

1801 CIRCULAR LETTER WARWICK

by

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[The copy of this Minute is the hand-written copy – a nightmare to transcribe. However, in what I could make out, I thought it worth attempting. If you receive it, Guess what? Another guess don't count! I'll stick it under my glass and see how clear I can make the print. – Stan Phillips]

The Circular Letter

The Warwick Baptist Association convened at Redford (?), West Chester County, in the State of New-York, May 26 and 27, 1801.

To the Churches they represent, send Christian Salutation.

Dear Brethren,

I now address you on the subject of **THE GLORIFICATION OF THE CHURCH**. As it is known but in part in the present state – so the description of it must be in part; - *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”* The word *glorification* implies every thing beneficial, as it respects the body, called “the Church,” and in illustration of this we shall consider it in **three parts**; to that in their connection we may say *“that upon all the glory shall be a defence”* – Isaiah 4:5. First, Its beginning and laying the foundation- Secondly, The enjoyment and pleasures of the subjects composing the body. Third, the appearance in glory in a future state.

I. Its beginning and laying the foundation. The blessings of grace that the Church enjoys are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus and were committed to and ratified in the hands of the Mediator. Gal. 2:15. This is the beginning and foundation, so that Christ became the actual Head and real Surety of the Church. *“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, etc.”* Isaiah 28:16. These blessings of grace have in them ***eternal life***- which being certified to the hands of Christ before the foundation of the world, He became to His people a foundation and *tower* of strength and influence which hath a glory in them, John 17:5; where He evidently alludes to the grace of spiritual life in Him. *“The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them, that they may be **one** even as we are one.”* John 17:3- 22. On this Rock the Church is built, and against it the gates of hell can never prevail. Other foundation can no man lay; hence though in the winds of false doctrine shall blow, and the storms of persecution break in upon it, the Church shall stand, because its foundation is on such a Rock- which is the good pleasure of God. He is the Rock. His work is perfect. Deut. 32:4. The children of God are represented as being with shoutings of “grace, grace unto it.” –Zech. 4:7. Hence Christ is described as accomplishing the salvation of His Church with power and great glory. Matt. 24:30. His own arm bringeth salvation, Isaiah 63:3. All this answers to the promise of God before

the world was- Titus 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:9. The Church derives strong consolation from the assured belief that God is true and His work perfect. Having this seal, “the Lord knows them that are His.”- 2 Tim. 2:19.

The experience of the members composing this body, having their understanding brought out of darkness – made light in the Lord; their heart reconciled to God in the Word of His grace; their expectations are raised and set on things above. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord they are changed into the same image from glory unto glory; even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Cor. 5:18, Hence the King’s daughter is said to be all glorious within and her clothing is of wrought gold. We remark also, that there is an agreement of the individual with God, in the manifestation of it; in the provision of His grace; in the redemption by the blood of Christ in Justification by His imputed righteousness; in the eternal union of the Church and fellowship in the order of the Gospel – all these fill the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Holy Spirit teaches us that it is our privilege and duty to be glad and rejoice forever in that which He creates; for He has created Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people with joy. He says “I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in My people.” Thus we see that they are glorified in the essence of divine grace and God is glorified in them. We learn from the Bible, that this glory manifested itself in individual characters in the beginning, or soon after man apostatized, and that it lay in personal characters until the Gospel dispensation took place as witnesses of the glory to be revealed. 1 Peter 1:10. Observe, that the Church appeared in personal characters, who were mixed with in this world, under the same laws, and were in bondage, nothing differing in their visible standing from servants till the fullness of time came. Yet, by their zeal for God, the reverence of His name, their expectations of enjoying Him in His kingdom of glory, they shone as lights, and were heirs of the inheritance in heaven. Thus they were witnesses of God’s grace and they glorified Him. Some of these worthies went about in sheep skins and goat hair, taking shelter in dens and in caves to escape the rage of their adversaries. The epistle of Hebrews furnishes an extended list: David and Daniel testified with others that they were from another and better country; that is, an heavenly one. These in their time looked forward as the morning, or day dawn; they sustained a glorious character, obtained a blessing and have entered into glory. But the Church in Gospel times has an appearance of more glory than the ancient worthies had, and bears a clearer resemblance to His heavenly than they did. Her glorification is more uniform and elevated. She is a visible body – chosen out of the world – not reckoned among the nations – made of lively stones – a spiritual house – and partaker of the heavenly calling – not as wise men after the flesh – not many mighty – not many noble are called; and those who are called are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints, unmixed with the children of the flesh. “*The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God*” Romans 9.8. - the Church being now made free in the doctrine of Christ – in His promises and ordinances, in all their glory! Now, Paul and Apollos – Cephas and Christ: things present and future, all belong to the faith, for their improvement edification and

comfort; free from the overbearing carnal selfish motives of worldly men; keeping the faith once delivered to the Saints in light, they appear fair as the moon, clear as the sun that shines upon her. There is one glory of the moon; and, although she shines in the night – she travels in that glory which she borrows from the sun. So, the Church, in her visible state of Gospel faith and order has a glory from Christ, and is changed from glory unto glory. Therefore by the privileges Christ confess His Churches are exalted in glory, resembling the heavenly state.

II. We now pass to notice the Church in her perfected state in the kingdom of God above. This will be only the completion of events she was heir to in all her happiness below – In describing her future glory we may sum it up by saying, The Church will then appear in the perfect likeness and full enjoyment of Christ. This corruptible shall put on incorruption and thus conform to the spiritual life born of the incorruptible seed; and this mortal shall put on immortality, as being in the life of Christ. Death will be swallowed up in victory! Every evil will be excluded and every good will be enjoyed. Those who have followed Jesus in the regeneration will reign with Him in glory. In this life the Church appears as an “army with banners;” her weapons though not carnal, are mighty through God to demolish Satan’s strongholds, but in her exalted state she will be without spot or blemish, She will have joined a complete conquest through Christ; by the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming, rising in triumph far above every foe and beyond the reach of sin. She will shine as the Sun in her Father’s kingdom forever. The glorification of the Church was an object with God in Eternity when she was given to Him of the everlasting Father. He hath chosen her to justification through the Spirit and belief of the truth. He has displayed His power and grace in every age and we firmly believe in union He justified her in Himself. And now dearly beloved, we wish to all grace to stand, that when He shall appear, we shall appear also with Him.

John Caton, *Moderator*

John Stanford, *Clerk*.