

1879 CIRCULAR DELAWARE RIVER

Written by

Elder J.M. Purington

[Item 7 reads: “Appointed the Elders of this association, together with such other brethren as may **be present** at the meeting of the committee, to examine and report on the Circular Letter.”]

Item 11 reads: “The committee on the Circular Letter reported and recommended the same, which was read and adopted.”

We think it important to record the above, along with the Elders and associations’ messengers present, and alert the reader to the doctrines these brethren fully subscribed to. In **dark, bold, characters**, we underline those present that we know, historically, compromised the doctrines less than ten years after this date.

Ministers present this session were: Elders Gilbert Beebe, B. Bundy, I. Hewitt, L. P. Cole, I. B. Whitcomb, William Pollard, J.D. Hubbell, N.Y.; James Martindale, P. W. Sawin, Ind.; T. M. Paulson, William M. Smoot, Va.; **F. A. Chick**, Md.; Wilson Housel, William J. Purington, A.B. Francis, N.J.; Licentiates.- J.C. Bateman, Ontario, Canada; Benton Jenkin, N. Y.; G. M. Fetter, and W. B. Kugler, N. J.

Associations seated this session were: Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, Warwick, Chemung, Conference Western N.Y., Corresponding, Va., Lexington, N.Y., Maine Conference, Maine Association, Licking Particular, Salisbury, Oconee, Euharley, Yellow River, Ocmulgee, Kehukee, Contentna, Western Corresponding of Mo. And Covenanted Particular Baptist Church of Canada.

Item # 4. “Messengers from sister associations, and visiting brethren, were invited to seats with us. Brethren present not members of, nor messengers from any association with whom we correspond, are invited only on motion and vote of the association.”]

CIRCULAR

The Elders and messengers composing the Delaware River Old School Baptist Association, in session with the First Hopewell Church, Mercer Co., N.J., May 28th, 29th, and 30th, 1879, to the several churches whose messengers we are, send hristian salutation.

Beloved Brethren:- Through the abounding goodness and watch-care of our unchanging and covenant-keeping God, we are spared to meet again, agreeable to our previous appointment, for which great privilege we surely ought to render thanksgiving to Him who keepeth Israel in safety, and supplies the saints with every blessing, **both temporal and spiritual.**

As it has been our established rule, from our organization to the present time, to

present an annual address by letter, we feel to continue the custom, and at this time would call your attention to the following declaration of Scripture: “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and established in faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*” - Col. 2:6,7.

The exhortations, precepts and commandments recorded in the twenty-one epistles written in the New Testament, are not addressed to the children of men *indiscriminately*, but unto professed believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, although the votaries of anti-Christ, and that man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God, have been clearly delineated, in all their horrid deformity and hateful abominations, by the pen of inspired apostles; but Gospel precepts are not addressed to them, neither do they apply to the vessels of mercy in their flesh, before born again, of the Spirit. For Saul of Tarsus was ignorant of the binding force of Gospel injunctions, until that wonderful time of which he speaks; for said he, “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son [not to, but] in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*” This man of God was prepared by grace, as a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory, to set forth, in Gospel order, the things pertaining to the organized church, and the outward walk of believers while tabernacling [sic] here in the flesh, yet he claimed no merit nor power of himself to bring it to pass; for said he, “*By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me.*” Divine truth, when cordially received, always produces, sooner or later, effects corresponding to its own nature. No person, who has beheld the divine glory shine in the atonement of Christ, and who has a good hope through grace therein, can possibly exhibit in his own *habitual dominion* of principles that are the very reverse of the Gospel which he has received; therefore the apostle said, “*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which*” were “*at Colosse,*” (and he says the same to us, if we are born of the Spirit,) “*as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.*”

As we proceed to make some remarks upon the text now under consideration, it is of vast importance that we notice **what** the apostle said his brethren had receive: for it was not merely a *reformation*, not simply a conversion, **not the changing of their carnal nature**, but the reception of “Christ Jesus the Lord;” and the receiving of Christ was the **causal principle** which produced then, as well as now, the glorious fruit of the Spirit, *viz., “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is not law.”* The bearing, or showing forth, of that heavenly fruit is the **evidence of spiritual life and vital union to Christ, the Head of the church** (Emphasis mine, SCP). It appears to be very important that sustaining and corroborating proof should be adduced from the New Testament that Christ is received, and that there

is a birth of the Spirit, a birth of God, for it is positively and solemnly asseverated by our Lord Jesus Christ to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;” and all the cunning, wisdom and ingenuity of mortal man can never change the awfully solemn import of the Savior’s declaration. *“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, (even) to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* (John 1:12-13). If this quotation does not set forth a birth of God, **separate and distinct from the natural birth of the children of men,** then terms have no meaning whatever, and we have no possible means of expressing out thoughts, motives and actions in an intelligent manner, and language is entirely useless. And, as attesting and sustaining the all-important Truth, that the children of God receive Christ experimentally by being born again, what stronger evidence can we have than the following declarations? **But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.** *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; But the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”* *“I am crucified **with** Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live **in the flesh,** I live by the faith of the Son of God, who love me, and gave Himself for me.”* *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to Thy **SEED, which is Christ.**”*

Now, dearly beloved brethren and sisters, the apostle declares that *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;”* and have we not thus received Him? If we have thus received Him, the injunction of the apostle is known and felt by experience in our hearts, concerning deliverance from carnal rites and ceremonies; for said he, *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or drink, or in respect of a holy day, or the new moon, or of Sabbath days, which are shadows of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”* The apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, says that he was *“separated unto the Gospel of God, which he had promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”* Therefore the Gospel of God concerns His Son, and the whole of it is comprised in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; so that whoever departs in any way from Him, departs from the Gospel; for as Jesus Christ is the divine image of the Father, He is set before us as the *real object* of our faith. When deliverance was given us in our first experience, if such release was real, and we were enabled to entertain a good hope through grace, it was Christ in us the hope of glory. At the time that glorious hope was bestowed upon us, did we not feel childlike, meek and humble? Did we not feel then that we wished no harm to any mortal on the earth? Did we not feel that we could endure all things for the elect’s sake? Did we not then truly lay *“aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings?”* Did we not *“as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that we”* might *“grow thereby?”* Did we not feel that we had

“tasted that the Lord is gracious?” If we have thus received Christ, the injunction is that we should so walk in Him.

By so walking in Him, we certainly shall be inculcating brotherly love; but where deception is practiced, and the attempt is made, with much speciousness and carnal ingenuity, to misrepresent brethren, and real facts are perverted with much subtlety, as certainly as effect follows cause, there will be an extinguishing of brotherly love. In unguarded moments we all say and do what we afterwards sorely regret; but such circumstances are very different from that *persistent* course pursued in endeavoring to bias the mind against brethren, concerning what they are not proclaiming nor preaching. If we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, it was not in that manner; and if such a course is continually followed, the evidence is that we have not received Christ, but have merely a theory. And although many truths, in the abstract, be contended for, and much outward zeal be manifested, if the love of God be not in our hearts, it all avails nothing; for the apostle Paul has said, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”*

If in our experience the grace of God hath appeared unto us, we have been taught that while in this world we should deny *“ungodliness and worldly lusts;”* that *“we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”* And when enabled thus to do, we are walking in the precepts of the Gospel, walking in Christ Jesus our Lord; but when we are *“wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which”* we *“ought not,”* we are then walking in the flesh. The apostle Peter says, *“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on His behalf.”*

We must contend that it is impossible for a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to be an unjust man, because he has seen, through faith in the cross of Christ, such a display of divine justice that he cannot, though tempted at times by his carnal mind to do so, practice injustice; and such a man cannot be an unmerciful and implacable person, because he has beheld in the atonement, made by our Lord Jesus Christ, the highest display of divine compassion towards his own guilty soul; and accordingly as he is led by the Spirit to discover the fact that the compassion of God towards him is incomprehensible, he will certainly be so influenced that he will be kind and tender-hearted towards the children of God, ready to forgive injuries, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven him. A true believer cannot be a deceitful man or a liar, because his mind has been so deeply affected by the view he has had of the character of Jehovah, as it appears to him in the glorious way of salvation; and he has been taught to admire the truth and faithfulness of his Redeemer God, and in his measure he exhibits the character

which Paul describes in the following declarations: *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”*

“Rooted and built up in Him.” As the root is that part of the vine, shrub or tree which imparts life and vigor to the branches, causing them to flourish and bear fruit, so to be rooted and built up in Christ is something far beyond merely contending for the letter of the word. **It shows that there can be no life and vitality unless it** (the branch, or person, or church) **be vitally united to and one with the root; but that vital union will not lessen the deep anxiety on the part of the heaven-born and heaven-taught to contend for the true and just meaning of the letter of the word.** (Emphasis, SCP) But they desire to do so in meekness, fear, love and reverence, and not merely for the sake of argument, in order simply to put to flight an adversary; for they who advocate the Truth because they are rooted and built up in Christ, would remember that holy and reverend is the name of their God. Said the Savior, *“I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.”* Also, *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”* These solemn admonitions of the Son of God to His people cannot be too carefully heeded by the lovers of Truth. Every example, every reproof and every commandment recorded in the New Testament, contains important things for believers to practice while sojourning in the flesh; and the more deeply rooted in their experience in Him, and the more firmly built, the less trouble will the “isms” and delusions of the present day give them; for the more odious error appears, the brighter the Truth will shine. And being thus rooted and built up in Him, they are *“no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”*

“And established in faith.” *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; for by it the Elders obtained a good report.”* The faith of the saints who lived on earth and died before the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, caused them to implicitly trust in the promise of God concerning the advent of Jesus Christ into this world, that He would magnify the law and make it honorable, finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. Those ancient servants of God were established in faith. The faith of God’s elect is the same under the Gospel dispensation as it was under the legal dispensation; but, while the saints were under the law, they were so established in the

faith that they knew what God had promised, concerning His Son's coming in the flesh, would be accomplished. And God's children now, under the reign of grace, are so established in faith as to fully believe that Christ has put away the sins of His people by the sacrifice of Himself, and by that one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified; and all promised to His dear children will certainly be accomplished. To be established in faith is a great blessing; for when such is the case, the poor, timid, tempest-tossed children cannot, dare not doubt but that the promise of their heavenly Father will certainly be accomplished, however dark and gloomy surrounding circumstances may appear. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* Job said, *"When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."* The apostle Paul, in that terrific storm while on his way to Rome, a prisoner, said, *"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for **I believe God**, that it shall be even as it was told unto me."*

"As ye have been taught." The saints have an infallible Teacher; for *"All Thy children shall be taught **of the Lord**; and great shall be the peace of Thy children."* And of these children it was said, *"Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Savior."* The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, has never taught the children of God contradictory lessons. Said the Savior to the disciples, just before His betrayal and crucifixion, *"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever: even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world **cannot receive**, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth **with you**, and shall **be in you**."* And on another occasion the Master said, *"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."* *"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye knoweth all things."*

They who are born again, not of corruptible, of fleshly, seed, but of incorruptible, (seed) by the word of God, which **liveth and abideth forever**, have the same Teacher today that the church had in her first organization; and how thankful the lovers of truth ought to be that whatever betide the generations of men in the future, their blessed Teacher will instruct, uphold and comfort them. Though they should be deprived of church privileges, and a chaotic state of society should exist, still the Comforter will teach them; and they have been taught those very truths, and at times rest sweetly upon the firm foundation laid in Zion for the hope of the guilty, though they be scattered abroad and alone; and they do rejoice that their heavenly Father is the sole Arbiter of all events; that *"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet;"* and also, that *"The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."*

"Abounding therein with thanksgiving." What wonderful displays of the loving-kindness, mercies, wisdom and power of their heavenly Father do the children of God witness while in this earthly house of their tabernacle, or earthen vessel. When they enjoy the good hope through grace that they have been made the recipients of eternal

life, and have the heart-felt evidence that God is their Father and heaven their home, there is an abounding of thanksgiving, and an unspeakably ardent desire for the peace, prosperity and happiness of the church, in her many visibly organized branches, and is a prayerful desire to walk in the commandments of their Savior, blameless and harmless. The apostle Peter says, *“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity; for if these things **be in you** and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Sometimes the children of God have such a view of the way the lord has led them on in their earthly pilgrimage, and remember the many deliverances He has granted them in times of deep distress, and the blessed privilege bestowed upon them in the past, as well as present bounties enjoyed, they feel that if ten thousand tongues were theirs, and were they all used in sweet harmony, the thanksgiving would even then fall infinitely short of rendering to their heavenly Father the praise, adoration and reverence which are justly His due.

Beloved in the Lord, May we all be so taught by the Spirit as to realize more fully the force of the examples, precepts and injunctions recorded in the New Testament for our rule while in this world, and be enabled to show, not only to one another, but to the gazing and gainsaying world of mankind, that we not only believe what we profess, but love the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; therefore, if it be His will, may our God grant us grace so that we shall daily feel the force of the following words: *“See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord: giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”*

We have in a brief manner, brethren, called your attention to those things which pertain to the course of life that should be pursued by us while journeying through this wilderness world, feeling satisfied that brotherly love cannot be inculcated by disobeying the commandments of our Savior; and as brevity, in a letter like this, is commendable, we close our address with the following declaration of Scripture: *“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”*

William J. Purington, *Moderator.*

A. B. Francis, *Clerk.*