

1870 Circular of Delaware River Association

*Written by
William J. Purington*

I hope some of you can have an enlarged view of your hope in Christ reading behind Elder Philander Hartwell. When we submit these, we feel it correct to say that the Circular is an expression of Predestinarian Old School Baptists. Some could say, "But how can you say that? There are some many different kinds of Baptists, even Old School Baptists!" My answer can be seen by quoting an item in all their order of business. In this Session, it is item 5. It reads:

"5. Appointed Elders William J. Purington, C. B. Hassell, Silas Durand, Gilbert Beebe, E. Rittenhouse and J. A. Johnson, together with the writer, to examine the circular letter."

"11. The committee on the circular letter reported, and recommended the same, whereupon it **was read and adopted.**"

BTW, Sometimes I forget to put this note in when I send these documents out. (I was born ugly and got old!) If you do not want to receive these documents, and want your name removed from my address book, please let me know, and I'll delete it. Thanks, Stan Phillips.

[Notes: Ministers present in this session were: Elder P. Hartwell (moderator), A.B. Francis, Forris A. Chick, E. Rittenhouse, J.A. Johnson, Joseph Correll, Gilbert Beebe, William J. Thorpe, Joseph N. Badger, Silas Durand, William J. Purington, F.A. Chick, John A. Badger, and C. B. Hassell.

Associations seated this session were: Baltimore, Delaware, Warwick, Chemung, Conference Western New York, Corresponding of Virginia, Lexington, N.Y., Maine Predestinarian Ass'n, Maine Predestinarian Conference, Licking Particular Baptist, Ky., Salisbury, Ocmulgee (Ga.), Euharlee, (Ga.) Yellow River, (Ga), Oconee (Ga), Kehukee (NC), and Contentna of Va. Document transcribed by Stanley Phillips, Dec. 20-21, 2008.]

The Elders and messengers composing the Delaware River Old School Baptist Association, in session with the Southampton Church, Bucks Co., Pa., June 1st, 2^d & 3^d, 1870, to the several churches whose messengers we are, sendeth Christian salutation:

Beloved Brethren:- As it has been the custom of this association to address you by litter at their annual meetings, we do not feel at liberty to depart from that wholesome and established custom. We therefore address you this Circular. May the God whose servants we are, guide us by His word and Spirit to declare the Truth unto you, that you may be deified and comforted thereby.

As all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, we are directed to search the Scriptures. And it seems to have been the custom of some of the disciples to do so. They of Berea were accounted more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.- Acts 17:11. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God (not the man of the flesh) may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.- 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The Scriptures are a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, and search daily. All that we can know of

God and Christ is revealed in the Scriptures. They are the record that God hath given us of His Son. Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Jesus directed the Jews to search the Scriptures; and He seemed to reprove the disciples for being so slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

The Spirit that indited the sacred Scriptures can open the hearts of the children of God to understand them, and without the teaching of the Spirit all our search for Truth will be vain. The Comforter brings to the remembrance of the saints all things that Jesus has spoken. He alone can give us understanding of the Scriptures. Mortals may err, and if left to themselves are sure to err; but the Spirit of Truth cannot err; He leadeth into all Truth. May the Lord help us in our search after Truth, and give us an understanding of the Scriptures.

Dear Brethren, In this letter we will present for consideration that portion of Scriptures recorded in the second epistle of Paul the apostle, to the Corinthians, fifth chapter and first verse.

*“For we know that if our **earthly house** of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a **house not made with hands**, eternal in the heavens.”*

The second epistle to the Corinthians, like all the other epistles, is addressed to the *saints*. Paul has associated with him in the writing of this letter, Timothy, and has addressed it “unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.”

“For.” He here gives a reason for what he had before stated, and among the things referred to we find the following declarations: *“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though **our outward man perish**, yet the **inward man is renewed day by day**. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and **eternal** weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things **which are seen are temporal**, but the things which are **not seen are eternal**. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* But this “building of God” is not seen with our fleshly eyes, but is seen by the eye of faith only, by such who have spiritual eyes.

“Our earthly house of this tabernacle.” The tabernacle has an earthly house, and also a heavenly. We will now consider:

1st, *This tabernacle*. There was a tabernacle in the wilderness. God showed Moses the pattern of that tabernacle, and all that belonged to it, and he was directed to make all things according to that pattern. *“According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof even so shall ye make it,”* saith the Lord to Moses.- Exodus 25:9. The glory of God was manifest in that tabernacle; yet the literal tabernacle in the wilderness was only a **type or figure** of that which God showed to Moses. He had a view of the *heavenly* building. The Church of God is that building or tabernacle, and it is not to be taken down, *“not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords be broken.”* The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.- Revelation 21:3.

It is the holy city, the new Jerusalem, which John saw *coming down from God out of heaven*, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This tabernacle is not earthly, but heavenly.

God's glory dwelleth in this tabernacle, not only in the Church as a body, but He dwelleth in the saints individually. Each one is a tabernacle or temple where God dwelleth. He walks in them. Jesus has come again, and received them unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also, that they may behold His glory. Christ's body is a temple; or tabernacle. Jesus said, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.*" The Church is His body, and Jesus dwelleth in each member of His body. The divine nature may be brought to view as a tabernacle also, dwelling in each of His children. It is "*Christ in you the hope of glory.*" The kingdom of God is within the saints, collectively and individually.-"*Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the Kingdom of God is **within you,***" said Jesus.- (Luke 17:21).

2d, *Our earthly house of this tabernacle.* Man was made of earth, and is earth. Man in all his parts is earth, or flesh, and not spiritual. It was man that sinned, and it **was man that Christ redeemed.** Our earthly house of this tabernacle includes the **whole man**, the soul, body and spirit. The saint has experienced **two births**, the earthly or fleshly, and the spiritual or heavenly. Man having sinned, he is under the curse, or in other words, the penalty of death is upon him. He must return to dust. In consequence of sin, while in the earthly house the saint has pain and sorrow. Sin is the cause of all our sighing and groaning. It is in this earthly house or tabernacle that we groan, being burdened. The apostle terms even this earthly house a tabernacle. It is a temporary dwelling place; yet it is a place where the saint has much trouble. He is burdened, and desires to be clothed upon with his house which is from above, if so be that being clothed he shall not be found naked. The earthly house is in a decayed and decaying condition. The saint while in this house is greatly annoyed by the corruptions of the house. His earthly nature is sinful, is prone to evil, and is it a wonder that he groans? We think not. How can the saint, who loves holiness, and hates sin, feel comfortable while he dwelleth in this our earthly house? This heavenly Life, (or **the new man**, this tabernacle which is holy, and desires to live a holy life and abstain from every sin,) is brought constantly in contact with the old earthly house. But it must be dissolved, it cannot endure forever; it is mortal. The seeds of mortality are sown, the frame is crumbling, and ere long it will be dissolved. It shall not become extinct, but only dissolve. It is to exist still, but not as an *earthly* house; but by the power of our God this mortal shall put on immortality. The new principle within, the tabernacle of God will dissolve and completely **change** the nature and condition, so that it will be no more flesh, but spirit. The leaven of Christ in the earthly house will so dissolve it that it will be wholly heavenly, "*like the glorious body of Christ.*" Then there will be no earthly house of this tabernacle, but the saint will appear in his own glorious form, the house not made with hands will have subdued, and moulded the earthly into the heavenly. Then there will be no more an earthly house.

3d, "*The building of God, the house not made with hands, **eternal** in the heavens.*" This house is the body of Christ, embracing all the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. But this house is not made with hands, but **is eternal in the heavens.** God made all things. He made the earthly house of this tabernacle; yet this earthly house has been developed by *ordinary generations* from the first Adam. We have fathers according to the flesh, though the **life** was one, and no new life has been made, created, or breathed; but as far as we can see, this earthly house was made by hands, or rather we have to acknowledge earthly paternity; and the development of the earthly house has been slow – nearly six thousand years have rolled around since man was made, and, for aught we know, thousands more may yet roll on before all of this earthly house shall have been developed to mortal view; and many convulsions and commotions in earth may take place ere that house be fully developed. But we, the saints, have another building, **eternal in the heavens.** This house is **eternal**, without beginning or end, and consequently there was no period when it did not exist, not only in the *body complete*, but in its parts or particles; but as the house complete **in Christ.** The body of Christ was **never imperfect**; the members of this body were as perfect with God ere time began, as was the eternal Head. God

beholds the **end from the beginning**, and has declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that **are not yet done**, saying, *“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.”*- Isaiah 46:10. This glorious building of God embraces **all** the component parts of the body of Christ, the saints, the Church, the body of Jesus Christ.

Earthly houses have a beginning; hands are engaged in building; the progress is often slow, and even uncertain; for many houses have been begun that were never finished; but not so with the Building of God, for that is **eternal** in the heavens, and, like the Builder, is the same *“yesterday, to-day, and forever.”* Yet this heavenly house, in its *manifestation*, as viewed from *our* earthly standpoint, is *progressing*. He is manifestly bringing the lively stones together; “He is bringing His sons from afar, and His daughters from the ends of the earth;” and we, whilst in the earthly house, are looking and waiting for its completion; but not so with God, the Great Builder. *“It is finished,”* saith Jesus. This heavenly house is not merely *in prospect*; the saints **have** a building of God, whether they can see it or not; the building is **eternal** in the heavens; that is, in the presence of God and the glorified, blood-washed throng, in His immediate presence. This building is complete in Him, who **is** (already) the *“Head over all things to His Church, which IS His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”* But the limits of a circular letter forbids us dwelling longer on this branch of our text.

4th, *“The knowledge of our heavenly house.”* *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens.”* This *knowledge* is not gained by research, nor by our human calculations. By no rules of language, logic, algebra, can any attain to this knowledge; *“for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”* (I Cor. 2:9-10). A more self-evident truth cannot be found. Faith is **the gift of God**. Faith takes hold upon the word of the Lord, and does not stop to calculate whether the thing spoken of is probable or possible; but takes God at His word, and knows that what God saith is true. The saints often look for some evidence that they have an interest in the heavenly house. They have incontestable evidence that they are of the earth, earthy; that earthly house can be seen with the powers of the flesh. We can feel the pains, suffer the afflictions peculiar to our earthly state, but cannot see things that are spiritual. But faith is all-powerful, and overcomes all obstacles, and removes all difficulties. Faith is the substance of things hope for, and the evidence of things not see, It is of divine operation. It works by love. Faith cannot be mistaken. Sight and feeling may be at fault, but faith never. Christ prayed to His Father to be glorified with the same glory that He was glorified with before the world was. The glory would not have been complete, if there had been any lack of members, or any of the members maimed; but the body was then complete, and that was all that Jesus prayed for, the triumph of His body. Faith dispels distance and abolishes time.

When we were brought to see ourselves sinners, we did not have to stretch the mind backward to the fall in the garden of Eden, but the fall was with us **then**. All our sins were revived, and were **present** with us then. It was faith that gave us that view. The eyes of nature could not see it thus; they turned to some personal acts we had committed, or found some explanations and excuses. But faith embraced the whole, and they were **all present then** with us, and we had to acknowledge the sentence just. We felt that we were *justly* condemned. When Christ was revealed to us as our Redeemer and Savior, we did not have to stretch the mind backward eighteen hundred years, to the time of the crucifixion, but we had a present Savior; bearing our sins, who bid us live. Faith seeth all things *present*, even the perfect Church of God. We had by faith a view of our glorification. All sin seemed to vanish, the perfect righteousness of Christ was ours, and we were accepted in the Beloved. Then faith saw the house complete. We then came to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of

angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. The house was complete! Whenever faith triumphs in us, we have a view of that perfection of the body of Christ, that none other can entertain. **As Christ is, so are they that are one with Him.** [Stan's emphasis –for a present purpose] There is no more possibility of the members falling short of that glory, than there is of Christ falling short. Christ and His children are one; where He is, there they must be also.

In conclusion, dear brethren, we would say a few words to those who feel weak, and hardly dare hope that this heavenly house is theirs. This house is the home of all the children of God, we know. But we are ready to inquire whether we belong to that family or not. We often think we have little or no evidence of our interest in the house that God has builded for the saints, the Church of God. But there are some plain marks given by which the saints are to be known. God is love; He that loveth is born of God. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. To love holiness and hate sin is a sure evidence that we have a house in the heavens which is eternal.

Beloved, may God give us faith to see the perfect work of Christ, that we may rest upon the promises of God, trusting in Jesus.

P. Hartwell, *Moderator*
Wm. J. Purington, *Clerk.*
