

CIRCULAR LETTER.

DEAR BRETHREN,

THROUGH the tender mercy of our Covenant God and Father, we are permitted again to address you, and in so doing we beg leave to call your attention to the importance of exercising an impartial discipline in the several Churches composing this Body. By discipline, we mean that mode of treatment towards offending members which the word of God distinctly points out. God has been pleased not only to establish his Church here on earth: but he has also given a code of laws in his word, by which that Church is to be regulated and governed. These laws in his Kingdom are to it, what the laws of a State are to a nation. The laws of a nation may be pure and wholesome: but if trampled upon with impunity, and transgressors permitted to go on unpunished, consequences the most disastrous to the peace and prosperity of the nation must inevitably follow. So with the Kingdom of the Redeemer on earth, if those who are its subjects are suffered to violate its holy principles, and disregard its divine mandates, without meeting the admonitions and the censure of the Church, what may we expect, but envyings, and strife, and discord, and every evil word and work amongst us. A Scriptural discipline is one of the great bulwarks of our Zion, for when offenders are dealt with as the Gospel directs, it serves as a beacon to others and awakens a spirit of watchfulness and prayer on the part of the members generally, that they may be preserved from those evils which have befallen their offending brethren, and perhaps separated them for ever from the communion of the saints. The word of God may be faithfully preached, the ordinances regularly administered, and members rapidly increased: but if discipline be neglected all is tending to desolation, and although we may imagine that all is prosperous and healthy, yet there is a disease fastening itself upon the vitals, which if permitted to work its natural course must terminate in ruin.

In looking for the cause of those serious evils with which some of our once flourishing Churches are at present infected, and which have arisen like a moral pestilence amongst them, to disrobe them of all their beauty, to wither up all their comforts, and to blight all their hopes as regards the future, are we not naturally led to the conclusion from what we know of the conduct of many of the professors of our holy religion, that they have had their origin, in part at least, in a most woeful neglect of the administration of the wholesome laws of Church discipline? It may be that the door has not been carefully closed against all such as cannot give Scriptural evi-