

CIRCULAR LETTER: On Coldness in the Churches.
By Gilbert Beebe

The Elders and messengers composing the Warwick Old School Baptist Association, convened with the church at New Vernon, Orange Co., N. Y.; June 9th, 10th and 12th, 1880, address this, their annual Circular Letter, to the churches whose messengers they are.

Beloved Brethren:- It is recorded of the saints of old that they who feared the Lord spake often one to another; and an apostle has exhorted the saints "to forsake not the assembling of themselves together, but to exhort one another, and to provoke unto love and good works."

In our last annual address (1889) we called your attention to the spirit of apathy, coldness and indifference which had prevailed with some of our churches to an almost alarming extent, as expressed in their letters to this association, and we now propose to present for your serious consideration some of the causes which produce such a state of things.

It certainly becomes us to examine our own selves, and prove our own selves, whether we be in the faith; and in this examination we are to be governed by the only reliable standard, the Scriptures of divine Truth, the "*sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our hearts.*" Whatever we do or believe religiously is to be tested by this Word; and if we are sustained by the word and Spirit of our God, we certainly have no nothing to fear. "*For,*" says the apostle, "*who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*" If the apostles found it needful in their day to stir up the pure minds of the saints, it certainly is no less needful at the present day that we also have stirred up, that we may be mindful of the words spoken by our dear Redeemer and His inspired apostles.

As there can be no *effect* without a *cause* to produce it, there must be a cause for the drowsiness, coldness and barrenness in the things of the Spirit experienced by the people of God. The apostle found *disorders* in the churches at Corinth, and said to them, "*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*" Perhaps there is nothing more disheartening to a faithful minister of the Gospel, or more disorderly in the saints, or more calculated to produce barrenness and deadness among them, than the neglect to attend the appointed meetings of the church for the worship of God, and for the transaction of the affairs of Zion. The imperative accountability of the church to warn such disorderly members, we are led to believe, has been too often neglected.

When members become disorderly, and cannot be reclaimed by that course which the Scriptures point out and enjoin, it becomes the bounden duty of the church to put them away from her fellowship. We should not forget the solemn charge of the apostle (2 Thess. iii. 16,) "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.*" "*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven.*" We cannot expect peace and prosperity to abide with us, if we as churches, walk not according to this Gospel rule.

Perhaps we are led by a worldly, sentimental spirit, which is always sure to produce spiritual declension. We can not be conformed to the world, and at the same time enjoy the communion of the blessed Spirit. Says an apostle: "*If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" Many plead their love for God's disorderly children as the grounds for overlooking their walk and conversation; not realizing that in so doing, they show a lack of love for the Lord Jesus and His commands. We cannot sow to our flesh, and from it reap life and peace. It is a law which God

established in the beginning that everything shall bring forth “*after its own kind.*” Says an apostle, “*Be ye not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*” The truth of this declaration all the saints realize in their individual experience. Do we experience a dearth of spiritual enjoyment, and a lack of interest in the things of the Kingdom? If so, must we not conclude that we have been sowing to the flesh, and the harvest of death has ripened to our sorrow? “*Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little, ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink, ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes*”- Haggai 1. 5,6. Such was the message sent to Israel in the type; and as God would not suffer them to prosper in rebellion and disobedience, so neither will He suffer His spiritual Israel to prosper while walking in disorder and disobedience to the law of the King in Zion. When willing and obedient, they eat the good of the land which the Lord has blessed; but in disobedience and rebellion they shall find that the way of the transgressors is hard. The apostle tells us that those things which written aforetime were written for our admonition and instruction, and it is well for us that we consider our ways. Let none think that those things written aforetime under the law and prophets, are of no concern to us under grace; thus denying their profitability upon us upon whom the end of the world is come. While the Scriptures abundantly teach that our deliverance from the law and its curse does not depend upon our works, but was accomplished alone by the sacrifice of our Redeemer, yet our spiritual prosperity, our joys and comforts, are inseparably connected with our faithful obedience worked in us by our divine Lord and Master. Only in walking in the Spirit, and minding the things of the Spirit, can we *run and not be weary, walk and not be faint.*

Dear brethren, we write not these things to condemn you, but as beloved brethren, whom we have in our hearts, and whose prosperity we greatly desire, we exhort and warn you. We are living in evil days, and iniquity abounds, and the love of some of the saints seems to wax cold. Watch ye; stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

Gilbert Beebe, Moderator.
William L. Benedict, Clerk.
1880