REPRINT OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER

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Especially grateful are we to R. L. Roberts, first for his urging that we coordinate the reprinting of the set, and second for producing a general index to the entire series. This required long hours of reviewing articles on his microfilm copy and assigning appropriate titles. The original indices at the end of each volume, as the reader will observe, were vague and inadequate. The general index is at the end of volume 14.

Sincere appreciation is expressed also to the hundreds who have entrusted us at Star Bible with their orders, a vote of confidence that gave us renewed courage and strength. We pray that these men of the early Restoration Movement will be duly honored, that many wise men will be led to their Savior, and that Jehovah's Name may be glorified through His Church now and evermore.

Alvin Jennings
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THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

BY BARTON W. STONE,
AN ELDER IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

"*Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.*"—PAUL.

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To illustrate lengthily the importance of the object contemplated in this work, would be unnecessary. Of this the public will judge, to whom the work is now presented.

It is universally acknowledged, by the various sects of Christians, that the religion of Heaven, for centuries past, has fallen far below the excellency and glory of primitive Christianity. The man, who honestly investigates the cause of this declension, and points the proper way of reformation, must certainly be engaged in a work, pleasing to God, and profitable to man. This is our design; and to accomplish this desirable end, shall our best exertions be enlisted and engaged. That these exertions may be better calculated to effect the object contemplated, we invite and solicit the aid of qualified brethren, who feel as we do, an ardent desire for the restoration and glory of the ancient religion of Christ—the religion of love, peace, and union on earth.

That there are errors in the doctrines, as well as in the lives and practices of the various religious denominations now living, I presume, no Protestant will deny. Their various, jarring creeds—their bitter strife and uncharitable opposition to one another—their multiplied divisions and disunion among themselves—their pride and worldly spirit—their death and cold formality:—these are undeniable evidences of the melancholy fact. To have these errors corrected and removed from the church; and to have truth restored in her heaveuly, captivating robes, unadorned with the tinsel of human wisdom, are certainly the pious wishes of every honest Christian. Therefore, unappalled at the dangerous attempt, not discouraged at the attendant difficulties, we will boldly, though humbly, advance to the work. As

the Bible alone is acknowledged by all Protestants to be the only infallible rule, by which all doctrines and spirits are to be tried; so by this rule we will honestly try the various, jarring doctrines and spirits, which have done so much mischief in the world, for so many centuries back. Should we be so happy as to find the error, we shall be compelled by our benevolence for man, and love of truth, to expose it to view; and to endeavor to exhibit the doctrine of the Bible, unsullied by the unhallowed touch of man's wisdom.

Before we can promise ourselves success, the mind must be previously prepared to enter upon the work.

1. We must be fully persuaded, that all uninspired men are fallible, and therefore liable to err. I think that Luther, in a coarse manner, said *that every man was born with a Pope in his belly.* By which I suppose he meant, that every man deemed himself infallible. Our pride abhors the idea of being accounted *weak.* To give up an opinion, a sentiment or doctrine, and to receive a different one, has been long reckoned a certain evidence of weakness. The public has strangely affixed this stigma on the man, who dares change his opinion. If the various reformers, in the different periods of the world, had been influenced by this principle, what would have been the consequences? Certainly, they would have remained in error—have evaded persecution, and we should now have been under the midnight shades of paganism and popery. If the present generation remain under the influence of the same principle, the consequences must be, that the spirit of free enquiry will die—our liberty lie prostrated at the feet of ecclesiastical demagogues—every sect must remain as it is—their various and contradictory notions must continue, and strife and division remain, in opposition to the will of God, and to the disgrace of Christianity.

To approach the Bible, with a desire and determination to learn and practise the truth there revealed, in despite of all opposition, requires a greater degree of fortitude and self-denial than is generally possessed by professors of religion in the present day. To be stigmatized as weak—to be accounted as fools, when we take the best method to become wise—to lose the smiles, approbation and friendship of the circle, in which we have long moved with great pleasure—to incur the frowns of our dearest relatives and friends, the sore displeasure of the sect of Christians, with which we may be united—these are not light things; but these must be expected by the man, that dares change his opinions, from a scriptural conviction that they are wrong.

2. We must possess the mind of the honest Baptist, to be willing to decrease, that Christ may increase—to be willing for truth's sake, to be rejected by all, even to be excluded from the society, with which we may be associated, however popular and respectable it may be. The dread of this has caused thousands to shut their eyes against the light of truth, or if received, to conceal it from the view of their fellows. Should this dread of exclusion influence all, the consequence would be, that all the litigant sects would remain—their discrepant doctrines continue, and division and schism in the body of Christ still abide, in opposition to the will of God. Can these things be right? No Christian will affirm it; all acknowledge them wrong. Therefore the principle, which is the basis of all this wrong, must itself be wrong.

3. We must be willing to give up all worldly gain or wealth, for the sake of truth. Had Paul been unwilling to count all his gain but loss for truth's sake, he never had been a Christian. In the present corrupt state of society in many places, it is found that a man of business cannot well succeed in his pursuit of gain, without being in connexion with some religious society, and that, which is most numerous and wealthy. Should a mechanic, a merchant, a teacher, or even a preacher in such a society, begin to open his eyes to truth, and in its light to see himself in error, with what sore temptations has he to struggle. Says the preacher, should I change my opinions, and reject the standards of this church, I must lose my salary, my whole living, and turn out in an unfriendly world, and with my helpless family face poverty and disgrace with persecution. Says the teacher, if I

change my sentiments, I shall lose the patronage of this church; they will no longer entrust their children to my care, and want must be my lot. So the merchant and mechanic—if they change their opinions, their gain must be diminished. "Buy the truth," is the advice of Wisdom. Whoever obtains it must give gold and silver for it, in the sense I have stated. But surely it *excels rubies.*

4. We must learn "to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils"—from man, however pious, learned and great he may be accounted. They are all fallible; and their jarring creeds and confessions of faith, too plainly evince this humiliating truth. If we cease not from them, but receive their opposite dogmas as truth, then the schisms of the body of Christ must continue with all their attendant evils. We should follow them as far as they follow Christ, but no farther. We should bring their doctrines to the Bible, and judge for ourselves, as we will at last have to be judged by our *own* works.

5. We must believe that the Bible was addressed to rational creatures, and designed by God to be understood for their profit. When we open the Bible under the impression that it is a book of mysteries, understood only by a few learned ministers, we are at once discouraged from reading and investigating its contents. But believing it was written for our learning and profit, and therefore addressed to our understanding, we are encouraged to read and diligently search its sacred pages. The man, who does this, with prayerful attention to its instructions, will find the truth, and walking in it, will *find her ways pleasantness, and all her paths peace.*

I have now stated what I think necessary to prepare the mind for the investigation and reception of truth. Were we all thus prepared, and were we in this spirit to read the Bible, great and glorious would be the effects. How soon would the dark clouds of error fly before the brilliant rays of truth! How soon would the divided flock of the great Shepherd, hear his voice and flow together unto him! How soon would they leave the barren, solitary wilderness, where they have been long

scattered, and hungry, and enter into the rich pastures, prepared for them! How soon would the world, seeing all Christians united, believe and be saved! O Lord, help, for the glory of thy name! EDITOR.

OF THE FAMILY OF GOD ON EARTH.

THAT God has a peculiar family on earth, is an undisputed truth. Eph. III. 15—"Of whom (Christ) the whole family in heaven and earth is named." It is all-important that the character of this family, its privileges, its rule of conduct, and its name, be clearly ascertained from the Bible. This being done, the effect must be good. To these points, we shall particularly attend.

1*st*—*The character of this family.*—Each member of this family has trusted in Christ. Eph. I. 13—*In whom* (Christ) *ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.* This is in perfect accordance with the purpose of God, expressed by his prophet Isaiah, and confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ and by his apostle Paul; that *In his name shall the Gentiles trust.* Matt. XII. 21—Rom. XV. 12. None are worthy of being called members of this family, or will ever be acknowledged as such, who have not trusted in him their present and eternal interests—in him for salvation, grace and eternal life.

But will any trust in him before they are convinced of their own ignorance and weakness—of their own inability to save themselves? No: for as long as they have *confidence in the flesh*, they see no necessity of a Saviour. Again: Will any trust in him before they believe that he is able and willing to save them, wise to guard and guide them, benevolent and merciful to receive and bless them? No, certainly. They must believe that he possesses these attributes, or in him they cannot trust.

Another query naturally is suggested, What led them thus to believe in Christ, so as to trust in him? I answer, The revealed truth of God in the scriptures. *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. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. John xx. 31—Eph. i. 13. In the scriptures are exhibited, not only the evidences of his being the promised Messiah, sent to be the Saviour of the world; but also his power and willingness to save—his love and benevolence to man—his truth and faithfulness to his promises, and his delight in bestowing his mercy and grace on believing sinners. Thus putting no confidence in the flesh, believing that Jesus alone can save, they have trusted in him without reserve; crying with sinking Peter, *Lord, save, I perish.*

They, who have believed and trusted in Christ, are sealed with the holy spirit of promise. *In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise.* Eph. i. 13. This spirit is the spirit of God—the spirit of Christ, or Christ dwelling in us; for these different expressions mean the same thing, as is evident from Rom. viii. 9, 10. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, &c.* It is the spirit of holiness, which, when received, hungers and thirsts for righteousness, pants for God and a perfect conformity to his lovely character. It is the spirit of adoption, *whereby we cry Abba, Father.* It is the spirit of love to God, and man. It is the spirit which unites the whole family of God. It is the spirit of power, by which we are enabled to oppose successfully every temptation, and every enemy. It is the spirit of liberty, not of bondage; *for where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* In a word, it is the spirit, the fruits of which are *love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.* Gal. v. 22, 23.

Those, who have not this spirit, belong not to the Lord's peculiar family. *For if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Know ye not your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* Rom. viii. 9—2 Cor. xiii. 5. They, who have this spirit, have *Christ formed in them, the hope of glory.* The very mind and character of their Lord, do they possess. As the seal or signet, impressed on wax, leaves the image of itself; so the spirit of Christ as a seal, leaves its own image on the heart of every believer. This is the mark of his family. By this shall all men know them. By this we are to know that we are the children of God. By this shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. This person, whether bond or free, black or white, rich or poor, prince or slave, is a child of God, the favorite of heaven. How solemnly does our Lord warn us against offending and despising one of these little ones that believe in him! Matt. 18. Shall this man, who has believed in the Lord Jesus, and trusted in him, and is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, be denounced, because he has not received a party name and mark? because he cannot receive the creed and dogmas of human invention? or because he cannot pronounce the Shibboleth of reputed *orthodoxy?* How many, reputed orthodox, have not the mark of God's people! and how many, reputed heterodox, have it so evident, that all may see it!

Another character of this family is that they are quickened or made alive. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Eph. ii. 1. Once they were dead in sin as others—dead to God, as having no desires after him—no delight in him nor in his ways—no love to him nor fellowship with him; but they were alive to the world—to the would their desires were drawn—on it was their love fixed, and in its ways were their whole delight. Now they are alive to God—to him are the desires of their hearts—on him is their love supremely fixed, and in him and in his service are all their delights.

They are saved from sin—from the love of sin; for *they hate it with a perfect hatred*—from the practice of sin; for they endeavor *to avoid every appearance of evil,* and *he that is born of God sinneth not*—and from the dominion of sin; for *they being made free from sin, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

They are reconciled to God. Once enmity existed between them and their God. He was light, they were

darkness—He was holy, they were unholy—He was good, they were evil. How can natures so opposite be reconciled? *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?* But they, *who were once darkness, are now made light in the Lord*—they, who were once unrighteous, are now made righteous *even as he is righteous*, and holy even as he is holy. Now they are partakers of the divine nature, and therefore the reconciliation between them and their God is effected. Being reconciled to God, they are also reconciled to every perfection of his nature—to the law and gospel—to his government and people—to all his dispensations in providence. *Not my will, but thine be done*, is the language of his heart. We might proceed more particularly to delineate the character of God's family; but we shall for the present dismiss this subject, for the consideration of another.

The privileges of this family.—It has pleased God to bestow privileges distinguishingly great on this his family on earth—privileges high, above all comparison. They are acknowledged by him as *his children; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. All things are theirs, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are theirs; and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* 1 Cor. III. 22—Rom. VIII. 17.

Every member of the family has an equal right to all these things by the gift of God, their common father; who then shall dare presume to debar any, even the least, from the enjoyment of them? We will state a case. An earthly father has a numerous family of children. Wishing to enjoy their company, and that they might enjoy each other, he makes a feast and invites them all on a certain day to come. They all come at his invitation. The father sits at the head of the table, and kindly invites them to sit down and partake of his provisions. They advance to the table. But says one to his brother, Thomas, you shall not sit down, and eat of this provision? for I consider your political opinions as subversive of our good government, and therefore deem you unworthy

of this privilege. Says, a second son, John, I debar you from sitting down with us, and partaking of these provisions, because I view your federal notions as aiming a deathly blow at our happy constitution. And you, Richard, says a third, must stand back, for your democratic principles render you unworthy of this high privilege of sitting down and eating and drinking with us. Thus in an authoritative manner they debar each other from their father's table. What must be the feelings of the wounded father? Would he not indignantly frown upon such conduct? Would he not thus speak?—Sir, who gave you authority to debar my children from my table? Have they not an equal right with yourself to these provisions? Are they not my children as well as you? Have I not invited them? Have I made any difference among you? How dare you thus presume?

How easy the application. God has made rich provision for his children. All are invited to come and receive. But how often have we seen the presumptuous man, endeavoring to thrust the children of heaven from the company of Christians, and from the privileges of God's house? How often do we hear him presume to lock the door of heaven against them, and sink them anathematized to hell? We have seen a poor worm, swollen with self-importance, assume the seat of God at the Lord's table, and utter such language as this: In the name of God, and by his authority, I debar from this table, all that do not believe this and that doctrine peculiar to his party. To speak in the name of God, is to speak as God; and to profess to speak and act by his authority in such matters, is easy; but it requires better proof than he is able to give, to confirm it to be true. If God has given this authority to uninspired man, who has it? Is it the Pope, or Luther, or Calvin, or Arminius? To what one sect of the many is it given? Is it given to one or all of them? If to one only, it is important to know that one; for that one sect, speaking truly in the name of God, and acting by his authority, must be infallible. If the authority be not confined to one, but given to every sect, then every sect must be infallible. This stubborn facts

dery. While such unwarranted authority is assumed, and exercised, confusion, Babel-confusion must continue, as it long has contined in the family of God.

For more than a thousand years has Zion been in the wilderness, driven there by the beast, the man of sin, who has assumed the seat of God, and presumes to speak in his name, and to act by his authority. The Pope of Rome thus presumes, and therefore consistently, pretends to infallibility. Shall every sectarian make the same pretension? If not, let him never presume to say that he speaks and acts in the name of God, and by his authority, without sufficient proof for his assertion.

The rules of this family.—In every well regulated family, certain rules are ordained for its conduct. Should the father of a large family of children give different and contradictory rules to several different portions of his family, would not discord, strife and division be the unhappy consequences? If the father approve of the conduct of one part of his family for acting up to the code of rules given them; for the same reason he must approve of another part of his family for acting up to the contrary rules given them. In doing thus, he must approve of opposite conduct—right and wrong. No earthly father, it is believed, was ever found on earth, who acted thus imprudently. And will any man venture to affirm, that God gave to different parts of his family discrepant and opposite rules for their conduct? Would not this be the very foundation of discord, strife and division among them? And how could their heavenly Father so expressly forbid these things, and enjoin the contrary?

Will any plead that God has given uninspired men authority to make and give rules for the regulation of his family? If he has, to whom is the authority given? Is it to the Presbyterian ministry? Is it to the Methodists or Baptists? If the Presbyterians have this divine authority exclusively given to them, then the Methodists, the Baptists and all others must be wrong; for they have made rules contrary to those made by Presbyterians, and these are, according to the hypothesis, of divine authority. If this divine authority be given to the Methodists, or Baptists, or to any other sect, then every sect must be wrong, which differs from that one, to which this divine authority is given to make and give rules of faith and practice to the Lord's family. Will any plead that this authority is given to all the sects? Then it will follow that God has given a divine warrant and authority for division, discord and strife among his family—and yet has expressly forbidden them! Should any yet plead that this divine authority is given to them, we demand the proof. Either let them shew a *thus saith the Lord*, or confirm their word as Christ and his apostles did, by miracles. Then, and not till then, can we believe them; and not till then can an honest man claim such authority; nor till then should Christians receive and adhere to such rules.

Hence we assuredly conclude, that the various and opposite authoritative rules, creeds and disciplines, invented by the various sects, are unauthorized by God—are the foundation of discord, strife and division, and therefore contrary to the will of God. If the will of God is that all his people be one, and that there be no division among them, then to make such rules and adhere to them must be rebellion against God and his government, and a war against the spirit of truth, which calls upon all the family to unite and walk by the same rule. This conclusion may appear to be awful; but will candor deny its truth? Innumerable good men have never seen the evil of such things; but now it is high time to open their eyes, and reform.

The inspired Apostle exhorts the family to walk *by the same rule.* Phil. iii. 16. It is not pretended that this rule was any other than the New Testament. This God gave for the regulation of his family, and he judged it the best. This will promote union, peace and love in the whole family, if they obey it. *Mark them* (says Paul.) *who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, and avoid them.* Rom. xvi. 17. That doctrine learned and received by the family of old yet exists in the New Testament. It cannot be denied, that various divisions have been made, and do yet exist, contrary to this doctrine. Therefore, every man that

makes division contrary to the doctrine of the New Testament is *in ipso facto*, a schismatic, and ought to be avoided. It is important too, that such should be avoided; or the Apostle would not have pressed, and urged the exhortation with such forcible language. *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that cause divisions*, &c.

An important query naturally rises—how are such to be avoided? I know of but one way: Let the whole family of God reject their various, authoritative creeds, and receive the New Testament. as the only rule of faith and practice—let them reject all party names, and receive that, given by divine authority at Antioch, the name *Christian*. Let them endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, till they all come to the unity of the faith. Let them learn and practise the old, neglected, but all-important doctrine of forbearance one towards another. Let them lay aside *all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, and as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word.* In a word, let them read the Bible much, and obey its precepts in all things; then shall Zion's glory shine forth, and engage the world to glorify God.

Of the name of this family.—1. It is evident that the name given by divine authority to this family, is Christian. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Acts xi. 26. They, who are acquainted with the Greek language, well know, that the word in this text translated *were called*, should be rendered *were called by divine appointment*. Thus Dr. Doddridge translates it: "*And the disciples were by divine appointment first named Christians at Antioch.*" He adds, "I think with Dr. Benson, that the use of the word Chrematisai (were called) implies, that it was done by *a divine direction*, and have translated it accordingly; (compare Matt. ii. 12, 22; Luke ii. 16; Acts x. 22; Heb. viii. 11, 7, 12, 25.)

The celebrated Dr. A. Clark on this text says: "The word Chrematisai—which we translate *were called*—signifies, in the New Testament, *to appoint, warn*, or *nominate by divine direction*. In this sense the word is used Matt. ii. 12; Luke ii. 26; Acts x. 22. If therefore the

name was given by *divine appointment*, it is most likely that Saul and Barnabas were directed to give it; and that, therefore, the name *Christian* is from God." The Dr. farther remarks: "A Christian, therefore, is the highest character, which any human being can bear upon earth; and to receive it from God, as those appear to have done, how glorious the title!"

Similar are the remarks of President Davis, in his sermon on this text. To adduce more authority is deemed unnecessary to substantiate the true meaning of this text.

2. It appears that by this name the family was ever afterwards called, and known. Acts xxvi. 28: *And Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* Agrippa well knew that this was the name by which they were called.

3. It was for bearing the name *Christian* that they were reproached and persecuted of old. 1 Pet. iv. 14: *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.* 16: *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.* It is well known, that the edicts of the persecuting emperors of Rome were against those who bore the name of Christ, or were called Christians. Some, to avoid persecution and imminent death, denied the name; but others, more faithful, owned it in defiance of affliction, persecution, and death, and suffered martyrdom for it. Hence, in high commendation of this firmness, the Lord addresses the persecuted Churches—*For my name's sake thou hast labored, and hast not fainted.—Thou holdest fast my name.—Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name.* Rev. ii. 3, 13; iii, 8.

4. By the event of the disciples being called Christians by divine appointment, an ancient prophecy was fulfilled. Isai. lxii. 2: *And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.* This new name is *Christian*, for this is the only name given to them by divine appointment, that we read of in the New Testament.

5. Into this name they were baptized. A party, divisive spirit once prevailed in the church at Corinth. The

apostle Paul hastened to check it, knowing its baneful tendency. While they were saying, I am of Paul—and I of Apollos—and I of Cephas—and I of Christ; he asks the question, Were you baptized into the name of Paul? If they had been baptized into his name, they would then have had grounds for saying, they were of Paul, as bearing his name. They would have been Paulites. So had they been baptized into the name of Apollos, or Cephas, they would have been called properly Apollosites, or Cephasites. But as they were all baptized into the name of Christ, they should all be called *Christians*.

The family of God is torn and divided into almost innumerable parties, and each party distinguished by a peculiar name; as Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, &c. Were Paul here again, would he not be grieved and pressed in spirit, as he once was at Athens? Would he not reprove sharply, and call these divisions, carnality? Would he not labor to destroy this party spirit, and these party names? Certainly, he would. For he would well know that, these existing, the unity of the family could never be effected, and therefore, the will of God must be opposed. Will any contend that these party names are of divine appointment? Not one will presume it. For it is a fact, that some of these party names were given by the spirit of wickedness. And can Christians contentedly wear them? What should we think of a wife, who should reject the name of her husband, and assume that of another man? Would not her conduct excite suspicion? Would it not be a ground of jealousy?

Will any plead that these names are innocent? I will grant that an individual may wear a party name, without injury to himself; but I am persuaded that it is a serious injury to society. With a party name are associated all the supposed errors of that party. To elucidate the subject, I will suppose a probable, if not a common case. Two travellers, strangers to each other, are going the same road. They fall in together. After common salutations, they introduce the subject of religion. It is found to be an agreeable subject to each. They

talk of the goodness, love and grace of God—of the Savior of sinners—of regeneration—of heart experience, &c. They feel a sweet union of spirit, and fellowship for each other. Presently it is unhappily found out by them, that one is a Baptist and the other a Methodist. The Baptist views the Methodist with all the train of supposed errors attached to the name, and feels the bonds of fellowship dissolving. The Methodist is no less affected towards the Baptist. For with the name Baptist are associated the heart-chilling doctrines of eternal election, reprobation, &c. &c. The union begins to dissolve; and cold indifference succeeds his fervent charity. Now, what but the name produced these effects?

But few professors in the present day, but know these things to be correct and true facts. If so, who will plead for party names? Who will deny the name given by Divine appointment, and assume another? The will of God is that his family be called Christians, else he would not have given them the name. Who, in opposition to his will, shall willingly assume and bear another name? I cannot view it a light matter.

It is frequently asked, Why so much zeal in the present day, against authoritative creeds, party names, and party spirits? I answer for myself: because I am assured, they stand in the way of Christian union, and are contrary to the will of God.

It is again asked, Why so zealous for Christian union? I answer, because I firmly believe that Jesus fervently prayed to his Father, that believers might all be one—that the world might believe in him as sent by the Father. I also firmly believe, that the will of God is that all should be one; else he would not have so frequently enjoined upon them, that they should be perfectly united in one, and that there be no divisions among them—he would not have so severely discountenanced disunion, by saying that such as were disunited *were carnal, and walked as men*. Believing these things, can we be blamed by the pious for our zeal in promoting union, and in aiming at the destruction of disunion, its causes and baleful effects? Were we to be silent, should we not be

unfaithful, not declaring the whole will of God to our fellow-creatures? Shall we stand and see the world in wickedness, knowing that they will not believe till all Christians are one? Shall we refrain from lifting up our voice, and pleading for the truth of God? If we oppose the union of believers, we oppose directly the will of God, the prayer of Jesus, the spirit of piety, and the salvation of the world. If we contend for party creeds, party names, and party spirits, we contend for disunion, for these are among the chief causes of it.

I ask, are not the divine commands, *walk by the same rule—be perfectly united in one spirit, in one body*—and *let there be no division among you?* Are not these commands binding on every believer, of every name? None will presume to deny this truth. I farther ask, Is not the person guilty, who knows this, yet will not do it? It cannot be denied.

Some try to excuse themselves by saying, they ardently desire union, and pray daily to God for it. Do these people expect that God will work miracles to effect this union? Do they not know that he has ordained the means to effect this end? and that these means are within the power of us all? I will propose a case. Here are three parties, established on three different creeds. In each of these parties are obedient believers, who are persuaded that division is an evil, and that union is the will of God and their duty. They determine to do their duty; but how shall they proceed? Let them all agree *to walk by the same rule*, the New Testament. Could they for this be blamed by the candid of any party? Does not every party confess that its own rules are fallible, and that the Bible is the only infallible rule? Do they not act wisely then, who give up the fallible for the infallible? Candor would blush to deny.

Again: Let the believers in each party adopt the name *Christian*, as that given by divine appointment, and let them give up the party name, by which they have been distinguished from others. Let them relinquish their party-spirit, and party interests, and agree to unite their endeavors to promote and advance the kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

We are assured, that they who would act thus, must suffer much opposition and persecution from all those in a different spirit. But let the Christians of every party, unawed by the frowns and menaces of men, do right. Who, instructed in the revelations of God, can in conscience deny that such would do right? We think there are none.

There are many preachers in the world, who often zealously preach the doctrine of union, and eulogize it in high terms; yet these men, though they know and preach the truth, remain inactive in promoting it. Like the Pharisaic doctors, *they say and do not.* Can such men be honest? If they were, would they not labor to do what they declared to be right? Would they not step forth into the will of God, and be an example to the flock, and say *be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ?*

The objections to Christian union shall be attended to in our next. EDITOR.

MR. JOHN WESLEY'S THOUGHTS.

"WE may die without the knowledge of many truths, and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom; but if we die without love, what will knowledge avail? just as much as it avails the devil and his angels. I will not quarrel with you about any opinion; only see that your heart be right towards God, that you love the Lord Jesus Christ, that you love your neighbors, and walk as your master walked, and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions; I am weary to bear them: my soul loathes this frothy food. Give me a solid and substantial religion; give me an humble and gentle lover of God and man: a man full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with these Christians, wheresoever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of. Whosoever doeth the will of my Father, who is in Heaven, the same is my brother, my sister and mother."

THE Editor has lately returned from Tennessee.—While he was there, a separation took place in the Elk River association of Baptists. The causes, which led to this event, were, that some of the preachers, convinced of the evil effects of man-made Creeds, and doctrines, ventured boldly to preach against them. For their opposition to the doctrine of trinity and of the Son of God, as held by the *orthodox*, they were charged with heresy. They attended the Association, prepared to answer the charges against them. The *ultimatum* was, that eleven of the Association declared themselves independent of that body, and withdrew. This information the Editor received from a member of that Association. The event took place in September last.

THE Gospel Luminary for August, 1826, informs us that about 60 Methodist preachers, disaffected with their government, met in convention in New-York city, the 31st of May last, pursuant to appointment, and continued several days in session. After pointing out in their *declaration of independence*, the many evils they have endured, they make the following disclosure:

"We (say they) submit the following facts to an enlightened public—

"1. The Legislative, Judicial, and Executive powers, being assumed by any one man, or body of men, constitutes the essence of *despotism*.

"2. Those powers are all assumed and exercised by the Bishops and Itinerant ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and is therefore (in the opinion of this convention) *real despotism*.

"3. That the Methodist Episcopal Church have not derived Episcopal order, or power, by regular succession (could a *regular succession be proved by any Church*,) but have (in the opinion of this convention,) surreptitiously, and against all regular order, assumed the same.

"4. The government of the Methodist Episcopal Church. not being in accordance with the civil institutions of our free and happy country; should its influence become universal, would (in the opinion of this convention) in time, endanger our form of government.

"5. Having failed in every attempt to obtain a reform, in which our civil as well as religious rights would be better secured, we, the delegates from the different secessions from the said Methodist Episcopal Church, have assembled ourselves in the city of New-York, in convention, appealing to the great Head of the Church for the purity of our motives, and the sincerity of our hearts and intentions, and imploring divine aid and assistance, do ordain and establish the following Constitution of our Church, to be known by the name of the METHODIST SOCIETY."

This Constitution we have not seen; but we seriously doubt whether it be equal to that *ordained* and *established* by the Head of the Church. Nay: we are fully persuaded it must be greatly inferior. For in their Constitution all Christians cannot agree, and therefore cannot unite. But in the Bible, the Constitution ordained and established by infinite Wisdom, they can and will agree. We think it is generally acknowledged, that the Bible will ultimately prevail, and that all other Constitutions, formed by the wisdom of man, must sink into neglect and ruin. Not doubting the *purity of their motives*, nor *the sincerity of their hearts and intentions*, yet we firmly believe, that their new Constitution, and name, will be additional barriers to the union of Christians. Of this we hope they will be convinced, and will speedily reform; and instead of saying, "We, ——, do ordain and establish the following Constitution of *our Church*, to be known by the name of the METHODIST SOCIETY;" they will say, "We do receive and adopt the Constitution of the Church of God, the Bible, and wish to be known by the name of Christians." EDITOR.

From the Christian Inquirer.

THE EMPEROR (OF GERMANY) JOSEPH'S PRAYER.

THE following prayer, extracted from an old German work under the title of Joseph's Gebetbuck, (the Emperor's Prayer Book.) which was published in the Christian Reformer (England) for November last, is worthy of

the serious consideration of all professing Christians. It breathes throughout the whole of it, so much of the spirit of true religion, that it cannot fail of being approved by every liberal minded person.

PRAYER.

"O THOU eternal, incomprehensible Being! who art the fountain of mercy and the source of love. Thy sun lights equally the Christian and the Atheist; Thy showers equally nourish the fields of the believers and the infidels: The seed of virtue is found even in the heart of the impious and the heretic. From Thee I learn, therefore, that diversity of opinion does not prevent thee from being a beneficent Father to all mankind. Shall I then, thy feeble creature, be less indulgent? Shall I not permit my subjects to adore Thee in whatsoever manner they please? Shall I persecute those, who differ from me in point of thinking? Shall I spread my religion with the point of my sword? O Thou! whose mighty power and ineffable love embrace the universe, grant that such erroneous principles may never harbor in my breast! I will try to be like Thee, as far as human efforts can approach infinite perfection. I will be as indulgent as Thou to all men, whose tenets differ from mine, and all unnatural compulsion in point of conscience shall be banished forever from my kingdom. Where is the religion that does not instruct us to love virtue and to detest vice? Let all religions, therefore, be tolerated. Let all mankind pay their worship to Thee, thou eternal Being! in the manner they think best. Does an error in judgment deserve expulsion from society? And is force the proper way to win the heart, and bring the swerving mind to a true sense of religion? Let the shameful chains of religious tyranny be parted asunder, and the sweet bonds of fraternal amity unite all my subjects forever. I am sensible that many difficulties will occur to me in this bold attempt, and that most of them will be thrown in my way by those very persons, who style themselves Thy ministers; but may Thy almighty power never forsake me! O Thou eternal and incomprehensible Being! fortify my holy resolutions with Thy love, that I may

surmount every obstacle; and let that law of our Divine Master, which inculcates charity and patience, be always impressed upon my heart. Amen."

The progress of liberal principles in Tennessee has been very far beyond our most sanguine anticipations. Its advocates have been opposed with all the might and ingenuity of man, aided by the popularity of their party, the long received dogmas of *orthodoxy*, and the furious zeal of bigotry. The more intelligent begin to see the weakness of their own arguments and aids to arrest the progress of these principles. One, a preacher of eminence in that country, lately in his address to a vast assembly, after having exhausted his store of arguments against those, who opposed the *orthodox* notions of Trinity, of the Son of God, and of atonement, observed *that the civil authorities ought to interpose and put them down!* Some gentlemen of real republican principles, though not professors of religion, in disgust rose up and left the assembly. This information the Editor received while in that country, from a respectable source.

The brethren of the Christian name are not discouraged at this opposition, but zealously persevere in propagating what they deem to be the truth. They met in Conference, in August last, near Murfreesborough, and enjoyed a refreshing season from the presence of the Lord. About thirty believed and were baptized. The names of the Elders in that Conference are as follows:

John Bowman, Wm. Moore, Ephraim D. Moore, B. F. Hall, Wm. D. Jourdan, Abner Hill, James Y. Green, John Hooton, Francis A. Stone, Robert Randolph, Mansel W. Matthews, Wm. Clapp, Rob't Bates, Jno. Northcross, James Northcross, John O. Scott, Persius E. Harris, John M. Barnet, John Roberts, James E. Matthews, Crocket M'Donald, John M'Donald, Elisha Price, Elisha Randolph, Jno. Parkhill, Thacker Griffin, Lorenzo Griffin, Wm. D. Carns, Andrew Davis, John Green, Abner Peeler, John Mulky, Philip Mulky, Willis Hudleston, Wm. Gilbreath, Samuel D. Dewit, James Griffee, John M'Cartney, Robert Pedigo, Robert Leeper, —— Stover,

Elihu Randolph, Isaac Mulky, Wm. Chaffin, —— Johnson. The unordained preachers are, John Ward, Richard Lane, Calaway M'Gee, Henry Hays, &c.

The Churches in Tennessee and Alabama are numerous and fast increasing. We have recently received accounts from those countries, that at their meetings from 30 to 40 are frequently added to the Church. Many of the Elders are men of fine talents, of warm piety, and zeal, and are highly respected and beloved *for their works' sake.* May that unanimity and brotherly love, which have ever marked their course, still continue, to the glory of their Lord, and to the prosperity of Zion!

We have just received the printed minutes of a Christian Conference, held in Harrison county, Indiana, on the 1st of September, 1826. The names of the Elders and unordained preachers in this Conference, are as follows:

Elders.—Hugh Cole, Josiah H. Yager, James Dougherty, Simon Hiller, Wm. R. Davis, David Morriss, Reuben Duggans, Sherman Babcock, Clement Nance, Elisha Gun, Jesse Lucas, John Lucas, John Rogers, Adam Payne. *Unordained Preachers.*—Wm. Lindsay, Wm. Ellis, Barzillai Willie.

From the face of the minutes, it appears that great harmony and peace exist among the members composing this Conference. May these Christian graces forever dwell with them! May they never undertake to legislate for the Churches, nor attempt to wrest from them the right of independent and self-government, according to the New Testament!

OBITUARY.

Died, in July last, in Tennessee, Elder Daniel Travis. He was taken sick on a preaching tour, and died near Gallatin, before he could reach home, and before his family could see him. He left a wife and six children to lament their loss. His numerous friends express their hearty grief in tears, sighs, and lamentations. For

about twenty years, he had been a zealous, highly respected, and successful preacher of the gospel, in the Church of Christ. His public exhibitions marked the man of intellect and deep research. His addresses were lucid, argumentative, and impressive. He was beloved, even by those who differed from him in opinion. None questioned his honesty, piety, or great talents, both natural and acquired. He died as he lived, in the unwavering faith of that gospel, which he had preached to others. He left the world in the full assurance of a blissful immortality. His body lies interred in Gallatin.

Also, in October last, died, Elder John Mavity, in Indiana. He was an Elder in the Church of Christ for many years, greatly beloved for *his works' sake*, for his zeal in the cause of his Lord, and for his able and dignified defence of the gospel. He was bold, but unassuming and humble in preaching the word. The churches in Indiana, have sustained a great loss by his death. To promote their good, were his life and labors devoted. His exemplary piety, his indefatigable exertions to advance his master's cause, his meekness of wisdom, and his unwearied endeavors to keep the peace and unity of the churches, endeared him to all. A wife and children are left to grieve on earth, from whence he is taken to the rest prepared for him in Heaven.

Also, in March last, died, Elder William Hamilton Gray, near Bloomington, Indiana. He was cut off in the bloom of youth. At an early age he professed religion, and having finished his Academic studies, he devoted his time to the study of the Bible. He soon became remarkable for his great proficiency in Bible Theology. He was ordained to the work of the Lord, and labored with zeal and success, till he sunk, under the weight of disease, into the grave. In him the Church of Christ has sustained great loss. He died in the full assurance of hope, in the unshaken faith of the gospel, which he had declared to the world, and in the full confidence and joyful anticipations of eternal life.

☞ The Editor solicits those who hold prospectuses for this

work, to send forward immediately the names of the subscribers. It is hoped that the friends of the work will exert themselves to obtain more subscribers, and send him such religious communications as will be profitable for the public to know. The postage must be paid, or communications cannot be received by mail.

AGENTS,

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

KENTUCKY.—Stephen G. Marshall and A. M'Hatton—*Georgetown;* Benjamin Cassell—*Lexington;* Elder Michael Rice—*Jessamine County;* C. C. Moore—*Winchester;* Elder Josiah H. Yager—*Elizabethtown;* John Bryan—*Hopkinsville;* Elder H. Osborne—*Bethel;* Richard Hart—*Flemingsburg;* Elder John Jones—*Liberty;* Andrew Henderson—*Everett's House;* Thomas Hall—*Frankfort;* Elder Thos. M. Allen—*Union Meeting House;* A. Perrin—*Stanford;* Henry Parker and H. F. Wilson—*Paris;* Dr. A. W. Bills—*Millersburg;* Elder John Rogers—*Carlisle;* Jas. Houston—*North Middletown.*

INDIANA.—Thomas Parsons—*Terre Haute;* William Armstrong—*Bloomington;* Elder Clement Nance—*Nancyville;* Elder David Stewart—*Tuckersville;* Obadiah Seward—*Rushville.*

OHIO—Elder David Purviance—*Eaton;* Elder Levi Purviance—*New Paris;* Elder Isaac Waller—*Dublin;* Elder George Alkire—*Williamsport;* G. Foose—*Springfield, Clarke County;* E. Vickars—*Franklin;* Elder S. Kyle; *Troy & Piqua;* Isaac Sparks, G. Venousdol, and Jos. Carnahan—*Cincinnati & Springfield, Hamilton County;* Elder Joseph Baker—*Chillicothe.*

TENNESSEE—Elder William Jourdan—*Sparta;* Dr. Joel B. Sanders—*Columbia;* Jas. Shelton—*Round Lick;* Elder John Green—*Lebanon;* Elder A. Davis—*M'Minnville;* William Read—*Readyville;* Elders Jno. Bowman & Wm. Moore—*Murfreesborough;* Wm. Bell—*Gallatin.*

ALABAMA—Jas. Matthews—*Florence.*

ILLINOIS.—Daniel Travis—*Vincennes, Ind.*

VIRGINIA—Parker Lucas—*Giles Court House;* Jno. Weton—*Moorefield, Hardy County*

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THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

BY BARTON W. STONE,
AN ELDER IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

"Prove all things: hold fast that which is good."—PAUL.

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OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIAN UNION CALMLY CONSIDERED.

Objection 1.—In the present existing state of society, it is right and best that Christians should be divided, and remain as they are.

Answer.—There are not a few in this day, who openly avow this sentiment, and plead for its propriety. If we judge the sentiment by the Bible, as the standard, there are none, it is hoped, so blind but must see it condemned in almost every page. It is a true maxim, that *a kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand;* and it is universally admitted, that the glory and strength of any kingdom consist in union. So the kingdom of God. The man, who pleads for disunion, is laboring to make void the commandment of God, who solemnly enjoins the contrary upon his people—he pleads against the prayer of Jesus being answered, who fervently prayed that believers might *all be one*, that the world might believe that the Father had sent him—he pleads against the spirit of true piety, which ardently breathes as well as prays for union—he pleads for that, which is pleasing to the prince of darkness, who has ever found it his interest to divide the Church of God—he pleads for what subserves the interests of partyism; for his pleas, like opiates, lull the people to sleep, and to indifference to the truth of God, the glory of Zion, and the salvation of men:—in a word, the man, who pleads for the propriety of disunion, pleads for iniquity. To contend that it is right, is an impeachment of infinite wisdom—a condemnation of the Messiah's prayer, and a deadly blow aimed at the very spirit of piety. However well the sentiment may comport with the spirit of partyism, it is humbly hoped, that obedient, living Christians, of every name,