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taking part in the agitation. If there be any virtue in it, I have never read the "Fly Sheets,"—never attended one meeting of the expelled ministers. I love peace, and strive to pursue it.

The position which I occupy in connexion with the "Local Preachers' Mutual Aid Association" (an association which is calculated to do great and lasting good, and which I commend to your favourable notice), and a fear lest I should endanger its success, has also tended to keep me from interference with all such matters; still, I am what is called a "Reformer," and as such, must not shrink from my responsibilities. Surely there is nothing in the name of which one should be ashamed, though there may indeed be in the villanies which have been perpetrated under that name.

One of the most glorious events connected with the history of the Church and the world, notwithstanding what the Puseyites say to the contrary, is called "the Reformation." Of it we make our boast, and feel somewhat proud that by the ties of humanity—still more, if in heart and sentiment—we are identified with those who helped to forward that event. Reformers are not to be made responsible for all the follies and crudities which have found advocates among those bearing that name. Reform is not opposed to the conservation of all that is good and right, however long it may have existed—has no dislike to things "time honoured," if they be God approved; but, with all champions for the truth, it sets its face against tyranny, and is anxious to sweep away abuses, and repair dilapidations. Advancing with the calls of Providence, it is willing to adapt its institutions to the wants of the age, and deprecates in severe terms any persecution for the free exercise of opinions, or any attempt to interfere with the rights of conscience.

In such a sense, I believe that *you* are a Reformer. One of the best definitions of religious liberty I ever

remember to have seen, was given by you at a breakfast meeting, where you attended to meet ministers of various denominations, at the invitation of the then Lord Mayor of London, Mr. Humphreys. And when I remember how you have striven to quicken the sluggishness of some, and overcome the opposition of others, silencing their fears, satisfying their scruples, or answering their arguments, in order that you might introduce new measures or modify old ones, in accordance with what you deemed the demand of the times,—I do not despair of obtaining a favourable hearing, while I take the liberty of making a few suggestions in reference to Methodism.

One other preliminary remark I feel constrained to make. Whatever of blame or praise, if there be any, this address may call forth, must be wholly my own. I have consulted no one,—am not acting in concert with any; and I have to request that this letter be received from me in my individual character, and not in any way identified with the excellent Association to which I have referred. Sorry should I be if this attempt to advance peace should in any way be prejudicial to its interests. It gives me unfeigned pleasure to know, that however strongly individuals may feel, and however widely they may differ on other subjects, everything has been hushed when the claims of our sick and aged poor have been advocated in connexion with the “Local Preachers’ Mutual Aid Association.” Already has it had a healing tendency, and this will continue to be its effect, when the present agitation shall have ceased.

That I be not further troublesome, I beg at once to offer the following suggestions:—

First, That it is of great importance to our welfare that the Rules and Regulations of the Connexion be prepared for publication.

The necessity of this must be apparent to every one. It has been recognised more than once by Conference, who

have intimated their intention of doing it. All declaratory resolutions, whether of '35 or any other date, show the necessity of this; and when it is remembered that they now run through more than ten volumes, each one almost as large as the whole canon of Scripture, it does seem strange that a compilation has never taken place. Mr. Grindrod attempted to supply this desideratum, and the favour with which his undertaking was regarded, shows that Conference cannot be averse to the thing. It is much to be regretted that Mr. G., who was well qualified for the work, did not act under the authority of Conference, and make his book correct and complete. Now, it is not acknowledged as the *lex scripta*, either by them or the people. Never was the necessity of such an undertaking more evident, or more urgent than now; for never was there such a diversity of opinion as to what *is*, and what *is not* law.

Permit me, therefore, to request that you urge upon Conference, at an early stage of its sittings, the importance of nominating a Committee, to prepare for publication the Rules of the Connexion, by which we are to be governed.

I will not say anything which shall seem like dictation, as to the constitution of that Committee; but cannot forbear to remark that we have laymen, members of Society, whose extensive acquaintance with the whole economy of Methodism, and many of whom are, by profession, "learned in the law," who would be of great assistance, if they could be induced to attend the sittings of such Committee.

Then, as to the duties which the Committee should be called on to perform. If it were merely to add rule to rule, as they have been adopted by the successive Conferences, it could be quite as well executed by a clerk who could copy from the various minutes and send to the printer; this would be of little use, and afford no satisfaction.

It is notorious that many of the rules are re-enactments of old ones, and are called declaratory; others have been modifications of old ones; and while both the old and the new remain on the statute-books—the Minutes, there is often a difficulty in determining what the law really is.

Now, the Committee would have to select and leave out all needless repetitions, and, from the mass, arrange and classify, so that a clear system, free from that which is conflicting and anomalous, might be produced. It is also desirable, that in the present day the same regulations should obtain in every circuit in the Connexion, and to accomplish this, *usage* and *custom* must be abolished, as now *they* are quite different and distinct in separate localities. This should form part of the business of the Committee, and would enlarge their sphere of operations. In making a selection for the sake of uniformity, it is alike demanded by the character of the times, the temper of the people, and the comfort of the preachers, that the most popular and liberal of the usages should be taken as the one to be universally adopted. Against this, no objections would come from the circuits—from the preachers there ought to be none.

Again, some of the Rules are obsolete. As a total abstainer from the use, or abuse, of intoxicating drinks, smoking, snuff, and even meat suppers, I should not greatly object to the retaining the Rules on these subjects, if they were to be enforced; but seeing that both preachers and people pursue their course unmindful of them, they ought, for consistency sake, to be annulled. If this were done, it would get rid of much which is merely dead letter, and also of much that is now objected to, and which, while one party condemns as illegal, others declare to be only a re-stating and re-enacting of that which is old.

I have proceeded thus far without asking for your Committee authority to introduce anything new. The question arises, whether they should be so limited? To

a certain extent, I conceive that they should. It is not requisite, in order to an efficient reform, that any new principle should be introduced. To *reform* is not to create;—but there may be a new application of the elements we already possess, and this I would commit to them as part of their trust. For instance, they should be called on to set forth a definition of the constitution of Conference; and might suggest a modification of the way in which that Conference should be convened, without at all introducing any new element into that body.

I am opposed to lay delegation. It is unnecessary for me to state reasons; were I to do so, my remarks might seem derogatory to the character, for liberality, of our lay members. My opposition is grounded on a desire for the welfare of the Connexion; and that includes the liberty of the preachers, as well as the liberty of the people. Who, then, should compose the Conference? Should it be merely the legal hundred? To that I am equally opposed. Here, too, I forbear to state reasons, though I may say, I do not believe that ever Mr. Wesley intended it to be so limited; and it does seem a strange method of popularizing an assembly, to reduce their numbers from five or six hundred to one hundred persons. My suggestion is, that beside the legal hundred, others should be invited from the various circuits; but, in order to give some influence to the people, through their ministers, an elective system should be introduced, and each circuit should determine whether either, and which, after so many years' standing, of the preachers, should attend—the election to take place at the Quarterly Meeting, previous to the assembling of Conference. This, while it would satisfy the people, as being representative in its character, would not in any way derogate from the dignity of the pastorate, or interfere with the provisions of the “Deed Poll.”

Another thing in reference to Conference. It should

be open to reporters of the press, and members of society, just as the Houses of Parliament are open to the public, through the presentation of a Member's ticket. This would neither impede business or engender strife. It would be doing openly and fairly what is now done by stealth; and much of bitterness and many evils would be removed by its adoption. There is something in the English character which is desperately opposed to secrecy, and "open doors" are demanded by them everywhere; to refuse, is to excite their mistrust and ill-will; to grant it, is to win their confidence and support.

I would not limit the power of Conference, constituted as suggested; but there is one of its rules, in reference to its enactments, which ought to be more specifically stated, and then always acted on. I refer to that which alludes to the power of Quarterly Meetings to refuse to be governed by a regulation of the previous Conference, and such refusal being tantamount to a negation of the rules for twelve months.

Every rule should, of *necessity*, be submitted to each Quarterly Meeting after the Conference in which it was passed, and never come into operation unless it has been so submitted. The other part of the rule to be retained as now.

As I am only giving hints as to what should be the province of the Committee, whose appointment I am desirous you should ask of Conference, it is unnecessary for me to speak of our several courts, and their susceptibility of improvement; but leaving others, let me offer a few remarks on the Quarterly Meetings. Of whom should they be composed? Everywhere of those who now, in the great majority of country circuits, are members—the travelling and local preachers, leaders, stewards, and trustees, being members of Society; but, in addition to this, I would, at least half-yearly, call a meeting of all the members of Society who choose to attend, and they

should be made acquainted with the condition of the circuit, both as to the number of members, and the state of the finance. And rest assured that such a plan would work well every way. Circuit debts would not accumulate, to press down and cripple the energies of the officers. The people would be interested to an extent which they now are not, and more prayer and more effort would be put forth to secure the Divine blessing; while it would be a means of bringing back a spirit of fellowship, and renewing a confidence, the want of which is one great cause of our present unhappy state. "Confidence begets confidence," is an old, but veritable maxim. I challenge any to prove the contrary. Invite people to co-operate with you, and they will join heartily, if they approve,—and they seldom disapprove of what is right. Tell them you can do without them, or show an utter indifference to their will on the subject, and ten to one if they do not oppose and throw obstacles in your way. Such is human nature. The same feeling clings to us when we profess to have had our natures influenced by the grace of God. We have no right to expect that it will ever be different; but it is astonishing what an amount of prejudice, and even bad temper, may be overcome by bringing persons in contact, when only one person, influenced by the "law of love," is found exhibiting kindness and generous affection. There is a sense in which the declaration of the Almighty, concerning himself, is the law of our nature—"I love them that love me." Oh, that our belief in the existence of this responsive chord were stronger, and that we took more delight in causing it to vibrate! What harmonious sounds would then be heard, where now is only discord!

A word or two in reference to the appointment of "Leaders." An old practice in the classes was to select one, and name him to his class-mates as an assistant to serve in case of the leader's absence, through sickness, or

any other cause. Generally, the oldest, or most efficient, person was chosen. To him the class readily assented, and thus a sort of apprenticeship for the office of leader was served. Why not adopt such a course universally? Such assistant, after having been tried for a certain period, could be named at the Leaders' Meeting, and if approved, placed with others on a reserve list, to be given the charge of a class as the occasion required.

I do not find fault with the present method of election—have never known an improper person appointed, if only a minority thought him unfit. Still, as a matter of real advantage, and seeing that there is a strong feeling that now every officer is the preacher's nominee, why not adopt the plan as above?

Respecting the power to be exercised by the Leaders' Meeting, it is unnecessary for me to say much; but, notwithstanding the things which have been said on this matter, my experience forces me to testify, that I never knew a case of inquiry into character, or the investigation of a charge against an individual, in which there was not a free consultation between preacher and leaders, both as to the proof of guilt, the extent of culpability, and the punishment to be awarded; and, generally speaking, it is felt to be a case too solemn for anything like bickering or opposition. Of course, I do not include the recent cases of discipline, in respect to the unhappy expulsions which have taken place. Now, if what I have stated as my experience, be the universal practice, and it has been found to work well, why not let it be the stated *rule* on the subject? Thus much in the way of suggestions, as to the powers vested in your Committee, the result of whose labours should be brought forward, if possible, during the sitting of Conference,—if not, to be published during the year, subject to the approval of the next Conference. Meanwhile, both preachers and people would have time calmly and seriously to consider any alterations made.

From a Committee acting under such instructions, much that is calculated to be of great and lasting benefit might be anticipated. My expectations are not sufficiently sanguine to induce me to hope that even, if everything that I have recommended were adopted, all would be satisfied. I have not written with an idea that I am propounding a scheme that is to heal every wound, and satisfy every mind; but my firm conviction, from a tolerably extensive acquaintance both with preachers and people, is, that thousands in our Israel will rejoice if some such means be taken, which will evince a generous effort, on the part of Conference, to close up the breaches which unhappily have been too long open, and show that, in connexion with the prosperity of Zion, they consider the interests of the people identical with their own. Then would the whole family again flock around you with more earnestness than ever, and, "touched with a sympathy within," exclaim as with one voice, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God!"

"Haste, happy day, the time I long to see!"

I have purposely avoided allusion to any matter that is calculated to irritate, and trust that nothing in my letter will give offence. I cannot, however, conclude, without referring to the way in which the present agitation is attempted to be put down. With it, I have not had any connexion; there has been much in its progress that is greatly to be deprecated. Very few, I hope, even of the most violent in its ranks, but are ready to admit that there has been much of bitterness and uncharitableness exhibited, contrary to the spirit and injunctions of our holy religion, and at variance with the courtesies of civilised life. I dare not trust myself to speak freely all that I have felt on the subject; but the strongest feeling in my mind, has been deep regret that there should be such flagrant violations of the law of love. I should not gain much advantage, or

justify the sayings and doings of one party, if I could show that the other has been equally guilty. Recriminations are not justifications in the court where "the Judge of all the earth" sitteth. The *lex talionis* is not the law that a God of love has given us for the guidance of our conduct. I refer not to it—but in the hope that many who are "out of the way" may be brought back again, I would ask, if there should not be manifested long-suffering, and patience, and forbearance? And should not these distinguish the ministers of God above all other men? Where is that charity which "is not easily provoked?" that love which "endureth all things?" that attention to the law, "render not railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing?" Had the process recommended by our Saviour been more closely followed, may we not reasonably conclude, that, in many instances, the soul-cheering intelligence would have been conveyed, "Thou hast gained thy brother!" Oh, that the breach were healed! Oh, that confidence were restored! Oh, that we were *one*! To this end let there be an imitation of Him who "suffereth long, and is kind," who "hateth putting away," and who is ever crying to His children, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you;" and who, even when they have grievously sinned against Him, promises to "heal their backslidings, receive them graciously, and love them freely." With such compassion exhibited to us, should we not deal gently with even those who have erred? and may not means be devised to restore such "in the spirit of meekness?"

When I think of the standing and character of some of the men, I am grieved at heart to know that they have been forced away from communion with us—some after labouring for more than half a century without reproach—their services owned of God—and their children in the Lord still clinging to them; others having had the oversight of a hundred souls, who now refuse to be cared for by those who have been appointed to supersede them.

Either these individuals must have been placed in positions far too high for them, or there must be great responsibility in attempting to impede their usefulness now. But I will not longer dwell on the matter. My prayer is, that in the spirit of conciliation, and charity, and brotherly kindness, many may be drawn back again, to help in building up the bulwarks of our Zion.

I might have addressed you at much greater length, showing reasons for the adoption of the suggestions made; but it is not necessary. If they do not carry their own commendation, no words of mine would have influenced your conduct.

Still, I trust that you will not be indifferent to the matter. My only desire is for the peace of a society to which I am ardently attached, of which I have been a member about twenty years, and in the service of which my head, my hands, and my heart have been engaged; and in connexion with which, I am desirous of living and dying. Nor can you be less anxious for peace. The position which you occupy—with the gaze of the whole Christian Church on you—your brethren and sons in the ministry looking to you for direction;—in the decline of life, every day not only bringing you nearer to the grave, but making you feel that you are approaching very near to it;—with the opportunities of preaching peace lessening every hour, and your Master, the Prince of Peace, looking on you, and saying, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man as his work shall be.”

With such considerations as these, I rest assured that you will feel that it will be a rich enjoyment—a great privilege—to have to help to settle questions which not only now break the peace of our Societies, but which threaten to rend us asunder—causing the enemy to triumph, and making the ungodly exultingly exclaim, “Aha! aha! so would we have it.”

In the prospect of that eternity to which we are hastening, I entreat you to use the influence which you possess for the establishment of peace. This will afford more consolation in a dying hour than the survey of a system consolidated, an hierarchy established, or a community great in numbers, wealth, and influence, but wanting the cementing bond of love. Few envy the man who exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" but who would not desire, while contemplating loving hearts, joyous countenances, willing and confident children, to be able to say, "Ye are my rejoicing in Christ Jesus;" and, entering into the satisfaction which He felt while leaving His sorrowing disciples, and breathing the legacy which is above all price, exclaim with Him—"Peace I leave with you!"

Such may be your happy privilege. May you enjoy it as in the fear of God!

Praying that the blessing promised to faithful Abraham may descend on you, more abundantly than it has ever yet done—that God may "bless you, and make you a blessing,"

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

In the bonds of Christian affection,

Truly yours,

WILLIAM HARRIS.