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1889

Peter P. Warren, Address and Declaration [at Sand Creek, Illinois, August 17, 1889]

Peter P. Warren

Daniel Sommer

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--Followed a speech--duration one hour and forty minutes--by Daniel Sommer--

(Elder P. P. Warren then took the stand and addressed the audience substantially as given below)

My brethren--

I come before you today with thoughts and feelings different from what I have ever had before in addressing you. For about forty years I have stood in this and adjoining communities as a proclaimer of the gospel. I took up the work in company with those who were the pioneers of this country. We started on the platform of the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible. The New Testament we took as our rule of faith and practice. "Where the Bible speaks we will speak and where the Bible is silent we will be silent" was our watchword. Then we prospered and became, as our brother who preceded me has shown you, a great and a mighty people. For a continuation of this order of things we hoped and labored and prayed. But there have arisen many among us who have shown themselves to be unsatisfied with what is written. They have introduced things which our King has never authorized, and as a result have made us a divided and an unhappy people. We pled and entreated that we might have the peace of the gospel, but they would not hear our entreaties. Therefore, after much earnest thought on the part of loyal brethren it was decided that something should be said and done which would relieve those who intend to be true to the Lord Jesus Christ from responsibility for the misdemeanors, of those who are not satisfied with what is written in the word of God. That is to say, these brethren decided that those who are loyal to Christ should no longer have thrust in their faces by wordlings and their religious neighbors, such taunts as this: "Why your people have fairs--your people have festivals and your people have a good many things that Christ never authorized." As a result a goodly number of Churches sent prominent brethren and we met yesterday, August 17th, in the Sand Creek house of worship and decided upon the following document which I will read:

ADDRESS AND DECLARATION

BY THE CONGREGATIONS REPRESENTED BY THEIR
RESPECTIVE CHURCH OFFICERS IN A MASS MEETING ASSEMBLED AT
SAND CREEK, SHELBY CO., ILL., AUG. 17th, A. D. 1889

TO ALL THOSE WHO IT MAY CONCERN: greeting

Brethren:

You doubtless know that we as disciples of Christ (with scarcely an exception) many long years ago took the position that in matters of doctrine and practice, religiously, that "where the Bible speaks we speak, and where the Bible is silent we are silent;" and that further, we held that nothing should be taught, received or practiced for which we could not produce a "thus saith the Lord." And doubtless many of you also know that as long as the above principles were constantly and faithfully observed, that we were a happy and prosperous people. Then we were of one heart and of one soul, we lived in peace and prospered in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then what was written as doctrine and for practice was taught and observed by the disciples. And, it may not be amiss in this connection to say that many, yes, very many in the sectarian churches saw the beauty, consistency and wonderful strength and harmony in the plea, as set forth by the disciples, for the restoration of primitive or apostolic Christianity in spirit and in practice; and so came and united with us in the same great and godly work. It is, perhaps, needless for us to add in this connection that we, as a people, discarded all man-made laws, disciplines, and confessions of faith, as means of governing the church. We have always acknowledged and do now acknowledge the all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to govern us as individuals and as congregations. As an apostle has said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

And now, please allow us to call attention to more painful facts and considerations. There are those among us who do teach and practice things not taught nor found in the New Testament, which have been received by many well meaning disciples, but rejected by those more thoughtful and, in most instances, better informed in the scriptures, and who have repeatedly protested against this false teaching and these corrupt practices among the disciples. Some of the things against which we protest are the unlawful methods resorted to in order to raise or get money for religious purposes, NAMELY, that of the church holding festivals of various kinds in the house of the Lord or elsewhere, demanding sometimes that each participant shall pay a certain sum for an admittance fee; the select choir to the virtual, if not the real, abandonment of congregational singing; likewise the manmade society for missionary work, and the one man, imported preacher-pastor to take the oversight of the church. These with many other objectionable and unauthorized things are now taught and practiced in many of the congregations, and that to the great grief and mortification of some of the members of said congregations.

And, now, brethren, you that teach such things, and such like things, and those who practice the same, must certainly know that they are not only not in harmony with the gospel, but are in opposition thereto. You surely will admit that it is safe, and only

safe to teach and practice what the divine record enjoins upon the disciples. To this none can reasonably object, and this is exactly what we want and for which we contend. And, now, we say, that we beg of you to turn away speedily and at once from such things, and remember that though we are the Lord's freemen yet we are bound by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that by keeping His commandments and not the commandments of men that we have the assurance of his approval. Therefore, brethren, without addressing you further by using other arguments, and without going further in detailing these unpleasant, and as we see them, vicious things, you must allow us in kindness, and in Christian courtesy, and at the same time with firmness, to declare that we cannot tolerate the things of which we complain; for if we do, then we are (in a measure at least) blamable ourselves. And, let it be distinctly understood, that this "Address and Declaration" is not made in any spirit of envy or hate, or malice or any such thing. But we are only actuated from a sense of duty to ourselves and to all concerned; for we feel that the time has fully come when something of a more definite character ought to be known and recognized between the church and the world. Especially is this apparent when we consider the scriptural teachings in the matters to which we have herein referred--such for instance as the following: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

It is therefore, with the view, if possible, of counteracting the usages and practices that have crept into the church, that this effort on the part of the congregations hereafter named is made. And now, in closing up this address and declaration, we state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to say, that all such as are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations to which we have referred, that after being admonished and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we can not and will not regard them as brethren.

[Signed]

P. P. Warren, A. J. Nance, Daniel Baker, Peter Robertson, J. K. P. Rose, James W. Warren,
Officers of Sand Creek Church.
Randolph Miller, Charles Erwin, W. K. Baker, Wm. Cozier,
Officers of Liberty Church.

[Signed]

Wm. R. Storm, Ash Grove Church.
J. H. Hagan, Union Church.
Isaac Walters, Mode Church.

The brethren whose names stand alone in signing this document, represented the churches from which they came. Beside these, Elder Colson, of Gays, and Elder Hoke, of Stricklyn congregation, signed as individuals only, because the congregations whence they came had not been called together and formally sent them.

Green Creek congregation was represented by letter from Bro. Jesse Baker, indorsing the movement.