


THE
TWELFTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
HUDSON RIVER
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

Maintaining inviolably, 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; the absolute necessity of the Spirit's operation; efficacious grace in regeneration; the obligation of believers to attend to all the precepts of Scripture; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the general judgement of the last day; the eternal happiness of the righteous, and the everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; the baptism of believers by immersion; and the independence of their respective Churches.

HELD IN THE MEETING-HOUSE
OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH,

CATSKILL AUG. 1 & 2, 1827.

——
NEW-YORK:

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—
1827.

MINUTES

OF THE

Hudson River Baptist Association.

1. At 10 o'clock A. M., Brother Samuel Eastman delivered the introductory Sermon, from Gal. vi. 14. *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. Took a collection for the Widows' Fund, amounting to \$16 94.

Prayer by Brother Upfold.

3. Read the letters from the Churches, and took minutes of their changes during the past year, and present situation, as follows.

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

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS.	Restored.	Baptized.	Rec. by Let.	Dis. by Let.	Excluded.	Deceased.	Total.	When constituted.
Poughkeepsie,	WM. HUTCHINSON, Isaac Moore, John G. Sturges. SPENCER H. CONE, *JOHN STANFORD, *DANIEL HALL, *F. WAYLAND, SEN. *Wm. Hague.	2	3	4		1		87	
Oliver-st. N. Y.	Dea. Thos. Purser, :: Wm. Colgate, :: James Wilson, Wm. Butler. Theodore Clark, Edward Smith, ARCHIBALD MACLAY, *LUKE DAVIES, Dea. Thomas Stokes, :: Wm. Winterton, Nathaniel Price, JACOB BROUNER, *H. MALCOM, *WM. STURGES, Dea. Jesse Story, Henry Anable, Wm. Van Peter Bortle,	17	18	16	5	21	580	1795	
Mulberry-street, New-York,		4	4	8	7	4	337	1809	
Mount Pleasant.		2		3		1	75	1790	
Hudson.		2		5		1	121	1810	

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS.	Restored.	Baptized.	Rec. by Let.	Dis. by Let.	Excluded.	Deceased.	Total.	When constituted.
Troy,	*L. HOWARD, Dea. J. Harpham, C. Webster. Dea. J. A. Burke, Friend Humphrey, S. Dutcher, W. S. McIntosh, T. Holmes. B. T. WELSH, Jira D. Cole, Nathaniel Jacobs, Peter Turck, Benjamin Smith, James Cole, George M. Kendall, James Irwin.	30	25	26	6	1	282		
Albany,		2	6	16	4	2	197	1811	
Catskill.		2	6	7	9	1	78	1803	
Newburgh.	*ALANSON DRAPER, THOMAS POWELL, Abraham Ennis.			3	3		31	1821	
King-street.	*NATHANIEL FINCH, *——RAYMOND,						30		
Albany African.	NATHANIEL PAUL. CHA. G. SOMMERS.	2	10			3	53	1821	
South Baptist Ch. New-York.	D. H. Barnes, E. Pierson, N. Caswell, No information.	20	8	4	1	121	1822		
Coxsackie.							14		
Brooklyn.	WM. C. HAWLEY, Thomas Day. SAMUEL EASTMAN, *JOHN BOYD, John Hazlet, R. F. Winslow.	11	4	5	2	64	1823		
Union, N. Y.		51	2	2	1	86	1823		
Lansingburgh,	*J. WEBB, John Yates, Wm. A. West. JOHN C. MURPHY, JOHN SMITH, John Rugar. WM. G. MILLER, Henry Vogell, Adam W. Turnbull, George Henry.	4	1	3	1	44	1804		
Mission Ch.N.Y.		12	18		1	2	49	1826	
Elizabeth-st. Ch.		24	2			42	1826		
North Bap. Ch. N. Y.	JOHN GIBBS, Wm. Wilson.		2			14	1827		
		41	97	103	107	30	34	2505	

4. Brother Spencer M. Cone was chosen Moderator; Brother Thomas Stokes, Clerk; and Brother Charles G. Sommers, assistant Clerk.
Adjourned to 8 P. M. Prayer by Brother Sommers.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 1st, 1827, 3 o'clock, P. M.

Met pursuant to adjournment. Brother Hawley prayed.

5. The Moderator read from the Chair, the RULES adopted at the last session for the government of the Association.

6. The *Mission, Elizabeth-street*, and *North Baptist Churches* in the city of New-York, made application for admission into the Association. Their respective letters were read, and referred to Brethren Barnes, Hutchinson, and Purser, who were directed to inquire into their faith and order, and make report.

7. Ministering Brethren present were invited to a seat, and to assist in our deliberations. The invitation was accepted by Brethren John Upfold, E. Nelson, and S. S. Mallory.

8. Voted to open a Correspondence with the New-Haven Baptist Association.

9. Communications and Messengers from Sister Associations were received.

ASSOCIATIONS.	MINUTES.	MESSENGERS.	BAPTIZED.	TOTAL.
Warren,	1826	—	57	3430
Boston,	1826	—	256	4022
Hartford,	1826	Thomas Winter,	40	1849
New-London,	1826	—	20	1814
Shaftsbury,	1827	—	167	2545
Lake George,	1825	—	—	530
Saratoga,	1825	—	—	3550
Rensselaerville,	1826	Heman Hervey.	28	1933
Cayuga,	1826	—	—	—
Franklin,	1825	—	83	2007
Warwick,	1826	—	27	1467
Madison,	1826	John Peck,	418	4403
Union,	1826	—	6	911
New-Jersey,	1826	—	90	2160
Philadelphia,	1826	—	53	2080
Baltimore,	1826	—	18	612
Delaware Associa.	1826	—	10	561
Columbia,	1826	—	—	—
Charleston,	1826	—	269	4098
Abington,	—	—	—	—
Westfield,	1826	—	250	1536
Essex,	—	—	—	—
Stonington,	1826	—	37	3206
Otsego,	1825	—	—	1388
Black River,	1825	—	—	2327
St. Lawrence,	—	—	—	—
Accomack,	—	—	—	—
Oneida,	1826	—	303	2295
Ontario,	1825	—	—	3255
Manchester,	1826	—	67	593
Michigan,	—	—	—	—
New-Haven,	1826	—	—	852

10. No information having been received from the Church at Cox-sackie, Brethren Welch, Howard, and Delanoe, were appointed a Committee to visit them and inquire into their state, and report at the next Association.

11. The Committee appointed to examine into the faith, order, and practice of the three Churches soliciting union with us, reported favourably; whereupon it was unanimously Resolved, that said Churches be admitted as members of this body; the Moderator accordingly gave to their respective Pastors the right hand of fellowship, and invited the Messengers to seats.

12. The Circular Letter from the New-York Baptist state Convention was presented by Brother Peck and read; when it was Resolved that Elder John Peck be requested to preach to-morrow at 11 o'clock A. M. and take up a Collection in aid of the funds of said Convention.

13. The Committee to whom was referred last year the subject of establishing a periodical religious paper, to be published in the city of New-York, beg leave to report:

That in the judgement of the Committee, such a publication is much needed; and could the services of a competent Editor be secured, no doubt is entertained of the success of such an enterprise as was contemplated by the Association when this Committee was appointed; nevertheless, inasmuch as the Association is not an incorporated body, and has not funds in possession which could, with propriety, be employed in originating a weekly Journal, your Committee are of opinion that the subject must be left to an individual, or individuals, who may be disposed to encounter the cares and responsibilities necessarily connected with the establishment in question.

All which is respectfully submitted.

S. H. CONE, *Chairman.*

August 1st, 1829.

The Report was accepted, and the Committee discharged.

14. Brethren Brouner, Hawley, and Murphy, were directed to examine the Minutes of Corresponding Associations.

15. Brethren Eastman, Barnes, Paul, Gibbs, and Stokes, were appointed to draw up a Summary of the state of religion within the bounds of the Association.

16. The brethren appointed to write the Circular Letter for this year having failed, Brother Sommers was requested to perform that service, and Brethren Maclay, Cone, and Barnes, were directed to examine it, before its publication.

17. The Corresponding Letter, written by Brother Welch, was read, and referred to Brethren Powell, and Colgate, with the author.

18. In compliance with their earnest request, the Association will hold its next Anniversary in the Meeting-House of the Baptist Church in Hudson; to commence on the FIRST WEDNESDAY IN AUGUST, 1828, at 10 o'clock, A. M.

19. Brethren Sommers, Welch, Harpham, Wilson, and Anable, were directed to report in the morning, the arrangements necessary for the next Association.

20. Appointed a Prayer Meeting, to be held in the Meeting House, to-morrow morning at 6 o'clock.

Adjourned to 8 A. M. to-morrow. Prayer by Br. Maclay.

At 8 P. M. Brother Maclay, according to appointment, preached from 1st Chron. 29—5. *And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?* After Sermon, a collection was taken to aid the funds of the New-York Baptist Theological Seminary, amounting to \$14 17. The services of the evening were conducted in the Meeting-House of the Presbyterian Church, which was affectionately tendered by Dr. Porter, for the occasion.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 2d, 1827.

Met at 8 A. M. according to adjournment.

Prayer by Brother Barnes.

21. The Minutes of yesterday were read, corrected, and approved.
22. The Catskill Church presented the following Query; *Would not the general interests of Zion be advanced, and the comfort and security of the Churches be promoted, by the adoption of the regulations suggested in the Circular Letter of 1826; at least so far as relates to the transfer of membership, and the Ordination of Elders?* The subject was referred to Brethren Maclay, Welch, and Brouner.

Brother Sommers, from the Committee of Arrangements, made the following Report, which was accepted; viz.

23. Brother Brouner to preach the Introductory Sermon next year; and in case of failure, Brother Howard.

24. Brother Eastman to write the *Circular Letter* for next year, and Brother Barnes in case of failure.

25. Brother Maclay to write the *Corresponding Letter*, and in case of failure, Brother Gibbs.

26. Brother Hawley to preach in the evening, and Brother Miller, in case of failure. After the Sermon, a collection to be taken for education purposes.

27. The Committee for the examination of the minutes of Sister Associations, *Reported*, that a man who calls himself *Samuel I. Counsellor*, and sometimes *Consell*, and *Council*, and who was published in our minutes of last year as an Impostor, is now travelling among the Churches in Canada. To guard the brethren against this deceiver, it is deemed expedient again to state, that he is a short, thick set, stout built man, about fifty-two years of age, and is in the habit of slandering Christians, and of finding fault with his accommodations.

28. The Committee on the state of religion, within the boundaries of this Association, *Reported*;

That though there are a few churches among us, which seem to remain in the same state of Laodicean lukewarmness, that appeared to pervade the whole body, and was so much lamented at our last session, yet in several of them we rejoice to find there has been, during the past year, a special outpouring of the Spirit, and in a majority of them, such decided indications of divine mercy, as are calculated greatly to cheer the hearts of God's children.

On the whole, our hands have been strengthened, and our souls encouraged, by a refreshing from the presence of the Lord—by a considerable addition to our number—by the reception of three newly constituted churches into our body—by the organization of several new Sabbath Schools, which are in a flourishing condition—and by the pleas-

ing hope, that God's time to favour Zion in this part of his heritage, has now come!

We close our report, by recommending to each of the churches composing this body, the propriety of communicating in their annual letters a particular account of their Sabbath Schools; of their Bible, Missionary and Tract Societies; and by expressing our ardent hope that the progress of such institutions may hereafter indicate a healthy state of religious feeling among us; and render it manifest, that we feel a laudable desire for the universal spread of the glorious gospel of the Son of God!

29. The Trustees of the Ministers' Widows' fund, having made no disbursements during the past year, have no statement to present to the Association except the following Report of the Treasurer, viz.

<i>The Hudson River Bap. Ass. in acct. with WM. COLGATE,</i>		Cr.
Aug. 3, 1826.	By balance	\$350 00
Aug. 2, 1827.	One year's interest at 6 pr. ct. . .	21 00
:: ::	Contribution from Oliver-st. Church . .	55 18
:: ::	Collection at the Association	16 84
:: ::	Contribution from Mulbury-st. Church, . .	16 00
:: ::	do South Baptist Church N. Y. . . .	12 75
:: ::	do Poughkeepsie do	2 50
:: ::	do Newburgh do	1 00
:: ::	do Troy do	14 00
:: ::	do Lansingburgh do	1 63
:: ::	do Hudson do	4 00
:: ::	do Mount Pleasant do	5 00
		<hr/> \$500 00

30. The corresponding letter was reported without amendment, and adopted.

31. The following brethren were selected to obtain subscriptions and donations for the widows' fund, viz: Poughkeepsie, *A. Raymond*; Oliver-street, *Theodore Clark*; Mulberry-street, *William Winterton*; Mount Pleasant, *Caleb Willis*; Hudson, *Peter Vandyke*; Troy, *C. Warner*; Albany, *W. S. McIntosh*; Catskill, *N. Jacobs*; Newburgh, *Abraham Ennis*; Albany African, *Asher Foot*; South Church, New-York, *N. Caswell*; Brooklyn, *Alexander Stewart*; Union, *William C. Dusenbury*; Lansingburgh, *William A. West*; Mission Church, *V. Wilkinson*; Elizabeth-street, New-York, *Adam W. Turnbull*; North Church, New-York, *James H. Townsend*.

32. Brethren B. T. Welch, and John C. Murphy, were appointed delegates to the New-York Baptist State Convention, to meet in Utica, the third Wednesday in October next.

33. The following brethren were appointed messengers to corresponding Associations, viz: to Warren, *Maclay and Sommers*; Boston, *Maclay, Sommers and Paul*; Shaftsbury, *Howard and Harpham*; Lake George, *Wayland and Paul*; Saratoga, *Wayland and Powell*; Rensselaerville, *Burke*; Cayuga, *Peck*; Franklin, *Maclay*; Warwick, *Cone, Hutchinson, Purser and Wilson*; Madison, *Hutchinson and Burke*; Union, *Hutchinson and Ennis*; New-Jersey, *Cone, Malcom, Hagar*

and Wilson; Philadelphia, Cone, Malcom, Hague and Purser; Black River, Powell; Oneida, Burke.

34. *Resolved*, that this Association recommend to the Churches comprising the body, to appoint one or more individuals in each Church, to obtain subscribers for a religious paper to be published in the city of New-York, under the patronage of the Hudson River Baptist Association, and that a committee be appointed there to receive a list of subscribers' names, and engage an Editor to publish the paper on his own responsibility.

35. The Committee selected to carry the foregoing Resolution into effect, consists of Brethren Cone, Maclay, Sommers, Eastman, Barnes, Murphy and Colgate.

36. The following brethren were requested to obtain subscribers for the contemplated paper, viz: Hudson, Charles Hildreth; Troy, L. Howard; Albany, A. S. Holmes; Albany African, F. Marsh; Newburgh, Abraham Ennis; Lansingburgh, William A. West; Poughkeepsie, J. P. Sturges. All the Churches in the Association, are solicited to engage in this work.

37. *Resolved*, that this Association, view with interest every effort made to advance the literary progress of our denomination, and that we recommend the *New-York Baptist Register*, published at Utica, and patronized by the Baptist Convention of this State, to the attention of our people generally, as a useful medium of communication, on subjects important to the general welfare of our Churches.

38. *Resolved*, that this Association cheerfully recommend the Tracts of the Baptist General Tract Society, and learn with pleasure, that a Depository is established at No. 59 Fulton-street, New-York, where their Tracts may be obtained.

39. *Resolved*, That this association recommend to the Churches of which it is composed, an increased attention to the great and important interests of *Foreign and Domestic Missions*, which at the present time, call loudly for the best exertions, and the most fervent prayers of every Christian.

40. *Resolved*, that we affectionately and earnestly request our Churches to attend strictly and regularly on the *Monthly Concert of Prayer*, and to endeavour by all proper means to encourage a Missionary spirit among our members.

41. *Resolved*, that this Association view with peculiar satisfaction the progress of our denomination towards a state of united and happy co-operation, in the formation of State conventions and local associations, for the purpose of concentrating the energies of our already numerous Churches. We feel impressed with the belief that the time has arrived, when we should have some regularly constituted bond, or centre of union, towards which, as a denomination we might look. We do therefore recommend, that the Churches in this Association, and the Associations with whom we correspond, take into consideration the propriety of forming an *American Baptist Convention for general purposes*, to assemble triennially, in some central part of the United States, and that they report their views upon this subject, next year.

42. *Resolved*, that the Moderator of this Association, write an affectionate and encouraging letter to the Baptist Education Society of

the State of New-York, and bid them God speed, in the important work in which they are engaged.

Adjourned, to meet immediately after public worship.

Prayer by Brother Gibbs.

At 11 o'clock A. M. in accordance with the request of the Association, Elder John Peck, preached from Romans x. 15—"And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

After the sermon, a collection was taken, to aid the funds of the New-York Baptist State Convention, amounting to . . . \$33 83

Given for same object, by Troy Baptist Church,	20 00
do do Oliver-street, New-York,	20 00

\$73 83

Met agreeably to adjournment. Prayer by Brother Winter.

43. Collected for printing the minutes, from Poughkeepsie Church, \$2, Oliver-street, \$10, Mulberry-street, \$3, Mount Pleasant, \$1 50, Hudson, \$1 50. Troy, \$3. Albany, \$4. Catskill, \$2. Newburgh, \$1 25. King-street, 50 cts. Albany African, \$1. South Church, New-York, \$2 25. Brooklyn, \$3. Union, New-York, \$2. Lansingburgh, 75 cts. Mission Church, New-York, \$1. Elizabeth-street, New-York, \$2. North, 50 cts. Amount, \$41 25.

44. The Committee on the Query from Catskill Church *Report*, that in their opinion, it is highly important that some general system for conducting the correspondence between the Churches be adopted; they therefore respectfully offer the following *Resolution*—

Resolved, that the Churches in this Association, be requested to take into serious consideration, the suggestions contained in our Circular Letter of 1826, with reference to the *transfer of membership*, and the *ordination of Elders*; and report their resolutions upon the subject, at the next meeting of the Association.

45. Brother Archibald Maclay was chosen Corresponding Secretary of the Association.

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

47. The minutes were read, corrected, and approved.

48. The Minutes of Corresponding Associations were distributed.

The business being finished, the Moderator closed with an affectionate word of exhortation and prayer, and the Association adjourned.

CIRCULAR LETTER.—1827.

THE HUDSON RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION. convened in
Catskill, on the 1st August, 1827, to the Churches they represent, send
Christian Salutation.

BELoved BRETHREN,

In pursuance of the invariable practice of our Association, to append to our Minutes a Circular Letter, on some subject calculated to afford you "instruction in righteousness;" we beg leave to invite your serious attention to the nature, and importance of prayer, as indispensable to your growth in grace and practical exemplification of that religion which animated the devotion of primitive saints.

The imperious duty of prayer to God is demonstrable, not from the light of nature, which can at best supply but a few controverted probabilities of benefit which may result from the exercise, but is clearly ascertained in the volume of divine revelation. The Bible not only enjoins prayer to God as a duty, but affords us the most positive assurance of its efficacy and acceptance. In defining its nature, we would call prayer an intercourse between God and the soul of man. The language of a convicted and broken heart, addressed to the omnipotent, independent, and bountiful Creator, Preserver and Redeemer, who "looketh not at the outside appearance, but at the heart."

In acceptable prayer, two things are evidently required—Mark xi. 24. First, an earnest desire after the things prayed for; "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." Prov. x. 24. Secondly, a confident expectation of being heard and answered. To pray and doubt at the same time, is to shut up the gates of heaven against our supplications. James i. 7. We are not to imagine that prayer is to be limited to the secret ejaculations of the soul; but we should, at all proper seasons, express, in an audible manner, the inward and fervent desire of the heart. In discharging this most solemn duty, it is important to regard not only the dignity and glory of that being whom we address, but the circumstances and comprehension of those with whom we unite. Nothing therefore is more improper than a laboured and ornamented style of address, when we approach that God who cannot be deceived by the most elegant diction, if unaccompanied with the humble devotion of the heart. Hence, the Saviour condemned the hypocritical prayers of the Jews, though adorned with all the ornaments of a sublime eloquence, while the humble groan and fervent but simple petition of the contrite publican, ascended to heaven as an incense of sweeter savour, than all the boasted perfection of the vainglorious Pharisee. The pious aspirations of saints, recorded in the word of God, are undoubtedly the best model for prayer, in as much as the Holy Ghost not only inspired their petitions, but moved the writers to transmit them for our imitation.

The duty and propriety, as well as the nature of true prayer, rest altogether upon the infallible revelation of the Bible; how very important therefore must it be, that we should at all times be governed by the principles and promises of that book, when we approach the mercy-seat. The promises and exhortations of Scripture, in reference to prayer, are unlimited as the multiform necessities of man. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall

be opened unto you."—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" Let no penitent therefore be prevented from the performance of this duty, from any mistaken apprehension, either of personal inability, or of reluctance on the part of God to hear and answer the prayers of the humble and contrite heart. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgement unto victory."

Although the Scriptures encourage and direct us to pray to God for blessings upon ourselves and others, (since Paul prayed thrice unto the Lord, for the removal of his bodily infirmity; and Moses besought the Lord that he would turn away his wrath from Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, his servants,) yet we do not infer from thence, that the omniscient Jehovah is a stranger to our wants: on the contrary, he is perfectly acquainted with each particular of our address ere it breaks from our opening lips; but, "For all these things, saith the Lord, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

In our prayers to God, it becomes us to approach with the most profound reverence and humble adoration, remembering that we are worms of the dust, guilty and condemned criminals, at the footstool of our offended Judge. The Scriptures particularly point out three kinds of prayer, neither of which can be a substitute for the other—these are, *private, domestic, and public prayer.*—The first of these is always supposed to be the practice of every real Christian; and in this duty he is to have a special regard to God as his father, not only by creation, but, by gracious adoption. Here it is important to be deeply impressed with a sense of the divine omniscience. Others may not; but God sees every humble saint, when prostrated at the throne of grace—he sees thee; and, blessed be his name, he approves too, and will "reward thee openly." In private prayer, we are particularly to confess our sins, both secret and public—to give thanks for mercies received—to acknowledge our constant dependance upon his grace—to dedicate ourselves and all we possess to his service, and to seek, by holy communion with the Father of Lights, to become assimilated into his divine likeness. To encourage us in this duty, the Scriptures abound not only with promises and precepts, but with the examples of Patriarchs and Prophets and Apostles. It was in private that Jacob wrestled with the Angel, until the breaking of the day. Elijah prayed to God in secret, under the juniper tree; David also lifted up his soul unto God amid the shades of night; it was in his chamber that Daniel made his supplications to the God of heaven, and it was when alone, and in private communion with God, that the soul of Peter was illumined by the vision of the Lord. Nor can the Christian forget the example of his Saviour, who not only enjoined this duty upon his followers, Matt. vi. 6, but exemplified it in his frequent devotions upon the mountains of Judea, Matt. xiv. 23, in the wilderness, and on that memorable night, when in the bitterness of his last conflict, he prayed thrice; saying, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done."—Private devotion is indeed an invaluable privilege; but to secure the greatest possible amount of benefit, let it in reality be in secret, agreeably to the divine command; and not in an exposed apartment, or under circumstances liable to interruption. Secret prayer should always be under a full persuasion that God is actually present with us; hearing every word, and discerning every emotion of the soul. He is there where

no one else is; the witness of our most private thoughts and actions. We should therefore pray, as we no doubt would, if we saw the *eternal Jehovah* standing before us in the visible lustre of his own incomprehensible glory.

The precise time, or the frequency of this duty, is not determined by any positive command; but the pious resolution of David, is worthy of imitation, "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice," Ps. lv. 17. While private devotion has thus received a sanction from the authority and example of Jesus Christ, it comes recommended to our serious consideration and constant practice, by its own propriety, and by those superior advantages which are not attainable in any other form of religious duty. Here in a peculiar manner the communion is immediate—the soul is unfettered by "the fear of man which bringeth a snare," It is left at perfect liberty to pause, reflect, repeat, or retract—here, if ever it may be truly said of the penitent sinner, "behold he prayeth," and we cannot doubt, that Jehovah does especially delight to meet with his people, when in secret they prostrate themselves at his throne.

Neither the immutability of God's decrees, Dan. ix. 1—3. Nor the infallibility of his promises, Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. Nor the effectual intercession of Christ, is to be regarded as an apology for neglecting secret prayer. To do so, is an evidence that we are ungodly. Ps. xxxii. 6. No sooner was Saul converted, than, "behold he prayeth." The Spirit of grace, is a spirit of supplication; and will teach us to call upon the name of the Lord, and though the purposes of God shall not fail of their accomplishment, yet it will be in answer to the prayer of his people. Dan. x. 12. "I know," saith God, "the thoughts that I think towards you—thoughts of peace, and not of evil;" but it is added—then shall ye call upon me, ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Jeremiah, xxix. 11, 12. The adage is as correct as it is ancient, "A heart without prayer is a heart without grace." Every Christian recognises this as an invaluable privilege, and his seasons of private communion with God, are among the most favoured and precious moments of his life. It will perhaps, more than any other exercise, tend to regulate our passions—control our irregular desires, and give ease to the wounded spirit, under the accumulated afflictions and temptations of life. It not only prepares the soul for circumspection before the world, but is perhaps among the best preparatives for the enjoyment and improvement of the public worship of God. Let then every professed Christian abound in private prayer, and carefully guard against whatever may unfit him for the enjoyment of so exalted a privilege. To neglect it is to dishonour God, by disobedience to his commandments; and to hazard the present prosperity, if not the eternal salvation of the soul. Apostacy generally begins at the closet-door!—He who dares to neglect God in secret, because men cannot see this sin, will find, when too late, that God dares to punish him openly, and make the whole world see his shame.

In short, to which of the saints will you turn, who have not practised this duty? All real Christians, in every age, have "walked;" that is, they have enjoyed daily intercourse with God—they have sought after him, and called upon his name; to which there is a manifest allusion in the description of the Apocalyptic Angel, standing at the altar of incense before the throne, that he should offer it with the prayers of *all Saints*. Rev. viii. 3.

Domestic or family prayer, is another duty enjoined upon every

pious parent and head of a family. During two thousand years before the giving of the Law, mankind were without any express rule upon this subject, if we except the divine intimations which were made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and a few others; but now we enjoy the superadded light of revelation, which speaks to every individual and to every family. "Pray always;" "Pray without ceasing;" "Continue in prayer;" "Praying always with all prayer;" "In every thing give thanks;" and perhaps in no other place can these precepts be more regularly obeyed than in the family circle. The Jews had their morning and evening sacrifices; and even the heathen, adored their *household gods*. But our Lord has put this duty in a clear light, by the prayer which he taught his disciples, "give us this day," not, my, but, "*our* daily bread." Now it is peculiarly in a family capacity that this prayer is appropriate. Besides, the Apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to the discharge of moral and relative duties; as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, he adds, "praying always with all prayer and supplication." The Biblical history of good men, will be found to agree with the spirit of this precept. Abraham built an altar unto the Lord at Shechem; and when removed to Bethel, he again built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord: and from the honourable notice which God takes of Abraham's care for the religious interest of his household, we cannot doubt that he was constant in the duty of family prayer; that he might teach them both by precept and example. The same was true of Isaac and Jacob; and no one who is acquainted with his Bible, can forget the pious resolution of Joshua; "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." But time would fail to speak of David, and Job, and Daniel, and Cornelius and others, who evidently lived in the habitual exercise of family worship, and who are particularly distinguished as the favourites and friends of God.

"Their pure thoughts and words of prayer were borne
Like fumes of sacred incense o'er the clouds,
And wafted thence on angel's wings, through ways
Of light, to the bright source of all."

The vast importance of this duty will not be questioned by any who seriously reflect upon the advantages which have arisen from it in numberless instances. How often have children and servants received their first serious impressions at the domestic altar; while the example and salutary effect of this practice, has had no inconsiderable influence in promoting a uniform attendance on the public means of grace. A conscientious practice of family prayer, and devout reading of the scriptures, will generally be attended with the marked approbation of heaven; while upon those families who impiously dare to live in the habitual neglect of these, the malediction of Jehovah will, sooner or later, descend. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen and upon the families that call not on thy name." Jer. x. 25. The seasons for family worship, should be regular and stated—no worldly avocations, or the presence of visitors, should be permitted to supersede a duty fraught with so much glory to God and spiritual benefit to our own souls.

The following interesting fact, will illustrate the advantages of stated and regular family devotion.

"When I first began business, says a pious tradesman, I determined, through grace, to be particularly conscientious as to family prayer. In this delightful practice, I continued for many years. Morning and evening, my whole family were ordered to be

present; nor must my apprentices be absent on any account. The advantages of this arrangement were soon apparent: the blessings of the upper and nether springs, followed me—health and happiness in my family, and prosperity in my business. A rapid increase in trade, and the necessity of devoting every possible moment to my customers, led me to think that family prayer consumed too much of my time in the morning. Scruples arose respecting my intention of relinquishing this duty; but, worldly interest prevailed so far as to induce me to excuse the attendance of my apprentices. It was soon thought to be sufficient to pray with my wife, when we arose in the morning. Repeated checks of conscience followed this presumptuous neglect of duty, but the calls of a flourishing business appeared to be so commanding, that I found an easy excuse for this fatal omission, especially as I did not neglect prayer altogether. My conscience was now almost seared as with a hot iron; when it pleased God to awaken me by the following providence.

One day I received a letter from a young man who had been my apprentice previous to my omitting family prayer. Supposing that I continued in this practice, his letter was chiefly upon this subject, and couched in the most affectionate terms; but judge my surprise and confusion, when I read these words: "Oh my dear master, never, never shall I be able sufficiently to thank you for the precious privilege with which you indulged me in your family devotions: Oh, sir, eternity will be too short to praise God for what I learnt there. It was there I first beheld my lost state as a sinner; it was there that I first knew the way of salvation; and there that I first experienced the preciousness of 'Christ in me the hope of glory.'" Oh, sir! permit me to say, never, never neglect those precious engagements. You have yet a family and more apprentices: may your house become the birth-place of their souls." I could read no further: every line flashed condemnation in my face. I trembled, I shuddered, I was alarmed at the thought, that the blood of my children and apprentices might soon be demanded at my hands!

Filled with confusion, and bathed in tears, I fled for refuge, to the throne of Grace. In secret, I spread the letter before God—I agonized in prayer to him—but you can better conceive than I can describe my feelings: suffice it to say, that light broke in upon my disconsolate soul, and I obtained a sweet sense that there was mercy and pardon, even for such a wretch as I. I immediately drew my family around me, presented them before the Lord, and from that day to the present, I have never dared to omit family prayer. I am determined, through grace, that, whenever business becomes too large to permit family prayer, I will give up the superfluous part of my business, and retain my devotion. Better to lose a few dollars than become the deliberate murderer of my family, and the instrument of ruin to my own soul."

In closing this article, we would intreat every head of a family to listen to the voice of conscience and of God—of Patriarchs and Prophets—of holy Apostles, and even of Christ himself; who, though Lord of the Universe, condescended to set us an example of family prayer, in that sublime and pathetic supplication, recorded in the 17th John. See also, Luke, xi. 1. But if these examples and exhortations, should be disregarded by any of us, whatever may be our professions of religion, awful will be the parting hour of that family, who have never, or but seldom, bowed the knee together before the Lord. You may leave your families in affluence, your children may be accomplished in all the branches of polite literature; but ah! you cannot leave them in peace, if you have neglected their souls; and O, how will you meet them at the bar of God! When he shall address you in the words of the prophet, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" how awful to be constrained to point to the left hand of the Judge, perhaps to a beloved wife, or child, and answer; alas! there is one of my dear family, for whom upon the earth, I neglected to pray! Better to have left them in the midst of obscurity and want, than to leave them, enemies to God, and strangers to the duty and the blessings of family prayer.

To the foregoing, we may add *public prayer*, as an important christian duty. But some may ask, am I bound to attend the public prayer-meeting, if I pray at home? Are not my prayers in the closet, as efficacious and acceptable, as in the Cathedral? To both of which we

answer in the affirmative. It is undeniable that God does hear and answer the supplications of his children, both in the closet and at the family altar; but it is no less true, that those who are the most frequent and fervent in private and domestic worship, will not only be the best qualified for the practice and enjoyment of public prayer, but will be among the last to plead for an exemption. The habitual performance of this duty, is in strict accordance with the spirit of prophecy. Zech. viii. 20, 21. and in unison with the practice of primitive saints. Luke xxiv. 53. At such times, it is very desirable that *all* who are present, should devoutly unite in the exercise of prayer. It is true, all are not called to pray audibly, this would create inevitable confusion; but while the minister, or individual who leads in the devotion of the assembly, is engaged in solemn audience with the Deity; nothing can be more irreverent and improper, than half of the congregation to remain in a sitting posture, some perhaps asleep, and others gazing about as though they were at perfect liberty to insult God and his worshipping people, by a wanton disregard to all decency. This is profane in any person; but most unpardonable in such as profess to be the followers of Christ. We would affectionately recommend to all who love the house and public worship of God, to grant us the aid of their influence, *by always being present before the commencement of worship, and by endeavouring to promote the greatest possible degree of silence, and order, while the service continues.* Public prayer to God, is a christian duty which rests upon the authority of a divine appointment, and cannot be disregarded with impunity.

Finally, the *importance of prayer* will appear, if we consider the success with which it has been invariably attended. When Jacob prayed to be delivered from the wrath of Esau, the angel of the Lord interposed for his protection. When Moses supplicated the mercy of God upon rebellious Israel, God heard and answered his prayers. The same is true of Hezekiah, Daniel, Peter, and multitudes besides, who through prayer and faith, have wrought righteousness upon the earth, and are now enjoying the unclouded vision of a blissful eternity. To this we may add, that prayer is a duty enjoined upon every Christian, by the command of heaven's King; and it has pleased him to constitute it one of our highest earthly privileges. Well may it be said

"Prayer, ardent prayer, opens heaven, lets down a stream
Of glory, on the consecrated hour
Of man in audience with the Deity.
Who worships the great God, that instant joins
The first in heaven, and sets his foot on hell."

Yes, such are the blessed effects which result from true devotion; for he who has the ear of God in prayer, controls the arm that sways the universe. It was this fact that made the sanguinary Queen declare that she feared more the prayers of John Knox and his followers, than an army of thirty thousand men. It was while Peter and John prayed that the house was shaken where they were assembled; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.—Acts iv. It was while Moses, Aaron, and Hur prayed unto God upon the Mount, that Joshua vanquished the Amalekites in the valley. Truly it may be said, Prayer is our guide to God; and the key to the treasury of God; for he can never become really poor who can pray, "seeing that the Lord is rich unto all that call upon him."—Rom. x. 12. To encourage us to come boldly to a Throne of Grace, our Lord assures us that no earthly parent was ever more willing to grant the reasonable requests of a beloved child, than

God is to answer the prayers of those who call upon him in truth—see John ix. 31; Rom. x. 12; 1 John, v. 14, 15. Another argument may be derived from our own helpless and destitute condition. Revelation declares us to be morally poor, blind, naked, and wretched; but the same blessed book points us to the exhaustless stores of divine grace, to supply all our wants, and to prayer as the appointed means. Are we sick? prayer is heaven's own restorative; hungry? prayer supplies the precious manna; dejected and walking in darkness? prayer is the most effectual relief; for though a Christian may approach a Throne of Grace under much dejection, and scarcely able to hope for an answer, yet he shall not return empty; and at last, he shall reap an abundant harvest from the prayers which here he may have sowed and watered with many tears.—Too much importance cannot be ascribed to prayer; especially where several Christians are united in that exercise. "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." This fact is strikingly illustrated in the case of Daniel, ii. 17, 18; and in the history of Peter, Acts, xii. 12.

Is any pious family or individual in affliction, or walking under the hiding of God's countenance? let them unite together in prayer; and they have the highest authority to hope that God will come and help them. Is a church of Christ in a state of spiritual declension? let those, who feel the importance of the subject, unite together in solemn fasting, humiliation, and prayer; and we are greatly mistaken if a revival of religion does not ensue. Such was the result in the days of Hezekiah, Solomon, and Azariah—2 Chron. vii. and xv. chapters—and such has been the effect of fervent prayer in every age of the church. Almost every revival of religion may be traced to the united prayers of God's people, and we cannot but believe that the happiest consequences would result to the Churches of Christ, if the ministers, located in any particular town or district, would meet at stated periods for special prayer to God, for a blessing upon their own souls, and upon their several churches. Let the deacons of churches, let the male and female members, appoint special meetings for prayer; and let each pious individual Christian regularly pray to God for the outpouring of his Spirit upon the world that lieth in wickedness, and we have reason to believe that the world would soon be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. If, therefore, you love your country, and desire the present and eternal happiness of those hundreds of millions who are destined to populate this vast continent; if you love your own family; if you have any regard for the cause of Jesus, or love for your own soul; then cultivate the duties of *private, domestic, and public prayer*.

CORRESPONDING LETTER.

THE HUDSON RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, *to the Associations with whom they hold correspondence, send Christian Salutation.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

In again addressing you by our annual letter, we feel in some measure conscious of our obligations to the God of all grace, by whose providential goodness we have been preserved through another year, and are again permitted to enjoy the consolations of Christian communion, and to unite our prayers and counsels for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

We find human society every where united in those bonds which interest, ambition, and affection have generated; but we know of no bond of union upon earth so powerful, or so replete with pure and rational enjoyment, as that which unites the household of faith. We here associate as the members of one family, deriving our comforts and strength from one source; alike the subjects of the same sorrows, toils and conflicts, in this valley of tears; our fears and hopes, our interests and destiny, the same; we are connected in ties that no created power can sunder, and which must unite us together in a fellowship increasingly near and tender throughout eternal ages. This holy bond of union has, we trust, been recognised, and the sweet and sacred consolations derived from it, delightfully enjoyed, in our interview with your messengers, whom we have welcomed as brethren in the Lord, and whose counsels and preaching have contributed much to our comfort and edification.

Our present session has been to us peculiarly interesting; our hearts have been encouraged and comforted by your letters of love; and the information received from our Churches, presented in their annual epistles, is truly animating. The history of our experience, for the past year, is a record of the faithfulness and love of our ever living, merciful and faithful High Priest. The Churches continue to "hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;" and harmony and brotherly kindness, the precious results of a firm and

United adherence to *one Lord, one faith, one Baptism*, prevail throughout our borders. In some of our Churches, seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have been experienced, and many precious souls, the purchase of the Saviour's blood, have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and made to rejoice in the liberty and love of the truth. These displays of the power and compassion of our covenant head, have a claim upon our gratitude and praise; may these cords of love draw us nearer, and bind us closer to the cross!

In the retrospect of the dispensations of God towards us, and the progress of the great and glorious work to which he hath called us, we have much reason for humiliation and self abasement before him; that with stimulants so powerful and holy, so little has been accomplished for the glory of his great name! Yet, with our repentance, we may mingle our songs of grateful thanksgiving, that weak and imperfect as our most efficient efforts have been, the God of love has smiled benignly upon our labours.

In viewing the interests of Zion prospectively, it is our privilege to rejoice, that the great question of her prosperity, depends not for its answer upon human efforts, but was long since settled in the councils of eternity. The promise is secure, based upon the immovable foundations of the divine faithfulness and immutability, that "*the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.*" But while the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, we are stimulated to active exertion in his cause, and fervent prayer at his throne, by motives the most interesting and important, that can possibly urge to action the subjects of his love; nor is it among the least of these motives, that it is the pleasure of God to employ human intelligence, human hearts and hands, as the instrumentality by which the work is to be accomplished; the exceeding great and precious promises fulfilled. Let us therefore labour assiduously, and suffer cheerfully, in the kingdom and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever may be our discouragements, nothing should be suffered to abate our ardour, or relax our exertions; for this is our confidence and our joy, amid all the labours and sufferings of Christian profession, that we are sustained by his grace, consoled by his love, and animated by the prospect of soon meeting in one great association with the Church of the first born, where parting and regrets, imperfection and sin, shall be known no more for ever.

We affectionately solicit a continuance of your correspondence.

Our next Anniversary will be held at Hudson, on the 1st Wednesday of August, 1828, where we hope again to be favoured with your Minutes and Messengers.

Signed by order and in behalf of the Association.

SPENCER H. CONE, *Moderator.*

THOMAS STOKES, *Clerk.*

CHARLES G. SOMMERS, *Ass't. Clerk.*