

CORRESPONDING LETTER.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

With peculiar pleasure, we once more address you by our Epistle, which will inform you of the great satisfaction we have derived from the reception of your Messengers, or Letters.

To hear of the prosperity of Zion in any part of the world inspires us, as a part of the family of our great Redeemer, with sentiments of gratitude to the God of all grace, and fills our souls with heavenly joy; we participate with angels above in that holy delight, which arises from the conversion of sinners unto God. Our churches, during the year past, have not been favoured with great revivals of religion; but we have abundant cause to bless the Lord, who has not left us without witness of his presence, in supporting his cause, and in calling some from darkness into his marvellous light. Our prayer continues to be "Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years." We rejoice with you, and all the friends of Christ, in the great things which the Lord is doing, in our days, upon the earth. The Spirit of God is poured forth; the joyful sound is heard among them that dwell in the wilderness of our own land; and of the nations, which, for ages, sat in darkness and the shadow of death. Some now hear the glad tidings of life and peace to man, by faith in the blood of Christ. We view the efforts of Missionary and Bible societies, and the institution and increase of Sabbath Schools, as the most important and delightful signs of the times. Thousands have already, from these labours of love, received invaluable blessings: but much more is to be done; many great and precious promises are yet to be fulfilled. The earth must be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and his arm shall accomplish his own word.

Let us then arise in the name and strength of the Lord of Hosts, and devote our time, our talents, and our all, to this delightful service. Time is short; the day is far spent, and the night rapidly approaching, when no work can be done by us on earth. But *He* must increase: this was the comfort of the ancient Baptist, and it remains a source of joy to all the friends of Christ, in all ages and countries. Requesting earnestly an interest in your prayers, and the continuance of your correspondence, we subscribe ourselves your brethren in the bonds of the Gospel of Christ.

LEWIS LEONARD, Moderator.

Garret Conrey, Clerk.

MINUTES

OF
THE EIGHTH SESSION

OF

The Hudson River Baptist Association,

HELD IN THE BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE, POUGHKEEPSIE,

August 6th and 7th, 1823.

1. Brother Charles G. Sommers, of New-York, delivered the annual sermon, according to appointment, at 10 o'clock, A. M., from Eph. ii. 19. "*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*"

At the close of the service, a collection was taken for the benefit of destitute widows of ministers dying while members of the Association, amounting to \$16 68.

2. On motion, resolved, that brother L. Leonard be moderator, and brother H. Malcom clerk.

3. Moderator opened the meeting by prayer.

Resolved, That the letters from the constituent churches be read and messengers names enrolled.

N. B. The names of ordained ministers are in SMALL CAPITALS—of licentiate in *italic*—those of the brethren not present are marked thus *.

| CHURCHES. | MESSEN- GERS. | Re- quired. | Rec. by Let. | Dis. by Let. | Ex- hated. | Decent. | Total. |
|-------------------|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------|--------|
| Poughkeepsie, | Dea. J. Forbus, :: A. Raymond, R. Hervey, J. G. Sturges, Abrm. Ennis, William Plummer, A. Waterous, Abraham J. Shultz, Jacob Ralph, Abraham Odell, Jacob Ward. | 3 | 4 | 1 | | | 7 |
| Oliver-st., N. Y. | JOHN WILLIAMS, SPENCER H. CONE, *Garret Conrey, Dea. William Colgate, :: Thomas Purser, James Wilson, Joshua Gilbert, *Thomas Hays, *R. Thompson, *Theodore Clark. | 17 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 4 | 5 |

| CHURCHES. | MESSENGERS. | Baptized. | Rec. by Let. | Dis. by Let. | Excluded. | Restored. | Total. |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Mulberry-street, New-York. | ARCHIBALD MACLAY, JOHN SEERS, Thomas Powell, Bro. W. Winterton, [Res. 1-6 :: D. T. Valentine, Dea. Thomas Stokes, JACOB H. BROUNER, Caleb Willis, Mount Pleasant, John Leggett, William Mangam. HOWARD MALCOM, Dea. Jesse Story, Hudson, :: J. W. Dutche, Bro. J. B. Van Beuren. LELAND HOWARD, Troy, J. V. Powelson, Calvin Warner. ALBANY, LEWIS LEONARD, Dea. T. Humphrey, Bro. John Johnston. Gatskill, Richmond Taggart, James Cole, William Hermans, Samuel Smith. King-street, No information. CHARLES MAIS, Dea. Thomas Herbert, Newburgh, J. Sturdeyvant, John Howard, N. S. Davies. African, NATH. PAUL. CHARLES G. SOMMERS, South Church, N. York. *D. H. Barnes, James Mills, John Smith. Coxackie, Peter Turck, Seberry Fish. | 6 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 424 |
| | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | 77 |
| | | 4 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 141 |
| | | 2 | 18 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 258 |
| | | 30 | 21 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 218 |
| | | 7 | 6 | 6 | 1 | | 85 |
| | | | | | | | 80 |
| | | 1 | | 2 | 3 | | 21 |
| | | 4 | 3 | | 3 | 1 | 32 |
| | | 14 | 10 | 7 | | | 42 |
| | | | 5 | 1 | | | 14 |
| | | 89 | 99 | 55 | 34 | 20 | 1990 |

4. Resolved, That ministering brethren present, who are not delegates, be affectionately invited to sit and deliberate with us. The following brethren then sat down, viz., RUFUS BABCOCK, Sen., of Colebrook, Conn.; RUFUS BABCOCK, Jun., from Washington City; J. SMITZER, of Bethany, Pa.; J. D. HART, of Acre, Greene co., N. Y.; Birch, of Fishkill, N. Y.; Marshall, of Hillsdale, Col. co., N. Y.

Adjourned to 3 P. M. Brother Williams prayed.

Met pursuant to adjournment. Brother Howard prayed.
5. Resolved, That we proceed to hear the corresponding letters of Associations.

| ASSOCIATIONS. | Minutes. | MESSENGERS. | Baptized. | Rec. by Let. | Dis. by Let. | Excluded. | Restored. | Deceased. | Total. |
|--|--|--|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Warren, Boston, Hartford, New-London, Shaftesbury, Lake George, Saratoga, Rensselaerville, | | | 130 | 37 | 38 | 32 | 2 | 29 | 2774 |
| Gayuga, Franklin, Warwick, Madison, Union, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Charleston, Columbia, | min. min. min. min. min. min. min. | Mallory, Griswold, STREETER and CON- NELLY, | 54 | 28 | 72 | 46 | 5 | 40 | 2570 |
| | | | 78 | 64 | 179 | 42 | 9 | 42 | 3251 |
| | | | 183 | 77 | 83 | 35 | 14 | 13 | 2013 |
| | | PERKINS & GILLETT, | 44 | 31 | 234 | 24 | 4 | 17 | 1611 |
| | | Deacon Osborn, | 29 | 5 | 16 | 6 | | | 61094 |
| | | | 153 | 46 | 76 | 69 | 5 | 65 | 2903 |
| | | | 117 | 30 | 60 | 18 | 6 | 37 | 1644 |

6. Resolved, That Brethren Colgate, Stokes, and Humphreys be a committee to examine the minutes of Corresponding Associations.

7. On motion, Resolved, That Brethren Williams, Sommers, and Paul be a committee to draw up a summary of the state of religion in the Association.

8. The Circular Letter of Brother Stanford was read. On motion, Resolved, That it be referred to Brethren Maclay, Sommers, Perkins, Malcom, and Howard.

9. The Corresponding Letter, by Brother Perkins, was not quite prepared, and he was requested to present it to the same committee.

10. Resolved, That a committee, consisting of Brother Williams, Cone, Perkins, Taggart and Griswold, be appointed, to examine the letters from the churches, as to certain requests some of them contain, and report this afternoon.

11. A Circular Letter from the Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention was read.

Resolved, That we place increasing confidence in the wisdom and energy of the Board. The objects which occupy their attention possess our ardent affections. We will not diminish aught of our assistance, and may Jehovah strongly sustain them.

12. Resolved, That we appoint delegates to sister Associations—
—these are as follows:

Associations.

Warren,
Boston,
Hartford,
New-London,
Shaftesbury,
Lake George,
Saratoga,
Rensselaerville,
Cayuga,
Franklin,
Warwick,
Madison,
Union,
New-Jersey,
Philadelphia,
Charleston,
Ontario,
Columbia,

Messengers.

P. Ludlow, Jr., SOMMERS and BABCOCK, Jr.
do. do. do.
PERKINS.
Minutes by MACLAY.
HOWARD, PAUL, MALCOM.
PAUL and MALCOM.
HOWARD, PAUL, MALCOM.
LEONARD, HOWARD, MALCOM, HART, TAGGERT.
LEONARD and JOHNSON.
Minutes by HOWARD.
MACLAY, MAIS, CONE.
Johnson.
Minutes by BROUNER.
Wilson and SOMMERS.
CONE and SOMMERS.
Minutes by MACLAY.
Johnson and PAUL.
Powell.

13. The committee on certain requests from churches, made report as follows, viz.

That in accordance with the request of the church in Poughkeepsie, Brother Rufus Babcock, Jun., be ordained, and that this service be attended to to-morrow afternoon, at 3 o'clock. They further recommend, that a council be appointed to examine Brother Babcock, and if satisfied, to assign to different Brethren their respective parts in the ordination.

14. *Resolved*, That this report be accepted, and that Brethren Maclay, Williams, Cone, Perkins, Sommers, Stokes, Colgate, and Purser, compose the council, to examine the qualifications of R. Babcock, Jun., for the work of the ministry.

15. With respect to the Catskill church, they remark, that as we do not undertake the management of domestic missions, we refer them to societies professedly for that purpose.

16. The delegation to the N. York Association, read the historical sketch on their minutes in reference to a correspondence, on which

17. *Resolved*, That the subject be referred to the committee on the minutes of corresponding Associations, and that brother Sommers be added to that committee.

Adjourned to 9 o'clock to morrow morning.

Brother Maclay prayed.

Thursday 9 o'clock.

Association met.—Brother Brouner prayed.

Minutes of yesterday were read.

18. The committee on the Circular Letter reported it with amendments; and recommended the Corresponding Letter, which was read.

Resolved, That the report of the committee be accepted and the letters adopted.

19. The Committee on Corresponding Letters of sister Associations made a report, which was read by sections, and adopted; as follows:

1. That your Committee are much gratified to find in the Philad. Minutes, a recommendation to the churches in that Association, to have frequent meetings for solemn prayer for the spread of the Gospel. Your Committee advise the same pious course to our churches.

2. That the information found on page 6 of the Minutes of the Saratoga Association be transferred to ours, viz. Authentic information being presented to your Committee in writing relative to one Samuel Gunter, late from Wales, who is travelling through our country in the character of a Baptist minister, but is known to be a notorious impostor, the churches of this association are therefore warned against him.

3. Whereas the Minutes of Associations usually receive a circulation in places where ordinary Missionary and other religious publications of the day are not to be found, it would serve the cause of Christ, if the accounts of the Treasurers of the different societies be published with the Minutes. It is recommended, that the churches in this Association, be requested to give a distinct statement in their next letters to this body, of the several amounts collected by them for missionary, education, and other such purposes; and that the residence of the treasurers of these societies be specified, that donations may be forwarded to them.*

4. That no official communication has been received from the New-York Association on the subject of our proposed correspondence with them. We, nevertheless, continue to cherish the same wishes for an affectionate interchange of Messengers and Minutes, and that brethren Sommers and Cone be appointed to forward our Minutes to that body.

20. The draught of a system for the widows' fund was received, and on account of its peculiar importance was referred to brethren Stanford, Williams, Maclay, Sommers, Colgate, Stokes, Purser, and Gilbert to report thereon at the next session of the Association.

21. Brother Colgate, treasurer of the widows' fund, made a report as follows:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Hudson River Baptist Assoc. with Wm. Colgate, treasurer, Cr. | |
| August, 1822. By Collection at Assoc. | \$35 00 |
| August, 1823. From the late Treas. brother Withington, | 18 08 |
| Coll. in Association | 16 66 |
| Donations. Wm. Colgate | \$10 |
| T. Humphrey | 5 |
| John Forbus | 1 |
| T. Stokes | 5 |
| | —21 00 |
| | \$87 76 |

Which report was accepted.

* Joshua Gilbert, Esq. Treasurer For. Miss. Soc. Clinton and Bancker-st. New-York; Wm. Colgate, Esq. do. N. Y. Dom. Miss. Soc. No. 27 John-st. New-York; Thos. Skelding, Esq. Education Soc. No. 120, Greenwich-st. New-York.

22. *Resolved*, That one brother in each church be appointed to solicit and receive donations and subscriptions for the widows' fund. The following were appointed—

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Troy, | I. V. Powelson. |
| Albany, | J. G. Wasson. |
| African Do. | Asher Foot. |
| Coxackie, | Peter Turck. |
| Hudson, | A. H. Gifford. |
| Catskill, | Nath. Jacobs. |
| Poughkeepsie, | Alfred Raymond. |
| Newburgh, | John Howard. |
| Mt. Pleasant, | Caleb Willis. |
| Oliver-st. | Theodore Clark. |
| Mulberry-st. | Wm. Winterton. |
| South Ch. | Leonard Bleecker. |

23. The Committee on the state of religion within the bounds of this Association, reported,

That the blessings of grace bestowed upon us, as an association, during the past year, demand our highest gratitude and praise. It appears, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, does in a happy degree prevail in the Churches generally, and that by several of them, interesting reports have been made of the origin and successful operation of Sabbath schools, Bible classes, and Missionary societies; and that the spirit of missions seems greatly to increase amongst us, and we are happy to perceive a growing disposition manifested, to promote the interests of societies formed to give a suitable education to those whom God has called to the work of the Christian ministry.

More than 1000 children are taught on the Sabbath day within the bounds of this Association, and at least \$800 have been collected for Missionary and Education purposes, and we are happy to say that a fund has been formed, and is rapidly increasing, to provide for the widows and orphans of deceased ministers in this Association.

24. *Resolved*, That the Association cannot hesitate, again to express their sympathy with the Oliver-st. Church in the additional loss they have sustained in the death of Deac. Thomas Hewit. We ardently pray that the Lord may sanctify their affliction, and fill up the vacancies he has recently made in their body.

35. The delegation to our state Convention made an interesting and satisfactory report, whereupon

Resolved, That we consider the new Constitution of that body to embrace the right objects, and that we consider ourselves auxiliary; and brethren LEONARD, CONE, SOMMERS, HOWARD, Humphrey, and Johnson be our representatives.

26. The Church in King-street, West-Chester Co. N. Y. having sent no information this year,

Resolved, That brethren Sommers, Cone, and Brouner, be each requested to visit said church.

27. Moneys collected for charitable purposes, by the churches, were called for, and there was received from the Hudson Ch. \$5 for the state Convention.

28. Understanding that an edition of Wm. Jones's History of the Christian Church up to the 18th century, including an account of the Waldenses and Albigenses, is about to be published by brethren Gray of New-York and Johnston of Albany;

Resolved, That we very decidedly recommend to our Baptist brethren this interesting and important work.

29. *Resolved*, That we also recommend our Sister Judson's excellent history of the Burman mission.

30. *Resolved*, That, as the Reformed Dutch Church has tendered us the use of their new and spacious meeting house, the ordination this afternoon take place there; and that our moderator be appointed to return our thanks to their Consistory.

31. *Resolved*, That we with pleasure comply with the invitation from Troy, and that our next session be held in the Meeting House of the Baptist Church in that place.

32. *Resolved*, That brother Maclay preach the introductory discourse, and brother Brouner in case of failure. The collection according to our custom, to be appropriated to the widows' fund.

33. *Resolved*, That brother Cone preach in the evening for the benefit of the Education society, and in case of his failure brother Taggart.

34. *Resolved*, That brother Cone write our next Circular Letter, on the "TERMS OF COMMUNION," and that in case of his failure, brother Maclay perform that service.

35. *Resolved*, That brother Howard write the corresponding letter for next year.

36. Received for printing Minutes from South Church \$1—J. Stanford \$1—Coxackie 75 cents—Catskill \$1—Poughkeepsie \$2—Mt. Pleasant \$1—Oliver-st. \$5—Mulberry-st. \$3—Hudson \$1 50—Troy \$3—Albany \$3—Newburgh 75 cents—Albany African \$1.—Total \$24.

37. *Resolved*, That brethren Maclay, Sommers, Cone, and Colgate be appointed to print and distribute the Minutes.

38. Distributed Minutes of sister Associations.

Minutes of this day's session were read.

Adjourned till 3 o'clock; to meet in the house of the Reformed Dutch Church, and attend to the ordination.

Brother Babcock, Sen. prayed.

Ordination, 3 o'clock, P. M.

39. Association and a large congregation assembled according to appointment. Brother Leonard made the introductory prayer. Brother Cone preached the ordination sermon from Acts ix. 6. "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"

The ordaining prayer was offered by brother Williams, while he and the rest of the ordaining committee laid on hands; Brother Maclay gave the charge, and brother C. G. Sommers the right-hand of fellowship. Concluding prayer by brother Perkins. Benediction by the candidate.

40. *Resolved*, That our clerk be requested to transmit to one or two of our religious papers an account of this interesting transaction.

41. *Resolved*, That our affectionate thanks be tendered to our friends in this place for their kindnesses during our session.

42. The session was closed with prayer by the moderator.

In the evening, according to appointment, brother Howard delivered a discourse from Eph. ii. 10 "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

CIRCULAR LETTER.

BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE LORD,

Agreeably to appointment at your last annual association, we now address you on the important subject of *THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD* under a cheering impression that it may contribute to your greater establishment in the Gospel, and stimulate you to hold fast the confession of your faith without wavering, knowing that God is faithful, who hath promised to keep the feet of his saints.

The Church of Christ may be described as either *visible* or *invisible*.

THE INVISIBLE CHURCH is known only to God; and is composed of all those *whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life*; who were chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world; (Eph. i. 4.) given to the Son, as the election of grace, to be redeemed by his blood, regenerated and sanctified by his Spirit; and who shall be eventually brought to inherit eternal life and glory. These form "the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven." Heb. xii. 23.

A *VISIBLE CHURCH*, signifies a particular congregation of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized upon profession of faith in his name, and assembling together, from time to time, in one place, to worship the living God. Such was the character of the Church of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, of Antioch, of Corinth, and of all the other churches of Christ, described in the New-Testament; nor do the Scriptures any where countenance the idea of a *universal visible church on earth*.

The great Head of the church having arisen from the dead, was seen of his disciples forty days upon earth, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Act i. 3. and explaining to them its nature, subjects, laws, institutions, and privileges; at the same time requiring them to *tarry at Jerusalem until they should receive the promise of the Holy Ghost, and be endowed with power from on high*.

They did so, and, therefore, we are to look to the writings and conduct of the Apostles for the necessary information upon this subject. For, as Moses was commanded to make all things for the tabernacle, according to the pattern shown to him by the Lord upon the mount: so we, if we be the followers of Christ, must take the

form and pattern of a *Gospel Church*, exclusively from the writings of his Gospel, or forfeit our claim to the character of a Church of Christ.

Although our Lord, on two different occasions, had instructed his disciples on the subject of his kingdom, under the appellation of *Church*: we will direct your attention to the second chapter of Acts, in which we are informed of the existence of the *first visible Church* at Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, according to the promise of Jesus, the Holy Spirit miraculously descended upon the disciples, and endowed them with power from on high; and, immediately, under the preaching of Peter, a vast number, whom he charged with having been, at least, accessory to the death of Jesus, *were pricked in their heart*, and were brought to believe in his name, to the salvation of their souls. How rich the harvest; how great the grace! pleasing prelude to the glory of the latter day! The Greek word *ecclesia*, which we render *Church*, signifies "a people called out." So Christ called out his followers from the world; converting enemies into friends; and enabling them to "shew forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." A comprehensive description of this Church, Luke, the historian, has recorded in the last verses of this chapter. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And the Lord added to the Church daily, such as should be saved." What a plain, simple, yet expressive statement is this? How worthy of imitation for its spirituality, unity, benevolence, perseverance, and truth. Departing from this standard has been the cause of many clouds which have obscured the Churches of God. By the influence of the Spirit and power of Christ accompanying the preaching of his Gospel in this early age, a multitude of sinners were converted; churches were formed in various places; and, as we are in possession of epistles written to those churches by the apostles who had the *mind of Christ*, we may, by the perusal of those epistles, obtain information of their individual character, union, government, duties, and privileges. A sketch of these shall now be drawn, so far as the short limits of a Circular Letter may admit.

Members of a particular church.

Persons who are fit subjects for union in a church, may easily be perceived from the several epistles. Those in the church at Rome were "the called of Jesus Christ, beloved of God, called to be saints." Rom. i. 6. 7. The Church of God at Corinth was formed of those who were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, and who were called upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. i. 2. The Ephesians are more particularly marked.—"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; formerly walking in the course of this world, and who were by nature children of wrath, even as others; but now saved by grace, and their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, are manifest:" ii. 1—15. Those of Colosse were "some-

time alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now reconciled in the body of Christ's flesh through death; and they had also put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

From all which it is evident, that, notwithstanding their former character as sinners, they were regenerated, changed, and called into the fellowship of Christ, and thus were made meet for fellowship in the Church.

That the individual members of those primitive Churches had been previously buried with Christ in baptism, on profession of their faith in him, is certain. Rom. vi. Col. ii. 12. There was then *one baptism*; and although controversies at that time existed on the subjects of circumcision, meats, gifts, &c. be it remembered, that there was none on the subjects, mode, and design of baptism.

THE OFFICERS OF A CHURCH. Christ, the chief shepherd of the flock, and head of the Church, when "he ascended up on high that he might fill all things, gave gifts unto men, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Eph. iv.

When Paul addressed the Church at Philippi, he named only *Bishops and Deacons*, because they were the two standing officers, having the more immediate charge of that Church. The apostles as such, we know, had no successors; but Christ, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, has never failed to raise up, and qualify in successive ages, gracious, faithful men, and hath endowed them with gifts, whether for pastors, teachers, or evangelists.—*Pastors, overseers, elders, or Bishops*; for the same names are applied and combined in one and the same character and office; whose immediate province it is to feed, govern, and promote the welfare and prosperity of the Church, over which the Holy Ghost made him an overseer. It is the imperious duty of such pastors, according to their talent, to commend the whole truth of the Gospel in its rich variety; conduct the worship of God; administer the ordinances as they were first delivered; and, to govern the whole flock, according to the revealed laws of Jesus Christ. Besides pastors, it is not unfrequent, that in the same Church, the ascended Saviour raises up *evangelists*, who, while at home, may be denominated, what Paul calls *helps*. They are also of the greatest utility abroad, in aiding destitute churches, and engaging in missionary labours; of course, are entitled to every possible encouragement.

The next order of office in the Church is that of **DEACON**, or one who serves. This office was created in the first Church at Jerusalem; and the qualifications for it are amply described by Paul in his first epistle to Timothy. It took its rise from a neglect of temporal supplies being communicated to the poor widows; which duty had hitherto been performed by the apostles and ministers themselves. In consequence of the rapid increase of the Church, the apostles considered it unreasonable, that they should leave the word of God and serve tables; and, therefore, required the disciples to look out from

among themselves seven men, whom they might appoint over this business. They did so; and being set before the apostles, they prayed, and laid their hands on them; thus approving the choice of the Church, and pleading for the blessing of God upon them. Acts vi. Hence it appears, that this office was of a *temporal nature*, merely "to serve tables;" whether to supply the wants of the poor; provide a support for the ministry; or to furnish the Lord's table with the necessary elements of bread and wine. Exclusive of these temporal services, it no where appears that deacons, as such, were allowed any more right and authority over the spiritual concerns of the Church, than any other members. Contemplating these two standing offices, we may say: that while the bishop or pastor preaches the truth, administers the ordinances, and watches over the flock in the name, and under the influence of Christ Jesus the Lord,—the deacons have the honour to represent the tenderness and compassion of the blessed Jesus, by supplying the wants of his needy and afflicted members.

A body of believers, whether many or few, thus united together in the bonds of the Gospel, having their Pastor and Deacons, taking the word of God as their sole directory in faith, profession, and practice, must be recognized as a well organized Church of Christ; and as agreeing with the formation of the Church at Ephesus; "As built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord, for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. ii.

THE PRIVILEGES OF A CHURCH. The first, and greatest is, the sensible presence of God the Father, in Christ Jesus the Son, by the communion of the Holy Ghost. Without this, all external means are ineffectual; and, the Church will more resemble a field of dry stubble, than the fruitful garden of the Lord. Let every Church, therefore, most fervently pray for such sacred visitations; for "ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them; and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 2 Cor. vi. 16.—Fellowship with the saints, is an inestimable privilege. Man, by natural birth, was formed a social creature; and when born again of the Spirit of God, he is more so; for, although he esteems his relatives and friends, yet there are those of "the household of faith," the saints of the Most High, the excellent of the earth, with whom is his delight. In the house of God, the family reside as children of the same heavenly Father; united to Christ as their elder brother and redeemer; born of, and influenced by, one and the same spirit; having a mutual interest in all the privileges and provision of the family; and partakers of the same hope, through grace, of a final residence in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!—The **ORDINANCES** of God's House, and the services of the **LORD'S DAY**, furnish a rich repast to the children of Zion. Although the ordinance of **BAPTISM** be administered but once, yet in the various Epistles, there are repeated addresses to different Churches, enjoining them to reflect upon, and to improve their Baptism, to promote their hu-

mily, increase their gratitude, strengthen their union, and stimulate them to walk in newness of life.—THE LORD'S SUPPER is a feast of love and union; and at which, Christ is frequently made known in the breaking of bread. While it is the memorial of the love of Christ in the gift of his body and precious blood; the bread and wine direct our faith to appropriate the fulness of Christ for the nourishment and joy of the heart. It is admirably calculated to exhibit the union of the Church with Jesus, and its respective members with each other, *as one bread*. So that, *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*.—THE LORD'S DAY affords the high privilege of assembling together in the house of God, for the purposes of solemn prayer and praise, and of hearing the unsearchable riches of Christ preached as the food, and the treasure of the flock; while not unfrequently the Lord crowneth the assembly with showers of his grace, and maketh the place of his seat glorious!

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH. Whether we consider the Church, as the house of the living God; a kingdom, or the household of faith, in which the children of grace reside; and who are subject to many temptations, and have a variety of duties to perform for the social advantages of the whole; it is requisite that they possess rules by which they should be governed. Besides, as the Lord hath appointed Teachers, Pastors, Elders, or Rulers in his Church, it is indispensably necessary, that rules or laws should be placed in their hands to direct them to perform the duties of their respective offices, so that the Churches may be preserved in truth, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Various, indeed, were the laws for the government of the house of God, under the Old Testament dispensation; and whereas the New Testament Church is of a different, and spiritual character, we dare not indulge a supposition, that the Lord Christ should not have provided for her every necessary regulation. Whoever, therefore, takes the New Testament in his hand, and carefully examines the commands of Christ, whether given by him personally, or by his Apostles, will find them comprehensive, and adapted to all cases whatsoever, whether relating to duty, or to delinquency. We cannot dismiss this part of our subject without inquiring where the power, or authority of governing a Church exists; for Christ must have placed it in some hand. It cannot possibly rest with the civil authority, for Jesus said, *My kingdom is not of this world*. John xviii. 36. A case which occurred in the Church at Corinth, will best assist us to perceive where the power of discipline is placed. Paul, in his first epistle, and fifth chapter to that Church, describes the enormity of the incestuous man's sin, and as being unworthy of communion in the house of God. Possessed of authority from Christ to give a law in the case, Paul thus addressed the Church; "*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*"—v. 4. 5. "*Do ye not judge them that are within? Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*"—v. 12. 13. The Church did

so. Afterwards, when the same wicked man received repentance from the Lord, the Apostle, in his second epistle, gave directions for his restoration. "*Sufficient for such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many; so that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him*." Ch. ii. 6—8. The procedure is plain. Paul revealed the mind, or rule of Christ. The Church gathered together in one body, and in one place; they judged *within*, concerning the case of the criminal person; they excommunicated him; on his repentance, they restored and confirmed *their* love towards him. If, therefore, the right of judging, and power of government, do not exist in the whole assembled body of the Church, we can find no document in the Gospel to inform us where else it exists; for, even Pastors or Elders, are forbidden to *lord it over God's heritage*. We, therefore, conclude, that while the Church in her existence, and in all the variety of her concerns, is absolutely *dependent* upon Christ, she is *independent* in her own acts of government of any persons or ecclesiastical authority whatsoever. And, notwithstanding such power be vested in the hand of the Church, should she depart from the purity of truth in doctrine, profession, or practice, the Lord knows how to *reprove*, or to *remove the candlestick out of its place*. Rev. ii. 5. How important then is it, that every individual Church and Pastor should make themselves familiar with the laws of Christ, designed for the government of his Church; and, with solemn prayer, plead for the spirit of Jesus to inspire them with a sound mind and judgment, impartially and faithfully to preserve the order and beauty of the house of God?

THE UNITY of a visible Church of Christ. This constitutes a very material part of her strength, honour, and happiness; and is, indeed, the ground of Christian communion. It is so charmingly described in the Gospel, that we need only recite a few passages, and add our fervent prayer that such spiritual and visible union may be found with you, and with all the Churches of the saints to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Union in experience and profession is thus described: "*There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*." Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. So also the union of members, as composing the whole spiritual body. "*As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*." Rom. xii. 4, 5. The same subject, with its application, is more fully described in 1 Cor. xii. ch. "*As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many*." "Therefore, as the elect of God, put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long suffering. Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule

in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Col iii.

We close our epistle by naming a few of the great designs of Jehovah in establishing his gospel Church upon earth. While the world, with the fulness thereof, displays the glory of God, as the parent of universal nature; "*in the Church is made known the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,*" in the redemption of his people; and here the superior richness of his wisdom, grace, power, and everlasting love, shine with infinite brilliance. Eph. iii. 10, 11. All that were designed, whether in the Tabernacle of Moses, or in the Temple of Solomon, are now consummated in the person and Church of Jesus Christ, the true tabernacle, the house of God, being erected by the Gospel. As God, by the Spirit of his Son, is successively calling in his redeemed from the world, the Church, the house of God, is open for their reception, where every spiritual blessing and privilege are provided for their growth in grace, their comfort under sorrow, and to cheer their hope of immortality. Mat. xxii. 9, &c. The Church stands in the world, as a city set upon an hill, by which the light of truth, holiness, and grace, so admirably shine, as at once to condemn the wicked, and point the path to Christ, the way of eternal life. The existence of the Church for so many ages, amidst floods of error and persecution, forms a monument of the faithful promise, and unerring providence of her Lord. So shall she exist, and so shall she stand as a habitation of God through the Spirit, until the last child of grace shall partake of its privileges, and the Church be received to the full fruition of eternal felicity and glory!

Thus, brethren, we have presented you with what we believe to be a miniature likeness of the house of the living God, the Church of Christ, in which you will perceive we have taken our copy altogether from the New Testament. We present it for your examination, instruction, and establishment in the truth of Christ; concluding in the lines of a departed brother,—

"The Church on earth's the nursery of heaven;
And Christ is its first fruit, its full blown flow'r,
That sheds a dignity on all the rest
No eye hath seen a beauty in the Church,
That has not seen the Saviour's features there."—SWAIN.

HOWARD MALCOM, *Clerk.*

L. LEONARD, *Moderator.*

Corresponding Letter.

The Hudson River Baptist Association, to the several Associations with whom we correspond:

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Under the merciful care and direction of the great Head of the church, the ministers and messengers composing this body, have once more been convened: each deeply laden with the rich experience of the past, and ardently looking forward to prospects full of immortality, and eternal life. The peculiar satisfaction which we derive from meetings like the present, is produced by a combination of events; among which your friendly correspondence holds an elevated place: and as an evidence of our esteem for your messengers and epistles, we shall hold ourselves under solemn obligation to reciprocate these tokens of fellowship and affection.

In taking a retrospect of the year past, we find much to record of the goodness of God among us. Our churches have been preserved in the unity of the spirit, and in the bonds of peace. Mission and Bible institutions, we continue to esteem sacred; and rejoice exceedingly in their triumphant march.

Our ministers of the sanctuary have been continued to the flocks of their charge, and their labours succeeded by the Holy Ghost, sent down from Heaven; whose influences have been felt in some instances to a considerable extent, and generally, so far as to evince that God has not forgotten to be gracious. But when we turn from the past events of more local interest, and regard the future prospects of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world: and when we compare, with a view to this subject, the pages of prophecy, with the signs of the times, our hearts beat high with rapture, and we almost antedate the glorious latter day: but pausing to look down the intervening vista, we behold the Messiah in the power of his might; destroying errors by the spirit of his mouth, and by the brightness of his coming. Religious tracts, pious missionaries, and the Holy Scriptures, shall go before him to prepare his way:—large outpourings of the Holy Spirit shall allay every discord in Zion, and cement every pious heart in one:—the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, shall break down every opposing object:—kings and queens shall become nursing fathers and mothers in Israel; they shall rejoice in the Redeemer's light; and bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all. With prospects in view so glorious, and so near at hand, let us all be incited to diligence in well doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

Our present session has been harmonious and interesting; and we have once more learned, from happy experience, how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

For farther particulars concerning us, we refer you to our minutes and messengers—and soliciting a continuance of your correspondence, and an interest in your supplications, we subscribe ourselves, dear brethren, most affectionately yours in the bonds of the Gospel.

HOWARD MALCOM, *Clerk.*

L. LEONARD, *Moderator.*