

excommunicated persons is about twenty per cent of the whole, and more than half of them have been from the one hsien, a Shiu-kuang, where there were for a time numerous accessions under a good deal of excitement. in the other four hsien the proportion of excommunicated persons as compared to the whole number of converts is about ten per cent. While there has been this falling away in individuals, there has been a comparatively slight loss of stations, nearly all having left in them a few earnest men; so that the places where there have been the most excommunications are really stronger and more promising than when they had more names on the roll.

5. Cases of discipline have diminished considerably during the last year, and we hope the number may be much curtailed in the future by avoiding some of the causes which have led to them. Very few excommunicated persons have returned to us. Very few have become enemies and open opposers. Most are indifferent, some soured and disappointed. Many of them retain strong sympathy with the Church and continue to attend services. In every case, so far as I know, the administration of discipline has been sustained by public opinion in the Church and outside of it, and the effect of discipline has been decidedly good. I believe the neglect of it would soon result in checking the growth and perhaps extinguishing the life of the Church.

C. The Basis for Church Discipline

Three major considerations form the basis for the exercise of church discipline:

1. The interrelationship and consequent obligation of believers to one another as members of the body of Christ.

This basis may be seen in I Corinthians 12:12-13, 24b-26a, 27. Paul says:

"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; . . . Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."

It is interesting to note that in Revelation 3:19 the great Head of the body says: "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent."

In Galatians 6:1-2, Paul exhorts the members of Christ's body: "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ."