

THE
M I D L A N D L E T T E R,
ON THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

The Elders and Messengers of the several Baptist Churches, meeting at *Bewdley, Bourton; Cannon-street and Bond-street, Birmingham; Cirencester, Cosely, Dudley, Evesham, Leominster, Pershore, Ryeford, Stourbridge, Tewkesbury, Upton, Warwick, Westmancoat, and Worcester*; being met in Association at *Tewkesbury, in Gloucestershire*, on the 25th and 26th of *May, 1790*,

M AINTAINING the important doctrines of three equal persons in the godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the righteousness of Christ imputed; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of the saints; the resurrection of the dead; the general judgment at the last day, and the life everlasting; with the INDEPENDENCE of the several Christian societies they represent: *To whom they send Christian salutation.*

Dear Brethren!

IN our public preaching, we have set before you the importance of doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion; and have endeavoured to do the same in our annual epistles. We would now recommend to your serious consideration, the great and important doctrines mentioned at the head of the circular letter, to which your ministers and messengers every year give their assent.

The doctrine of three equal persons in the ever-adorable Trinity, is of very great importance. The Holy Scriptures inform us, that *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one.* The Father is distinct from the Word and the Holy Ghost: *All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me.* The Word (or the Son) is distinct from the Father and the Holy Ghost: *My Father worketh hitherto and I work*, says the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost is distinct from the Father and the Son: *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall reprove the world of sin, and guide into all truth.* Each person is truly and properly divine, according to the scriptures of truth; and

yet we are informed, that there is but one God. This, indeed, is a mystery, and it must remain so to us, at least in the present state.

Eternal and personal election is another doctrine mentioned at the head of our annual epistle. This is *not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.* The objects of God's love are chosen, that they *should be holy and without blame before him in love; that they should be conformed to the image of his Son; and were predestinated to complete and everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Original sin is another doctrine of our faith: *God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners.* You are therefore ever to remember, that you brought a corrupt nature into the world with you; and that all are corrupt, through the sin of their first parents. Hence the Psalmist saith, *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Particular redemption is another article of our faith. *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He hath visited and redeemed his people. He gave his life a ransom for many.*

Free justification by the righteousness of Christ imputed, is another article of our creed. As all men, by nature and practice, are become guilty before God, and are altogether incapable of working out a righteousness to justify themselves before him; it became absolutely necessary, in order to their salvation, that there should be a righteousness provided, sufficient to justify the sinner before a just and righteous God. Such a righteousness the Lord Jesus Christ hath wrought out, and brought in, for his people. Although, *by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; yet, by the righteousness of Christ imputed, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.*

Efficacious grace in regeneration, is another article of the Christian faith. *We must be born again; for, without this, we can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. No man can*
renew

renew his own heart, or the heart of his fellow-creature. It is the eternal God, by his Holy Spirit, who effects this change. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.*

The final perseverance of the saints, is an important article mentioned at the head of the circular letter. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall be stronger and stronger. He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

These, dear friends, we consider as some of the very important articles of our faith. By these, as revealed in the sacred scriptures, you are to examine what you hear from time to time. *To the law and to the testimony, if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

Experimental religion is what we sincerely recommend to you. That change of heart mentioned above, we sincerely wish you to experience. You must experience a hatred to sin as such, and as committed against a good and gracious God; you are to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; you must manifest your love to the Lord, by loving his word, by loving his people, by loving his service, and by delighting in holiness; you should seek to be made more holy in your thoughts, desires, purposes, and resolutions; to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. We are persuaded, that where there is grace, there will be a concern to have it daily increased.

We also heartily recommend to you the practice of religion. When the doctrine according to godliness is understood and properly received, and where the grace of God is implanted in the heart, it will, in a greater or less degree, manifest itself in the life and conduct. *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.* It well becomes you who profess religion, to come out from the company of the wicked and ungodly, and to separate yourselves from them, and constantly to guard against every thing which hath a tendency to carnalize the heart. Sin is of a very infectious nature: we are, therefore, not to touch the unclean thing, lest we should be defiled. Sin, once indulged, will be very likely to increase in strength.

We exhort you, not only to avoid that which is evil, but to practise that which is good, in every way possible. As you should be concerned to know, so you are ever to be ready to do the will of the great God. You are to employ the members of your bodies, and the powers of your souls, in his service. Upon all the duties of religion, private, social, and public, we are to attend in a very serious, humble, and spiritual manner, that God may be glorified in us and by us. Sin is a want of conformity unto, or a transgression of the holy law of God. The law is a transcript of Jehovah's perfections. Man was made to serve and glorify the great God, with all the powers of his soul; but by sin he debases himself, and all the powers which God hath given him, employing them in a way directly contrary to his revealed will. Sin accuses God of a want of wisdom and goodness; and in effect says, that real good is not to be found in a course of obedience to his holy will. It is an attempt to dethrone the Majesty of Heaven, and to set up poor vile man above the Divine Being, that he may reign in his stead. It is a contempt of God, of his holy law, and of his blessed image; and it is expressive of an approbation of the diabolical service of Satan. It is an horrid affront offered to the Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared readily and graciously to make atonement for our sins, by the sacrifice of himself. Every new act of sin, in a sense, crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to open shame.

Sin is an insult to the Holy and Blessed Spirit, whose work it is to subdue sin, and to implant real holiness in the souls of his people. He is called the *Holy Spirit*. Sin is as opposite to him as light to darkness, as heaven to hell.

Now, dear friends, if sin be thus odious and detestable; if it dishonours God, and is exceedingly injurious to your precious souls, you should learn to abhor and detest it. You see the reasons there are to humble yourselves before God, on account of your past conduct; wherein you have left undone that which you ought to have done, and have done that which you ought to have left undone—the need you have for watchfulness and prayer, that you enter not into temptation—the great importance of laying out yourselves, through the whole of your future life, in seeking to glorify God, and to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world. As you are daily to cherish true repentance for sin, so you are to seek after faith in Christ, and to have it daily increased. *Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,*
and

and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be much in reading the word of God; as that, in the hand of the Divine Spirit, is able to make you wise unto salvation. Be much in prayer to God, as the God of all grace; see to it that you pray in prayer; and be ever seeking to the Divine Spirit, for his powerful and gracious influences upon your hearts.

Be always concerned to set death, judgment, and an eternal world, before you. With these important things in view, you will be concerned to fill up your several stations creditably and usefully; to enjoy frequent discoveries of the divine mercy towards you while you continue here, and a meetness for the full enjoyment of God hereafter. Being thus under the divine influence, you have reason to hope for tokens of Jehovah's favour in this world, and for admission into his glorious presence in that which is to come. Not that our obedience is the cause of God's love to us; but it is the blessed effect of it, produced by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Those, therefore, who are holy in all manner of conversation and godliness, have the greatest evidence in their own experience, and they give abundant proof to others that they belong to God, that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and that they are heirs of that celestial state, where no sin or sorrow shall ever enter, but where a fulness of joy will be experienced; which, God grant we may be put into the eternal possession of; for Christ's sake! *Amen.*

Commending you, dear friends, to God, and to the word of his grace, we subscribe ourselves your brethren in the bonds of the gospel.

Signed by the Moderator,
JOSHUA THOMAS.

May 26, 1790.

B R E V I A T E S.

THE ministers and messengers of the churches met on Tuesday evening.—Brother Thomas was chosen moderator. Brother Henry Dawson prayed. The letters were read: the intelligence was agreeable in general; and Brother Tift concluded by prayer.

Wednesday morning, met at half past six o'clock.—The circular letter, drawn up by Brother Hiller, was read and approved. About

About ten o'clock the public service began. Brother Williams prayed. Brother Reece preached from Rom. xiv. 17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Brother Dore prayed, Brother Wilkins preached from 1 Thes. v. 18. *In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* Brother Butterworth concluded with prayer. At six o'clock in the evening, Brother Duncombe prayed. Brother Pearce preached from Micah vii. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.* Brother Aston concluded by prayer.

Resolved, That no church be admitted into, or continued in this connection, but such who profess to believe the doctrines mentioned in our circular letter.

Resolved, That the monthly meeting of prayer for the revival of religion, be continued.

In the affiliated churches, there were

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| Baptized | - | - | - | - | - | - | 90 |
| Received by letter | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 |
| Baptized at <i>Henley</i> (a branch of <i>Aulcester</i>) | | | | | | | 8 |
| | | | | | | | —103 |
| Dead | - | - | - | - | - | - | 29 |
| Excluded | - | - | - | - | - | - | 15 |
| Dismissed | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 |
| | | | | | | | — 49 |
| | | | | | | | — |
| | | | | | | | Increase 54 |

☞ The next Association to be held at *Ross*, on Tuesday and Wednesday in the Whitsun-week. Brother Thomas, of *Leominster*, and Brother Hiller, to preach. In case of failure, Brother Dore, of *Cirencester*.—Put up at the George.

THE

KENT AND SUSSEX LETTER,

ON THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

The Elders, Ministers, and Messengers of the several Baptist Churches, meeting at *Ashford*, *Sandhurst*, *Smarden*, *Tenterden*, and *Folkstone*, in Kent; *Battle*, *Rye*, *Wivelsfield*, *Lewes*, and *Brighthelmston*, in Sussex.

MAINTEINING the important doctrines of three equal persons in the divine essence; eternal and personal election to holiness here, and eternal life hereafter; the original

original guilt and depravity of mankind; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone; efficacious grace in regeneration: also, the perseverance of the saints to glory.

Assembled at TENTERDEN, the 2d and 3d days of *June*,
1790.

To the several churches they represent, send christian salutation.

Beloved Brethren in the Lord!

WE can better feel than express our happiness, in having an opportunity of addressing you, on so noble and important a subject, as the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of God's people; a subject of infinite weight and worth, the which when we forget or refuse to preach and maintain, *ichabod* may be written on our pulpits. When we consider the dignity, importance, and mystery of his operation on our hearts, we are struck with a sacred awe, and something of a delightful surprise; but when we attempt to describe the same to others, we are ready to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Surely, brethren, there never was a period when this truth needed more to be *explained* and *insisted* on than the present; for there are not wanting those who are ready to call every thing the work of the Spirit of God, which animates their fancies in reading or hearing religious subjects. This is enthusiasm with a witness: but let such know, that the truth of God hath often been brought into contempt and ridiculed on their account. Others there are who profess the name of the Lord Jesus, but never knew what the spiritual birth is: such persons, not having experienced the grace of God in their hearts, speak slightly, if not disrespectfully, of the operations of the "Holy One of Israel;" but such persons should be informed, that, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*¹.

That there is such a person as the Holy Ghost, is manifest from scriptural accounts of him. Different works are ascribed to him. He had a share in creating the world, and is said to have *moved upon the face of the waters*²; and *garnished the heavens, and formed the crooked serpent*³. He formed the human nature of Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

² Gen. i. 2.

³ Job. xxvi. 13.

Mary: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God* ³. We are at a loss to know how words can express the *personality* and *divinity* of the Holy Ghost, if these do not. Further, the Scriptures are called the *word of God*, and yet we find that they were written under the *inspiration* of the *Holy Ghost* ⁴; which is a farther illustration of his *personality* and *divinity*. But that which puts the matter out of all reasonable doubt, is his *omnipresence*; for we learn from Scripture, that the same Spirit which raised up Jesus from the dead, dwelleth in all the subjects of divine grace ⁵. How can this be explained, but by acknowledging the *omnipresence* of the Holy Ghost? And who can be *omnipresent*, but God?

At present we shall attend to the necessity—the parts—and the sufficiency of the work of the Holy Spirit.

First—The necessity of the effectual operations of the Holy Ghost, appears from the impossibility of our persons or services being accepted without faith. The word of God informs us, that *all men have not faith* ⁶: none have it, but those who are regenerated, since *the carnal mind is enmity against God*. How deplorable doth our case appear, if we have not the Spirit of God! because without him we can lay no claim to Christ, as having died for our sins and risen for our justification, but are enemies to his person and cross. Have not men in all ages pursued every method, but God's, to escape misery, and enjoy felicity? but, alas! how have their schemes miscarried! Ah, brethren! another day will discover this, more than it is possible for us now to conceive: however, of this we are assured, that *he who believeth not, shall be damned* ⁷.

Another consideration which adds fresh force to this branch of the subject, is, the impossibility of obtaining or possessing faith, unless the Holy Spirit be given unto us. Doth a natural man pretend to pray that God would give him faith? What are his prayers, unless he be conscious of his wretched state by nature, and sees the necessity of a real acquaintance with Christ? then (if this should be the case) he may take this consolation to himself, that *if the Lord had been pleased to destroy him, he would not have shewn him such things!* As for human efforts, however far they may conduct a man, yet they will never lead him into *green pastures*,

³ Luke i. 35. ⁴ 2 Pet. i. 21. ⁵ Rom. viii. 11. ⁶ 2 Thess. iii. 2.

⁷ Mark xvi. 16.

nor cause him to lie down beside the *still waters*. No, brethren! this is a work too noble for depraved man: it must be performed by the Holy Ghost, or it will never be done: think not that the Holy Spirit is in vain called *a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and of fear* ⁸.

Secondly, Let us now consider the different parts of his divine work.

1st. We shall begin with Regeneration. The Apostle Paul, when speaking on this subject, expressly says in his epistle to Titus ⁹, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. Now, no sinner can perform any works of righteousness acceptable to God, in a state of nature, as fallen in Adam, he himself being unrighteous; for the moral law of God is such that it extends to the *motives* as well as to the *actions*, and unless both are pure, and unite in every work of righteousness, it is impossible we can ever be saved by them: from hence it appears to be absolutely necessary that we be regenerated, or born again. Now, regeneration is a work of the Holy Ghost, infusing or implanting a divine principle in the heart of a sinner; a restoring and renewing the image of God in the soul; in which operation the soul is entirely passive. In some the work is felt more powerfully than in others; but wherever it takes place in any, it never miscarries, but proves effectual to their eternal salvation; for the Holy Spirit must be given of God, to effect such a work or change; and the volume of divine truth informs us, that *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance* ¹. Here let it be observed, that none are the subjects of this Divine Grace, but such as are chosen of God in Christ Jesus before the world began; for they, and they alone, *are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. The Holy Spirit was one among the numerous gifts which the Redeemer received at the hands of his Father, *when he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive*.

2ndly. Another part of the work of the Holy Spirit, is to discover the hidden mysteries of the Gospel. We will suppose a *vessel of mercy* already regenerated, but not enough acquainted with the method of salvation to obtain any solid happiness of soul on a good foundation; labouring at the same time under distressing views of his own depravity, the

⁸ Isa. xi. 2. ⁹ Tit. iii. 5. ¹ Rom. xi. 29.

pollution of his nature, the dishonour he hath done to God, and the awful distance he is at from him; not knowing wherewithal to come before God, or how to approach the Most High; troubled with fears that God will take vengeance on him, for having despised his authority, and trampled on his government; oppressed with the power of temptation, and ready to expire in despair. In such a case, what would the serious enquirer do? Were it not for the agency of God the Eternal Spirit, he would wander in endless labyrinths, darkness and difficulty: but here the Spirit of God kindly interposes, and discovers to the guilty sinner the blood of Jesus, which he beholds with the eye of faith; and by this his guilt is removed. He also reveals and applies the righteousness of Christ, which he wrought out for the justification of his own people: this at once satisfies the scrupulous conscience, renders the enquirer happy, and puts that triumphant challenge into his mouth, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect* ²?

The Spirit of God proceeds also to seal the believer.—This work is thus expressed: *In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise* ³. This *sealing of the Holy Spirit*, seems to be the satisfactory assurance which he gives the people of God of their safety after conversion, removing those doubts from their minds which are commonly incident to young converts. Some are sealed sooner, and others later, as seems good in the sight of JEHOVAH, who is a Sovereign in the dispensations of his Grace, both with respect to measure and time: this is what the Apostle terms, *The witness of the Spirit itself with our spirit, that we are the children of God* ⁴: this witnessing he affords sometimes under the preaching, or in reading the word of God; and at other times, when the soul is prostrate before the throne of Grace, or is contemplating divine subjects: this induced the Psalmist to say concerning God, *My meditation of him shall be sweet* ⁵.

Farther, the Spirit of God gives the saints considerable assistance in prayer, (Rom. viii. 26.) He is said to *help our infirmities*, which are very numerous, yet all known to him *who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins*: sometimes we labour under weakness of body; sometimes are straitened in spirit; at other times, darkness covers our minds like a cloud; and many things, well known to the children of God, sometimes combine to impede our approach to him;

² Rom. viii. 33. ³ Eph. i. 13. ⁴ Rom. viii. 16. ⁵ Ps. civ. 34.

but even, under these circumstances, God is pleased to appear for us; the Holy Spirit *maketh intercession for us*, i. e. stirs up and invigorates the graces which he hath implanted, indites our matter, and draws up our plea, giving us *access with boldness* into the divine presence.

Before our Lord left this world; he promised his disciples that he would send them the Holy Ghost, under the endearing characters of the *Comforter* and *Remembrancer* ⁶. Hence believers have infinite reason to rejoice; for they are sometimes exceeding sorrowful and low, mourning that they cannot love God, nor enjoy communion with him as they wish, nor experience that deadness to the world, nor affection for Heaven and heavenly things, which it is their duty and privilege to feel; yet while the believer laments his want of conformity to God, the Holy Spirit descends *to bind up the broken-hearted*, to give *the oil of joy for mourning*; and *the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness* ⁷.

Again, The people of God are frequently reduced and brought low, and in their unbelieving moments may be ready to say to those who try to comfort them, *All men are liars*. Then the Holy Spirit is pleased to bring former times to their remembrance; and they exclaim, as the Psalmist did, *I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar* ⁸.

But while we are in this thorny maze, we are never free from sin, and consequently seldom free from sorrow; we are exposed to many temptations from various quarters; Satan, that grand adversary of mankind, continually watches us; he knows our weakness, and what will suit us; he therefore presents to the view of our minds, objects adapted to our depraved appetites, and sometimes most unhappily prevails. What an instance of this appears in David, when he murdered Uriah, and took Bathsheba to wife? Therefore, when a believer falls into sin, the Holy Ghost sooner or later convinces his conscience, and makes him express himself like the humbled penitent, *Have mercy upon me, O God! according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions* ⁹. The Spirit of God doth not utterly forsake him, but only withdraws his sensible and comfortable presence for a time; yet, though sorrow endure for a night, joy shall return in the morning; for he will restore unto him the joys of salvation, and uphold him from despair and apostacy.

⁶ John xiv. 26. ⁷ Isa. lxi. 1. 3. ⁸ Ps. xlii. 6. ⁹ Ps. li. 1.

Lastly, We are told by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that God gives the Holy Spirit to his people, to be an *earnest* of the heavenly inheritance ¹. This assures us of, and secures our perseverance through every obstruction to, immortal felicity; and though our inherent strength, as saints, be insufficient, yet the Blessed Spirit will strengthen us in our inward man. It is impossible that he can deceive us; therefore, if we are possessed of the Holy Spirit, and if he be the earnest of the inheritance of the saints in light, we may with a holy confidence triumph as the Apostle Paul did, saying, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* ².

Thirdly, We proceed to the sufficiency of the operation of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish whatever he takes in hand.

This may be proved from his *Omnipotence*. That he had a share in creating the world, hath already been observed: and who but the Lord God Omnipotent could move upon the waters, fix their bounds, and regulate and keep them there, as he hath done from the beginning? It may be farther proved from the power he hath over *devils*; for, Christ, in the days of his flesh, cast out devils by the power of the Holy Ghost; (Matt. xii. 28.), *but if he cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you*. We may also confirm it by the power which he hath over wicked men. Ananias and Sapphira both lied to the Holy Ghost ³, who, in the same chapter, is called God; and to resent this insult offered to his Sacred Majesty, he smote them both so that they died immediately.

The sufficiency of his operations to answer the ends for which he is given, is manifest from the effectual and surprising change which he produces when he takes possession of the soul. Where shall we find a brighter instance of this than the Apostle Paul, who was once Satan's captive, under strong delusions, under the dominion of sin, and in total darkness; thirsting for the blood of the saints; but, in the height of his mad career, stopped by the voice of heaven, and sent home an altered man; and afterwards declared himself, that what things were gain to him before conversion, he now counted loss for Christ's sake ⁴.

The sufficiency of the operations of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of believers, is further manifest from that holy

¹ Eph. i. 14. ² Rom. viii. 38, 39. ³ Acts v. ⁴ Phil. iii. 7.

magnanimity and fortitude, with which some of the saints have suffered tribulation in the cause of religion, and for the sake of Christ; such as Daniel in the lions den—the three children in the fiery furnace—the apostles of the Lord Jesus, and many servants of God of a later date, who have cheerfully embraced the stake, been surrounded by fiery faggots, and (if we may so speak) whose heaven-born souls have ascended to glory in flames of fire.

From what hath been said, we may venture to affirm,

First, that the sanctification of believers is the work of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord said, *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you* ⁵. This he fulfilled to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and to believers in all ages; the Spirit imparting those measures of Grace in time, which were given to them of God in Christ Jesus before the world began; and as it is impossible for us to obtain a sight of the Redeemer's glory, but as the Holy Spirit discovers the same, so likewise, by every believing view we have of him, we are transformed into his glorious image; to which heavenly pattern we must be conformed, before we can be said to be made meet to be partakers of the heavenly inheritance.

Secondly, Strong consolations may be drawn from these truths. God hath made a provision for all our miseries, and the Holy Ghost will apply the same as necessity calls for it. Do we sometimes complain of darkness and contraction of mind? let us remember, *that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*. Call then upon him in the day of trouble, and *he will break the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder* ⁶, and proclaim liberty to the captive mind. He will not always lead us into temptation and trouble, but will sometimes conduct us to the top of the hills, whence we shall see *the land that is afar off, and behold the king in his beauty* ⁷; then, with what contempt shall we look down on this world! But this is our consolation, that *it is not our rest*; we still thirst after Canaan, those sweet fields which are beyond the swelling floods of death, whose inhabitants shall not say, *we are sick*, and whose iniquities shall be forgiven them ⁸. Surely there is no pleasure in this world, to be compared unto communion with God in Jesus Christ; it sometimes makes us exclaim with ardour, *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart on the mountains of spices* ⁹.

⁵ John xvi. 14. ⁶ Ps. cvii. 16. ⁷ Isa. xxxiii. 17. ⁸ Isa. xxxiii. 24.

⁹ Sol. Song, viii. 14.

Thirdly, Let us enquire, are there none among us who have left their first love; none, who seem so indifferent, carnal, and sluggish, as to make their ministers and brethren very much suspect their religion; none, who seem to have hardly religion enough to keep them within the pale of the church? Surely, there are such to be found. The true state of such persons is doubtful to us; however, we have a few things to say to them: If you find yourselves dull and inactive in the ways of God, do not think of laying the blame on the Spirit of God, saying, Ah! he is a sovereign; but know this, that if you sin against God, and cause him to withhold his kind influence, the blame belongs to you, and not to God; and until you confess the same with brokenness of heart, you will not enjoy the tokens of his favour. We entreat you to take care that you *grieve* not, nor *quench* the Spirit, but pray, saying, *Awake, O North Wind! and come, thou South! blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out: let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits*¹.

Lastly, It is probable that this letter may fall into the hands of some who regard not the operations of the Holy One of Israel, nor understand the fear of the Lord. Of such persons we have one question to ask—Can you lay your hands upon your breasts, after having read this letter, and solemnly declare, that it is a general description of your sentiments and experience? If not, you are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity; and should God dispatch his messenger, Death, to summon your spirits to his awful bar, your case would be desperate beyond description and remedy. Consider how many years God hath spared you! With what mercies your lives have been loaded, and how great your obligations are to love and serve the Lord! but your greatest obligation arises from your living in a gospel-land, where the trumpet of the everlasting gospel sounds; and be assured, that if you perish under these advantages, your guilt will be great indeed. But, God forbid that this letter should be a means of aggravating the punishment of any, who through wickedness and hardness of heart reject the counsel of God against themselves!

But probably some one will be ready to say, If I am an enemy to God, this severe method of reasoning will not soften my mind; it is like the tremendous wind, earthquake, and fire, which Elijah saw, yet the Lord was not in them.

¹ Sol. Song, iv. 16.

But know you not, that we are commanded to plow up the fallow ground, and not to sow among thorns? Did not the Apostles, by the terrors of the Lord, persuade men? However, for your encouragement, we are authorised to tell you, that any sinner who feels an heart and inclination to come to Jesus Christ for eternal life, in God's own appointed way, is heartily welcome, and may hope that the Spirit of God hath begun a *good work in him, which shall be performed until the day of Jesus Christ*². Hear the words of Christ, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*³. And now, May the Spirit of Truth follow these few lines with a divine blessing. *Amen!*

Signed on the behalf of the Assembly, by

JOSEPH MIDDLETON, Moderator.

² Phil. i. 6. ³ John vi. 37.

B R E V I A T E S.

TENTERDEN, 2d and 3d of June, 1790.

HAVING experienced much of God's goodness through the past year, the ministers and messengers of the associated churches met on Wednesday afternoon, about three o'clock, agreeable to appointment; and, impressed with gratitude to God, and brotherly love to one another, the solemnity was begun with prayer by Brother Purdy. The names of the ministers and messengers were called over, and Brother Middleton was chosen moderator, and Brother Scott the scribe. The moderator then read the preliminaries of the Association; after which, the letters from the different churches were called for and read; the contents of which, we were happy to find, engaged us more to thankfulness than mourning; for the churches were (in general) in possession of much peace and harmony, and aware of the prevailing and pernicious errors of the day. May God preserve the churches from every delusion!

The church at Battle requested the assistance of the ministers of the associated churches, during the absence of their pastor. The church at Battle likewise proposed the following question to consideration, viz.—How far may the temporal concerns of a church of Christ be attended to on the Lord's day? The Rev. Mr. Stanger, pastor of the church at Bessel's Green, in Kent, proposed the church under his care to be a branch of the Association; and it was resolved, that the said church be requested to send a letter to the associated churches, at their next meeting, declaring explicitly their faith and order; after which our brethren, Smith and Butcher, concluded the meeting with prayer. Divine worship began at seven o'clock, by singing. Brother

Farmery, from Difs, in Norfolk, who was at this time in Kent, collecting for his meeting-house, prayed. Brother Cromwell preached from 1 Theff. v. 12, 13. and Brother Booker concluded with prayer.

Resolved, That the advice of the associated ministers and messengers to the church at Battle, in answer to their question, is this, "That the temporal concerns of a church ought not to be attended to on the Lord's day, except when it be absolutely necessary."

Thursday morning met at six o'clock. Brother Atwood and Brother Parham prayed. Brother Wake, who had been appointed to draw up the circular letter, read the same, which, being approved, was ordered to be printed.

The brethren, Purdy and Vidler, were desired to draw up plans for an association-fund, and to lay them before the next meeting.

The case at Uckfield in Suffex, and Difs in Norfolk, were voted to be good cases, and worthy of recommendation.

On account of the silence of the church at Rotherfield, the Association considers that church as no longer a branch of their body. The moderator concluded with prayer.

Divine worship began at ten o'clock. Brother Wake began with prayer. Brother Purdy preached from 1 Theff. iii. 7, 8. Brother Stanger, after suitable hymns were sung, concluded with prayer.

Letters were read from the Charlestown Association in America; and it was agreed that Messrs. Lloyd, Copping, Purdy, Atwood, Vidler and Middleton, should compose a committee of correspondence.

Brother Atwood proposed the following question to the Association, viz.—Whether any matter respecting church government, can be received by this Association from any church not belonging to it? Answered in the negative.

Resolved, That the next Association be held at Rye, on Wednesday and Thursday in the Whitfun-week. Brother Lloyd to introduce the business of the Association, in a suitable discourse. Brother Wake and Brother Copping to preach on Thursday; and in case of failure, the brethren Vidler and Middleton. Brother Lloyd to draw up the circular letter. Put up at the George.

State of the Associated Churches.

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Baptized | - | - | - | - | - | - | 43 |
| Received by letter | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| | | | | | | | —46 |
| Dismissed | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Excluded | - | - | - | - | - | - | 12 |
| Dead | - | - | - | - | - | - | 11 |
| | | | | | | | —25 |

Increase 21

THE

THE
WESTERN LETTER,
ON TRUTH AND ERROR..

The Elders, Ministers, and Messengers of the several Baptist Churches, meeting at *Falmouth, Chacewater, Plymouth Dock, Plymouth, Kingsbride, Bovey-Tracey, Exon, Tiverton, Lyme, Loughwood, Prescott, Wellington; Pithay, and Broadmead, Bristol, and Thornbury.* Having received letters also from *Portsmouth, Sarum, Bratton, Melksham, Calne, Bradford, Crockerton, Frome, Paulton, Cheltenham, Horsley, Wotton, Grittleten, Sudbury, Bridgewater, Hatch, Chard, Horsington, Upottery, Stoke-Gomer, Cullumpton, and Banp-*
ton.

Being met in association at **PLYMOUTH**, May 25, 26, 1790.

To the several churches they represent send Christian salutation.

Dear Brethren!

BEING once more permitted to meet together, and having considered the accounts received from the several churches in this connection, it is with pleasure we inform you, that many of them have had additions, and some of them very considerable.—This, amidst the many trials and cares we are called to encounter, has given us joy, and afforded us matter for much thankfulness: nevertheless we cannot but with real sorrow and the deepest concern behold the rapid strides that error is making in this our day of splendid profession; and though, brethren, we are persuaded better things of you, yet we think it needful to write unto you, and to exhort you earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. To this end, we pray you to remember the hole of the pit from whence ye were digged—to remember the deplorable condition of the human race in a state of nature,

“ Sprung from the man, whose guilty fall
Corrupts his race, and taints us all.”

This declaration of that pious divine, and sweet finger of Israel, Dr. Watts, must be, more or less, the experimental language of every regenerate soul.

There are two benefits which naturally spring from this consideration, viz. The knowledge of our own state; and a proper view of the moving, meritorious, and efficient cause of our salvation.

By reflecting properly on the fall, we shall be led to see, that through our first parents disobedience, man became obnoxious to the justice of God; for the scriptures declare, all have sinned in him: But this is not the only evil that Adam our federal head brought upon us; we have likewise derived from him a corrupted nature, through the influence of which we became practically unrighteous, and consequently actual transgressors before God. This is the awful state of every son and daughter of Adam; for God himself declares, *All are gone out of the way; there is none righteous, no not one.* Hence it appears, that man, by nature, has neither power nor inclination to deliver himself from the miserable state into which his guilt has plunged him; and the scripture declares, that *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.* Rom. iii. 20. This being properly considered, the soul will be led to look further than self for deliverance; and the favourite cry of the day, Do and live, will be exploded.—He will exclaim with Paul, *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Eph. i. 3, 4, 5. and will say with the same apostle in another place, *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* 2 Tim. i. 9.

With these views, God will be honoured, and the afflicted conscience comforted; the soul will catch the flame of heavenly love, from the free love of the Father, in chusing, and in giving Christ to suffer and die for guilty, helpless sinners; and faith, looking to a crucified Christ, will produce genuine repentance in the soul, agreeable to the promise made of old, Zech. xii. 10. *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn,* &c. Thus the soul, sanctified through the truth, will experience the happy fulfilment of that precious promise made by the Redeemer, John viii. 32. *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

If

If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Hence God will have all the praise and glory, both as the redeemer and sanctifier of his people; and the soul, enjoying the inestimable blessing of union with Christ, will find faith more or less in exercise, going out in the workings of divine love, leading him to glorify God by a life of evangelical obedience; he will not defer his coming to Christ; will not tarry to blow up the sparks of affection on the altar of self-righteousness, in order to qualify himself for acceptance. All true believers, who know Christ, the fountain of life and grace, will come to him empty, conscious they have nothing to bring, but weakness, guilt, and misery; and as he has ordained peace for them, he will therefore work all their works in them, for it is God that worketh effectually in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Phil. ii. 13. and his providences, word, and Spirit, direct all their steps. Psal. xxxvii. 23. In this view of evangelical truth, it is easy to see, that an holy walk and conversation is connected with a true faith in Christ, as the fruit and effect of union with him; when the tree is made good, the fruit will be good also. Matt. vii. 17. Believers are subjects of special grace: Christ, through the agency of the eternal Spirit, is formed in them the hope of glory; consequently sin cannot have the dominion over such characters, for they are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. vi. 14. And if we attend to the voice of inspiration, we shall find this to be the great end proposed by God in chusing to himself a people: hence, his language concerning them is, *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*, Isa. xliii. 21. This same view the apostle Peter maintained in his address to the scattered Christians, 1 Pet. ii. 9. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* And likewise St. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, who having particularly insisted on the rich mercy of God, and the great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in sins, chap. ii. 4, 5. tells them, verse the 10th, that they were God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that they should walk in them. And addressing himself to his son Titus, he exhorts him to speak the things which became sound doctrine, and to enforce different duties on various characters in their respective stations; for he saith, chap. ii. 11, &c. *The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this*

present world: looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We would therefore say, brethren, our hearts desire and prayer to God for you all is, that you may be enabled, by your pious conduct and good conversation, so to make manifest your union with Christ, and faith in him, that we, whom the Lord hath placed in his Church as under shepherds, may with pleasure say, *We are bound to give thanks always to God, for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.* 2 Thess. ii. 13. We are then persuaded, brethren, you will see it to be both your duty and privilege to guard against two errors in particular, which in our day prevail among persons professing godliness.

The first is the leaven of Arminianism, which, by asserting and maintaining a power in the creature either to receive or reject the grace of Christ, and insisting on certain qualifications, such as repentance, love, good frames, and holy dispositions prior to justification, disseminates around the seeds of Popery, denies the electing love of the Father, the finished work of the Son, and the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit which the scriptures declare to be irresistible; and by denying the perseverance of the saints, gives God himself the lie, who declares, that where he has begun the good work, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Phil. i. 6. and that none shall pluck his sheep out of his hands; it makes God unrighteous in permitting those to perish, for whom his justice has received full satisfaction. As these are but a few of the many evils which flow from Arminianism, we exhort you, brethren, to beware of this pernicious doctrine: stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

But a second error, of which we have too much cause to complain, is the baneful and pernicious poison of Antinomianism. We would not here be understood to refer to that doctrine, which maintains justification to be independent of the deeds of the law, as a free act of God's divine sovereignty and love, founded on the perfect atonement and obedience of Christ, and made manifest to us through the effectual operations of the Eternal Spirit, which through enmity or ignorance has been branded with this epithet; but we would be understood to speak of that horrid doctrine which makes
God

God the author of sin, by charging it on his absolute decrees; and the minister of sin, by denying the sanctification of the Spirit, and substituting the holiness of Christ as imputed for our sanctification; and which further asserts, that God does not punish or chasten his people for sin, though he expressly declares the contrary in his holy word. Thus the advocates for Antinomianism turn the doctrine of the grace of God into licentiousness; and so far as they hold the truth, hold it in unrighteousness, and thereby bring the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ into disesteem. The pernicious influence this doctrine hath on the mind, too evidently appears in the lives of its professors; therefore, brethren, we beseech you to flee from this growing evil. Contend earnestly for the power of the Gospel, and for the effects and evidences of union with Christ through sanctification and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

But there is yet another error, against which we think it our duty to guard you, which in its consequences, if received, will prove as pernicious as either of the former, we mean a denying the Divinity of Jesus Christ; for if Christ be not a divine person, possessing all fulness of deity, then his death, resurrection and ascension, are rendered of none effect, the Gospel is a mere jumble of inconsistencies, a heap of flat contradictions, and the whole race of Adam are yet in their sins; for, with the atonement of Christ, which could only be rendered efficacious by his divinity, our present and future happiness stands connected and secured; therefore Paul's language to the Corinthians was, *I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* He could not intend by this expression, that Christ suffered as a martyr, and died only to seal the truth of his doctrine with his blood; but undoubtedly meant what he affirms in other places of his inspired Epistles, that Christ died a sacrifice for us, *died for our sins, and rose again for our justification: was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,* 2 Cor. v. 21. And that by making his soul an offering for sin, he became the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.—This doctrine of the atonement of Christ, which cannot be supported without his divinity, is connected with, and deeply concerned in all our graces, duties, and privileges.

If we speak of faith, repentance, love, hope, prayer, praise, or obedience to the commands of God and Christ, these

these all fall to the ground ; they are of no consequence to us, unless founded on the divinity and atonement of Christ. Our faith cannot avail us, if it does not rest here. Hence Paul says, *God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood.* Our hatred to sin, and repentance for it, is built on this doctrine ; and the Apostles have used this as the chief argument for that purpose in all their writings. Does not our love, as flowing from faith in the blood of Christ, centre here ? Yea, does not also our hope depend on the death and resurrection of Christ ?—Surely it does.

Hence the Apostle says, Rom. v. 5. *Hope maketh us not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* And our access to God, by prayer and praise, is only through this medium, Heb. x. 19. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, &c. let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, &c.* This the Apostle calls *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.* Our obedience, to his ordinances rest on this doctrine of Christ's atonement ; we are commanded to break the bread, and take the cup at the Lord's table in remembrance of it. And the ordinance of Baptism has the same basis ; this it was meant to shadow forth, and was therefore ordered to be administered in the name of the Son, as well as the Father and Spirit. Moreover, all the promises made to men respecting pardon of sin, justification, acceptance with God, sanctification, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, answers to prayer, and all present enjoyments, as well as future glory, flow freely through this channel—the divinity and atonement of Christ.

Suffer then, brethren, the word of exhortation : examine yourselves, search the Scriptures, for in them you have the mind and will of God relative both to your faith and practice. We affectionately sympathize with you in your afflictions, and mourn for the late breaches made in churches and families by bereaving providences ; but who can say to the Almighty, What doest thou ? He taketh away, and who can hinder ? Yet remember, beloved, though friends and ministers die, and earthly comforts fail, your Redeemer liveth, he is King in Zion ; the government is upon his shoulders, he is a very present help in trouble ; whatever he is pleased to deprive you of, he assures you, that he will
never

never take away his loving kindness from you, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; *for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii. 5.

And now, brethren, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace: may you be found with your lamps trimmed, and oil in your vessels, looking for and expecting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; for unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. In the mean time, that God may help you to adorn the doctrine of your Saviour in all things, walking as children of the light, to the praise and glory of him, who hath saved you and called you with an holy calling, is the prayer of

Your affectionate brethren
in the faith and hope of the gospel,
PHILIP GIBBS.

Signed also, on behalf of the Assembly, by
the Moderator,

C. EVANS.

Plymouth, May 26, 1790.

B R E V I A T E S.

TUESDAY afternoon, May 25, met at six.—Brother Redding began in prayer; the preliminaries were read; brother Evans, of Bristol, was chosen moderator; the letters from the churches were read, minutes taken, and the service concluded in prayer by our brother Dunn, at nine.

Wednesday morning, May 26, met at seven.—Our brethren Thomas of Prescot, Hugh Giles, Joseph Dawson, and Norman, prayed.

At half past ten met again.—Our brother Sprague prayed. The moderator preached from 2 Cor. iv. 5. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* Brother Penn concluded in prayer.

Met again at four in the afternoon.—Brother Hugh Giles prayed. Our brother Tommas, of Bristol, preached from Ezek. xlii. 12. *This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy: behold this is the law of the house.* Brother Tommas prayed, the circular letter prepared by our brother Gibbs was read, and the public assembly dismissed with the usual benediction at six.

The ministers and messengers then settled the business of the association fund, and other matters that came before them; and at seven the Moderator closed the whole with prayer.

It was earnestly recommended by one of the churches, that a caution should be inserted in the general letter against hastily admitting ministers to preach in the churches, whose characters are dubious, or but little known, as the peace of many churches has been thereby destroyed, and many evil consequences arisen. The very mention of such a needful and salutary piece of advice is judged sufficient, as it carries with it, to every considerate mind, its own recommendation.

The following letter, received last year from Granville Sharp, Esq; was read, and a third benefaction of five guineas was voted to the treasurer of the truly honourable committee for the abolition of the Slave Trade, as a further testimony of our high approbation of their zealous efforts to obtain the removal of so great an evil.

Rev. Sir, *Leadenhall-street, London, July 11, 1789.*

HAVING communicated the resolution of the Western Baptist Association at Horsley, dated the 3d and 4th ult. to the committee of the society for effecting the abolition of the Slave Trade, I received their directions to request that you will be pleased to acquaint that association, that their approbation of the endeavours of this committee, and their so hearty concurrence with us in the purposes of our institution, affords very great satisfaction to the committee, and encouragement to their steady perseverance: and they also desire me to acknowledge the receipt of the second subscription from the association, of five guineas, which has been received by the treasurer of this committee.

I am, with great respect,

Rev. Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

GRANVILLE SHARP,

Chairman.

Rev. Mr. Horsley,

*Moderator of the Western Baptist Association,
at Horsley, Gloucestershire.*

Agreed, To recommend to the churches a monthly meeting of prayer, the first Monday evening in every month, for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the promised blessings of the *latter day*; and Mr. Jonathan Edwards's Sermons on that subject, reprinted lately, and sold by Mr. Button, Newington-Causeway, London, price nine-pence only; in which such a meeting is strongly enforced, and which has already been adopted, not only by two of our own associations, but by many other ministers and churches of different denominations. The fervent effectual prayers of the righteous avail much.

Agreed, To hold the next association at Wotton-Under-edge, Gloucestershire, Tuesday and Wednesday in the Whitsun-week, to begin at *three* precisely on Tuesday. Our brethren, Birt of Plymouth Dock, and Day of Wellington, to preach the sermons; or, in case of failure, our brother Kingdon. Our brother Sprague to prepare the circular letter.

In

In the ASSOCIATED CHURCHES, the last year, there were

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|-------|------------|---|---|---|-------|----|
| Baptized, | - | - | - | 166 | Dead, | - | - | - | - | 46 |
| Received by letter, | - | - | - | 10 | Dismissed, | - | - | - | - | 4 |
| Restored, | - | - | - | 3 | Excluded, | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| | | | | <hr/> | | | | | <hr/> | |
| | | | | 179 | | | | | | 60 |

Increase, - - - 119.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ASSOCIATION IN NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK,

To the Rev. JOHN RIPPON.

Rev. Sir,

Ringshall.

I RECEIVED your's, and, as far as I am able to form a judgment of your intended Register by the proposals you sent me, I do approve of it, and wish to promote it to the uttermost of my power. And, Sir, according to your request, I shall give you the best information I can of the several churches of our denomination in NORFOLK and SUFFOLK. These churches in association, are six: *viz.*

Worstead in Norfolk: this church is now, and has been for many years under the pastoral care of the worthy, laborious, useful, and aged servant of God, Mr. Edward Trivett; this is the largest and the most ancient of the whole, and is in a flourishing condition. The next to this, is situate at

Claxton in Norfolk, and is at present under the care of Mr. Henry Utting, a very aged and infirm disciple of Jesus: this church is but small in number, though very respectable. The next of these churches meets for the worship of God, at

Shelfanger, but formerly at *Rushall in Norfolk*, and is under the pastoral care of Mr. Thomas Smith: this is but small, and by reason of some trials which they have met with, is apparently upon the decline. The last of these *Norfolk* churches in association, is situate at

Great Yarmouth, under the pastoral care of Mr. Jabez Browne, a very judicious and humble servant of Jesus Christ: this church is not large, but, through a divine blessing upon the labours of their present minister, appears to be in a flourishing and increasing condition.

There

There are but two churches of our denomination in the county of *Suffolk*; the first is situate at

Ipswich, formerly at *Woolverstone*, a parish about four miles distant from *Ipswich*, at this time under the pastoral care of Mr. George Hall, and is very respectable. This people were formerly a branch of *Colchester*, under the pastoral care of Mr. John Rootsey; but after his death, they embodied together as a separate church, as far as I can recollect, about thirty-five years ago, and chose for their pastor, Mr. Samuel Sowden, who laboured amongst them in his Master's work about sixteen years, and was then removed by death, I doubt not, to the Church Triumphant;—much respected and lamented by all the churches with which he was connected. The last of these associated churches is that at

Wattisham, in the county of *Suffolk*, and is under the pastoral care of him who is least of Saints, and chief of sinners, John Hitchcock. This church, from a very small beginning, was separately embodied in the year 1763: in the same year, the church chose and ordained the above-named John Hitchcock to be their under shepherd, who has continued according to his poor abilities to this day, not, he hopes, without the divine blessing, and some success in spreading the Redeemer's kingdom and interest. A prayer-meeting of three persons was followed with the baptism of twenty-eight, who formed themselves into a church, and have since greatly increased. Not unto me, but unto the Lord's name, be the glory!

The first association of these churches was in the year 1769; our last meeting was held at *Worstead* in 1790. But, Sir, I would inform you, though there are but two Baptist churches in *Suffolk*, yet there are several beside those in association with us, in the county of *Norfolk*, as *Norwich*, *Lyn*, *Elden*, and one not long since planted at *Dis*, where Mr. Charles Farmery is lately settled. This, Sir, is only a short and imperfect account of things: I have not such materials at present*, as would have enabled me to have given a more full and perfect one. Please to send me thirty copies of the Register, and I will remit you the money directly.

I remain your Servant and Brother,

In the bonds of the Gospel,

JOHN HITCHCOCK.

* Since the above was written, Mr. Hitchcock has been so good as to intimate a design of favouring the Register with a more copious account of the churches in this connection.

THE
NORTHERN ASSOCIATION.

THE Brethren belonging to this ancient association now and then have printed their letters ; but no one has yet appeared for the year 1790. This union consists of seven churches, which, from their situation, are called *The Eastern and Western District*.

THE EASTERN DISTRICT.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| HAMSTERLEY | <i>Durham</i> | Charles Whitefield, past. |
| ROWLEY | Ditto | John Ross, ditto |
| NEWCASTLE upon Tyne | <i>Northumberland</i> | |

THE WESTERN DISTRICT.

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| BROUGHTON | <i>Cumberland</i> | Jacob Hutton, pastor |
| WHITEHAVEN | Ditto | William Graham, ditto |
| HAWKSHEADHILL | <i>Lancashire</i> | |
| TOTTLEBANK | Ditto | Thomas Harbottle, ditto |

It is proposed, that these churches shall have an annual association in the month of June in each district alternately ; the churches in whose district it is not, to meet a month before by their Ministers and Messengers, and to depute one Minister at least, to carry their letters, and represent them all in the general association for that year : distance of situation is mentioned as the principal reason of this plan, and it is presumed that the communion of these churches may be thus maintained, and the advantages of an association enjoyed. An accurate account of this association from the year 1699, is come to hand, drawn up for the Register by Brother Charles Whitefield, of *Hamsterley*, consisting of above seventy close pages in quarto.

T H E
W E L S H L E T T E R*,
ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

The Ministers and Messengers of the several Churches of Jesus Christ, in *South* and *North Wales*, owning the only true God, viz. the Scripture Trinity, the Father, Son and Spirit, in union inseparable, yet distinguishable; holding likewise faith before baptism; the major part practising the laying on of hands on the baptized; all holding that the BIBLE is our perfect rule; and our belief respecting its truths is to be seen, partly in the Confession of Faith usually mentioned, and also in our sermons and religious practices: Met in association at *Dolau*, in the county of *Radnor*, on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of June 1790.

To the several Churches we represent, Greeting.

Dear Brethren!

AS it is the last time you are to be saluted in this manner, we wish affectionately to animate you to hold fast the faithful word, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: with a view to this end, we judged it meet to put into your hands, this year, the following directions, with a desire that you may retain them in your hearts. They are

Some articles relating to Church Discipline, briefly discussed, and designed to assist the disciples of Christ to know their duty and privilege; and that all the Baptist churches in Wales may understand how to walk by the same rule, and mind the same things concerning discipline, so far as they see these particulars to agree with the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness.

1. Let us consider what a church is according to the Scripture.

* Contrary to the original design, this letter is somewhat abridged, and in two or three places a little altered since it was translated; but the Breviates of the Association are given at length.

First,

First, It denotes all God's elect, Heb. xii. 23.—all that are redeemed by Christ, Jews and Gentiles, Matt. xvi. 18. Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. 32.—beloved of God, and called to be Saints, Rom. i. 7. In this sense we call it the *invisible* church, not known unto the world. 1 John iii. 1.

Secondly, A congregation of professing people, as a nation; so Israel, according to the flesh, were accounted a church, Acts vii. 38.

Thirdly, A congregation of persons under the New Testament, Jews and Gentiles, professing faith in Christ, and repentance towards God; as the church at Jerusalem, at Corinth, and the seven churches of Asia. In this sense, good and bad constitute the church, Mat. xiii. 47, 48. and xxii. 10. Some foolish virgins are among the wise; and some unprofitable servants, without the wedding garment. But the professed order, by which they came into the church, is this; they first gave their own selves unto the Lord, then to his church, 2 Cor. viii. 5. In this view we call it, a *visible* church.

2. It has been, and still is, necessary to have officers in every church, Acts xiv. 23. (1) Elders or ministers, to preach the word, and administer ordinances. (2) It is convenient also to have other elders, as *helps*, to preserve due order, 1 Cor. xii. 28. (3) Deacons are likewise necessary in the church, 1 Tim. iii. 8. &c. to serve tables, Acts vi. 2, 3. to see that the ox which treadeth out the corn be not muzzled, 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10. and that the poor are not neglected. The qualifications of the officers should be according to the Scripture, 1 Tim. iii. 1. &c. and their number according to the number and extent of the church.

3. It is proper that the members of a church should bind themselves to the Lord, and to each other, by covenant. We often find that the people of Israel entered into covenant, and bound themselves by vows, Deut. v. 27. and xxix. 10—12. Neh. x. 28. &c. And we have reason to conclude, that under the New Testament, some engaged by covenant; for they are mentioned as *truce-breakers*, under the form of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 3. 5. Reason and experience shew, that no society can be supported orderly, comfortably, and peaceably, without it. This covenant at least implies these things; (1) that the persons bind themselves to strive against sin, and for the faith; or in other words, to lay aside the service of Sin and Satan, and cleave to the Lord, his worship and service; and adhere to the people of God, the excellent of the earth, especially to those of the same fellow-ship,

ship, remembering the old commandment and the new is, *Love one another*; (2) that they are to watch over one another in love, to exhort each other; and if it be needful, to reprove and rebuke one another, but in the spirit of the Gospel, and according to the rule of God's word; (3) that he who is overtaken in any fault should receive reproof, rebuke, or advice, in humility, confessing his fault, and forsaking it; (4) that none should behave as busy bodies and tale-bearers, mentioning the business of the church to the people of the world; (5) that all should endeavour to keep their place in the church, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is; (6) that they should be willing and ready to contribute what may be necessary and meet for the support of the *cause of Christ*, and that according to what they have, and not to what they have not.

4. Should any one of the church, through hardness of heart, undervalue and forget God; and despise his word, his church, and the above covenant, and return to his former sinful practices, or become worse than before; with such we are directed not to keep company, no not to eat. The place of such is to be without the camp; and should it appear that the plague is in his forehead, he should be driven out in haste, although he were a king, 2 Chron. xxvi. 20. But if any member has fallen through a sudden and fiery temptation, as Peter, and manifests godly repentance for sin as he did, such a person is an object of pity and compassion. *Restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted*, Gal. vi. 1.

5. It is proper that meetings should be supported in the church every Lord's day, for prayer, reading, singing praise, and preaching the word; on which the minister, the officers, and every other member, should carefully attend. There are also more private occasional meetings to be kept on other days, as prayer meetings, preparative meetings for the Lord's Supper; and besides those, it may be proper and useful to keep meetings, to declare and hear what God hath done for our souls.

6. When members are not prevented by any lawful impediment, arising from sickness, restraint of superiors, distance or badness of roads, and yet neglect filling up their place in the church, while they can travel otherways for pleasure or business, it is right to reprove them for their neglect of assembling themselves together, that thus they may be brought back into the bond of the covenant.

7. Should

7. Should any member neglect his communion, it is right to call him to an account, or to inform one or more of the officers, that they may enquire why he doth not walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

8. Should a person wilfully continue to neglect his place, after frequent warning; such an one virtually separates himself, and therefore should be excluded.

9. Church members should have great love for, and maintain fellow-feeling with each other, as belonging to the same body; then there would not be too much haste in the one to exclude the other.

10. Church members should be without respect of persons, and be very self-denying; then the rights of the poor and the rich would be mutually regarded, and it would be as easy to bear as to do wrong, to forgive as to expect forgiveness.

11. As some things may happen, which may not appear so plainly (to the weak in understanding) to be included in the above covenant; that is, should any matter of importance arise, which it is difficult to adjust, so as best to promote the honour of God, and benefit the person concerned, without giving offence to others; in such a case, the judgment and advice of the church should be asked, and given according to the word of God: if the advice be according to the Scriptures, and rejected, such reject the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?

12. Let us observe, that no person should be received into church covenant or communion, without being baptized after the example of the primitive church, Acts ii. 41, 42.

13. It is proper for young preachers to be kept within the limits of the church, to be tried, 1 Cor. xiv. 29. until the church in general judge them to be qualified, with respect to their understanding, prudence, gifts, and conduct, for more public and extensive service. And then let the church they belong to certify it by a letter, that all things may be done decently and in order, 1 Cor. xiv. 40. And let other churches, which they may visit, require such young preachers to produce their letter of recommendation, and see likewise that it be not of very old date, lest the bearers should have forfeited their character since it was written.

14. When two churches meet near each other, it is right not to receive one member from the other, till the two churches first consult together, and take time to consider

the matter well, especially if the two churches hold the same principles, that there may be no occasion of offense given to the church of God.

15. It is not proper to receive persons from a distant place into occasional communion, without good evidence that they are orderly members of the church to which they belong ; and no testimonial should be satisfactory, but what is recently given.

16. When a member is likely to settle at a distance, it is proper for him to have a letter of dismission, in order to enjoy the privileges of a regular church, that may be more conveniently situated for him. Philem. ver. 19.

B R E V I A T E S.

Several of us met on Tuesday in the afternoon ; the service was introduced in prayer by our brethren R. Edward and Zacharias Thomas ; and after singing, the letters from the churches were read, wherein we had pleasing information, though some things were mournful. The churches this year are mostly in union and peace among themselves, and great additions are made to several of them ; there are but few without some increase. Brother Morris Jones is settled Minister of Llandyfaen church, and brother David Powel of Nottage. Some complain that they are yet without Ministers. Llanwenarth church laments that their beloved Minister, Morgan Harris, is taken away by death. Though there is a revival, reformation, and increase in most of the churches, yet where people are like trees cumbering the ground, they cause much grief and lamentation. The letters being read, the opportunity was closed in prayer by David Evans of Maes-y-berllan.

Wednesday morning the public meeting was introduced in prayer by our brethren David Evans of Cilfowyr, and Timothy Thomas. Brother Edmund Watkins preached in Welsh from Luke xiv. 22, 23. then brother Benjamin Francis preached in English from Phil. iii. 16. he repeated in Welsh, and concluded that opportunity by prayer. After a little refreshment, brother Thomas Morris prayed ; brother John Evans of Roe preached in Welsh from 2 Cor. iv. 7. then brother David Jones preached in the same language from Isa. lx. 7. Lastly, Brother J. Thomas, of Leominster, preached in English from Jos. xxi. 45. and concluded the public solemnity by prayer. These last sermons were short, and there was singing at proper intervals through the whole work of the day. Thursday morning the messengers met : our brethren D. P. and J. Hier prayed ; then the following articles were agreed upon :

1. The members of each quarterly meeting belonging to this association, were desired to consult among themselves respectively, concerning the Baptist Confession of Faith, whether it be right to reprint it as it is, revising the translation, or whether any thing should be added or abridged; and to send their thoughts to brother J. Thomas, of Leominster, who is to correct it.

2. To receive the new church at Neath a member of the association.

3. That the Northern churches meeting at Glyn, Ceiriog, Cefn near Newbridge, Salem, Beaumaris, Ebenezer, Llanfachreth, Nevin, Horeb, and Ramoth, are from henceforth to be an association by themselves.

4. That the churches meeting at Neath, Pen-y-fai, Nottage, Ystrad-dafodog, Peterston, Hengoed, Twyn-gwyn, Bethesda, Caerleon, Usk, Pen-y-garn, Trofnant, Blaenau, Llanwenarth, Chapel-y-ffeen, Maes-y-berllan, Builth, New Pentre and Dolau, are to be another association.

5. That the churches meeting at Aberystwith, Aberduar, Pant-têg, Graig, Cilfowyr, Ebenezer, Llangloffan, Rhydwlîm, Moleston, Salem, Porth-tywyll, Priory Street, (these two in Carmarthen) Llanelli, the old meeting-house in Swansea, the new meeting-house there, the Engine, Bryn Salem, and Llandyfaen, form the third association.

6. That, as we agreed last year to divide the association into three, as above, and our design hath taken place this year, we certify, that the above division is not the effect of any disagreement in doctrine or discipline, but with a view to the spread of the Gospel, and the conveniency of the churches.

7. That, should it hereafter happen in the course of providence, and circumstances call for it, all the churches shall meet together by their Messengers, in association, to endeavour, advise, and order measures for the proper settling of any thing that may cause such an occasional extraordinary association, as well as to brighten the golden chain of fellowship.

8. That our Ministers or church members who may go to either of the above associations, though they be not proper members of that association, shall for that time partake of all the privileges thereof.

9. That should any one of these churches, in fellowship, hereafter stand in need of charitable assistance, such church is to have liberty to go to the churches of the other associations with a letter; first signed in the association to which that church belongs, by the Moderator; but no more than one case in the year is to go out of either of the associations.

10. That each association shall be at liberty to chuse what Ministers they please to preach at their annual meeting, even though such ministers should belong to another association.

11. That the first association be at Hengoed, on the first Wednesday and Thursday in June next, brother David Evans,

of Dolau, to preach; or, in case of failure, brother Morgan Evans: the letters to be read Tuesday afternoon.

12. The second association to be at Swansea, on the second Wednesday and Thursday in June, brother W. Williams, of Cardigan, to preach; or, in case of failure, brother J. Rees. The letters to be read Tuesday afternoon.

13. The third association to be at Salem in Denbighshire, the first Wednesday and Thursday in July, brother Z. Thomas named to preach; or, in case of failure, brother Morris Jones. The letters to be read Tuesday afternoon.

14. That the church, in Priory Street, has leave to send to the churches to receive their voluntary contribution towards defraying the expences of building their meeting-house.

15. That the brethren in Merthyr Tydfil likewise be permitted to send to the churches, for help to defray the charges of erecting their place of worship.

16. That a meeting of humiliation and thanksgiving, occasioned by the circumstances of the state and the churches, be kept on the Wednesday month after the association.

EDMUND WATKINS, Moderator,

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|------|
| Baptized in the several churches | - | - | 544 |
| Restored | - | - | 42 |
| Received by letters from abroad* | - | - | 7 |
| | | | —593 |
| Dead | - | - | 84 |
| Excluded | - | - | 101 |
| Dismissed | - | - | 1 |
| | | | —186 |
| | | | — |
| Increase | - | - | 407 |

* The Welsh churches do not include in their minutes, members received or dismissed among themselves, but those from or to England, or any other distant place.

A
V I E W
OF THE
BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS, &c.
IN THE
UNITED STATES
OF
AMERICA AND VERMONT,
FOR OCTOBER 1790,
ACCORDING TO THE BEST INTELLIGENCE.

| | <i>Associations.</i> | <i>States in which they meet.</i> |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Bowdoinham. | Massachusetts. |
| 2 | New-Hampshire. | New-Hampshire. |
| 3 | Woodstock. | New-Hampshire and Vermont. |
| 4 | Vermont. | Vermont. |
| 5 | Warren. | Massachusetts. |
| 6 | Rhode-Island. | Rhode-Island and Massachusetts. |
| 7 | Groton. | Connecticut. |
| 8 | Stonington. | Rhode-Island and Connecticut. |
| 9 | Danbury. | Connecticut. |
| 10 | Shaftsbury. | Massachusetts and New-York. |
| 11 | Philadelphia. | Pennsylvania. |
| 12 | Redstone. | do. |
| 13 | Salisbury. | Maryland and Virginia. |
| 14 | * Ketockton. | Virginia. |
| 15 | * Chappawamnick. | do. |
| 16 | * Orange district. | do. |
| 17 | * Dover do. | do. |
| 18 | * Lower do. and Kehu- key. | do. and North Carolina. |
| 19 | * Middle do. | do. |
| 20 | * Upper do. | do. |
| 21 | * Roanoak do. | do. and North Carolina. |
| 22 | * S. Kentucky. | do. |
| 23 | N. Kentucky. | do. |
| 24 | Ohio. | do. |
| 25 | Holston. | North Carolina. |
| 26 | Sandy Creek. | do. |
| 27 | Yadkin. | do. |
| 28 | Charleston. | South Carolina. |
| 29 | Bethel. | do. |
| 30 | Georgia. | Georgia. |

The nine associations in the above list, distinguished by this mark (*), meet in a *General Committee*, by their representatives, at *Richmond*, in the month of *May* annually.

| <i>Times of meeting.</i> | Minist. | Chur. | Members. |
|---|---------|-------|----------|
| September. | 8 | 8 | 500 |
| 2d Wednesday in June. | 7 | 8 | 500 |
| 4th Wednesday in Sept. | 14 | 24 | 950 |
| 1st Wednesday in Oct. | 6 | 11 | 500 |
| Tuesday after 1st Wedn. in Sept. | 25 | 41 | 3400 |
| 3d Friday in Sept. | 15 | 12 | 500 |
| 3d Friday in June. | 8 | 11 | 1500 |
| 3d Tuesday in Oct. | 10 | 13 | 1000 |
| 4th Wednesday in Sept. | 14 | 15 | 870 |
| 1st Wednesday in June. | 10 | 22 | 1500 |
| 1st Tuesday in Oct. | 49 | 56 | 4100 |
| 3d Saturday in Oct. | 9 | 11 | 600 |
| 3d Saturday in Aug. and Oct. | 6 | 14 | 1400 |
| 3d Friday in Aug. | 10 | 12 | 650 |
| 2d Wednesday in Sept. | 7 | 14 | 850 |
| 2d Friday in Oct. | 22 | 32 | 4600 |
| 1st Friday in May and Oct. | 36 | 26 | 5100 |
| 4th Saturday in May and 2d in Oct. | 45 | 51 | 5500 |
| 1st Saturday in May and Oct. | 24 | 25 | 2000 |
| 4th Saturday in May and 1st in Oct. | 11 | 18 | 1200 |
| 2d Saturday in June and 4th in Oct. | 18 | 18 | 2200 |
| 4th Friday in May and Oct. | 15 | 14 | 1200 |
| May and Oct. | 10 | 12 | 1100 |
| 1st Saturday in June and 2d in Oct. | 4 | 5 | 300 |
| 4th Saturday in Oct. | 10 | 17 | 1200 |
| 4th Saturday in April and Sept. | 10 | 13 | 1200 |
| 4th Saturday in Oct. | 11 | 14 | 800 |
| 2d Saturday in Aug. | 16 | 19 | 1850 |
| 2d Saturday in May and Oct. | 9 | 16 | 1200 |
| | 22 | 31 | 2700 |
| Churches not belonging to Affociations, | 452 | 533 | 50970 |
| | 100 | 150 | 8000 |
| Seventh Day Baptists, | 552 | 733 | 58970 |
| | 12 | 15 | 2000 |
| Sum total, | 564 | 748 | 60970 |

From the best accounts in 1789, there were within the limits of the United States, three million eighty-three thousand and six hundred souls. This number, which is rapidly increasing, both by emigrations from Europe, and by natural population, is composed of people of almost all nations, languages, characters, and religions. The greater part, however, are descended from the English; and, for the sake of distinction, are called Anglo-Americans.

M I N U T E S

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

Held at *New-York*, Oct. 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1790.

Tuesday, Oct. 5, 1790.

AT three o'clock, P. M. Dr. Samuel Jones delivered the introductory sermon from John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.*

After worship, proceeded to business. Dr. James Manning was chosen moderator, and Brother William Van Horne, clerk.

Letters from the churches were read, when it appeared, that in this Association, the last year, there were

| | | | | | | |
|------------|---|------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Added | { | Upon a profession of faith | - | - | - | 264 |
| | | By letters of recommendation | - | - | - | 56 |
| | | Restored after exclusion | - | - | - | 3 |
| | | | | | | —323 |
| Diminished | { | By death | - | - | - | 42 |
| | | Dismission to other churches | - | - | - | 117 |
| | | Exclusion | - | - | - | 28 |
| | | | | | | —187 |
| | | | | | | <hr/> |
| | | | | | | Increase 136 |

Letters from corresponding associations at Charleston, Warren, Ketoc-ton, Shaftsbury, and Vermont, were read. Also a letter from an association lately formed at Danbury in the State of Connecticut, desiring union and correspondence with us. After the usual enquiries respecting their doctrine and practice, their request was agreed to, and their Messenger, Elder Adam Hamilton, received. Adjourned to nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

Wednesday, Oct. 6. met pursuant to adjournment.— Answered a query from the church at the Scotch Plains, and resolved, That in answer to requests from the churches at Cape May and Pitts Grove, Brethren Samuel Jones, Samuel Morgan, William Van Horne, and Ezekiel Robins, be a committee to prepare a letter to them on the subject of their difficulties. Adjourned to three o'clock, P. M.

Met

Met pursuant to adjournment.—Voted, that Brother S. Jones, Brother Hart, and Brother Allison, be, and they are hereby appointed, a committee to revise the materials for A HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, collected by Brother *Morgan Edwards*.

Letters to the corresponding associations ordered to be prepared by to-morrow afternoon. Adjourned to nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

Sermon this evening by Elder Adam Hamilton, from Heb. xii. 1, 2. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, &c. &c.*

Thursday, Oct. 7. Met pursuant to adjournment.—A letter written by Dr. Jones, opposed to Universal Salvation, being read, and esteemed very seasonable at this juncture, it was adopted as the circular letter for the present year, instead of that prepared by Brother Foster, agreeably to appointment, which was also read, and agreed to be printed*.

Resolved, that it be a standing rule of this Association, that the circular letter be produced early in the sessions; and being read, a committee shall be appointed to examine, and, if necessary, correct it.

According to the recommendation of last Association, in which it was agreed to raise a FUND for the education of pious and promising young men for the ministry, the following churches paid in the monies raised :

Lower Dublin, Piscataway, Cohansey, Hopewell, Brandywine, Hights Town, Philadelphia, Scotch Plains, New-York, Baltimore.

Adjourned to three o'clock, P. M.

Met pursuant to adjournment—Fixed on supplies for destitute churches.

Letters to the corresponding associations, according to order of yesterday, were brought in, read, &c. and approved. Messengers were appointed to several associations.

This Association sincerely regret the failure of an appointment, the last year, to address the President of the United States; but deem it at present out of season.

The Association to be held, first Tuesday in October next, in Philadelphia.

Brother William Van Horne is appointed to write the circular letter for next year.

* It is very well written, and must appear in the Register.

Brother Oliver Hart is appointed to preach the association sermon next year ; and in case of failure, Brother William Van Horne is requested to be prepared.

Sermon this evening by Brother Thomas Fleeson, from Rev. iii. 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Elders and Messengers of the several churches met in Association, in the City of New-York, October 5, 1790—

To the several Churches in this Association, send, Greeting.

Dearlly Beloved !

WE are happy, at the close of our annual meeting, that we can say it was agreeable and comfortable through the whole. We had refreshing news from several churches in our connection, as well as from the associations that correspond with us. It is a matter of joy, and calls for our grateful acknowledgements, that peace and good order so generally prevail, and that the work of the Lord is carried on with power in many places. We have, however, to lament, that there are some appearances in two or three of our churches, of the leprosy of Universal Salvation. It behoves us, then, humbly to implore the Divine mercy, and to do our endeavour to prevent the spreading of so dangerous a plague. To this end, we have concluded to address you at this time on the subject.

The notion of Universal Salvation, as now propagated, is explained two ways. Some declare, that there is no hell ; or if there be, that not any of the human race shall be sent there, but that all, good and bad, shall be taken to Heaven together. Others say, that though there be a place of future punishment, and though some of the human race are sent thither for a time, yet that they shall all finally be released, and brought safe to Heaven.

We doubt not, dear brethren, but it will seem strange to such of you as may not have heard these things before, that any who pretend to be the ministers of Christ, should advance such dangerous notions. Yet so it is. He who in the beginning gave divine revelation the lye, when he said to the woman, *Ye shall not surely die !* has ever since been going about

about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; endeavouring, by various means, to deceive and lull men asleep; and his principal aim has been to evade the force of divine truth.

As to the first of these notions, namely, "That not any of the human race are ever sent to a place of future punishment, but that all, good and bad, are taken to Heaven," we shall say but little, because we deem it unnecessary. The Scriptures, on the one hand, are so express, particular and positive; and on the other, the methods taken to evade them are so disingenuous, that it is difficult for any one to believe, that the patrons of this scheme, seriously and in earnest, believe it themselves. The Scriptures positively, and without equivocation, say, *that the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God*, Ps. ix. 17. *The whole body should be cast into Hell*, Matt. v. 29. *Cast into Hell-fire*, Matt. xviii. 9. *How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?* Matt. xxiii. 33. *Cast into Hell*, Mark ix. 45. 47. *And in Hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments*, Luke xvi. 23. Not to mention numerous other Scriptures, any more than the dissolute manners which might be expected to attend, and which actually have been the consequences of this licentious tenet.

The other way of stating this notion, namely, that "though some of the human race are sent to a place of future punishment for a time, yet that they shall all finally be released, and brought safe to Heaven," merits more attention, because it is more plausible, though not more true.

Here we shall attend to three or four considerations:

1. That the Scripture is expressly against it.
2. That there are no Scriptures for it.
3. That there can be none, since it would be likely to do much hurt, but could do no good.
4. And lastly, that if the notion were in some degree probable, yet that it would be safest to reject it.

The Scripture expressly says, that future punishment will be

For ever, 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude 13.

For ever and ever, Rev. xx. 10. xiv. 11. xix. 3.

And we read of

Eternal damnation, Mark iii. 29.

Eternal judgement, Hebrews vi. 2.

Eternal fire, Jude 7.

Everlasting fire, Matthew xxv. 41. xviii. 8.

Everlasting punishment, Matthew xxv. 26.

And

And of one sin, that *it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come*, Matt. xii. 32.—In this absolute manner, the endless duration of the wrath of God is expressed: and to cut off every possible evasion, there are three things remarkable:

1. That the eternal duration of the punishment of the wicked, is expressed in the very same words as eternal duration in general, Dan. ii. 20.

2. In the very same words also whereby the eternal duration of the happiness of the righteous is expressed, Dan. xii. 2. Rev. xxii. 5. John iii. 16. Matt. xxv. 26.

3. Nay, in the very same words whereby the eternal duration of God himself is expressed, Gen. xxi. 33. Ps. xc. 2. Dan. vii. 27. Lam. v. 19. Deut. xxxii. 40.

Since the awful subject before us is so clearly revealed in the word of God, it may seem trifling to undertake to shew that there is no scripture in favour of a release from future punishment. Nevertheless, it may be of use to mention the principal scriptures that are pretended to hold forth a redemption from hell, in order to shew, (saying nothing of the arguments above) that there are generally reasons sufficient, rising out of the texts themselves, and contexts, to shew that they mean no such thing as they are brought to prove. Thus, for instance, the *all men* in 1st Tim. ii. 4, can never mean every individual of the human race; for there are some who were before ordained unto condemnation, and are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, Jud. 4. Rom. ix. 22. but rather all sorts of men, as ver. 1. kings and peasants, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, young and old; and who are therefore to be prayed for: nor can 2 Pet. iii. 9. admit of such an interpretation; for this means, not any of the *us* mentioned before, or the *beloved* in the 1st ver. nor 1 John ii. 2. which means that the benefits of Christ were not to be confined to the Jews only, but to be extended to the Gentiles also: nor Rom. v. 18. for here the first and second Adam, and their respective offspring, are put in opposition, shewing, that as the offspring of the one was lost by his sin, the offspring of the other shall be saved by his grace; the one condemned for one offence, the other saved from many offences: nor Col. i. 20. for *all*, here, must be understood in a limited sense; it cannot include angels in heaven, who could not be reconciled to God, since they never had been in a state of irreconciliation; all the elect of God, then, are meant, who are spoken of as reconciled by the blood of the Cross: nor Eph. i. 10. which only says, that all *in* Christ shall be brought

brought together, but not those who never were in him, and die in their sins : nor 1 Cor. xv. 22. for this speaks of the resurrection of the body from natural death, not of a resurrection from spiritual death : nor Rom. xi. 32. which speaks of having mercy on all, that is, on all that believe, as in the parallel place, Gal. iii. 22. : nor Zech. ix. 11. for these are the words of Christ to the Jewish church, comforting them in the prospect of the favour that should be shewn them by Cyrus, and comparing their distressed situation in the Babylonish captivity, to the situation of one in a pit wherein was no water ; and it is said, this deliverance should be wrought in virtue of the covenant made in their behalf, which is therefore called *their* covenant : nor Rev. xx. 13. for this speaks of gathering *them* from all quarters to the general judgment, who in the next verse are said to be cast into the lake of fire : nor Heb. xii. 23. for here all the saved are said to be the *first-born*, to denote their excellency, high privileges, right of priesthood, and large inheritance : nor James i. 18. for the *first-fruits* here mean all the saved, as in Heb. xii. 23. who are separated and distinguished by grace from others, as the first fruit was wont to be from the crop, and consecrated to God as that was : nor 1 Cor. xv. 25. 28. and Phil. ii. 10. Rev. v. 13. for these are only expressive of the universal dominion of Christ, and of homage and adoration paid to him on that account : nor Ezek. xvi. 53. 55. for first, if Sodom were literally to *be returned*, it must be, as the passage says, *to its former state*, which was a very bad one. Secondly, if the *restoration*, should be understood in an improper sense, then, by Sodom may be understood the Gentile nations, who were like unto Sodom in practice, Deut. xxxii. 32. Is. i. 10. Jer. xxiii. 14. Rev. xi. 8. and Israel may be intended by Samaria who shall be restored when all the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, shall be brought in, at the time of the latter day glory. Or thirdly, that when Sodom and Samaria should return to their former state, then the Jews should to theirs ; as much as to say, they never should, as they never have. For though many of them returned from the Babylonish captivity, yet they were never restored to their former state and glory. And besides, it is expressly said, with respect to Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, that they are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7.

Thus, brethren, we have cited the principal passages brought in support of this wild notion of Universal Salvation,

tion, and you see how little they are to the purpose ; but people in a strait will catch at any thing.

Further, it is not only manifest that there is no text to support such a notion, but that there cannot be such a text. It cannot be, that the Divine Being has published any thing contrary to those plain texts that speak positively of the eternal duration of future punishment. Indeed, if the wicked were ever to be released from Hell, time enough to let them know it, after they get there, and not before, to encourage them in sin. To give them so much as a hint of it in this life, would be exactly the same as if the Divine Being, when he prohibited the use of the forbidden tree, had told Adam, that if he should eat of that tree, he would contrive a way for his escape, of which we know that not the least item was given before the fall, and indeed than which nothing could be more unworthy the Divine Being. So that if there were any passage in the Bible that gave information of a release from Hell, we might be sure that it was apocryphal : such a text could never be the word of God.

We only add, that if the notion of restoration from Hell was in some degree probable, which it is not, yet it would be much safest to reject it altogether. For if those who place dependence on it, should at last find themselves mistaken, awful will be the disappointment. On the other hand, those who place no dependence on it, but seek in God's way to avoid future punishment, if these should be mistaken, they will nevertheless share equal benefit with others.

Let us therefore carefully avoid a notion so unscriptural, so useless, and at the same time so dangerous. Beloved, of you we hope better things, though we thus speak. We do not apprehend much danger, but judged it seasonable, and that it might be of use to give a word of caution.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

N. B. *The Clerk of the Association takes the liberty of informing those who wish to see the subject discussed more at large, that they will find their attention amply rewarded, by reading Dr. Edwards against Chauncey.*

MINUTES OF THE WARREN ASSOCIATION,

Held at the Baptist Meeting-house in *Harvard*, 1790.

Tuesday, Sept. 7.

AT two o'clock, P. M. Brother Clark, according to appointment, preached the introductory sermon, from Acts. v. 32. *And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

After public worship, chose Dr. Stillman moderator, and Brother Joseph Grafton clerk.

Read the letters from the several churches, and took the following account of the members who have been added, dismissed, excluded, or who have died the year past, &c.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|----------|-----|
| Added | - | - | - | - | - | - | 181 |
| Dismissed | - | - | - | - | - | - | 21 |
| Excluded | - | - | - | - | - | - | 31 |
| Dead | - | - | - | - | - | - | 27 |
| | | | | | | | 79 |
| | | | | | | Increase | 102 |

Received and read the letters and minutes from our sister associations.

Messrs. Brother Backus, Brother Thomas Green, and Brother Maxy, were appointed to draw a letter to the corresponding associations.—Adjourned till eight o'clock tomorrow morning.

Sermon in the evening by Dr. Stillman.

Wednesday, September 8. Met according to adjournment.—Dr. Stillman communicated a letter to the Association, which he had received from the * Committee of the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts, informing him, that they had presented a petition to Congress, requesting their “attention to the several impressions of the Bible now

* Rev. Dr. Willard, Dr. Howard, Rev. Messrs. Phillips Payson, Peter Thacher, and Jedidiah Morse.

making,

making, representing the importance of accuracy in these impressions; and earnestly praying that they would take such measures as the Constitution may permit, that no edition of the Bible, or its translation, be published in America, without its being carefully inspected, and certified to be free from error; and requesting the concurrence of the Baptist interest, throughout the United States, in this matter, which is of the highest importance to all denominations of Christians, as they all appeal to the Holy Bible as the standard of truth." Upon due consideration of this matter,

Voted, That we the Members of this Association feel ourselves under very great obligations to our reverend brethren, for their early attention to the preservation of the purity of the Holy Scriptures.

Voted, That Dr. Stillman, Mr. Backus, Mr. Smith, Mr. Baldwin, and Mr. Green, be appointed a committee, in behalf of this Association, to prepare and transmit a petition to Congress on this important subject.

Voted, That the same committee transmit an answer to the letter now before us, assuring those gentlemen, that we heartily concur in the measure proposed, and are equally desirous of cultivating a friendly and Christian intercourse with them, and the whole body of Christians; "believing that such an intercourse between good men of different denominations and sentiments, especially the ministers of the Gospel, will have a happy tendency to harmonize them, remove unreasonable prejudices, to promote a spirit of love and candor, and thus essentially serve the interests of our holy religion; and that it also might have a beneficial influence on the civil affairs of our country.

Voted, That this matter be recommended to the attention of the several Baptist Associations throughout the United States, earnestly requesting them to unite with us, and the several denominations of Christians, in a measure truly interesting.

Read and approved the circular letter prepared by Mr. Grafton.

Read and approved the letter to the corresponding associations, prepared by Messrs. Backus, Green, and Maxy.

Chose Dr. Manning our messenger to the Philadelphia Association, to meet in the city of New-York, the first Tuesday in October.

Messrs. Brethren Smith, Green and Crofman, to the New-Hampshire Association, to convene at Brentwood, the second Wednesday in June, 1791.

Brethren

Brethren Thomas Baldwin and Nathan Dana, to the Woodstock Affociation, to meet at Canaan, the last Wednesday in September.

Brother Obed Warren and Brother Nathan Dana, to the Shaftsbury Affociation.

Brother Lewis and Brother Grafton, to the Stonington Affociation, to meet at Stonington, on the third Tuesday in October.

Brother Sylvanus Haynes to convey our letter to the Vermont Affociation, and open a correspondence with them.

Brother Smith was appointed to write the circular letter to the churches the next year.

The next Affociation to be held at New-Rowley, the Tuesday after the first Wednesday in September, 1791, at 2 o'clock, P. M. Dr. Stillman to preach the introductory sermon; and in case of failure, Brother Green, of Cambridge.

Brother Backus concluded by prayer.

Sermon in the afternoon by Brother Baldwin; and one in the evening by Brother Backus.

C I R C U L A R L E T T E R.

Beloved Brethren!

DIVINE Providence hath indulged us with another anniversary interview, by which we not only obtain knowledge of the circumstances of the churches that compose this Convention, but acquire information of the Redeemer's kingdom through this extensive Continent.

It must give peculiar pleasure to every pious soul, to hear of the effusion of divine grace which is made in many places; and that our ascended Lord is making a willing people in the day of his power.

Several churches in this Affociation have occasion to praise God, for the gracious influence of his Spirit granted them; and the churches in general, for that degree of harmony which they enjoy. Yet we have cause to mourn, and, in the deepest humiliation before God, to acknowledge our ingratitude and unfruitfulness, under these special favours.

Certain it is, the church of Christ, in no preceding age, was indulged with greater privileges, civil and religious, than in this; yet how far inferior in faith and love are we

to those saints who have lived before us ! Blush, and be ashamed, Oh professor, at this !

To profess religion is one thing, but to be truly pious is another. It is to be feared, there are many who place the whole of religion in certain feelings, and have their goodness by fits and starts, who are inattentive to the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian is represented in God's word, as one who evidences his faith by his works, which not only intends his conformity to the ordinances of the Gospel, and now and then an act of kindness to his suffering brother, but involves in it the temper and spirit of Jesus Christ. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

By possessing these things, we obtain evidence to ourselves, that we are the children of light ; we have the enjoyment of that religion we profess ; we maintain the fellowship and confidence of our brethren, and convince those who are around us, that religion is not mere imagination, or an empty name. *But he who lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

It should be the study of the Christian, to be useful in the church of Christ, and to promote the welfare and happiness of society ; by which he will glorify God, honour and recommend religion.

Candour and catholicism are tempers much to be cultivated in all our conduct and intercourse with Christians of different sentiments from us. A censorious, a bigotted temper, we abhor ; yet we cannot dispense with what we believe to be truth and duty, to gratify their feelings, or to accommodate ourselves to their opinions.

Much, very much depends upon a uniformity of conduct in those who profess religion. The glory of God, the honour of Christ, the interest and excellence of religion, and our present happiness, are connected, closely connected, with the conduct of those who profess to be the friends of Jesus Christ.

We might produce many important arguments to enforce the preceding remarks, but the limits of a circular letter forbid us. Suffice it to say, the purity of the Divine Being, his everlasting love to his people, the holy nature of his law, the grace and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the examples of saints, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, are arguments, convincing arguments, to excite us to *walk worthy the holy vocation wherewith we are called.*

Finally,

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

We cannot but notice the frown of Divine Providence upon this Association, since our last meeting, in the death of our worthy, much lamented, and very useful brother, Thomas Gair, whose gifts and exertions have been of singular advantage to this Association. It is worthy our grateful observation, that this Association has been incorporated twenty-three years, and Brother Gair is only the second minister who has died belonging to it, since it was formed * May this instance be a monitor to his surviving brethren in the ministry, to be faithful unto death, that they may receive a crown of life!

Brethren, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits. Amen.

Signed in behalf of the Association,

SAMUEL STILLMAN, Moderator.

JOSEPH GRAFTON, Clerk.

* The other was Brother John Davis, A. M. who was pastor of the 2d Baptist Church in Boston, and died December 13th, 1773, at the Ohio, while on a visit for his health.

E X T R A C T S

From the American Association Letters, and from the Personal Correspondence between the *English* and the *American* Brethren.

From the Corresponding Committee * of the *Charleston* Association, *S. Carolina*, Feb. 2, 1789.

To the Rev. Mr. —

WE take the liberty again to inform you, that it is the desire of this Association to cultivate a more general acquaintance with their Brethren in *Europe*,

* *Charleston* Association, Oct. 27, 1788.—Rev. Richard Furman, Col. Thomas Screven, and Captain John Hart, are appointed a committee to take proper measures for opening a correspondence with other associations in *England*, &c. &c.

hoping that mutual advantages may arise from it. From your situation in the metropolis, we apprehend your knowledge of the state of religion in the kingdom must be extensive, nor do we doubt your willingness to forward the interests of the Christian Church. We therefore request you will be kind enough to favour us with an account of the state of the Baptist churches in *England*—and we more especially desire an acquaintance with the churches in *London*, and the time and place of their associate meetings. We are happy to think that in various nations, divided, not only by lofty mountains, vast deserts, and extensive oceans, but by different manners, languages, and political regulations, the influences of the Divine Spirit, and the blessings of grace, are diffused;—that our glorious Redeemer is gathering and securing a people to himself, who are ripening for the glory and blessedness of the eternal world; and who, when the scheme of Providence and Grace is completed, will be brought into the most intimate acquaintance, and indissoluble, happy union with each other.

Charlotte County, Virginia.

LONG have I been desirous a door of correspondence might be opened between the ministers and churches of Christ of the *Baptist* denomination in Europe, especially in your kingdom, and those of North America, &c. For notwithstanding we are at the distance of 3000 miles, yet we are born of the same Spirit, and pursuing the same glorious object. The convulsions and fluctuations of the times, with other circumstances, have hitherto prevented my making an attempt; but considering the desirableness and excellency of Christian acquaintance, the unity of the Spirit, and the fellowship of the Churches, I have ventured to draw a bow, and leave the event to Divine Providence. Though I am not an old man, I have seen *Virginia* as dark as midnight touching spiritual things, except in a few instances; but, glory be to God, *we that sat in darkness, have seen a great light!* The Sun of Righteousness, with divinely illuminating and cheering rays, seems to be rising to his meridian splendor in our hemisphere; Jesus is going forth with a bow and a crown, conquering and to conquer; and we, the despised Baptists, have become a numerous, and, blessed be God, a united people. Could you be wafted across the *Atlantic* upon the wings of an angel, and sit down among us, your soul would triumph, and you would stretch forth your hands to enable your little sister in the wilderness

to

to make advances. If God should bless the design, and a door of correspondence should be opened and maintained, if I am spared, I shall in future give you a more circumstantial account of our churches, &c. At present suffice it to say, we became so numerous and so extensively situated, that we could not with propriety associate at one place and time; therefore divided into various convenient districts, 6, 7, &c. each district to send delegates annually to meet in general committee; by which the general union and harmony is maintained. There were from our beginning, bars of distinction kept up, and we lived under the titles of *Regulars and Separates*; but the Lord, in his wonder-working goodness, has caused this unhappiness to be removed, and we have become an united people, and are now distinguished by the title of *The United Baptist Churches in Virginia*; the blessed and happy effects of which it is out of my power minutely to describe. We had before, but particularly at the time of the union's taking place, adopted in a soft, general manner, what is called with us, "The Philadelphia Confession of Faith," and which is better known with you, by the title of "A Confession of Faith set forth by upwards of a hundred Congregations in England and Wales in the year 1689." I mention this, to give you an idea of our principles in the general. Before the American Revolution took place, the Baptists upon this Continent, at least as far as related to us, had a very superficial knowledge of each other out of their own colonies, (now states) only where they were neighbours; but since then, an universal acquaintance and harmony seems to be taking place, much to the glory of God, and the advancement of the Redeemer's interest. *New England* was as much, or more out of our idea, than *Old England*; but now, blessed be God, not only an epistolary acquaintance and correspondence is kept up, but personal visits have actually taken place, at least from them to us; the salutary effects of which we are daily experiencing. These things prompt me to be more determined, I hope with an eye to the glory of God, to extend the correspondence to our brethren and fathers in the kingdom of Great Britain. Much in favour to us may be expected to result therefrom*.

* The latter part of this letter contains a plan which, when realized, will probably be of considerable service to the interests of religion. It was forwarded by way of *Providence*, accompanied with a polite epistle from President Manning, expressive of his approbation of the general design---a design, which by this time may be more matured, and, I think, needs only to be known, in order to be executed.

Rhode Island, March 13, 1789.

IN *Virginia* the Lord reigns gloriously. Thousands are converted there, in a judgment of charity, year after year, and the Baptist churches are multiplied and greatly increased, as appears by every account I receive from thence. Their number in that state is upwards of an hundred. *They are about to publish their History.* The venerable Isaac Backus, of Middleborough, is gone there on a visit, by whom, on his return, I expect to receive particular information from that quarter. *Georgia* too has been graciously visited for some time past, and the work continues. This has been, and still is the case, in many of the interior parts of *New-York*, in the western parts of *Massachusetts*, and in some parts of *New Hampshire*. This work appears much more genuine and free from enthusiasm than in some former reformatations. About the middle of last winter a revival began in *Swansea*, and spreads fast. A considerable number have there and in the neighbourhood been added to our churches. *Providence* also has some degree of this gracious visitation, especially of late among the *black people*, several of whom appear under deep concern, while others, it is hoped, have found Christ. Oh! for more of this work. I entertain a hope that *America* is about to see a brighter day than for some years past.

From a Senior Pædobaptist Minister at — — in
Massachusetts, May 15, 1789.

Rev. and Dear Sir!

I RECEIVED and read with much pleasure the ——— Baptist, &c. I cannot but rejoice to see, what appear to me to be, the important and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, so clearly and fully asserted in it. These truths have been gradually gaining ground in this country, ever since the writings of the late excellent President Edwards have spread amongst us; and the knowledge and belief of them is still making progress, especially in *New England*, notwithstanding the opposition they meet with from the hearts of men and the indefatigable labours of their enemies. Wherever there appears to be a genuine work of the Spirit of God upon the minds and hearts of men, these doctrines are received and relished. And many parts of our land have of late years been graciously visited, and wonderfully blessed with revivals of religion, and the outpourings of
God's

God's holy Spirit, and numbers, we hope, brought into the kingdom of Christ. Even at the present time, we are not left destitute of tokens for good, and blessed testimonies of the power and grace of Christ. There are several towns in *Berkshire*, and in the adjoining county, *Hampshire*, in which a glorious work of God's Spirit, as we trust, is begun, and carrying on. And even in this place, very lately, God seems graciously to have begun to work. Within seventeen years past, we have been graciously visited with two awakenings, which were considerably general; and numbers, we hope, at those periods, as well as some at other times, have been savingly converted. The hopes of God's children amongst us now revive, and their expectations are in some measure animated by the prospect of another gracious visit from on high. How do I need the prayers of God's people at such a time as this! Those words of Christ to Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, are very supporting.

As the same blessed Spirit who dictated the truths of the word of God, operates upon the minds, and dwells in the hearts of all his children, we cannot but suppose that they are all brought to relish and embrace the same doctrines in general, in some proportion to their opportunities and advantages of acquaintance with them. Truth is uniform; the operations of the Holy Spirit uniform; and, the external evidence of every revealed truth one and the same. So that were our minds entirely candid and unprejudiced, there would be *no* unhappy differences, *no* dividing sentiments amongst the friends and followers of Christ. But, alas! we are none of us free from prepossession and prejudice in a greater or lesser degree. *Perfect* union, both in sentiment and in heart, is not therefore to be expected, till the church arrives at the world of light, where all sin and darkness will be done away.

The *Roanoke* District Association, *Virginia*, convened at *Grassy Creek* Meeting-house, Saturday 16th of *May*, and days following, 1789.

BROTHER James Hunt preached an agreeable discourse from Sol. Song, ii. 11, 12.

Brother Samuel Harris was chosen moderator, and Brother John Williams clerk. Letters from twenty churches were read.

read.—We hope, in future, the churches will put it in the power of their editors to publish a particular state of each, their number, &c. the authenticity of which is circumstantially proved from several hints in the New Testament, but in particular Acts i. 15; though it is not to be done in the same spirit that influenced David to number Israel, for which the scourge of God was severely felt.

Messrs. Samuel Harris, John Williams, and William Dobson, appointed to preach to the congregation that may attend at this place to-morrow, it being the Lord's Day.

Unanimously agreed, That the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be duly administered at every of our associations upon the Lord's day.

Close attendance upon other things prevented a circular letter, and letter to our general committee; therefore agreed to lodge the trust thereof in the hands of our clerk, brother John Williams, who is acquainted with the sense of this association in both particulars. Voted, That our next association be held at Cataubo meeting-house, Halifax county, and that it begin the fourth Saturday in October next.

EXTRACT

OF THE

CIRCULAR LETTER.

Dear Brethren in the Lord!

THE major part of the churches belonging to our district met by their ministers and messengers, agreeable to appointment; and considering our unsettled circumstance in associating, (this being our second meeting since the constitution of our district), upon the whole we had a comfortable interview, and many things put in train, which, with God's blessing, will render it more and more so in future. Excepting a few instances, we had agreeable accounts from the churches, touching the advancement of Emmanuel's interest; and from some parts very much so. May the divine effusion become general! may the blessed Jesus go forth conquering and to conquer, until his name and praise be one in all the earth!—The principal design of our associating is instrumentally to promote the spiritual welfare of Zion, give assistance and advice in difficult cases, and to the utmost of our power, establish permanent harmony and concord in spiritual Israel. Several matters of some note came under

our observation, which, with our decisions, are in the minutes; but we suppose, from their great utility, that there are two of them which deserve to be particularly mentioned.

First, It is thought very expedient to form or compile a history of the baptized churches in *Virginia*; their rise, progress, hinderances, remarkable events, and occurrences, chief instruments, present condition, &c. Our general committee have taken up the matter, and appointed ministers in the various districts to collect materials, who find it very necessary to claim the exertions and assistance of the several churches, ministers, and other individuals. We desire every circumstance to be handed forth in as clear and conspicuous a point of view as possible, perfectly consistent with candor and truth, capable of bearing the most critical remarks.

Secondly, That of raising and supporting seminaries of learning. Two at present are proposed in our state, one on each side of James river. We have sufficient encouragement from our learned brethren in the North, that we shall not want for able, skilful teachers. This will also require very diligent exertions, and liberal contributors. And if we, in this, as we ought in every thing, do it with a single eye to the glory of God, and the advancement of the Redeemer's interest, then shall we have sufficient grounds to hope we shall meet with the approbation of Heaven.

Dear brethren! suffer a word of exhortation. We live in an extraordinary day, under the benign influence of the Gospel Sun, that seems to be rising to his meridian height; no nation or people, since government was first introduced into the world, ever enjoyed equal privileges with us. We boast not merely a *toleration* from the civil laws, but a *universal, free exercise of the laws and government of Christ*, without any kind of check or control from the hand of oppression: How ought every one to *praise the Lord for his goodness and wonderful works to the children of men!* How ought we to *wrestle* with God in prayer for *grace equal to the day!* that we may not, like Jeshurun, grow wanton, and abuse the glorious privileges! Notwithstanding all that Jehovah is doing for our American lands, yet look round and behold, what crouds of thoughtless, ungrateful men and women! the major part of our neighbours and families perhaps careless in sin, or revelling in vice and luxury. The inestimable worth of souls, the cause of God in general, and our numerous civil privileges, combine to call upon us in the most serious and pointed terms, *to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made*

made us free. Every circumstance points out to us the importance and necessity of *holy living*—pious deportment—a well educated offspring—and proper family government. Masters and mistresses of families may do much, yea, very much is required and expected from such. Of what avail will be the best laws and well ordered civil governments, the most virtuous rulers, and warm pathetic addresses from the pulpit, if religious domestic government is not supported? What very great discouragement must the faithful ministers of the gospel be under when professors do not aid them by their pious exertions: therefore, dear brethren, be exhorted to strengthen their hands, by walking, and steadily persevering in every practical part of Christianity. In fine, let us all, to the utmost of our power, stand up firm for the cause of virtue and religion; let us bear open and practical testimony against the dissipations, luxuries, and extravagancies which too much prevail in many parts, and which, in their very nature, awfully threaten the interest of liberty, learning, morality, and religion.

Washington County, Pennsylvania, June 2, 1789.

I HEARTILY thank you for your acquiescing in a correspondence. There is no subject more delightful to good men than Christ and the spread of his kingdom. His stately goings have been clearly seen in the western world, so that many souls have been made to rejoice in the salvation of a bleeding Saviour; especially at *Kentucky*, a country settled about fifteen years since, down the Ohio river, about 500 miles from us, where many of our friends are gone, and who are indeed the prevailing denomination there. In my next shall send you a particular account of the number of ministers of *every* denomination, both here and at Kentucky†.

THE Shaftsbury Association at their Convention in *Hillsdale*, June 3d and 4th, 1789.

Wednesday, June 3, 1789.—At two o'clock, P. M. elder Peter Werden preached the introductory sermon, from 2 Tim. ii. 15.—Chose brother Samuel Waldo *moderator*,

† Such an account would be *peculiarly* acceptable, but it has not yet been received,

and

and brother Justus Hull *clerk*.—Letters from 17 churches were read, and the following account taken :

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|----|------------|
| Added | - | - | - | - | 174 |
| Dismissed | - | - | - | 16 | |
| Excluded | - | - | - | 16 | |
| Dead | - | - | - | 5 | <u>37</u> |
| Increased | - | - | - | - | <u>137</u> |

Adjourned till half after eight to-morrow morning.

Thursday, June 4th.—Met pursuant to adjournment.—Elder Blood delivered a discourse from Heb. v. 13, 14.—Letters to the sister associations were read and approved, and messengers appointed to several associations.

As the churches of Stillwater and Hillsdale have signified in their letters, &c. that their respective elders, Lemuel Powers and Stephen Gano, are disposed to travel considerable part of their time, and preach the gospel; and the churches acquiescing therein, have requested us to send supplies to, and provide for them while their elders may be absent : We heartily rejoice to find the churches' elders engaged in the spread of truth, and do appoint them supplies.

Our next association will be held in elder Werden's meeting-house, Adams, on the first Wednesday of June next.—Introductory sermon to be preached by elder Samuel Waldo, and in case of failure by elder Lemuel Powers.

From three Letters of the Rev. Mr. Isaac Backus, dated *Middleborough*, July 6.—Oct. 9, 1789.

LAST September our Association received an earnest request from our brethren in *Virginia*, for some of our labourers to come over and help them.

I was nominated and appointed by the Association; and though I did not think at first it would do for me to go, being sixty-five years of age the 20th of last January, yet I was at length convinced of duty. I sailed from *Rhode Island*, Jan. 2. and landed in *North Carolina* the 10th, betwixt which and May the 27th I travelled and preached in six counties in that state, and twenty-three counties in *Virginia*, and preached in the whole one hundred and seventeen sermons to very attentive audiences. I was at one association in *Chesterfield* county, May 9th, and at another in the *Isle of Wight* county, May 16th, each of which held three days; and four sermons were preached on the 10th and 17th, perhaps to two thousand people each day. Considering the former darkness they were in under episcopal ministers, most

most of whom were drunkards, card-players, and swearers, it is wonderful to see to what light and love they have attained. Three Baptist ministers went from *New England* to *North Carolina* about thirty-four years ago: from their labours a glorious reformation hath spread quite through to *Georgia*, where it is now going on powerfully. About 1758 there were some beginnings in *Virginia*; but though before 1768 there were but four Baptist churches in the state, there are now not less than an hundred, many of which have from one to six hundred members, many of whom are Negroes, who are owned as brethren by many of their white masters and mistresses, who hope ere long to see them released from servitude. My pen cannot give you an adequate idea of what God hath done in these parts. Near an hundred Baptist Ministers, or perhaps more, have been of late years raised up in *Virginia*, and others in *North Carolina*, many of whom I saw and heard, who appear to have clear ideas of doctrinal and experimental religion, and to be in earnest to maintain Gospel discipline in their churches.

The Episcopalians in *Virginia* had all the power of office, civil and religious, in their own hands, from their first plantation in 1607 to 1775, even so as to imprison Baptist ministers for preaching, which was done so late as 1774; yet now their power is so gone, that episcopal worshippers are but a small sect in that state, and have no power to demand a farthing from any man for the maintenance of their ministers; nor has any tax been gathered by force to support any denomination of Christians for three years past. *Equal Liberty of Conscience* is established, as fully as words can express it. O! when shall it be so in *New England*? However, God is working wonders here. In *Hampshire* and *Berkshire* in our state, where they were killing each other three years ago, a glorious work of grace is now going on, and large additions are made to old Baptist churches, and new ones are gathered in divers places; also in our churches at *Swansea*, *Warren*, *Dighton*, and some more remote places, they have a happy time.

One likely young brother came over with me to our college at *Providence*, where we arrived June 16, and found the beginning of a revival of religion there.

A few years ago you asked me, Whether I could not obtain accounts, so as to publish a history of the Baptists to the Southward. I had no idea of it then; but several of our ministers in *Virginia* are collecting historical materials, with a proposal of having assistance hereafter for publishing them.