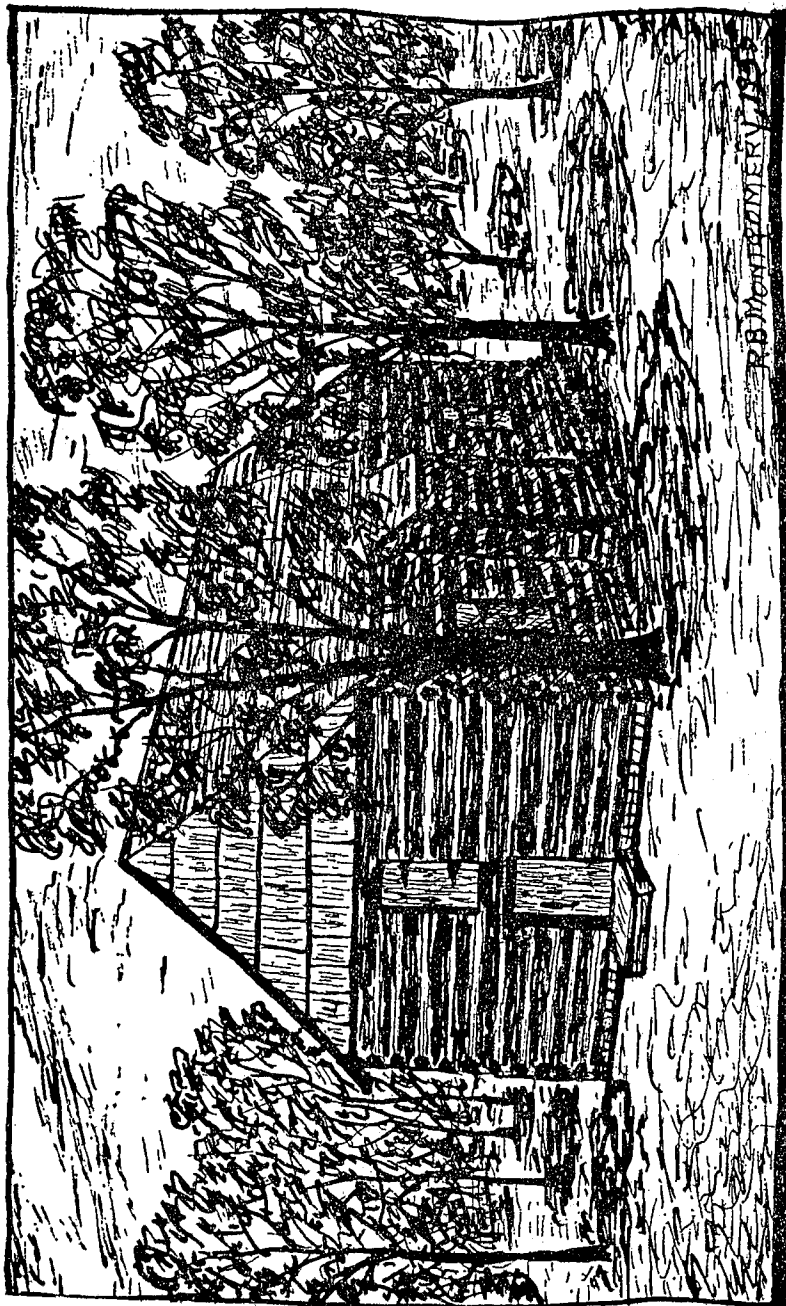


HISTORY
of the
CHRISTIAN CHURCH
IN THE WEST

BY

BARTON WARREN STONE



CANE RIDGE MEETINGHOUSE, BY RILEY B. MONTGOMERY

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with illustrations by
Riley B. Montgomery and William Clayton Bower,
and a foreword by
Roscoe M. Pierson

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY
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FOREWORD

Barton Stone knew that the movement launched in Kentucky in 1804 had great historical importance, and he made several attempts to record the events with which he was connected. His sense of history was, no doubt, partly responsible for his starting the famous periodical the *Christian Messenger* from his home and pastorate in Georgetown, Kentucky, in November 1826, for in the fourth issue of this paper he commenced the series of articles that are reprinted here as *The History of the Christian Church in the West*. The first two numbers of the series were entitled simply "History of the Christian Church," but the title was expanded to the present form in the last six installments.

Though Stone's narrative wanders from a simple recounting of the important events into a discussion of his doctrinal position at several points, this series of articles that appeared in the *Christian Messenger* from February 1827 through October of that year is probably the first attempt to set down a sympathetic history and interpretation of the origins of the peoples known today as Disciples of Christ and Christians. This historical study reveals much of the character of Barton Stone, especially his concern for the Christian gospel, his intense personal piety, and his genuine strivings for Christian unity, all of which is cast against his reaction to human authority and his plea for personal liberty of belief based on a direct approach to the Bible without the prior interpretations of the creeds.

Included in this booklet are all of the articles that appeared in the original series plus the account of the "Union of Christians" which appeared in the January 1832 issue of the *Christian Messenger*, published immediately after the famous convocation of Christians and Reformers in Lexington on January 1, 1832.

We thought at one time that we should reprint this material by

one of the photographic processes so that it might be read in its original form. However, there were several reasons why this idea was abandoned, reluctantly: dimness of the text, the arrangement of the articles, and smallness of the original type. When it was decided that even if we produced the material photographically we would have to make certain changes in composition upon the new pages, we gave up this method entirely and made arrangements to reset the type completely. Very little editorial work has been done to the text in order to preserve as much of the original flavor as possible; all spelling, punctuation, capitalization and sentence order are absolutely unchanged. It was of course impossible to remake all of the original mistakes such as to reprint letters that were printed upside down, or to preserve quaint examples of the division of words, but as far as possible we have reprinted this material as it was originally printed in the pages of the *Christian Messenger*. In like manner, the editor has refrained from intruding upon the reader by the insertion of footnotes, though in some ways a few notes might be desirable. There are no square brackets, no *sics.*, nor other editorial comments upon the text. The only notes that have been added are those at the beginning of each chapter stating the issue, date, and original pagination of the articles.

As an added feature we have been fortunate in securing pen and ink drawings from two of Barton Stone's spiritual descendants of two major shrines of the Stone movement: Riley B. Montgomery has sketched Cane Ridge meetinghouse and William Clayton Bower has carefully recreated the old Hill Street Christian Church as it probably appeared in 1832.

The early issues of the *Christian Messenger* are quite scarce and few except the professional scholars of our brotherhood have had the privilege of reading this material as it first appeared. Nor has this historical sketch been reprinted, though it has been long overdue. It is, therefore, a real pleasure for The College of the Bible to share this part of its historic literary treasures with its friends.

ROSCOE M. PIERSON

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH No. I

TOWARDS THE CLOSE of the eighteenth century, there was an unusual death in the professors of religion, throughout the western country, both among the preachers and the people. In the commencement of the present century, the more pious became seriously alarmed at the prevalence of vice and the declension of vital piety. They agreed to meet often in prayer to God to revive religion, which appeared ready to die. These meetings were frequent, and began to attract general attention. The humble Christians prayed fervently, and sang the praises of God with warm devotion. Their prayers reached the ears of the Lord; *he answered by fire*; for he poured out his spirit in a way almost miraculous. This powerful work was first experienced in Tennessee, and in the lower parts of this state, among the Presbyterians, in the summer or fall of 1800. At this time I had gone to Virginia and North Carolina. From Carolina I was returning to Kentucky in company with Dr. Hall, who was going on a mission to Natchez and the low countries. Never shall I forget the events that transpired on our journey. We were met by a company returning from Tennessee, who had letters to Dr. Hall. We stopped in the woods. The Doctor began to read silently; but soon cried out aloud, and burst into a flood of tears. At first we were at a loss for the cause; but soon learned from the bearer of the letters, and from the letters themselves, that which equally affected us all. It was an account of a wonderful meeting at Shiloh in Tennessee—that many had been struck down as dead, and continued for hours apparently breathless, and afterwards rose, praising God for his saving mercy—that the saints were all alive—and sinners all around weeping and crying for mercy—and that multitudes were converted and rejoicing in God.

[The *Christian Messenger*, Vol. I, February 24, 1827, pp. 74-79.]

The work spread and progressed like fire in a dry stubble. The sparks, lighting in various parts of the field, would quickly raise as many blazes all around. So the Christians from various and distant parts met together; and returning home in the spirit and power of religion, they became preachers, successful preachers, in their neighborhoods, by simply stating what they had seen, heard, and felt; and so spake that many believed and turned to the Lord. I knew an old Presbyterian in a barren neighborhood. He heard of this strange work, and went 60 or 70 miles to one of these meetings. The work was very great and strange. He felt the flame of it in his own heart, and returned home in the power of the spirit. He had a very wicked son. He went to see him, deeply impressed with the situation of his child. As soon as he saw him, he burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, O my son Reuben. The son was instantly convicted of his sins, and immediately repaired to the woods, and cried for mercy; nor did he cease till he obtained it. He straightway began to exhort and warn his companions in wickedness to repent and believe the gospel; and many turned to the Lord. From that period to his death, about 20 years, he laboured without ceasing, in the vineyard of the Lord, and was eminently useful.

In the spring of 1801, the Lord visited his people in the north of Kentucky. In Fleming, and in Concord, one of my congregations, the same strange and mighty works were seen and experienced. On the fourth Lord's day in May, we had an appointment for a communion at Concord. Various causes collected an unusual multitude of people together at this time,—between five and six thousands, of various sects, and many preachers. The house could not contain them, and we repaired to the woods. Worship commenced on Friday, and continued without intermission day and night, for four or five days. From this meeting, the flame spread all around, and increased till the ever-memorable meeting at Caneridge, in August following. Here an innumerable multitude collected, estimated at 25,000 souls. The meeting commenced on Friday, and continued six or seven days. It was truly a solemn scene to see the multitudes coming together, and the number of wagons and carriages bringing provisions and tents to stay on the ground; for it was found that no neighborhood could entertain and support the multitudes that came together. The members of the church and the neighbours brought their provisions to the encampment, for themselves and strangers. Long tables were spread with provisions, and all invited to eat. This

was the beginning and introduction of camp meetings. During this time, night and day worship continued. Hundreds were lying as men slain in battle; many engaged in prayer for the distressed in every part of the camp; many in the woods around crying for mercy; many rejoicing aloud in songs of praise. In other parts many of the preachers of various names, were proclaiming the gospel of salvation. The number of converts could never be ascertained: it is thought to have been between 500 and 1000.

The doctrine preached by all was simple, and nearly the same. Free and full salvation to every creature was proclaimed. All urged faith in the gospel, and obedience to it, as the way of life. All appeared deeply impressed with the ruined state of sinners, and were anxious for their salvation. The spirit of partyism, and party distinctions, were apparently forgotten. The doctrines of former controversy were not named; no mention was made of eternal unconditional election, reprobation, or fatality. The spirit of love, peace, and union, were revived. You might have seen the various sects engaged in the same spirit, praying, praising, and communing together, and the preachers in the lead. Happy days! joyful seasons of refreshment from the presence of the Lord! This work from this period spread throughout the western country.

It should not be concealed that among us Presbyterians, there were some, both of the preachers and private members, who stood in opposition to the work, and the doctrine by which it was promoted. They did not like that the doctrines of their confession should be neglected in the daily ministrations. They therefore became jealous lest those doctrines should be entirely rejected by the churches; they began to preach them, and oppose the doctrine of the revival. The other sects began to take the alarm and to oppose the doctrine of Calvin. The war commenced; and now there appeared to be more solicitude to establish certain dogmas, and to enlist members into a particular party, than to preach the gospel, and win souls to Christ. The pious wept at the sight, and were groaning at the devastations of Zion, the breach of union, and the unhappy check put to the work of God! Never before did partyism to my mind appear so hateful, so destructive to the progress of truth and vital piety, and to the salvation of souls. Many saw it in the same light, and felt determined to stand fast in the gospel of Christ, and labour to promote his work.

But here we were not permitted to rest. We must come into the

party views and party spirit of the denomination by which we were called, and cease from preaching that doctrine which was considered contrary to the doctrines contained in our confession of faith, contemptuously called *arminian*. These doctrines were, that the provisions and calls of the gospel were for all, and to all the family of Adam; that Christ died for all, and was the constituted Saviour of all; that the poor sinner must believe in him, and that he was capable to believe from the evidences given in the gospel. In this strain of preaching, a number of the Presbyterian preachers had been for some time past engaged. But these by no means suited the sticklers for *orthodoxy*. Richard McNemar, a member of Washington Presbytery, was zealously engaged in preaching these views. At the session of this Presbytery in Cincinnati, Oct. 6, 1802, a *lay* elder, a member of the Presbytery, arose and entered a verbal complaint against McNemar, as a propagator of false doctrine, and desired the Presbytery to look into the matter. Though McNemar protested against this measure as disorderly, yet he was overruled, and the Presbytery, as a court of inquisition, proceeded to examine him, on the doctrine of particular election, human depravity, the atonement, the application of it to sinners, the necessity of a divine agency in the application, and the nature of faith. The result of the examination was, that his views were essentially different from Calvinism—and that his *principles were strictly Arminian*, “which, (say they) are dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion.” A copy of their judgment was ordered to be sent to all the churches under their care. What appeared extraordinary is, that this same presbytery in the same session, in which they passed a vote of condemnation on his principles, as dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion, appointed McNemar to preach among the vacancies, as usual, as their minutes shew.

At the next session of this Presbytery in April 1803, a petition was presented, praying Presbytery to examine McNemar on the fundamental doctrines of religion; and that the Rev. John Thompson undergo the like examination. The Presbytery rejected the petition as improper; and presented McNemar a call from Turtle Creek, which he accepted. The minority of Presbytery protested against these acts of the majority.

In Sept. 1803, the Synod met in Lexington. Here the books of all the Presbyteries were to be examined, and their improper con-

duct arraigned at the bar of this court. Through the committee of overtures, the business of the Washington Presbytery in their sessions in Cincinnati and Springfield with respect to McNemar and Thompson, was laid before the Synod. The Synod soon determined, that the Washington Presbytery acted orderly in examining McNemar, and of publishing their vote of condemnation of his principles, as dangerous, and contrary to the constitution of the Presbyterian church, and that they were disorderly in giving him appointments to preach. They also determined that the Presbytery acted disorderly in rejecting the petition to examine McNemar and Thompson at Springfield, and in presenting McNemar the call from Turtle Creek. It was now evidently seen that the way was prepared to censure any minister of the gospel without charge, witness, or prosecution, through the short medium of Presbyterian inquisition. We, who were of the same sentiments, now plainly saw that the proceedings of Synod not only involved the fate of McNemar and Thompson, but equally our own. We saw the arm of ecclesiastical authority raised to crush us, and we must either sink, or step aside to avoid the blow.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH No. II

UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES we retired, during a short recess of Synod, to ask counsel of the Lord, and consult with one another.

When we came to converse on the subject, we found it had struck each of our minds precisely in the same point of light, without any preconcerted plan. To appeal to the general assembly, so long as human opinions were esteemed the standard of orthodoxy, we had little hope of redress. We therefore determined to withdraw from the jurisdiction of Synod, and cast ourselves upon that God, who had led us hitherto in safety through many trials and difficulties; and who we believe, will lead us safely on to the end.

We then concluded to draw up, and enter our protest against the proceedings of Synod. While we were doing this, the Synod were employed in debating on the propriety of proceeding on in the new inquisition, as will appear from the following extract:

"Whereas the Synod have taken into consideration certain petitions and papers respecting the conduct of Washington Presbytery at Springfield, &c. which conduct this Synod have said was out of order, &c. On motion, resolved that Synod now enter upon the examination of Messrs McNemar and Thompson, according to the prayer of the petitions, and the charges therein stated; and also that this Synod resolve the questions of doctrines, seriously and reasonably proposed in their petitions."

"While Synod were deliberating on the propriety of adopting the above resolution, Messrs Marshall, Stone, Dunlavy, McNemar, and Thompson, appeared in Synod, and having given their reasons for not attending sooner, they presented a paper through Mr Marshall, which that gentleman stated to be a protest against the proceedings

[The *Christian Messenger*, Vol. I, March 24, 1827, pp. 97-101.]

of Synod, in the affair of Washington Presbytery, and a declaration that they withdrew from the jurisdiction of Synod, this paper was read and is as follows:

"To the Moderator of the Synod of Kentucky.

"Rev. Sir—We, the underwritten members of Washington and West Lexington Presbyteries, do hereby enter our protest against the proceedings of Synod, in approbating that minute of the Washington Presbytery, which condemned the sentiments of Mr McNemar, as dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion; and the proceeding therewith connected; and for reasons which we now offer, we declare ourselves no longer members of your reverend body, nor under your jurisdiction, or that of your Presbyteries.

1. "We conscientiously believe, that the above minute, which you sanctioned, gives a distorted and false representation of Mr McNemar's sentiments, and that the measure was calculated to prevent the influence of truths of the most interesting nature.

2. "We claim the privilege of interpreting the scripture by itself, according to section 9, chapter 1, of the Confession of Faith; and believe that the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures.

"But from the disposition which Synod manifests, it appears to us that we cannot enjoy this privilege, but must be bound up to such explanations of the word of God, as preclude all farther enquiry after truth.

3. "We remain inviolably attached to the doctrines of grace, which through God have been mighty in every revival of true religion since the reformation. These doctrines, however, we believe, are in a measure darkened, by some expressions in the Confession of Faith, which are used as the means of strengthening sinners in their unbelief, and subjecting many of the pious to a spirit of bondage. When we attempt to obviate those difficulties, we are charged with departing from our standards, viewed as disturbers of the peace of the church, and threatened to be called to account. The proceedings of Presbytery have furnished the world with ample

encouragement in this mode of opposition; and the sanction which those proceedings have now received from your reverend body, cuts off every hope of relief from that quarter, from which we have at least faintly expected it. We therefore feel ourselves shut up to the necessity of relieving you from the disagreeable task of receiving petitions from the public, and ourselves from being prosecuted before a judge* whose authority to decide we *cannot in conscience acknowledge*.

Rev. Sir—Our affection for you as brethren in the Lord, is, and we hope shall ever be the same; nor do we desire to separate from your communion, or to exclude you from ours. We ever wish to bear and forbear in matters of human order or opinion, and unite our joint supplications with yours for the increasing effusions of that divine spirit, which is the bond of peace.

With this disposition of mind, we bid you adieu, until, through the providence of God, it seem good to your reverend body, to adopt a more liberal plan respecting human creeds and confessions.

ROBERT MARSHALL,
JOHN DUNLAVY,
RICHARD MCNEMAR,
BARTON W. STONE,
JOHN THOMPSON.

“Done in Lexington, Ky. Sept. 10th, 1803.”

The introduction of the above protest put a sudden check to the examining system. The protest was then read, and shortly after, we retired from the house.

Synod then appointed a committee to converse with us, as you will see in the following extract from their minutes:

“On motion, resolved, that Messrs D. Rice, Matthew Houston, and James Welsh, be a committee, seriously and affectionately to converse with Messrs Marshall, &c. to labour to bring them back to the standards and doctrines of our church, and report Monday morning.”

“On motion, resolved, that Mr Joseph Howe be added as a member to the committee appointed to converse with Messrs Marshall, &c.”

* Confession of Faith.

The result of this conference you have in the report of the committee as follows:

“The committee appointed to converse with Messrs Marshall, &c. report as follows, viz:—That the aforesaid gentlemen agree, that they will confer with Synod on points of doctrine, in the following manner, viz:—they will answer any questions proposed to them by Synod, which may be stated in writing, in writing again; and that they are ready to enter upon the business as soon as they may receive notice for that purpose.

N. B. The whole of the questions shall be given in at once.”

To this committee we further stated, that we were willing to return, and be considered under the care and jurisdiction of Synod as formerly, provided they would constitute us into one Presbytery; and if they had any charges to bring against us, with respect to doctrines, or otherwise, let them come forward in an orderly manner, according to the book of discipline, criminate us as a Presbytery, and bring our sentiments to the word of God as the standard, and we were willing to stand trial.

To these proposals we received no answer. It appears that Synod had considerable debating among them, whether they would comply with the proposal contained in the report of committee, in conferring with us in writing; and that there was a diversity of opinion on that subject. A resolution being introduced for that purpose, it passed in the negative, 12 to 7.

Why Synod did not accede to the proposal we could not then tell, for they sent us no answer. However, one of their reasons, as we afterwards understood, was that the whole of the questions must be given in at once. The weight of this reason we leave to the reader to determine. We were not only willing, but anxious to have our sentiments fairly and fully investigated, provided we were put in a situation to have a fair hearing. This we knew we could not obtain, while the leading members of Synod were in their present spirit. We did not expect to have the privilege of discussing the subject before Synod in the capacity in which we then stood; and were unwilling to bring our *necks again under a yoke*, which we had so lately thrown off. The only fair way, then, to prevent quibbling and misrepresentation, was to do it in writing, as we could not do it any

other way, unless we revoked our protest, and came again under the jurisdiction of Synod.

But the Synod had another objection to our proposal, viz: they could not confer with us as a *body*, because they could not acknowledge the legality of *this body*. Time has a wonderful power in legalizing bodies! a few years have legalized the self-created bodies of Luther, Calvin, and all the different sects of Christians since the reformation! A few more years may legalize our *body* in the estimation of Synod, when we hope they will condescend to confer with us, and unity be restored.

Though we had withdrawn from the jurisdiction of Synod, it was of necessity, rather than of choice. We found we must forsake them, or what we believed *the truth*: the former were dear to us, but the latter was dearer. Under these circumstances we again committed ourselves to God, and constituted ourselves into a Presbytery, known by the name of the Springfield Presbytery.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. III

AFTER CONSTITUTING with prayer, and choosing a moderator and clerk, we proceeded to draught a circular letter to the congregations formerly under our care, which is as follows:

DEAR BRETHREN: By the time this letter shall have reached you, you will, no doubt, have heard, that a separation has taken place between us, and the Synod of Kentucky, and the presbyteries to which we belonged. The reasons which induced us to withdraw, you see in the above copy of our protest; which reasons we intend more fully to unfold as soon as we can obtain the minutes of Synod, and those of the Washington presbytery, which are referred to in said protest. But lest you should form an improper opinion of the nature or kind of separation, we take the liberty of giving you a short statement of it. We do not desire, nor do we consider ourselves to be separated from the presbyterian Church, as christians, whether ministers or people; we still wish to continue united to them in the bonds of love; we will admit to communion as formerly, and desire to be admitted. It is not our design to form a party. We have only withdrawn from the jurisdiction of those bodies, with whom we stood connected, because we plainly perceived that, while that connexion subsisted, we could not enjoy the liberty of reading, studying and explaining the word of God for ourselves, without constant altercation and strife of words to no profit. We pass no uncharitable censures on those reverend bodies for their strict adherence to their standards; but as we are accountable to God for ourselves, so we must act for ourselves as in the sight of God; and can own no standard of faith but the word of God; and we desire ever to look to him for his Spirit of wisdom to lead us into all truth. Brethren, we wish to pay all due deference to the Confession of

[The *Christian Messenger*, Vol. I, April 25, 1827, pp. 121-125.]

Faith, and other writings of our pious fathers; but we plead a privilege, which is granted in the Confession of Faith, chap. I, sec. 9, 10, as we mentioned in our protest; that the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture, is not the Confession of Faith, nor any human writings whatever, but the Scripture itself. On this ground we have attempted, and still mean to proceed to hold forth the word of life, peace and pardon to sinners, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. But as we are by some suspected of having departed from the true doctrines of the Gospel, we design as soon as convenient, to explain to the public our views of the Gospel. In the mean time we are determined, by the grace of God, to preach the Gospel, and administer ordinances as formerly.

"And now, brethren, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace; which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Farewell."

Late in the evening, after our adjournment, the following resolution was handed to us from Synod.

"On motion, Resolved, that Messrs. Rannels, Houston and Kemper be a committee to wait upon Messrs. Marshall, Dunlavy, M'Nemar, Stone and Thompson, to enquire of them, what objections they have to our Confession of Faith, or to any part of it, which they have in their remonstrance declared they could not submit to be judged by; and that they transmit said objections to us in writing on to-morrow morning, or before the Synod rises."

As several of our members were under a necessity of leaving town that night, we concluded to meet next morning, to take into consideration the above resolution. The result of which meeting you will see by the following letter, addressed by us to the Moderator of Synod:

*"Rev'd. and Dear Sir:—*We received your resolution from a member of your committee, requesting us to give you a statement of our objections against some parts of the Confession of Faith. We have taken the matter into consideration and resolved to comply. But it is out of our power to state them to you as soon as you require: but will without fail give you a statement at your next annual session. A party is not our aim; and this we hope to evince to you, and to the world at your next session. In the mean time we design to proceed no farther than circumstances may require. Brethren, you are in our hearts to live and die with you: our hearts are bound to you in love. We hope your intentions in doing what you have

done, were good; but we still believe as stated in our protest. In the mean time let us unite our prayers to our common Lord and Father, that he would in his kind providence heal our divisions, and unite us more closely in the bonds of love.

"We remain, dear brethren, as ever, united to you in heart and affection.

"ROBERT MARSHALL,
"JOHN DUNLAVY,
"RICHARD M'NEMAR,
"BARTON W. STONE,
"JOHN THOMPSON."

This letter was sent forward to Synod as soon as possible on the same day of our meeting; but they did not wait for an answer, for before its arrival, they had passed a vote of suspension; an account of which you will see hereafter.

Shortly after our return home, we were followed by heralds proclaiming our suspension from the ministerial office.

In some of our congregations the minute containing that extraordinary act, was publicly read, and handed to us; which is as follows:

"On motion, the following resolution was introduced, and on a vote being taken, was carried in the affirmative. Whereas, Messrs. Robt. Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard M'Nemar, Barton W. Stone, and John Thompson, have declared themselves no longer members of our body, or under our jurisdiction, or that of our presbyteries; and whereas, it appears from their remonstrance laid before Synod, that they have seceded from the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and no more wish to be united with us, until we adopt a more liberal plan respecting human creeds and confessions; and, whereas, a committee has been appointed, seriously and affectionately to converse with the above members, in order if possible to reclaim them to the doctrines and standards of our church, which committee has proved entirely unsuccessful; moreover, whereas said gentlemen came into Synod and informed us that they had constituted themselves into a separate presbytery, and have refused to comply with every solicitation to return to their duty, but persist in their scismatic disposition: Therefore, Resolved, that Synod do, and they hereby do, solemnly suspend Messrs. Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Barton W. Stone, Richard M'Nemar and John Thompson from the exercise of the functions of the Gos-

pel ministry, until sorrow and repentance for their scism be manifested; leaving it however to the several presbyteries, to which the above members may have belonged, to restore them as soon as they give satisfactory evidence of repentance; and their congregations are hereby declared vacant.

“On motion, Resolved, that commissioners go to the several congregations where Messrs. Marshall, Dunlavy, M’Nemar, Stone and Thompson have stately preached, to declare those congregations, not before vacated, now vacant; and state the conduct of Synod, respecting those men, and exhort to peace and unity; and that the commissioners be as follows, viz. Messrs. Shannon and Lyle, to Bethel and Blue-spring; Messrs. Rannels and Howe, to Cane-ridge and Concord; Mr. Blythe, to Eagle creek; Mr. William Robinson, to Springfield and Turtle creek.

“A true copy,

“JAMES WELSH, S. C. S. K.”

Here it is worthy of our most serious attention, to observe that the Synod had no legal grounds to proceed farther against us after our withdrawing from under their jurisdiction. For if the power of suspension is not legally vested in a Synod, their assuming and exercising it, must appear indeed an empty flourish. We would humbly enquire upon what ground they proceeded? Their standard affords no pretext for such a step; the power of Synod is limited to certain bounds which you will see, *Form of Gov.* chap. x, sec. 2; you see not a word there of suspension; their highest authority is to advise the presbytery in such a case, (*Form of Proc.* chap. ii, sec 11). It is unnecessary to prove a negative. We say they had no such authority from the word of God, or the form of Government. But seeing much has been said in support of their authority in that case, it is necessary we should pay a particular attention to the subject.

If our suspension be orderly and according to the will of God, the consequences are serious indeed. We are bound on earth and bound in Heaven; cast out of the vineyard as fruitless, withered branches; in no better circumstances than heathens and publicans; running unsent; and all that bid us *God speed*, must be partakers of our evil deeds. On the contrary, if we have been called of God to minister in Holy things, and have done nothing to forfeit that authority; and if any man, or set of men, should rise up and command us to be silent, and forbid the people to hear us; the con-

sequences may be serious to them in the end. It is certain Synod had no authority from the Book of discipline to suspend us; their authority then must have been either from the word of God, or from such existing circumstances as required them to dispense with order.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. IV

IT IS DIFFICULT to find, from the preceding minute of Synod, what was the real crime alleged against us. They tell you that we have seceded from the Confession of Faith; that they have labored in vain to bring us back to the standards and doctrines of the church; that we have declared ourselves no longer members of their body, nor under the jurisdiction of Synod or of their presbyteries; that we persisted in our schismatic disposition, &c. It is thought necessary even in a regular charge, that such crimes be alleged as appear from the word of God, to merit the censure of the church. What part of the above mentioned conduct does the word of God criminate? Does it bind us to any human confession of Faith as a standard? Does it absolutely condemn every man as unworthy to preach the Gospel, who is not of their party, and who cannot be brought to that standard, or its peculiar doctrines? If all who differ from them in this matter, are bound to cringe to their authority as sacred; who do they not level their anathemas at others as independent of their standard, as we? They will grant that their authority does not extend to preachers of other persuasions; we ask then how it could *possibly* extend to us, when we declared we were neither of their persuasion, nor under their jurisdiction? Because their committee failed to reclaim us to the standards and doctrines of the church, is this crime of such a nature, as to warrant suspension? How did Synod know that their committee had used arguments sufficiently powerful to answer this end? Because we had constituted ourselves into a separate presbytery, is this crime of such magnitude that scripture authorizes such to be suspended? If so, they have no right to preach in the sight of God. To suspend us for constituting a separate presbytery, is not this to cut off at a blow

[The *Christian Messenger*, Vol. I, May 25, 1827, pp. 145-151.]

every minister since the Reformation? Luther and his followers constituted a presbytery separate from the Church of Rome; Calvin separated from Luther, and with his followers constituted a separate presbytery; and so have the various sects of Christians ever since. Have these therefore no right to preach, according to the word of God? If not, the Synod in their act of suspension, have virtually suspended themselves and every minister of the reformation since Luther.

“They say we could not be prevailed upon to return to our duty.” They take it for granted that it was our duty to return and follow with them; and for the neglect of this duty they pass their act of suspension! We have the judgment of Christ in a similar case, John in the name of his brethren, lodged a verbal complaint against a certain seceder, whom they had taken under a *previous orderly examination*, and silenced, because he followed not with them. *But Jesus said, forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me; for he that is not against us, is on our part.*

The Synod without making any exception suspended all the five preachers for the *crime* of seceding from the Confession of Faith, when it was known by the Transylvania presbytery, which composed a part of the Synod, that one of the five, B. W. Stone, refused to adopt and receive the Confession of Faith at his ordination, farther than he saw it consistent with the word of God. This he has satisfactorily proved from living witnesses of the highest respectability, in his Address, p. 33, 34.

In our licensure and ordination, this question was proposed us “Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the word of God; and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?” Which we answered in the affirmative. We had also to promise “to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and the purity and peace of the church; whatsoever persecution or opposition, might arise to us on that account.” Form of Gov: Chap: 13 & 14. These things we believed, and were laboring zealously and faithfully to maintain the truths of the *gospel*; not the dogmas of the Confession, for in the light of the *gospel* we saw many of its doctrines wrong. We were zealously and faithfully engaged to fulfil our engagements, also to maintain the purity and peace of the church; not the Presbyterian church only, but our longing souls embraced the whole church of God on earth. We had

learned that purity and peace could not be promoted by jarring creeds and party-spirits; but by love, faith, and obedience. Can it be possible in this enlightened day, that the Ministers of the Presbyterian church are bound to study the purity, peace and unity of their sect alone? and to preach nothing but what is contained in the Confession alone, or what may be agreeable to it? If so, there is an end of liberty among them—they must be Presbyterians always—they must not change one sentiment nor opinion, which they professed to believe at their entrance upon the ministry; nor oppose one doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith! And if any should change their views, they must be hypocrites to profess and preach what they disbelieve; or if honest, they must be deposed from the ministerial functions, excluded from the church, and branded with the crime of perjury, as having rejected the Confession, which they once professed to adopt and receive! Are they not completely imprisoned within their own party walls?

Can it be a crime to withdraw from those with whom we could not remain in peace? No! it is the inalienable right of every moral agent to withdraw from any society, when he thinks the rights of conscience are invaded. If the government of the Presbyterian church deprives its subjects of this privilege, it must be tyrannical. But there is not a sentence in that book to criminate any person for renouncing its authority. Its compilers were too well acquainted with the rights of man, either to deny the privilege of withdrawing, or to inflict censure on any one for doing it. For proof of this, read attentively their introduction to government and discipline.

It may be, however, alleged that there was something criminal in the manner of our withdrawing: the book of discipline admits it to be proper to suspend a minister for *contumacy*, which is a refusal to attend Presbytery, after being three times duly cited, to answer for atrocious crimes of which he is accused. (Forms of proc. Chap. 2, Sec. 8.) This appears to be the only kind of *contumacy* noticed in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church. It may be supposed that a minister thus cited may not only refuse to appear, but may withdraw from under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery. This step is by some called *declinature*, a higher degree of *contumacy*. But does this apply to our case? What was the atrocious crime laid to our charge? Where was the due citation? There was no such thing in the case, and therefore *contumacy*, or *declinature*, is by no means applicable to us.

If any suppose we withdrew, lest we should be charged with atrocious crimes, not yet stated, then our withdrawing could not come under the charge of *declinature*, seeing there was nothing to decline. Besides the only thing of which we were ever accused, and which could give occasion for a future charge, was never determined by the protestant church to be an atrocious crime. If we wished to decline any thing on the occasion, it was vain jangling and strife of words to no profit, on those subjects about which the wisest and best of men differ.

All juridical authority, which any society has over an individual, is in consequence of a voluntary compact tacitly or explicitly made, by which he is connected with that society, and under its laws. When such compact is dissolved, which may be done at any time, by the voluntary act of the individual, the authority ceases of course. Our voluntary act in putting ourselves under the care of Presbytery, put it in their power to license, ordain, watch over, censure, suspend or depose, so long as we stood in that connection; but when we voluntarily withdrew, being under no judicial censure, it may be properly said that we withdrew from them all that power over us, which we had given them.

When the church is satisfied that any person is called of God to preach the Gospel, it is their duty to encourage and forward him to the work. This they may do by their presbytery, as representatives of the church, as is common in the Presbyterian government; or they may do it in a church capacity, as is done by the Independent and Baptist churches. When the church or their representatives take a candidate on trial, it is not with a view to call and authorize him to preach, but to inquire into the validity of that call and authority which he professes to have received from God. If they approbate his profession, they express it by the act of licensure. The candidate is then to make *full proof of his ministry*, whether it be from Heaven or of men: and when the church is satisfied, they manifest it by ordaining him. In all this, the church confers no power, human or divine; but only the privilege of exercising the power and authority, which they believe he has received from God, in that particular society. This privilege, the church may recall; the candidate may forfeit or voluntarily resign. But neither the refusal of the church, his own forfeiture, or resignation of that particular privilege, can disannull the original call of God, or the obligation of the candidate to obey.

These principles we think are confirmed, both by the New Testament, and church history. Those who can consult Doddridge's paraphrase on the New Testament, Mosheim's church history, and Dr. Watts' constitution of a christian church, will see that the practice of the primitive church, in such matters, was exceedingly simple; and according to the principles of common sense, as stated above.

Some have supposed that the legal authority of transacting church business, wholly independent of the Spirit of grace, has been committed to the rulers of the church; so that the transactions of those, thus authorized, and those only, are legal. Now upon this principle none have legal authority to preach, administer ordinance, &c. unless he has received it through regular succession from the Apostles. This regular succession has been so often broken, that it is impossible ever to get into order again, unless we make the church of Rome the standard, and return into uniformity with it: For every division and subdivision from that has shared the same fate of suspension or deposition. This was the case with Luther. "He was commanded," (says Dr. Mosheim,) "to renounce his errors within sixty days, and cast himself upon the clemency of the Pope, on pain of excommunication. At first he purposed to appeal from the sentence of the lordly pontiff to the respectable decision of a general council: but as he foresaw that this appeal would be treated with contempt at the court of Rome; and that when the time, prescribed for his recantation was elapsed, the thunder of excommunication would be levelled at his devoted head, he judged it prudent to withdraw himself, voluntarily from the communion of the church of Rome, before he was obliged to leave it by force; and thus to render this new bull of ejection a blow in the air, an exercise of authority without any object to act upon. At the same time he was resolved to execute this wise resolution in a public manner, that his voluntary retreat from the communion of a corrupt and superstitious church, might be universally known, before the lordly pontiff had prepared his ghostly thunder. With this view, on the 10th of December, in the year 1520, he had a pile of wood erected without the walls of the city of Wittemberg, and there, in the presence of a prodigious multitude of people, of all ranks, and orders, he committed to the flames both the bull that had been published against him, and the decretals and canons relating to the Pope's supreme jurisdiction. By this he declared to the world, that he was no longer a subject of the Roman pontiff, and that of consequence, the sen-

tence of excommunication, which was daily expected, from Rome, was entirely superfluous and insignificant.* For the man who voluntarily withdraws himself from any society, cannot with any appearance of reason or common sense, be afterwards forcibly and authoritatively excluded from it. However he only separated himself from the church of Rome, which considers the Pope infallible, and not from the church considered in a more extensive sense; notwithstanding, in less than a month after this noble and important step had been taken by the Saxon reformer, a second bull was issued against him, by which he was expelled from the communion of the church, for having insulted the majesty, and having disowned the supremacy, of the Roman pontiff. He was also condemned the next year by the diet of Worms, as a schismatic, a notorious and obstinate heretic; and the severest punishments denounced against those who should receive, entertain, maintain, or countenance him, either by acts of hospitality, by conversation or writing. And his disciples, adherents, and followers, were involved in the same condemnation." (Mosheim's Eccle. History, Vol. 4, page 51, 52, 55.)—Against this edict the reformed party protested, by which they got the name of *Protestants*.

But our Synod were of a different opinion from Dr. Mosheim, as they have acted upon the very same principles with the lordly pontiff.

* The Pope might have published to the churches that Luther was no longer connected with the see of Rome, and thus have warned them against him. This is all that Synod could have done respecting us, with any appearance of reason or common sense.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. V

ON THE ABOVE extracts from Dr. Mosheim, we also observe that Luther was guilty of the crime of *declinature*. He declined the jurisdiction of the church of Rome, when charged with an atrocious crime, to avoid the censure of excommunication. He was afterwards excommunicated by the high court of that church. His sentence was not for the false doctrines, of which he was before charged; but for insulting the Majesty, and disowning the supremacy of the Roman pontiff; and also for schism. And yet he did not withdraw from the church in a large sense, but from that part of it only, which considered the Pope infallible. In like manner we have not separated from the Presbyterian church at large; but from that part only, which considers the Confession of Faith infallible, that is, as the standard of the church. How easy it is to see the similarity between Luther's case, and that of ours; and yet he never suspected that he had lost his authority to preach; nor has any Protestant since his day called it in question.

Synod takes it for granted, that we received all our authority from them, to exercise the ministerial functions, and as they have taken it away, we therefore have none. Let us apply this to the case of Luther; if he received his authority from the church of Rome, and this authority was taken from him, through what medium then has it been transmitted to the Synod of Kentucky? We would be glad to see authentic testimonials of their spiritual genealogy, proving their orderly descent from the Apostles of Christ. Or if this cannot be done we must consider them as illegitimate as ourselves. It is commonly used as an apology for the Saxon reformer, that the church from which he separated was so corrupt that her suspension was wholly invalid. Let this be granted, and what will it argue? Cer-

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tainly, that her power of ordination was also invalid. This proves at once, that the ordination, not only of Luther, but also of Calvin, and every other protestant minister, is *null and void*; seeing that all received their ordination from that corrupt church. Therefore if the filthiness of the church of Rome is taken to plaister the character of our reformers, it will render the apostolic authority of our Synodical brethren not only suspicious, but absolutely a blank.

As the proceedings of Synod were evidently arbitrary and unauthorized, we need not wonder that we are charged to the world, under the odious name of *schismatics*, without any fair statement of the crime, or evidence to support it. A *schismatic* is one, who aims at dividing the church into sects and parties; not only by separating from its communion and drawing away disciples after him, but also, by *loving the pre-eminence in the church, receiving not the brethren, forbidding them that would, and casting them out of the church*, as did Diotrephes, 3 Epis. of John.

We have before proved that, merely forming a separate association, is not schism: provided that association be not intended to dissolve the union and communion of the church. But the Synod takes it for granted that a separation from their *reverend body*, is a separation from the church; thus implicitly declaring, that they are the only church on earth. We would hardly have thought that a body of men so liberal in their principles, as to admit Christians of other denominations to their communion, would exclude those of their own, for merely renouncing what others never acknowledged. Is it not confessed by all that a schismatic spirit, and a party spirit, are the same? If so, let the reader judge on which side the party spirit operated through the whole of the business. Was it a party spirit that induced the preachers at first, to lay aside those points of controversy, which had been a means of keeping the children of God apart? What spirit prevailed at Fleming, when the late revival first commenced; when Dr. Campbell and Mr. Northcut, a methodist preacher, gathered their flocks together, and fed them at the same table? It was justly confessed that Heaven smiled upon the union. Was it not under the same spirit of union, that the flame spread to the east and to the west? Let bigotry blush, and be ashamed at the recollection! But when former things were thus forgotten, and former differences laid aside, whether was it a spirit of union or a party spirit, that prompted some, who were spectators only of this glorious work, to bring forward those speculative opin-

ions, which, at that time, were neither publicly disputed, nor combated; and involved the church in a controversy? This may be emphatically said to be *dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all vital religion*. We neither felt nor expressed a wish to leave our own society, nor proselyte others to follow us: but on this ground we could not long remain in peace: The bible doctrine was too simple for those, who had been accustomed to solve riddles and reconcile contradictions.

The Synod have again raised their standard, which, for three happy years had been gathering dust. The lines will probably now be cleared; the enemies of orthodoxy, however pious, be driven out of the pure church; drowsy bigots recalled to arms, and another bold push made to Calvinize the word. May Heaven prevent the furious onset, and revive in the breasts of christians a spirit of forbearance and love! And may we, while we go under the *name of schismatics* be ever kept from the *thing*.

It is not uncommon to give the blow and raise the cry. We are brought up to public view, pronounced as the leaders of a party thundered against by the bull of suspension, and our congregations declared vacant! Could the Synod imagine that we would be silent? no: The measures carry too strong marks of ecclesiastical tyranny, to influence us farther than we are driven.

If any enquire why we did not appeal to the General Assembly, we answer: it appeared to us unnecessary; because the business must naturally come before them through the minutes of Synod. David did not immediately go to his father-in-law, to learn his disposition towards him; he chose rather to remain in the field, till the flying arrows determined his doom. If we learn from the minutes of the assembly, that they are for peace, we are near at hand, and ready to obey the signal: but if otherwise, our empty seats must so remain.

We have stated notorious facts, and now let every impartial friend to order, judge for himself. If the prosecution was unprecedented and disorderly from first to last, let the candid reader say, whether it was not an orderly step for us to withdraw. We have said in our protest that we only withdrew from the judicatories with which we stood connected, and not from the church; we say so still. They have beaten us uncondemned, being presbyterians, and then would cast us out of the church. Nay, their letter of suspension will not do. We must again call for order: and desire that body to pro-

duce authority, not from the annals of the church of Scotland, but from the word of God, or at least from the constitution of the presbyterian church in America, to justify their proceedings. If they have suspended us without authority, the General Assembly will have to say whether they were in order or not. So long as we believe their proceedings were out of order, that belief will bind us more firmly to the church. The hireling may flee when his congregations are declared vacant, and his salary called in: and set out in search of another benifice. But we pledge ourselves, through the grace of God, to stand fast in the unity of the Spirit, and without respect of persons, endeavor to gather into one the children of God, who have been *scattered in the cloudy and dark day*. How this solemn pledge was redeemed, will be seen in the progress of this history. It will be also seen how little dependence can be put in the pledges of men! Who could have believed that such a noble purpose should so soon be blasted?

After the adjournment of Synod we returned to our several homes with a sorrowful heart, and with many tears. We were soon followed by the authorized heralds of Synod, proclaiming our suspension, and declaring our congregations *vacant*. The mournful scenes of those days can never be forgotten by me, nor by thousands who were witnesses of their evils. Who without a sigh could see torn asunder the pastor and his flock, united in the closest ties of friendship and christian affection, strengthened too by the growth of years? Who without a tear could see the flood gates of strife raised, and the sweet spirit of religion swept from the sanctuary of God, where peace, love and union had long delighted to dwell? Who, that had been accustomed to see the great congregation collecting from every quarter on every Lord's day at the house of God to worship together with solemnity and joy,—who, accustomed to this, but must feel a holy indignation at the men, who should raise their voice and forbid the people to worship together under the penalty of excommunication? This was done. Future ages will be incredulous; for many in the present day can scarcely believe it. But why all this mischief? What evil had we done? This was our crime, we preferred the Bible to the Confession and preached the *doctrine* of the former rather than the *doctrines* of the latter. We could not believe both, for we saw they widely differed; we could not preach both without preaching contradictions; we could not serve both, for who can serve two masters? We were under the necessity of cleaving to, or

of rejecting one or the other. We could not conscientiously bear a party standard, or fight under it against our brethren.

The great majority of our congregations cleaved to us and to the word we preached. Their confidence could not be shaken. The Presbyterian preachers generally thinking their cause in danger, expended much zeal and labor to crush our influence, and divert the attention of the people from us. But all their efforts were apparently vain. Their endeavors to defend and establish the peculiarities of their system, rather tended to open the eyes of the people to its deformity, and opposition to what they deemed the gospel of God, and to strengthen their attachment to the doctrine we preached. The Methodists, thinking that we would all unite with them, were very friendly, and treated us with brotherly attention.

In the mean time we were busily engaged in preaching and defending our views of the gospel. To the Bible we paid assiduous attention, *determined to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified.* The people followed our example in studying the Bible, and knowledge and true piety began to shine forth in the professors of religion. We prepared and published our apology, including our views of the gospel, and our remarks on the Confession of Faith. This publication had a happy effect on the public mind; not only to soften their prejudices against us, but also to convince many of the truth, of which they became zealous advocates. It is now thought necessary to give a concise view of that doctrine we published and preached continually at that time, that the world may more correctly judge and determine respecting us, and of the justice or injustice of our opposers.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. VI

THE DOCTRINE WE PREACHED at the commencement of the Revival, and which we urged before and for some time after our separation from the Synod of Kentucky, were not novel, except among the Presbyterians. We labored to convince the unconverted that they were lost sinners, and must be born again, or never enter into the kingdom of Heaven. We endeavored to point out the means of regeneration, as divinely ordained, and urged the sinner to a speedy compliance. These means we declared to be the Gospel, believed and obeyed by the sinner—that in the use of these means he should be born again, be saved or made alive unto God, by his holy spirit given to him. We continually taught that God was the author of this great change, and confirmed the doctrine by such texts as the following: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” “Of his own will begat he us.”—Eph. II. 10; Jas. I. 18, &c. But we as continually taught that God’s revealed plan of effecting this change was by the means of the word or gospel. “Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth.*”—Jas. I. 18. “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the gospel.*”—I. Corinth. IV. 5, &c. We also every where taught that this gospel had no power, and could produce no good effect on the heart of the unregenerated, “till it was believed by them.” The gospel is the *power of God* unto salvation, to every one that believeth.”—Rom. I, 16. “For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*”—Heb. IV. 2.

This doctrine preached by us, was considered a novelty and innovation by many of our Presbyterian brethren. For this we incurred their displeasure, and suffered much opposition from them. It is a

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fact which cannot be denied that the doctrine of Trinity and atonement, which we afterwards received, and for which we have suffered such bitter opposition, were at that time never preached by us; and indeed, the doctrine of atonement was unknown to any of us, till sometime after our separation from Synod; and I believe the common notion of trinity was by all of us believed, except by myself on the point of the pre-existence of the Son of God. The doctrine of satisfaction to law and justice, we preached without having once doubted its correctness. [See Apology, p. 68.] The truth of this statement may be doubted at this day by many, who can hardly believe that this doctrine, which we then preached, could have been opposed by Presbyterians. To remove this doubt, I will briefly state the difference between our doctrine and theirs. We both viewed the sinner in a state of death and alienation from God, exposed to eternal damnation: We both agreed that the gospel was the divinely appointed means of salvation, or regeneration: But we contended that this means would never prove effectual salvation or regeneration, till the sinner believed it; and we insisted that he was capable to believe. They contended that the sinner was as unable to believe as to make a world; and therefore if he was saved, God gave him faith, or wrought it in him by some mysterious divine power; a *power* extraneous from the word.—We taught that the spirit and all the promises of the new covenant were given through faith, or were received by the believer. They taught that the spirit, though a promise of the covenant, and faith, were given to the sinner in unbelief. This difference was viewed by us all as very great.—The one was connected with the whole system of Calvinism; the other with the gospel of God, as we humbly believed.

Justice requires me to state that Presbyterians have become more liberal in their conduct since that boisterous period. To prove this I will state a fact: Soon after our separation two learned and pious presbyterian preachers, Thomas B. Craighead and John Todd, were deposed by the Presbyterians for preaching the same doctrine, that a sinner can and must believe the gospel, and by this means receive the spirit, and be saved.—But some years after, the presbytery restored Mr. Craighead without one acknowledgement of his error, or any change of his sentiments. They also restored Mr. Todd in the same manner, as I have been credibly informed. This proves that the voice of their confession of faith has but little authority, and it is hoped, will shortly be lost in the loud cry of the gospel.

I will now make a few extracts from the *Apology* by which our views of the gospel at that time shall be clearly exhibited.

The gospel we defined in the language of the Angel, to be “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Luke ii, 10. An epitome of which is, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii, 16. The love of God is the spring, or moving cause of all the benefits of the gospel. His love to the fallen world is absolute, and must be so declared to mankind. To say that God loved us on condition that we should love him, would destroy the very idea of the Gospel. “We love him because he first loved us,” 1 John iii, 10. 19.—The whole world of mankind is the object of God’s love, and to which he has given his Son without exception. This truth we confirmed by the following arguments.

1. Because Christ is the constituted savior of the world: “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world,” 1 John iv, 14. John iii, 17. xii, 47. vi, 33. 1 Tim. iv, 10. &c.

2. Because all are invited and called to believe and come to him as their Savior, Isai. xlv, 22. Matt. xi, 28. Isai lv, 1. Rev. xxii, 17. &c. How can we account for these invitations, and offers, made to all, if Christ be not given to all? How could we reconcile the conduct of a prince or sovereign, who should propose terms of pardon and peace to his rebellious subjects, when at the same time substantial reasons existed, why he could not accede to his own proposals? If Christ be not given to the whole world, then that *part*, to whom he is not given, have no right to any thing in him more than the fallen angels, nor can they be invited to receive Christ or his benefits in *truth* and *sincerity*. Besides how can their punishment be aggravated for rejecting Christ, when he never was, nor could be sincerely and truly offered to him?

3. Because he died for all, 2 Cor.v.14-15. 1 Tim.ii,6. Heb.ii,9. 2 Pet.ii,1. John i,29. That Christ died for all we farther argued, because sinners who hear the gospel shall be finally condemned for not believing and obeying it. “He that believeth on him is not condemned. He that believeth not is condemned already; *because* he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. John iii,13.2 Thes.i,7-8. John xii,58. Jas.ii,12. 1 John iii,23. But how can this be required of those for whom Christ did not die? Would not such be required to believe an untruth? And can we

think that the judge of all the earth would condemn his creatures for not believing a lie? If Christ died exclusively for a part of the human race, unbelief follows of course. The scheme furnishes no proper foundation for any one to make an application of the promises to himself; and no one, holding this system, can believe till his mind is drawn off from it, and his attention fixed on the promise of a faithful God. We farther taught, that with Christ is freely given all his fulness, or all that is in him; for we have no authority to believe that a partial Christ is offered to any. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Rom.viii.32. In him is the fulness of grace, life, salvation, pardon, wisdom, righteousness sanctification, redemption, and the spirit without measure. All these he received as gifts for men, even for the rebellious, ps.lxvii,18. Acts ii,39-40, &c.

These are the provisions of the gospel, equal to our most enlarged capacities, boundless as our desires, and infinite as our wants—all treasured in Jesus, and with him given, freely given, and offered to a lost world. They are represented, (Prov.ix, 1-5) by a feast, prepared for sinners: Those, invited, had no hand in preparing the provisions—all were ready before the guests were invited—they were only to come and receive what was already prepared for them.—The same truth is taught by our Lord himself by the figure of a supper; the servants sent to invite the guests were authorised to say, "Come, for all things are now ready," Luke xiv, 16-25.—No qualification was required in the guests.—Their believing the report of the servants did not set one dish on the table; nor did their coming give the food its nourishing quality—all things remained the same whether they came and partook or whether they staid away.

The Lord Jesus requires no excellent distinguishing qualifications to bring us within the reach of his Almighty arm. He saves freely and voluntarily. He delights in the work of saving sinners. His very heart breathes forgiveness; and he rejoices over them as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. He wants no reward before the work is done. In this respect every sinner stands upon equal ground; there is no difference between the king and the beggar. He lays down before he takes up, and strows before he gathers. Neither does he require the vigorous help of his helpless creatures; *his own arm brings salvation; we are his workmanship*. He does not divide the work, nor take a sinner in hand to finish what he had begun. He

calls all the ends of the earth to look unto him, and be saved: saved, not in part, but in whole, from beginning to end.

The Gospel contains facts in themselves, which require nothing from us to make them true. It is a fact, that the *great supper* was prepared, whether those invited believed it or not; or whether they came, and partook if it or not. Their believing the fact could not make it more true. So it is a fact, that God has absolutely given to the world his son, with all his fulness; whether we believe, or disbelieve; whether we receive, or reject the gift. To insert any condition in the Gospel, on which its truth should depend, would be to destroy its very nature; or to cover it with such a mist of darkness, that no one could see its reality. Thus to say that Christ died for us, on condition we should believe on him, is to cast a veil over the truth: for we should then have no certain end of his death, and therefore no foundation for our faith.

The absolute freeness of the provisions in Christ is represented by the manna provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, John vi,32. The manna was given to all without exception, to those who loathed it, as well as to those who loved it. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. The spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev.xxii, 17. Water is free to all, and no money, or price is required to purchase it. So are the provisions of the gospel. No good works, no qualifications are previously required; no time is allowed to obtain them. But all are exhorted now, immediately to come. *For behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation*. And, *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*. Whatever the situation of the sinner may be—though his sins be like crimson, and for multitude as the sand on the sea shore; yet has he a sufficient warrant now to believe the gospel, and receive its provision. For if the gospel does not authorise him *now* to receive its provision, it does not suit him *now*, and while he goes to seek for qualifications, death may put a final period both to the means, and the end. Besides, if the gospel require previous qualifications; while the sinner is seeking them, he is obeying it; and should death, in the mean time, carry him off, he could not be condemned on the principles of the gospel. But neither could he be saved: for, by the supposition, he is yet without the provisions of

life. These qualifications, by whatever name they may be called, are legal; and instead of preparing the soul to receive the gospel, they are turning it away from Jesus Christ.

The gospel, then, invites all to come *now*, and at no other time. Therefore it bids all welcome just as they are. But lest any should after all be discouraged, God proclaims his disposition to sinners in such a manner, as to remove every doubt and fear. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?" Ezek. xxxiii, 11. The Lord, is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter iii, 9. "Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii,3. "He waits to be gracious." Isa. xxx, 18. "He is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Cor. v, 17. 1 John iv, 6.

God sits upon the mercy-seat to dispense grace and mercy to the lost race. None but sinners need mercy; therefore none but sinners have any business at the mercy-seat; and no other character does God receive there. The rich he sends empty away. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. This man (Christ Jesus) receiveth sinners, the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the chief of sinners. If Christ receiveth sinners only, then every attempt of the sinner to make his condition better, before his coming to Christ, is an attempt to throw himself out of the reach of Christ and of mercy. As long as he remains out of Christ he remains out of *the way, the truth, and the life*.

This we conceive to be *that gospel*, which Christ commissioned his apostles "to preach to every creature in all the world." Mark xvi,15. "To as many as they should find." Matth. xxii, 9.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. VII

FAITH.

HAVING SHOWN how the Gospel effects regeneration, by being believed, we are naturally led to speak of faith. We have already shown that the word of God is the foundation of faith; but it will be necessary to say something further on this subject. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John, xx. 31. "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 2.Cor.II.5. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom.x.17. "When he (Christ) shall come to be admired in all them that day." 2 Thess. I.10. "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" Rom.x.14. "Howbeit many of them that heard the word believed." Acts IV.4. "In whom ye also believed, after that ye heard the word of truth the Gospel of your salvation." Eph. I.13. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, who testified, he told me all that ever I did. John IV.39. "As he spoke these words many believed on him.—Chap. VIII.30. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word."—Cap. XVII.20, &c.&c.

The word of truth is not only the foundation of faith; but it has sufficient evidence in itself to produce faith (see Deut.xxx. 11. and John xx.31.) Faith can have no existence without evidence. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." John III.27. If a fact be stated to us, which is accompanied with sufficient evidence, we believe it. Faith does not depend upon any disposition, whether holy or unholy; but on the strength of the testimony. No

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that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in Christian will deny, that there is sufficient evidence in the *word* to produce faith. For if there is not, God cannot require us to believe it, nor condemn us for not believing, when it is impossible to be believed. But many say, though the evidence be sufficient in itself, it can have no access to the mind in its natural state. To this we answer, that evidence, under such circumstances, is no evidence to us.—And therefore neither God nor man ought to wonder, if we do not believe.

The word, or testimony of God, is to be believed in the same manner as we believe the testimony of one another.—This is evident: See John I. 9. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;” and therefore can, and ought to be received by all that hear it.

As faith is a simple idea, we cannot give any definition of it, that will make it plainer than it is already. And it would have been happy for the church, if no other definition had ever been attempted. But if the reader, according to custom, must have one, we say—it is *admitting testimony, upon the authority of the testifier*: Or, *it is simply believing the testimony of God*. Many elaborate treatises have been written to explain what *faith*, or *believing* is, with no better effect, than to destroy its signification. A child of a few years old understands *believing* as well as a doctor of divinity.

Some have defined it *coming to Christ, flying to him, trusting in him, &c.* which are not faith itself, but the fruits, or consequences of it. For none will come to him, till they hear and believe the report of the Gospel; that he is, and is able and willing to save them.

Some have distinguished it into various kinds, as faith of *credence; historical; temporary*; the faith of *reliance; assurance*; of *miracles*; and *saving* faith. But all these are one and the same act of the mind, believing various truths, as God has revealed them.

The Apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, expressly describes the nature, fruits, effects, or consequences of faith, as he does also in his other epistles, sometimes directly, and sometimes indirectly. In Chapter x.38,39, he tells us it is *that by which the just shall live*; and it is *believing to the saving of the soul*. In Chap.x.I.1, “It is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.” Verse 3, It is giving credit to the divine testimony respecting the *Creation*, as related by Moses; “Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God,” &c. Verse vi, it is *believ-*

ing that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and the consequence of it is *coming to God*. But we cannot know these things, in the first instance, any other way than by admitting the testimony of God, which is *the evidence of things not seen*; and is opposed to experimental knowledge, which is *the evidence of things seen*; or experienced. It is believing the testimony of God, as in the case of Noah, Abraham, &c. Verses vii, viii, &c. without any other evidence; nay the evidence of sense, and experience had hitherto contradicted it. It signifies the same thing respecting dividing the Red sea and Jordan, and the passage of the Israelites through them, the falling of the walls of Jericho, &c.&c. Now the *act* of believing in all these cases is the *same*; though the *objects* of their faith are *various*, and the effects produced on the mind accordingly.—As we have already said, faith influenced Enoch to *come* to God. It moved Noah with *fear*: it induced Abraham to leave his country; it gave Sarah strength to conceive seed; *for she judged him faithful that had promised*. Verse XI. It influenced the Israelites to venture into the midst of the mighty waters; to surround the walls of Jericho, &c.&c. See its wonderful effects, described at large throughout this chapter, and elsewhere frequently in the word of God.

We see, then, from what has been said, the simple nature of faith, and its use in regeneration. If, therefore, the Gospel believed, or faith in the Gospel produces, or effects regeneration, it necessarily precedes it. This is as evident as that the cause precedes the effect, and the means the end. But as this is an important point, we will add some further proofs to the many already mentioned. “For ye are all the children of God, by faith.” Gal. III.26. If we become children *by* or *through* faith, then it is plain we were not children, or born again, before faith. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” John I.12. Therefore before they believed they were not the sons of God. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Rom.IV,5, Here we see the *ungodly* are the persons, who are justified; but as God justifies none but them that believe, therefore the ungodly believe; and so faith precedes regeneration.

To assert, that regeneration precedes faith, is to destroy the very foundation and nature of the Gospel. No unregenerated sinner would then have any warrant to believe; he would be more solici-

tous to work *for* righteousness than to believe *unto* righteousness; and until he imagined he had the evidences of regeneration in himself, he never would regard the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of sinners. It is in fact the foundation of *legality*. Upon this plan the Gospel ceases to be glad tidings to sinners; for sinners have no right to any thing the gospel reveals.

In the *great supper*, already mentioned, the faith of those who partook of it, did not depend upon the provision they ate; nor the sight of the well furnished table; but upon the report of the servants, who invited them. So the faith of those who partake of the gospel provisions, does not depend upon their partaking; but upon the report of God in the gospel. We grant that partaking the provisions of the gospel strengthens their faith; it adds to the testimony of God, *that* of sense. Then they know *experimentally*, that the report of the servants is true. Should these invited reply to the servants, that they could not believe there was such a supper provided for them; they would not act more foolishly than those who say they cannot believe in the gospel, till they partake of its provisions. The very act of taking, or receiving the provisions of the gospel is an *exercise* of faith: and therefore faith necessarily precedes receiving them.—As, therefore, faith precedes partaking the provisions of the gospel; so it does not depend upon the reception of them for its foundation.

Now, as we before proved, that salvation, pardon, eternal life, divine light, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, the fulness of the spirit, &c. are the provisions of the gospel; and that faith precedes the reception of them: therefore it follows, that faith does not depend for its existence on partaking any of them; but necessarily precedes all.

Will any say, that faith depends upon salvation? No; for the scripture every where asserts, that salvation follows faith. *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.* Will any assert that it depends on pardon, or justification? No; for we are justified by faith.—Does faith depend on spiritual life for existence? No; for “these things are written, that ye might believe; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Does its existence depend upon the Spirits powerful, enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying influences? No: for we receive the Spirit *through* faith. Gal.III.14. “That we might receive the promises of the spirit through faith.” See also verse 25; “In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise.”

Eph.I.13. Faith does not depend upon grace; for by faith we receive grace. “By grace are ye saved through faith,” &c. Eph.II.3. “By whom also we have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand.” Rom.v.2.

As, therefore, faith precedes the reception of the gospel provisions, it cannot be a part of those provisions, in any other sense than as it is a *medium* of *divine appointment*, through which we receive them. If it belongs to the provisions of the gospel, then it is absolutely out of the creature's reach. And would God damn a soul for not having faith, when he had it in his own hand to give or withhold, at sovereign pleasure? With equal propriety might he damn him for not creating a new world. For the one is as much above his power as the other. Faith is no where promised, but always represented as that through which the promises are received.

Thus, according to promise, we have given you a brief view of the Gospel; and we desire that you will not take these things merely upon our word, nor the contrary upon the word of any other person; but search the scriptures daily, with an humble dependence on God for the necessary aids of his spirit, and see whether these things are so.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. VIII

WE HAVE BEEN thus particular in giving our views of the gospel, which we preached prior to separation from the Presbyterians, that the world might be able to form a correct judgment respecting our course. After we had stated our views of the gospel, we next proceeded at the request of Synod, to state our objections to their confession of faith. We deem it unnecessary to notice particularly those objections which we made and published in our apology; for by attending to our views of the gospel, any one may at once see their discrepancy with the confession of faith. We objected to all the rigid doctrines of Calvin, contained in the confession. We also stated our objections to all human, authoritative confessions; as being separating walls between christians from their first introduction to the present time.—We determined therefore in order to promote christian union, to cast all such books *to the moles and bats*, and to take the Bible alone as the only standard of faith, practice and discipline. This was then considered a daring and dangerous step indeed. For this we were ranked among the atheistical Illumineers of Germany, and derided, reproached and persecuted as the enemies of God and man. The pulpits were disgraced with invective, and the presses groaned under the weight of opposition to us.

In the mean time we were earnestly and successfully engaged in preaching the gospel, and churches were multiplied. We ordained to the ministry David Purviance, who had long served his country as a legislator. His labors were then, and still are, a blessing to the church. We listened to objections made against us by enemies as

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well as friends, and determined to correct our errors, and receive truth by every means. While we were denouncing partyism and urging christians to union, it was frequently cast up to us that we were as much a party as others, having assumed a party name, *the Springfield presbytery*. We felt the force of the objection, and determined to free ourselves from this cause of offence. We therefore met in Bourbon County Ky. June 28th, 1804, and agreed to cast off our assumed name, and power, and to sink into the general body of christians, taking no other name than *christians*, the name first given by divine authority to the disciples of Christ. This we announced to the world in a small piece, entitled "*the last will and testament of Springfield Presbytery*."

The manner in which this piece was written, we confess, did not then meet with our entire approbation, but the matter of it we see no good reason yet to reject. As it has been the cause of much declamation and censure, we have determined to present to the public the substance of it.

1. In the first place, we agreed that as a party and legislative body, the Springfield Presbytery be dissolved, and sink into union with the body of Christ at large: *for there is but one body, and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.*

2. We relinquished the power of making laws for the government of the church, and of executing them by delegated authority; that the people might have free course to the Bible and adopt *the law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus.*

4. We advised candidates for the gospel ministry to study the holy scriptures with fervent prayer, and to obtain license from God to preach the simple gospel without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or rudiments of the world; and *that none take this honor to himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron.*

5 & 6. We yielded to the church her right of government, and to try her own candidates for the ministry, to choose her own preacher, and support him by a free will offering; admit members; remove offences, and never henceforth to delegate her right of government to any man, or set of men whatever.

7. We recommended to the people the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven.

We then gave our reasons for dissolving as follows; "With deep concern they viewed the divisions, and party spirit, which have long

existed among professing christians; principally owing to the adoption of human creeds and forms of government. While they were united under the name of a presbytery, they endeavored to cultivate a spirit of love and unity with all christians; but found it extremely difficult to suppress the idea, that they themselves were a party separate from others. This difficulty increased in proportion to their success in the ministry. Jealousies were excited in the minds of other denominations; and a temptation was laid before those, who were connected with them, to view them in the same light.—As they proceeded in the investigation of church government, they soon found that there was neither precept, nor example in the New Testament for such confederacies as modern church sessions, presbyteries, Synods, general Assemblies &c. Hence they concluded, that while they continued in the connexion in which they then stood, they were off the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, of which Christ himself is the chief corner stone.—Therefore from a principle of love to christians of every name, the precious cause of Jesus, and to dying sinners, who are kept off from the Lord by the existence of sects and parties in the church, they have cheerfully consented to retire from the din and fury of conflicting parties and to sink out of the view of fleshly minds, and die the death—yet they will preach, and aid the brethren by their counsels, when required, assist in ordaining elders or pastors, seek the divine blessings, unite with all christians, commune together, and strengthen each others hands in the work of the Lord.”

This piece when published increased ten fold the opposition against us. The artillery of every party was directed against us. They evidently saw if we prevailed all parties must be dissolved. They represented us as disorganizers, having no form of government, and aiming a destructive blow at all church government. Why these charges against us? Because we took the Bible as the only rule given to the church by the only law giver, who solemnly enjoined upon all to walk according to this *same rule*. The Bible alone was considered as an insufficient rule, as *no government*, by many of our opposers; and to hold up this as the standard of heaven, to which all parties should come into one body, was thought to be disorganizing, and destructive to all church government!

In the year 1804, the General Assembly of presbyterians sent a committee to endeavor to reconcile, and settle the difference between us and the Synods. We attended the call of the committee

with the Synod at Danville Oct. 1804. The committee proposed to us a few queries which we answered as follows:

Question 1. By the committee. “What were your reasons for renouncing the jurisdiction of the presbyterian church?”

Answer. 1. “Because we believed that those bodies, with which we stood connected, acted contrary to their own rules.”

2. Because the confession of faith or standard of that church, contained several things which we viewed as contrary to the word of God, on which account we could not retain it as the standard of our faith, or submit to be judged, and condemned by its dictates. This we saw evidently to be the design of Synod. Other reasons and the train of circumstances, which in a gradual chain brought the matter to that issue, are fully exhibited in our apology to which we refer all who want information. While we were let alone, we were willing to let the confession of faith alone; but as soon as we found our sentiments were to be brought to that standard, we renounced its authority, and consequently had no alternative but to withdraw.”

“Question 2. By the committee of the general Assembly. Can any method of accommodation be proposed, which may induce you to return to the jurisdiction of that church, and heal the division which has taken place in the Synod of Kentucky?”

Answer. “To the first part of this question we answer in the negative, so long as they retain the confession of faith, as the standard of doctrine and discipline, because we cannot receive that book as our standard. When we at first withdrew, we felt ourselves freed from all creeds but the Bible, and since that time by constant application of it, we are led farther from the idea of adopting creeds and confessions as standards, than we were at first; consequently, to come under the jurisdiction of that church now, is entirely out of the question.”

“We feel ourselves citizens of the world, God our common Father, all men our brethren by nature, and all christians our brethren in Christ. This principle of universal love to christians, gains ground in our hearts in proportion as we get clear of particular attachments to a party. We therefore cannot put ourselves into a situation which would check the growth of so benign a temper, and make us fight under a party standard.

“Notwithstanding we conceive we can propose a method of accommodation, which, with the divine blessing, will heal the division,

which subsists between both the ministers and people throughout the bounds of the Synod of Kentucky, as follows:

1. "Let us remember that all christians are one in Christ, members of his body, partakers of his nature and heirs of the kingdom: Therefore they have no power over one another to cut off, exclude, or unite.

2. "Let us pray for more of the uniting, cementing spirit.

3. Treat differences in lesser matters with christian charity and mutual forbearance, and bend our united force in the common cause.

4. Give up the care of the church to God by constant fervent prayer—counsel, advise, admonish, reprove, comfort and strengthen one another as necessity may require, in the spirit of love and meekness. Then will be accomplished that saying, *that of the rest durst no man join himself to them.*"

"ROB'T. MARSHALL,
JOHN DUNLAVY,
BARTON W. STONE,
JOHN THOMPSON."

Danville, Oct. 18, 1804.

No accommodation or reconciliation could be effected by the committee, between the Synod and us. The business was therefore indefinitely postponed, and we returned to our respective homes.

Three valuable Elders, who had a few years before separated with James O'Kelly from the Methodist connexion, about this time united with us. Their names were Clement Nance, James Read and Rice Haggard, the latter of whom soon after published a pamphlet on the name *Christian*, proving that by this name alone every member of Christ's body should be called.

We were sorely pressed with the weight of another argument or objection to the doctrine we then preached. We believed and preached that the sufferings of Christ were vicarious, or in the room and stead of sinners, in order to pay their debts or to satisfy law and justice in their stead—we also preached that Christ died for all, or tasted death for every creature. If he died for all, and the design of his death was to satisfy the penal demands of law and justice in the room of sinners, then it appeared that all must be saved. On this view of the sufferings of Christ, we evidently saw Calvinism or Universalism was true; neither of which we could receive as the doctrine of the Bible. To the Bible we then applied with prayerful

attention to find the truth on this point. We soon found that the sufferings of Christ were no where said in the Bible to be designed to reconcile God to sinners; but on the contrary, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."—We soon found that the word *atonement*, was but once named in the New Testament, Rom. 5, 10.; and in this text it could not mean *satisfaction* to the demands of law and justice, because it states "by whom *we have now received the atonement*," and not that God received it. We evidently saw that the word should have been translated, *reconciliation*, as all the learned agree. We diligently sought for the doctrine of satisfaction to law and justice by the death of Christ. We could not find in the Bible, nor could we find a man who could shew it there. We then enquired what were the demands of law and justice against the sinner, accordingly to the popular systems of the day. We learned that the law required perfect, personal and perpetual obedience—that justice required of the transgressor death temporal, spiritual and eternal, that Christ as surety paid this debt of obedience and suffering in the stead of the sinner, which obedience active and passive, is imputed to the sinner for justification.

We admitted the claims of law and justice to be correct; but our enquiry was, did Christ as surety satisfy these claims, or pay these debts for the sinner, in his stead?—Did he in the sinner's stead, pay the debt of obedience to law, that is, love God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself? If so, we evidently saw that the sinner was freed from obligations to love God or his neighbor, seeing the surety had paid this debt of obedience for him. This we durst not admit. Nor could we learn how Christ could fulfil these demands for another; for admitting he was both God and man, we plainly saw that *as God* he must love himself infinitely; and *as man* he must love his neighbor as himself. We could see no surplus righteousness for another. The doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ to the sinner for justification, we found not in the Bible; though this doctrine is a prominent feature in the system so generally esteemed as orthodox, yet the expression, *the imputed righteousness of Christ*, is not once named in the Bible. We therefore gave up the doctrine as a human device.

We next enquired, did Christ pay in the sinner's stead, the debt due to justice, and so satisfied justice? Did he pay the debt of temporal death? If he did pay this debt *fully*, why do sinners of every age die, or pay the debt again?—Can it be just to demand and re-

ceive the payment twice?—Did he pay the debt of spiritual death for the sinner? Impossible; for spiritual death is to be dead to God and divine things, to have no love nor delight in God nor his ways.—Could Christ have suffered this death without being a real sinner, and guilty? Could a hloy God or a holy law demand such an unholy debt? Could they demand sin as a punishment for sin? But should we contrary to truth, say that Christ has fully paid this debt of spiritual death for sinners, do they not still suffer it? Can this be just? Did he pay fully the debt of eternal death in the sinner's stead? Eternal death he never suffered, for he arose from the dead the third day, and now *liveth forevermore*. To say he fully paid the debt of eternal death, is a pointed contradiction—for the debt of eternal death will require an eternity to pay it—it can never be fully paid.

We had long before seen this hole in the system, but had filled it with a patch of human wisdom, which was this, that Christ suffered an infinite punishment which was equivalent to an eternal death. We admitted that God was *without passions*, and could not suffer; and as none but an infinite being could suffer infinitely, therefore Christ neither as God nor man could suffer this penalty. But we had been taught that the divinity was the altar on which the humanity was offered, and which gave efficacy to the sufferings of Christ. We immediately concluded that the altar did not suffer, but the human nature only—and therefore the human nature could not suffer infinitely.

For the want of Bible evidence we were compelled to give up these doctrines as the mere notions of men. This system of atonement we fearlessly affirmed was not to be found in the Bible. What is the truth on this point was one great pursuit. We enquired thefore for what purpose did Christ die?

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WEST—No. VIII

WITH DILIGENCE we searched for the truth on the Doctrine of atonement; the result of our inquiries was published soon after, and are well known in the West. As this doctrine, and those of trinity and the son of God (the *orthodox* notions of which were relinquished generally by us) may be laid before our readers in our subsequent numbers, we shall omit a particular notice of them now, and proceed to the history.

About this time, or soon after the dissolution of Springfield Presbytery, Matthew Houston a popular preacher among them, united with us. The revival still progressed, and new churches were forming in Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.—In the midst of this prosperity, some of our leading preachers began to indulge in wild, enthusiastic speculations, and hesitated not to publish them abroad. One proclaimed that the Millenium was come—another said, that Christians would never die, but be made immortal by some extraordinary operation of the spirit; and plainly hinted at the denial of the resurrection of the body and of a future judgement. These things to me and others were the cause of great distress. They portended great evil, which soon came upon us from a quarter the least expected. This we shall now state.

A people, called Shakers, living in New York, hearing of the remarkable revival in the West, sent a deputation of men to reconnoitre among us. The mission consisted of Mitchum, Bates and Young, men eminently qualified to execute the purpose for which they were sent. Their appearance was grave, humble and interesting. Perfection in holiness was their theme, to attain which the people were urged to receive their testimony, and submit to their direction.

[The *Christian Messenger*, Vol. I, October 25, 1827, pp. 265-269. *N.B.*: This issue is misnumbered, it is properly number IX.]

As many among us were breathing after perfect holiness, they were disposed to listen to any proposition by which they might advance to that desirable state. The bait therefore was taken by many, and many were ensnared to their ruin. Among those taken were Richard McNemar, Matthew Houston, and John Dunlavy, who became very zealous to make proselytes to the shaker-faith, and were too successful in their attempts.

This was the first serious check to our progress; and it was humiliating in the extreme. The opposition to our course before had been so violent and ill-directed, that it rather increased, our influence in society, and inclined many to unite with us. But now the Shakers under the mask of friendship, were drawing the multitude after them and many for fear of them fled from us to the different sects for refuge. What added to our grief was, the spirit of rejoicing, manifested by many of our sectarian opposers at this event, so ruinous to the souls of many. Their conclusion was, that our doctrine was thus demonstrated to be false, because so many of its advocates had embraced Shakerism.—But this argument was soon taken from them; for many of the various sects, both preachers and people, were also ensnared, and united with them.

Those of us, who stood firmly fixed in the faith of Christ, encouraged each other, and were indefatigable in our exertions to rescue the Churches from the snare of the Shakers, and to establish them on the Gospel. The storm, so tremendous in its first appearance, soon passed over. We have thought that this distressing occurrence has eventuated in good, great good to the Christian Church; for by it we are taught to check our mind from indulging too freely in vain speculations, and to examine well by the Bible, every doctrine presented for our acceptance. We are also taught our entire dependence upon the great Head of the Church for all good, and that he only can keep us from falling.

We humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God—day and night, in public and private we called upon God for his Holy Spirit to revive us and bless us once more. The Lord hearkened and heard, and poured out his Spirit upon us. Our ranks, which had been thinned by the Shaker-storm, were soon filled and the churches were multiplied. Peace, love and union increased, and abounded every where. Many who had been our opposers began to see that God was with us, and either united with us, or ceased from their

opposition. A few happy years we thus enjoyed in the service of our Lord. But tribulation yet awaited us. Some of us saw evidently another storm gathering and began to prepare to meet it.

A number of us from reading the Bible had received the conviction that immersion was the Apostolic mode of baptism, and that believers were the only proper subjects of it. The Elders and brethren met in Conference on this and other subjects of importance. It was unanimously agreed that every brother and sister should act according to their faith; that we should not judge one another for being baptized, or for not being baptized in this mode. The far greater part of the Churches submitted to be baptized by immersion, and now there is not one in 500 among us who has not been immersed. From the commencement we have avoided controversy on this subject, and directed the people to the New Testament for information on this matter. Some of our preaching brethren appeared rather uneasy and dissatisfied that their congregations were submitting to this ordinance, while they could not be convinced of its propriety; yet they said but little. Some of them began to urge the necessity of making a stand upon the truth we had already learned, and desist from farther search. It was understood that we should have some other bond beside the Bible and brotherly love; that these were insufficient to unite our growing churches, and keep them pure.—It was urged that there was already a diversity of opinion among us on the doctrines of trinity, the son of God and atonement, and therefore it was necessary that some *formulary* should be made and adopted, by which uniformity might be promoted and preserved among us. Some of us saw plainly that these were the arguments used for the introduction of every human party Creed; which has ever been imposed on the world, and therefore opposed *formularies*, from a full conviction of their injury to the cause of Christ.

At Bethel, August 8th, 1810, we met in Conference.—After some time spent in conversation, a plea of union was agreed to, and the following instrument was proposed and generally adopted. “At a general meeting of ministers of the Christian church at Bethel, in the State of Kentucky, August 8th, 1810, the brethren, taking into consideration their scattered, local situation, their increasing numbers, and the difficulties arising in the execution of their office, agreed to unite themselves together *formally*, taking the word of God as their only rule and standard for doctrine, discipline and government, and promising subjection to each other in the Lord,

have hereunto subscribed their names, according to their present standing in said connexion."

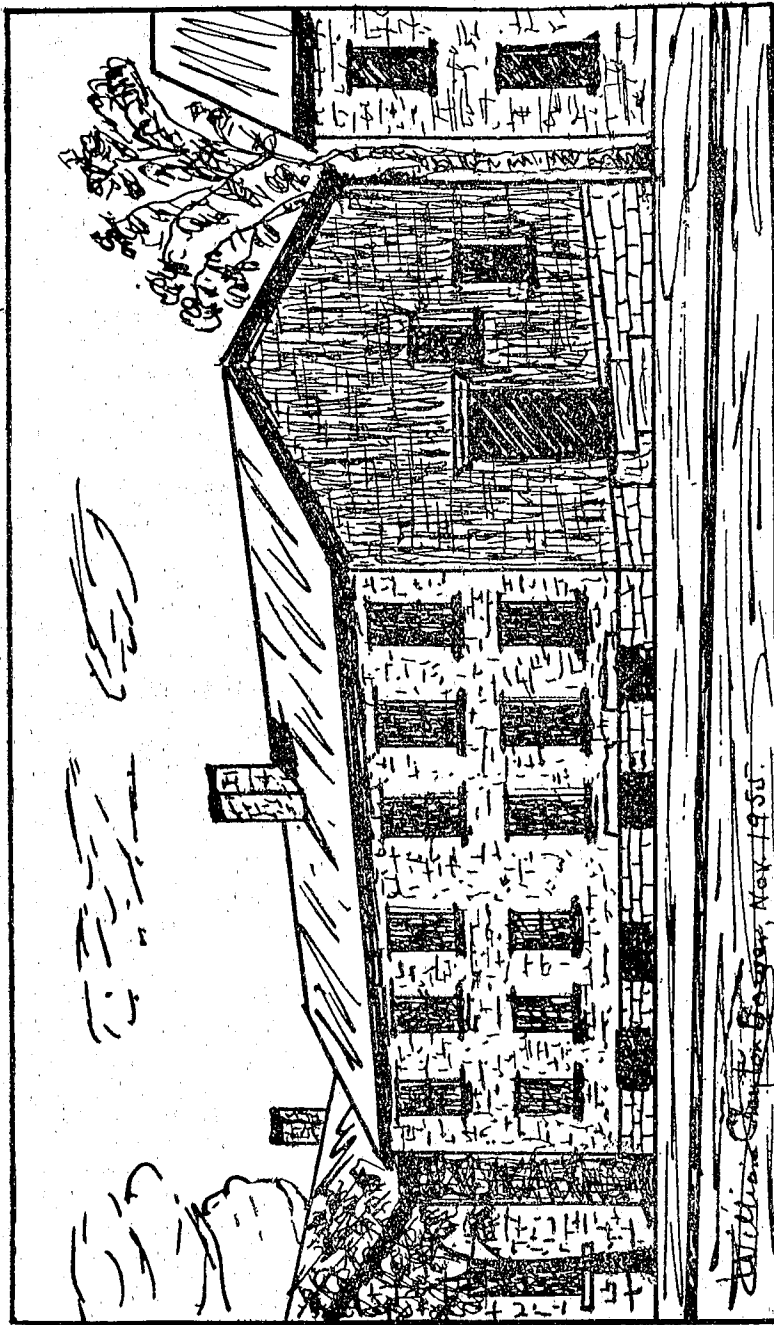
At this conference it was also proposed, and agreed to that a committee be appointed to write for publication, a piece, embracing those points of doctrine, respecting which, there was so much noise throughout the country; hoping by this to remove from the public mind those strong prepossessions against us, and to obtain some degree of communion with brethren of other denominations. The committee was appointed, consisting of R. Marshall, B. W. Stone, J. Thompson, D. Purviance and H. Andrews. The subjects on which they were instructed to write, were the trinity, the Son of God and atonement. They were to report to a general meeting at Mount Tabor on the 2d. Monday of March, 1811.

On the day appointed, a very general collection of the preachers met at Mount Tabor. The committee with leave of Conference, retired to compare their writings, promising to report next morning. The committee soon found that they disagreed among themselves on the atonement the first point on which they compared their writings. Marshall, Thompson and Andrews, having relinquished the views entertained by the Christian church generally for some years past, advocated those contained in the *orthodox* creed, with regard to this doctrine and that of trinity—Stone and Purviance had written and spoken in opposition to them. On next morning we reported our disagreement among ourselves, and could not do the business to which we had been appointed by Conference. The Conference agreed to hear what the committee had written. After we had read our several pieces, a motion was made to enter into a public debate on the doctrines but the general voice was against it, supposing that they had heard enough, and declaring that the difference of opinion need not break fellowship.

Marshall and Thompson, in failing to reform us, and bring us back with them to believe what we have long since rejected, became from this time our opposers. They wrote a book against us, and in justification of their conduct, with regard to us. It was by us considered a harmless production, beneath the talents and high respectability of the authors, and therefore scarcely noticed by us. In this book they give their reasons for leaving us. One was that they could not reform us—that by some years experience, our church had not increased in number and holiness, as they had expected—that they had thought that the Millenium was just at hand, and that

a glorious church would soon be formed, &c., but they were disappointed. We pretend not to blame our brethren for acting up to their convictions. We are not to judge another man's servant, and therefore pass no uncharitable judgement on them. We believe them to be christians, driven from some points of precious truth into errors, which must and will be relinquished by Christians of every sect not long hence. These brethren, Marshall and Thompson and F. Monfort, soon after were received into the presbyterian church; and S. Westerfield and H. Andrews, not having a classical Education, were left at the door, and joined the Methodists.

The loss of these dear brethren we greatly lamented; but we less sensibly felt it: Because our number of preachers and churches had greatly increased; and the influence of the brethren in society was greatly diminished; their weight against us was almost imperceptible. From that time we have lived in peace & harmony among ourselves—our numbers from a handful have swelled to many thousands, and many churches have doubled their numbers every year for some time past. At the present time there is a greater increase than we have ever yet known. We are yet warmly opposed and spoken against every where. We trust in the living God, and labor to be accepted of him not doubting but that on the ground we now occupy, the whole church of God on earth will ultimately settle.



UNION OF CHRISTIANS

WE ARE HAPPY to announce to our brethren, and to the world, the union of Christians in fact in our country. A few months ago the Reforming Baptists, (known *invidiously* by the name of Campbellites,) and the Christians, in Georgetown and the neighborhood, agreed to meet and worship together. We soon found that we were indeed in the same spirit, on the same foundation, the New Testament, and wore the same name, *Christian*. We saw no reason why we should not be the same family. The Lord confirmed this union by his presence; for a good number was soon added to the Church. We agreed to have a four days meeting on Christmas in Georgetown, and on New-Year's day at Lexington, for the same length of time. A great many Elders, Teachers and Brethren of both descriptions, assembled together, and worshipped together in one spirit, and with one accord. Never did we witness more love, union, and harmony, than was manifested at these meetings. Since the last meeting we have heard of the good effects. The spirit of union is spreading like fire in dry stubble.

It may be asked, is there no difference of opinion among you? We answer, we do not know, nor are we concerned to know. We have never asked them what were their opinions, nor have they asked us. If they have opinions different from ours, they are welcome to have them, provided they do not endeavor to impose them on us as articles of faith. They say the same of us. We hear each other preach; and are mutually pleased and edified.

It may be asked again—Have you no creed or confession as a common bond of union? We answer, yes. We have a perfect one, delivered us from heaven, and confirmed by Jesus and his Apostles—we mean the New Testament. We have learned from the earliest history of the church to the present time, that the adoption of man-

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made creeds has been the invariable cause of division and disunion. We have, therefore, rejected all such creeds as bonds of union, and have determined to rest on that alone given by divine authority, being well assured that it will bind together all who live in the spirit of it.

It may again be asked—How will you dispose of such as profess faith in Jesus, and are baptized? To which party shall they be attached as members? We answer: We have no party. It is understood among us, that we feel an equal interest in the prosperity of every Church of Christ, (and of such we all profess to be members,) and are determined to build up and edify all such Churches, without any regard to former names by which they may have been called. To increase and consolidate this union, and to convince all of our sincerity, we, the Elders and brethren, have separated two Elders, JOHN SMITH and JOHN ROGERS, the first known *formerly*, by the name of Reformer, the latter by the name Christian. These brethren are to ride together through all the churches, and to be equally supported by the united contributions of the churches of both descriptions; which contributions are to be deposited together with brother JOHN T. JOHNSON, as treasurer and distributor. We are glad to say, that all the churches, as far as we hear, are highly pleased, and are determined to co-operate in the work.

Some may ask—Will the Christians and Reformers thus unite in other States and sections of our country? We answer.—If they are sincere in their profession, and destitute of a party spirit, they will undoubtedly unite. They all profess the same faith—they all reject human creeds and confessions—they all declare that opinions of truth are fallible, and, therefore, should not be substituted for truth, nor embodied in an authoritative creed, written, or verbal; nor imposed as terms of fellowship among obedient believers. They all profess the same one Lord, the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners—They all profess the same one immersion, into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—They profess all that our Lord Jesus and his Apostles and Prophets taught, and nothing more as of divine authority—In fact, we have just received intelligence from Elder JOHN LONGLEY of Indiana, that these people are also united in his bounds, and great are the blessings of the union. Many are added to the church. But should all in other states and sections act inconsistently with their profession, we are determined to do what we are convinced is right in the sight of God. Nothing can move us

from this purpose, unless we should make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. From which may our merciful God preserve us.

EDITORS