

1836 CIRCULAR LETTER
Of The Delaware River Association,

Held with the Church at Southhampton, Bucks Co., PA., May 28th and 30th.

[Note: This Association was established in 1835, and has the following footnote appended:
“THE ORIGIN OF THE DELAWARE RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.- Pursuant to an invitation from the Baptist Church at Kingwood, N.J., a number of brethren, delegates from different churches of the order commonly denominated “Particular Baptists,” met at Kingwood, Hunterdon Co., N.J., Oct. 14, 1835, to consider the propriety of forming a new Ass’n. After a full discussion of the question, and earnest supplication for divine direction, it was unanimously Resolved, That it is expedient to constitute an Association; which was according done, and the following Constitution adopted:

Art. 1. This union of Churches shall be called the Delaware River Baptist Association.

Art. 2. Voluntarily associating together for our mutual edification. We disavow all right to intermeddle with the concerns and independence of any Church, believing that each has all the authority and power requisite to the government of its own concerns. Neither do we claim the right of an advisory council, satisfied that every constituent member of this body should be left at full liberty to pursue the counsel of God, as laid down in the divine word.

Art. 3. We cordially subscribe to and adopt as a *summary of our views of divine Truth*, the Baptist Confession of faith, put forth in 1689 by upwards of one hundred Baptist congregations in England and Wales.

Art. 4. No Church shall be admitted into this Ass’n. but such as not only **formally** adopt the said *summary or Confession of Faith*, but firmly adhere thereunto by supporting a ministry holding forth and defending the same precious doctrine. And in case any church being a member of this body shall cease so to maintain the doctrine and ordinances aforesaid, or shall receive and sustain a ministry not in accordance with the same, this Association will in that case hold it as her right to expunge the name of said Church from her minutes, and thus dissolve all further connexion with such church.

Art. 5. Conceiving it to be our indispensable obligation to glorify God, and promote, as far as in us lies the welfare of our fellow men, and believing, as we firmly do, that the Gospel of the blessed God is given, and to be spread for the same unto the ends of the earth; that thus the Redeemed of the Lord shall be gathered in; we, in the fear and strength of Jehovah, and with a humble reliance on His blessing, are determined to use all our energies and influence, according to His word, to spread this precious Truth until “*this Gospel shall be preached among all nations.*” But as to the *method* by which the churches shall labor in this good work, we leave to be decided by themselves: judging it not to be the province of this Ass’n. to recommend or decide to the churches what measures they shall or shall not pursue.

Art. 6. Each church composing a part of this body shall send a written communication to the Ass’n. at the annual meeting, (which annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as shall be expedient) containing the names of her messengers, with a plain statement of the condition of each church, as to her prosperity, trials, increases or diminution, and all such other matters as may concern her spiritual welfare, and the dealings of God with her during the past year. But carefully avoiding the introduction of any matters irrelevant to her case.

Art. 7. This Association will not seek or attempt to become incorporated, or to be known as a body politic in law; as we conceive such a course to be at variance with the objects we have in view as above stated.

Additional Note: This Association was in correspondence with such sound Predestinarian Old School Baptists Associations as the: Licking Association of Particular Baptists of Ky., the Mount

Pleasant Old School Baptists Association of Ky., The Virginia Corresponding Meeting of Va., Warwick Association of New York, the Baltimore Association of Maryland, Salisbury Association, Ketocton Association of Va until it went Means Baptists under the leadership of Elder John Clark, the Rappahannock Association of Pa., The Allegany Association.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER

The Delaware River Baptist Association, to the several Churches of which it is composed, send Greetings:

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

The peculiar emotions with which we send you our **first Circular Address**, may be more readily imagined than expressed. To you, the circumstances which have lead to the organization of our present union, are perfectly known: and from you they have received, we trust, that attention they merit at your hand: We, therefore, deem it unnecessary on this occasion to advert particularly to the causes which have induced to a withdrawal from our former connexions. Suffice it to say, they were sufficient, at least in our estimation, to justify you as **independent Churches of Jesus Christ**, to pursue the measures which were adopted in October last by your delegates at Kingwood.

The important stand has been taken, it is humbly believed, with pure motives, and in the exercise of that charity, which, while it "*Hopeth all things,*" also "*Rejoiceth in the Truth.*" Should our anticipation of successful operations in the cause of our blessed Master be graduated on the scale of our present numbers; little can we have to expect. We are *few* and but "*a feeble folk.*" Recollecting, however, that the "*handful of corn on the top of the mountain*" has the sure promise of increase, and with the encouraging example before us of *little ones* under the divine benediction becoming thousands; our confidence would unshakenly rest in Him whose good pleasure it is to work His wonders by the *few* as well as by the *many*; thus instructing His servants "*Not to despise the day of small things.*"

The holy Phalana of God's chosen, altho' a little band, yet martialled on the plains of Eternal Truth, clad in the true armour of God, and *onward led* by the illustrious Captain of our Salvation; while *sore, and long, and sanguine* may be the conflict, shall ultimately come off more than conquerors thro' Him that loved them and gave Himself for them. Brethren, suffer the word of exhortation while we urge upon you as good, soldiers to bear, as a suitable motto in all your future operations, the Apostolic injunction – "*Hold fast the form of sound words.*"

Perhaps we risk little in saying, that many and dangerous errors abound amongst the Church at this time: while vain Philosophy tends greatly to subvert the simplicity and purity of the Gospel of Christ. Such is the wonderful "*march of mind*" that in our day no possible difficulty exists to prevent every class of men from the high infidel to the most consummate Pharisee, from being accommodated with a religious sect, so called, in perfect harmony with his own peculiar taste. In order to meet the rapid improvements of the times, we are required to abandon almost **every distinguishing principle** of our holy religion for the exercise of a *charity, so called*, of the most fastidious and sickly nature. In the overflowings of this boasted principle, the advocates of *truth* and *error* are expecting to **unite** in what men are pleased exultingly to call the *work of God*. [SCP. He has reference to the modern missionary and benevolent movement then sweeping the American frontier. That principle, as well as the one in the next paragraph, is still advocated and practiced in 2008.]

We may not wonder, brethren, if in such a state of things, much *open* opposition and far more *secret* hostility is cherished against such a Scriptural "*form of sound words*" as is briefly compiled in our declaration of Faith. We are told, what is, indeed, a delightful *Truth* never to be abandoned, no not for a moment, viz, That the Bible is all sufficient, and the **only rule of Faith and PRACTICE**. But on this readily admitted proposition a conclusion is raised to which we **cannot subscribe**: That while every man is at liberty to put his own construction on the sacred oracles, we by the law of charity are bound to fellowship such in the bonds *of the Gospel, regardless of opinions and notions of the testimony of God*, provided the life be regulated by the rules of morality.

On these latitudinarian principles our ancient formulas are warmly assailed, and an unceasing effort made to shake all our attachment to them, by representing their sentiments as antiquated and barbarous. By some adventurers, all declarations of faith or *written views of Bible Truth are openly condemned*, and their fancied evil deeds published on the house-top: as being the attempts of designing men to tyrannize and usurp a dominion over the consciences of their fellow men little, if any, short of Popery. [Which has no Articles of Faith! SCP] While not a few, perhaps equally hostile to the Truth, but wanting in the same degree of candor, under the plausible guise of keeping pace with the improvements of the age, seek to accomplish their object by the cry of *reform*, made with much apparent piety at the corners of the streets of our Zion. To them the ancient dress and rustic garb of the valuable form of sound words, drawn up by our forefathers, is

unseemly, disagreeable and harsh. The refined taste and philosophical penetration of the present age rise superior to the crude and unpolished dogmas of the original framers of our articles of Faith. The work, therefore, of modernization must trim off the uncomely protuberances and polish their surfaces, so as to meet the views of unconverted men and carnal professors, who have been urged into our churches without, it is feared, ever having received the *Truth* in the love of it. The evangelizing of the world seems to be a favorite object inseparably connected with the movements of the advocates of this universal charity: and as though they conceived the doctrine of divine Sovereignty in the bestowment of Grace, *plainly preached*, as opposing an inseparable barrier in the way of such a benevolent object, they anxiously desiring to remove this stumbling block out of their way. Not, however, having the temerity to encounter this *imagined* obstacle in the open face of day, they cautiously avoid the plain declarations of Scripture; while all the thunder of their artillery is leveled against *Human Creed, Articles of Faith, Confessions, &c.*

The more readily to set aside the Truth and establish error, new terms and phrases are coined and introduced, crafty hypothesis laid down and metaphysical expositions resorted to, while plain Scripture doctrine is kept out of view, seldom or never expounded, and the form of sound words is abandoned because not loved either by the preacher or his hearers. Thus a most lamentable ignorance of the marrow and fatness of the Gospel prevails under the imposing guise of growing intelligence, zeal and piety. Is there not reason to fear that too many amongst our churches, are uninformed as to whether Trinitarian or Unitarian sentiments are taught in their pulpits, or to which of these sentiments their minister subscribes? – whether special or universal redemption is preached or believed? – original sin maintained or denied? – whether the Sovereign Grace of God or the sovereign will of man determines the salvation of the soul? – whether men are renewed by the Holy Ghost or by dipping them in water? – whether men are made Christians by the power of God or by the power and management of the preacher, or whether all parties are co-workers in this business? In short, is there not reason, from too many appearances to apprehend, that from what is called “Gospel” by many in our day, it would be no easy task to divine whether we are to “*Receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith.*”

Beloved Brethren, should you conceive that we are not mistaken as to the existence of these things, however we may differ in judgment as to the extent of the evil; we trust our confidence is not misplaced in that we are persuaded you will as good soldiers contend earnestly for the faith once

delivered to the saints, " *Holding fast the form of sound words.*" The term *sound*, as used here, is derived from a word in the original, signifying to be *healthy* or of sound condition. It is used of the withered hand which was healed by our Lord (See Matt. 12:13). It is also used of the body in general, (see Luke 5:31,) and particularly of the mind in chapter 15:27. *Sound words*, therefore, are such as are readily understood and easily digested in the mind, presenting Scripture truth clearly and without equivocation. They stand directly opposed to *crafty words* and *doubtful phrases* which, like the responses of the heathen Oracles, are susceptible of a double meaning. Hence we read of "*sound speech that cannot be condemned.*"

The term which we render *form* imports an *outline* or *first sketch*, such as limners use in drawing.- A concise representation or the impression of a type or stamp. (see 1 Timothy 1:16). Thus Paul speaks of a *form* of doctrine which was delivered to the Romans, (see chapter 6:7,) which in another place he calls "*wholesome words*" (1 Tim. 6:3). From such expressions some have concluded that the Apostles used a *sketch* or *outline* of the prominent articles of the Christian doctrine for the use of the Churches, somewhat as our creeds or declarations of faith.

To hold fast this form of sound words, something more than a mere reception is obviously intended. It includes an unshaken adherence to every part of the divine oracles, joined with a laborious and untiring zeal to defend and propagate the Truth as it is in Jesus; well knowing from whom we have received it, and with a view to the unutterable advantage and glory connected with the diffusion of these holy sentiments. That service which is due from man to his Maker, has been by general consent denominated *Religion*. A name, however, extremely vague and indefinite: as to its import, embracing within its vast circumference the countless notions and opinions of all who profess to believe *in* and worship the Deity.

In order more clearly to define this comprehensive subject, it has been distinguished by the name of *natural* and *revealed* religion. The existence of a Supreme Being constitutes the basis of what is termed "*natural*" religion. Admit a God, and by the admission we place ourselves under solemn and indispensable obligations to love, to serve and adore Him. The duty is inseparably connected with the relation of the *Creator* and the *created*; and is one from which no circumstances or situation can ever dissolve an intelligent being. Love and Obedience are equally due to *God* from all created intelligence.

As the existence of a God is the basis of all *natural religion*, the doctrine of a Trinity in the God-head is fundamental in that glorious scheme

of Revelation with which our guilty world is favored. This article of the “form of sound words” in our holy Religion, is not less important that it is confessedly mysterious. This inconceivably sublime doctrine has its origin infinitely beyond the limited comprehension, and consequently above the device of created intelligences. Human reason may demonstrate the existence of a God, and clearly shew that *that* God can be but *one*; but nothing short of divine revelation can inform us that there are “*three that bear record in heaven,*” and that these three are “*one*” essential and incomprehensible Jehovah. This glorious Truth is intimately connected with the first lesson of the Bible. No attempts are made at explanation, it is true, even by the inspired penman. It is the mode of the divine existence; how utterly unavailing then must be every such attempt on our part you will readily see. But the evidence of its Truth is *strong, various and indubitable*.

This grand and imposing Truth will admit of nothing short of our absolute and unequivocal reception. The plain declarations of Scripture must decide our judgment, every step inclining towards an accommodating exposition for obviating its difficulties is ineffably dangerous. To reject it on any principle is to overturn the whole system of salvation; to reduce the Scripture account of the work of Redemption by our Lord Jesus, is utterly inexplicable; and throw into perfect confusion all our ideas of divine revelation; leaving man bewildered in His own wisdom if not in most lamentable idolatry.

If this doctrine be without foundation; with much yet hopeless interest may we inquire who purchased the Church? Who was Immanuel God with us? And whose soul was made an offering for sin?

On the vain hypothesis that the *Three* spoken of, in the holy Volume, are to be understood, not of *persons* but as *characteristic* distinctions expressive of different official operations of the Deity; what conceptions are we to form of the *prayers* and various solemn appeals of the Son of God to His divine Father? As Matt. 11:25,26; 27:46; Luke 23:34; John 11:41; 17:1, &c.? Must we be driven to the absurdity that He addressed those solemn appeals to Himself? And that His *Father* was identically Himself under another name, differing in nothing except official characteristics?

Let us not flatter ourselves, brethren, that although confessedly we live in times of abounding errors; yet that the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity is not found amongst them. The enemy, whose business is ever to deceive, varies his assaults on Truth with the most consummate skill: sometimes by direct and open warfare; often by covert and secret movements. To undermine and root out a fundamental Truth, is the infallible means of implanting and

nourishing a destructive error. In the soul of man in this respect there can be no possible vacuum. When Truth is not to be found, error inevitably exists. Thus the advocates of error succeed most readily, not by openly denying the Truth; but by attempting to prove that the doctrine in question is not to be found in *one* Scripture and in *another*, until their deluded followers can find it nowhere in the Bible.

Probably the task would not be excessively laborious to find those around us claiming a communion from the skies, who are exhibiting a plan of salvation not only void of this fundamental doctrine, but utterly subversive of the precious foundation stone that God has laid in Zion. A plan by which many would be compelled, if questioned on the subject, to say, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost; yea, a plan in which it would seem the deity Himself, has, at present, no further concern, then to wait the movements and determinations of His rebellious and condemned creatures that His final decisions may be regulated accordingly.

The Scriptures in presenting for our consideration a perfect form of sound words, abound with the most sublime descriptions of the infinite perfections of Jehovah.

His Knowledge, says one, “*Is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*” (Psalm 139:6). “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgment and His ways past finding out;*” says another, Romans 11:33, His understanding is *infinite!* Of *His power* – it is exclaimed: “*Lo these are parts of His ways, but how little a portion is heard of Him; but the thunder of His power who can understand,*” (Job 26:14). Not only has He *made*, but also upholds all things by the word of His *power*, (Hebrews 1:3).

The astonishing mystery of His love moves our souls in holy exultation to unite with the beloved disciple, “*Behold what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed on us*”. – So of other attributes.

Can we wonder that a Being so inconceivably perfect should have inspired holy men in past ages to foretell with unerring precision multitudes of events, the accomplishment of which extending through many hundred years, must necessarily depend on a countless variety of volitions of moral agents. So obvious is this principle in the divine government, that inspiration affirms, “*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world;*” and thus with infallible certainty does He call *things which are not as they were*. Strictly adhering, therefore, to the “*form of sound words,*” your attention is solicited to the following prominent principle of our holy Religion, viz, That this incomprehensible Jehovah, subsisting in the

inexplicable personal relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, did purpose in Himself prior to all time, both *what Himself would do and what He would permit to be done* by the various orders of creatures in time and through Eternity. Thus He is declared to order ***all things after the counsel of His own will,*** and to have “*determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of the habitations of all nations,*” (Acts 17:26).

If it be an important qualification of limited understanding to act in view of some purposed ***end***, certainly Supreme Intelligence cannot be supposed to pursue an uniform course by acting without an adequate object. The more elevated and perfect the agent, the more elevated and noble the end of all His actions; the infinite God assuredly then can **fix an *end***, as the mark of His operations, but such as is *proportioned* to the nature of His own *infinite mind*. [In case no one read that paragraph closely, that statement is the concept known as absolute predestination! Read carefully the following also! SCP]

The same infallible wisdom and power are applied in choosing all the means and securing their operations for the certain accomplishment of the end determined. The wise man about to build, first sits down and counts the cost. The judicious king preparing for war makes a careful comparison, whether with ten thousand he can successfully meet his enemy whose numbers are double. The infinite resources of God, will most undoubtedly be so applied as to subserve His glorious designs, and must infallibly result in doing all His pleasure. Thus the ***divine purposes*** are characterized by certain peculiarities, which, when properly understood, must produce awful sensibilities in every reflecting mind.

1st. They are inconceivably venerable for their antiquity, bearing date before the foundation of the world; like God Himself, they have no beginning and so are called His ***eternal purpose***.

2nd. They are ***absolutely free*** and gloriously *independent*. – *Who hath been His counselor.- “I will do all My pleasure.*

3rd. It naturally follows that they are ***unchangeable***. – “*With Him is no variableness neither shadow of turning.*”- “*I am the Lord, I change not.*”

4th. They are ***universal***; Thus “*He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,*” both “*in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth.*”

But with the divine purposes concerning man in his present state and future prospects, have we more particularly to do at present. Uncounseled by any did the Almighty Creator determine the nature and constituent properties of man: the imperfections and liabilities of his condition; the precise number and names of all succeeding generations throughout the vast revolutions of

time: the modes and circumstances of their existence: the particular path each would take through life: the time and manner of his death, and his eternal destiny all lay open and naked to His view, because within scope of His all-wise decrees, the connexion of divine providence has been unfolded sufficiently to impress this Truth upon our minds in a most awakening manner. The *Great Artificer* has joined all the determinations of His will, inseparably together by a chain so perfect in its formation that not a link can be broken.

From these views, which we presume to be consistent with the spirit and teaching of the Bible, we readily subscribe to the sentiment so clearly revealed in the Scriptures and put forth in our ancient "*form of sound words,*" viz: By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the praise of His glorious *grace*; others left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious *justice*. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed: and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. (See Con. Of Faith, Chapter 3: 53,4).

This glorious arrangement, so humbling to our proud hearts, is the result of the *free sovereign pleasure* of God. Simply so, "*Because it seemed good in ZHis sight.*" (Luke 10:21). Hence the names of some will be found written in the Lamb's Book of life; (Rev. 21:27; Phil. 4:3;) while the names of *the rest* will not be so found. (Rev. 27:8).

It is, indeed, a delightful Truth that God is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works, Psalm 145:9). Yet there are *some*, whom, He loves as His Jacobs anterior to their actual being; with an everlasting love, and therefore, in time, with loving kindness He draws them, (Jer. 31:3). *Some* of whom divine Truth asserts; that they were appointed **not** unto *wrath* but to *obtain salvation* by our Lord Jesus Christ, (I Thess 5:9, - chosen from the beginning, 2 Thes. 2:13, and ordained to eternal life, Acts 13:48, and "*afore prepared unto glory as vessels of mercy,*" (Romans 9:23). While of the rest we are told they were *blinded or left in blindness*, Romans 11 and do not believe because they are not of Christ's sheep, John 10:26, and are styled vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, (Romans 9:22). This fearful distinction, we readily admit does not exist, nor its ultimate consequences follow, without due regard to the qualities and dispositions of the soul. No fallen creature can possibly receive admission into the glorious presence of God, unless as a vessel of mercy he is afore prepared, by a conformity to Jesus Christ, for the celestial abode; nor will any be sent to perdition, but, as he having fitted and

prepared themselves by iniquity for the awful gulph. Yet we are in the infallible word, that the choice of any of the human family to eternal life, is not to be on the ground of any merit foreseen in them, or because there exists any difference in one from another. Jehovah chose them, *not* because they **did**; but, it is God who make them to differ: as by nature the chosen are children of wrath even as others. Surely if He *saved* and *calls*, not according to our *works*, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, it is not easy to conceive how He should have fixed His *choice according to our works*. (I Tim. 1:9).

No doubt you are appraised, brethren, that the precious Scripture Truth at which we have glanced, are warmly opposed by some amongst ourselves at this day; and altogether such may be constrained to acknowledge that many portions of the world give countenance to something of the kind; yet seeing that many abuse and fight against these doctrines, would not prudence and sound policy dictate, say they, that we should cease to exhibit them in our ministry, especially as they declare that they can discover no possible connexion the preaching of them can have with the conversion of sinners; yea, that sinners are known to stumble at them, and not a few in our churches have no relish; no not even for their name. But is it come to this, that the unconverted shall prescribe to us what portion of revealed Truth we shall preach and what we must suppress? If so, truly, where are we to stop in this work of accommodation? [Sep: We now know! They threw it all away!] What principle of divine Truth is it forsooth that they love? Shall we be told that if we hold fast the "*form of sound words*," and use great plainness of speech in this day of light and refined taste, multitudes will refuse to hear the word, and thus place themselves beyond the means of conversion. Be it so! Were there not those in old times who so treated the Master? (see John 6:60-66; Luke 4:25-29;) did He suppress the Truth to relieve them? No! nor did His Apostles before those despisers who wondered and perished. (Acts 13:41).

[Note: A portion of the side of this pages is rotted away, so I'll have to try restoration by contextual reading. I'm placing this restoration between brackets [].

[. . . .those in the churches on whom the word of truth produce this painful condition, let such as bring in those who fight against the word answer to the Master of the house. The "wood, hay, and stubble they carry into His temple to feed the flames of their burning zeal, will have its work. But we cannot be persuaded to cast away our sweetest and most precious and delightful Truths, our souls are much encouraged perseveringly to war a good fight of faith, not withstanding our moral hemisphere should be veiled and shrouded in the

flood of error and delusion. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God. The Spirit of the Lord is not straightened. Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; as most unquestionably, divine *fore-knowledge* is closely connected with *glorification* in relation to all the objects of His sovereign good pleasure.

Therefore, let us hold fast the form of sound words without wavering. This must be with much prudence and decided firmness, as probably society in all its historical conditions was never in a state of greater excitability. 1st. This is the distinguishing mark of the age. Every thing is “*going ahead*,” with *loco-motive* celerity, which movement is pushed onward to keep pace with the improvements of the times. Old institutions and soberness fall vastly in the rear; while rash and unscriptural exercises leaves neither time for reflection or scriptural improvement. Thus persons are in] thoughtlessly whirled into the baptismal waters and hastened into the churches without being allowed sufficient time to count the cost, or opportunity to inform the mind as to the important position they assume. In short, every movement is produced as the power of electricity; and the people are supplied not so much with the bread of life as by an artificial stimulus affecting only the passions. Thus true spiritual life and vigor decline while a weak and sickly growth inevitably follows; the great Truths of the Gospel are not admired, reflected on, received and practiced. The form of sound words is not unfrequently represented as deleterious to holiness, and all who have the courage to hold them fast, are stigmatized as anti-nomianism, and represented as being unto every good work reprobate.

2nd. We should firmly adhere to the “form of sound words,” as the church of God is fearfully threatened with innovations on every hand. Alchemy (sic) seems to be resuscitated: and the *philosopher’s stone* diligently sought, not as anciently to convert all the elect, but to transform all into religion. Every moralizing attempt must be appended to the religion of works and made to occupy a seat in the church. The revolution of almost every year discovers new measures, while the Scriptures are tortured to yield some countenance in the exclusion of the Apostolic means which are deemed inefficient for the purposes of saving men and glorifying God. Unconverted man-measures are set up as the criterion by which to decide Christian character and experience in the sight of God. These innovations are pressed beyond all the bounds of Christian prudence. Under the burning influence of this spirit the *experience, sober and intelligent membership* of churches are held up to public view as “*dead weight*,” “*stumbling blocks*,” over whom souls are stumbling headlong into hell and *obstacles* in the way of God’s

work. The youthful adversaries of the ministry consider this portion of the true Church too often as the proper and legitimate enemy in which to drive his most pointed weapons. The inexperienced who have but just assumed his armour, readily catching the contagion, usurp the reins; and *phaeton-like*, dash forth the ?????? ear regardless of consequences. Thus Zion mourns and is divided: her aged sons and daughters who have borne the burden and heat of the day, go forth weeping and find no rest for the soles of their feet.

3rd. The Churches of Christ should most pertinacious hold fast a “form of sound *doctrine*, of sound *experience*, and a sound *practice*; for unless these subsist in some good degree all our profession is vain. The neglect of this engenders and diffuses through the community a spirit of infidelity. Religion professes to be of God, and on Him its votaries declare their only dependence rests for its final success. No institution was ever more narrowly regarded by the world to discover some discrepancy between profession and practice. When, therefore, associations and combinations obviously of human, and also of recent origin, without the shadow of Apostolic authority, are mainly relied on for the triumphs of the Gospel; when it is clear that human measures take precedence of Scripture authority and primitive practices, can we wonder to hear, as we frequently do from the mouth of the skeptic, that the advocates of religion conscious of the imbecility of the boasted system to withstand the light, and to rest secure on its own basis, are surrounding itself with fortresses and entrenchments of human device and ingenuity, having no foundation in rational thought. Does the cause of Truth now need *pioncers* (?) to clear the way, *unused*, because *undiscovered* by infinite wisdom in former days? Are institutions raised up by man’s devices and inventions necessary as the nurseries of the church, which were unknown in her infant state? Let us, dear brethren, be jealous over ourselves, with a godly jealousy lest we by any means be removed from the simplicity of the Gospel; and while we fancy we are building up the wall, the unconverted and others daub it with untempered mortar. Let us watch and pray lest we do the ?????? Lord under deception, and while we fancy we are successfully moving forward Christianity in the world, we are polishing and confirming infidelity.

John Miller, *Moderator*,

James B. Bowen, *Clerk*.