

## 1853 Circular Warwick Baptist Association

[Associations in correspondence this session were: Delaware, Delaware River, Baltimore, Corresponding of Va., Kettocton, Va., Licking Particular, Ky., Lexington, NY., Maine O.S. Association, Maine O. S. Conference, Chemung, Allegany, Ebenezer, Va., and Salisbury, Md.

Ministers seated were elders James Bicknell, Gilbert Beebe, D. L. Harding, P. C. Brome, Samuel Trott, P. Hartwell, R. Burritt, William Sharp, J. L. Purington, and John Winchel.

Of special interest to this transcriber is the following note which demonstrates a unique difference in this fellowship of Baptists with others that have advisory powers:

“Item 10. The committee to which was referred the letters from the Thompsontown and Hardyston churches, through their chairman, brother Becknell, reported the following, viz.

1. That inasmuch as the churches of this association, have expressly refused to clothe their messengers with *power to act as an “Advisory Council,”* in discussing or deciding on queries, Therefore the queries presented in the letter from the Thompsontown church **cannot be received for discussion or decision by this association.”**

Another interest note follows. It refers to some remark in the 1852 Circular, written by Elder Gilbert Beebe, and which was the subject of John Clarke of Virginia’s charge against Beebe. (We apologize for not being able to locate that Circular, since it is of great historical importance to this fellowship of Baptists. The note: “2. Your committee report that having **carefully examined the letter from Hardyston church** in which the Association is charged with having sent a false doctrine in the Circular of last year, “**of a Mediatorial Christ without deity or humanity,**” and a “**Mediatorial Christ pot of the Lord,**” &c. We, (the committee made up of elders Becknell, Beebe, Trott, Harwell, and Sharp, with the authors of the circular and corresponding letters,) **having also carefully examined the said Circular Letter of the last year, found the charge totally unfounded in truth, as that Circular will show that the supreme and eternal Godhead sustained,** and regarding Elder Brome, whose malicious and continuous course to last year and rendered it highly improper that he should, under any circumstances occupy a seat with us, until he shall evince a different spirit and practice; We, your committee, **unanimously recommend** that so long as the Hardyston church shall persist in her railing accusations against the association, and so long as she shall continue to sustain the said Elder B. Pitcher, in his ungodly course, that she, (Hardyston church,) be **dropped from the Minutes and connection of this association. The above reports were severally accepted and adopted.”**

Further note by SCP: On an examination of the 1854 Minute of the Warwick, the minute shows that Kettocton and Ebenezer Associations of Virginia were no longer

seated; and also that in 1854, the Kehukee of N., Ockmulgee, Uharlee, Yellow River, Ocone, and Primitive Western associations in Georgia be received in correspondence.

In our examination of the Delaware River, Lexington, Licking, and Warwick associations' minutes, we do not find a single instance where Elder John Clark of the Ketocton was ever present in these "sister" corresponding association through these past years. We offer a suggestion of the possibility that even though his association was in this fellowship of churches, he was never in that "*fellowship*" himself. – SCP.]

## CIRCULAR LETTER

*The Warwick Association of Old School Baptists in session with the church at Wallkill, Orange, County, N. Y., to the churches of which it is composed, send Christian salutation.*

*Dear Brethren:-* By permission of our heavenly Father whose goodness and mercy have followed us all our days, we enjoy the privilege of another anniversary meeting together, as a band of brethren, and as the messengers of a cluster of churches of the same faith and order, and it is truly gratifying to learn from your letters and messengers, that peace and harmony generally pervade your respective borders. "*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*" While strife and discord, evil speaking and divisions have annoyed and distressed some of the associations with which we have *formerly* held sweet intercourse. That the churches of this association thus far been enabled to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, should awaken our profoundest gratitude to God for His amazing goodness to usward. But while we have so much cause for rejoicing, we have also reason for humiliation and supplication to the God of our salvation. The languid state of some of our churches, and the lamentable destitution of faithful pastors, and able ministers of the New Testament, admonishes us of the necessity of obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, to pray the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers and send them into His harvest. In regard to ministerial gifts, the ways of Zion, in this department of our Redeemer's kingdom, truly mourns, and but few come to our solemn feasts.

We are informed by an inspired apostle that the design of the gifts bestowed by our ascended Lord, was "*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*" – Ephesians iv. 12-14. This being the great design of our God in the provision and bestowment of gifts, we are led to infer that when such gifts are *withheld*, a languid state of the church must be the *result*. Not that we harbor

the thought that men, however gifted, can of themselves do anything to elevate the church of the most High God, for all our experience has demonstrated that, *“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it, and except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain.”* Still we know the Lord’s ways are equal, and when it is His pleasure to revive His saints, and cause His spices to send forth their delicious savor, He generally raises up for His church pastors after His own heart, whose labors in love for and with the flock are greatly blessed by Him for the encouragement and edification of His children.

The church is presented by the apostle in the text just referred to as the “body of Christ.” *“There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, and one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* Of this body Jesus Christ is the Head, and when all the election of grace shall come in the unity of the faith, they shall also come to the knowledge of the Son of God. They shall know and fully recognize Him as their Head, their Prophet, Priest and King; their Lord and their God. They shall know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death.

The saints are to be perfected, not in regard to their acceptance and justification before God, for that is not *to be accomplished by gifts* in the church. Christ was Himself delivered up for their iniquities, and raised again from the dead for their justification. *“For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.”* But the perfecting of the saints, by the gifts, is in regard to the symmetry of the body, the unity of the faith and perfect knowledge of the Son of God. The measurement of the stature of the body of Christ is very exact. It is embraced in the purpose of God, in the election of grace, and cannot be greater or smaller. The entire church of God is the fullness of the measurement of that stature; for the church is His body, and the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. When all the members of that mystical body shall be brought into the unity of the faith, then will the church have come to a perfect man, then will that body reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. When that grand ultimatum shall be accomplished then the design of the gifts of Zion will be attained, and then the saints will be above the necessity of the exercise of the gifts which are for “the work of the ministry,” for they shall see as they are seen, and know even as they are known. That which is only in part shall then be done away.

At present the church painfully feels that she has not yet arrived at that ultimate state. She is yet in her militant state warring against foes with out and fears within. Her babes “desire to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;” and her strongest members require to be supplied with “meat,” lest they should faint by the way. To meet their necessities, Christ has commanded His ministers to *“feed the flock of God which He has purchased with His own blood.”* His ministers are instructed to *“Study to shew themselves approved unto God, workmen that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word,”* and giving to every one a portion in due time.

From what we have gathered of divine instruction from the Scriptures, in the foregoing, it is not difficult to perceive that the church of Christ is very differently situated, in regard to her gifts, from the popular religious combinations of the earth. If they lack ministers, the process of procuring them is perfectly plain and natural. Suitable young men are to be selected by the wisdom of the world, and to them such inducements as have attractions for the graceless must be held out. Worldly honors, ease and emoluments must be offered. Dignified and flattering titles, fat livings and large salaries will generally call them out. Humanly instituted schools and colleges must supply them with a substitute for grace and the gracious operations and instructions of the Holy Spirit. They can generally buy up all the ministers and missionaries they require. But it is quite the reverse with the church of God. She can no more make or provide her own gifts, than she can quicken or regenerate souls. None are, or can be qualified for her service, unless they are *called of God to the work* as was Aaron to the priesthood in which he officiated. She has no alternative; God has laid on her the stern necessity of praying the Lord of the harvest. All who have come unto her without a commission from on high, she has found invariably to be “:thieves and robbers.” They come “only to steal, to kill and to devour.” If by deception they have “crept in unawares,” into the confidence of the saints, they have soon manifested their wolfish disposition. However they may, for a time, beguile, flatter and deceive, as soon as they receive their “sop,” they will commune with the enemy to betray the sheep and lambs, as Judas did with the priests to betray the Shepherd.- *“Wo unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain,”* to establish a system of religion which God has not authorized, and of which He will never approve. And they have *“run greedily after the error of Balaam,”* and vainly endeavor to inflict a curse upon the chosen Israel of God. Such are the ways of carnal patronage, worldly honor or princely pay, loving the wages of unrighteousness. And they have *“perished in the gainsayings of Core;”*- vainly attempting to contest the validity of the divine appointment to the hiring of the ministry, the earthly religious establishments have swallowed them up, and thus relieved the Israel of God. The present scarcity of gifts and callings, (ministerial gifts more especially,) may be intended for the trial of our faith and confidence in God, as well as of our fidelity. God’s people require trials of their faith which is more precious than that of gold, our obedience is also to be tried. And may we not with propriety enquire, Have we obeyed the voice of our Lord? Have we been looking to Him, acknowledging our dependence, and praying that He would build up the waste places of Zion, strengthen all her stakes and lengthen her cords; that He would place watchmen upon her walls that shall never hold their peace, and pastors after His own heart, who shall contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints? If we have in all respects stood on our lot, we may rest assured, that whatever may be the cause of His withholding from us a greater supply, the object is worthy of Himself and shall result in His declarative glory and the real good of His people.

P. Hartwell, *Moderator.*

Wm. L. Benedict, *Clerk.*