

CIRCULAR LETTER.

TO THE BRETHREN COMPOSING THE NEW RIVER DISTRICT BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, OF VIRGINIA:

DEAR BRETHREN—As I was appointed to write a circular letter to be attached to our minutes, you will doubtless expect an address. I will call your attention to Isaiah 54th chapter and 13th verse—“And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” Here we discover a difference between the offering of Cain and of Abel. Cain brought the fruit of the earth after the Lord had said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake;” while Abel brought the firstlings of his flock, and offered an offering more acceptable than that of Cain. Here seemed to be two spirits, and they pursued quite a different course; one teaches self exaltation and justification by their own works, saying, “God doth know ye shall not surely die;” therefore they bring death eternal upon themselves by taking the advice of the old serpent, the devil and satan. But quite different with our Father's children—they are taught that vain is the help of man. The Lord hath said by the mouth of the prophet, “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” We believe that Jeremiah was taught of the Lord, and therefore spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. David, being taught of the Lord, says, “And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” “Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” Isaiah, being taught of the Lord that he was mighty and able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, says, “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Thanks be unto the God of Zion, for he has visited his people, “and when they receive teaching of the Lord great is their peace.” The prophet saith, “Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold his reward is with him and his work before him, he shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom.” &c. This is the promise to the redeemed of the Lord. How thankful we should be for the gift of Jesus, who appeared in Bethlehem, and all the powers of darkness could not prevail against him. He came to do his Father's will; he lived up to the law that man had violated, and restored it honorable to the Father. Now he saith, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Now he preaches repentance—he lets us know that we were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and nothing short of his blood can fit us for immortal glory. Jesus saith to Nicodemus, “Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born again.” This was strange doctrine to the ruler of the Jews, and so it is strange to the natural mind. They cannot discern

the things of the Spirit, for they are spiritually discerned. All who are taught of God can see eye to eye and speak the same things; therefore, brethren, we should be thankful to God for the teachings of the Spirit; “behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,” &c; for though we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved, and grace produces faith of a genuine kind, and that fadeth not away. Paul saith “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” The apostle being taught of the Lord, was enabled by the Holy Spirit to say, “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” Brethren, let us try to pursue a course that will enable us all to love his appearing. We should live together in love, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints; let us bear each other's burden, preferring each other in love; let us hold fast the profession of our faith, for he is faithful that hath promised. If we have been taught of the Lord, we are dead, and our lives hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Then it is enough to say, “Great is the peace of thy children;” here we have crosses, but bear up under them, for where there is no cross there is no crown. Some who professed to be Baptists have gone and left us, and have made it manifest that they were not of us. They have joined themselves to a people who are afraid to trust God, for they say if you do not take care you will fall from grace. Brethren, permit me to say that I am sorry, very sorry, that some of our brethren have taken the iron-clad oath, so-called, which has wounded the feelings of a great many good brethren. We are commanded to shun every appearance of evil. Now if we are all taught of the Lord, we will endeavor to live in love one with another. Jesus is love, and he loves his followers; he has lived for his children—he has died for them; he has risen a victorious conqueror for them, and ever liveth to make intercession for them according to the will of God. He tells us to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us, and if we do this it shows that we are taught of God, “and great will be our peace in the end.” Remember to live in love, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace; pray with and for each other. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. Farewell.

AMOS DICKENSON.

Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding; but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

[From the Signs of the Times.]

COWINGTON, Ga., Nov. 20, 1869.

DEAR SISTER PHILLIPS:—Since my return from the Primitive Western Association in Cowetta Co., in October last, through a consideration of the few words which passed between us at the breakfast table at Mr. Weaver's, relative to the text of scripture in Matt. xxvi. 13, upon which you had requested my views, I have had more special reflection than heretofore.

Upon reading the text, “Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her,” I am led necessarily to a consideration of the act of this woman in anointing Jesus' head with ointment, and the principle which governed her in the performance of the act. In comparing the account given of Matthew of the circumstances of the case, with Mark xiv. 3—8, I rather involuntarily am led to the conclusion that it is the same instance. It is true John says, Mary anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair, while Matthew and Mark says it was his head which was anointed. This seeming discrepancy may be obviated by the consideration that John recorded a portion of the circumstances which the other evangelists did not, and he did not record what the others did, so far as the anointing of the head is concerned. The anointing it appears took place, according to the account of each of the writers, a little before the passover, and is of an interesting importance. Whether the circumstances are the same, or different circumstances are recorded, there is no derogation of the importance, or vitality of the subject. The act of this woman inculcates the principle of faith in her heart as the gift of God. In reply to the indignant feelings of the disciples at the supposed waste of the ointment, Jesus said, “Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.” She must have had faith to perform a good work, for without faith it is impossible to please God. Still further Jesus said, “For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.” Or, as is expressed in John, “Against the day of my burying hath she kept this.” The literal circumstance is

illustrative of her affection and regard towards him as well as an experimental knowledge of him as her Saviour and Redeemer. She did it for, or because of his burial. Here, I expect, is the gist of the subject in its full bearing upon the text.—The woman, whom I am inclined to believe was the sister of Martha and Lazarus, had a revealed knowledge of the Lord Jesus as the Son of the Most High God, the atoning sacrifice for the sins of God's elect in the whole world, and also in his death and burial her sins were remitted forever, or buried beyond the possibility of a resurrection.—Her faith was her salvation, like the case of the woman recorded in Luke vii. 50. All the ancient saints from Abel's time until the incarnation of the promised Messiah, were saved through the faith of him that was to come. They viewed in the death and burial of the Son of God, their sins and iniquities fully remitted, or as it is expressed in Heb. ix. 15, “That by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”—This woman was one of the called, to whom the promise was made, and she anointed his head, as a sure token, not only of her love to him, and her confidence in his atoning blood for the remission of her sins, but that in his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation upon his throne in the heavens, full satisfaction is rendered to the law and justice in her behalf, and in the behalf of all who are called according to God's purpose.

In this anointing something further must be understood than the mere literal circumstance. Anciently the practice of anointing the bodies of the dead was customary, and in the church, it is said, in early times, it was observed. Perhaps this woman may have considered this custom in anointing Jesus' head, but I consider some higher and more excellent consideration controlled her. Anointing was a venerated custom in Israel in relation to kings, priests, and some prophets. We have several instances of the kind. Saul was anointed with a vial of oil. The use of a vial on this occasion denotes the weakness and brittleness of Saul's kingly government. David was anoin-