

1811 Circular Warwick Association

Written by
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The Ministers and Messengers of the Warwick Baptist Association, to the Churches they severally represent, send Christian salutations.

Beloved Brethren,

In conformity to the long established custom of annually addressing you upon some religious subject, there cannot be any other more endearing than **Divine Love**; permit me to offer a few thoughts on the excellent attribute of Jehovah, for your consideration “for God is love,” 1st John 4:5, the towering thought can soar no higher; the most ardent desire can wish no more; it is the ocean of heaven and the river of delights that waters the blissful field of glory. Wondering angels view it with rapture, and with seraphic ecstasy, sing the honors of the God of Love.

We may also dwell upon the theme of love, employ our minds, our tongues and pens, and expatiate on its matchless excellencies with language that might melt the heart into astonishment and our eyes into tears of sacred joy, yet not half be told. “*From everlasting to everlasting*” is the sweet subject of love, without beginning or end; a day without a night; a sea of delights without shore or bottom. It is a fountain of life inexhaustible, ever full, always flowing, where the thirsty may drink of the waters of life freely, and bathe their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest. In extension, as incomprehensible as Deity, and imparts life and bliss, and inestimable delights without limits or bounds. It is a risen sun in meridian brightness never to set; it dispels the sable glooms, scatters the clouds and mist of darkness that brood upon the minds of mortals, and with effulgent beams of uncreated light illuminates the Gospel hemisphere and pours its cheering influence on the Church below. Love is stronger than death; it brought the Father’s well beloved Son, the express image of His person, the King of kings, from His throne of glory to the deepest scenes of woe. Love sustained the ponderous load of all our aggregate guilt, endured Jehovah’s ire, broke the massy chain of death, vanquished hell, and amidst the shouts of myriads, sat down at His Father’s right hand.

In the strongest display of love, He interferes in the sorrows and grief of His people, “*opens the prison doors to them that are bound*” and preaches the acceptable year of the Lord. The love of God is conspicuous in the subject of His grace and trophies of His victory. The heart that once could defy Jehovah’s power, that neither judgment could drive or mercy melt by the charms of heavenly love is brought to the acknowledgement of the Prince of Peace, the enjoyment of a Savior’s love and sweet experience of a heaven begun below. The knee of king Manassas can bend before the throne, blaspheming Paul prays, and the flowing eyes of Mary washed her Lord’s feet, and her

disheveled hair becomes a napkin to wipe them dry; (what wonders love can do!) The astonishing condescension of the Most High in the pangs of His love claims the attention of every ear and the affection of every heart; the delight of the heavenly Lover was to do the will of His Father (as it was written in the volume of the book) to compel the sons and daughters of affliction and sorrow to His Beloved embrace. He stands in the great day of the feast cries: His voice is both majestic and graceful, and His words are clothed with heavenly sweetness. *“If any man thirst let him come and drink of the waters of life freely.”*

Rest, freely given to the weary and heavy laden – mournful hearts have a fullness of comfort and wounded spirits have a certain cure, and in every circumstance of life the humble soul may freely come in at mercy’s door and share in the affections of the Friend of sinners. O unequalled love! Higher than the heavens, broad as infinity and deeper than the grave, yet stoops to liberate slaves to sin from their chains, drudges of Satan, from the gates of hell to thrones and crowns of glory in consummate bliss. Divine Love effects a sweet assimilation in every child of God, as God is love and completely happy in the enjoyment of His love, without change or the least degree of discomposure, so is the humble heart under its sweet enjoyment; as God is love, so divine love unites God’s dear children in one body in Christ, their Head, they are joined in one spirit, engaged in one general cause; their united hearts promote the interest of Christ kingdom and each other’s good, and with a brother’s care in each other’s afflictions affords a friendly aid in times of distress.

Divine Love is exhilarating; it cheers the disconsolate, raises up the bowed down, sweetens the bitter cup of affliction, illuminates our darkest nights of sorrow and dispels our glooms; it makes our bed in sickness, softens the bed of death, and finally, the soft handkerchief of love will wipe away all our tears and waft our weary souls to a kingdom of endless repose.

Lastly, love is the substance of heaven, the effulgence of glory, the heart of uncreated delight, the joy of angels and song of the Church of the First born triumphant in heaven. In a word it bars and bolts the gates of hell, and wide unfolds the golden leaves and everlasting doors of bliss, and hails the happy heirs of heaven to dwell with God, forever blest.

O thrice happy day when will our illustrious dawn salute our immortal eyes and raise our weary souls to join the everlasting songs of praise to the God of love. Now dear brethren let us take the exhortation of Jude, 21st verse.- *“Keep yourselves in the love of God;”* and of Paul, Hebrews 13th 1st.- *“Let brotherly love continue”* and urge our way through this dark world of woe, putting our trust solely on the arm of Omnipotence until we are raised to unite with the Church triumphant, and sing unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and Himself, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen.

Benjamin Montanye, *Moderator*.

Levi Hall, *Clerk*.