

PART THE SECOND.

Concerning the visible Church of Christ and its Discipline.

1. We believe that a particular and visible Church of Christ is a number of believers, by mutual acquaintance and communion voluntarily and understandingly covenanting and embodying together, for upholding and promoting the worship and service of God, to show forth his declarative glory, and for their own edification: 1st Pet. ii. 5; 1st Cor. i. 2; Acts ii. 42—47.

2. That Baptism and the Lord's Supper are Ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming, and that the former is requisite to the latter, that is to say, that those are to be admitted into the communion of the Church, and to partake of all his ordinances and privileges, who upon profession of their faith have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Matthew xxviii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 26, 28; Acts ii. 41, 42, and ix. 18—26, and viii. 12, 33, 39; Matt. iii. 6—16; Rom. vi. 4; Co. ii. 12; John iii. 33; John i. 9, 10; Acts viii. 36—39.

3. That since none but true believers can rightly partake of the Ordinances, therefore the door of the church should be carefully kept against all such who cannot give scriptural evidence of their Union with Christ: 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29; Matt. vii. 6—15—20; Ezek. xlii. 7—9; Isaiah xxvi. 2; 1 Peter ii. 6.

4. That a Church thus gathered, hath power to choose, and by Elders to ordain those officers that Christ hath appointed in his Church, viz: — Bishops or Elders, and Deacons; and also to depose such officers who walk contrary to the rules of the Gospel; and to discipline their members, though in some such cases it may be convenient and profitable to request the advice of neighbouring Churches of Christ: Acts i. 22, 28, and vi. 3, 6; Num. i. 10; Matt. xviii. 15, 18; Acts xv.

5. That a Bishop or Elder hath no more power to decide any case or controversy in the Church than any private brother; yet they, having superior gifts for teaching and ruling, ought to exercise and improve the same for the benefit of the Church; and the Church ought to be subject to the gifts bestowed on the Minister from the Lord, while he is rightly administering in his place, whose place it is to lead in the actings of the Church, and to administer the Ordinances of the Gospel, and devote himself to the work of teaching, warning, rebuking; and exhorting the people publicly, and from house to house: Matt. xx. 25—29; 1 Peter v. 3; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts xx. 20, 26, 31.

6. That the Deacon's office or work is to take care of the poor, and to have the oversight of the temporal affairs of the Church, and to minister at the Lord's Table: Acts vi. 1, 6; 1 Tim. iii. 6, 14.

7. That every believer is commanded to be faithful, to improve every gift and talent which is bestowed on him, in order to which, there ought to be such a Gospel freedom that the Church may know where every particular gift is, that it may be improved in its proper place, and to its right end, viz: the glory of God and the good of his people; and the Church ought to be subject to such improvements; 1 Peter iv. 10, 11, and v. 5; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 1 Cor. 12th and 14th chapters.

8. That there is a mutual obligation between Minister and People—one to administer in things religious and spiritual, according to the gifts God has given. The Church to communicate of their temporal or worldly substance for his comfort and support, and that by an equality, as nearly as can be ascertained, that one may not be burthened and another eased. But this is not to be effected by force or compulsion, or by the sword of civil power; but it is to be a freewill offering agreeably to the scripture of truth, and every member deficient in this matter ought to be disciplined by gospel rule as for any other breach of covenant, or neglect of performing Christian duty; 2 Cor. viii. 12—13; Luke x. 7; Rom. xv. 27; 1 Cor. ix.

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