

1837 Circular Warwick Ass'n.

[Note: The committee on the Circular Letter not having time to write one, recommended the **1836 Circular of the Chemung** Association, which was read and adopted for this session.

Associations in correspondence this session were: Lexington, Delaware, Delaware River, Baltimore and Ketchikan was sent messengers, Elders Beebe, Bowen and Wig.

Elders present this session were: Elders Richard Pickard, Gabriel Conklin, Amos Harding, Phillip C. Broom, H. Hait, David Forshee, William House, St. John, Barton and Gilbert Beebe.

CIRCULAR LETTER

By

H. Hait

The Elders and Brethren of the Warwick Baptist Association: to the several churches they represent, Greetings:-

Dear Brethren:- The Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice; hence it is our privilege to search the Scripture. All who profess the name of Christianity, readily admit this principle. It is, however, to be deeply lamented, that its admission, or application, results in the production and adoption of sentiments so discordant and contradictory that it would seem as if the Volume of Inspiration had been considered as a mere textbook, to furnish some sentences or phrases, to justify the various organizations of different minds according to their diversified tastes. We apprehend this arise from ignorance, or disdain for the humbling truths of the Scripture; and often, partly from a loose and injudicious manner of discharging one's duty. To avoid the evils resulting from the latter source, permit us on this occasion, to suggest a few hints on the subject.

1st. Apply all declarations of the Word of God to the same characters, or class of persons to whom they were originally addressed. We apprehend that taking language addressed to the subjects of Christ's Kingdom, and applying it to the world, or that which it is not spoken to, or concerning ungodly men, to the saints of God, confounds things so diametrically opposite, and so awfully misrepresents the intention of the Spirit of God, as may necessarily result in the most dangerous mistakes. From this source has arisen a multitude of errors, which have completely infected the professed Church of Christ – dishonored God, and injured the souls of men; and which would never have existed, had not this plain and obvious rule been violated. So long as churches abide by the simple rule of doing all things in peace and with one accord, in one mind, taking the Scriptures solely as their only rule of both faith and practice, so peace and prosperity will reign.

2nd. Examine the connection. If we take detached portions of the sacred Scripture

and apply them to points without a strict regard to the design of the inspired writer or speaker, they may be made to express and prove any false sentiment we may choose. Doctrines the most opposite and contradictory to each other, may be clothed with all the apparent authority and solemnity of Divine Inspiration; and the most pernicious errors may be propagated and received as the solemn decisions of the God of Heaven.

3d. Avoid fanciful or whimsical interpretations. Divine Truth possesses much to sacred and solemn an importance to be made the subject of a sportive fancy. A spiritual soberness and gravity becomes the investigation of the import of language addressed to us relative to the character and government of the Eternal God, whom the highest angels adore; and in reference to our state and character as sinners in the flesh, and the way of salvation in the Spirit by our Lord Jesus Christ. Too often this regulation is transgressed, and a meaning attached especially to prophetic and metaphorical declarations, which they never were designed to express- and which neither the connection nor the analogy of Scripture will justify; while by multitudes it is admired and greedily received, on account of its novelty and fanciful character.

4th. Admit every legitimate consequence which flows from a fair interpretation. In the present day, we often hear objections made, on the ground that such a sentiment cannot be a true one, because it is unreasonable; or because we cannot reconcile it to the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God; or because we imagine it would have a certain effect which we suppose may be injurious. We are not competent, Brethren, with our limited capacities, to decide what either would or would not be just or unjust, wise or unwise, in the conduct of our Creator; or whether such a principle would or would not be injurious. In making this assumption, we arrogate to ourselves the seat of God Himself. Our only enquiry is, or rather ought to be, What has the Lord said? If He has made this, or the other assertion, it is holy, wise, and good, and can never be injurious, except by the perversion of it by our own carnal hearts.

5th. Explain passages which are difficult of interpretation, by those which are plain. In other parts of the Scripture, as well as in the Epistles of Paul, are some things "*hard to be understood.*" But it certainly can require no argument to show that it is unsafe to build any hypothesis on passages which are obscure – which cannot be sustained by the abundance of clear and explicit declarations. Whatever may be the import of the few different passages which are not easily understood, can it be supposed they are designed to teach principles contrary to clear and obvious Truth? Certainly not.

6th. Bring to the sacred Scriptures a disposition to bow to their authority. "If," said Christ, "*any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*"- John 11:17. Opinions of those not in subjection to His will are not to be credited. When we are under the influence of a disinclination to yield to the authority of the Divine Testimony, is it any wonder if the door of our hearts be barred against the reception of the Truth? Is it a matter of surprise if we endeavor to turn and accommodate it to the

unhallowed feelings and desires of our corrupt carnal minds; or may we be astonished if, as a just correction of our sin, our Heavenly Father permit us to fall into error which may fill us with perplexity, and injure the peace of our souls.

7th. In the last place, but by no means the least in importance, dear Brethren, the voice of Him who addresses you in the following language: “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not.*” Let it be yours to look to Him who alone can shed Divine Light into your hearts, that He may be pleased to pour upon you His Holy Spirit – to guard you from error and lead you into all Truth, which is His blessed promise. Thus may you realize the gracious fulfillment of the precious promise, “*All my children shall be taught of the Lord.*” May the Lord bless you and us, and through free and sovereign grace, bring us to His Heavenly standard of Truth to do His will.

Amos Harding, *Moderator.*

Gabriel Conklin, *Clerk*