

**SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST
CONFERENCE**

It's Origin

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Prefatory Note

Upon the recommendation of the Committee on Denominational History the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference at its annual session in 1903 authorized the Committee to have reprinted certain historical literature, which on account of its age had become very scarce and difficult of access. In this was included the early minutes of the General Conference.

The minutes of the first few sessions of the General Conference were not printed, and the manuscript minutes and accompanying documents became scattered, and many of them lost. Such of them as could be found remaining were gathered and published in the *Sabbath Recorder* beginning February 3, 1881, along with suitable explanatory notes written, as we are informed, by the Rev. Jonathan Allen, D. D., LL. D., at that time president of Alfred University. They were again reprinted in the *Sabbath Recorder* beginning November 16, 1903. From the *Sabbath Recorder* they are reprinted here.

Corliss F. Randolph, Chairman of the Committee on Denominational History.
Newark, New Jersey, July 14, 1907.

Seventh Day Baptist Conference ITS ORIGIN

Mutual General or Yearly Meeting.

When, how, and why originated the General Conference? These are questions which have had varied answers. The time of its origin has assigned it a sliding scale of some four years—from 1801 to 1805. The numbering of its yearly sessions began at its forty-fourth, 1844. Upon the title page of the Minutes for that year, it is styled the fortieth session. This title-page numbering continued till 1855, when it was incorporated into the body of the Minutes, and thus the Conference has continued to the present time, running on a schedule four years behind time. Deducting the ten years that it fell behind the century date during the triennial sessions, the last Conference was the seventieth instead of the sixty-sixth, as stated in the Minutes.

The mode and motive have had somewhat a similar fate. These uncertainties have grown largely out of the fact that, for the first six years, all records were preserved only in manuscript, no minutes or circulars having been printed till 1807. The manuscript documents were difficult of access, and, indeed, were supposed, by not a few, to have been, to a great extent, lost.

It is believed that no better service, in a short way, can be rendered both to denominational history and denominational literature than to place the chief remaining documents of this period in a form available both to the future historian of the denomination, and for the instruction and inspiration of those interested in its present welfare. For these, the yearly circulars especially are wholesome and invigorating reading. They are full of virile vigor, devout faith, ripe Christian experience, warm-hearted sympathies, and an earnest zeal for the promotion of divine truth. Their salutations sound like a refrain to the sublime Pauline salutations.

The Union and Communion.

From the Mutual General or Yearly Meeting beginning in 1696, between Newport and Westerly, when the latter was only a colony branch of the former, there sprang up a "Union and Communion" among the churches, which, without written constitution or formal organization, continued for a hundred and five years. In 1705, the church at Piscataway, Province of New Jersey, was admitted into this "Christian Union and Communion." Subsequently other churches joined the Union. The Westerly-Hopkinton church, from its location, its numerical strength, the mental and business, as well as religious vigor, of its membership, became from the first, and more and more as the years went by, the controlling power in this Union. To many she was the "Mother Church," they having swarmed out from her as bees from a parent hive; and the "home gathering" that took place at her Yearly Meetings and General Communion was the great religious event of the year. The Yearly Church Meeting lost its local character, and, occurring the day, before the General Communion, it came to be "considered not to be a day for common church business, or discipline," but a day of preparation for the Communion, and "set apart for conversing with distant elders and brethren, and receiving letters and information from our sister churches." The correspondence that thus sprang up is full of Christian love and fellowship, exhortations to faithful, earnest living, full of questions of doctrine and of practice.

The annual gatherings sprang from, and were continued because of, the felt necessity “for brethren to meet together, to stir up one another, and likewise, to commune together in order to provoke one another to Christian love and unity, that the weak may become strong, that God might have glory, and our souls have peace.”

The culminating interest, to which everything else was made subservient, was the Great or General Communion. The meeting on the day before was a preparation for it. Whether the meeting was to continue on the day following was frequently dependent on the spirit born of the Communion. Thus the Communion was the central and living Union, with its “stirring memories,” of a hundred years.

Statistical Reports.

In 1794, the Yearly Meeting adopted a plan for securing ampler statistical returns from the churches in the Union, with an increase of messengers. In 1799, the feeling that a more organic character for the Yearly Meeting was needed, took form in the appointment of a committee of ten, with Elder Wm. Bliss as chairman, to draft “some general rules to be adopted among the sister churches in fellowship with us.” For some unexplained reason this committee never reported. The Hopkinton yearly letter says: “Brethren, we would inform you that a committee was appointed to consult upon, and draw up some constitutional rules for the consideration of the several churches in fellowship; but for some reason it was omitted for the present.”

Missionary Work.

In the meantime, in 1795, an evangelist was commissioned by the “Mother Church,” as follows:

“Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island,
“March, ye 27, 1795.

“The Sabbatarian Church of Christ in said Hopkinton and Westerly present, in Church Meeting assembled, to our beloved brethren and sisters of the same faith and order of the gospel at Unadilla, unto whom we send our Christian salutation, wishing that abundance of grace, mercy, and truth, may be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

“Dear brethren, whereas a number of you, a part of our community, are situated near together, at such a great distance from us that we and you are not privileged to enjoy gospel privileges together, we therefore, recommend to you and exhort you to hold fast your profession of faith, and endeavor to build one another up in the truth, and maintain the cause of true religion among you, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

“Whereas, our beloved and Reverend Brother, Henry Clarke, whom we hold in reputation among us as a preacher of righteousness, who hath been legally ordained as an Evangelist Elder, authorized to administer all the ordinances of the gospel where he may be called in our Sabbatarian Communion, and who is about to move his situation from us to settle amongst you, who we hope you will gladly receive in the Lord, and hold such an one in reputation amongst you. We sincerely recommend to him and to you, brethren and sisters, to unite in

setting up and maintaining religious worship and communion amongst you, and may the kind Lord direct and succeed the administration for his own declarative glory, and your mutual edification and comfort. And if so that the Lord should move upon the hearts of any by his grace that they should manifest their sincere repentance and faith in Christ, agreeable to the laws of God and the principles contained in the gospel of Christ, and desire to follow him in the ordinances of the gospel and join the church, if such give the Elder and you brethren in that place satisfaction, so as you receive them to your fellowship, and pass under the ordinances of baptism and laying on of hands, we, in such case, approbate your receiving them into your fellowship and communion. And, on your recommending them to us in Christian character, we shall receive such into our fellowship and communion.

“Dear brethren, we desire your welfare that ye stand fast in the truth, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

“Signed per order and in behalf of the Church.

“JOHN BURDICK, *Elder.*”

In this beginning of commissioned evangelistic or missionary work in the denomination, the germ from which have sprung the Conference and all our missionary enterprises, the beautiful gospel principle prevailed of recognizing and treating these distant ones as a part of the church, and of baptizing the new converts, not out into the world, but into the church fellowship and communion. Whatever the evangelist and these brethren did, was done for and as by the church. This letter, in its essentials, is worthy of careful study and imitation. This evangelism was so prospered that this Unadilla branch of the Hopkinton church was constituted the Brookfield church, in 1797. This evangelism was likewise to continue to grow and bear fruit.

In 1800, this Church, in its annual letter, wrote:

“We apprehend that in case there was a more extensive plan of Yearly Meeting or Association, and proper preachers to visit the different branches of our churches at stated times, and regular discipline kept up among our order, it would, with the blessing of God, greatly promote the cause we profess, and be comforting to many souls. But in order thereto, there must of necessity be a more liberal and equal contribution among the brethren, for who goes to warfare at his own charges?

“Perhaps the main, if not the only, cause of our profession being so unpopular, so much despised, and, in some places, persecuted, is for want of our exertion in the cause. If we have truth on our side, why should worldly considerations or diffidence prevent our propagating it to the honor of Christianity and the good of souls? Beloved, think not that we make these observations only for you. We need to take a double share to ourselves; but as you have begun, and do abound in knowledge, utterance, and, we trust, in all other gifts and graces of the Spirit, and are favored in having able preachers among you, may you go on and try the experiment and be a worthy example for the other churches to follow.”

In the above are to be seen the embryonic forms, not only of the Conference, but of the Missionary and Tract Societies as well. This suggestion met with no response from the Yearly Meeting of this year.

In 1801, the Church renews the subject as follows:

“Dear brethren, we have had some conversation here on the subject of establishing a circuit or stated time for some elder or preacher of our order to visit the destitute churches and branches of churches which are remote from their brethren, and encourage them in keeping up meetings on the Sabbath, and form societies where circumstances will admit. Our Reverend Elder will more fully inform you of our plan. We conceive such an institution might, with the blessing of God, promote the cause we profess. As it will necessarily make expense we feel willing to contribute therefore, as we are able in proportion to our numbers. We wish your advice and assistance on this subject, and may the kind Lord be with you at your General Meeting, and assist you in your deliberations for the advancement of his cause and the good of souls.”

Union, Communion, and Evangelism.

The Yearly Meeting of the Union met at Hopkinton, September 11th, 1801, Eld. John Burdick presiding, probably in ex-officio capacity, as pastor of the church; Joseph Potter, clerk. “Present, about sixty brethren and twelve sisters.” During the progress of the meeting, Eld. Henry Clarke, pastor and messenger of the Brookfield church, brought forward a proposition “for the several churches in our Union to unite in an institution for propagating our religion in the different parts of the United States, by sending out from the various churches in said Union missionaries, on the expense of the several churches who may fall in with the proposition.” After the deliberation, the proposition was entered upon, and the following circular, prepared by Elders Henry Clarke and Jabez Beebe, by appointment of the meeting, was, after being approved by said meeting, sent forth as the voice and exponent of the new or rather modified organization, for the time being, its sufficient Constitution and “Code of Procedure.” More elaborate articles and rules were, from time to time, added as experience showed their utility or necessity.

General Conference
THE UNION MERGED IN THE CONFERENCE—
FIRST ANNUAL SESSION 1801.

Circular Letter.

“The Sabbatarian Baptists, in their General Conference assembled, at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island, September 11th, in the year of our Lord 1801, unto all the churches and branches of churches of the same faith and order of gospel with the States of America, and unto all people who serve the Lord and walk in the commandments of God, and keep the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

“Beloved brethren, we having received the kind letters from various churches in our fellowship, are bound by the love of God and the law of gratitude, to give thanks to God for the common salvation he has provided for us all, and for civil and religious liberty, and for the day and means of grace and hopes of glory through our Lord Jesus Christ, and may we all make such use of his benefits and graces freely given us, in the States of America, and unto all people who serve the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, which makes us happy here and in good hopes of perfect and eternal felicity in the world to come.

“Through the mercy of a kind God we are favored with as large information respecting the state and standing of the churches of our order as at any time heretofore, a brief statement of which we here present you:

“The Church at New Port, Wm. Bliss, pastor. About sixty members.

“At Hopkinton, John Burdick, pastor, and Abram Coon, evangelist. About six hundred and twenty members.

“At New London, David Rogers, pastor, and Jabez Beebe, Jr., evangelist. About twenty-two members.

“At Bristol, Amos Burdick and Amos Stillman, teachers, About forty members.

“At Petersburgh, Asa Coon and Nathan Rogers, elders. About one hundred and fifty members.

“At Brookfield, Henry Clarke, pastor. Fifty-four members.

“At Piscataway, Henry Lafferty, pastor. About eighty-five members.

“At Cohansey, Nathan Ayers and Jonathan Jerman, elder. A large number, but in a broken state of fellowship. Our information of them not agreeable nor accurate.

“No report from Stow nor Salem.

“In all, present living members of our order in good fellowship and within our knowledge, about one thousand and thirty-one members. And although our numbers are small, when compared with some other sects, yet as we have the commandments of God for our guide, why should we be dismayed? There seems to be too much luke-warmness apparent among our churches; and want of zeal and charity, and in order to strengthen the things that remain,

and to be builded up in the most holy faith, and to keep ourselves in the love of God, let us be instant in prayer, watchful and faithful in our practice, relying on the mercy of God through Christ for our comfort, and obedient to his Word for our confidence, for we shall have no cause of shame, if we have due respect to all his commandments.

“To affect so good an end and to keep order in the house or church of God, let every member have a home, or be under the watch and care of faithful brethren, and not scattered in the wide world where no church can see them walk, or discipline them. Let them be careful to keep God’s holy Sabbath, and join in social worship, stately; likewise faithful in private duties. If but two or three meet in Christ’s name, he is there; and if there is no preaching gift, read and sing and pray and exhort one another.

“Believing that the means of grace are to be used, we propose, by God’s permission, to send out some missionaries or traveling preachers to visit the destitute churches and branches of churches in our Communion, to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances generally, where duty may call; to assist in forming societies and churches, and to help restore order and fellowship among us.

“It is expected that all the churches in our Communion will send letters or messengers, or both, to our next Yearly Meeting, to be held at Hopkinton, the second Sabbath in September, 1802, with a statement of the condition of the churches, with their liberality toward defraying the charges of the missionaries. Such messengers in General Conference convened are to direct who is to go forth to preach, as above stated, and what allowance they shall have, and to consider, generally, what may be most for the up building of the cause of God in our land. As purity of heart and morality of life constitute our chief happiness, and as we are all but stewards of the manifold grace of God, let us give unto all their due, and not be weary in well doing, for we shall reap in due time if we faint not. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

“Signed per order and in behalf of the General Conference.

“JOHN BURDICK, *President.*

“JOSEPH POTTER, *Clerk.*”

Union, Communion, and Evangelism.

This attempt of the little band of Sabbatarian Baptists to engraft evangelism upon its “Union and Communion” was something unique, and has thus remained. The Christian world was just beginning to move in missionary enterprises. For a hundred and fifty years, there had been, from time to time, societies organized with missionary aims. A few years previous to the organization of the General Conference, several new societies had sprung into existence, and eight years after its organization, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was instituted. In all these efforts, however, the promoters of missions went outside of the church for their organized effort. The Sabbatarian Baptists, ever, careful to follow the gospel methods in all things, sought, likewise, to follow these methods in their missionary enterprises. They, therefore, attempted to develop their “Union and Communion” into a missionary organization. Even this apparently gospel mode of sending out missionaries met with a very pronounced opposition, as making missionaries man-sent instead of Christ-sent. This conscientious difference of views crippled the effort for years; yet, through it all, though the spirit of evangelism was baffled and checked and held back, like vegetation in a spring

full of east winds, there was manifested the most admirable Christian charity and mutual forbearance. No unchristian word or feeling appears in all the correspondence on the subject.

General Conference
SECOND ANNUAL SESSION, 1802

The second session of the General Conference was organized by the appointment of Abraham Coon, Moderator, and Joseph Potter, Clerk. "Present, about seventy brethren and eight sisters." The business portion of the session was largely taken up with receiving and acting upon the letters from the various churches of the Union.

*Responses of the Churches to the Conference
Circular of 1801*

Newport made response, by messenger, that "they had taken the action of the previous Conference into consideration," and had raised by contribution "twenty dollars and sixty-nine cents, to be appropriated to the aforesaid use, if the churches in fellowship generally, fall in with and adopt said resolution." Newport thus placed herself at the head of this missionary enterprise, not only approving, but acting, raising the first funds for its furtherance; these funds, however, lying unused, unappropriated, for the lack of the conditions on which they were contributed being fulfilled.

Brookfield replied:

"The Sabbatarian Baptist Church of Christ at Brookfield, county of Chenango, and State of New York, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Henry Clarke, unto their elder sister Church of the same faith and order of gospel at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island, and the elders, messengers and brethren in General Conference convened.

"Dearly beloved elders, deacons, brethren, and sisters, when our thoughts recollect the blessed seasons many of us have been privileged with you at Hopkinton; that mutual love and the consolations of God's blessed Spirit shed abroad. in the hearts of his people, and hearing the truths of the gospel proclaimed by his servants, our respected elders, it seems as if we wanted to be with you continually.

"Again, when we recollect that God, in his all-wise providence, has called home, of late, some of his ambassadors from his earthly kingdom, even three eminent preachers of the gospel, one after another, and bereaved two sister churches of their pastors, it seems that we are all called to mourning, and have reason to fear that our way does not fully please the Lord. We feel to sympathize with you in the loss, as we held a goodly part in those godly men. Alas, by whom shall God's people be fed with the sincere milk of the Word? Who will arise to fill the gap? Our breach seems truly great, and no arm of flesh can make up our loss; but God is able. Shall we not then cry unto the Lord of the harvest for more laborers?

"As to the propositions in last year's Circular Letter, we heartily approve of them, and feel a willingness to contribute toward the expense of some traveling preachers; but we heard from Petersburg that it was expected, by some, that the idea of sending any out this year must be postponed on account of the death of our elders, and, therefore, we have not sent forward our donation. But, although we are somewhat in want of suitable gifts for that work, possibly Eld. Beebe, or some other evangelist, may attend to traveling this Fall, and make some experiment and see how the case may look against another year. The expense of one can be no great affair for all our churches to bear, and, as the idea of equal liberty seems to run high, and we hear of great reformation in many parts, probably our exertions, if but small, may have effect and be blessed of God for the good of souls. If we were as zealous to propagate what we esteem an essential truth of the gospel as some other denominations are what we call error, we should

not be still at so favorable an opportunity. But we submit the matter to your collected wisdom and prudence, hoping God Almighty will bless you and direct your deliberations on the subject.

“We beg leave to observe, as our judgment, that the General Conference need not be attended at but one place, in a year, and that it should be appointed at some central place, or else should take turns around among our different churches. It need not interfere with mutual visiting, or any yearly meeting of any church in our order. Let it be attended regularly, each church represented, and consult for the mutual good of the whole—to consult, and finally determine cases of the first magnitude; as, where any church has nearly equal division among its members; where there is a difficulty between a church and its elder; also, generally, such cases as cannot be healed in a church. Let all these, and like cases, apply to the General Conference for decisions. The General Conference should, likewise, direct supplies for destitute churches, as, also, appoint and direct such itinerant preachers as is thought requisite.”

The Waterford Church replied:

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Church of Waterford and places adjacent, in the State of Connecticut, professing the faith of Jesus, to our well-beloved brethren of the same faith and order of all the churches in the United States, met in General Conference, by their Elders and messengers, at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island, to be holden September 10, 1802, sendeth greeting:

“Beloved, as to the matter talked on at our last General Conference, and recommended in its Circular Letter, respecting sending missionaries to the scattered brethren, we heartily acquiesce in the good motion and are willing to bear our proportion of the expense of so laudable a work, and may God render it beneficial to the general good.”

Cohansey (Shiloh) made no reply to the Conference Circular. Its letter is full of rejoicing over the healing of the “broken fellowship” referred to in the previous Circular, and the incoming of many new converts.”

Piscataway gave the following:

“Dear brethren, we, in conference, perused your Circular, and do not join with you to send traveling preachers out, as was proposed, therefore, the liberality toward defraying the charges, we hold back for reasons not rendered. We would not have you think that we are against having the gospel preached in the purity of it, hoping you may be directed to such measures as may be for the up building of the law of God in the land. By this short account you may understand our meaning, with the verbal information that our Reverend Elder will be able to give you, if spared to arrive, although somewhat lame at present.”

Petersburgh (Berlin) replied:

“The Sabbatarian Church, as we hope, of Christ, in Peters-burgh and places adjacent, unto our mother Church in Hopkinton and places adjacent, professing the same faith with us, with the bishops and deacons, unto whom we wish that an abundance of grace and peace be multiplied from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory through all the churches forever and ever. Amen.”

“Dearly beloved, father and mothers in the best of bonds, it is through much weakness and fear that we write unto you at this time; but, remembering the covenant obligations we are

under toward you and the sacred tie we feel toward the brotherhood, we are encouraged to address you in these salutations, and the God of all grace and consolation direct us.

“We hear of some of your losses and trials, and, especially your loss in your old pastor and much loved Elder, the Rev. John Burdick; but it seems to us that this consideration must be for your consolation, you have had his works of patience and labors of love until he was brought to a good old age. It seems that he has gone home like a shock of corn fully ripe. May we not sympathize with you, for the Lord in his great wisdom, has visited us in removing our under-shepherds, Elder William Coon and Elder Asa Coon. The Lord has visited us, as a people, of late, by calling home three of his watchmen, and to us they appeared to be main pillars in our churches. Ought not we all, and especially our watchmen, take heed to these striking providences?

“Dear brethren, concerning the things you wrote to us about in your last Circular Letter, that is respecting your determination of sending out traveling missionaries and of our liberality in supporting them, we hardly know how to answer you acceptably in the matter, for we consider ourselves, at best, but babes in Christ, and have need to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat; yet we think that the manner and form that you talked of sending the missionaries, was a little out of the line and form of the primitive custom of Christ sending his missionaries; for, saith the dear Saviour, ‘Go your ways, Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.’ To be short, dear brethren, and give you a hint of our ideas, we believe that that work belongs to the Lord, therefore, we first want to find a man or men that have reason to believe that he or they have got a mission from the Lord for this work. Secondly, we want that he or they should prove their mission or missions, by taking up their cross; putting their trust in him who called him or them; and let them speak in honor of their Master, and for the good of souls, and we believe that the Lord will support them. And thirdly, we believe that it is our duty to hand out to all such like missionaries, for their support, as the Lord shall give us strength and ability.”

Those letters from which the above extracts are taken, favorable to the missionary movement, were all addressed to the General Conference; those unfavorable were addressed to the Hopkinton Church. Whether this was intentional or unintentional, merely accidental, there is nothing to show.

A special committee of ten was appointed to report upon the subject of sending out messengers or missionaries throughout our “Union,” also upon times and places of holding the sessions of the General Conference: Hopkinton,—Elder Abraham Coon, Deacon Joseph Stillman; Newport,—Deacon Clark Burdick and Caleb Maxson; Waterford,—Elder Jabez Beebe and Deacon Ephraim Rogers; Cohansey,—David Ayars and Jacob Ayars; Petersburg,—William Satterlee and Charles Green.

Report of the Committee.

“Report of Committee appointed by the General Conference of the Sabbatarian Churches, by their messengers, holden at Hopkinton, September 10, 1802, concerning certain matters referred to its consideration:

“First, Concerning sending forth missionaries to preach the gospel in certain places contemplated by said Conference, we, the said Committee, propose as follows, as a mode of sending missionaries out: That said Conference appoint and send forth suitable persons to preach as aforesaid, and said preachers make a faithful report of their labors and travels, and

expenses to our next General Conference, wherever it shall be held. And said Conference allow said preachers a suitable compensation for their trouble, to be raised by contributions from said churches, and lodged with a treasurer appointed by said Conference, and drawn forth from said treasurer as the exigencies of the case require.

“Secondly, With regard to the circulation of our annual Conference, we recommend that it circulate to three places, viz.: First at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island; second at Petersburg, State of New York; third at Piscataway, State of New Jersey. At all the aforesaid places, on the fourth Sabbath in September, at one of those places each year.

“Signed by order and in behalf of said Committee,

“JABEZ BEEBE, *Committee Clerk.*

“ELDER ABRAHAM COON,

“DEACON JOSEPH STILLMAN,

“ELDER LAFFERTY.

“N. B.—It is recommended by our General Conference that the report above be transmitted to the different churches in the Union for their approbation.

“ABRAHAM COON, *Moderator.*”

Circular Letter.

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Churches, by the Elders and messengers, at their General Conference, holden at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island, September 10, 1802, to our well-beloved brethren of the same faith and order throughout the United States of America, scattered up and down in various parts thereof, which hold the faith of Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, and keep the commands of God the Father, to whom be glory and praise, throughout all ages and in all places. Amen.

“To all people to whom these presents shall come, greeting:

“Grace be unto you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Beloved brethren and friends, when we consider the common salvation provided of God for us, kept in store in the hand of His Son Jesus Christ, ready to be given to all them who love our Lord in the truth of the gospel, and the means put into our hands whereby to obtain the same, and the solemn warnings given us in the sacred Scriptures not to receive the grace of God in vain, how highly does it concern us, each and every one, to summons up the various powers that God has possessed us with, and yield our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service, seeing that God has done all on his part, especially in sending his Son Jesus Christ into the world, who himself hath loved us and doth wash us from our sins in his own blood. Brethren, seeing that the great Head of the Church and Captain of our salvation, has condescended to set us a glorious example in subjecting himself to the divine commands of his and our God, let us work by the light of his example, and see that no abatement be made, on our part, in holy and fervent endeavors, to keep all God’s commands, that we may not be put to shame at the glorious appearing of Jesus.

“As the observance of God’s Seventh-day Sabbath is greatly neglected by the generality of men, may our zeal for God’s honor, and the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, be made known to all men by a faithful observation of it; and, although we are but few in numbers, we are forbidden the fear of failing of the inheritance promised if we follow his example, seeing it is God’s good will to give us the kingdom. Let us especially labor to possess a spirit of

forbearance toward our fellow brethren, and have fervent charity, which is the band of perfectness. Let no speculative matters of judgment mar our Union. We are but men, and see but as through a glass darkly. Let us look forward towards the glorious period when we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known. To this end let us unite in the solemn worship of God, stately, on his Holy Sabbath, and if we have no preaching gifts, let the word of exhortation and prayer be zealously attended to, and by no means neglected. Let us be careful, each one, to put ourselves under the watch and care of those brethren and sisters that are, in providence situated nearest us. Christ's church is but one, and where any have so done, let them give notice to the churches where they last belonged, that we may be able to make a proper estimate of our members.

“Brethren, we still keep in view the design, if God permit, of sending out preachers to visit the scattered brethren who are destitute of preaching gifts; and we recommend to the several churches in the Union to forward the purpose by showing their liberality towards its support by free contributions, and forwarding the same to men to be appointed by the next Conference to receive it, as treasurers, that it become as to effect the design in view. We have concluded to circulate our Conference to different parts of the Union; consequently we conclude to meet, by our messengers, in General Conference, at Petersburg, state of New York, to be held the fourth Sabbath in September, 1803, and hold our General Conference but in one place in each year. We desire not by this to hinder any Christian visits, or General Meetings, but would exhort all who are disposed to visit, to do it with fervent zeal and in sincerity.

“Brethren, we have great cause to be thankful to you for all your information, by your letters and messengers, concerning your circumstances and travel. We feel refreshed to hear of so general conformity to the rules of the gospel, and to hear of revivals of religion in various quarters. We pray that they may universally prevail, and overspread the Union of our churches, as well as in all other places. Pray, brethren, send messengers to the Conference appointed, or it cannot be held; and send your letters the year ensuing directed to the Annual Sabbatarian Conference, to be held at Petersburg, state of New York, with the account of your circumstances and travel. Pray, brethren, make a zealous point of it, for it appears to this Conference to be important.

“The members of this Conference are as follows, viz.:

“Newport Church—Deacon Clark Burdick, Brother Caleb Maxson.

“Hopkinton Church—Elder Abraham Coon, Deacon Joseph Stillman.

“Cohansey Church—Deacon David Ayars, Brother Evan Davis.

“Piscataway Church—Elder Henry Lafferty.

“Petersburgh Church—Brother William Satterlee, and Brother David Davis.

“Waterford Church—Elder Jabez Beebe, Deacon Ephraim Rogers.

“Some others from several of the above-named churches are also present.

“By these members and letters, sent from the different churches, we have gained the following account of the circumstances and travel of the undersigned churches, viz:

“Newport—Pastor, William Bliss. Forty members.

“Hopkinton—Pastor, Abraham Coon. About six hundred and thirty members.

“Cohansey—Pastor, Nathan Ayars. Added thirty-seven, whole number not given.

“Piscataway—Pastor, Henry Lafferty. About fifty mem

“Petersburgh—Pastor, Nathan Rogers;
preaching gifts, William Satterlee and David Davis. One hundred and eighty members.

“Brookfield—Pastor, Henry Clarke. Sixty-four members.

“Waterford—Pastor, David Rogers. Preacher, Jabez Beebe. Twenty-two members.

“No returns from the Bristol Church.

“And now brethren, as purity of heart and holiness of life constitute our chief happiness, let us purge the old leaven of malice and hypocrisy, and let us love as brethren. Be cautious, kind and tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us. Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and may the God of love and peace be with us all, for Christ’s sake.”

Signed by order and in behalf of the Conference,

“ABRAHAM COON, *Moderator.*

“JOSEPH POTTER, *Clerk.*”

General Conference
THIRD ANNUAL SESSION, 1803

The third Session of the General Conference, held at Petersburg, September 23-27, 1803, was organized by the appointment of Elder Abraham Coon, Moderator, and Joseph Potter, Clerk.

The following extracts from the letters of the churches this year show the spirit animating them.

The letter from the Hopkinton Church is given nearly in full, as a typical representation, in its beautiful spirit and devout faith, of the church letters of that period:

“The Sabbatarian Church of Christ at Westerly, Hopkinton, and places adjacent, in the State of Rhode island, to the elders and brethren from the several churches of our Constitution, in Conference assembled at Petersburg, State of New York, and to the brethren composing the Church at said Petersburg, to whom we send our Christian salutations, praying that grace, mercy, and peace may be multiplied among you abundantly, through the knowledge of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion throughout all the churches. Amen.

“Beloved elders and brethren, when we consider the many blessings and privileges we enjoy from God, the many opportunities put into our hands of reading and meditating on his Word, and of conversing and working together, and the many other comforts we receive from divine goodness, both temporal and spiritual, we acknowledge ourselves laid under the greatest obligation of thanksgiving to his name. And especially at this time, when we have the opportunity of addressing a number as beloveds in the Lord, believers in Christ, and partakers of the heavenly calling, who have met to confer on the great and important things that belong to the Church of Christ.

“We have to lament the declension of religion among us, that we do not experience that love and zeal as in times past, when we were illuminated by the quickening influence of the divine Spirit; yet we believe if we improve the means of grace and the privileges afforded us aright, we shall at last, come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him who hath loved us; and we would endeavor, according to the measure of grace bestowed on us, to walk worthy of that vocation to which we are called, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. We desire, brethren, that you may be abundantly blessed with the incomes of God’s grace and of the Holy Spirit, to guide you in the way that leads to life, that you may experience much of his love shed abroad in your hearts, to quicken your zeal for his cause, and to support and strengthen you at all times, and especially in every time of need, when affliction and adversity prevail. And may we all bear our desires to the throne of God’s grace for aid and direction in this, our trying day, while error, superstition, and inequity is prevailing, and the love of many waxing cold, and the blessed truths of the gospel and the kingdom of the Redeemer is set at naught by many. May we endeavor to maintain the truths of the gospel, and have our conversation in the world as becomes the children of God.

“Brethren, we hope that you who have assembled, from different parts of our land, in Conference, to confer on things that pertain to the Church of God and the good of society, and adopt measures respecting these interests, may be directed aright, that God may have the glory, and our souls the comfort. As fellow helpers may we pursue together the purpose

intended by our meeting, and thus build up the cause of true religion, propagate truth and suppress error, cherish love and unity, and every other Christian virtue, promulgate the everlasting gospel of Christ, that peace, pardon and reconciliation with God, through the merits of a Saviour may be displayed to the world, that the Churches of Christ may be enlarged, and the disciples multiplied. To that end may the Lord of the harvest send forth faithful ministers and laborers into his vineyard, whose endeavors shall be crowned with his blessing.

“Brethren, may our united desires be raised to God, our heavenly Father, that he would graciously bestow of his grace on the Churches of Christ, that they may be preserved from all error and delusion incident to this frail state of nature, and be firmly established in the most holy faith, founded upon the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, the rock of ages which never shall be moved. May we be enabled, brethren, to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his. Let us raise a tribute of thanksgiving to him for that manifestation of love and good will towards a guilty world, in that glorious plan of salvation revealed to us in the volume of sacred truth, and that he has been pleased to reveal himself to us by the influence of his Spirit operating on our hearts, by which we are enabled to do his will, being made willing, as we humbly trust, according to the measure of grace bestowed on us, to conform our lives thereto; whereby we have reason to hope in the mercy of God; and that he has not left himself without witness, but has been pleased to call on the children of men from the earliest ages of the world down to the present time, and we have faith to believe, will so continue, till he shall see fit, in his infinite wisdom, to call his church militant on earth to join the church triumphant in glory.

“Brethren, we beseech you, pray for us that our faith fail not; that we may be blessed with a growth in grace and the knowledge of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; that we may be kept from delusion, and from him who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And we pray God may visit you, brethren, in the several situations and circumstances in which he has placed you, in the churches, neighborhoods, and families where you respectively belong, with all needed grace; that the blessings of God may attend you in all your labor and endeavors which are consistent with his will. And we would, brethren, returning thanksgiving for the unmerited favors we have received from an indulgent Providence, raise our united desires to God that he would once more visit us with his grace and the outpouring of his Spirit, for the renewal of our spirits and daily additions to the Churches of Christ, of such as shall be saved; and that it may be the dawning of that day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the deeps, when the glorious Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healings in his wings. May those clouds of darkness and indifference which so often overshadow us, be dispelled, and our understandings enlightened; and may we, at last, be enabled to finish our course with joy, rejoicing in hope of a glorious resurrection to immortality and eternal life.

“Brethren, we would inform you that the Sixth-day before the last Sabbath in August being a day of church meeting, a large number of brethren and sisters convened, and unanimously called Eld. Abram Coon to take the pastoral charge over us. We have not yet received his answer. We likewise called brethren Elisha and Matthew Stillman to the work of the ministry, as evangelists, to receive ordination at some future season.

“Signed per order and in behalf of the Church,

“JOSEPH POTTER, *Church Clerk.*

“*Westerly, August 28, 1803.*”

This Church has made provision for sending out missionaries.

The Cohansey (Shiloh) Church respond that “with respect to your views of sending out missionaries, we have, towards supporting it, raised a small donation, at your request, which, if no messengers should come, will be at your service when you call for it, in the hands of our deacon, David Ayars. The brethren present requested assistance from sister churches of preaching gifts.”

Brookfield responded that “as to the matter of sending out traveling preachers, our mind accords with your proposition, at last Conference; but your not giving particular directions respecting the contribution for that purpose and being ignorant of what method our sister churches have pursued on the subject, together with our present embarrassment in building our meeting house, have prevented our sending forward anything for the support of that business.” To its “Elder Sister Church at Hopkinton,” it wrote:

“We cordially join with the proposition of the General Conference about sending out preachers of our order, and hope it will not be given up on account of our want of temporal supplies to defray the expense; for we are fully able, as a sect, would we but unite and equally bear the cost. Perhaps what would be each member’s part might be earned in half a day; and where is the poorest member that does not spend more than half! a day in a year for vain purposes or their own amusements. If we love the Lord and his cause as well as we do ourselves—and we should much better——can we not afford something to forward the cause? Our new country and our building a meetinghouse, together with the scarcity of cash, make it rather trying this year; but we hope to do something. As you are so numerous, and abound in wealth as well as graces, we hope you will set a good example in the case for the other churches. Perhaps our churches in general are as wealthy as other sects, and we think truth defends our tenets; and shall we be more backward to propagate truth than other sects are error? Let it not be so said of Sabbatarians; but, inasmuch as we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord, let us provoke one another, only to love and good works. The providence of God, in the signs of the times, together with his Word, seems to tell us that time draws towards a close, and that we have no continuing city. Oh~ that we may in earnest seek One to come, and lay up treasures in the heavens while the day lasts, seeing the night cometh wherein no one can work.”

The Waterford Church receded from its advanced position of the previous year. It now writes:

“As to missionary matters, we are really doubtful whether we, as a people, are ripe for such a business, considering the variety of sentiment among us; for no church or people whatever, are willing to promote that which they do not believe to be according to gospel. But we desire that the elders and brethren may visit and preach from place to place, not for filthy lucre’s sake, but of a ready mind. And we really believe that God will bless and prosper such preachers, and that they and theirs will be provided for. And now, dear brethren, let love and unity abound more and more, and may our desires be to God for the welfare of Zion. We are few in numbers, but we are capable, by the grace of God, of increase.”

“The Church at Petersburg,” as the minutes state, “not agreeing to the proposition of our last Conference respecting sending missionaries, have not made any return or statement. The Conference, by its Moderator, called on the above Church to act with us in council, and some of the brethren proposed to omit or defer acting till a fuller meeting of the brethren.”

The Newport Church “has made provision for sending out missionaries.”

The Piscataway Church “has made no provision for sending out missionaries, but seems to be free to contribute its part.”

Annual Conference.

“The subject of our Annual Conference being taken up, it is voted that the times stated for holding them, fixed at our last Conference holden at Hopkinton, be receded from, and that the times and places for holding Conferences be appointed in Conference for the year ensuing.

“The brethren from Piscataway request that the next General Conference might be holden at the aforesaid place, agreed to be thus holden, the Sixth-day before the third Sabbath in October, 1804, at ten o’clock forenoon.

“Whereas some of the churches in the Union are not fully agreed in the rules entered into at our last Conference, holden at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island, it is thought expedient to propose one different, in some respects, from the former, and voted that a committee be appointed to make a draught of some rules for proceeding in future Conferences.”

Committee: Elder Henry Clarke, Brookfield, State of New York; Deacon Daniel Babcock, Hopkinton, Rhode Island; Deacon Abram Dunham, Piscataway, East Jersey; Caleb Sheppard and Jacob West, Cohansey, West Jersey.

Report of Committee.

“We, the subscribers, being appointed a committee to consider a resolution of last year’s Conference respecting the circulation of the Conference., and to explain an idea of the powers and duties of said Conference, beg leave to report the following bill:

“An explanation of the duties and powers of the Sabbatarian General Conference, viz.:

“*First.* Said Conference is to be composed of messengers from all the churches in fellowship, if the said churches see fit to send them; but no church shall be considered as breaking fellowship for neglecting to send such messengers. And each church may send as many members or messengers as it sees fit, who shall have equal right to sit in said Conference, to speak and debate on any subject before them; but when any matter is to be determined by vote, the votes are to be taken in proportion to the number of the members of the church they represent; yet no church shall have a right to more than four votes and each church having sixty members shall have a right to two votes, and any church under sixty, one vote.

“*Second.* It is considered the duty to consult and to recommend to the several churches the best rules or methods of proceeding in different cases of discipline; such as may arise from the scattered situation of their members, or difficulties that may arise between different churches; to make arrangements for supplying or visiting such churches as may be destitute of an ordained minister, that all the churches, at stated times, may have the privilege of preaching and the ordinances of the gospel; and, in case circumstances admit, to send out traveling preachers to visit remnants of churches, and to organize or gather new churches for the promotion and welfare of the cause of God and the good of souls.

“*Third.* The Conference is to appoint its own Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, or Treasurers, to determine its rules of proceeding while sitting, to sit once annually at such places as it may judge most consistent, and adjourn as it may see fit; but shall have no power to levy

contributions or collect any moneys or other supplies from the churches, for any use whatever, nor to interfere in the discipline of any church. Each church is to exercise every right and power the gospel gives it as fully and freely as if no Conference were held. Whatever may be freely contributed by any church or churches for any purpose, and received into the treasury of the Conference, is to be considered to 'be at the disposal of the said Conference, to be applied to the use contributed for, and no moneys so contributed are to be applied to defray the expense of any member of said Conference merely for attending said Conference, except the clerk of said Conference, as all the expense of said Conference may be at, is considered to be borne by said members, or the church they represent; but it may be expected that the church where said Conference sits will see, by its deacons, or otherwise, that the members of said Conference are provided with places to lodge and victuals whilst there.

“Fourth. All proceedings of said Conference, of a public nature, shall be transacted in a public order, and a journal or minutes kept of all its transactions, whilst sitting, for the inspection of the churches or any members thereof, who shall have a copy thereof when convenient. This bill shall be considered a part of our rules or constitution, but is subject to such alterations, from time to time, as the Conference may judge expedient; nevertheless, when material alteration is thought necessary, it must be previously notified by the Conference to the churches; or, any church or churches, wishing an alteration, they shall make it known to the Conference while sitting.

“HENRY CLARKE,
“ABRAM DUNHAM,
“DANIEL BABCOCK,
“CALEB SHEPPARD,
“JACOB WEST.
“Committee.

“Jacob West and Zacheus Maxson were appointed to write the Circular Letter, which was presented and approved by Conference.”

Circular Letter—Extracts.

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Churches by their elders and messenger, at their General Conference, at Petersburg, State of New York, September 26th, 1803.”

The main body of the letter is a verbatim transcript of the one for the Second Conference. The following are the differing points:

“Brethren, with respect to our views of sending out missionaries, as it has not met with general approbation, and there has been but little support sent forward, we shall postpone it until our next Conference, to be holden at Piscataway, in the State of New Jersey, on the third Sabbath in October, A. D., 1804, to which place we request our brethren to send their messengers and letters to the General Conference; but would exhort all who are disposed to visit, to do it with fervent zeal for the unity of brethren.”

“N. B.—From the information received, we have gained the following intelligence:

“Church at Hopkinton—Elder, Abraham Coon; Deacons, Joseph Stillman, Daniel Babcock, Zacheus Maxson; Clerk, Joseph Potter. Members, six hundred and five.

“Newport Church—Letter, no messenger. William Bliss, Pastor; Arnold Bliss, Evangelist; Clark Burdick, Deacon. Members, forty-nine.

“Cohansey Church—Letter with messengers: Ezekiel Thomas, Caleb Sheppard, Samuel Davis and Jacob West. Nathan Ayars,. Evangelist; David Ayars, Deacon. Members, eighty.

“Waterford Church—Letter, no messenger. David Rogers, Elder; Jabez Beebe, Evangelist; two deacons. Members, twenty-six.

“Piscataway Church—Letter and messengers: Henry Lafferty, Abraham Dunham, Joshua Ayars. Henry Lafferty, Elder; Abraham Dunham and David Dunn, Deacons. Members, eighty.

“Bristol Church—Letter, no messenger. Members, thirty-two.

“Brookfield Church—Letter and messengers: Henry Clarke, Joshua Coon. Henry Clarke, Elder. Members, sixty-eight.

“Petersburgh Church—Nathan Rogers, Elder; William Satterlee, David Davis, Preaching gifts; William Greenman, John Green, Jabez Burdick, James Greenman, Deacons; Stephen Maxson, Clerk. Members, one hundred and seventy-nine.

“Signed per order and in behalf of General Conference. Done at Petersburgh, State of New York, this 27th day of September, A. D., 1803.

“**JOSEPH POTTER**, *Conference Clerk.*”

General Conference
Union, Communion, and Evangelism.
FOURTH ANNUAL SESSION, 1804.

“At a General Conference of the Sabbatarian Churches in fellowship, at Piscataway, State of New Jersey, assembled this 19th day of October, A. D. 1804, voted that Elder Abram Coon serve as Moderator, and Joseph Potter, as Clerk, for said Conference.”

Extracts from Church Letters.

“The Sabbatarian Church of Christ at Hopkinton, Westerly, etc.

“Dearly Beloved, great and manifold are the blessings which Almighty God, the Father of all mercies, hath exhibited to us, the people of America, not only in the almost miraculous settlement of our forefathers here among cruel and barbarous savages and their wonderful deliverance and protection from every surrounding foe; extending their borders and prosperous possessions from east to west, from north to south, and finally planting them an independent nation; securing to us their children, the rights of man and the liberty of conscience; establishing a permanent peace with prosperity and plenty throughout our borders, which call for all possible praise, gratitude, and thanksgiving; but when we consider that in addition to all this, we are blessed with the preaching and promulgation of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, that inestimable treasure which excelleth all the riches of the earth, because the fruit thereof extendeth itself, not only to the time present, in this transitory world, but directeth and disposeth man unto that eternal happiness which is beyond the grave, what return of gratitude can we make to so good and gracious a benefactor? Surely nothing less than to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

“Dear elders and brothers, who have the privilege of assembling in General Conference:

“*First.* We pray God to bless you abundantly with the increase of his grace and spirit, that you may not only be mutual sharers of the love of God shed abroad in the soul, but that you may be likewise, prepared to consider of the affairs of the Sabbatarian order, and be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, that whatsoever you do may be for the glory of God and the good of his people. Secondly. *We* entreat you to guard against all unhappy debates and everything that tends to strife, and be careful to walk softly, and do nothing to wound the weak and feeble lambs of Christ who cannot endure much, and be not offended with those who cannot see as far and walk as fast as you; for, better it is for the people of God to get along by slow degrees and with united hands, than for the wise and strong to speed their way with hasty strides, and leave the feeble lambs to mourn in the wilderness. Therefore, dear brethren, let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and establish nothing new, although it might be for the better, until the whole be generally agreed thereon, that peace and harmony may be established among ourselves, and we better prepared to spread the truth abroad.

“Let us then, dearly beloved, with the confidence and resolution of men and Christians, join our united forces in maintaining the truth of Christ, and propagating it far and near, carefully laying aside all jealousy and evil surmising, one of another, let each of us ever consider his own weakness, so shall we easily pardon the failings of our brethren; thus we may be prepared, not only to study the necessary rules of discipline, but at all convenient seasons, to advise and assist each other, and especially, at our Yearly Meetings, we may be instrumental

in building up the cause of Christ, not only in receiving and communicating good and friendly advice, but likewise, in joining our united petitions to Almighty God for the gracious continuance of those rights and privileges which we and our forefathers have so long enjoyed, that the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ may shine brighter and brighter, until atheism, idolatry, and superstition vanish before it like dew before the morning sun, and the scales fall from the blinded eyes of those who make light of the commands of God and live in constant neglect of his holy Sabbath. Dear brethren, who knows but that in our united earnest efforts, accompanied by our good example, the blessing of God may fall on the little feeble handful of Sabbath-keepers and their number be increased to a majority in these United States, for God is able to do all things, and has promised that whatsoever we ask in his name, he will do.

“We have to inform you that we are not fully agreed among ourselves respecting the mode of the General Conference, and sending out missionaries; yet we mean to bear with one another and strive to help each other’s minds to bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

“We have appointed as messengers, our beloved, Elder Abram Coon, Deacon Joseph Stillman, Deacon Daniel Babcock, Brother Joseph Potter and Brother Thomas Williams, whom we recommend unto you as faithful brethren and fellow helpers with us.

“The state of our church is as followeth: Elders, Abram Coon and Matthew Stillman; Deacons, Joseph Stillman, Daniel Babcock, Zacheus Maxson; Clerk, Joseph Potter. Members, 607. Of these same, twenty-four are under admonition and dealing, but doubtless, a considerable number of the above have become members of the Petersburg Church.

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that we may be quickened to every Christian duty, to keep the commands of God and faith of Jesus Christ, and finish our course with joy, and share with you some humble part in singing praises to God and the Lamb, for redeeming grace and dying love. And now, we commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Amen.”

“The Seventh-day Sabbath Baptist Church at Cohansey, West Jersey, to our beloved brethren in Christ of the same faith and order, who through the mercy and providence of God, may compose the General Conference, holden at Piscataway, East Jersey, in October, 1804. Beloved brethren and elders, having considered the scattered situation of our professing brethren, the great importance of the prosperity of Zion, and the contrasted effects of union and disunion, we are convinced of the great utility of the General Conference; for we think that the united efforts of messengers from every church will greatly contribute to the stability of our profession, and the spread of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we earnestly pray that God may bless your endeavors and crown them with success through Jesus Christ

“Brethren, we have reason to believe that an approved administrator, would be an useful blessing to our congregations; for some are now waiting for opportunity to be received into church fellowship, and we are trusting and hoping in the Lord, that he will shortly open some way for the prosperity of his cause, and building up of the walls of Zion, that it may grow into an holy temple in the Lord. We still think it necessary to repeat last Fall’s request for a minister, and we trust you will not fail to supply every destitute church and society, as far as your power and opportunity may enable you; for we understand that to be the design of the General Conference, and as you are now tolerably informed of our circumstances, we doubt

not but you will consider us with the most important of your considerations. We should greatly rejoice if some ministering brother would visit us from the Conference this fall, and as Elder Coon has given some of our members some encouragement in this way, we are not without hopes of seeing him come.

“As for our provision for sending out missionaries, we have made none since the last General Conference; but we have that which was contributed last year still in reserve for that purpose, and it may be had at any time when need shall require.

“At our last Conference the following brethren were nominated as messengers to the General Conference, some of whom, we trust, will meet you and bear this letter, viz: Deacon David Ayars, Clerk; Caleb Sheppard, Evan Davis, Samuel Davis, Jacob West and William West.

“For further particulars of our church circumstances and present officers, we state the following, viz: No official minister; ordained evangelist, Nathan Ayars, but declines acting as administrator; Ruling Elders, Joshua Ayars and John Kelley; Deacon, David Ayars; Clerk, David Ayars; Moderators, Evan Davis and Caleb Sheppard. Added one, deceased two, under dealing one, present number seventy-nine.

“Finally, brethren, we pray that you may meet in peace and be of one in accord in your proceedings, and being gathered in the name of Christ, may ye experience his promised spiritual presence to comfort, support, direct and bless your endeavors to the end, that the cause of Christ may be declared, his saints comforted and his kingdom completed in which glorious kingdom and power, we desire to be found, that the glory may be given to God the Father, by him.”

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Church at Brookfield, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Henry Clarke, unto their beloved elders, messengers, and brethren composing the General Conference:

“Respected friends and dear brethren, as our situation is so remote, our settlement somewhat new, and having been building a meeting-house, which straightens our circumstances so much that it is not convenient for us to send messengers, therefore, we take this opportunity of addressing a letter unto you.

“It is with much regret we learn that the churches, professing to be of the same faith and order with us, have not mutually agreed in the method of our Conferences and of sending out preachers. We conceive it of great consequence that a General Meeting or Conference shall get up a Constitution, agreed on, that each church may be well informed in the terms of fellowship in our churches. The report of last Conference, by its committee, we approve of in full, and, if there were added thereto, on the same principles, to make the duties of the Conference and also the duties of the several churches more explicit, it would be well. When we consider the worth of our souls, the cause of God, the freedom of our National Constitution, and the favorable opportunities God, in his good providence, is giving us, we lament that no method has been hit on of sending out preachers of our order. While almost every other sect in religion has its preachers to and fro, teaching the people to break God’s positive command, we, as a people, are, in a manner, silent in respect to our belief on the subject of the Sabbath. Is not our neglect a crime? We would not wish to censure other denominations, but if the Sabbath is held a bar to fellowship, should we not contend earnestly for the faith? So long as God’s moral character is the same, and man an accountable being, it

is of importance to his people to observe his law, and we may be justly despised of God and man, if we do not exert ourselves in the cause of truth. Mere speculative ideas in religion, and especially in mysterious points, as an original sin, personal election, final perseverance, universal salvation, and the like, may be borne with, while those who hold them are really conformed to God's law and gospel, and are not too impetuous; but when a person breaks a known command of God, it is sin, as saith the Apostle; 'For sin is the transgression of the law,' and if we fellowship such, are we not partakers of the crime? We have cause to believe that could a suitable person be sent out to preach, and spread the books written on the Sabbath, it would greatly tend to the cause of truth, for truth beareth away all things, and will stand when our mistaken ideas will fail; for mankind will sometimes hear to reason. Could we find a man of our order, who could, by sound doctrine, both exhort and convince the gainsayers, he might, with the help of God, do much good. We pray God to direct you in all your deliberations for his glory and the good of souls.

"The present state of our church is somewhat more encouraging than last year. We hope God has begun a good work among us. Many seem awakened, and some have come forward to own his flame, and there is quite an appearance of a revival:

"The following, is as correct statement as we can give:

"One Elder and Pastor, two Deacons, deceased four, dismissed three, under dealing four, added five. Total seventy-seven."

The letter from the Church at Petersburg states "disapprobation of the present mode of holding General Conference." Messengers, Deacon James Greenman and William Satterlee.

This Church makes request for the assistance of the Conference, "in ordaining brother William Satterlee." "The subject being taken up it is the opinion of the members present that the request could not be conceded to consistently, therefore it is understood and directed that Conference Clerk write an answer to said church, signifying the same."

The above action reads oddly in the light of history, by which is seen the man, who was thus, at thirty-nine years of age, in the prime of manhood and the full vigor of his powers, refused ordination, because of an impediment in his speech, and the consequent embarrassment especially before strange audiences, approving himself, in after years, one of the most original, apt, and effective preachers the denomination has produced—Bunyan-like in the aptness and beauty of his allegorical illustrations; the coming missionary, for whom they were praying and seeking; the planter and waterer of churches... Does this action go to show that even General Conferences are not infallible, or that they do not infrequently become "circumlocution offices," where all the machinery is invented, arranged, and geared with especial reference and how best not to do?

The church, thus repulsed by the General Conference, applied to the "Mother Church," at Hopkinton for aid. Aid was granted. Elders Abraham Coon and Matthew Stillman, and Deacon Daniel Babcock and Joseph Stillman were sent to aid, and the ordination effected.

Immediately following his ordination, a great revival sprung up under his pastoral labors, some over a hundred being added soon to the church, and, in a few years, the membership was increased from one hundred and seventy-nine to four hundred and forty-seven. The first

person baptized by him, “became the honored mother of four ministers of the Seventh-day Baptist denomination—Nathan V., Varnum, Oliver P., and Hamilton Hull.”

Constitution

The constitutional question came up again:

“Whereas there is some objection against the last year’s Conference draft or explanation of, by its committee, of the Conference, that there be a committee appointed to revise or make a new draft for the approbation of the several churches in fellowship, and the following brethren were chosen: Deacons, David Ayars, Abraham Dunham, James Greenman, and Joseph Stillman, and brethren, Jacob West, Lewis Titsworth, William Satterlee, Joseph Potter, James Dunn, and Joel Dunn. The committee presented the following draft to be sent out to the churches:

“The elders and messengers from the Sabbatarian Baptist Churches, met at Piscataway, State of *New Jersey*, the 21st day of October, 1804, agreeable to adjournment for the purpose of holding a General Meeting of the Elders, messengers, and members from the several churches, situated in various parts of the United States of America, for the mutual edification and enlargement of acquaintance and Christian fellowship throughout the several church of our profession, being desirous to be useful to each other in the duties of our religion, and being sensible of the necessity of stirring up one another to a remembrance of the great privileges and enjoyments we are favored with, both civil and religious: that we may bear in mind a feeling sense of that gratitude and thankfulness we owe to the supreme Author of our being, the object and the ultimate end of all our hope and future enjoyment, have thought proper to propose and recommend to the consideration of the several churches, in the faith and fellowship of our religion:

“To hold a circular General Meeting, yearly, at such times and places as may seem convenient, to be agreed upon and appointed annually, for the ensuing year, by the messengers who may compose the General Meeting for the time being.

“It is to be understood that all things transacted in such General Meeting be done by way of advice, counsel, recommendation, and by no means to effect or alter the government or discipline of the churches in their individual capacity; but that each enjoy its own mode of discipline as to it may seem most agreeable to the Word of God; and that each church desirous of holding an Annual Meeting will appoint its time and place for such meeting as it may think proper, and whenever the General Meeting is held at any church where there is an Annual Meeting, it is thought to be most proper for both to be holden at the same time.

“As the comfort and usefulness of society must depend upon regularity of proceeding, and attention to good order, it is recommended that such General Meeting be conducted by a moderator, clerk, and such other officers as from time to time may appear needful, to be appointed, occasionally, by mutual consent, or the free vote of elders, messengers, and members then sitting.

“In all matters that require a vote of the General Meeting, it is meant that each church has one vote only in deciding any question, though every several member has equal liberty to speak, in an orderly way, in all matters of deliberation.

“It is considered incumbent on such General Meeting to hear and attend to all questions that concern the welfare of the churches, to give counsel and advice, as times and circumstances may require.

“As we entertain a sympathizing sense of the state of our scattered brethren in distant parts of our country, whose situation affords but little opportunity of hearing the gospel preached by ministers of our profession, by reason whereof some important duties are too much neglected, it is therefore recommended to the consideration of brethren composing the churches of our Union, to use their endeavors to compose a general mode that may meet their approbation, as near as may be, to be agreed to at our next yearly General Meeting, and that the messengers be authorized to concede to such variations in form as may be considered by the General Meeting to be most useful for the purpose intended.”

“*Voted*, That there be a committee appointed to write a circular letter to the several churches in our Union, viz: Deacon David Ayars, and brethren Joel Dunn, Jacob West and Lewis Titsworth.”

Circular Letter.

The circular letter was presented and approved as follows:

“The elders and messengers from the different churches of the Sabbatarian order, composing the General Meeting, holden in Piscataway, New Jersey, Oct. 22d, 1804, to the churches of the same faith and order, scattered up and down throughout the United States of America, we send greeting. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you. May the love of God the Father, the faith of Jesus Christ the Son, and the comfort and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.

“Beloved brethren, since it hath pleased God, in his providence, to favor us with another opportunity of meeting together, to worship and adore his great name, and see and hear from each other, we deem it expedient to continue our usual custom of addressing you by way of letter.

“When we consider the great and manifold blessings that are continually poured out upon us, that we, in this nation, have the liberty of meeting together, as a people, to worship God in that way that seemeth right unto us, and none to make us afraid, it becometh us to call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless and praise the Lord for his goodness to us who are so unworthy of these favors at his hand. And when we consider the love of God in the great work of redemption wrought out by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the extensiveness and freeness thereof; that it is without money and without price, that salvation is extended to all nations of the earth; and that the way of life and salvation through a crucified Savior is preached so extensively to all that believe and obey the gospel; and we still hope that the Lord is carrying on his work in the hearts of his people, to spread the gospel of our Lord and Savior to the remotest parts of our land, we have reason to thank and adore his great and holy name for his goodness to the children of men; that in the early ages of eternity he had thought of mercy concerning us; and in these latter days he hath fulfilled the promise which was made to our fathers, in that he hath raised up Jesus from the dead, who hath ascended to the majesty on high, ever to be an advocate for his people, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and seeing we have so great encouragement to come unto him, it becometh us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, knowing that it is God

who worketh in us of his good pleasure, and hath given us assurance that he will cast off none that cometh unto him in obedience to his commands, and accept of life and salvation through faith in his Son. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that easily besets us, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“As it appears from your letters and messengers that the churches of Christ of our order are not in so lively and active a situation as we could wish, let us be instant in prayer and supplication to God for the outpouring of his Spirit, that all who have named the name of Jesus may feel the spirit, and the power of religion, that they see the beauty of holiness, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and let their light so shine that others may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus, and glorify their Father who is in heaven. And now, dearly beloved, we would commend you to God and to the word of his grace. Make it the man of your counsel to see if these things are so or not. And may the God of all grace comfort you in every good word and work for Christ’s sake. Amen.

“N. B.—It is also recommended that all members who remove to an inconvenient distance from their own church, that they put themselves under the watchcare of the church or churches nearest to them of the same order. We, likewise, inform you that our next General Meeting will be held at Hopkinton, State of Rhode Island, the Sixth day before the second Sabbath in September next, 1805, to begin at ten o’clock, forenoon, said day. A statement of our minutes with that of our churches will accompany this Circular.

“Done by order and in behalf of the General Conference.

ABRAHAM COON, *Moderator.*

“JOSEPH POTTER, *Clerk.*
“Oct. 22d, 1804”

General Conference
FIFTH ANNUAL SESSION, 1805
Union, Communion, and Evangelism.

“At a General Meeting of the elders, Messengers, and brethren of the several Churches of the Sabbatarian order, now assembled, this 13th day of September, A. D., 1805, voted that Elder Abraham Coon act as Moderator, and brethren Stephen Maxson and Joseph Potter, as clerks, for said meeting.”

Extracts from Church Letters.

The following letter from the Newport Church possesses peculiar interest, as being probably, the last paper of the kind, penned by the venerable William Bliss, who was then in his seventy-eighth year. While the penmanship shows the tremors of age, its spirit has the immortal vigor and beauty of true religion. The letter is as follows:

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Church of Christ at Newport, under the care of Elder William Bliss, under the General Annual Conference to be holden at Hopkinton, the second Sabbath in the present month, and to them with you, who have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, grace, peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

“Dear brethren, our heart’s desire and prayer to God is, that your present meeting may be accompanied with his approving presence; that he may grant you such a portion of his divine and blessed Spirit as to enable you to worship him in Spirit and in truth; and so direct your minds into the knowledge of his will and love of his truth that your meeting may be for God’s glory and your edification and comfort; the cultivation of Christian love and unity; and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world.

“When we take a view of the prevalence of iniquity and the united forces that the great enemy of God, and of man’s salvation, has raised to oppose the truth, and lead mankind into the way of sin and death, we are convinced of the necessity of uniting in the cause of truth, and exerting all the faculties that God has given us, to support the cause of virtue and religion, and stand fast in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not be afraid to oppose the torrent of vice, error and superstition. Let us gird on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the power of darkness firmly, relying on the assistance of him who has all power in heaven and in earth given unto him.

“We approve the report of your committee, the last year, concerning the continuance of the yearly General Conference, as we conceive it will be a source of information and acquaintance with the circumstances and travel of our sister churches, and have a tendency to promote Christian love and unity among the distant branches of Christ’s Church with which we are in fellowship.

“You are not unacquainted with our sentiments concerning sending missionaries to visit our scattered and destitute brethren. We steadfastly believe that it will be productive of very happy effects, and be the means of diffusing light, and advancing the cause of truth, and consequently, the glory of God and the happiness of our fellow-creatures.

“It is a long time since there have been any additions to our numbers. We have greatly to lament the want of that zeal and activity in the things that concern God’s glory and the

welfare of our immortal souls; yet we have reason to rejoice and be thankful for the mercies and favors that the Great Giver of all good has bestowed on us; especially that there is, we hope and trust, a good degree of love and harmony in the body; and it is our ardent desire that God would enrich our souls with his grace, and make us a people for his praise, that we may live to the honor of his great and glorious name.

“Our present state is as follows: Elder William Bliss, Pastor; Elder Arnold Bliss, Evangelist; Clark Burdick, Deacon; William Bliss, Clerk; Deaths since last account, two. Under dealing, one. Total number, fifty.

“Signed by order and in behalf of the Church,

“WILLIAM BLISS, *Elder.*

“*Newport, September 6, 1805.*”

“The elders and brethren and sisters of the Seventh-day Baptist Church of Christ at Piscataway unto our beloved brethren and sisters in the same faith and order in the gospel, composing the General Meeting to be held at Hopkinton, sendeth greeting:

“According to a vote in our church, in regard to the action of the General Meeting held in this place last year, each elder is to supply the destitute church and scattering members nearest to him, and such churches as may be supplied, if well done, cannot think hard of defraying the expense, and for the scattering members, the church, where the elder belongs, is to make him a compensation for the labor of love amongst them.

“State of our Church is as follows: Added two; removed, one; Died, one. Messengers, Elder Henry Lafferty, and Deacon Abraham Dunham.

“August 20, 1805”

In the above extract, the term Seventh-day Baptist appears for the first time in any correspondence of the period. Thus, evidently, the Sabbatarian Baptists were first officially, called Seventh-day Baptists at Piscataway, August 20. 1805.

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Church of Cohansey to our beloved brethren at the Circular General Meeting at Hopkinton, etc.

“Dear brethren, we desire to remember, among the many favors we have enjoyed, that of the visit we had by Elder Coon, whose labors in preaching the word among us, were fervent, and was a refreshing season to many, and, we trust, will not soon be forgotten, and have reason to believe will yield fruit to the glory of God. We had a visit lately by Elder Lafferty, from Piscataway, who also labored with fervency. He has administered the ordinance of baptism on seven persons, and eight have joined in fellowship this time.

“Messengers, Caleb Sheppard and Jedediah Davis. State of the Church as follows: Evangelist, Nathan Ayars; Ruling Elders, Joshua Ayars and John Kelley; Deacons, David Ayars and Samuel Davis; Clerk, David Ayars. Added, sixteen, deceased three; Under dealing, two; present number, ninety-two.”

“Hopkinton Church, reported by Elder Coon as follows:

Elder, Abraham Coon; Evangelist, Matthew Stillman; Deacons, Joseph Stillman, Daniel Babcock, and Zacheus Maxson; Clerks, Zacheus Maxson and Joseph Potter. Added, six. Deceased, seven. Total number, five hundred and sixty-five, twenty three of the same under admonition and dealing. Said Church in favor of the present mode of holding General Meeting. Nothing done in said Church respecting sending preachers.”

“The Sabbatarian Church of Christ, at Bristol and towns adjacent in the state of Connecticut, to our well-beloved elders and brethren composing the Circular Yearly Meeting, etc.

“Dear brethren, without any superfluous ceremonies or needless salutations, we come immediately and with a deep sense of gratitude to an acknowledgement of your kind and friendly letter accompanying the minutes of your last Yearly Meeting, and we desire to render thanks to our adorable Creator and Redeemer, that out of his abounding grace, he has inclined your hearts to sympathize in such Christian-like manner with our distant brethren who are scattered up and down throughout these United States.

“If you desire to know the reason why we have not taken a more active part in the measures proposed by the Conference, from time to time, they are as followeth:

“First. We are all republicans in church as in state government, hence we doubted the propriety of the elders and brethren, not being delegated for that express purpose, taking the liberty of changing the customs and usages of the churches and establishing a new constitution. If the business, at first, had been referred to the churches, and had been stated as it now stands in the minutes of the last Conference, it is probable we should have had no formidable objection against some alteration in the form and manner of holding our Yearly Meeting. As the business now lies fairly before the churches, they can delegate messengers, who can deliberate on and adopt such form of regulations as to them shall appear necessary, and if such form of regulations as to them shall appear necessary, and if such regulations and rules shall be approved of by the churches when laid before them, the same articles may be considered a legitimate constitution, for the churches who approve and adopt the same.

“Second, As the first objection seems, at present, to be out of the way, we will pass on to the second and most formidable one. It is this: it is recommended to the churches to raise by subscription a certain fund for the use of missionaries, to go into different parts of our country, to preach the gospel. We are sensible the harvest is great and the laborers are few, and we sincerely pray that the Lord would raise up and qualify and send forth more; but we are not warranted to believe that the same Lord who commanded his disciples to go forth without purse or scrip, and that what they freely received to freely give would be pleased with our holding money up as a pleasing temptation, for covetous men to enter into the gospel vineyard. Not that we suspect any of our brethren of being thus covetous, or that ‘any of them would enter into the ministry for lucre’s sake, but yet since the love of money is the root of all evil, and since we have had so many sad examples of the doleful effects of the “Money Call” from the days of Constantine to the present time, we are inclined to think that we had better keep our money out of sight, until it shall please the Lord to move upon the hearts of some of his faithful servants to visit their brethren, and, when this shall be the case, we hope we shall not be wanting, on our part, in communicating to them of our carnal things. We heartily desire that the kind Lord would open some way, consistent with the plan of the gospel, for the more general promulgation of the gospel in its purity, and that not only our brethren, but that all the Christian world, might be conformed to the observation of the sanctified day.

“These reasons, for the want of more light, have prevented our delegating certain messengers according to your request; but as two or three of our brethren will attend the meeting, we wish them to hear and be heard in our behalf, and if we can by any means attain to any light on the subject contemplated, we hope not to be obstinate,

“The state of Our Church is as followeth: Amos Stillman, Evangelist; Elisha Covey, Clerk. Added, two. Died, two. About forty members.

“The Sabbatarian Church at Waterford and places adjacent, to our well-beloved elders and brethren composing the Annual Conference:

“Brethren, as to the mode of proceeding in Conference, recommended in our last circular, we have no objection to make, provided, we always allow liberty of conscience and discipline in individual churches, especially when they zealously seek the imitation of Christ’s example, and are subject to all God’s commandments. Brethren, we heartily wish that the sending of missionaries, so long talked of, might be carried into effect, but we deem it a matter impracticable, considering the variety of sentiment existing in our churches, unless we can abate somewhat our zeal for favorite particulars. We wish for all ministers to preach their heart-felt sentiments, and although they should not agree with us in everything, we desire to forbear all evil-speaking and censure of the man who cannot see with us, providing he maintains a regular walk. Let us be courteous, kind, and tender, and not say a man does not preach the gospel unless he preaches everything exactly as we believe. Let us think favorably of honest men and their sentiments, then we may expect success in sending missionaries.

“Another thing, brethren, we wish to observe. It is this: Although we believe immoderately long sermons are not so salutary in general, yet, let not a man be censured for a long discourse, for we find the apostle Paul preaching till midnight. Let us be careful not to stint the Spirit of God, which, it is to be feared, is sometimes the case. Forbear each other in love, for in vain may we attempt to publish our sentiments, unless we live in union, for what rational person would put himself under the care of those who are in contention among themselves? Let our moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. We wish charity and mutual love to abound throughout all the churches. Let us maintain good morals, and honest dealing, and good humor among sentiment and popular applause. Let us not be discouraged, though for these things we are despised. And may the God of peace be with us and the whole Israel of God. Amen.

“Elder Jabez Beebe, Pastor; Elder Davis Rogers still under our watch care, though removed from us; Ephraim Rogers and William Wescote, Deacons; added, five; members in fellowship, thirty-seven, five of whom of the Hopkinton Church, yet sometimes commune with us. Jabez Beebe, Jr., Clerk; Messengers, Elder Jabez Beebe, Jr., Jabez Beebe, and Jonathan Rogers.”

“The Sabbatarian Baptist Church of Brookfield, to their esteemed brethren of the same faith, composing the Sabbatarian General Meeting:

“Respected elders and dear brethren, we are bound to give thanks to Almighty God, the Father of our Spirits, for his goodness to us, in that he has not only preserved us one year more in our civil and religious liberties, but has, we trust, visited us with the kindly showers of His grace, and has caused a time of refreshing among us. You will see by our returns that a

goodly number has been added to our church. Bless God, and cease not to pray for the peace and prosperity of Zion.

“You will doubtless see a certain address to the Sabbatarian Churches on the subject of a Constitution, General Meeting, sending out preachers. We think the subject worth due consideration and hope something on the subject will be agreed upon. We hope you will see fit to appoint your next Annual Meeting at our meeting-house, as the circumstances of our churches and country, we conceive, make the prospect of your meeting here as useful as at other places.

“Messengers, Elder Henry Clarke and Deacon Phineas Burdick. The state of our church: Pastor, Henry Clarke; Clerk, Clark Maxson. Added, thirty-eight; deceased, one; under dealing, three. Total numbers, one hundred and twelve.”

“The Sabbatarian Church of Christ at Petersburg, Stephentown, and places adjacent, to the Church of God at Hopkinton and Westerly, and all the brethren there convened for a General Meeting or Annual Conference, greeting:

“Dear brethren, we have attentively perused your letter from your last Convention, with its much good counsel, and have had much conversation upon the subject matters recommended to us, and, at last, have drawn up the following articles which we recommend in lieu of those articles recommended to us, as we cannot fully agree with all those articles:

“Articles first and second, same as those recommended by Conference, except no act of Conference shall be considered binding on any individual church, until such vote or act has been approved by said church.

“Article third, provides for yearly church meetings and communions in each of the churches, and the attendance of visitors from sister churches ‘in order for the strengthening and uniting the churches in gospel fellowship.’

“Article fourth, same as recommended by Conference.

“Article five. We would recommend that the fellowship of the churches be in the same relation as individual members in a church, and, if any church deviates from the rules of the gospel, said church so offending, shall be dealt with in the same manner, as near as may be, as a member of any individual church.

“Article six. We think that the proposed mode of sending out traveling preachers is not agreeable to the practice of primitive preachers. This we are agreed in, that if any preacher has this duty imposed on him to visit our scattered brethren in their solitude, or lonesome situation, we feel willing to contribute something for their support; but to enter into contract to pay a certain sum of money to any man to travel and preach, we do not yet see to be our duty.

“Article seven. We think it advisable that an uniform faith, order, and fellowship should be agreed upon, so that each church may be so well acquainted with the faith and practice of the

others, that no one may break fellowship ignorantly. Therefore, we think it reasonable to send forward a statement of our faith in manner following:

“We believe in one God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost — three in one; and that Jesus Christ came in flesh, fulfilled the law that mankind had transgressed, and wrought out a complete salvation for the whole fallen race of Adam, so that all who will come to God, by faith in Christ Jesus, may find remission of their sins.

“We believe the ten commandments to be binding, and left on record for a rule of life, in Exodus 20.

“We believe in baptism by immersion, and laying on of hands, and in the resurrection of the dead, and in an eternal judgment. Heb. 6:2.

“We believe in the communion of saints, or the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Matt. 26: 26-28; 1 Cor. 11: 28.

“We think it duty to be found in the practice of all that is required of us in the sacred Scriptures. In cases of trespass, strict attention is to be paid to the rule laid down in Matthew’s gospel, eighteenth chapter, beginning with the fifteenth verse.

“This, in short, is the outline of our faith, and what we mean to practice, if God gives us strength.

“Dear brethren, let us lay aside all sinister views and selfish notions, and, in all our deliberations, be found in wisdom’s ways, having our eyes single to the glory of God, so that we may not be led into error by establishing any new form of government or discipline in the churches. Let us strive together to cultivate and strengthen our Zion, so that all disputes may be done away. Amen.

“Messengers, Elder William Satterlee and Stephen Maxson; number and standing of our church is as followeth: Nathan Rogers, Evangelist; William Satterlee, Evangelist-Elder; Deacons, W. Greenman, John Green, Jabez Burdick, James Greenman; David Davis called to the ministry; Stephen Maxson, Clerk; added, forty-eight; deceased, one; under admonition, one; total number, two hundred and thirty-nine.”

The Conference continued the subject of Constitution making.

“After reading the former draft respecting the mode of holding General Meetings, listening the letters and messengers from the churches in our Union, and all in substance, agreed to the same, while some of the churches, by their messengers, propose some additions to the same, is voted that a committee be appointed for the aforesaid purpose.

“Voted, that the following members be the committee, viz., Deacon Abraham Dunham, Piscataway; Elder Henry Clarke, Brookfield; Jedediah Davis, Cohansey; Elder Mat-hew Stillman, Hopkinton; Deacon Clark Burdick, Newport; Elder Jabez Beebe, Waterford; Stephen Maxson, Petersurgh; Elder Amos Stillman, Bristol.

Report of Committee.

“The committee appointed to revise the several propositions, heretofore proposed as the rules of fellowship amongst the churches of our order, report that, as last year’s recommendation has generally met the approbation of our churches, therefore we, your committee, beg leave to lay before you a transcript of the articles recommended to the churches by the churches, by the General Meeting, or Conference, held at Piscataway, the 19th of October, 1804, with some alterations and a few articles in addition to the foregoing articles.

“**ARTICLE 1. WHEREAS,** there have been different names given to the General Meeting, or Conference, and, as the different churches have general or annual meetings, and, as the names of the meetings do not at all affect the nature of the business, and that w& may clearly understand each other, it is thought most desirable to give this meeting the name of General Conference, and that, in the future, all letters from the churches be directed to the Sabbatarian General Conference.

“**ART. 2.** We think it advisable for the churches of our fellowship and profession to hold a Circular General Conference yearly, at such time and place as may seem convenient, to be agreed upon and appointed annually, for the ensuing year, by the elders, messengers, and members who may compose the General Conference, for the time being.

“**ART. 3.** It is to be understood that all things transacted in such General Conference be done by way of advice, counsel, or recommendation, and, by no means, to affect or alter the government or discipline of the churches, in their individual capacity; but that each church enjoy its own mode of discipline, as to it may seem most agreeable to the Word of God; and that each church which is desirous of holding Annual Meeting always appoint such time and place for such meeting as it thinks proper.

“**ART. 4.** Whenever the General Conference is holden at any church where there is an annual appointment, it is thought most proper for both to be holden at the same place.

“**ART. 5.** It is thought proper that such General Conference be conducted by a Moderator, Clerk, or Clerks, and such other officers as, from time to time, may appear needful, said officers to be appointed by the free vote of the elders, messengers, and members then present.

“**ART. 6.** In all cases that require a vote, it is meant for each church to have one vote only, in deciding any question, which vote shall be a majority of the messengers, representing any church. It is considered incumbent of such General Conference to hear and attend to all questions that concern the welfare of the churches, and to give counsel •and advice, •as circumstances may require.

“**ART. 7.** It is understood that, in cases of controversies between sister churches, the General Conference, made up of the messengers from the other sister churches, be the Council of Judges to determine said controversies.

“**ART. 8.** In cases where members move to a distance for the church their first covenanted with, and do not put themselves under the watchcare of a sister church nearest their residence, it is understood that in case such persons walk disorderly, it is the right and duty of the Clerk of any church, having knowledge of such disorderly members, to certify the same to the church to which they belong as soon as may be.

“**ART. 9.** It is understood that no church in our Union can receive into its fellowship a person except he observe the seventh day for a Sabbath, and has been baptized by immersion.

“**ART. 10.** It is understood that when alteration or amendment, in our rules of fellowship or Constitution, is wished for by any church, such alteration be proposed to the General Conference, and, by its recommending such alteration to the several churches in order, and said churches agreeing to the same, it shall be considered a part of the rule of fellowship.

“The above articles are humbly submitted’ to the General Conference by your Committee, for your approbation, &c.

“HENRY CLARKE,

“AMOS STILLMAN,

“JABEZ BEEBE,

“MATTHEW STILLMAN,

“CLARKE BURDICK,

“ABRAHAM DUNHAM,

“JEDEDIAH DAVIS,

“STEPHEN MAXSON.

“*Hopkinton, Sept. 15th, 1805*

“Said report accepted and voted for record.

“*Voted.* That Elder Abraham Coon and Brother Jedediah Davis, write a Circular Letter; that each church in our Union have a copy of said letter; that said letter be investigated by the Church at Hopkinton; and that the doings of this Conference accompany each copy.

[As the Circular Letter is nearly a verbatim reproduction of the one for the previous year, it is here omitted.]

“*Voted,* unanimously, that our Conference hold at Petersburg, State of New York, on the fifth day of the week before the second Sabbath in September, A. D. 1806, at ten o’clock A.M.

“ABRAHAM COON, *Moderator.*

“JOSEPH POTTER,

“STEPHEN MAXSON,

“*Clerks:*

“*Hopkinton, Sept. 17th, 1805*

General Conference
SIXTH ANNUAL SESSION, 1806
Union, Communion, and Evangelism

The Revival Year

“At a meeting of the Sabbatarian General Conference, holden at the meeting-house in Berlin (formerly called Petersburg) State of New York, September 11, 1806, voted that Elder Abraham Coon be Moderator of said Conference, and Stephen Maxson and John Hubbard, Clerks.

“Messengers from sister churches, as stated hereafter.

“Received church letters as followeth: From Hopkinton, setting forth a very prosperous state of religion, viz:

“Dear brethren, we call on you to join with us in adoration and thanksgiving to God, on our behalf, for the miraculous displays of his goodness, of late, amongst us, that, while we were deserving of nothing better than his frowns, he has most wonderfully blessed us with the showers of his grace, in pouring out his convincing Spirit on the youth, as well as the aged and middle aged, and leading them, we trust, out of darkness into light. It is admirable to see the sudden alteration of our assemblies. It was but a few months ago that most of our seats in our meeting-house were empty, and a most gloomy aspect was before us; but suddenly there appeared a gleam of light, like the dawning of a day. Soon it ushered forth, like the glorious return of Spring, and the voice of the turtle began to be heard in our land. The sound of young converts began to resound from house to house. Our assemblies began to be numerous, and while some were declaring what the Lord had done for their souls, we could, with delight, behold the tears trickling down the cheeks, and a solemn silence seemed to be shed through the listening multitude, while a gleam of sacred joy lit up the faces of the silent spectators.. Old professors, as backsliders were returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, and confessing their wanderings one to another, could only say, “It is the Lord’s doings, and it is marvelous to our eyes.” The work still continues, and is spreading into neighboring towns and churches, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

“Now, dear brethren, since the kind Lord has done and is doing such wonderful things, for us, let us gird up our loins, watch unto prayer, and hold the profession of our faith; steadfast unto the end, for such shall be saved. And to you, especially, who may be present at your meeting, we beseech that you labor for the unity of the Spirit, laying aside all prejudice and animosities, hard thoughts and evil speaking, and put on fervent charity one for another, and strive, not for mastery, but let each one freely enjoy his own opinion, yet endeavor to communicate and receive the light of the Spirit and the truth as it is in Jesus. Let all your things be done in charity, none seeking his own pleasure, or speaking his own words, but doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God. So may the kind Lord bless you abundantly with his glorious presence, and all of you return to your respective homes richly laden with the experience of his grace.

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be of one mind. Live in love. Live in peace. And may the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

“Church officers: Abraham Coon and Matthew Stillman, Evangelist-Elders; Joseph Stillman, Daniel Babcock, and Zacheus Maxson, Deacons; Joseph Potter and Zacheus Maxson, Clerks. Added since last year’s Conference, 202; deceased 9; total number of members, 769; of the same under admonition, 24.

“*Voted*, that Elder Abram Coon, Dea. Zacheus Maxson, brethren Wait Clarke and Thomas Williams be messengers to the General Meeting.”

“The Sabbatarian Church at Cohanse:

“Dearly beloved brethren, we shall inform you that this Church has called upon two of our brethren to improve their gifts in public speaking—Brother John Davis and Brother William West. The latter has since removed, with his family, and several more of the members of this Church and congregation, to the State of Ohio. Brother Davis still continues to improve amongst us, and our prospects have a more favorable aspect than what has been presented for some time past, and we are still in hopes, and wait in expectation that the Lord will, in his own due time, yet smile upon us, and make us rejoice together in love.

“We are greatly rejoiced to hear of the increasing work of grace in our sister church at Rhode Island and adjacent places, likewise at Petersburg and other places.

“We have experienced a trying season. The drought has been hard, and many around us have been taken by the arrest of death, and some of the members of this Church also; among whom we have to lament the loss of our respected deacon David Ayars, with seven more very valuable members.

“Our attachment to the established plan of holding General Conferences is by no means abated, but our ardent desires are that God may bless and prosper the same for more general advancement and spread of the gospel. We earnestly solicit and request the approbation and concurrence of our brethren who may compose the General Conference, that the next General Conference may be holden at this Church, Cohanse, at the time of our Yearly Meeting, which will be on the third Sabbath in October, 1807. If that time should be thought too late in the season for the convenience of our brethren who may visit us, we would submit it to your discretion to appoint an earlier time.

“State of the Church as follows:

“No official minister; Elder Lafferty attends quarterly; John Davis speaks occasionally. Ruling Elders: Joshua Ayars and John Kelley; Deacon: Samuel Davis; Clerk: Jacob West. Added 2 deceased 9; under dealing 1; present number 88. Messenger, Evan Davis.”

“Church at Piscataway, stating a good degree of harmony, and that it approves of the proceedings of last Conference.

“Henry M. Lafferty, Elder; Abraham Dunham and David Dunn, Deacons; Joel Dunn, Clerk. Added 1; deceased 6; total 79. Messengers, Elder Lafferty and Dea. Dunham.”

“Church at Burlington, Conn., approves of the proceedings of last year’s Conference.
“Amos Stillman, Elder; Ethan Stillman, Deacon; Elisha Covey, Clerk. Added 1; total 36.
Messengers, Elder Amos Stillman and Dea. Ethan Stillman.”

“Received a letter from Brookfield, stating a good degree of union.
“Officers: Henry Clarke, pastor; Joshua Maxson and Phineas Burdick, Deacons; Clark
Maxson, Clerk. Added, 9; under dealing 1; admonition, 3; dismissed, 3; deceased, 1; total
number, 116. Messengers, Eld. Henry Clarke, brethren Ethan Clark and Benjamin Belgrave.”

“No letter from Newport, on account of the illness of the elder and deacon. Verbal report that
said Church was in favor of the proceedings of the last Conference. Added, about 40.”

“The Clerk of the Berlin and Petersburg Church states their situation as follows:

“Officers, William Satterlee, Evangelist Elder; Wm. Greenman, John Green, Jabez Burdick,
James Greenman, Deacons. Added, 74; deceased, 5; under admonition, put themselves under
the watchcare of this Church from Hopkinton and Westerly Church, total number, 301.”

“The Church at Petersburg and Berlin received a letter from the brethren at DeRuyter, N. Y.,
praying that they may be organized a church, and brother David Davis be ordained. Said
Church, after consultation on the subject, thought it advisable to lay the matter before the
Conference for its counsel and advice on the same. Said Conference received said letter. After
conferring largely on the aforesaid subject, we think it advisable to appoint a committee to
visit our brethren at DeRuyter, and if they, in their judgment, think said brethren are in a
suitable capacity for organization, to answer their request. The undernamed brethren are
appointed a committee as above: From Berlin and Petersburg Eld. William Satterlee, Dea.
Jabez Burdick and Brethren Stephen Maxson and Eliphalet Johnson. From Brookfield, Elder
Henry Clarke and Dea. Phineas Burdick.”

“It is recommended by this Conference to the churches of our union that they take into
consideration the utility of having the minutes, Circular Letter, and such other information
respecting the rise and progress of the Sabbatarian order, as the Conference ‘at its annual
meeting, may think proper, printed, and also give such information as is in their province,
respecting such origin or progress, and send the name forward by letter or messenger to our
next Conference, and likewise such money for defraying the expense of such publication, as
their freedom may admit of.”

“*Voted.* That Eld. Abraham Coon and Bro. John Hubbard write a Circular Letter to our sister
churches, of which the subject matter is to be Love.

“Circular Letter presented, read, and approved.

Circular Letter—Brotherly Love

“The elders and messengers of the Sabbatarian Baptist Conference sitting at Berlin, late
Petersburgh, Sept 11, 12, 13, and 14, A. D., 1806, to the churches which they represent, send
greeting:

“Dear Brethren, in conformity with the custom we have adopted of addressing our brethren, composing the different churches of the Sabbatarian order, on some important subject relative to the great concerns of religion, in order to excite your minds to the practice of every Christian. virtue, we shall call your attention, at this time, to the important subject of Brotherly Love.

“Though every suitable respect is to be paid to all men, yet there is a peculiar affection due to every believer, which is called brother love. Peter enforces this duty in his exhortation to love the brotherhood. This is one of the relative duties which Christians owe to each other. It stands pre-eminent in the Word of God. From the repeated exhortations to this duty, and the variety of forms in which it is enforced in the Bible, we believe the inference of its being of the first magnitude, is conclusive.

“Moses gives the sum of all moral duties in the ten commandments, and Christ comprehends them all in two. The first and principal one is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. He then declares that on these hang all the law and the prophets, hence we see the propriety of Paul’s declaration, that love is the fulfilling of the law; for every duty required of us is to be performed from the principle of love to God, as the moving cause, and in obedience to his revealed will, as the rule of all our actions. The first table of the law containing our immediate duty to God is by our Savior comprehended in this one sentence, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength.’ This is called the first and great commandment. The second table, which contains our duty to our neighbor, is also comprehended in this single sentence: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ We are, therefore, authorized to conclude, that though all our duties are to be performed from the principle of love to God, yet love to the brethren, abstractly considered, is the cause from which arise all the relative duties which we owe to them; for, as love to God is that active principle which constrains us to delight in his worship, and which makes the ways of wisdom to be ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace, so love to man is that principle of action which not only impels us to fly from the thought of doing him any injury, but prompts us to give relief when in distress, and render him happy. Love worketh no evil to his neighbor. Love is, therefore, the fulfilling of the law. If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well. Granting that we take. this command in an unlimited sense to extend to every individual of the human race, yet we still contend that there is a peculiar affection due to the children of God. The Apostle’s advice runs thus: ‘As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto the household of faith.’ We are to love all men, as men, though some, by their abominable practices, forfeit our respect, and bring upon themselves merited contempt; but Christians are to be loved as the adopted children of God, and for the image of him which they bear. The obligations we are under to love God and his children are inseparable. It is folly in the extreme for any one to deceive himself under the idea that he loves God, when, at the same time, he has no disposition to love and do good to his people; for, says the Apostle, ‘This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also, and if a man says he loves God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.’ From this and similar language in the Scriptures, it is evident that brotherly love is an indispensable duty resting upon all the followers of the Lamb.

“Brotherly love is not only an incumbent duty on all believers, but it is, likewise, a very comfortable evidence of their state, for, says the Apostle: ‘We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.’ From this it appears evident that Christians, from the circumstance of their loving the

brethren, may draw the comfortable and assured conclusion that they have passed from death to spiritual life, or, in other words, that they are regenerated or born of God, and made heirs of eternal glory.

“As an evidence of heavenly affections, it is not common for this to stand alone; but it is generally attended with other discriminating marks, by which a person may judge of his adoption into the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ; but we still think that there are seasons when almost every other mark is lost, and when this is the Christian’s principal, if not only support, and we believe this abundantly sufficient to preserve him from sinking in despair.

“Let us review this delightful subject. Figure to yourselves a person just made acquainted with his dreadful situation as a sinner, condemned by the law of God, a load of guilt upon his soul, ready, in his own apprehension, to drop into endless misery, but waiting with an anxiety bordering on despair, to receive some comfort from the Word of God, interrogating the beloved disciples. ‘We know,’ as says the Apostle John. ‘What,’ says the disconsolate sinner, ‘do you know?’ ‘That we have passed from death unto life.’ ‘O, happy saint, do you know this to be your situation?’ A knowledge of this is worth ten thousand worlds. Would to God, that I had the smallest gleam of hope that such a blessing were mine. Let me ask you, how do you know it?’ ‘Because we love the brethren, and I am instructed by the Holy Ghost to assert, for the encouragement of believers, that he who truly loves his brother has been delivered from death, and hath a right to the tree of Life, and also to check the presumption of hypocrites, from the same authority, to declare that he who loveth not his brother, abideth in death.’

“Brotherly Love is not only an evidence to ourselves that we are born of God, but also to others; for says the blessed Redeemer, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ It is only when Christians are wearing Christ’s livery and completely equipped with the gospel armor, that they appear fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners. It is only those whose general conversation is such as becometh the gospel, that appear respectable in the eyes of mankind, for the path of the Christian is so clearly pointed out in the Word of God, that even the wicked world can readily discern the least deviation in his steps, and when professors allow themselves to fall into the vain and sinful customs of the world, and especially when they are contentious, and give themselves up to backbiting and evil speaking one of another, they become a stumbling block to infidels. Let us, therefore, dear brethren, be exceedingly careful, in all our conduct, to give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully of the innocent cause we profess.

“This divine principle of love is founded in the reason and in the nature of things. The motives to it are innumerable. The vast and stupendous works of creation; the regular and beautiful order in which all its parts are planned and executed, display, not only their infinite power and wisdom of the Creator, but his unparalleled love in preparing inexhaustible treasures for the happiness of intelligent beings. This display is conspicuous in his universal and equitable government of the world, and especially in the great plan of redemption. We ought, therefore, brethren, to love one another, because God first loved us.

“Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you. Amen.

“ABRAHAM COON,

“JOHN HUBBARD,

“*Committee.*”

“Voted that the Conference be adjourned to the fifth day before the second Sabbath in September, 1807, at the meeting-house in Cohansey, at ten o’clock A. M.

“ABRAHAM COON, *Moderator.*

“STEPHEN MAXSON,

“JOHN HUBBARD,

“*Clerks.*”