

1851 Circular Warwick Baptist Association

[Associations in correspondence this session were: Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, Corresponding of Va., Ketocton, Licking Particular of Ky., Maine Old School Association, Maine Old School Conference, Chemung and Allegheny, Rappahannock, Va., and Salisbury, Md.

Ministers seated in this session were: Elders: Reed Burritt, Amos Harding, Gabriel Conklin, William Purington, B. Pitcher, Gilbert Beebe, P. C. Brome, P. Hartwell and D. Forshee. Nothing noteworthy mentioned in the Minute.- Scp.]

CIRCULAR LETTER

The Elders and brethren of the Warwick Baptist Association, convened with the church at Warwick Orange County, N.Y., on Wednesday and Thursday, the 4th & 5th of June, 1851, to the churches whose messengers we are, send Christian salutation.

Beloved Brethren:- Being in the providence of God, permitted to meet once more in association, we embrace the opportunity of writing a few words to you in circular form. The ***Doctrine of the Church of God and its Government*** will constitute the subject upon which we propose briefly to dwell in this letter.

We are deeply sensible of the magnitude of the subject before us, and of the impossibility of setting it adequately in a brief circular, in its fullness; for volumes might be written upon the subject and yet the truth would not be fully presented: but we shall endeavor to bring to view a few particulars, and to set forth the subject as appeared in the Scriptures of Truth.

The church is styled the *Kingdom of God* and the members thereof are called “Sons, and heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” The visible church is composed of believers, who have been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and continue steadfast in the Apostles’ doctrine and observe the commandments and ordinances of the Lord’s house, to walk in them. They are called Christians, because they are Christ-like, (anointed) and they are conformed to His Law – the law of His Kingdom.

Being born of God, they are partakers of the Life of Christ. The baptism of believers sets forth their death to the law, to which they have been made dead by the body of Christ, and their being raised from the dead by that same body; they are married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead. The law cannot have dominion over them for they are not under the law, but under grace. The name *kingdom*, by which the church is frequently called, in some degree expresses the *form* of its government.

The subjects of this Kingdom are not required *to make laws for themselves*, nor to devise plans for the enlargement of the Kingdom; but to be in subjection to their King in all things. Christ is the King in Zion, for of Him God hath said, “*Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion*” –Psalm 2: 6, and He is the Fountain, and source of all Law to

the church, which is His body. He came rightfully to the Throne. *“Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment”* – Psalm 32:1. This is Jesus our King, for ever and ever. His throne shall never be vacated, and His glory will He not give to another. He will reign, until all His enemies are destroyed, and every power is subjected to His sovereign will. Obstacles ever apparently insurmountable, cannot obstruct His course, for His pathway is clear, *“and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”* – Isaiah 53:10. He declared to His disciples, *“All power is given unto Me, in heaven and in earth”*- Matthew 28: 18. The testimonies of God, which are very firm, confirm this glorious Truth. *“As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give **eternal** life, to as many as Thou hast given Me”* – John 17:2. *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, Thou hast the dew of Thy youth”*- Psalm 110:3. He is authorized to establish doctrine, and order in the church, *“For unto **us** a child is born, unto **us** a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this”*- Isaiah 9: 6,7.

The Law of Christ is **absolute**, and imperatively binding upon **every believer**; and they are under law to Him, and all His commandments and precepts require obedience, while the traditions and ordinances of men, are to be rejected. It would be treason against her King, should we receive and obey laws which He has not given. His laws being perfect, they require no amendments – His ordinances admit of no change. The laws of Zion are recorded in the New Testament, by the apostles who were by Him constituted judges of the twelve tribes of Israel, and answer to the Psalm mentioned by the prophet Isaiah. 32: 1.

All matters relative to His Kingdom, have been determined by them, and from their decision there can be no appeal. Whatsoever they have bound on earth is bound in heaven, and whatsoever they have loosed on earth are loosed in heaven. Their decision establishes both doctrine and order in the church which was fully organized on the day of Pentecost, when God made a great display of His power and grace, and when the first Gospel sermon was preached, after the disciples were commissioned to *“Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to **observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you**, and lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world”*- Matthew 28: 19, 20. **All things** spoken by Christ, were brought to their remembrance, by the Holy Ghost. From the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and from other discourses left on record we learn their method of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Their example is to be followed by the ministers of Christ, to the **end of time**. Thus when the people heard the word of the Lord preached by Peter, they were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, to

the Apostles, *“Men and brethren, What shall we do?”* And Peter said, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”*- Acts 2:38. The order of the church is beautifully set forth in these words, *“Then they that **gladly received the word**, were baptized, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. **And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**”* And the *“Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”* The church then organized was a “baptist church,” unless it can be shown from the Scriptures, that the King has changed that order, (which cannot be broken, for what God does is forever) it is a baptist church still.

The Apostles’ doctrine, clearly declares the **sovereignty of God**; the everlasting union of Christ and His church; personal, unconditional election, the predestination of the elect unto eternal life, particular redemption, effectual calling; complete salvation from sin and condemnation, by the sovereign grace of God, with all the kindred principles of the doctrine of Christ exhibited in the Gospel of the grace of God.

In this doctrine the church continued. – Such was the church eighteen hundred years since:- such is the church of God now.- A professed church, unless adhering to this **doctrine and order**, cannot be identified with the *mystical body of Christ*. All which receive the doctrine, commandments, ordinances, or institutions of men, instead of or in addition to the Apostolic doctrine, are fully identified with antichrist, and by the laws of Zion’s King, are held as enemies of the cross of Christ. *“He that is not with Me, is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad”*- Matthew 12:30. *“No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon,”*- Matthew 6: 24. Such is the decision of the King.

It is not only necessary that we continue steadfast in the doctrine of the Apostles, that it may be known that we are the *subjects* of Zion’s King; but we must be conformed to His image, follow in His footsteps, and obey Him. *“Ye are My friends if ye **do whatsoever I command you**”*- John 15: 14. *“Not every one who saith unto Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven. Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord! Lord! Have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? And in Thy name did many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity”*- Matthew 7: 21-23.

The church is styled the Temple of God. The house of God; A garden; A Vineyard,” &c., which terms imply that **order** is necessary in the church, that she may appear in her beauty. In his letter to the church at Colosse, the Apostle Paul speaks of their *order*. *“For though I be absent in the flesh, I am with you in spirit, joying and **beholding your order**, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ the Lord, so walk ye in Him. Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as*

ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving”- Col. 2: 5-7. Although born of God, the believer finds within a nature carnal, and unsanctified, which will manifest itself from time to time in opposition to the law of Christ, and to **the order established by Him**. How many, and solemn are the admonitions to the church, upon this point, which it becomes us to take heed. *“Let brotherly love continue. Let us try to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.”* In order that the church may enjoy health and peace, the Lord and His Apostles have plainly given a system of discipline which must be strictly maintained. *“If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault.”* As the Lord has commanded, and if necessary take the other steps ordered by our Lawgiver and then will the church *“look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”* Ever looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of her faith, and the source of her order and discipline.

Finally brethren, Farewell. “Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of **one mind, live in peace**; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with an holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

P. Hartwell, *Moderator*.

William L. Benedict, *Clerk*.