

By Samuel Trott

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Relation of Gospel Churches and Ministers.

Circular Letter: *The Delaware Baptist Association, to the Churches they represent.*

Beloved Brethren: - Having again been permitted through the mercy of God, which *endureth forever*, to meet in our associate relation; and to receive, as tokens of your mutual fellowship, the epistles sent by your messengers; we in turn address you by Letter, praying that *grace and peace* may be multiplied unto you.

As a subject that may be interesting and profitable unto you, we present for your consideration a view of the relation of gospel Churches and Ministers, as we believe is revealed in the word of God, the only correct standard of gospel order.

This relation is therein represented as a household or family relation. The churches, as the bride of Christ, are the mistresses of their respective families. For although the term *bride* is more generally applied to the collective church, or body of Christ, yet as each branch into which the body is divided, is individually spoken of in the New Testament as a distinct church, and as an independent body is entrusted with an administration of the discipline and order of Christ's house, in its own sphere, {see, for instance, Paul's direction to the church at Corinth, concerning the disciplining of its members, I Cor.5:1-13 & II Cor.2:6-10,} each branch may be considered as the bride of Christ, owning Him for her Head and Husband, and as the Father of her children.

The gospel ministers, stand to the respective families or churches with which they are

severally connected, in the relation of *servants*, as the term *minister* denotes. The minister of the gospel is primarily the minister or servant of Christ, being by Him entrusted with the ministry, {see I Tim.1:11 & Col.4:17.} Hence says the Apostle, “Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” I Cor.4:1. Being the servants of Christ, they are of course, especially called by Him, and gifted or qualified for the work assigned them. Hence in all their ministrations they are to be governed by the New Testament; it being the law of Christ, which they are to seek at His mouth, as the *High Priest of our profession*. See Mal.2:7. To Him they must also ultimately account for the manner in which they have discharged their stewardship. Luke 12:42-48 & I Cor.4:2-5.

But whilst the gospel minister is to act as the servant of Christ, he is also to consider himself as a servant of the church of which he is a member, and which he is appointed to serve; and is therefore to act under her direction in all things committed to her government by her and his Lord. And surely the Lord has not appointed His bride to be subject to the servants, as many will have it, but His servants to be subject to the church. Paul says to the church at Corinth, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.” II Cor.4:5.

To the churches it belongs in administering the government of their Lord’s house, to set her servants to work, or in other words, to call into public service the gifts bestowed upon them respectively. But in doing this as they are so abundantly cautioned by their Lord to “*beware of false prophets, which come in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are raving wolves,*” and to “*try the spirits,*” &c., it becomes them to be very cautious that they set none to work whom the Lord has not sent forth into *His harvest*. And to the churches it belongs to examine the credentials of those who would introduce themselves into the family of the Lord’s servants. They are to examine the certificate of their appointment to His service; that is, the gift imparted for the work of the ministry; namely, *aptness to teach*; and their *experimental* call to it, and discovering their Lord’s signature, which is nothing less than an *experimental witness* in their own breast, that the messages delivered are from God; then, and not otherwise, to appoint them to their work, as the case may require; either to labor as a pastor in the duties of that office, or as teachers simply, that is as preachers not having a pastoral care. The appointment to be manifested according to the pattern given, namely: *by prayer, and the laying on the hands of the Elders*; as in the case of setting apart Paul and Barnabas to the work whereunto the Holy Ghost had called them. Acts 13:1-3.

We are aware, brethren, that in the above remarks we pass by one practice common in our Baptist churches, namely: that of *licensing* preachers. Upon this point we will propose, for the candid consideration of our brethren, the following queries: 1st. Do we anywhere in the New Testament, find any pattern or direction for licensing preachers? 2nd. Does our Lord anywhere commission any to preach His gospel, whom He does not commission to baptize? We know that we ought to “*lay hands suddenly on no man,*” nor ought we in anyway to send them out into the world as Christ’s ministers, without a thorough trial.

But in the case of *licensing* preachers, this caution is not always sufficiently regarded. Too

many churches, in sending out preachers in this way, act under the impression that it is only a licensing of them, and therefore think it not necessary to have the same full evidence of the individual's being called of Christ to this work as in the case of ordination; as though a person being imposed upon the churches and the world as a gospel preacher without having the gospel of Christ *committed*, of God, *to his trust*, was of much less consequence than his baptizing without being specially called to do it. Another evil arising from the plan of licensing, is that many persons who are fellowshipped by their churches, as having been called of Christ to preach, but whose gifts are not great, or who have not confidence to crowd themselves forward, are left to labor for years under the difficulty of being allowed to obey but one part of their Lord's command. He says to His ministers, "*Go and teach all nations, baptizing them,*" &c., but the churches say to these, "No, you may go and teach, but not baptize."

Again, gospel ministers, whether pastors or others, being servants of the church, and connected with the churches where they severally belong as members of the family, are as much under the watch and care of the church as are the other members. Consequently if it is the duty of each church, as it manifestly is, in maintaining the order and discipline of Christ's house, to know how its members attend upon the institutions of the gospel; and to call those to an account who shall be found treating with neglect, or turning from the gospel and its ordinances, as they professed to receive them; it is equally its duty to see that each minister belonging to the church faithfully discharge the duties of his station; and not only to *know* that he preaches Christ's gospel, but also to know that with fidelity, as providential circumstances permit, he exercises the gift committed to him in the *work of the ministry*. Thus Paul and Barnabas, although specially sent forth by the Holy Ghost to a certain work, yet considered it their duty to account to the church, how they had fulfilled the work assigned to them. Compare Acts 13:2 with 14:26,27. But how different from this is the present state of things among the Baptist churches generally. They leave the preachers which are among them, other than the pastors, to roam at large; and if they abstain from immoral conduct, and from the grosser errors, such as Universalism, or Campbellism, or the like, the churches exercise no more watch over them, either as to the exercising of their gifts, or to their doctrine, than over those who are not members with them. In consequence of this, among those who profess to have been called by the Lord, to go and preach His gospel, even with the urgent direction to *let the dead bury their dead*, rather than neglect this work; and whose *call* their churches have declared a fellowship for by licensing them, we find *one* engaged in the business of the world, preaching but seldom, if at all; *another* is wandering far and wide, probably more intent to hunt a settlement than to preach the gospel; a *third* we find in a seminary of learning, studying the heathenish writings of the ancient Greeks and Latins to qualify him to preach the gospel of Christ; a *fourth* is traveling as an agent of some society, to collect monies, &c.; a *fifth* has engaged as a missionary, to some mission board, to be subject to their direction, to hold himself accountable to them, and to acknowledge his dependence on them for his reward. Thus we find him a member of two distinct families; one the household of faith, by which he was licensed, the other a household of *human contrivance*. To the latter he cleaves, and owns their government; the other he despises

as an inefficient institution for spreading the gospel. We would not have it understood by these expressions that we are opposed to spreading the gospel upon New Testament principles. Perhaps a *sixth* may be found living within the bounds of his church, and engaged as far as circumstances permit, in preaching the gospel to the destitute.

But to return; the duty of the churches to watch over the preachers, as such, which are among them, involves in it their accountability to their Lord, for the employment of those gifts which He has bestowed upon them. For the apostle tells us, Eph.4:11-13, that “He gave some, Apostles,” that is, evidently, to some churches, as in the first age of the gospel. “And some Pastors and Teachers,” and they were given *for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*. By the *body of Christ*, in the passage, as appears from what is said in the following verse, we are evidently to understand the whole collective body, of which each church is a branch. Hence though these gifts are given to the individual churches, yet as they are designed for the *edifying of the whole body*, it becomes the duty of the churches, to see, according to circumstances, that they are thus employed. It is true that as each church can only act in a limited sphere, and as each gift can only be employed in a like sphere, a church will feel the propriety of requiring the gifts committed to it, especially in the pastoral office, to be employed for its own edification, so far as in connection with the good of the whole, it is judged proper. Not that the labors even of the Pastor should be wholly confined within the bounds of his church; much less that the other gifts, in the office of *Teachers*, should be thus confined.

We do think, brethren, that the churches have been too remiss upon this point. They have of late years acted too much upon the principle of *mine* and *thine*, as though the pastor was exclusively for the church to which he belonged, and as though the individual church had no concern in the whole body’s being edified. Poor and destitute churches have been left to shift for themselves as well as they could. For that care which the churches ought to have exercised towards the *feeble branches* of the body, and towards destitute neighbors, *human contrivance* has been substituted in the form of Mission Societies; whereas let the churches but discharge their duty towards, and with the gifts entrusted to them, and it will be found that the institutions of the great Head of the Church are perfectly adequate to the edifying of His body, and the accomplishing of His purpose of salvation, without the intervention of human wisdom to guide His affairs.

You will perhaps say, that we do not feel able to support more than one preacher, nor hardly that; and we should not like to insist on a man’s leaving his business, and going from home to preach, without being able to secure him a compensation for his time, &c. How was it, brethren, in the early ages of the church? Oh! but, say some, that was a day of miracles; and we cannot now expect preachers to be supported by miracle. Jesus has the same power as then, and the promise that He *will be with His ministers to the end of the world* still holds good. But where have we an instance of the Apostles performing a miracle to procure themselves substance? Paul’s *own hands* ministered unto his necessities, when the churches did not communicate to him; and he tells the elders of the church at Ephesus, I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak. Hence we have here an example for preachers, when the

churches fail to minister to their necessities, that they should *labor, working with their hands*, to support themselves while preaching the gospel. See Acts 20:34,35. It is true, the Lord has *ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*; but He has never appointed that his ministers should wait till they have competent wages secured to them, before they go forth to preach the gospel. And if they have put their hands to the *gospel plough* in a right spirit, they will not be looking back for their gains, before they can move on.

But let not the churches conclude that they are not under obligation to communicate a support to those who preach the gospel, or to their families. *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things*, is the direction of Zion's King. Gal.6:6.

An important enquiry arises, how this support is to be communicated; whether as a fixed salary, or otherwise. Much is said in favor of salaries on worldly principles; but we no where find this to be the New Testament plan; nor is it congenial with the gospel spirit. It places the preacher and church in opposite scales, as much as are the parties to a mercantile transaction. Indeed this stipulating with a preacher to give him a certain annual sum on condition of his being their preacher, looks too much like a worldly bargain, and places the preacher in circumstances very much like those of a hireling. It deprives the preacher of the sweet consolation of receiving the communications from the church and individuals as a token of love for his work's sake; for they are naturally received as the fulfillment of a contract. Many other evils arising from this plan might be specified, had we room.

On the other hand, by a due regard to the family relation, in which the churches and preachers are connected, the occasion for a stipulated salary for the ministerial support will be excluded. In a family where proper equality reigns, those members of the family who are laboring in the harvest field, or engaged in tending the flocks, will come to a family table, and partake equally free with those who have been concerned in making ready the provisions. So the preachers being called to labor in the *gospel field*, or as *shepherds* to take the oversight of the family in spiritual things, are or ought to be principally engaged in these things; whilst the other members of the family are attending to their worldly avocations, and thereby collecting the *meat that perishes*. Now as these come and freely receive for the supply of their spiritual wants, out of that distribution which the preachers make, as *stewards of the mysteries of God*, is it anything more than a proper equality that the preachers should be allowed to come freely for the supply of their temporal wants to the stock which the others have collected? This is evidently the New Testament view of the subject. See Gal.6:6. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." And I Cor.9:7 - "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" Again, verse 11 - "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?"

A correct view of this relation, and a conformity to it in practice, will place the preacher in a happy remove from the two extremes; that of being engaged as a *hireling*, and that of being supported upon the ground of common charity. It will place him at *home* among his brethren.

But you are ready to enquire how this thing is to be come at; and whether your property is all

to be thrown into *common stock*? This was the case in the beginning of the gospel church, and that by the voluntary act of the disciples, from an ardent love to the gospel cause, and a sense of the present necessity. Compare Acts 4:32-37 with I Cor.7:26. But the peculiar circumstances of the first church, which called for these great individual sacrifices, having passed away with the increase of disciples and churches, with it passed away, even in the Apostles' days, the practice of *having all things common*. Still, however, a circumstance arose out of this which produced a peculiar demand upon the liberality of the Gentile churches; and Paul speaks of it as an act of just return in these churches; his words are: "and their debtors they are." See Rom.15:26-27. That is, as we understand the Apostle, as the liberality of the saints in Jerusalem, in giving up their individual possessions to the church, enabled the Apostles and the other gifted brethren, to give themselves to the *ministry* of the word; and be supported, without a *miracle* too, by which means the knowledge of salvation was extended to the Gentiles, and Gentile churches were planted; so the after suffering state of these disciples, in consequence of their voluntary poverty, in connection with the oppression of the church at Jerusalem, called for a suitable return of liberality from the Gentile churches, to supply their temporal wants. The Holy Ghost, in handing down the particular description of the management of this collection, contained in Romans, chapter 15; I Cor.16:1-3 & II Cor., chapters 8 & 9 appears to have designed it as a pattern to the churches in after ages, in reference to those demands which the gospel would at all times have upon their liberality, for the support of its preachers and the poor of the church. Taking this collection then as our pattern, we conclude that the preachers are not to be supported by tithing, taxing, or restraint in any way, but by a voluntary and liberal return made for benefits received. We also conclude that no individual is required to throw his possessions into a *common stock*, but to improve them with care and industry. Upon the proceeds, however he will find, and feel too, if he feels aright, that the gospel has a claim, for a due share. *Let every man lay by him in store as God has prospered him*, is the direction: I Cor.16:2. Not that the preacher *should be eased and they burdened*; but that, whilst he is engaged in feeding the flock with the bread of eternal life, they by a proper distribution of their worldly increase may yield him a supply for his wants; and thus *there may be equality*. For to be placed on an equality, as to the circumstances of temporal support, for himself and family, with the other members of the church, is what the preacher has a right to expect, for services rendered, in the gospel; and with which he ought to be satisfied. If the preachers could feel and exercise that humbleness of heart which is proper to the servants of Jesus, and if the other members of the churches, instead of expending the surplus of their incomes in vain trappings, that their families may make a show in the world, or in adding farm to farm or stock to stock, would freely allow the gospel claim to its share of what God from time to time is pleased to bless them with; many churches, which now think, they cannot give one preacher a support, would find themselves able not only to make their Pastor comfortable, but also to say to other preachers which they may have among them, "go preach the gospel to the destitute around, as the Lord opens a door for you, and the wants of yourself and family in the mean time will be our care." Or if they had no gifts among them save the Pastor, they could contribute something towards the support of those who were laboring

with small and poor churches, or in destitute neighborhoods, as did the Philippians to Paul, while laboring in Thessalonica and Corinth, Phil.4:16 & II Cor.11:9.

In a word, when we get back to the proper state of gospel feeling, to be of *one heart and of one soul*, to realize that we are *one body*, animated by *one spirit*, even as we are called in *one hope of our calling*, owning and loving the *one Lord, one faith, and one baptism*; then will vanish all difficulties from the way, in supporting the gospel ministry according to the gospel *pattern and order*, even to any extent to which the Lord may *send forth laborers into His vineyard*.

Brethren, let us, both preachers and churches, strive more to cultivate the spirit of the gospel; and to act more in conformity to that family relation by which we are bound together, and as those who are to give an account, not unto men, but unto our Lord. In proportion as this is the case, we shall find it *good to stand in the ways, and to see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and to walk therein, for we shall find rest to our souls*. Jer.6:16. Though others may say, *we will not walk therein*, yet we should find our confidence in the Lord's wisdom and power to accomplish His own gracious purposes increasing, according to the plan laid down by Himself in His word; and of course shall be less disposed to wander after the traditions and inventions of men.

The Lord, we judge from the signs of the times, *will suddenly come to His temple*. But who may abide the day of His coming? How many, alas, will He have to scourge out, for having made His Father's house a house of merchandise? Brethren, may all our loins be girded, and our lights burning, that when He comes, we may welcome His approach with the salutation, "EVEN SO COME, LORD JESUS." Amen.

S.Trott,

Moderator.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.1 {1833}

Remarks on I John 1:3.

Circular Letter: *The Corresponding Association held with the Mt. Pleasant Church, Fairfax County, Va., to all Old School brethren, churches, associations, corresponding and annual meetings, sendeth christian salutation:*

Beloved Brethren: - "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." I John 1:3. The Apostle in the above text seems to express a desire to cultivate christian fellowship with those to whom he is writing, and to this end declares unto them what he has seen and heard; and as ours is the same desire, we wish in the following address to confine ourselves to what we have seen and heard, believing as we do, that the believers in Christ, in every age and country, were all embraced in the same eternal purpose; were all interested in the same grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began; are

all watched over by the same kind Providence which brings them to, and preserves them in their natural existence; are all sanctified by the same God and Father, preserved in the same Christ Jesus; called with the same holy calling; the same pangs and sorrows bring them all into their spiritual existence; the same provision is the support of each, while on his pilgrimage; and the same heaven will be their home, when mortal scenes shall end. We can but believe also that the language of one who is in the *light* will be the language of all; and if we would all speak the same things, we must walk in the same light; and if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another. Here two questions arise for our consideration. 1st. What is light? And secondly, What is fellowship?

In answer to the first of these enquiries, it is not our purpose to enter into an illustration of the various significations with which the term *light* is used in the scriptures, nor to direct you to any *new light* which has sprung up in these modern times; but to ascertain if we can, what is the nature of that light in which the saints are called to walk. And 1st. It is not the light of human reason; for this is often at war with the whole government of God, instead of enjoying fellowship with Him. It is not the light of nature; for this is called in the scriptures a darkness, which will eventually lead those who follow it into interminable woe, unless God call them out of it into His marvelous light. It is no blazing comet beheld by the natural eye; for, "We walk by faith, and not by sight." Nor is it the pillar of fire literally, that was the directory of national Israel through the wilderness into Canaan; but what this pillar of fire was to them figuratively the Lord Jesus Christ is to His church substantially; hence they are required to follow Him; to hear Him, &c. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." God has given Him for a light of the Gentiles. Isa.42:6. Again, He is said to be the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. John 1:9. And John 3:19, where it is said that men loved darkness rather than light; and concerning Christ it is said: "He was despised and rejected of men." And Christ says of Himself, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. Without multiplying quotations, we think the above sufficient to establish the fact that Christ is the light in which the saints are called to walk. But it may be asked, since Christ has ascended up on high, are we not each at liberty to walk according to our own sense of propriety, and to put our own construction upon His own word, and walk accordingly? We answer, No! There has been too much of this done, hence the lack of fellowship and union among us. This would be like departing from the Lord, and thinking to have peace by walking in the imagination of our own heart. Deut.29:19. What then are we to understand by following Christ, or walking in Him as our light? And where shall we find the substance of what was shadowed forth in the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, that guided Israel after the flesh in their windings through the wilderness? The spiritual Israel experience, both darkness and day, and it is truly a wilderness through which they are called to pass. How important then that we should have a safe Directory, a bright and shining Light to conduct us on our pilgrimage. Well, our strong Deliverer has not left us to grope our way in the dark, but has afforded us a Light whereunto we do well that we take heed. "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord?" Jer.23:29. And says the psalmist, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and

a light to my path.” Psa.119:105. It is Christ Jesus who shines in this word, that makes it a fire and a light. And as this is evidently a night season with the church, how important that we should give the more earnest heed to this light, and have our eye steadily fixed on Him who is clothed with light, as with a garment. We know that there are many who profess to be the children of God, and profess to be governed by His word, and yet are pursuing different plans and schemes; but we are inclined to believe that by far the greatest part are following some fancy of their own, instead of waiting for the moving of this fiery pillar. The scriptures in themselves are but as a dark body, even to the children of God, only when Christ, who is our light and life shines therein. And whilst, dear brethren, we are wading through this dark night, anxiously watching for the morning, let us be *still*, like our ancient types, when the pillar of fire is not moving before us, that is, let our lips be sealed in silence, and our pens keep their places where nature grew them, rather than advance one sentiment, either in doctrine or practice, much less move therein, if we have not a thus saith the Lord for it. When there exists a diversity of opinion among brethren, touching any one point of doctrine, it is clear that they are not all following the light, in contending each for their peculiar sentiments; and as these things are confined chiefly to the ministry, it only goes to show that the *cloudy* pillar will not do to follow in the night; but when the morning shall again dawn upon the church; when “Zion’s watchmen shall see eye to eye;” when the ministers of the gospel who are also called clouds, shall be embodied as one pillar; then may Zion’s children follow on; then our peace shall be as a river; and then shall our fellowship be sweet. But to our second enquiry, what is christian fellowship?

This term, as used in the scriptures, and experienced by christians, means something more than formal friendship or kindness. This kind is experienced by the world, and by the various anti-christian societies that are in the world, consequently is nothing more than a fleshly feeling, while the saints are required to “know no man after the flesh,” all fleshly attachments and preferences should be laid aside; no creature fondness should be suffered to predominate over that fellowship which is of God. This term is not particularly defined in the scriptures of truth, but according to its application as there used, seems to be somewhat synonymous with love, and is an inevitable consequence of fellowship or communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; “For if we love Him that begat, we love them also that are begotten of Him.” This fellowship with God is brought about alone by being born of God, having our souls washed in the blood of Jesus and made holy, otherwise there could be no communion with Him; for as soon might we expect that light and darkness might have fellowship one with the other, or righteousness and unrighteousness; but being purified we become experimentally connected with Christ, and in Him enjoy communion with God, as did Noah in the big ark, while it rode sturdily upon the bosom of the mighty deep. There is a fellowship that is merely nominal, but like that which exists merely in the flesh, it always fails to produce those delightful effects flowing from a fellowship of kindred spirits - this is to take an individual by the hand and call him brother, for whom we do not feel that endearing relationship, and to whom we are not bound by any fleshly ties. This kind is sometimes expressed towards those who have gone out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us - contrary to the Apostle’s

injunction, that we have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them. Christian fellowship is a union of soul, and does not exist towards an individual *because* he is called an Old School Baptist, or because he professes to be a believer in Jesus; but because he gives evidence of being born of God, and manifests a conformity in his life to the precepts of the gospel; and in his conversation an unyielding attachment to the doctrine of Jesus, thus bearing His image; and the more christians discover of this in one another, the more closely will they be knit together in the bonds of christian love and union; and where this exists, instead of opposition and persecution from their many enemies, having a tendency to untwist the chains that bind them together, it will but rivet them more firmly; lead them to speak often one to another, and endeavor to comfort and console each other with the rich promises of the gospel; to administer to each other's necessities; and to drive them often to a throne of grace, to tell God their sorrows.

Fellowship with God, and with one another, is what constitutes our happiness here below; but more particularly the former; for by it we have the promise made to us of a rich inheritance beyond the narrow bounds of time, when we shall be fully fitted to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; 'twas this that burst off the prison bonds of Paul and Silas, and lightened up their dark abode; 'twas this that made the burning furnace a pleasant palace for Shadrech, Meschech and Abednego; 'twas this that buoys up our fainting spirits, in our lonely sojournings. But when we meet the children of God associated together for the worship of their Father, and enjoy the comfortable evidence that He is in the midst; we unite our melodies in praise to His name; we unite our supplications to a throne of grace; we are charmed alike with the gospel proclamation, and we are led to enquire, "From whence doth this union arise?" The answer can be found alone in Him who has made us one; and who has made it our desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple, Psa.27:4.

Our meeting has truly been a season of refreshing to our souls, having enjoyed, as we trust, the presence of our God, and the visits of a goodly number of our brethren. The letters from the churches express peace and love among themselves, and they seem to enjoy an unshaken confidence in God.

Finally, brethren, farewell. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

S.Trott,

Moderator.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.10 {1842}

On the Reign of Christ.

Circular Letter: *The Baltimore Association of Old School Baptists, convened with the church at Black Rock, Md., May 18, 19 & 20, to the churches of which she is composed, greeting.*

Time like some mighty whirlpool will sooner or later engulf all that floats in its channel.

Every returning period tells of many that have already been swallowed up, and we too are hastening to the vortex. But while upon the surface we would indulge another opportunity afforded us of communicating with those we love of the things that make for our peace, as children of the same family, and things whereby one may edify another. Considering the uncertainty and many changing scenes of time, the thousand allurements and great oppositions that are in the world, the wily arts of the Devil with his armed legions, the lust of our flesh with its propensity to evil, and above all the rapid strides and boasting threats of the man of sin, it is thought there is no subject we can contemplate with greater pleasure or profit than that of the *Reign of Christ*. He is that King that Isaiah said should reign in righteousness and whose princes should rule in judgment. The prophets universally ascribe sovereignty to God, and David says, Psa.62:11, "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." Christ, not as the essential God, but as the head of His church and the executor of the Father's will possesses a delegated power, conferred upon Him for a special purpose and for a limited period, and the question as to how far that power extends or what it is made to effect, is one that forever separates between Christ and antichrist, or the children of God and the children of the Devil: the one believing it to be omnipotent, the other that it is limited; the one, that He does His pleasure and none can let Him; the other, that it is dependent for its execution upon the cooperation of His creatures; and while the saints are hailing Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, and rejoicing that there is one possessed of all power that careth for them; the whole antichristian brood are very busy in taking care of their little idol, which they call Jesus, and transporting him from one country to another. Now, in all the little that we may write upon this important subject, we wish to take divine inspiration as our guide, and in order to render the subject intelligible, we will briefly consider it in three branches, namely: Its extent, its nature and its duration. In considering first the extent of the reign of Christ, it is needful that we take into consideration the object for which it is conferred upon Him, in order to ascertain how far it was needful that power should extend. That object is declared in scripture, and that by Himself, to be that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. These are in the world, have to do with the things of the world, stand connected with the rest of mankind, and have a frail and evil nature in common with all the human family. It therefore became necessary that Christ, in order to secure to them eternal life, should have unreserved control over all things that stand in the least degree connected with them, as it is written, "As thou hast given Him power over *all* flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him." John 17:2. Nor does He simply possess a power in earth and over flesh, but He informed His disciples after His resurrection from the dead that All power was given unto Him in *heaven* and in earth, Mt.28:18; by which we may learn that the eternal power of the Godhead, and whatever power the Prophets and the Psalmist speak of as belonging to God is involved in the mediatorial reign of Christ. Old Testament scriptures are therefore as applicable to define the power of Christ as those of the new, for "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." It is not to be expected that we should find in the scriptures an express declaration that the power of Christ embraces this, that, and the other particular thing or occurrence; it is enough that we find

evidence of its extending to all things in all worlds. We have already shown that it embraces heaven and earth, as Peter says, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. It now remains to show that it extends over hell and the power there. He is regarded by us as the mighty angel that John saw descend with a great chain, and lay hold of the dragon, and bind him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up. The apostles having fulfilled their mission and returned on a certain occasion said, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name. This power is not only declared but acknowledged, for, said the devils to the seven sons of Sceva, Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye? We might here make a number of other quotations to the same import, but these are deemed sufficient. Here let us ask what comfort or enjoyment could christians feel in view of the storms and tempests that are howling around them, did they not know that in Jesus dwelt a power that rules the raging of the sea and stills its angry waves. What security could they feel in a world of opposition, did they not know that He made the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrained the rest. In short what hope could they have of final blessedness, but in the belief that Jesus holds the keys of hell and death, controls all the angry passions of their natures, and every being, every thing, and every act; whether standing in opposition or needful to be employed for their comfort. So they can unite their voices with, and make up that great multitude, many waters and mighty thunders spoken of in the book of Revelation, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. He reigns over Heaven, earth, and hell. The winds and the seas obey Him. The sparrows in their flight are moved and directed by His care, and not one of the countless hairs that deck our heads can fall or remain unmoved but by His government. His is a power to wound and a power to heal, a power to kill and a power to make alive, this is the King that saves His subjects and destroys their foes.

In the second place we are to consider the nature or character of this reign, and wish it borne in mind that there is no reign but His, for the kingdoms of this world are become "the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ," and Solomon says, Proverbs 8:15,16 - "By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." It is also written in the New Testament: There is no power, but of God. The powers that be, are ordained of God. We wish it also borne in mind that He reigns for the exclusive good of his people, His chosen. Isaiah has characterized His reign as a reign in righteousness. Whether we consider Him, then, as dethroning kings, or exalting to sceptres base and blood thirsty tyrants; whether as sending wars with all the evils that follow in their train, or causing the clarion of peace and good will to men to be blown, still His reign is in righteousness, because so it seems good in His sight. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments," Psalms 119:137. He governs the world by a power which they neither see nor acknowledge, and to describe it fully, would be beyond the capacity of angels. It is to His reign in Zion, where His power is both felt and acknowledged, that we would confine ourselves in treating upon this branch of our subject. It is there that He has laws, or more properly, a law, which is unchanging as His own eternal throne, and extending to all the subjects of His kingdom in all time and eternity too. It needs no fire and fagot, no sword or bayonet to enforce it; it exerts no tyrannical influence, holds to view

no terrors; promises no rewards. It is not recorded upon tables of stone or pieces of parchment, and deposited in the archives of some moldering edifice; nor is it subject to abrogation or amendment like the laws of men. This law is the *law of love*. The promptings of this law are recorded in the New Testament; but let this be obliterated, let bonfires be lighted up with the pages of scripture, still the law is in their hearts and will teach them the way that they should go. Whilst then in the precepts and commandments of the New Testament, we have a transcript of the mind and will of God, they furnish us also with an expression of christian desire. They delight to do the will of God; a service called forth by any other law, either looks for a reward or dreads punishment; but this is all performed for the sake of Him who hath loved them and given Himself for them. If a man preaches truth and does not love it, he is no better off than if he had preached error, and he that practices morality and loves iniquity, is no better off than if he practiced iniquity. Self love has a governing influence over us in nature; but here: "the love of Christ constraineth us." But whence this love? Paul in his letter to the Romans informs us that it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. So that, as Solomon says, If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned. As it exists independent of the creature, so it operates independent of his mind and will. It extends to all the family of God and no further. It is therefore no marvel that christians cannot love those that give no evidence that they love God. But we now pass to the consideration of the third and last branch of our subject, which is, the duration of this reign. While we are utterly unable to find any limit to the extent of His reign, the scriptures justify us in fixing a period to its duration and this is no other than the full completion of all that work for which His power was conferred upon Him. Viewing Him as Jehovah the scriptures speak of Him as reigning for ever and ever, but in His mediatorial character they figuratively speak of Him as reigning a thousand years. When that thousand years shall expire no man can tell; but certain it is that He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When He shall have called up the slumbering bodies of His saints from their graves, and thus taken the prey from the mighty, then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, See I Cor. 15:24; and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all; verse 28. And now brethren, may we not rejoice in the universal power of Christ, since being controlled by His power no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise up in judgment against us we shall condemn. May we not confidently look for the complete glorification of all the election of grace since it is His will that they may behold His glory, and all power is His to execute that will. May we not rejoice in the nature of His reign, since, all His works being done in righteousness, all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose. Being by the law of love, we have nothing to dread from our many short comings and repeated wanderings; He heals our backslidings and loves us freely. He holds no threatening judgments over us; nor spurns us from His face.

"The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here."

Lastly, may we not rejoice in the termination of that reign, since with its end will be the eternal overthrow of the kingdom of antichrist, the complete destruction of all enemies including the last, which is death, and the raising up of His church, both soul and body, to dwell with Him in bliss forever. Finally, brethren, farewell; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.16 {1848}

S. Trott.

The Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit.

Circular Letter: *Of the Baltimore Old School Baptist Association to the churches of which she is composed.*

Beloved Brethren: - As an expression of fellowship, we again address you in our Associational Circular. On this occasion we have selected as our subject the address to the Israel of God contained in Isaiah 48:17-19. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments," &c. We understand spiritual Israel to be here particularly addressed. In the first verse of chapter 48 God addresses the house of Jacob, which art called by the name of Israel, &c., which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness, &c., thus showing that national, and not the true Israel are there addressed. Hence their idolatry and obstinacy, &c., are spoken of.

In verse 12th, and onward, the Lord addresses *Jacob and Israel His called*. Paul says, "But unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." I Cor.1:24. So that being *called* is distinctive in believers or the true Israel. Hence these are the people we think are addressed in the verses we have selected as our subject. In directing your attention to this subject, we will notice.

First. The person speaking, who being Israel's Redeemer, can be no other than the Messiah. Hence whilst He declares Himself to be the Lord, or Jehovah, *their God* {verse 17} as He is in truth the self-existing God, and whilst He claims the prerogatives of God, saying in verse 13, "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens," &c; He in verse 16 saith, "And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent *me*;" thus showing that whilst He is Jehovah, God, He also exists in a relation personally distinct from the Lord God and His Spirit; and is the Messenger of God.

Secondly. The characters under which He speaks. - 1st. *The Lord thy Redeemer.* He is the Jehovah, whilst He is also *thy God*, *thy Near Kinsman*, who stood of course in this relation to

thee, before thy thralldom; whose right therefore it was to redeem thee and who was not like Ruth's kinsman afraid of marrying His own *inheritance* in doing it; but who has accomplished thy redemption from all bondage and from all iniquity, by the sacrifice of Himself; and who is to thee, and for thee, all that righteousness which the law requires; who indeed gave Himself for thee, that He might in justice, be manifested as thy Lord and thy Husband. - 2nd. "The Holy One of Israel." He is to His people all that holiness in which they will shine through eternity, was to them all that holiness in which they stood before God from before the foundation of the world, as His body, His bride; being loved in Him, and in Him predestinated to the adoption of children. His blood is their purification from all pollution, and He in them is the principle of personal holiness and of love to God.

Thirdly, What He says. 1st. He says, "I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go." - As before noticed, Christ is truly the self-existing God, whilst He is He who was sent of the Father; and being God in Christ, He is as such peculiarly the object of His people's worship, trust, and love; is their God; whilst as such He is to all others the *unknown God*. As the *Root and offspring* of David, He was given a Leader and Commander to the people. As such He *teaches* His people to *profit*. He by implanting His spirit in them, gives them spiritual discernment, gives them ears to hear, and hearts to understand, and when He speaks the word, whether He speaks through others, through the written word, or in visions of the night, they know it, and rejoice in it as the truth, whilst all other teaching but deludes. All that He teaches is good, and He teaches them all that is good or profitable for them to know, whether in relation to doctrine or practice. Let us then beware of other teaching. Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. As the Leader of His people, He goeth before them, and draws them with cords of a man, with bands of love. John 10:4 & Hosea 11:4. When He thus draws, they willingly run after Him. He does not lead His people to places of worldly rest and ease, but to the experience of tribulations and trials, to temptations and darkness, and thereby to the knowledge of the plague of their own hearts. He does not lead them to partake much of the applause, honors, &c, of the world, but to receive its reproaches and persecutions. He leads them to know the law, but He also leads them out from it, to the enjoyment of the privilege of sons of God. He leads them to death, but He will also lead them to participate in the joys of the resurrection. He leads them about through the way of the wilderness, but it is by a right way that they might go to a city of habitation. Ex.13:18 & Ps.107:7. He has gone before leading them in the way of patience, meekness, uprightness, holiness and self-denial. Both by precept and example He leads them into the ordinances in which they should go, and out from the traditions, and commandments of men. Where the footsteps of Jesus are seen going before, there is the right way. Where they are not found, there let His people not go.

2nd. He says, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments," &c. All our Lord's instructions whether in relation to faith, or to acts of obedience, are with authority, hence they are here with propriety called commandments. So the Evangelist speaking of Christ's instructions to His disciples as recorded in Matthew, Chapter 10, says, chapter 11:1 - "And it

came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His disciples, He departed thence to teach, and to preach in their cities." His instructions came to the Jews as the preaching of men does to the world, but to those to whom He has given ears to hear and hearts to understand, they come as commands. But it may be asked: Do any of the people of God neglect to hearken to the instructions of Christ after having once received His commands with joy? We answer, the church, the visible Israel of God, evidently has done it in two ways. First, she has neglected to adhere to the instructions received; and secondly, she has been much disposed, instead of hearkening to hear what He commands, to listen to the suggestions and commands of men. Thus, the churches of Galatia, instead of adhering to the gospel testimony, which they had no doubt once received with joy, proclaiming them *justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*, were disposed again to return to the law. And so the church went on listening to the suggestions of reason, and the teachings of Satan's ministers, until the *man of sin* came full robed into power; and the bride the Lamb's wife had to retire from the pomp, the splendor and persecution of an established religion, to the wilderness, to find a lodging place. Still with all this evidence of the evil consequences of not hearkening to the commands of her Lord, the church has been too much disposed to hearken to the reasonings and commandments of men, even to this day. Hence instead of her peace flowing as a river, divisions and contentions prevail, instead of her true righteousness rolling on to view she is covering herself too much with *linsey-woolsey* or the flimsy stuff of human doings. We also think that individual believers have not as they ought, hearkened to the commands of the Lord, though times have been when His word was all precious to them, and they wanted nothing else for their comfort and directory. But enticers from without and from within have succeeded in turning away their ears from hearkening to His commands, and led them off from the simplicity of the word. Hence they have been bewildered and confused with the traditions and systems of men, have been contending for things that are not according to the word, or have found themselves walking in paths of disorder and disobedience, and to aggravate the wretchedness that has resulted, instead of the regular flow of peace and righteousness, Satan has charged these disorders home upon them, as evidences that they are not christians.

Then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. We do not, brethren, understand by this complaint, that God has been disappointed, or His purpose at all frustrated by the disobedience of His church and people. On the contrary this very oppression and diminishing of His church is abundantly pointed out in prophesy; and these very trials of His people, are fully anticipated in the Scriptures. But we understand that it was designed to set forth on the one hand, the direct tendency of a faithful hearkening to the commands of the Lord in all things pertaining to religion; namely, unity of faith and consequent peace. On the other hand, the evil consequences of seeking guidance and instruction in religion from any other source. *Then had thy peace been as a river.* A river flows on in a constant current, bearing down and overcoming every obstacle to its progress. Such would have been the peace of the church had they uniformly been disposed undeviatingly to have hearkened to the commands of the Lord, and suffered no opinions of men to usurp the place of His instructions.

Not its external peace with the world, for in this sense Christ *came not to send peace, but a sword*, {Mt.10:34,} but peace within, a oneness of mind and heart. *And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea*. The sea is in constant motion, and its waves or swells are therefore constantly rolling on in regular succession. So would their righteousness have been constantly rolling on to view, that is, *The Lord their righteousness*, in all their preaching, in all their conversation, in all their approaches to God. *Thy seed also had been as the sand and the offspring of thy bowels as the gravel thereof*. Instead of multitudes of the children of God having been led off with the various sects that separated from the Apostles' doctrine and order, and multitudes more being deterred from making a profession, by the divisions among the professed disciples of Christ, there would have been but one doctrine, one order, one professed church of Christ, and all the children of God should *have been borne upon her sides, dandled upon her knees; and sucked and been satisfied with the breasts of her consolations*. See Isa.66:11 & 12. And who will say that in that case her seed would not have been manifested to be numerous as the sand of the sea?

His name should not have been cut off, nor destroyed from before me. Instead of the expression as it stands in the text, *should not have been cut off, &c.*, in the margins of some Bibles we read, *Shall not be cut off, &c.* This we think is the correct reading of the text because it corresponds with the declaration of our Lord - "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Mt.16:18. It also corresponds with what is said in the next verse, "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the ends of the earth, say ye, The Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob." So that instead of Jacob or Israel's being *cut off* for his rebellion, he is yet to be redeemed and come forth from *Babylon*, or from all the *confusion* occasioned by the *man of sin*. How rich and free the grace and mercy of our God!

Now, brethren, we see and we lament that there are discords among the O.S. Baptists. Whilst instead of *hearkening to the Lord's commandments*, we say, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ*, and suffer opinions, whether our own or of other men, to govern us, can we expect our *peace to flow like a river*? Opinions of men always have, and always will conflict one with another. If then we were to stop all means of public correspondence, whilst each is swayed by opinion, can we *be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*? Methods were resorted to in the earlier ages of the church, for supplying the place of the remedy pointed out in our text, to produce unity of faith and practice in the church. Councils were called, Creeds and Confessions of Faith were formed, ceremonies and forms were agreed upon, and the observance of these was attempted to be enforced by laws and persecutions; but all would not do. Do you ask why? We answer, that all of the children of Zion are to some extent taught of the Lord, and are led more or less to wait on Him for further teaching, and so far as He reveals to their faith His doctrine or order, or any point thereof, all the fetters and chains which men may forge will not bind their consciences to prevent their testifying to that which they know is truth, nor against what they know is error. Could we give up all contending for opinions, if we have occasion to mention them, mention them only as opinions, as it is written, *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream*, and contend only

for what we have been taught of God to know is truth, then would contentions cease among us; for the Spirit of truth cannot give different views on the same subject to different persons; though He may give more extended views of scripture to one than another. It may be asked, How are we to distinguish what is taught us of the Lord, from what is merely made up opinion? We answer, there are certain things which every child of grace so knows to be the truth, that neither the sophistry, nor wrath of man can lead him to deny them. He knows that he did not attain this knowledge of them from men, nor from books, except, it may be, instrumentally, and that he did not reason himself into it. He was taught it internally; there was an enlightening of the mind to see, to taste and feel that it was truth and that the Scriptures bore testimony to it. And since the first revelation of Christ to him as the way, he has in like manner had his understanding enlarged in the knowledge of the Scriptures on particular points. There is an exercise of faith in the thing, a knowing that it is God's truth. When he states these things and points to the Scriptures which he has seen as so clearly sustaining their truth, he does it with confidence, feeling that he is girt about with truth. But it is not enough to have an internal impression, there must be an opening of the Scriptures to view as sustaining it. If there were with us more of a waiting to *hear what God the Lord will say*, and of hearkening to His commandments, then might we look for unity and peace. It is not however probable, that we shall altogether be divested of our attachment to human opinions, whilst the church remains encompassed by Babylon. But if we cannot agree in opinions, let us try to *love as brethren*, to be *courteous*, and not to give place to anger and bitterness, nor to a wresting and distorting of each other's views, that we may put down by prejudices what we cannot confute by argument. And let us remember for our comfort that amidst all the confusion, Jesus will in His own good time show Himself as walking upon the waves, and will hush all to peace.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.18 {1850}

S. Trott.

Unity of the Brethren.

Circular Letter: *The Brethren assembled with the Mount Pleasant Church, Fairfax County, VA, August 9,10, 1849, in a Meeting for Correspondence: To the Churches, Associations and Corresponding Meetings, in correspondence with us, send this token of love.*

Beloved Brethren: - Having received and read your communications to us, we would reciprocate the correspondence by addressing our epistle to you in return. The Psalmist says: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Ps.133:1. In order to *unity*, they who dwell together, must be brethren, children of the same family, having a common interest. Such is the case with the children of God, when not bewildered; the truth of God, the order of His house as established by the Head, the peace and prosperity of Zion, are with them a common interest, as well as the joys and sorrows of the individual members. But

when *strange children* get in among the household of faith, her *sons* become stunted in growth - her *daughters* lose their polish - her *oxen* become weak to labor - her *garnerers* become impoverished, and there is a breaking in, and going out, thus breeding confusion. These *strange children*, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood, Ps.144:11, are children of the *strange woman*, Prov.7:5. How careful should we be to keep, and to be kept separate, from all religious intercourse with such, that our harmony and unity be not broken, and an interest averse to the interest of Zion be not set up in our midst. We have mentioned the truth of God, as one of the items connected with the *interest of Zion*, and which is of vast importance toward the brethren's dwelling together in unity. By the *truth of God*, we mean that which God has revealed as truth, and which is according to the standard of truth as He hath given it in the Scriptures. When we begin to bring in other standards, or the writings and opinions of men as standards, however eminent they were or may be, they are but the opinions of men, and we shall feel here to indulge in our partialities, as they did in the Church of Corinth, and one will say: I am of Paul, another, I am of Apollos, &c., and this will cause bickerings and divisions and wrestings of the words of Scripture to make them conform to our standards. But, when brethren are agreed to let the *thus saith the Lord*, and as He has said it, decide all points, our unity in doctrine will then be preserved; as Watts says:

“This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail.”

We have named, as another item in the interest of Zion, the order of His house as established by the Head, the one King of Zion. Where a number of heads are acknowledged, unless they form a unity among themselves by deciding by majorities, there will be conflicting orders, and clashings in practice. But where Christ alone is acknowledged as King, and His directions as the order, there will be no confusion, nor contention in the observance of the order of the house. In thus acknowledging Him alone as *King*, we render to Him no more than is His just due, both in reference to His claims on us, and to His claims to qualifications to be Head. This order includes ordinances, discipline, the choosing of officers, and the manner of their officiating, the meeting of the Church, the worship, the business transactions, and the manner of publishing the Gospel abroad. As we value the good of dwelling together in unity, let us therefore, be careful to observe its commands, to confine ourselves to them, and to His directions through Apostolic example for observing them.

We named, as a third item, *The peace and prosperity of Zion*, as belonging to the common interest of the children of Zion. In promoting the peace of Zion, and her prosperity, in the showing forth her salvation, in attracting those who love the Lord, within her borders, and in her being built up in purity and love, it is important that the several members should conduct themselves orderly, meekly and affectionately in the Church, and toward one another; that they see that the discipline of the Church be exercised faithfully and impartially, and that they submit when subject to it, quietly and patiently; that each be found occupying his proper gifts, station, or sphere in the Church; that in the support of the ministry, the relief of the poor, and in meeting other rightful demands for contributing of our temporal goods, none hold back through

covetousness, but that each contribute freely as the Lord has prospered them; that the brethren show their love toward one another, by a manifest preference for each other's society, comfort and welfare, and that they be not estranged from these things by indulging in the love of the world, or by being entangled in alliances or pledges, with other societies, whether secret or otherwise; and further, that the brethren conduct themselves honestly, humbly, quietly and blamelessly toward them that are without, and who may differ with us; and in all their intercourse with men, aiming to be governed by the directions in the New Testament. Brethren, if these things were so, would not the people of the world be again constrained to say, "Behold how these christians love one another!" And, if we were found fearlessly and earnestly contending for and bearing testimony to the faith once delivered to the saints; bearing patiently and quietly, the scoffs, reproaches, indignities and persecutions if they come, incident thereunto, from those who oppose the truth, would not others be made to acknowledge that we are actuated by another spirit than that of the world? And would we not then experience; *How good it is to dwell together in unity?*

Brethren, although the children of God are now somewhat scattered by localities, and perhaps worse, by different standards set up, and consequently different views of doctrine and order entertained, yet, even in this day of darkness, and of the scattering of the flock, our Churches are generally permitted to dwell together in a good degree of unity, and from time to time many of the brethren, from distant parts are permitted to meet together, and sit together, in a good degree of unity. How long we shall be permitted to enjoy these privileges, without for a little season being deprived of them, is known only to Him, who orders *all* events. But come, when it may, whilst it will come in accordance with prophecy, it will come as a just chastisement upon the Church and people of God, for permitting their unity to be so much marred by clinging to the creeds and systems of men as their standards, instead of *taking heed to the more sure word of prophecy*; and in other cases for suffering the peace of Churches to be broken by winking at, and countenancing disorderly walk among the members. It will also come as a needful fire, to purge away all this dross from the Churches. The seven thunders mentioned in Revelation, chapter 10, which are a prelude to the killing of the two Witnesses, are apparently sounding. Whether the *seven thunders* designate seven particularly astounding events, or whether they denote seven years duration of such events or rather, whether as is frequently the sense of the number seven in the Scriptures, it is here used to denote that *full* shaking of the governments of the world, necessary so to concentrate the powers and branches of antichrist, as to enable them to accomplish the killing of the Witnesses, we will not say. But, as before said, we think we hear the sound of the thunders, and hear the voice from Heaven, saying, *Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not*, in that such dark obscurity hangs over every event which transpires, as that all the expectations and calculations made on the particular event, are disappointed. It is not improbable that some of these thunders, before they cease, may burst over the head of our government, and shake it to its foundation.

But, Brethren, let what will come, and come when it may; God grant that we may be found

standing in our lots, being neither traitors nor cowards towards the cause of our Lord and His truth, but enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And may God, by His grace, so keep us from all corruption in doctrine, or in walk, that the enemy may have no evil thing to say of us justly.

Our meeting has been pleasant; your ministering brethren came to us bringing the precious gospel of the grace of God in its fulness; our congregations have been large and quite attentive.

The Bethlehem Church having invited our next Meeting to be held with them, we have appointed to meet with them, to commence on Thursday, before the 2nd Lord's day in August, 1850. We continue our cordial invitation to Churches, Corresponding Meetings and Associations, to meet with us by their Letters and Messengers, at that time and place.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.17 {1849}
S.Trott, Moderator.

The Lord shall comfort Zion.

Circular Letter & Corresponding Letter: *The Baltimore Old School Baptist Association, to the several churches of which she is composed, send christian salutation.*

Beloved Brethren: - As an expression of our fellowship, we again address you in our associational circular, and on this occasion we have selected as the theme or subject of our address, the following declaration made in the scriptures concerning Zion: "The Lord shall comfort Zion." Isa.51:3.

In this passage we find four things which demand the attention of the redeemed of the Lord. First: Zion, which is to be comforted. Second: Zion's Comforter. Third: The absolute character of the promise. Fourth: The Comfort promised. May the Lord by His Spirit guide both writer and reader into the experimental enjoyment of the subject under consideration.

First: Zion, or the city of David, see I Kings 8:1, is frequently used in the scriptures as a type of the church of Christ, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; and we regard it as a very beautiful and instructing figure: first, from the meaning of the word *Zion*, which signifies a *monument raised up*. The church of Christ is truly a monument raised up and founded on the eternal purpose of God, based on His unchanging love, secured against all evil by His omnipotence. Every individual believer is a monument of grace, seen and read of all men. The whole church forms a monument which shall remain resplendent in glory when all the glories of this world, yea, when the creation itself shall no longer exist. But, some will say, the word *Zion*, means a *heap of stones* - rough, unpolished, useless. Do they come from nature's quarry? Are they not made living stones and polished by divine grace? They are raised up as the spiritual seed of Abraham, and built upon the foundation which God hath laid. Each stone, whether great or small occupies the place which was from eternity assigned it, by the great

Architect, who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. But again, Zion is emblematic of the church in being the object of God's peculiar love. See Psa.87:2 - "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and even so hath He loved the church; yea, "He loved the people." Deut.33:3. And He so loved them that He gave His Son to die for them. I John 4:10. And although the Lord's tender mercy is over all His works, so as to supply all His creatures with food and raiment; yet His love for His church is peculiarly manifested in providing for them in an everlasting covenant, spiritual food and raiment in the Person and righteousness of His dearly beloved and only begotten Son. Zion is the object of God's choice. Psa.132:13 - "The Lord hath chosen Zion." So hath He chosen the church in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. Eph.1:4. Zion is well garrisoned: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof; Mark well her bulwarks." Psa.48:12. So also is the church. Her walls are Salvation, and her gates Praise. The Lord will be a wall of fire round about her. God, with all His wisdom, power, love, mercy, longsuffering and goodness is for her; who can be against her? She has watchmen upon her walls, to warn her of danger, and they have a trumpet on which to blow *a certain sound*, that her inhabitants may prepare for battle.

Second: Let us notice Zion's Comforter. And this is the Lord: He is God the Father; for all her comfort, all her joy, and all her hope springs from the heart of Jehovah, the Father, and descend to her through the Son, whom He declares to be: "Lord, to the glory of the Father." For in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All spiritual blessings were given to the church in Him, and of His fulness they all receive their strength, light, hope, joy and peace. These are all in Him in their fulness; and for the use of thirsting souls, to whom they are applied by the Spirit who is expressly called the Comforter. John 14:15-17. Because His covenant engagements are to give the church a knowledge and enjoyment of her most gracious Lord and Master.

Third: We will now glance at the absolute promise of God: "The Lord shall comfort Zion." All the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea, and in Him, Amen. That is, they are sure and certain, irrevocable and irrevocable to all the promised seed of Abraham. And the nature and attributes of Jehovah confirm the same. For if Jehovah, the Father hath given comfort, the Son received the same, and the Spirit engaged to communicate it to the hearts of the elect. Jehovah being unchangeable in His nature, is consequently immutable in these wonderful acts, whereby the comfort of the church is secured. Not dependent on any contingency or uncertainty: for God has so arranged from even the most trying circumstances of their lives. If the comfort of Zion depended on her deserts, she would indeed be comfortless; or if it depended on her improvement of anything committed to her care, she would be destitute; for she feels daily and hourly that she can only stand as she is held up, and only use what is given to her; for the Spirit of God works in her both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

Fourth: We will now offer a few remarks on the comfort, and the manner in which the Lord applies it to Zion. It is by His word, by the ministry, and by the direct agency of the Holy Ghost. 1. The Lord comforts His people by His word when it quickens them, as it did David,

Psa.119:50, and when through patience and comfort thereof they have hope. Rom.15:4. Seeing themselves, in the early stage of their conversion, and in their daily falls into sin, to be altogether helpless, they imagine themselves to be in a hopeless state, until by the word, they see the foundation of hope to be not in themselves, but in Jesus Christ the Lord. 2. He comforts them by the ministry, when a full and free salvation is proclaimed, as in Isaiah 40:11 - "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd," &c, and when His ministers have been led into trouble, and comforted, expressly that they might be enabled to comfort those who are in any tribulation, with the same comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God. II Cor.1:3,4. But neither the word, nor the ministry, valuable as they are, can afford any comfort, only as instruments in the hands of God, by His Spirit. Now all the comfort of Zion's citizens consists in relying *entirely* on Christ in every emergency, and in all trying circumstances. 3. The Holy Ghost becomes a Comforter in testifying of Christ, and by leading the soul to Him. Are any suffering under a sense of indwelling corruptions; He leads them to Jesus for sanctification. Are they naked; He leads them to Jesus for the mantle of His righteousness. Are they hungry; He leads them to Jesus for the bread of life. Are they weak; He teaches them to rely wholly upon that strength which is made perfect in their weakness.

Fear not then, ye drooping, doubting and desponding saints; for *Christ is All*. The Father hath given you all. The Holy Ghost is engaged to bring you to Him; and thus the Lord *shall* comfort Zion, and all her children shall rejoice. Yet a little while, and the Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their faces, and lead them to fountains of delight, to cast their crowns at His feet, and praise Him forever and ever, even so, amen, and amen.

Corresponding Letter:

Dear Brethren: - Agreeably to our last year's appointment, we have been indulged of our Heavenly Father with the privilege of once more meeting together; and considering our ingratitude and many short comings, of which each church, and each individual member among us will plead guilty, and stand convicted. We are amazed at the goodness of God in granting us privileges so inestimable. Yet, we enquire on the other hand, if while we were dead in sins, God so loved us as to give His Son to die for us, will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Cold, ungrateful, and indifferent as we are, we do feel an assurance that we hold and love the truth as it is in Jesus. For our attachment to what we understand to be the doctrine and order of the gospel, and our opposition to the innovations and inventions of men, we have not only to endure the persecutions of men made religionists, but to resist the popular current of the world. All this we could well bear and even rejoice in knowing as we do that it is a part of the saint's inheritance on earth; but the Lord seems to have in a measure withdrawn His presence from us, and because of this we mourn. Many of the churches in our connection, have, from the ravages of death and other causes dwindled down to a mere moiety, while some have entirely disbanded, and we are in a great measure dependent for ministerial gifts, on other associations.

The evidences of the power of divine grace are few and far between, and our harps are hung upon the willows; but amidst the raging storm, to whom shall we look so confidently as to Him "who rides upon the stormy sky, and thunders when He please." Perhaps these things may be to prove our steadfastness in the stand we have taken; or it may be that the Lord is about finishing His work in this part of the land, and that the gospel, like the sun, arose in the East, and is traveling on to the West, leaving us to repose in its evening shade. Let the purpose of our God be what it may, we desire to still contend for His truth, submit patiently to all His will, and live upon the assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose.

Our meeting, which is drawing to a close, has been one of unusual comfort and christian enjoyment. Your messengers and ministers who have come to us have brought us the pleasing intelligence that you are enabled in some good degree to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. The preaching that we have had has been of Christ, and His salvation, without a jarring note.

Our next Association will be held, the Lord willing, with the church at Harford, Harford County, Md., to commence on the Thursday preceding the third Sunday in May, 1852, at 10 o'clock, a.m., when and where we hope to receive a continuance of your correspondence.

S.Trott, Moderator.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.19 {1851}

Saved by the Lord.

Corresponding Letter: *The Fryingpan Old School Baptist Church and the churches and brethren uniting with her in a meeting for correspondence, - To the churches and Associations corresponding with us together, with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and walk in truth: Send brotherly greetings.*

Beloved Brethren: - In addressing to you this our letter of correspondence, we would call your attention to the declaration found in Deut.33 - part of verse 29, as a theme of contemplation. "Happy art thou O, Israel: who is like unto thee, O, people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency."

Moses having in the preceding part of the chapter pronounced prophetically a blessing upon each tribe severally, then addresses Israel collectively, first as *Jeshurun*, and in the text above quoted as *Israel*.

"*Happy art thou O, Israel.*" Israel is here addressed as singular, as one whilst she is spoken of as a people. Wherein was this unity found but in him to whom this name Israel was given, and from whom as his posterity they inherited it, together with the blessing therein implied? This was evidently the case with national Israel, and can be no less so with spiritual Israel the antitype. At the time Jacob received this name he was in very straightened circumstances. He

had just received word that his brother Esau was coming to meet him, and four hundred men with him; he knew Esau's enmity against him, he no doubt felt conscious of the provocation he had given him. He therefore feared that himself, his wives and children and all that he had would fall a prey to Esau's vengeance. After making certain arrangements, and having sent all over the brook, "Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day, and when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh, And he said I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Gen.32:24 - 28. This has all undoubtedly a typical reference to the spiritual Israel, but we cannot now go into a full illustration of it, lest it swell our letter to too great a length. We will remark that Jacob's posterity were all involved in his sin toward Esau, and in the threatened vengeance, and in his prevailing to clear away his sin before God, and to have Esau's enmity subdued, his posterity, those already born, as well as those that should be born after, participated in the same blessing. Hence the name *Israel* was attached to them, and so recognized of God. Exod.4:22 - "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." Now brethren, would we not insult your feelings, were we to ask you whether as spiritual Israelites, you in your own persons, as *princes have power with God and with men*? How then have you prevailed, and have been manifested as Israelites? National Israel as we have seen thus prevailed in an eternal sense and obtained the name Israel through and in their immediate head Jacob. Have we not a Head, a Jacob through whom as Israelites we have power with God and with men? Jacob was so named from the circumstance of his hand's taking hold of Esau's heel. Esau as from his names, Esau and Edom, as well as from his being the first born and being disappointed of the blessing was evidently typical of national Israel as manifested under the Sinai covenant. Had not Christ hold of the heel of national Israel, in all the manifestation or birth of that people from the promise to Abraham to give him a seed on through the giving of the law with all its ceremonies and forms? That is, was not all, designed to prefigure the coming of the Messiah, and to introduce Him to the view of faith as well as to prepare the way for His manifestation in the flesh? Thus we see His hand hold of Esau's heel in the declaration to Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," as well as in His being the substance of all the sacrifices of the law. Again Jacob was distinguished as the *elect* of God. See Rom.9:10, 13. So Christ is declared as the *elect* of God. See Isa.42:1 & 65:9. But the posterity of Jacob were elected in him to be participants in the blessing of Isaac, and that whilst Jacob was yet in the womb, and therefore it must be as they existed in him, and hence it was said to Rebekah: "Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels" which could only immediately have taken place in the birth of Esau and Jacob. Gen.25:23. So the children of God are said to have been *chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world*. See Eph.1:4. If before the *foundation of the world*, of course when He only, as their life existed in God, before sin existed and therefore before He could be manifested or declared in the world.

And if then chosen *in Him*, it must have been, that according to the type, they were chosen in His election, and must have existed in Him and were a distinct *manner of people* in time to proceed from Him. Brethren, is it not in Christ and in Him only, that you find your Israel, your *power with God and with men*? Is it not alone through His atonement, and intercession that you have confidence to approach God with your supplications, and hope for acceptance with Him? Is it not *Christ in you the hope of glory. Christ living in you* {Col.1:27, Gal.2:20} that gives you the victory over the old man and over the allurements and opposition of men? Or is it from some new strength that you have obtained of your own? In other words, Is that *faith which is the victory &c.* a faith of your own, or is it not the *faith of the Son of God*? See Gal.2:16, 20. Happy indeed art thou, O, Israel; thy life being one with the Son of God. I John 5:12. Christ being thy life, thy salvation and righteousness, no curse can now reach thee, nor any plague come nigh thy dwelling in a spiritual sense. The blessing of God rests upon thy head and therefore upon His body and upon each member thereof. Thy very afflictions are blessings, and not in disguise neither, but often seen openly as such.

"Who is like thee, O, people saved by the Lord?" Truly in all times, the spiritual Israel, the members and body of Christ, have been singular, a different manner of people from others, in their salvation. Saved by the Lord, by Jehovah as it is in the original. As He is, as His name signifies, self-existent, He is all that He is, absolutely of Himself, therefore in the manifestation of Himself in His power, in His grace, or in His holiness, or in His love and mercy, He cannot be controlled, influenced, nor helped by any other, nor governed in the manifestations of any of His attributes, but by His own purpose and His purpose and design, must be like Himself eternal. Hence His people in being brought to know His salvation, are brought off from every idea of conditions. Their repentance instead of being viewed by them as a condition, is in itself a turning with loathing from every doing and exercise, yea from their whole Adamic nature, with all its works and faculties, as being depraved and rendering them unworthy of the favor of God. Instead of viewing their faith as a means of their salvation it gives them to see their salvation as already complete in Christ Jesus, that He is that salvation, {Isa.62:11} so that we might as well talk of faith's being the means of Christ's existence, as of its being the means of salvation. As we are saved by Jehovah, Christ must be, and is Jehovah, existing of Himself, and not of another. If the life which *is the light of men, was in Him in the beginning*, He was still the Word and the *Word was God*. If He is the only begotten Son, He is in the bosom of the Father, He and the Father are one. John 1:18 & 10:30. Hence the life of believers is hid with Christ in God. If Christ is in His people, the hope of glory liveth in them. Col.1:27, Gal.2:20. God, even the Father is in them there, "I in them, and thou in me." John 17:23. If that as the Mediator, He might make that offering to law and justice which was required for the redemption of His people. He partook with them of *flesh and blood*, He was still, *God manifest in the flesh*. Contemplate the salvation of Israel as you may as completed in Christ or as existing experimentally in the believer, his hope of glory, it is by the Lord; it was His purpose, it is all His work, all that was necessary for accomplishing it, He provided in Himself, and communicates it with Himself as the life, to His people, as His body. Hence the *church* of

which He is Head is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Eph.1:22, 23. Who then is like thee, O, people? Who is there of all the shades of religion in the world that do not manifest their opposition to Thy salvation? "The shield of thy help." That is, Jehovah is the shield &c. Israel by his relation to Adam was ruined, condemned and helpless. But God laid help upon one that is mighty, exalted one chosen out of the people. Psal.89:19. By David in this connection, we are evidently to understand the antitype of David, He who was David's Lord and Son, Jesus Christ as we have showed is mighty as the Jehovah, and He is called the Mighty God, Isa.9:6. Help was laid on Him, in that He was appointed the Surety of the better testament, a Mediator between God and men, and the High Priest of our profession. Israelites are made to know by experience that all their help must come from Him. As He said to His disciples "Without me ye can do nothing;" {John 15:5} and that they can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them. Phil 4:13. And Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

A shield is an armour of defense. Christ as the helper of His people was assaulted with the wrath of the law, it met Him at His birth and pursued Him to His tomb. He was assaulted by all the rage of Satan. Nothing short of the Godhead could have sustained Him under the assaults and enabled Him to triumph over them, and to bring His body the church out with Him unharmed from the contest. The help itself, the salvation of Israel is assaulted by many enemies, external and internal, but Jehovah shields it. "He that keepeth Israel, &c., Psal.121:4,5. "And who is the sword of thy excellency." The word here rendered excellency, signifies exalted, or exaltation. In the passage already quoted, Psal.89:19 where David is spoken of as the type of Christ, it is written: "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." David was chosen from among his brethren and exalted to the throne of Israel. So Christ is manifested as one with His brethren. Thus, it is written: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb.2:11. And thus Christ said to Mary; "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." John 20:17. Here He fully acknowledges a brotherhood with His disciples, as having with them one common Father, and one God. Not only this, but it is also written that: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death, &c." Heb.2:14. In the foregoing verses He had both acknowledged them as brethren and as children, and thus claims a father and a brother's right to redeem them. And that the law might recognize His right to redeem, and accept of satisfaction at His hands He came into the law place of the children by taking part of the flesh and blood of which they partook and in which they had sinned. He thus humbled Himself to come under the law, both as God {Phil.2:6,7} and as the Son. Hence it is written: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Heb.5:8. His humiliation thus was the ground of His exaltation as spoken of in the text above quoted from Psal.89. See Eph. 4:9 & 10, and Phil.2:6 - 10. As the condemnation of Christ to death lawfully, could only be by His standing in that relation to His people as their life, by which the law could hold Him as one with them and their sins as the sins of His body and members, and hence could inflict the penalty on Him. If their sins were not thus considered as His, how could

David when speaking of Christ in Psal.40 represent Him in verse 12, as saying "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, &c." Christ individually had no sin.

If then Christ is so one with His people, He the life and head, and they the body and members in particular, {I Cor.12:12-27}, that their sins were His, did not Paul rightly say "I am crucified with Christ"? Gal.2:20. If crucified together, were they not raised up together? Hear what Paul testifies: "But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, {by grace ye are saved;} and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph.2:4-6. Notice that this quickening, this raising &c., is not only together with Christ, but it is *in Christ Jesus*, it must therefore have been in His being quickened, in His being raised; and therefore as one with Him. And who is it that has the presumption to call in question a truth so divinely testified to by an inspired Apostle? In the exaltation or excellency of Israel; the Lord is the sword of this excellency. By this sword, by the power of His self-existent Godhead, Christ cut His way through the curse of the law, through death and the grave to the exaltation of His people. This sword was stronger than the flaming sword placed at the east of Eden. Jesus by His death vanquished that. The religion of Christ is a living and experimental religion; it is not to be supposed that Christ as the head and life of His people hath ascended to glory with the purpose of leaving His body or a single member of His body behind. The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you. I Cor.12:21. As every member of a body is quickened by the same life which animates the head, so every member of Christ's body must be quickened with that life which animates Him as the head, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His," and they must be born of the seed of Abraham, of Israel, or they are not Israelites. Again the saints must be kept and their bodies raised spiritual bodies before they can participate individually in the glory, the exaltation of Christ. But when we consider that Jehovah Himself is the sword by which this excellency, this high exaltation is achieved, who can doubt its accomplishment, whatever obstacles we see in the way, whether within us or without?

Brethren, this is the salvation in which we believe, and to which we would bear our testimony. It meets with opposition and false representations even from some who once professedly walked in fellowship with us. But we rejoice to know and to testify that this is the God we worship, the Saviour we adore, the Mediator in whom we trust. Even Him of whom John testifies that , "This is the true God and eternal life." I John 5:20. Therefore though reviled and reproached, we would rejoice in the consolations of our trust.

Our meeting which is drawing to a close has been truly refreshing and comforting to us, we have been highly grateful at receiving a goodly number of corresponding messengers from our sister associations, ministers and other brethren. The preaching that we have had has been of Christ and His salvation and in opposition to all the attempts of men to save themselves; so that we have been made to think the language of Moses to Israel applies to us. "Happy art thou O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help and the sword of thine excellency."

To our sister Associations we would say, we desire a continuance of your correspondence by minutes and messengers. Our next association will be held by appointment, the Lord willing, with the church at Mt. Pleasant Fairfax Co. Va. on Thursday before the second Lord's day in August 1853.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.20 {1852}

Moderator: **S. Trott.**

God's Grace.

Corresponding Letter: *The Corresponding Association of Old School Baptists held with the church at Occoquan, Prince Wm. Co., VA., August 7, 8 & 9th, 1851, to all Old School brethren, churches and associations in correspondence with us, sendeth christian salutation.*

Beloved Brethren: - In the providence of God we are once more permitted to meet on the shores of time, and according to a long established custom, we send you this our annual epistle; in which we would offer a few remarks upon the subject of *God's Grace*.

This is a theme upon which ministers have declaimed, sages mused, and poets sung, in ages that are past, and yet the tale remains untold, and is one of the few subjects upon which repetition is not irksome; its sound is still charming, its effects still transporting to the children of God. Near six thousand years ago in the land of Asia, now wrapped in heathenish night, and under the influence of blind idolatry, appeared a solitary individual making an offering to God, expressive of his faith in the doctrine of salvation by grace, and incurring at once the approbation of his God, and the enmity of his brother, who offered the result of his own labor. Four thousand years subsequent was seen and heard in the same country, a meek, quiet, unassuming individual, bearing indubitable testimony of having been sent of God, yea of being God Himself made manifest in the flesh, proclaiming to the world in a voice so loud that the sound has even reached us of the Nineteenth Century, that there is no Salvation but by grace; yet there are found multitudes who like their ancient brother Cain, think to obtain salvation by their own works. It is true, they talk about grace, about obtaining it, and losing it, obtaining it by good works, and forfeiting it either by bad, or by neglecting to attend to those things which are reputed good. But brethren, we have not so learned Christ, we have not been taught to regard this grace as a commodity which may be obtained at a price, or upon conditions, but as the act of a Sovereign God having mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and hardening whom He will. The qualifying or distinguishing terms: Free, sovereign, &c., are not found in the Scriptures, are deemed wholly superfluous and unnecessary, because all the acts of God, whether of a gracious or other character are sovereign and free. Sovereign, because His will is the standard of His own acts; and all that He does is right, because so it seemed good in His sight. Free, because He requires nothing of His creatures as a return for what He does for them;

and because an act ceases to be gracious when it ceases to be free. Salvation is either of works or of grace, for there is no affinity between the two. If it be of works, it is no more of grace; if of grace, it is no more of works, and the question is settled in the scriptures, and in the experience of the children of God, that salvation is of grace. In a state of nature they have no evidences of being interested in the favor of God, but what are common to the rest of mankind. They are fed and clothed, protected and defended in Providence, and so are the rest of mankind, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. The raven and the lion both seek their meat from God; but they are no less interested in this grace because they are ignorant of it; nor do they partake of it any more freely because they know it. Prior to regeneration, they ascribe all their destiny to their own skillful or unskillful management {as the case may be} of their own affairs; but after regeneration, they say, as Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." And what was he? An apostle, a minister of the gospel, a persecuted and afflicted saint, a prisoner in bonds, enduring the buffeting of Satan, in perils, by land and in perils by sea, in perils among false brethren, and carrying about continually a body of death that made him wretched, &c., and yet the grace of God had made him what he was. Every act of God expressive of kindness or favor is an act of grace; and every act performed upon or in relation to His chosen people is an act of this kind. All the provisions necessary to their eternal salvation were made in Christ, while they were yet in a state of nonentity, yea, from all eternity. For their sakes the foundations of the earth were laid; light and darkness, life and death, evil and good, angels, men and devils, and all things present, past and to come, are so many expressions of God's grace to His people. And they are assured, through the apostle Paul, that no creature shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. What though they fell in Adam, and became dead in trespasses and sins? It was in full view of this state that God loved them with a perfect love, and made for them all that rich provision of grace of which we read in the Scriptures. What though when born they go astray from the womb, and run into all the excesses of riot and debauchery to which their depraved natures incline them? God's grace is commended to them in that while they were yet sinners Christ died for them. What though being dead they are unable to know or appreciate His kindness towards them? God's grace has made provision for their being quickened into life; but not through the means of a preached gospel as some suppose, for to admit this would be to deny that any were quickened until about eighteen hundred years ago when the gospel first began to be preached; or that any have been quickened since only where the gospel has been preached. To us such an idea savors more of the language of Ashdod or Arminianism than of being a mere different form of expression, to express the same idea with those who contend that the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead *shall* hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear *shall* live. What though being quickened they are left to feel themselves exposed to wrath under the sentence of God's violated law and borne down by a weight of guilt sufficient to sink a world to hell? There is in store for them, as the fruit of God's grace, a righteousness which shall hide all their shame, a sacrifice that shall atone for all their sins, and a victim that their faith shall behold, enduring all the wrath that was due to them. What though in the christian pilgrimage they meet with sore temptations

and dire afflictions? My grace, saith God, shall be sufficient for them. They shall glory in infirmity, and in weakness shall be made strong. Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. Job 5:6; but these are sent in loving kindness and tender mercy, for God has promised to be with them in six, and not to forsake them in the seventh. When His providence seems to frown and bear strong marks of displeasure, yet while He chastens He loves, and works all things together for good to them who are the called according to His purpose. That grace therefore which ordained the plan of salvation for God's elect, shall be their companion and comfort through this vale of tears; their support in death, and it has in store for them in heaven an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and cannot fade away. May we not then joyfully sing,

"O to grace how great a debtor!"

Our meeting, whilst it has been one of peace and pleasant intercourse together, has been one well calculated to lead us to mourn over the desolations of Zion; but few churches united in the correspondence this year, and messengers from but one association, were in attendance with us. Whilst we mourn before God the causes of the thinness of our meeting in reference to brethren, we would not repine; we sometimes feel that if our brethren abroad knew us as we know ourselves they would not care to associate with us. And when we contemplate God's dispensation in this affair, instead of repining we have ground for great thankfulness to Him that He is still granting us the privilege of meeting together in peace, of receiving epistles of love from a few sister churches, which are indeed little flocks, surrounded by wolves, and having nothing to hope for, but from God's rich grace in Christ, and His protecting care; and from two or three associations. Though we have but little to commend us to the favorable notice of our brethren abroad, yet we feel a desire for a continuance, and even extension of the correspondence of churches, corresponding meetings and associations who are united with us, in the glorious doctrine of salvation by the grace of God, and in that order marked out in the New Testament. And would therefore say again; Brethren visit us with your letters of christian affection, and your messengers, at our next meeting to be held with the Frying-pan Church, Fairfax Co., VA., to commence on the Thursday before the 2nd Lord's day in August, 1852, at 11 o'clock, A.M.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.19 {1851}

Brotherly Love and Unity.

Circular Letter & Corresponding Letter: *The Baltimore Old School Baptist Association, in session with the Church at Black Rock, Baltimore County, Md., May 14th, 15th & 16th, 1856, to the several Churches of which she is composed, sends love in the Lord.*

Beloved Brethren: - As an expression of fellowship, we again address you this our annual Circular, and on this occasion we have selected as our theme, the subject of Brotherly Love and

Unity. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." - Psa.133:1.

First. The character and relationship of brethren; and secondly, the manner of their living together in unity. In the Scriptures, the words *brother* or *brethren* are used in a variety of senses. Some are so called in a proper sense, as by immediate descent, the children of the same parent or parents, according to the flesh, and some by affinity, kindred or nation, and also by common participation of our human nature, in which all men are brethren. But the saints of God are all brethren in a spiritual sense, by the grace of God, they all having God as their Father, and Christ as their Elder Brother. In this sense we were brethren in eternity, as the members of Christ's body. "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned as when as yet there was none of them." Psa.139:16. Christ's incarnation is another proof of this brotherhood. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Psa.22:22. Again, "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee." Heb.2:12. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb.2:17. "For whom He {God} did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He {Christ} might be the first born among many brethren." Rom.8:29. "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and unto your Father; and to my God, and your God." John20:17. His death is a strong proof of His love to His brethren. He was delivered for their offenses, and raised again for their justification. And He received gifts for men, to quicken whom He will. {See John 5:21.} And He said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," &c. John 17:24. "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph.2:1. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Gal.4:6. In this way they are brought to view as brethren. Not like national Israel, under a covenant of works; but as the spiritual Israel, in the covenant of grace. National Israel was a separate people, and not reckoned among the nations, and in that sense they dwell alone. For Moses said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence; for wherein shall it be known here, that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us, so shall we be separated from the nations around about us." The brethren are separated from the world, for they are not of the world, as Christ was not of the world. Not that they chose Christ. No. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you out of the world;" therefore the world knoweth you not, because it knew Him {Christ} not. "For they neither know me nor my Father." So in dwelling together they are one body. "My dove, my undefiled is but one." Christ is the head, and they, the brethren, are His body, and members in particular; members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Christ is the living Stone, as the Foundation, and the brethren are lively stones, to compose the spiritual house, the holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. They, the brethren, dwell together in love. "Beloved, let us

love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. Beloved, if God so loved us we ought also to love one another. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in the world. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" I John 4:7,8,19,20. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Another evidence of thus dwelling together in unity, is that we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. "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." Eph.4:3-6. So the life which the brethren live is a life by the faith of the Son of God, who has loved them and given Himself for them. As they are living members of Christ's living body, the church, so they have bowels of sympathy; if a brother is in bonds, as being bound with him, and with such as suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Make not a man an offender for a word, nor lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gates; nor turn aside the just for a thing of nought. Isa.29:21.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem the other better than himself.

As evidence of the unity of the brethren, they all have the same prospect in view, and are heirs alike to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that cannot fade away; which is reserved in heaven for them, and they are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. I Pet.1:4,5. When we all shall have come in 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 fulness of Christ. Eph.4:13. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." Mt.13:43. And then shall they enjoy the presence of their God, and sing praises to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, who is the light of the city forever. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lambs book of life. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" May grace, mercy and peace be with you all.

Corresponding Letter:

Dear Brethren: - By the indulgence of our Heavenly Father, we have been favored with another opportunity of meeting together, and have been favored by the visits of brethren from

Maine to North Carolina, and from the Atlantic coast to the prairies of the West, all speaking the same things, and exhibiting a united and common interest in the things of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why this interest, and why this unanimity of sentiment among those who were born in different climes, raised up under different circumstances, and subject to different influences? The answer can only be, that they have one common Teacher, who teacheth as never man taught; whose school is subject to no locality other than the hearts of His pupils. When thus assembled and thus united, may we not confidently call both upon the interested and the curious to come and behold our order? Or say to them, in the language of David: “Walk about Zion, go round about her; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following.” O, how delightful to contemplate that, exposed as we are continually to the envenomed shafts of the world, and the fiery darts of the wicked, that God has enclosed us in the invincible walls and bulwarks of salvation!

As it was only Him that dwelt in the bush, that preserved the bush from burning; only Him that walked in the midst of the heated furnace that kept the smell of fire from the garments of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego: so it is only by His appearing as a wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the Glory in the midst, that Zion has ever been and still is preserved as a monument of the praise and glory of God’s grace.

Our next Association will be held {the Lord willing} with the church at Harford, commencing on Wednesday before the 3rd Sunday in May, 1857, when and where we hope to meet a goodly number of your messengers.

S.Trott,

Moderator.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.19 {1851}

The New Birth.

Circular Letter: *The Baltimore Old School Baptist Association, to the several churches therein represented, send love in the Lord.*

Beloved Brethren: - In addressing to you this token of our particular relationship and regard to you, we would call your attention to the subject of the *new birth*. This doctrine in all by-gone ages has been almost as distinguishing a mark of the Regular Baptists, as is baptism. Although the multitude bearing the name of Baptists have dwindled down the idea of a second birth to a mere wordy phantom, a change which an individual can procure, if not accomplish for himself by his efforts, and others claiming to be Regular or Old School Baptists, have substituted for it, imaginations of the human mind, having no direct resemblance to the idea of a birth, the scripture testimony still is: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And the necessity for it remains as strong as in past ages, for still it remains true, that “the

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” We do not contemplate entering into, in this letter, an elaborate argument in support of the doctrine of an actual *new birth*, but would content ourselves with giving you a brief view of what it is, as illustrated in the scriptures. For this end, we beg leave to call your attention to the births of Ishmael and Isaac. Perhaps it may be thought that the birth of Jacob and Esau are similar in their figurative application to the above, but the scriptures do not so represent them. Jacob and Esau are brought to view as illustrating the sovereignty of God in election from among the posterity of Adam. See Rom., chap.9-12. Hence they were both of the same birth, and therefore alike after the flesh. As their mothers were allegorical of the two covenants, so they represented in their births the children of the two covenants. But the things of the new covenant are spiritual, or things of the spirit of God, and therefore are only known by the spiritual man: {See I Cor.2:12-15.} Hence Ishmael is said to have been born after the flesh, and Isaac in distinction from him, is said to have been by promise; and the promises of God we know do not run through Adam, but through Christ Jesus. See Gal.4:22,23 & Rom.9:7-9. So that whilst Ishmael represents the natural seed of Abraham, or fleshly birth, Isaac represents the spiritual seed, or the spiritual birth; and Christ is that spiritual seed, and the believer is of the seed of Abraham as he is Christ’s. See Gal.3:15 & 29. Not that we do not suppose that Isaac was a fleshly man in his birth; but we believe that his birth had those peculiar characteristics connected with it which made it a fit allegory of the spiritual birth in distinction from the fleshly. Hence in further confirmation of this view, we have taken of the birth’s of Isaac and Ishmael. Whilst the scriptures represent the birth of Ishmael as being altogether without faith, being the result of human reasoning or contrivance, and fleshly actings, they represent that in the birth of Isaac all fleshly powers were previously dead, and that it was only through faith that Sarah received strength to conceive seed &c. Heb.11:11, and faith is not a fruit of the flesh, but of the Spirit.

Having thus far, as we think fully established the position that the birth of Isaac was a figure of the spiritual birth, in distinction from the birth of the flesh, we will proceed to illustrate the new birth by it.

1. We will remark that this birth in the figure had its particular seed, that faith was connected with its conception, and therefore points to that incorruptible seed which Peter declares the saints to be born of, by the word of God. I Pet.1:23. It was the promise of God that secured the birth of Isaac, so it is the word of God or His declared promise, or purpose and grace that secures the spiritual birth of all the elect; and as before noticed, all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, so the purpose and grace of God which secures the salvation of all who are saved is in Him, excluding all our Adamic powers from any part in accomplishing it. Christ is the substance, the grand whole of all the revelation of God, of all the promises, the grace and purpose of God; as we have Christ we have the promises and grace of God. And He is the life and therefore the embodiment of His church; hence they are saved according to God’s purpose and grace given in Him, See II Tim.1:9. We might go on to notice the effect of the conception of this incorruptible seed, how it produces faith in God, quickens the man to a sense of his

relations, and accountability to God, of the spirituality and broadness of the law, and of the sin in his acts, thoughts, and nature; of the distress occasioned thereby; of the darkness that covers the whole operation within, hiding all excepting certain external effects from the individual view, so that he is a mystery to himself, and can tell no more why he is thus, than he can tell of the wind whence it cometh or whither it goeth. We might show that whilst the soul is thus quickened to such a deep sense of the law or of sin as being against God, that it still evidently is not changed from a natural to a spiritual soul, and therefore it cannot receive the things of the Spirit, or the things freely given us of God, but entirely looks to the deeds of the law as the way of acceptance with God. But we forbear, and come to the birth. We are told that Sarah bear to Abraham a son at the set time of which God had spoken to him; and that Abraham called the name of his son whom Sarah bear to him, Isaac; also that Sarah said on the occasion. "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." And she further said, "Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah would have given children suck &c." Gen.21:1-7. The name Isaac signifies laughter, as Sarah says, God has made me to laugh. Laughter is an expression of sudden, but transient and light joy. The name Isaac therefore and Sarah's being said to laugh, is strikingly expressive of that joy which is experienced when a person is first born again, or brought by faith to behold the light of the Sun of Righteousness into liberty. It is all joy and excitement at beholding the way of pardon and acceptance with God. But as it is a general, but rather superficial view which the child of grace has at this time of the way of salvation, and not that full understanding which he has afterwards when taught of Christ as the way, his joy is easily and quickly turned again to sorrow and grief, and his light is obscured soon by clouds and darkness. Still with the very first burst of joy, there is a feeling in the individual that it is God and no other that hath made me to laugh. There is also a feeling as with Sarah, that all who hear shall laugh, and he is therefore anxious for the moment to impart the good news to others, some under the idea of publishing it to all, and therefore as having a kind of preaching excitement. As Isaac retained his name of laughter through life, so the believer in his after pilgrimage has his times of this transient excitable joy. {Note: There is much of humility and astonishment connected with this laughing. Who would have said that Sarah should give suck, &c. So says the new born child of grace, who would have thought that ever I should have found pardon, that all my distress which I have suffered on account of my sins should have been but preparing me to know and rejoice in salvation by Christ; that such a vile sinner should have been an object of God's love.} But brethren, let us not stop merely to laugh with Sarah, let us inquire what has transpired to occasion it. It was not that any change had taken place in Ishmael, he had not been transformed to be the son of the free woman, or of Sarah; he remained to be the son of Hagar, and subject to bondage with his mother. But it was that a new and distinct existence had come to light in the family, that Sarah had a son of her own, and that as she was a free woman so her son was free born. As she represented the children, or child of the new covenant; the spiritual man, for there is one spirit, and the Lord {Christ} is that Spirit; and it is Christ in all the saints, their life, and the hope of glory. Thus we have the new birth in a figure before us. That which was born of the flesh, the whole natural man, soul and body, remains fleshly and under

bondage, after the new birth as before. It remains subject to notions of legality and bondage, and therefore subject to be continually annoyed with doubts and fears. It remains subject to all that depravity and all those afflictions, and diseases, and that death which was entailed upon man by the transgression of the natural Adam. It is true that in reference to the believer, the whole curse has been removed by the atonement of Christ from all these evils of sin; but they in themselves remain to disturb his peace and hopes, only when faith is in exercise, then he can view and rejoice in the whole as blessings. But there is a new existence, spiritual in its nature, that opens its eyes from the first, not to behold the light of the natural sun, but to delight in the shining of the Sun of Righteousness; not to behold the alternate blaze and thick darkness of Mt. Sinai, but to rejoice in the light of life; not to cry and fret, and to labor and toil for that which is not bread, and which satisfieth not, but to behold and feast upon the rich supply of the bread of life, the bread which came down from heaven ready prepared at his hands. It is true that faith when looking through the natural senses as it sometimes does, takes a view of natural things; but instead of seeing the curse written upon them, views engraven on all, from the blaze of the sun to the glimmering of the glow-worm, the glorious truth, that God is love. But it is not by the fleshly senses that this spiritual child, this new man sees or judges of anything, it is by faith; faith is to it what the senses are to the natural man. Hence when faith is not in exercise and we look at, and attempt to judge of things by our senses and the faculties of our souls, much of clouds and darkness obscure our vision, and much that appears threatening and injurious hovers over us. But all that faith looks upon is light and peace, with no darkness to obscure, nor any threatenings to create fear; that which is most gloomy to sense, is light to faith. It beholds God in all, and God as He is manifested in Christ Jesus.

Hence as the two, the Ishmael and the Isaac in the believer, are so different in their birth, look at and judge of things so differently, and are so different in their pursuits; the one being earthy and clinging to earthly things, the other being heavenly and soaring towards heaven, and that which is heavenly, it is no wonder that there is a continued warfare going on in the breast of the believer; making him feel that whilst he would fly heavenward, he is still confined to the earth, that when he would do good, he is full of evil. But leaving this point with much that might be said on it, we pass in the next place to notice the weaning time, and the events connected with it. We are told that the child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. Also that "Sarah saw the son of Hagar mocking," and she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son, &c." Gen.21:5-12. Milk is a light food prepared in the order of nature to suit the tender stomach of the young infant. It is sought after by the infant as a balm for all its little ills and griefs. But it is necessary for the relief of the mother, that she may obey the mandate of God, to be fruitful and multiply, and that her children may be proper and healthy; as well as for the child, that it should be fitted to fill its station in the world, that it should be weaned from the breast and learn to live on stronger food. So for the spiritual Isaac's, the children of God; they at first live on such food only as they look to their mother - the church for, that which has a good deal of animal sympathy, and creaturely doing in it. They look to their frames and feelings and to the discharge of what they call duty, for their

nourishment and growth as well as for the healing of their woes. This is all light food, it is momentary in its effects, it may occasion them to laugh, but there is nothing solid like the feast we have to speak of. They are continually changing either up or down. Hence the importance of being weaned from the breast and of being fed with meat. But some even in the apostles' days did not get weaned. Paul complains of the Corinthians that he had fed them with milk and not with meat, for hitherto they were not able to bear it; and adds, "neither yet are ye now able." This he says to show that they were yet carnal, and that he could not speak to them as spiritual, but as carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I Cor.3:1-3. In like manner he complains of the Hebrews, that instead of being teachers, they needed to be taught first principles, to be fed with milk; and adds, "For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe." Heb.5:12-14. It would appear that many also among us are in the same condition, not weaned from the breast. Hence, the cry for what they call practical preaching, and the fondness for hearing and reading of first experiences to the exclusion of doctrine, &c. It would seem that the complaint against Ephraim, that "he is an unwise son, for he should not stay long in the breaking forth of children," applied to them. {See Hosea 13:13., with the words in *italics* omitted.} As for the mother, so for the churches, it is necessary if they would have proper and healthy children, and have them grow up to a vigorous manhood, to see that they are weaned from milk, and fed through the ministry with sound doctrine, such as the scriptures and the whole experiences of the children of God correspond with. Isaiah asks: "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine?" And he himself answers the inquiries thus: "Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." Isa.25:9. The enquiry is, not whom shall men, but whom shall *He*, that is, the Lord, mentioned in verse 5. So that according to this scripture the Lord leaves them who hang on to the breast, to continue in a puny state.

But when are they weaned? The natural child as was Isaac is generally weaned at a certain period; not so with the spiritual Isaacs, with them there is no fixed time. They have to do, not with time, but with spiritual things. Some begin their weaning and feasting on doctrine almost as soon as they are born, whilst all have more or less of the weaning process to experience through life. How about the feast? At feasts it is usual to have a rich supply of choice provisions, accompanied with wine. Such is the doctrine of Christ. It is true persons may speculate on this doctrine, and may discuss and argue it in a carnal spirit, and produce only coldness. But when any one is led to seek of God - His teachings in the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ Jesus, and enabled by faith to receive any part of that glorious truth, he finds in it a feast of fat things. How can it be otherwise? There is not only the fullness of Christ's atonement, the purpose and grace of God in Christ Jesus, but God in all His attributes, as He could not be known in all the works of creation and providence, couched in it. Hence, even the angels desire to look into these things. And the love of God, as wine on the lees well refined, flows through the whole of it, to cheer, to invigorate and to strengthen the child of grace to bear all the fatigues and trials of the way, and to support him under them. As he is led to feast on this glorious doctrine, he is weaned from the light food of frames, excitements, and

creaturely discharge of duties. Not only this, but also as he is thus weaned from creaturely dependencies, he with Sarah sees the son of the bond-woman, the fleshly nature mocking. He sees how it has mocked him, disappointing him in all his fleshly expectations for solid, lasting comfort, and spiritual enjoyment, how much soever they may have made him laugh at the time; and even when the rich feast of gospel grace is spread before him, the flesh mocks him, by suggesting to him that those consolations are not for him; that he, a poor sinful wretch as he is, can have no claim to those consolations, that it would be presumptuous for him to trust in the absolute promises of God, unless he could find something in himself more worthy of God's favor, and the like. But God has confirmed the declaration of Sarah, "Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac." Not only is it decreed that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but also we find that whenever we are led to God for consolations we have to cast out everything fleshly, in feelings and in action, and to depend alone on the mercy of God in Christ for acceptance, and we receive the blessings as coming alone through that channel.

Brethren, we have thus given you what we understand to be some of the outlines of the new birth, and of its effects as illustrated in the birth of Isaac. In conclusion let us say, brethren, that in this season of commotions, religious and political, separate and combined, shaking the heavens and the earth of the mere human mind, we need some stronger food to support and steady us than we can draw from excited feelings, human reasonings, or even acts of obedience. May we follow the example of David. He says, "Surely, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of its mother. My soul is even as a weaned child." How this is, he shows by saying, "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever." Psa.131:2, 3. Again we find him quieting himself thus: "Why art thou cast down O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." Psa.42:11. Brethren, farewell.

S.Trott,

Moderator.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.23 {1855}

The Nature of that Atonement or Sacrifice which has been made for Sin.

Circular Letter: *The Corresponding Association of Old School Baptists, held with the church at Mount Pleasant, To her brethren scattered abroad sends greeting.*

Dear Brethren: - It is under peculiar and trying circumstances that we address you in this our annual epistle. Peculiar because hitherto we have been permitted to regard all who wear the cognomen of *Old School* as being partakers of our joys and sorrows and although not particularly connected in our correspondence, we felt that their God was our God, and their

Christ our Christ. Trying because, we have seen such a disposition for strife manifested by many, and to set up new and unheard of tests of fellowship, so that instead of feeling assured as formerly that we have the prayers and sympathies of many with whom we have been in habit of associating as brethren, some have withdrawn themselves from us, who, if they read our epistles at all, read them for criticism and not for edification. And why this strife? Or whence these estranged feelings? It is difficult for us to believe that the principles of the religion of Christ or the fruits of the spirit are productive of such results, we must therefore look to a departure from those principles and to the depraved nature of man, to find an origin for such a state of things. We are all doubtless striving for the faith of the gospel, but are we according to the apostles admonition striving together? And not rather about a difference of *opinion* upon extraneous matters that do not effect the principles of the faith of the gospel? The limits of a circular forbid that we should notice all the points upon which a difference of opinion exists, nor do we think it necessary; but we would call your attention to the Nature of that Atonement or Sacrifice which has been made for Sin. In doing which we will try to divest ourselves of all preconceived *opinions* and utterly disregarding the views or opinions of others, take the scriptures as the man of our counsel, as the lamp to our feet and the light of our path. Whilst we have but little hope of being able to reconcile conflicting views upon this subject, we pray you brethren to hear us patiently and weigh well the scriptural evidence we bring in support of our views, before you judge us harshly or decide that we are heretics. We are perhaps all agreed that the sacrifice upon which sinners alone can have any hope of acceptance with God, is that of His own Son, this at any rate is the position we occupy, and as we do not intend to advance a single idea unsupported by the scriptures of truth we will before we proceed further, introduce some scripture proof relative to this point.

In Romans 5:10, it is recorded: "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Rom.8:3 - "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh" and 8:32 - "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all." Gal.4:4 - "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, &c. I John 4:9 - "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him," see 10th verse also. The point being fully established, we next proceed to enquire what constitutes the Son of God? Was it the human nature in which He appeared, the Deity and humanity combined, or was it a real existence as the first born among many brethren. If the human nature alone, then as a matter of course there was no such thing as the Son of God until He was thus curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, see Psa.139:15. If it be the deity and humanity united, then there was no Son until this union took place. And do the scriptures authorize us to believe that 4000 years of time should roll away and that Abel, Noah, Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Gideon, Barak, Sampson and all the long train of patriarchs and prophets should live and die without any real Redeemer, but such as existed merely in the design and purpose of God. No, but on the contrary we hear Christ declare: "Before Abraham was, I am." We cannot therefore think it was the seed of Abraham

which He took upon Him, but rather, He that took the seed of Abraham was the Son of God. This conclusion we find sustained by scriptures both of the old and new testament, not only as being before Abraham, but before all things, and by whom all things consist. When four men were seen walking in the fiery furnace, it was said that the form of the fourth was like the Son of God; and how we ask, could there be a likeness of that which had no existence? In Proverbs 8:23 {where it is generally admitted that the writer, under the name of Wisdom is personating Christ,} it is said - "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was &c., read to verse 30. Again, in Proverbs 30:4 hear the words of Agur: "Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Job exclaims in the depth of affliction as though it were the only comfort he had: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." In John 6:62, Jesus asks, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before," and also in Eph.4:9 & 10 - "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." In the John 17:5, Jesus asks to be glorified with that glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Therefore it seems clear that in ascending up where He was before, He was going to return to some position that He occupied with the Father, not only before He was born in Bethlehem, but before the world began. Again, if He had no existence prior to His incarnation we are at a loss to know how it was that the saints were blessed and chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Now brethren we think from these and other considerations we might notice, we are fully warranted in contending for the doctrine, that the Son of God existed before time began, and that therefore neither His humanity, nor deity and humanity united constituted Him such. The essence of sonship we cannot attempt to define any further than to say that He was and is a spiritual head of a spiritual family. But some may be ready to enquire, How long has He existed as such? To which enquiry we can only reply in the language of the same divine authority by which we have established the positions already taken, and we wish it borne in mind that we are not treating of His self existence as Jehovah, but of Him as the only begotten Son. And whilst we acknowledge ourselves utterly unable to trace His existence as such to any point, the scriptures everywhere speak of that existence as posterior to the existence of His Godhead. In Proverbs 8, already referred to, He is represented as having been set up from everlasting. In John 1:1, it is written: "In the beginning was the Word." In Col.1:15, He is said to be the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature; verse 17 - "He is before all things," 18 - "who is the beginning." And in Rev.3:14, He styles Himself - "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." And we acknowledge ourselves unable to see any difference in the language last quoted, which are the words of Christ Himself, and an expression found in the Signs of the Times, much caviled at, that "He is the first production of Divine Power."

Nor does it become cavilers to dispute the doctrine that Christ, as the Son of God, is the production of God, until they can show that these scriptures do not mean what they say, and

discard the idea that His Sonship consists in His humanity which is to all intents and purposes a creature; for He was *made of a woman*. He is spoken of frequently as the begotten of God, the sent of God, the messenger of God, and as coming to do not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. When He comes He is manifest as the Mighty God, though veiled in humanity, because it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell, and His humanity no more constituted Him the Son of God than it did God Himself. Then why was He clothed with humanity? Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, therefore He took part of the same, and we may add, for the same reason that Moses put a veil upon his face when he came down from the top of Sinai. Moses had been upon the mountain and talked with God, and his face in consequence shone with such a glory that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold him. Christ proceeded forth and came from God, yea has His dwelling in the bosom of the Father. If then it was necessary that the mediator of the administration of condemnation should veil his face, how much more that the mediator of the administration of righteousness which exceedeth in glory should veil Himself. This He has done, hence says Paul, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Here His flesh is expressly called a veil, and was not therefore that which constituted Him the Christ. He comes at the appointed time and this is the manner of His appearing, clothed with humanity and embodying the whole of Deity. At the appointed time He was delivered up and dies. Forsaken of the Father, insulted by devils, and denied by friends, is yet borne testimony to so strongly by the Father, who hides the sun and rends the rocks, that the amazed centurion cries, "This is the Son of God!"

Now we ask, is not such a sacrifice of infinitely more value than that which is merely human? If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

"So great, so vast a sacrifice,
May well our hopes revive;
If God's own Son thus bleeds and dies,
The sinner sure may live."

If this brethren be the doctrine of the Bible it should not be withheld because some do not *believe* it, nor because they refuse to worship this Son of God, though God has said "Let all the angels of God worship Him," and those who would convince us that we are in error must bring some scripture proof rather than to say falsely, that this is Arianism, new things, heresy, idolatry, &c.

This sacrifice we do not regard as being only the substitution of one person or thing for another; but as the sacrifice of the head for the body, which is His church, and the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Nor do we imagine that although the *Son* of God was delivered up and put to death, that He for one moment ceased to be; but that in Him at His death was fulfilled the

word of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, 54:7,9 - "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee," &c., and that though passing in connection with the body through the vale of terrors, He was the same vital head, and when He arose, it was with His body completely justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Our present meeting has been one of peculiar interest evincing as it has done, how christians can dwell together in unity. We have none of Hagar's mocking children among us, and although a much larger number than usual of our brethren have been together, they seemed to be one of heart and one soul. Our ministering brethren have come to us in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and their preaching has been a full exhibition of the glories of our Redeemer in the full and complete salvation of His elect. We feel thankful to God and those of our sister associations who have thought enough of us to send us their minutes and messengers, and desire to reciprocate their kindness. Our next meeting is appointed to be held with the church at Upper Broad Run, to commence on the Thursday before the second Lord's Day in August 1854, when and where we hope to great you again and enjoy another season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.21 {1853}

S. Trott.

Present State of the Church.

Circular Letter: *The Baltimore Old School Baptist Association met with the Church at Black Rock, May 19th, 20th & 21st, 1858, to the Churches connected therewith.*

Beloved Brethren: - Permit us to address you on this occasion on the Present State of the Church of Christ. That the Church is at this time surrounded with darkness in a peculiar manner, is generally admitted. It is like the plague of darkness of Egypt, a darkness that may be felt. It is a wintry state of the Church. The sun occasionally shines, but its shining has not that warming, enlivening and cheering influence upon the plants as at other times it has had, and it is soon obscured by cold bleak clouds. There are clouds rising from the mists of this world, from the various agitations in the world at this time, politically and otherwise, which much darken the hemisphere of the Church and saints, and produce a corresponding chilliness. There is not that liveliness in our love to the brethren, nor to the truth and ordinances of the Gospel, nor that engagedness in religious exercises, and in religious conversation, and meditations, as have at other times been felt. As in night and wintry seasons beasts of prey crowd round the settlements of men, to raven; so it is with the Church at this time. There are those around the saints and among them, that would persuade to scare the sheep from their fenced folds to ramble with them in the wild rages of human wisdom, and to repose with them with them in their dens that they may prey upon them, and no doubt they have bewitched some of the sheep. There are

others again who would persuade the children of God, that they ought not to follow or receive the light which God has given to their continual guide - the Scriptures and blessed teachings of the Spirit - but to be guided in their belief and practice by the mixture of light and shade which is found in the writings of eminent men of past ages; and as these are various, so as they are followed they produce different views and dissensions among the saints. Again, Satan takes the advantage of this darkness, to assault the saints with temptations. It is an old complaint with the children of God that,

“Temptations every where annoy,
And sins and snares my peace destroy.”

How it may be with the brethren generally at this time we know not, but some are peculiarly tried with temptations. Satan so stirs up their passions, appetites, &c., that they think it is altogether themselves. And indeed it is their own vile nature that thus shows itself; and what is a worse annoyance to them, the old man when left to act itself loves as much as ever it did, the indulgence of itself in its corruptions, and hence under this wildness and darkness, or in other words not having the spiritual man in lively exercise, we are led on under the influence of our corruptions, till we are on the very brink of acting them out, and were it not for the faithfulness of God who has promised that with the temptations He will make a way for our escape, we should plunge into actual sin. Though the escape is brought about, we know that it is not of ourselves, but that the sin is ours, though we were not left to carry it out; then arises the trying doubts, whether, if we loved God and His cause and believed the declarations of His word, &c., we could be led on thus contrary to His word and to the exposing of His cause to reproach. We are sometimes thus tossed upon the billows of temptations, until like Jonah, we become exceedingly displeased, and angry, and pray the Lord to *take away our life*, thinking it *better for us to die than to live*; yea, with Job, our souls, those souls which others tell us are made heavenly in regeneration, *choose strangling and death rather than life*. Again, as in wintry seasons, clouds have heretofore at times gathered over the Church, but at this time they appear to be gathering thicker than ever, as though preparing to burst in a storm upon us. The *Young Men’s Christian Associations* which are organized in most of our towns, and united throughout the country in a general convention, appear as very innocent combinations at first sight; but when we consider that they are composed of persons of different denominations and likewise of those who are not professors, all united together for promoting religion, though they appear like the little cloud which Elijah’s servant saw rising out of the sea, yet there is evidently in them the elements of a great rain, tending as they are to promote a matured, combined and concentrated effort in their religious enterprise. Again, these *union* prayer meetings which are said to have originated from these young men’s associations, are tending still more fully to concentrate and combine all the sects of Protestantism in a grand effort to bring the country and the government under the control of their religious influence, and thus enable them to dictate to the government, and to silence opposition to their plans and measures. Indeed the unprecedented and wonderful effects of these union prayer meetings, in making converts, looks more like *making fire come down from heaven in the sight of men*, and of consummating the power of the Protestant Beast,

than anything that has appeared yet. How soon it will be consummated is not our province to say.

But, brethren, it is with the Church now as it was with Israel during the plague of darkness in Egypt. *All the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.* So we think the churches of the saints have at this time as clear light in the great truths of the Gospel as in any former period; and it is more distinguishable from every false system than formerly as it makes manifest the darkness without, by being so contrasted with it. The ministers of Christ, although frequently on account of the wintry darkness when going to their appointments, feel more as though they were on some worldly concern than to deliver a message of peace, yet are enabled generally to preach the gospel with much clearness, to feel while preaching the vast weight of their subject, the precious fulness and freeness of the gospel of salvation, and the importance of contending earnestly for the faith, and of preaching Christ as the only way of salvation. Private members are as well established in the truth, and have as clear a discerning spirit to distinguish between truth and error when preached, as at any former period; and whilst complaining of many doubts, fears and temptations, are as well established in the truth that their whole salvation is in Christ Jesus as in any former period, and manifest as much anxiety to know the Scriptures, and to be in all things conformed to them.

The enquiry is frequently made, What can be the reason of the Church's being in this dark wintry state, and whether it is not owing to the unfaithfulness of the Church that this has come upon her? The inquiry is also made whether the Church cannot adopt some course, whether some measures cannot be taken to bring the Church back to more sunny seasons, and whether individuals by proper efforts, by prayer, &c., cannot deliver themselves from their coldness? Some few have urged the making certain exertions to relieve the Church and saints from this unpleasant situation. Brethren, does not the same God reign in the heavenly kingdom as in the earthly? Does He not reign as supremely in the one as in the other? Does not the declaration of the Lord, "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things" apply as fully to the spiritual world and its government as to the natural? Try your powers, brethren, in mid winter to clear away the storm clouds, to avert the long, dark cold nights and to bring the sun back to its summer solstice, and if ye can do this, then may ye hope by your efforts to hasten on again the period when in reference to the Church ye may sing, "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," and not till then. We know, brethren, that all this coldness and darkness and the corruptions, that cause us to doubt and fret, and are the materials for Satan's temptations to act upon, are in us. We cannot say with our Lord, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." No, the evil is all in us, and when we rightly feel, we take all the shame and blame to ourselves. But can we shake off to overcome these evils of ourselves? No, the more we feel the evil of these corruptions and coldness, we feel the more our entire impotency to relieve ourselves from them, we cry for God to interpose His grace or we must fall under them. It is true, that amid the severest colds and storms of winter, if God in His providence provide us with shelter, with food and clothing we

may keep from perishing, so under all these dark and wintry seasons spiritually, God's grace will be sufficient for His people to secure that *their faith fail not*. He will *keep them by His power through faith unto salvation*, though He may leave them, for more humbling of themselves, and for the trying their faith, to fall into the mire.

The people of God, are likened to sheep. Sheep are feeble, defenseless creatures of themselves, very simple in providing for their defense against their enemies, or in providing for, and protecting themselves and their young from perishing in the wintry storms. They need the constant care of a shepherd to provide food and shelter for them, and to protect them by keeping them embosomed, or by watching over them, or they will wander off, get scattered and devoured. The people of God are equally as dependent upon the care of their Shepherd. But David personating Christ in His body, the Church, says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me besides the still waters. He restoreth my soul, &c." So that even the souls of the children, get off at times from the simplicity of gospel truth and order and need to be restored by the great Shepherd. This does not look like the souls of saints have been changed into heavenly souls.

As to the reason why the church is in this dark and wintry state; we would say, it is not that the Shepherd is unfaithful to His charge; not because He has not power to preserve His sheep in perfect peace, and to keep them in the constant enjoyment of light; nor because they are left to their own care; but because He has seen it best for the church to be in this state. In a word, because it is so written, and the Scriptures must be fulfilled. The present dark and cold state of the church, will no doubt be more for the glory of God, more for a manifestation of the power and exceeding riches of His grace; more fully to display to the admiration of saints and angels, the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin, and that perfect fulness there is in Him to present the vilest sinner without spot or blemish before the throne of God, than would the church's being kept in the constant exercise of that faith and love and zeal such as characterized the lives of Peter, John and Paul. Because now it appears so manifest that it is all of grace that they are saved and kept, all of Christ in which they will appear with acceptance before God, and shine in glory.

Let us then, Brethren, amidst all the darkness around, rejoice in the power and faithful care of our Shepherd and may we be found walking as children of light.

S.Trott.

From: SIGNS of the TIMES: Vol.26 {1858}