

Province, and which the Petitioners refer to, as promised at its first settlement—"Perfect equality as to all Civil Rights advantages "and immunities; liberty of conscience in all matters of religious "belief ; and freedom in regard to all religious rights and ordinances."

Considered in this point of view, the *second* request of the Petitioners,—“that Corporate powers may be conferred on their respective Societies”—cannot be regarded as unreasonable. For if similar advantages are possessed by any one denomination of Christians in the Colony—if there follow from granting the prayer of the Petitioners, any benefits they do not at present enjoy—if greater stability and connection will thereby be conferred on these Communities—if the lands held for their Places of Worship, for the residence of their ministers, for interment, or for the support of their particular ordinances, can be better secured or protected, or made more available for the purposes to which they are devoted—if the legal inconveniencies of a Trust, consisting of members whose absence, death or disagreement may involve their constituents in litigation and expense, might be effectually prevented—then the Committee conceive, that this suggestion in the Petitions, should be viewed as a measure which a Legislature, acknowledging no one sect or body of men to be in regard to Civil Rights, preferable to another, ought to grant : and the Committee must regard it as a privilege equitably belonging to the Petitioners—and tending, and particularly adapted, to the advancement of the best Interests of Religion and true piety ; which, the Committee humbly apprehend, will ever flourish best in those places whence all sources of jealousy and excitement are carefully and effectually removed.

Nor do the Committee apprehend that—from the Incorporation of each separate Society, with its Minister, for the purposes referred to—there can result any inconvenience to balance the public benefit, which will ensue from the legal and regular establishment of Congregations; and from the means which will be thus presented of ascertaining with what particular Society, each Individual Inhabitant stands connected.

The Committee forbear from detailing what regulations (and many are necessary) may be expedient for this purpose; as the advanced state of the Session renders the maturing a Bill impracticable: but they beg earnestly to recommend that, early in the next year, proper steps may be taken to effect this important object.

The other claim, preferred by the Petitioners, is for the privilege of Solemnizing Marriages by *Licenses*: This subject has been repeatedly before the Legislature, and experienced from the Assembly the consideration, due to the intense interest it has excited and