

MINUTES

OF THE

Hudson River Baptist Association,

HELD BY APPOINTMENT

IN THE MEETING-HOUSE OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Albany, August 2nd and 3d, 1826.

1. At 10 o'clock A. M. according to appointment, Elder Charles G. Sommers preached the introductory sermon, from 1 Cor. vii. 29. "*This I say, brethren, the time is short.*" After which a collection was taken for the benefit of the WIDOWS' FUND, amounting to \$10 50.
2. The business of the Association was introduced by prayer, by Elder John Peck.
3. The letters from the Constituent Churches were read, and the Messengers' names enrolled.

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

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS AND MES- SENGERS.	Restored.	Baptize*.	Rec. by Let.		Dis. by Let.		Excluded.	Deceased.	Total.	When Con- stituted.
				Rec.	Dis.	Rec.	Dis.				
Poughkeepsie,	R. W. Cushman, Dea. John Forbus, : Alfred Raymond John G. Sturges. SPENCER H. CONE, *JOHN STANFORD,			2	4	7	1	2		87	
Oliver-st. N. Y.	FRANCIS WAYLAND, Dea. R. Thompson, Joshua Gilbert, John H. Harris, ARCH'D MACLAY, *LUKE DAVIES,	1	17	29	17	5	6		587	1795	
Mulberry-street, N. Y.	Dea. Thos. Stokes, Thos Day, Junr. Wm. D. Murphy, D. T. Valentine, JACOB H. BROUNER,	1	5	5	16	8	1		348	1809	
Mount Pleasant,	Caleb Willis, William Sing, N. Carpenter.			4						77	1790

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS.	Restored	Baptized	Ret. by Let.	Dis. by Let.	Excl. from	Decreased	Total.	When Constituted.
Hudson,	HOWARD MALOOM, * WM STURGES, Dea. Wm. Whitney, : Jesse Story,		8	5	5		2	128	1810
	Henry Anable, G. S. Turner, Robt. Martin, LELAND HOWARD, Dea. J. Harpham, T. Shrimpton, J. V. Powelson, F. B. Storvits, J. Wellington, C. Warner,								
Troy,	LEWIS LEONARD, Dea. F. Humphrey, : S. Dutcher, : J. G. Wasson, : J. A. Burke,		1	7	17	14	2	7	260
	H. Woodruff, W. Adams, J. W. Dutcher, P. Cure, BARTH'W T. WELSH, Jira D. Cole, Geo. M. Kendall,								
Albany,	*THOS. POWELL, Abraham Ennis, *NATHANIEL FINCH, N. PAUL, F. March, H. Ostrander		5	6	10	9	4	211	1811
	CHAS. G. SOMMERS. *D. H. Barnes, *Seth Smalley, Nathan Caswell,								
Cattskill,	None.								
	WM. C. HAWLEY, David Stuart,								
Newburgh,	SAMUEL EASTMAN, JOHN BOYD, HENRY WIGHTMAN, Dea. Daniel Goey, Wm. A. West, Jona. Choate,		1	4	1			84	
King-street,			1	6	3	2		44	1821
Albany African,									
South ch. N. Y.			11	4	6	1		98	1822
Coxackie,									
Brooklyn,			3	16	3	2	1	56	1823
Union, N. Y.			2	7	1	1		36	1823
Lansingburgh,			3	12	2	2	1	43	
Total,			56	122	87	36	25	2174	

Adjourned to 3 P. M. Brother Maclay prayed.

3 P. M. August 2, 1826. Met pursuant to adjournment.

Prayer by brother Welch.

4. Elder Spencer H. Cone was elected Moderator, and Brother Thomas Stokes appointed Clerk.

5. Application for admission to the Association was made by the Lansingburgh Church. Their letter was read and referred to Brethren Leonard, Maclay, Howard, and Brouner, who were directed to inquire into their faith and order, and make report.

6. Ministering brethren present, in good standing in their respective churches and associations, were invited to a seat, and to assist in our deliberations. The invitation was accepted by Brethren Olmstead, Leland, Lamb, Harris, Haborn, Shimeall, John M. Peck, Hetcher, Bentley and Knowlton.

7. The Committee appointed to examine into the faith and order of the Lansingburgh Church, reported favourably;—whereupon it was unanimously Resolved, that said church be admitted a member of this body. The Moderator accordingly gave to their Pastor the right hand of fellowship, and invited the messengers to seats.

8. Communications and Messengers from sister Associations were received.

ASSOCIATIONS.	MINUTES.	MESSENGERS.	BAPTIZED.	TOTAL.
Warren,	1825	—		4236
Boston,	1825	—	123	3868
Hartford,	1825	Wilson,	45	2679
New-London,	1825	—	20	1763
Shaftsbury,	1826	Marshal and Graff,	71	2713
Lake George,	1825	—	52	530
Saratoga,	1825	Witherall,	148	3550
Rensselaerville,	1826	Herrick Wicks, } Hare and Crary, }	48	2068
Cayuga,		Peck,		
Franklin,		—		
Warwick,	1826	—		1550
Madison,	1825	Peck,	126	4341
Union,	1825	—		1923
New Jersey,	1825	—	90	2134
Philadelphia,	1825	—		2670
Baltimore,	1826	—	18	612
Columbia,	1825	—		
Charleston,	1825	—	226	4104
Abington,	1825	—	17	612
Westfield,	1825	Hart,	24	1309
Essex,		—		
Otsego,	1825	—		1888
Black River,	1825	Hall,	435	2327
St. Lawrence,		—		
Accomack,		—		
Ontario,	1825	Peck,	325	3255
Manchester,	1825	C. M. Fuller,	67	532
Michigan,	1826	—		

9. Brethren Wayland, Leonard, and John Peck were directed to

draw up a memorial expressive of the feelings of this Association on the loss sustained by the sudden death of Elder Joseph Cornell.

10. The Circular Letter from the New-York Baptist State Convention was read, and referred to Brethren Cone, Howard and Malcom.

11. *Resolved*, That it be recommended to the churches in this Association to interest themselves in the objects of the *Baptist Theological Seminary* located at Hamilton, and endeavour, by every practicable means, to promote its success.

12. The Committee on the Circular of the State Convention, reported the following resolution, which was adopted:—

Resolved, That Elder John Peck be requested to preach to-morrow at 11 o'clock, A. M. after which a collection shall be made to aid the funds of the Convention, and enable them to meet the expenses of the Missions under their care, which we learn greatly need efficient and immediate assistance.

13. Brethren Hawley, Howard, and Sing, were directed to examine the minutes of corresponding associations.

14. Brethren Malcom, Paul, and Gilbert, were appointed a Committee to draw up a summary of the state of religion within the bounds of the Association.

15. The Committee appointed last year to devise a plan for the government of the Widows' Fund, presented their report which was read and ordered to lie upon the table.

16. The Circular Letter written by Brother Leonard, was read, and referred to Brethren Sommers, Eastman, and Thompson, with the author.

17. The request of the Mount Pleasant Church on the subject of a *religious periodical paper*, the profits of which shall be thrown into the Widows' fund, was referred to Brethren Cone, Maclay, Sommers, Eastman, Brouner, Cushman, Humphrey, and Harpham.

18. Appointed a prayer meeting to be held in the meeting house to-morrow morning at 6 o'clock.

Adjourned to 9 A. M. to-morrow. Prayer by Brother Fuller.

At 8 P. M. Brother Cone, according to appointment, preached from Psalm xlix, 8. "*For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.*" After the sermon, a collection was taken to aid the funds of the New-York Baptist Theological Institution, amounting to \$24 88.

Thursday, August 3, 1826, nine o'clock A. M. met pursuant to adjournment. Brother John M. Peck prayed.

The minutes of yesterday were read and approved.

19. The committee on the circular letter, reported the following resolution, which was adopted:—*Resolved*, that the circular letter be printed, subject to such verbal alterations as the publishing Committee, together with the author, may judge to be expedient.

20. Brother Wayland, from the Committee appointed for that purpose, presented the following memorial, which was ordered to be printed, viz:

With the most respectful and affectionate regard, would we mention the death of our beloved brother and Father in Christ, *Elder Joseph Cornell*, who departed this life the 26th July, in the 80th year of his age. His death may well be compared to "*falling asleep.*" having

dropt his earthly tabernacle, apparently without a pain, struggle or groan. The announcement of his death to this association was sensibly felt, and deeply regretted by its members, he having been expected to meet them during their present session. The Lord, however, determined otherwise, and called him from the church militant to join the church triumphant. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*" Few servants of the Lord have been more honoured in the service of their Divine Master, than was Elder Cornell, having been not only preserved, through grace, from bringing a blemish on his profession, but made useful in the vineyard of the Lord to the very close of his life.

21. The committee on the publication of a religious paper in the city of New-York, introduced the following resolution, which was concurred in.

Resolved, That in the opinion of your committee, the attempt to establish a religious periodical paper, is a subject of so much importance as to demand deliberate investigation: with a view to which, this committee solicit permission to report at the next anniversary of this body.

22. *Report of the Treasurer of the Widows' Fund.*

The Hudson River Bap. Ass. in account with W. Colgate,		Cr.
Aug. 2, 1826. By balance from last year.	- - -	\$250 00
: One year's interest on do at 6 pr. ct.	- - -	15 00
Collection after annual sermon,	- - -	10 50
: Mulberry-st. Church,	- - -	10 00
: Troy do.	- - -	10 00
: Hudson do.	- - -	8 37½
: South do. N. Y.	- - -	15 00
: Poughkeepsie, do.	- - -	1 00
: Mount Pleasant, do.	- - -	5 00
: Oliver-st. do.	- - -	25 12½

\$350 00

23. Brother Sommers read the corresponding letter he had prepared, which was referred to Brethren Maclay and Wightman, with the author.

24. The committee for the examination of the minutes of sister Associations, *Report*, That they find the public warned against a man who calls himself *Samuel J. Councillor*, and sometimes *Consell* and *Council*. He has been long known as an impostor, in Missouri, Illinois, and other Western States, and has been frequently published as such. He is a short, thick set, stout built man, about fifty years of age, and is in the habit of finding fault with his accommodations. He has lately been among the churches in Dutchess County, N. Y.—And in the Shaftesbury minutes, against *John Smith*, who has long imposed on our churches, and been several times advertised in the minutes of associations. He is just five feet eight inches high, rather stout, though by no means corpulent; hair nearly or quite black, a few grey hairs on the temples; good teeth, sallow complexion, large nose, and dark hazle eyes. This man is not only destitute of a regular standing, but is vile in his character.

25. Brother Malcom, from the committee appointed last year for this purpose, reported a number of *Rules* for the government of the

association, which, after some alterations and amendments, were finally adopted.

RULES.

- I. The Moderator and Clerk shall be annually chosen by ballot, immediately after reading the letters and credentials; those of the former year continuing in office till the choice is made.
- II. At every sitting, business shall be opened and concluded with prayer by the Moderator, or whomsoever he may request.
- III. Ministers present, invited to a seat with us, may debate on all subjects, but vote on none.
- IV. No member of the Association shall absent himself without leave of the Moderator.
- V. No subject shall be discussed, without a motion first made and seconded.
- VI. No person shall speak oftener than twice on any motion, unless by permission of the Moderator.
- VII. Motions made and lost, shall not be recorded upon the minutes, except so ordered at the time.
- VIII. If, when a motion has been made and seconded, a member opposes its being discussed, the Moderator shall immediately put the question, "*Shall this question be discussed?*" which, if negatived, the subject shall be dismissed.
- IX. If any proposition or motion under debate contain two or more points, it shall be divided at the request of any member, and the vote taken separately.
- X. Arrangements for the next Association, shall not be attended to on the first day of the session.
- XI. On the opening of business the second day, the roll of the messengers commissioned by the churches, shall be called, and the names of those who have not arrived shall be stricken off. Nevertheless, ministers and licentiates shall be inserted with the mark of absence.
- XII. The minutes shall be leisurely read and corrected, before the rising of the association.
- XIII. In distributing the minutes at the close of an association, only one member from each church shall come forward. If a surplus remains after these are supplied, they may be taken indiscriminately.
- XIV. These rules shall be distinctly read from the chair, immediately after the organization of the Association.

26. Brethren Howard, Leonard, Maclay, Malcom, Hawley, Cushman and Gilbert, were requested to report, in the afternoon, the necessary arrangements for the next association.

27. The Association will hold their next anniversary in the meeting house of the Baptist Church in Catskill, to commence on the FIRST WEDNESDAY IN AUGUST, 1827, AT 10 O'CLOCK, A. M.

Adjourned to half past 2 o'clock, P. M. Brother Herrick prayed.

At 11 A. M. Elder John Peck preached from Nehemiah ii. 20—

"Then answered I them and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." After the sermon, a collection was taken to aid the funds of the N. Y. Baptist State Convention, amounting to

For same object from Troy Bap. Church	7 00
do. Oliver-st. N. Y.	10 00
From individual members of the association,	56 00
	\$106 00

Thursday, half past 2 P. M. Met agreeably to adjournment.

Prayer by brother Howard.

28. The corresponding letter was reported and adopted.

Brother Howard, from the committee of arrangement, made the following report, which was agreed to, viz:

29. Brother Eastman to preach the Introductory Sermon next year, and in case of failure, brother Howard.

30. Brother Maclay to preach in the evening, and in case of failure, Brother Hawley. After the sermon, a collection to be taken for education purposes.

31. Brother Cushman to write the *Circular Letter* for next year, and in case of failure, brother Sommers.

32. Brother Wightman to prepare the *Corresponding Letter*, and brother Welch, in case of failure.

33. The committee on the state of religion, *Report*, That an examination of the letters from the churches, and inquiry among the delegates, produces the painful conviction, that this Association, as a whole, is not in that flourishing state, which, a few years ago, we so much rejoiced in. Several churches are smaller than last year, and none are largely increased. It is evidently a dark and gloomy day, in which our faith and patience are severely tried. Abasement and penitence become us. The violation of the sabbath, the growth of error, and the general impenitence of sinners in the places where our churches are established, call for profound humility and vigorous exertions. We know of nothing, in the shape of exertion, so important, as the careful nurture, in Sunday Schools and Bible Classes, of all the children we can gather. And that our supplications and confessions before God, may go up, not merely as individuals, but as a tried, and anxious, and united people, we earnestly recommend that the Association appoint the 1st day of January next, as a day of fasting and special prayer.

The report was adopted.

34. The plan for the organization of the Widows' Fund, was taken up and fully discussed, and after undergoing some alterations, was unanimously adopted as follows, viz:

ORGANIZATION OF

MINISTERS' WIDOWS' FUND.

In pious and grateful remembrance of our departed brethren in the ministry, whose widows and orphans may be left in circumstances of need. The Hudson River Baptist Association, *Resolve* to contribute 10

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their relief, as far as our compassionate Saviour may indulge us with ability. In order, therefore to create a *Fund*, for this benevolent purpose, we recommend—

MEANS.

1. That on the fourth Lord's Day in May, in every year, the respective churches composing this Association, make a public collection, for the purpose of aiding this fund.
2. That a subscription book be opened in every such church and congregation to receive, whether annual subscriptions, or donations, to this desirable object.

OBJECTS.

1. Persons intended to receive the benefit of this fund, are the widows and orphans of deceased Ministers, who at the time of their death, whether *ordained* or *licensed*, shall have been in good standing in this association; and no others.
2. Relief afforded such persons to continue during their widowhood, and no longer.
3. If there be no surviving widow, and the children, if any, of such deceased minister be under 12 years of age, and in need, they shall receive the same portion as allowed to a widow, until they arrive to their 15th year. Provided also, that should any one of the said children, destitute both of father and mother, be found by disease or accident, incapable of providing a living for him or herself, the allowance from this fund to continue until such person shall have arrived at 20 years of age.

MANAGERS OF THE FUND.

1. This Association, at their annual meeting, shall elect and appoint out of its members, *five* Trustees who shall have the sole management of this fund; one of whom shall be appointed Treasurer, and one other as Secretary; and that such trustees continue in office three years.
2. That this Board of Trustees, (three of whom shall form a quorum) shall meet annually or oftener as the case may require, for the transaction of business; and that the said board shall have power to fill up any vacancy in their number which may be occasioned by death, or otherwise, until the next meeting of the Association.
3. All applications for relief shall be made to this Board in *writing*, stating the name, residence and circumstances of the applicant.
4. It shall be the business of this Board to receive, and keep in charge, all moneys collected, or otherwise contributed to this fund. To receive and examine all applications for relief; and that they make such allowance of money to the needy, as in their opinion the cases may require, and the state of the funds may warrant.
5. It is further *Resolved*, that this Board of Trustees, whenever the moneys in hand shall amount to \$300, and there be no applicant for immediate relief, they are hereby authorized to invest the same in some secure stock, for the purpose of creating a PERPETUAL FUND; the interest of which only shall be employed to relieve the necessitous.—And, further, whenever other moneys in their hands successively shall amount to

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\$100, and not immediately required for use, the said sum shall be added to the *perpetual fund*; which it is presumed will ultimately prove essentially beneficial to the object intended.—And likewise, that the said permanent fund shall in no wise be disposed of but by the order of three fourths of this Association.

G. Finally it is required that the Trustees of this Board present to this Association at their annual meeting, a statement of their funds, collections and disbursements; with whatever else may be combined with this benevolent object, and the performance of their duty.

N. B. Whereas it is highly probable that benevolent persons will be disposed to remember the *Ministers' Widows' Fund*, while making their last will and testament, the following form of a bequest is respectfully submitted to their attention.

"*Item, I leave and bequeath to the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees of the Ministers' Widows' Fund, belonging to the Hudson River Baptist Association, the sum of (***)dolls.) to be paid by my Executors, six months after my decease, to be applied for the benefit of such widows.*"

ADDRESS.

Brethren in the Lord,

The subject on which we address you, cannot fail to interest your most sympathetic and benevolent feelings. While in the circles of domestic society, the loss of a husband by death, frequently leaves a widow and children helpless and forlorn: it is still more calamitous when a minister dies, and leaves a widow and children to weep in poverty and distress without the means of relief. It is well known, that few of the public servants of the Lord receive a competency for their temporal support; and that with large families, they are not unfrequently reduced to necessity, instead of making any provision for their future support. As parents, they are piously anxious for the *education of their children*, and with ardour of mind, they are induced to deprive themselves of many comforts to accomplish their laudable design, thereby leaving the less competency for the future. At length, death advances, his dart strikes; and the faithful minister drops into his grave, leaves his widow to mourn, and his children to seek their bread. And shall we refuse the kind office to wipe away their tears, or withhold the hand of benevolence to relieve their wants? While we most devoutly remember the successful labours, and the pious conversation of a departed brother, during his residence amongst us, let us not forget the value of a gracious wife to a laborious minister; her ardent concern for his usefulness; her attention to soothe his cares, and persevering exertions to preserve his congregation in peace and happiness—for, it is well known, that in many cases which occur in a congregation, a godly active wife has frequently been of utility. next

to the pastor himself. Can we then allow such a one, deprived of her husband, to sit as a disconsolate widow in sackcloth and ashes, without expressing our sympathy, and stretching forth the hand to afford her our succour? It is impossible! If David so feelingly asked, *Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul. that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?* shall we not inquire into the family of a departed brother in the ministry to whom we may give an expression of our kindness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ!—Ministers, who hear or read this Address, are supposed frequently to indulge the solemn reflection, *how short their time is*, and that soon they may be called away by death from their labours, their wives, and their children. Such, therefore, must feel a *double* interest in promoting the object of this Fund, by every laudable exertion, from the consideration of the possibility, that at a future period, their families also may require the aid which it contemplates to afford. Many other private Christians belonging to our Churches, bear in strong remembrance their charming intimacy with their departed ministers, and how frequently they were instructed and refreshed by the Lord under their ministry. Nor is it improbable, that the very ministers whom the Lord blessed to pluck you as brands from the burning, and caused you to drink of the cup of his salvation, are now numbered with the dead, and have left a widow and orphans behind, to sow their tears in the soil of poverty. The recollection of these circumstances will form a stronger argument to prompt your benevolent exertions in favour of their survivors, than the most pathetic address can possibly produce. Thus will you embalm the memory of your departed pastors, and stretch forth a liberal hand, in the fear and love of your Saviour, to support and increase the **MINISTERS' WIDOWS' FUND.**

35. The following brethren were appointed to solicit donations and subscriptions for the Widows' Fund, viz:—Poughkeepsie, *Alfred Raymond*; Oliver-street, *Theodore Clark*; Mulberry-street, *Wm. Winterton*; Mount Pleasant, *Caleb Willis*; Hudson, *Peter Vandyke*; Troy, *C. Warner*; Albany, *J. G. Wasson*; Catskill, *Nathaniel Jacobs*; Newburgh, *Abm. Ennis*; Albany African, *Asher Foot*; South Church, N. Y. *Nathan Caswell*; Coxackie, *James Delano*; Brooklyn, *D. Do-remus*; Union, N. Y. *Wm. C. Duzenbury*; Lansingburgh, *Wm. A. West.*

36. Brethren Wm. Colgate, Thos. Stokes, Alfred Raymond, Friend Humphrey, and Joshua Harpham, were elected *Trustees of the Widows' Fund*, for the ensuing three years.

37. Brother Howard Malcom gave an interesting account of the meeting of the New-York Baptist State Convention—of its business and encouraging prospects of enlarged usefulness, and Brethren Howard and Humphrey were appointed our delegates to the next anniversary of that body, and in case of failure, brethren Leonard and Welch.

38. *Resolved*, that we open a correspondence with the Ontario, Manchester, Michigan, and Baltimore Baptist Associations, at their request.

39. The following brethren were appointed messengers to Corresponding Associations, viz:—to Warren and Boston, *Leonard* and *Wightman*; New London, *Wightman*; Warwick, *Powell*; Shafisbury.

Howard and *Harpham*; Lake George, *Wayland* and *Paul*; Saratoga, *Leonard*, *Wayland* and *Humphrey*; Rensselaerville, *Leonard*, *Paul*, and *Cole*; Union, *Brouner* and *Sing*; New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, *Cone* and *Malcom*; Manchester, *Paul*; Michigan, *Leonard* and *Howard*.

40. Collected for printing the minutes, from Poughkeepsie church \$2 50; Oliver-st. \$6; Mulberry-st. \$2; Mount Pleasant, \$1 50; Hudson, \$2 50; Troy, \$4; Albany, \$4; Catskill, \$2 00; King-st. 50 cts.; Newburgh, \$1 50; African, \$1; Coxackie, 50 cts.; South church, N. Y. \$2; Brooklyn, \$2; Union, N. Y. \$1; Lansingburgh, \$1 50; Amount \$34.

41. *Resolved*, that the churches at Newburgh and King-street, be advised to make known their destitute situation to the N. Y. Baptist Mission Society, or the N. Y. State Convention, with the hope of obtaining preaching supplies.

42. The Moderator and Clerk were requested to superintend the printing and distribution of the minutes.

43. The minutes were read and approved.

44. The Moderator closed the business of the session with a brief address and prayer.

In the evening Elder Leland preached from 2d Samuel xxiii. 5. *Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.*

CIRCULAR LETTER—1826.



The Ministers and Messengers of the HUDSON RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, convened in the city of Albany, August 2d and 3d, 1826.

TO THE CHURCHES THEY REPRESENT,

Beloved Brethren,

The object of an annual Circular, dictated by an association, and addressed to the constituent churches of which it is composed, should be to promote the reciprocal interests of the whole body. In accordance with this sentiment, as the subject of the present address, we propose a brief review of *the nature, and general tendency of that official correspondence, maintained by the churches of our denomination.*

This subject may appear novel, yet its practical effects, and the extent of its influence, form a sufficient apology for the discussion of its merits on the present occasion.

Believing as we do, that Churches founded upon gospel principles, are free and independent; and, considering ourselves only as the delegated organs of those churches, whatever freedom we may use in the present discussion, or improvements we may deem it our duty to suggest, we utterly disclaim any attempt at ecclesiastical domination, or as possessing the least desire to be accounted lords over the heritage of God. The subject under consideration, is diversified in its attributes, and capable of the following classifications—(viz.)

The periodical addresses of associated churches to the different bodies, with which they are respectively connected:

Letters of license, and of commendation, given to individuals, for specific or general purposes:

Epistles of solicitation for advice and official assistance:

And letters of dismission, by which the covenanted connexion of individual members, is transferred from one church to another.

The periodical addresses of associated Churches are annual in their return, and statistical in their design. They are required only at the yearly sessions of the different Associations, and expected to contain a succinct history of the internal state of the churches, especially, the additions, diminutions, and total number of communicants in fellowship, when such return shall be made.

As these addresses are designed for public exhibition, they should be correct in composition, faithful in representation, concise in delineation, and legible in their transcription. For want of proper attention to these suggestions, much of the time and patience of Associations are unnecessarily expended, and the peculiar interest these documents are calculated to excite, in many instances, is almost entirely thwarted.

Letters of license and of commendation, are communications granted to individuals, for specific and general purposes. The former are given to those only, who in the judgment of the Church, possess gifts and qualifications suited to the work of the ministry. The latter are received both by ministers and private brethren, as testimonials in fa-

vour of their moral and religious characters; each, being documents belonging to individual members, expressive of the approbation and fellowship of their brethren, we have considered it proper, in the division of our subject, to present them under one classification.

Letters of license are of no ordinary character. Their influence is felt, not by the individuals only to whom they are presented, but they give direction to public confidence, and, in their practical result, must prove beneficial or injurious to the Christian cause. They should, therefore, only be granted as the decision of mature deliberation, and at the instance of the most thorough conviction of the propriety of the measure. There seems to be a kind of pious magic, exerting a powerful influence over the churches, concealing from their vision the magnitude and responsibility of this subject.

However desirous we should be, that the Lord would send forth labourers into his harvest, we must be extremely cautious, that we do not arrogate to ourselves that which belongs exclusively to him.

Have we not reason to believe that many, through the solicitations of their brethren, have been encouraged to enter the ministry, whose piety and zeal have supplied the place of almost every other necessary qualification? And the result has been, neglecting the gift which was in them, and aspiring after those bestowed upon others, they have buried their own talent, and have failed in the attempt to improve upon that which belonged to another; the church has been disappointed and deprived of their usefulness, and a good Deacon spoiled, to make an exceptionable minister. In avoiding this evil, we are in imminent danger of falling into the opposite extreme. And should the time ever arrive, when natural talents, and worldly attainments, supersede the necessity of piety and devotion to God, and become the criterion of our decisions, in granting letters of license, "then will the blind lead the blind," and Zion, bereft of her spiritual guides, may mourn her widowhood, in sackcloth and ashes. "*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus speak;*" yet the subject, in our judgment, assumes such a responsible attitude, we would suggest the propriety of soliciting the friendly advice of pious and experienced ministers before we engage in a correspondence of such magnitude and importance. This expedient would bring into practical use the results of pious experiment, equalize the responsibility of the transaction, guard against a premature decision, strengthen public confidence, and give our letters of license that responsible character, which their nature and design seem to demand.

Epistles of commendation, which we have proposed to notice in this division of our subject, are simple testimonials of moral character, and of regular membership in the churches of Christ. These communications claim the sanction of divine inspiration, and are influential and salutary in their design and tendency. They furnish the stranger with a friendly introduction, give life and vigour to Christian fellowship, awake Christian sympathies, embolden the sojourner to a participation of gospel privileges, remove excited suspicions, and prevent public and private impositions. They belong alike to ministers, and private christians; and those who remove, or travel among strangers, should never fail to solicit their aid, and avail themselves of the peculiar benefits resulting from them. We regret to say, that there are many brethren who never seek to be furnished with such credentials, and beyond the

circle of their acquaintance, are seldom known as the disciples of Christ. We would request the churches to be more prompt and liberal in this branch of correspondence, and the sojourning individuals who neglect it, to hear the word of the Lord—*Ye are the light of the world, a city set on an hill cannot be hid.*

Letters of solicitation for delegated assistance, and advisory purposes, will next claim your attention. This correspondence is maintained and reciprocated only by the churches of the saints. The aid and advice which it solicits, regard the adjustment of differences, the constitution of churches, and the ordination of ministers. In relation to the first, we shall only say, in our opinion, it would be more for the honour of the cause of Christ, to relinquish it altogether, except in extraordinary cases; for every christian church is invested with full power to transact her own business, settle her own difficulties, and administer that discipline in the government of her members, which the Gospel and the circumstances of the case shall require. And the word of God if properly consulted and understood, will afford every facility necessary to accomplish all she is authorized to perform.

In regard to the second, which relates to the constitution of churches, a delegation may with propriety be solicited, to consult upon the expediency of constituting a church, but no council has the power to affect, or prevent such constitution; for the existence of a church consists in christian fellowship, unanimity of sentiment, and covenant obligations. Every such body, therefore, must of necessity organize itself; and when so formed, no ecclesiastical court, recognized by our denomination, can dissolve the connexion, except by the full consent of the power which created it.

Though our churches, in their organization and internal regulations, are distinct, free, and independent; yet, in the covenant of redemption, they are considered constituent members of the same mystical body. In their confessions, they acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism," and in their designs, they are united in promoting one general interest. It is therefore highly proper, when a church is duly organized, and wishes the sanction and co-operation of sister churches, that she should immediately open a correspondence of solicitation with them, affectionately requesting a delegated assemblage, for the specific purpose of fellowship and mutual co-operation. This request should be promptly reciprocated, and upon satisfactory investigation, the fellowship of the churches should be publicly expressed by all the demonstrations of friendship. But no solicitation, requesting a delegated council, for the purpose of constituting a church, can claim the sanction of consistency, in our denomination.

Respecting the third branch of this division of the subject, we consider the present practice of soliciting the aid of sister churches in the ordination of ministers, to be attended with very serious difficulties, and capable of much practical improvement. Letters of this description of character, generally contain a twofold request: the objects specified, are the examination, and if thought advisable, the ordination of a brother designated to the work of the Gospel ministry. These objects are distinct in character, positively and conditionally expressed in the solicitation, and inseparably connected, in the wishes and calculations of the church. In this unhappy complexity, originate some of the evils to which we refer: for if the correspondence is reciprocated

by the churches, and the council requested convenes, it is almost morally certain that the candidate will be examined. But the ordination depends entirely upon the result subsequently formed. The latter, therefore, cannot be as free from uncertainty as the former: and yet, there is so much of positiveness connected with the whole design, that the condition appears to be nominal, or forgotten, in the succeeding arrangements. For while the decision of this negotiation is pending, information publicly announces, without reserve, the time and place of ordination, and every necessary preparation is made by the church, to carry this design into execution. Therefore, upon the day previously appointed, the public, with the friends and relatives of the candidate assemble, to witness the solemnities of the transaction. Thus situated, the delegation arrives, and impelled by the circumscription of the period allotted for consultation, immediately proceed to business. If the hasty examination proves perfectly satisfactory, and nothing in Providence appears to forbid, a result is formed, calculated to meet the expectations and the wishes of all the parties concerned. But suppose, upon investigation, objections arise which lead to a free discussion of the merits of the question, whether it would be proper to proceed to the ordination? would not the circumstances under which the council is placed, be calculated to prevent mature deliberation, and suppress impartial inquiry, if not entirely forestal the honest opinions of the brethren? It is true, that men delegated to act upon a subject in which the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom are involved, should be influenced only by the fear of God, and the sacred dictates of truth and duty; but the exigencies of the case are such, as to render it extremely difficult to fix upon that course which duty prescribes; for the point at issue is not a question of morality, but of expediency: all the appended circumstances, therefore, must be duly considered. The brethren of the council naturally reason thus: If we immediately proceed to the ordination, we are fearful, at some future day, we shall have occasion to regret the consequences of our determination. And should we arrive at a different result, the church which has solicited our aid and co-operation, will suffer the mortification of misguided calculations and of premature decisions. The candidate, deeply depressed, will imagine himself forsaken of his brethren, and his talents and reputation to have been publicly disclaimed. The assembled public, will be mortified at their disappointment, and pour contempt upon the imaginary folly of the whole transaction; while the enemies of the denomination will triumph in the reflection, that all is disorder and confusion amongst us. These considerations, more than counterbalance the fears and the suggestions of the scrupulous, and in many instances appear to control the sacred dictates of conscience; and we venture to say that in nine cases out of ten, will influence a result, in favour of the ordination. But we ask, is this the decision of mature deliberation, of calm and free discussion, and of unbiassed judgment? Does it not much more strongly resemble a compulsory choice, between the existing evils? The least of the two may have been selected, but it is highly desirable that the councils of piety and wisdom, should be so situated, that both may be happily avoided.

We would, therefore, affectionately propose an amendment to the present mode of correspondence relating to this subject. In all ordinary cases, let that portion of it which anticipates an ordination, be

entirely omitted. Let the council be called as confidentially as possible, for the express purpose of examination; leaving the ordination as a ministerial act, of subsequent consideration. A delegation convened at the instance of such a solicitation, would have a specific object before them, occupy sufficient time for mature deliberation, be frank and dispassionate in their discussion, and be likely to arrive at a correct and satisfactory conclusion. If after an impartial examination, and the free exchange of sentiments, it should be deemed advisable to impose the hands of the Presbytery, let the Elders present fix upon some future period, when they will attend to the solemnities of the transaction, and adjourn to meet accordingly; always giving a sufficient opportunity for every necessary preparation to be made, and for the public to be apprised of their decisions. Though the improvement proposed may be attended with extra expense, and considerable delay, yet we feel confident that the advantages of its practical result, will be more than an adequate compensation; while those, upon whom the weight of the responsibility devolves, will have the satisfaction of a conscientious compliance with the Apostle's injunction, to *lay hands suddenly on no man*.

The last division of this subject, which our limits will permit us to investigate, embraces that attribute of ecclesiastical correspondence, commonly called, *Letters of dismissal*. Though last in the order of our arrangement, yet not the least in magnitude and importance. These communications, in their present construction, are positive in their commendation, conditional in their dismissal, open and free in their condition, and altogether indefinite in their superscription. They are generally granted to those individuals who have removed, or are about to remove, from the vicinity of the churches to which they belong. Unsealed and open for inspection, they are put into the possession of those whom they liberally commend, indefinitely addressed to any church of our denomination, giving to each the unqualified privilege of receiving the bearers into full communion. At the same time, apprising them all, that these members are not considered dismissed, until so received, and information given accordingly. The consequence is, a church authorising such letters, guarantees to sister churches, the liberty of receiving into full fellowship, a certain portion of her members, whose names she is obligated to retain upon her own records. This want of reciprocity of obligation between the giver and the receiver, is evidently incorrect in principle and practice, and frequently results in gross absurdity. For when a brother so dismissed, receives the fellowship of a sister church, his name being retained upon the records of the church which gave the dismissal, he is unavoidably, from the circumstances of the case, a member of good standing, in two churches, at the same time, and so must remain, until information is given to the church which alone has the authority to correct the inconsistency. Judging from the remissness of churches in giving such information, there can be no doubt but that many of our members are thus situated, and are so recognized in the minutes of the associations from year to year.

There is also another difficulty still more unpleasant in its effects, originating from this indefinite mode of correspondence. These letters are put into the hands of brethren, as documents belonging to them, imposing not the least obligation to present them to any church

until they are so disposed. Therefore, in many instances, they are retained for years by the professors, as licenses of indulgence, as guarantees against immoral aspersions, and as sufficient apologies, for almost a total neglect of the church by whose authority they were given. These evils are sensibly felt, and deeply regretted by many of our churches; you will, therefore, permit us to propose what we conceive to be a proper mode of procedure, in counteracting this influence, and in maintaining correctly this branch of correspondence, destined to continue until the church of Christ shall be consolidated in one glorious body. As a general rule, let your letters of dismissal be what their title and consistency of conduct require them to be: letters of transfer, officially directed from one church to another. For instance, when a brother removes from you, give him an affectionate letter of commendation, introducing him to the kind attention of the christian community. And when he shall have located himself in the neighbourhood of a church, with which he wishes to become connected, let him then make known his desire to said church, and if cordially reciprocated, let it be the duty of that church to transmit an official communication to the one in which he stands a member, requesting that he might be dismissed agreeably to his wishes, which document shall be placed on file, or transcribed upon the records of the church, and shall be considered a sufficient voucher upon which to act in making the transfer as above stated. Then let an official letter of dismissal be sent immediately to the church from which the request had been made, and let the name of the brother be erased from the books. Upon the receipt of such dismissal, let the church to which it is addressed, cause the substance of it to be recorded, as an official testimony, that the request of the brother has been duly granted, and his membership transferred according to the mode prescribed by the churches. Then let the church testify her fellowship for him according to the usual practice, and let his name be enrolled upon her records, as a member in regular standing.

After expressing our unfeigned gratitude to Almighty God, for the privilege of epistolary correspondence, and the peculiar pleasure we have derived from perusing your periodical addresses, we most earnestly solicit your co-operation in every attempt to promote the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom; and conclude by subscribing ourselves, your devoted servants, for Jesus' sake.

SPENCER H. CONE, *Moderator*

THOS. STOKES, *Clerk*.

CORRESPONDING LETTER.

THE HUDSON RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, to the Associations with whom we correspond.

BELoved BRETHREN,—Perhaps no other proposition has been more clearly demonstrated by the test of experience, than the importance and general utility of well regulated Christian Associations; and where this intercourse is maintained under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, God will be honoured and the cause of Truth promoted. It is at these anniversaries, when like the tribes of the Lord we “go up unto the testimony of Israel, and to give thanks unto the name of the Lord,” that we do in a peculiar manner enjoy the blessedness of unanimity and mutual affection among the saints, while we at the same time realize increased facilities for promoting the essential interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom in the world. To us, the present has been an interesting, and we hope a profitable session. Our hearts have been encouraged by the information furnished in your letters, and we rejoice to learn that you “stand fast” in the truth. This, considering the prevalence of errors the most delusive and fatal to the immortal happiness of men, is a cause of thankfulness, and will we hope operate as an incentive to the Watchmen upon the walls of Zion, and excite them to the exercise of an increased vigilance and zeal in maintaining the form of sound words and holy practice in the churches of Jesus Christ.

With an unyielding perseverance let us constantly adhere to the dictates of the sacred volume—this is our only and infallible guide in whatever concerns the glory of Christ’s kingdom and the consummation of the Christian hope. While our churches continue to look to this polar star, as their guide across the moral ocean of the tempestuous world; Jehovah will be seen as in Isaiah’s miraculous vision, sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, while rejoicing saints, like the seraphim, covering their faces, will be heard to cry one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.

When we take a retrospective view of our own denomination in this country, and trace its progress up to the present period, we are constrained to adopt the language of inspiration, and say, “what hath God

wrought!” During the last 26 years, the number of Baptist Churches constituted in the United States is more than double the whole amount from the first settlement of America up to the beginning of the present century. The Baptists of the western continent, roused by the Spirit of God from the slumber of ages, appear like a giant going forth to the achievement of mighty deeds, and if their resources and energies are only directed to the right point, we may confidently expect important results. Already have our missionaries planted the standard of the cross upon the plains of Africa, and supplied a translation of nearly the whole of the New Testament to enlighten the vast population inhabiting the territory, from Tibet to the Indian ocean, and from the borders of China to the Tiperah mountains; while the Heralds of salvation in our own land, have sounded the trumpet of peace to the Indian amidst the forest, and in almost every village from the Mississippi to the Atlantic shore. In that wonderful system of means which is employed to accomplish the divine purposes of “good will to men,” we cannot but rejoice in the successful operations of Sabbath Schools and Tract Societies, as well as Bible and Missionary Institutions. To these we would earnestly direct your attention, and solicit for them, your co-operation and your prayers until the light of revealed truth shall shine into every habitation of man, and the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Brethren! remember the words of the beloved disciple, “little children keep yourselves from idols.” May this holy flame blaze upon the altar of every heart, and may the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. We do affectionately solicit a continuation of your correspondence and prayer to God for us, that we may be humble, prayerful, and united in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

Our next Anniversary will be held at Catskill on the first Wednesday in August, 1827, at 10 o’clock, A. M. when we hope to be again refreshed by your minutes and messengers.

Signed by order, and in behalf of the Association.

SPENCER H. CONE. *Moderator.*

THOS. STOKES. *Clerk.*