

R U L E S

ESTABLISHED BY THE PRESBYTERY OF

N E W B R U N S W I C K,

FOR THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT;

AND RECOMMENDED, AS FAR AS THEY APPLY,
TO THE OBSERVATION OF THEIR
CHURCHES.

TOGETHER WITH

A P A S T O R A L L E T T E R,

ADDRESSED TO ALL THE CHURCHES UNDER
THEIR CARE.

DONE AT PRINCETON, April 23d, 1800.

NEW BRUNSWICK: PRINTED BY
A. BLAUVELT. 1800.

R U L E S.

WHEREAS, in order that the state of the church, and its interests and duties as a constituted society, may be as fully known and attended to as possible ; that consistency and harmony may be preserved in all the proceedings of the church and its judicatories, and that due efficiency may be given to every measure that shall be undertaken for the general good of the church ; it is requisite, that a regular system of rules be adopted, embracing, not only such objects as are special to a judicatory, but such also, as it is their duty to make known and recommend to the observation of the particular churches under their care.

Therefore, to attain the above desirable and necessary ends, the presbytery of New Brunswick, after mature deliberation, did, and hereby do receive and establish for themselves, and for the churches under their care, the following system of rules, viz :

1. That the session of each congregation, under the care of this presbytery, meet, at least twice in each year, and attend to such business as is assigned them by the constitution of this church : and that they keep a faithful record of their proceedings.

2. That the respective sessions send up their records to every spring meeting of the presbytery, for inspection.

3. That the sessions also make a return, annually, to presbytery, at their stated meetings in the spring ; exhibiting the whole number in the communion of their respective churches ; the changes that have taken place in the preceding year, by admissions, removals, or deaths ; and the number of adults and infants that shall have been baptized.

4. That the corporation of each congregation (where the congregation is incorporated) lay before the presbytery, at their stated meetings in the spring, a statement of salary accompt between the congregation and their pastor, clearly exhibiting debt and credit, and expressing the balance due, if any, up to that time. This to be attested by the president, treasurer, or clerk of the board. Where the congregation is not incorporated, that this statement be made by the session, and properly attested.

5. That every representative from the congregations to the judicatories of the church, be chosen for that purpose at a regular meeting of the session.

6. That the statements of salary accompts be regularly registered in a book to be kept for that purpose, by a person appointed by the presbytery, who shall make the register, annually, and file and preserve the original documents.

7. That each minister, annually, give a verbal or written account of the state of religion in his congregation, and of his attention to parochial duties : also, that he answer such questions as the presbytery shall put to him on that subject.

8. That the presbytery, as often as they shall deem it useful, shall send to the churches under their care, a *circular letter*, containing, or accompanied with an account of such of their proceedings, as may be useful for the churches to be made acquainted with, together with such counsels, admonitions and exhortations, as their particular exigencies shall require : that they, being particularly acquainted with the state of the churches, may, with the greater cordiality concur in any measures for the general good.

9. That the circular letter, with such extracts as may accompany it, shall be printed by the presbytery ; and entered on the records, or preserved on the files of the different sessions.

10. That it shall be the duty of each congregation under the care of this presbytery, whether supplied with a pastor, or vacant, to make a collection, annually, to be applied for promoting and carrying into effect such objects, as the general good of the churches may require. And that these collections be forwarded, by the respective congregations, to the stated meetings of the presbytery, in the spring.

11. That the several sums forwarded, as above, by the respective congregations, shall be distinctly entered on the records of presbytery, as well as in the treasurer's book of accounts.

12. That it shall be considered the duty of, and that this presbytery do hereby earnestly recommend to all the vacant congregations under their care, to meet together every Lord's day, at one or more places, for the purposes of prayer and praise, and reading the holy scriptures, together with the works of such approved divines as they shall be able to procure : and that the elders be the

persons who shall pray, and select the portions of scripture and other books, to be read by any person whom they shall appoint.

13. That each minister of this presbytery, and licentiate, under its care, when they supply in the vacant congregations by appointment shall, if it can consistently be done, call together the children and young persons of the congregation, and examine them in their knowledge of the catechism of our church ; and inculcate upon parents the great value of this mode of instruction, and the necessity of preparing their children for such examinations.

And to secure a more punctual performance of this duty, each minister, or licentiate, in reporting his compliance with his appointment, shall report also, what attention he has paid to this part of his duty ; and what is the state of chatechetical knowledge and instruction in those vacancies to which his report may allude.

14. That it shall be considered the duty of the vacant congregations under the care of this presbytery that, whenever they make application for supplies, they produce sufficient testimony to presbytery, that they are not in arrears for such supplies as they have already received.

15. That this presbytery, in compliance with the direction of the general assembly and synod, will annually report to synod, the number of their members, their licensed candidates, deaths, removals ; and also the number of vacant congregations within their bounds, distinguishing between those who appear able and desirous to support the gospel, either in a single or united capacity ; and those who are not able. And that they will also send up, annually, duplicates of said reports to the general assembly, by their commissioners, properly attested.

16. That, as the interest of the church in every view requires a punctual attendance on its judicatories, provision be made, in the annual collection, or otherwise, for a reasonable allowance to ministers and elders, to defray their expenses in attending the several judicatories of the church. That commissioners to the general assembly be allowed for this purpose, each one dollar and an half for every forty miles in going to, and returning from the general assembly ; and one dollar and an half for each day during their attendance on the assembly, to be paid out of the annual collection. And that the session of each congregation estimate for themselves, the allowance to be made to their minister and elder for attending the other judicatories,

and pay them accordingly, from such funds as they shall provide for that purpose.

17. That the treasurer of this presbytery receive all the monies, annually collected and brought forward to presbytery by the respective congregations under their care; and make, in a book provided for that purpose, a fair entry for each congregation, on distinct pages, of the monies so collected and brought forward, that the whole monies, received by the presbytery from year to year from each congregation, may be seen at one view. Also, that said treasurer, on no account, pay out any of the monies, collected and brought forward as above, but by a special order of the presbytery. That he regularly enter, in a part of the book, reserved for that purpose, all the sums paid by order as above, and file and preserve the orders, as his vouchers, in settling his accompts with the presbytery.

18. That at every stated meeting of the presbytery, some person be appointed to open with a sermon the next stated presbytery. That said sermon shall be written out, and, after the delivery, laid upon the table for inspection; and that it be subject to the public criticisms and observations of presbytery.

19. That a committee of six persons be
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appointed at every stated meeting of the presbytery in the spring, whose business it shall be to examine before presbytery, every candidate for licensure, on the languages, the arts and sciences, theology, and ecclesiastical history, during the period of their appointment.

20. That no minister or elder shall take away copies of the supplies appointed to any minister, or granted to any vacant church, until they have been signed by the clerk.

21. That the clerk of the presbytery fairly transcribe the minutes made at every meeting of presbytery, before he deliver them at a subsequent meeting, or to the stated clerk, and that he preserve a sufficient space between each line, so as to leave room for corrections, if necessary.

22. That, for the mutual edification and comfort of the members of this presbytery, they will spend at least one session at every stated meeting of the presbytery, in discussing in a free and friendly manner, some topic in divinity or other subject, connected with the business of their profession ; that the subject to be discussed, shall be appointed at a previous meeting, and that every member shall come prepared to give his sentiments on the subject, either in writing, or verbally ;---but

that no decision on the subject, by vote or otherwise, shall be called for, nor any record made of the discussion.

23. That the stated clerk of this presbytery, shall copy into a neat small bound book, all those resolutions and orders of this presbytery, and of the higher judicatories of the church which are of permanent obligation. That it shall be his duty, constantly to insert in said book, such resolutions and orders as may be made from time to time ; keeping an index, corresponding in time with said resolutions and orders, as they arise ; and to bring it, with the records, to every meeting of the presbytery.

R U L E S

RESPECTING THE RAISING THE ANNUAL COLLECTION THROUGH OUR CHURCHES.

WITH a view to collect, and bring forward to presbytery the arrearages that appear to be due from different congregations belonging to our body ; and generally, for hereafter apportioning with equity, and collecting with punctuality the contributions that may be raised from them, in compliance with the recommendations of the general assembly, or other judicatories of the church ; presbytery, agreeably to the report of their committee on that subject, resolved as follows, viz.

1. That it is of primary importance to make known, annually, to our respective congregations, the views of the assembly and of other judicatories of the church, for the promotion of the interests of religion ; persuaded, that the people need only be well informed of their duty, and of the charities that are requisite to carry into effect the pious and extensive views of these bodies.

2. That for the attainment of this end, it

shall be the duty, and it is hereby required of each settled minister in his own congregation, and of particular members of presbytery, in fulfilling their supplies to vacant congregations, to explain these objects to the people ; and to adopt, with the eldership of the respective churches, such prudent and efficient measures, as will secure the collection and transmission to the presbyterial treasurer, of such sums as shall be severally apportioned to them.

3. That ministers when attending to this business either in their own charges, or in the vacancies, particularly inform the congregations, that the apportionments have been made in compliance with the request of the elders of the churches in presbytery exprest ; and that they use proper means to obtain the consent of the eldership of each church, and particularly of each vacancy, to the ratio of contribution herein after assigned to them. And that the eldership of each church be, and they are hereby requested, particularly to charge themselves with the business of raising and bringing forward to presbytery their respective rates of contribution, which they may raise at one or more collections, as their discretion shall direct.

4. That, in order to excite due attention to a subject on which the public interest of

religion so much depends, and to secure punctuality as far as it can be attained where contributions are necessarily voluntary, when any church session shall have failed for one year to return to the presbyterial treasurer, the full rate apportioned to that church, a letter shall be particularly addressed to them by the presbytery, with the view of engaging them as soon as possible to repair the deficiency.

5. That the treasurer be, and he is hereby directed to ascertain the arrearages which may now be due from any congregations belonging to this presbytery, and address to them such letter, and use such other prudential means as he may deem requisite, to procure these arrearages, and to bring them into the treasury as soon as may be practicable.

6. That the circular letters, to be hereafter addressed by this presbytery to the churches under their care, shall contain, besides other information relative to the interests of truth and piety, an accurate statement of the collections of the several congregations, for the satisfaction, the encouragement and excitement of the people ; and that private Christians may be induced more and more to extend their views beyond their personal concerns, or the concerns of their individual churches, to the most enlarged objects of

religion, and the general prosperity of the kingdom of Christ.

Finally. That in compliance with the request of the elders of the churches in presbytery met, and in order as far as possible to equalize the contributions, and to proportion them to the abilities of the respective congregations, the annexed schedule of apportionments be recommended to be considered as containing the yearly rates of contribution from the several churches. Three fifths of which annual rates to be for the uses of the general assembly, and two fifths for the uses of the presbytery. Any surplus which these contributions shall yield above the actual exigencies of the presbytery and the general assembly, to be applied to publishing such parts of the proceedings of presbytery as it may be thought expedient more generally to communicate to the people, and to make up casual deficiencies in the collections.

APPORTIONMENTS OF CONTRIBUTIONS.

	<i>Dollars.</i>
1. To Shrewsbury and Shark-River,	5
2. To Middletown-Point, - -	4
3. To Lower Freehold, - -	20
4. To Cranberry, - - -	20
5. To Allentown and Nottingham,	10
6. To Trenton and Maidenhead, -	16

7.	To Pennington and Trenton 1st church,	16
8.	To Princeton, - - -	16
9.	To Kingston, - - - -	12
10.	To New Brunswick, - -	16
11.	To Boundbrook, - -	18
12.	To Baskenridge, - -	18
13.	To Lamington, - - -	18
14.	To Amwell and Flemington, -	16
15.	To Kingwood and Bethlehem,	16
16.	To Mansfield and Greenwich,	16
17.	To Mount Bethel and Oxford,	8
18.	To Knowlton, - - -	2
19.	To Hardwick and Independence,	12
20.	To Newton. - - -	10

THE
PRESBYTERY
OF
NEW BRUNSWICK,
TO THE CHURCHES UNDER THEIR CARE,
SEND GREETING :

DEAR BRETHREN,

PRESBYTERY have, for some time past, taken into consideration the state of our churches, with a view to arrange some matters for their general benefit, a want of attention to which, in some regularly systematized way, hath occasioned much inconvenience, both to us as a judicatory, and to you as religious societies ; and we herewith send you the result of our deliberations.

The matters recommended to your, and enjoined on our own observance, we deem important. They have accordingly passed under our serious and deliberate discussion : and we doubt not that, as the experience of most amongst you has fully evinced the necessity of some such system of rules being put

in practice through our churches, so those now recommended, will meet with your ready acceptance and observation.

We deem it unnecessary, in this address, to detail at large the reasons, either for our taking them into consideration, or for sending them to you under their present form and character. We observe, however, in general, that the leading object in them, is, by bringing frequently and regularly into view, a just statement of the internal state and concerns of our churches, all may be the better informed ; and that both ministers and people may be led mutually to aid, encourage and excite to the discharge of their respective duties. And that, in the management of the churches' various concerns, harmony may be established, confidence inspired, and success ensured.

With real pleasure we inform you, brethren, of the success of your benevolent and pious contributions, for spreading the gospel, and planting churches in our northwestern frontiers. By the ministration of this your pious bounty, "to the poor the gospel is preached," and numbers in those remote regions, are brought to rejoice in God their Saviour. Such has been the success of the missions that, in several of the frontier settlements, regular churches have been formed :

and the prospect is daily and rapidly increasing, if endeavours are continued, of planting many more.

A plan is in contemplation, if sufficient aid can be obtained, for carrying on the missions in a more permanent way, and to greater extent. And we have no doubt you will continue, while occasion shall require, cheerfully to contribute as you have hitherto done ; and as the progress of the work may make increased aid necessary. And may the great Lord of the harvest, who beholds with pleasure, reward, with blessings in your own bosoms, these your labours of love.

It must occur to all, on the shortest reflection, that, the *general concerns* of the church require to be attended to, and can be provided for, only in the public judicatories of the church ; and that these concerns must fall into derangement, and both the particular and general interests of the church sadly decline, if its judicatories be not faithfully attended to. It may, therefore, be needful we observe to you, brethren, that the attendance on the several judicatories, has, in the present day, become a matter, in point of expense, considerably burdensome to most of us as individuals. We have therefore, required that, in the several congregations under our care, provision be made for defray-

ing the expense of the ministers and elders, in attending the judicatories. This requisition we conceive to be so just, and so reasonable, that no considerate person will offer the least objection to it ; especially, when he reflects that the time spent on these occasions must often be considerably felt, both by ministers and elders, even when their pecuniary expense is defrayed.

And now, dear brethren, having recommended to your notice the matter suggested above, permit us, with all the sincerity and affection of those that watch for your souls, to exhort you to stand fast in the faith, and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. And there is the more necessity for our doing so at this time, as the present is a day peculiarly marked with abounding infidelity and licentiousness. Yes, brethren, we that are set as watchmen on the walls of God's Jerusalem, are called to pronounce heavy tidings. We behold with pain, iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold. The desolations of Zion present a wide and fearful ruin ; not from the fire and sword of persecution, but from the deceivable and deluding arts of her enemies.

What the spirit of truth so long since predicted is, perhaps, more fully verified in the

present than in any former period, that, “In the last days many shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared as with a hot iron.” That evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Also that, from amongst the churches, professed members, shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Indeed there appears to be a bursting forth of abominations both in principle and practice, which, like a deluge, threatens to bear down all religion and good order before it.

Various causes have led to that apostacy from the faith, that now astonishes the Christian world. The corruptions in doctrine, discipline and worship which had for a long time been introduced, and maintained thro’ a large part of Christian Europe, in opposition to the simplicity and purity of the doctrines of Christ. The shameful impositions upon the credulity, and tyranny exercised over the consciences of men ; together with the absurd tenets and practices of some enthusiastic sectarians, while they gave just offence to all serious, judicious Christians ; afforded an occasion to the adversaries of our holy religion to speak reproachfully. These adversaries, sunk in luxury, and under the full

dominion of the carnal mind which is enmity against God, took occasion from the absurdities of professing Christians, to charge these absurdities upon Christianity itself. Disliking for themselves all the restraints of religion, in their enquiries on this subject, they have taken no pains to distinguish the *wheat* from the *chaff*; the pure truths of revelation, consonant with reason, from the commandments and doctrines of men, hostile to both: and impatient to give the reins to an unrestrained sensuality, they have renounced the sure word of prophecy, and set up human reason, blinded and enslaved as it is by corrupt appetites and passions, for the only guide of man. This they have dignified by the specious name of philosophy; and, availing themselves of the arts of disingenuity and seduction, they have come forward with a front of daring impiety, and threaten to overthrow all religion and morals together.

Unhappily, the unwearied zeal and artful address of men of this stamp, have given to their principles an astonishing success in courts and the higher classes of society. And, these fountains of power and influence being corrupted, their example like a pestilence, hath spread and infected the mass of the people: and, what is to be particularly lamented, hath proved a temptation to time-

serving and men-pleasing preachers and writers to depart, in their discourses and writings, from the purity of the gospel ; to explain away its most important doctrines ; to veil, by the mists of a visionary philosophy, the plainest truths of revelation, and unsettle the minds of men on this important subject. Nay, daring scoffers, men the most profligate and debauched in their lives, have ventured to come forward, and by bare faced sophistry and ridicule to attack all serious godliness ; and such is the general corruption and blindness, that vast multitudes stoop to receive them as their apostles and guides.

Swarms of universalists, arians, socinians, deists, and even atheists have sprung up, working with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, and laying waste the once flourishing churches of Europe. From thence their poisons are spreading through all parts of the Christian world. Their books, their principles, their preachers have found their way into this happy country. Time was, when deism was scarcely known here ; when men, whatever might be their secret sentiments, would have been ashamed to have it known, or thought that they' leaned to infidelity ; but now, numbers are to be found amongst us who openly avow and labour to propagate principles, the manifest tendency of which is to relax or destroy the

restraints of religion, and to set mankind loose, to walk after the way of their heart and the sight of their eyes. Enemies to religion, they are equally enemies to all energetic civil government. They can brook no restraints either from divine or human authority. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. They preach up liberty, while they themselves are the servants of corruption. And by attempting to destroy the principles on which all good order in society rests, they are in effect opening the flood gates to licentiousness ; and, as far as their influence extends, overturning the foundations both of the present and future happiness of man.

We are sorry to be compelled to declare the mournful truth, that the corruptions of an old luxurious country are breaking in like a flood upon this new and rising empire.

That religion, the love of which led our forefathers to these shores ; and, under the influence of which this land hath been converted from a desert to a fruitful field, that religion is, by numbers amongst us, despised and laughed to scorn. The scriptures of truth are detested. The rock of our salvation lightly esteemed. There is a great falling away from the religious observance of the Sabbaths, the worship, and the ordinances of God ; family prayer, family instruction and

government, and we have reason to fear, closet devotion, have sadly declined. The enemies of Zion triumph. Their efforts to seduce, are unwearied. Their books artfully calculated to deceive, are spread every where. Their emissaries are busily employed, creeping into houses, ensnaring and leading away the young and the ignorant ; and a propensity to licentiousness, inseparable from our corrupt nature, renders vast multitudes an easy prey to their seductions.

Indeed, we cannot but consider the present as an hour of temptation, that is come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. And, as God's watchmen amongst you, we call on you, brethren, and exhort you in the name of the Lord, that ye look well to your own souls ; and that ye stand fast in this evil day, having your loins girt, and your lamps burning. Be vigilant, be sober. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Consult God's precious truths with humility and prayer. Walk circumspectly before them that are without. Give none occasion of offence to any ; that your adversaries may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Let the self denying spirit of the gospel live in your hearts and shine in your whole example, and labour to maintain daily fellowship with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ.

Thus living, ye shall adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things ; put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and contribute in the most effectual manner to the defence and confirmation of the gospel.

Alas ! that in such a day as this, Christ should be wounded in the house of his friends ! O professors, let not your lukewarmness and unfaithfulness aid the designs of Christ's enemies, and strengthen the hands of his very betrayers and murderers ! How many in trying times have cheerfully laid down their lives for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus ? And shall Christ's people turn their backs on him now ; desert the standard of the cross, or be indifferent to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Remember, dear brethren, it is your lot to live in a trying day. See to it then that ye are faithful to the death. Whoever may prove treacherous to Christ, see that ye be not of the number. Awful indeed will be the case of those professors, who, giving a willing ear to this philosophy, falsely so called,

make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience ! Better for them that they had never known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment once delivered unto them.

Be zealous to cherish the means of grace, and encourage a faithful gospel ministry amongst you. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. An itching ear is a snare to the soul. Keep close to God's sabbaths, his worship and ordinances. Let the worship of God be maintained in your houses ; and oh ! labour to train up your families in the nurture, and admonition of the Lord. Let no endeavours be wanting on your part to preserve your dear offspring from the abounding corruptions of the day ; and to establish them in the truths and ways of God.

Respect and cherish the government of your country. You have reason to do so. It is the reward of your long and painful struggles during the revolutionary war. What you fought and bled for, the Lord hath granted you. A government founded in equity, suited to the genius and interests of Americans, and managed by men of your own choice.

Surely the kindness of heaven to this land is great beyond parallel ! How hath the Lord

exalted you above any other people, both in civil and religious privileges ! What could a nation wish for, that this nation enjoys not ? Amongst other signal favours, the Lord hath hitherto given us wise and good men as our first magistrates. We have seen and we still see, at the head of our government, wisdom, integrity and firmness, united with the most profound respect for our holy religion. May a gracious heaven ever preserve our government from falling to the direction of such as fear not God, and regard not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear brethren, see to it that you do not lightly esteem, nor inconsiderately abuse your great national mercies. They may be lost ; yes, through licentious rashness and folly, your boasted national glory may depart ; and you may be left to lament when it is too late, the influence of principles that have given you a prey to all the evils of anarchy, or the oppressions of a usurped tyranny.

However political opinions may vary, and from whatever causes these varying opinions may originate, we exhort you to adhere strictly to the doctrines of God our Saviour ; let his holy word ever direct your conduct as citizens ; and making this the man of your counsels, strive to “ Render unto all their

dues ; tribute, to whom tribute is due ; custom, to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour." Let your subjection be not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. Obey magistrates, and study to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

And we intreat you, be much in prayer, that it may please God to arrest the progress of infidelity and licentiousness ; to pour out his spirit upon the ministers of his sanctuary ; give success to the means of his appointment, and abundantly to revive his work in the midst of the years. Who knows but the present is that dark hour that precedes the dawn of a glorious day ; and that God may graciously hear the prayers of his people, and return and leave a blessing behind him.

Adored be his name ! he is already giving some tokens for good in this way. A very considerable revival of religion hath been progressing for some time in a great number of churches to the eastward, and in no small degree on our western and northwestern frontiers. Let us unite our fervent prayers to heaven, that God would cause the dews of his grace to be plentifully distilled on this part of his Zion, and give us a time of refreshing from his presence.

And now, dear brethren, commending you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

We remain
your faithful
and affectionate labourers
in the gospel of Christ.

By order of presbytery.

JOSEPH CLARK, Moderator,
GEORGE S. WOODHULL, Clerk.

Princeton, April 23, 1800.