

A

PASTORAL LETTER

FROM THE

PRESBYTERY

OF

NEW BRUNSWICK,

TO

THE CHURCHES UNDER THEIR CARE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED A TABLE,
EXHIBITING THE NAMES OF
CHURCHES, &c.

I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. Ezek. xxxiii. 7.

DONE AT PENNINGTON, September 16, 1801.

NEW BRUNSWICK, PRINTED BY
A. BLAUVELT. 1801.

Report by the Treasurer of Presbytery, on the state of the collections agreed to be raised annually, by the several congregations under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick ; with a view of the arrears apportioned to each congregation, and how far paid.

Names of the congregations.	The proportion to be raised by each congregation to settle arrears.		The sum to be annually raised by each congregation for the gen. Assembly & Presbytery.	The sums paid by each congregation on the arrears.		Sums paid by each congregation for the years 1799, 1800, & 1801.		Amount yet due from each congregation.	
	D.	C.	D.	D.	C.	D.	C.	D.	C.
Shrewsbury and } Shark River, }	6		5	6		15		—	
Middletown Point, }	—		4	—		—		12	
Lower Freehold, }	20		20	20		60		—	
Cranberry, }	20		20	20	22	60		—	
Allentown and } Nottingham, }	13	33	10	—		—		43	33
Trenton and } Maidenhead, }	20		16	16		48		4	
Pennington and } Trenton 1st ch. }	16	66	16	16		48			66
Princeton, }	16		16	16		32		16	
Kingston, }	10	66	12	10	66	23	53	12	47
New Brunswick, }	16		16	16		48	50	—	
Bound Brook, }	16		18	16		39	62	14	38
Baskenridge, }	20		18	20		23	10	30	90
Lamington, }	20		18	20		23		31	
Amwell & Flem- } ington, }	20		16	20		47	80		20
Kingwood and } Bethlehem, }	16		16	16		32		16	
Mansfield and } Greenwich, }	16		16	16		—		48	
Mount Bethel and } Oxford, }	16		8	16		9	34	14	66
Knowlton, }	5	33	2	—		—		11	33
Hardwick and } Independence, }	19	33	12	11	32	—		44	1
Newton and } Hardiston, }	10	66	10	10		—		30	66

*. The annual proportions for the three years named, are entered according to those specified in the printed rules. It may be that, before those apportionments were received by the churches, the annual sum to be raised in some of them was not so large ; in that case, their arrears as stated above, will stand too high.

* * Black lines denote that returns have not been received.

Names of Churches.	Names of Pastors.	Whole number of Communicants.	Number of Communicants admitted the preceding year.	Number of persons baptized the preceding year.
Kingwood and Bethlehem, } Freehold, } Princeton, } Trenton and } Maidenhead, } Bedminster, } Pennington and } Trenton 1st Ch. } New Brunswick, } Amwell and } Flemmington, } Boundbrook, } Baskenridge, } Newton, } Midway in } Georgia, } Mansfield and } Greenwich, } Cranbury, } Kingston, } Allentown and } Nottingham, } Shrewsbury and } Spartan River, } Knowlton, } Hardwick and } Independence, } Mount Bethel } and Oxford, } Middletown Point	Revd. John Hannah, Dr. John Woodhull, Dr. Samuel S. Smith, Revd. James F. Armstrong, Revd. William Boyd, Revd. Joseph Rue, Revd. Joseph Clark, Revd. Thomas Grant, Revd. David Barclay, Revd. Robert Finley, Revd. Halloway W. Hunt, Revd. Cyrus Gilderleeve, Revd. William Sloan, Revd. George S. Woodhull, Revd. David Comfort, Revd. John Cornell, Revd. Ebenezer Grant, Vacant— Vacant— Vacant— Vacant— Revd. Andrew Hunter, Revd. Samuel F. Snowden, Revd. Nathaniel Harris, Revd. Matthew Larue Perine.	— 232 65 72 80 168 75 41 102 105 — — — 189 55 76 26 20 — — — —	— 12 10 6 11 100 8 — 12 — — — — 7 5 4 1 — — — —	— 52 1 — 8 70 16 — 49 12 — — — 56 18 24 5 — — — —

} Are without pastoral charges.

THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW BRUNSWICK, TO THE CHURCHES UNDER THEIR CARE : Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.

VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

IN the preceding table, we have placed before you, some of the outlines of the present state of the particular churches, over which we endeavour to exercise an affectionate and faithful care.

There you have in one view, so far as returns have been made, the number of persons baptized, and of those received to the communion of the Lord's Supper, in the year past ; with the whole number of communicants in each church. Also, the sums paid on the annual collection, for purposes recommended by the general assembly and by this presbytery.

We have also the satisfaction of saying, that in addition to the annual collection, there has, in the year past, been a special and very generous contribution by those churches, and by others under the care of the general assembly,* for the pious and benevolent purpose of extending the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, and of the way of salvation through him, to those now sitting in darkness, and who are ready to perish for lack of knowledge.

* In the bounds of this Presbytery there has been subscribed 2512 Dollars 71 Cts. the most of which is paid.

This view of the flourishing situation of some of those churches, and of the prevailing benevolent disposition among them, and others, to promote the salvation of mankind, and to extend the borders of the Redeemer's kingdom, must afford much satisfaction to you brethren, and to all those, who in sincerity, love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As to ourselves, we render praise and thanksgiving unto God, that in this dark day, this day, in which the enemies of Christ appear to be making a vigorous, united, and general effort, to overturn every gospel institution, yea, even to obliterate the gospel itself, and annihilate Christianity : we say, that in this dark day, we render praise and thanksgiving unto God, that he hath not forsaken *you*---hath not given you up to strong delusion to believe a lie, nor taken his holy spirit away ; but hath, in some places, shed down his influences in a plentiful manner, and made a preached gospel mighty for convincing and converting sinners, and pulling down the strong holds of satan.

And brethren, we rejoice to hear that in general, there is a serious and solemn attention to the ordinances of the gospel among you, and a commendable adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Yet, notwithstanding these commendable things, you will not suppose that you have already attained, or that you are already perfect. Your own consciences will tell you of many things, which need amendment

and reformation. And the word of God, that discerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, which strips off false disguises and lays open the inward man ; this word of God will show you imperfections and sins enough, not only to awaken and humble, but even to alarm you. But above all, Jesus Christ the great head of the church hath his eyes, which are as a flame of fire, fixed upon you, and perfectly knoweth your works. And were he to represent *your* present state, as he once did, the then state of the seven churches of Asia ; might you not expect to hear him say, *to some*, that they had lost their first love, and left their first works----*to others*, that they had endured and countenanced those, who neglected his ordinances, violated his commandments, and were erroneous in doctrine---*to many*, that they were lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot---and *to each one*, “ I have not found thy works perfect before God ; remember therefore from whence thou art fallen---how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent : for, behold I stand at the door and knock.”

Christ's being at the door, awakening us from our slumbers, and waiting to be gracious ; his being in the midst of us, walking among his golden candlesticks, inspecting the state of his church, and his having *all* power in his hands, being made head over

all things, to his church, should immoveably fix our confidence in him, animate our zeal, and unite every faculty of our souls in his service. While his eyes are upon us, how can we be lukewarm ? and while *he* is for us, who can be against us ? While Christianity is in such hands, it will prevail ; and we shall have no reason to doubt its final success and triumph. If in some places, its course should be opposed and obstructed, it will like the waters of a flood, find out new ones, until the whole earth be covered with the knowledge of the Lord.

Yet, let it rest in your minds, that the church here is in a militant state ; and that her enemies are subtil, numerous, and powerful, who sometimes will, like the roaring lion, make an open and bold attack ; at others, will lie in wait to deceive, or, will assail with all the delusive arts of the old serpent. The church is, therefore, to expect *special seasons* of trial and trouble. Yet, though she may be in darkness for a time, the Day-spring from on high will revisit her, and dispel the gloom ; or, though like the sun, she may suffer an eclipse for a short period, she will again, like him, shine forth in glory.

The present seems to be such a special season.

Brethren, we have said *it is a dark day*, and we repeat it, this is, in general, a dark day to the church ; though some parts of it enjoy a degree of light and prosperity. Perhaps there never was a more extensive com-

ination formed against Christianity, than exists at this day ; nor enemies more artful and persevering, and seldom, if ever, more zealous and active, than many of those engaged therein.

As watchmen on the walls of Zion, we give you this warning.

The things under the sixth vial, foretold in the Revelations, seem to be now taking place ; namely, the coming of “ Unclean “ spirits like frogs, out of the mouth of “ the dragon, and out of the mouth of “ the beast, and out of the mouth of the “ false prophet : for they are the spirits of devils.” They are probably called, *spirits of devils*, on account of their malignant opposition to God, and all good. “ These,” it is said, “ go forth, unto the kings of the earth, “ and of the whole world, to gather them to “ the battle of that great day of God almighty.” This passage leads us to expect a very extensive, and inveterate combination against God ; that is, against his cause and interest, his kingdom and people in this world.

Such a combination, accompanied with all the malignancy of spirit foretold in prophecy, seems actually to have taken place*.

This combination, begun by Voltaire, Frederick, D. Lambert, and Diderot, has been carried on with a zeal and perseverance, al-

* See Robertson's Evidences of a Conspiracy—And the Abbe Barruel's History of Jacobinism, vol. iv.

most surpassing belief ; and, in its progress, has extended its bounds, and swelled the numbers of its votaries, to the astonishment of every pious beholder ! Now, like an organized and extensive army, supporting its different parts, and directing its united force to the accomplishment of its object, it presents to us, a menacing and formidable countenance.

But here you will not forget, that the combination, the army of infidels, and enemies to God, spoken of in the revelations, were to be gathered together in a place called *Armageddon*,* that is, *a place of slaughter* ; whence we may conclude, that they will certainly be destroyed. Which destruction, the spirit of prophecy leads us to hope, will be completed under the succeeding, or seventh vial. In which period, we also hope, opposition to God will cease, and the peaceful and happy time commence, in which, there shall be none to hurt the people of our God, nor to disturb in his kingdom below.

As awful convulsions and distress of nations, preceded the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the gospel dispensation ; so they, probably, will precede the more glorious, and peaceful days of the gospel.

These days of evil therefore, ought not to shake our faith as to gospel promises or prophecies ; nor make us despond for a moment, as to the happy issue of the cause of

* A place, not far from Jerusalem, which, on account of the multitudes slain there, was proverbial as a place of Slaughter.

God. He can, and often does, overrule the wrath of his enemies, so as to promote his own gracious purposes, and accomplish their own complete ruin.

Yet this confidence in God, should not make us less watchful over his, and our enemies ; nor less zealous in counteracting their hidden wiles, nor, in repelling their open attacks. It is our duty, to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to hold fast that blessed gospel, which affords our greatest consolation in life, and our best, and surest hope in death.

It is this blessed gospel, with all its ordinances, its promises, and prospects, which is the object of the most inveterate hatred, and against which, the infidels of the present day, direct their combined force. It is not any particular denomination of Christians which is aimed at ; but the whole system of Christianity, and with it the whole system of morals are, if possible, to be overturned. Many go even further, and with the fool in the scriptures, say “ *There is no God.**” They rise up against the throne of the *Eternal*, and would crumble it to the dust. They would banish from man, all sense of a Deity---all apprehension of futurity---all check of conscience---and consequently, all dread of accountableness. Take these from man, and what remains in him, on which we can rest with comfort, or confidence ! Take these

* Mr. Hall, in his discourse on modern infidelity, says that a great majority on the Continent (Europe) may be justly considered, as the open and avowed abettors of Atheism, page 9th.

from man, and he would soon be fitted for rapine, for murders, and, for every evil work.

How absurd and monstrous ! that by such means, any should talk of regenerating the world, and making mankind happy !

The awful system of infidelity and impiety, which, in Europe, has acquired such ascendancy and strength, and which seems to meditate the subjection of the world, will not leave you unassailed. No, the apostles of infidelity are to be expected amongst *us*---vilifying the holy scriptures, as vain and inconsistent fables---reproaching your commendable adherence to their sacred truths, as *bigotry*---and branding your love to God, and zeal for his glory, with the names of *folly* and *fanaticism*. You are to expect, their publications will appear under delusive titles, that *names** may beguile you. Already, we have those impious, and blasphemous productions, falsely stiled, *The Age of reason*, and, *The Temple of reason*, with many others. Some have only a sprinkling of infidelity, as if designed to form the taste, or, to lead insensibly into error.

It is to be feared that, this country, like that of Europe, will be inundated with publications of these kinds, which, like the flood cast out of the mouth of the dragon, will be designed to carry away the Christian church.

* In Europe, the leading infidels, have assumed the name of *Philosophers*, and under that disguise, effected more in a short time, than they could have done in a long period, had they come forward, *undisguised infidels*.

This system of infidelity, which attempts to despoil mankind of their best rule for life, their sweetest balm in adversity, and most joyful hope in futurity, affords no substitute, but what is either low, unprofitable, or ruinous. It is a system, destructive of sublime virtues, and favorable to great crimes ; it corrupts the moral taste, and promotes the reign of violence, sensuality, and in general of all the evil passions.

No marvel, then, that its votaries should shrink from the idea of futurity, of accountability, and of final judgment ; and, as their only refuge from the wrath to come, lay hold on the hope that “ Death is an eternal sleep.” Unhappy men ! is it here, you rest ? in the gloomy hope, that a short life of folly and vice, will end in the utter extinction of your beings ? And is this gloomy hope, this cold comfort, more dark and cold than the grave, offered as a substitute, for all the blessings of the gospel ?

Dear brethren, turn an eye of pity towards these unhappy fellow men who reject a Saviour, and so great a salvation ; and pray for them as *he* once did for his murderers, “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” They know not that, they cast from them the pearl that enricheth, and turn away from the sun that enlighteneth---they know not that it is eternal life which they refuse, and eternal death, which they practically choose. But especially, take good heed *to yourselves*, that ye do not lose

your love and respect for the gospel ; nor depart from its precepts and ordinances. Above all, be solemnly careful that you duly estimate the value of the gift of God's own Son, a gift, which leads all other gifts after it : for, “ He that spared not his own “ Son, but delivered him up for us all, how “ shall he not with him also freely give us “ all things ? ”

As we have ever lived under a dispensation of grace, we are in the habit of viewing ourselves and fellow men, only in this favoured situation ; and, from the *commonness of the view* are in danger of losing a *sense of the greatness* of the blessing. But, could the wish of infidels, to exclude the idea of a Saviour, the Sun of righteousness from our world, be realized, how dark and dreadful a prospect, would rise before us ! all spiritual light and life would cease, and every comfort---even hope itself would die, and the world of mankind be abandoned to eternal death ! What soul doth not shudder at the thought ! Were our natural sun to be put out, or removed from the system, and leave all objects here, as frozen statues, wrapped in eternal night, the prospect would not be equally dreadful.

You are then assuredly to expect, that a general rejection of Christ and his gospel, corruption of morals, and reign of vices, will be followed, with as general, temporal and eternal ruin ! Should the gospel leave us, earthly blessings will take wing after.

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If men combine and rise up against Heaven, the vengeance of Heaven will come down upon men. Hence the moral and procuring cause, of the unusual judgments which are abroad, is obvious. Men, in the boldness of their impiety, have combined against Heaven, and gathered themselves together against God : and he, in righteous displeasure, hath risen up---his hand hath taken hold on vengeance, and shaketh terribly the nations. And, *our* only refuge, while the indignation passeth, is, in this offended, yet merciful God, who, in giving warning to his church, hath proclaimed, “ Come out of her my people, that ye
“ be not partakers of her sins, and that ye
“ receive not of her plagues. For her sins
“ have reached unto heaven, and God hath
“ remembered her iniquities.”

Hitherto, in general, we have as a nation, together with our wise and pious rulers, revered God and his gospel. But, should the contrary take place, and we be carried away with the corruptions in principle and practice, so triumphant in the world, and join with the enemies of God, we must then also receive of their plagues.

Very dear brethren, with fervor of soul, look up to God for his divine presence and blessing, that we may avoid this, so great an evil ; and that peace and prosperity, pure morals and vital piety may abound ; and that infidelity, with vice its guilty offspring may, as ashamed, hide their heads.

And now, may the God of all grace have you in his holy keeping, strengthen and establish you in this hour of temptation, which is come to try them that dwell upon the earth !---*Christ* seems now to be standing with his fan in his hand, thoroughly purging his floor. Take heed, therefore, that you be not carried away as the chaff---nor, “ like “ children, be tossed to and froe, and carried “ about with every wind of doctrine, by the “ slight of men, and cunning craftiness, “ whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Stand “ fast in the faith, quit you like men, be “ strong.” Hold that fast which you have, let no man take your crown. “ But grow “ in grace, and in the knowledge of our “ Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him “ be glory, both now and for ever. *Amen.*”

Signed by order of Presbytery.

JOSEPH RUE, *Moderator.*

EBENEZER GRANT, *Clerk.*

Pennington, September 16, 1801.