a young and curious mind; to direct the eyes yet unsullied with the waters of contrition, to a bounteous benefactor; to lift the little hand yet unstained with vice, in prayer to their father who is in heaven. But so it is. The child as soon as it is released from the bondage of the nurse, and needs no longer a careful eye to look after its steps, and guard it from external injury, is too often surrendered to preceptors, some of whom are employed to polish the surface of the character, and regulate the motions of the limbs, others to furnish the memory, and accomplish the imagination, while religion gets admission as she can, sometimes in aid of authority, and sometimes in a Saturday's task, or a Sunday's peculiarity, but how rarely as a sentiment. Their little hearts are made to flutter with vanity, encouraged to pant with emulation, persuaded to contract with parsimony, allowed to glow with revenge, or reduced to absolute numbness by worldliness and cares, before they have ever felt a sentiment of devotion, or beat with a pulsation of sorrow for an offence, or gratitude for a benefit, in the presence of God."

"For creeds and systems, the children of ignorance and the nurslings of authority, are doomed to mortality, like the perishable authors of their being: whilst Truth and Reason, the emanations of God himself, without the props of human institutions, will continue unimpaired as his own eternity, when the earth and the heavens shall be no more."

GILBERT WAKEFIELD.

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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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FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Brother Stone:

As the subject of Conference is considerably agitated at present, in the religious community, on the propriety of which there is (as upon almost every other subject) a variety of opinions; and as it certainly is a matter of no small importance, I beg leave to invite your attention to the subject, with a single view of eliciting information, and ascertaining, if possible, what is propriety.

The very considerable hostility of many of our good brethren, to every convocation in the shape of Conference, together with the importance of the subject, renders it necessary that something should be said. For my own part, I have really thought that the most of the opposition to our annual meetings, from the brethren of the Christian connexion, arises from a want of correct information as to the objects of our association. For names I wish not to contend; I care not whether a religious convocation be termed Conference, Association, or Annual Meeting; but as to the propriety of the brethren occasionally meeting for religious edification, instruction, and information, from different parts of the community, within proper and limited bounds, there should exist no doubts whatever, particularly when the innocent as well as the useful objects of our meeting are ascertained.

Many are under the impression that we associate for the purpose of legislating, or making laws for the rule and government of our churches. Nothing is more foreign from our views. I acknowledge but one *law-giver*, and believe the great Head of the church has left a perfect code of laws for the government of his people;

therefore we stand not in need of human law-making, to facilitate the prosperity of the Redeemer's cause. I do most sincerely, and I hope ever shall, contend for the absolute independency of each church, as to the complete transaction of its own business; and for its want of responsibility to any human tribunal whatever. I know and acknowledge no higher tribunal than "*the church;*" and every member is alone responsible and answerable to the particular church where his membership may be. I see no authority in the word of God for the different ecclesiastical courts that have for so many centuries been established in the world, and that one set of men should, and of right ought, to be thus exalted over another. Those establishments, whose object is the elevation of one part of the religious community over, and entirely above another, must certainly fall before the light of truth.

It may then be enquired, what propriety is there in your Conference or annual meeting? I answer, simply to worship together and strengthen the bonds of union, to receive and obtain information from the different churches, either from their letters or messengers, and attend to their suggestions, and as far as in our power comply with their requests; attend to ordination, if thought proper, when required by the brethren; to arrange our appointments so as to supply the destitute churches with preaching; and imitate the primitive church by making such *requests* only as may be proper to *set things in order*. The brethren, who meet the elders as messengers, we do not recognize as representatives. Let that principle be established, and a foundation is at once laid for the final annihilation of Christian liberty. I would therefore oppose any convocation, the object of which is to take from the churches any of their sovereign rights and prerogatives, or to legislate in any manner whatever for them, or that will maintain or uphold the doctrine, that any man or order of men are not *alone* answerable to the particular church where they may have their membership. But I am nevertheless constrained to believe that our Conferences, as they are

termed, with our present views of Christian liberty, are highly beneficial. It enables the brethren to ascertain the situation of each other, and each church; to learn the prosperity of God's cause; to meet and worship together; and to obtain a variety of information, important to be known. Surely then, none will oppose meetings, the object of which is alone information and edification, and not legislation.

I have thus succinctly made the above few remarks on the subject, more with a view of obtaining, than with an expectation of giving, information; believing that something should be said to quiet the fears of some of our brethren, who are apprehensive that something wonderfully dangerous is done in Conference; which fear alone arises, as I before intimated, from an utter misapprehension of what is done. Then let the brethren be correctly informed of our opinions on the rights, privileges, and powers of each church; the innocent and simple business of Conference; and I have no doubt their fears will be dissipated, and their hostility cease. From the long ecclesiastical tyranny that has been so unmercifully exercised over the people, I am not surprised, that by many, dangers are apprehended from religious associations, and fondly hope that the brethren will vigilantly guard against any and every thing like despotism, and be ever ready to avoid that man or set of men who may attempt to trample on their rights and liberties; while on the other hand they should cautiously avoid that utter neglect of order and propriety, which for fear of doing wrong, will incline them to neglect doing right.

Should the above remarks be worthy a place in your paper, I hope you will accompany them with such additional remarks or strictures as will edify or instruct your readers. PHILIP.

—

TO PHILIP.

Dear Brother:—We thank you for your communication, and solicit a continuation of correspondence. With your remarks on the independence of the churches, and

with your views of Conferences, we are highly pleased; they meet our entire approbation. We will state a fact, which is thought to have increased the fears of some of the brethren, with regard to Conferences. It is commonly believed and confidently affirmed by some, that the mode of government practised by the Christian Church, is the same, or nearly the same, as that practised by the Baptist Church. This has considerably excited the fears of many, who think they see strong features of despotism in the Baptist government, as they do in that of others. In this we think they are not deceived; indeed some of the most respectable of the Baptists themselves acknowledge the same, and are persuaded that a reform must take place, or their churches must crumble into pieces, and ruin.

Though in some respects the features of our government and that of the Baptists bear a striking likeness, yet we would not conceal it, that there is a radical difference between them. The Baptist Association is *modestly* called an *Advisory Council;* yet it cannot be denied that their *advices* are of equal force with the authoritative decrees and cannons of *his infallible Holiness,* the Pope of Rome, and of the Catholic Councils. For if a Baptist Church refuse to receive the *advice*, given by this *advisory council*, it is cut off from the Association, and from the Baptist communion. It is acknowledged by protestants, that the authority assumed by the Roman Pontiff and his councils, to bind their decrees and dogmas upon the churches, is not divine. By what authority then do the Advisory Council make their *advices* authoritative? Can they condemn the Catholics, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, or the Methodists, for doing the same? If the authority be not divine in one case, then are all equally destitute of it. This authority we have proved in our first number to be assumed, and never granted by the great Head of the Church to poor fallible men.

We as a Conference meddle not with the government of the churches, leaving each church to act according to the New Testament. We have no other bonds of

union, than the bonds of charity and peace, and righteousness, founded on the word of God. Should our Conference ever attempt to unite the churches in one associated body, they must follow the steps of their predecessors in folly—they must assume a dictatorial authority over the churches—they must have an authoritative creed, composed of their own notions—they must thunder their bulls of excommunication against such churches as reject their authority—in a word they must act as every sect has done, which has departed from the simple plan of government, instituted by the Head of the Church, and practised by the Christians for the three first centuries after Christ.

It is objected that if the churches were left independent, to believe and act according to their understanding of the scriptures, anarchy must follow, and heresy and division prevail and annihilate the church. Does not this objection flow from unbelief and distrust in the Head of the Church. "Is there no king in thee? Is thy counsellor perished?" Has he ceased to be leader and commander to his people? Has his promise failed, that where two or three meet together in his name, there he would be in the midst? Is his hand shortened that he cannot save, and his ear heavy that he cannot hear? Is his eye no longer over the righteous? Does he not ever live to make intercession for us, or manage our affairs? Is he not a present help in time of trouble? Has he gone to heaven and ceased to be the guardian of his church on earth? Has he left it to the protection and guardianship of *his representative* and *vicegerent*, or *vicar*, the Pope, a Synod, a Conference, or an Association? Poor representatives of Christ! Let the history of the last fifteen hundred years attest what they have done to prevent heresy and division, and the establishment of the church in love, peace, and righteousness. Have they not deluged the earth with blood?—the blood of Christians!? By their vain unscriptural attempts to promote uniformity, by their authoritative creeds and councils, have they not introduced anarchy?—for what else is now presented to view in the general Church? Have they not divided

and subdivided the body of Christ into sects innumerable, and almost destroyed love and fellowship among Christians? And do not these very councils and vicars of Christ, oppose every attempt to reform? And have not the liberty of the churches been so long prostrated by them, that they kiss their fetters, and join in the persecuting spirit against the doctrine of reformation? Can such guardians be trusted any longer? No! no! no! Faith in a present Saviour as the only head, shepherd, and leader, and humble obedience to his word, as his voice, and following him as he has directed, will bring the church right, and abiding in him she shall shine forth in her primitive glory. All the laws, creeds, and digests of laws, formed by Popes, Councils, Synods, Associations, and Conferences, have never effected this, but have ever stood in the way of its being effected, and ever will stand in the way, while they exist.

With these things in view, the New covenant and its divine author should be highly prized; and all church covenants and their authors should sink from view. Let every attempt made by our Conference to form laws and rules for the government of the church, or to take the government of the churches into our hands, or to usurp authority over them—let every such attempt be frowned at indignantly by all.

We hope some of our correspondents will hereafter give you more satisfaction on this subject.

Your servant in the Lord, EDITOR.

THE CREED OF THE WALDENSES.

We subjoin the Creed of the Waldenses, from Jones' Church History, p. 325.

"We believe there is but one God, who is a spirit—the Creator of all things—the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all; who is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth—upon whom we are continually dependent, and to whom we ascribe praise for our life, food, raiment, health, sickness, prosperity and adversity. We love him as the source of goodness, and reverence him as that sublime Being, who searcheth the reins, and trieth the hearts of the children of men.

2. We believe that Jesus Christ is the son and image of the Father—that in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and that by him alone we know the Father. He is our mediator and advocate; nor is there any other name given under heaven, by which we can be saved. In his name alone we call upon the Father, using no prayers than those contained in the holy scriptures, or such as in substance are agreeable thereunto.

3. We believe in the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, proceeding from the Father, and from the Son; by whose inspiration we are taught to pray, being by him renewed in the spirit of our minds; who creates us anew unto good works, and from whom we receive the knowledge of the truth.

4. We believe that there is one holy Church, comprising the whole assembly of the elect and faithful, that have existed from the beginning of the world, or that shall be. Of the Church the Lord Jesus Christ is the head—it is governed by his word, and guided by the Holy Spirit. For her he (Christ) prays continually, and his prayers for it are most acceptable to God, without which indeed there could be no salvation."

There are several other articles, expressive of their faith respecting the ordinances of the church, the ministry, &c. of but little interest to us, and therefore we have omitted to insert them.

These Albigences, called sometimes *paterines*, for their great sufferings and persecutions for Christ's sake, are acknowledged by Protestants to be the true Church of God, preserved by him in the great apostacy from the faith of Christ. From the simplicity of their faith respecting the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they, no doubt, were accused by their enemies of denying the Trinity, and were persecuted to death for it. For in the second edict of Frederic II, Emperor of the Romans, issued against them, among the many crimes alleged, he adds, "these miserable paterines, who do not believe *the eternal Trinity*, by their complicated wickedness offend against three, viz. God, their neighbour, and themselves. Against God, because they do not acknow-

edge the Son and the true faith, &c." Jones' Church History, p. 351.

Would any Church, professing this creed in the present day, escape the charge of heresy by the *orthodox?* Seeing the doctrines of trinity, and the hypostatical union of Christ are not mentioned in it; and these doctrines are by the *orthodox* considered as the fundamentals of Christianity. EDITOR.

THE CHRISTIAN EXPOSITOR.

Matt. xxviii, 18, 20. "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The first question that naturally arises from reading this important passage, is, What is the power given to Christ in heaven and in earth. Before we answer this we remark, that there are two Greek words, *dunamis* and *exousia*, though of very different signification, yet are translated frequently in our English Testament by the word *power*. This has caused considerable confusion to the English reader. The word *dunamis* literally signifies physical power or strength; as Matt. xxii, 29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the *power* of God." Luke v, 17, "The *power* of the Lord was present to heal them." Acts iii, 12. "Peter answered the people, Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own *power* or holiness, we had made this man to walk?" The word *exousia* signifies authority; as Matt. xxi, 23. The chief priests asked the Saviour, when teaching in the temple, "By what *authority* doest thou these things? and who gave thee this *authority?*" Acts ix, 14, "And here he hath *authority* from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name." The different significations of these two words are seen in the same verses,

Rev. xiii, 2, "And the dragon gave him his *power*, (*dunamin*), and his great *authority* (*exousian.*)" I. Cor. xv, 20. "When he shall have put down all authority (*exousian*), and power (*dunamin*).

We are now prepared to answer the enquiry, What is that *power* given to Christ. The word translated *power* in the text is *exousia*, which means *authority*. It literally should be read, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This language is intelligible. A minister sent by our government to a foreign court, goes with full *power* to execute the business for which he was sent. We all understand this *power* to be not *physical strength*, but *authority*. So Jesus the great ambassador, the great and only Apostle of God, comes to our world, with full *authority* to execute the important work of salvation. He has all *authority* in heaven. "Angels, principalities, and powers, are subject to him." They wait the orders of his throne, and willingly fly to execute them. He has authority over all the treasures of grace, of wisdom and knowledge, the unsearchable riches of heaven, to distribute and give them to such as obey him. Not only has he all authority in heaven, but also in earth. Thus he addresses his father; John xvii, 2, "As thou hast given *authority* (*exousian*) over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." All flesh, all the human race, the heathen and uttermost parts of the earth are under his authority. For what purpose is authority over them given him? It is, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. As all mankind are given to him, we can unhesitatingly say, that he has authority, full authority to give to each and every one of the human family eternal life. But this authority he will execute according to his own plan, which is, that he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved—shall have everlasting life; and he that believeth not shall be damned—shall not see life. The poor lost sinner can never justly blame the Saviour, because he has not eternal life; but forever will curse his own folly for neglecting the means to obtain it.

"The son of man hath *authority* (*exousian*) on earth to forgive sins." Matt. ix, 6. This authority is also exercised by him according to his prescribed plan, *repent for the remission of sins*. His authority to forgive sins is limited to this world. It is no where said that he has authority in heaven to forgive sins, because there is no sin in that abode of bliss. It is no where said in the bible that he has authority to forgive sins in hell; but on earth only is this authority exercised. "For if ye die in your sins, where I am ye cannot come." In the end of the world he will put down all rule and all authority and be subject to the father, that God may be all in all. I. Cor. xv, 24. If all his authority is then given up, or put down, *then* his authority to forgive sins will forever cease. The wicked, impenitent part of mankind, *then* condemned, *have never forgiveness*, but must realize that, of which they were through life in danger, *eternal damnation*.

Jesus "hath authority given him to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man." John v, 27. The last act of his mediation is to adjudicate upon the world, and assign to each his everlasting portion of life or punishment.

On this authority, given by the Father to the Son, Jesus Christ, is predicated the commission to his disciples, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations," &c. This the evangelist Mark explains by, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel is the glad tidings of salvation, an epitome of which is, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotton son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The next part of the apostles' commission is, to baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The enquiry is, who are to be baptized? We answer, all those who believe the gospel preached to them; for thus says Mark, "He that believeth, and is baptised shall be saved." It would indeed be a hard commission, binding the apostles to baptize all the nations whom they taught, or to whom they

preached the gospel; for many of those people blasphemed and opposed the gospel taught or preached to them—many were infidels and abominable in vice of every name—nor had the apostles power and authority to compel them to submit to baptism, had they been so disposed. We have never heard of such compulsion in the apostles' day; though we are not ignorant that it was used by their pretended successors; for nations have been taught by priests, and compelled by the drawn sword to be baptized, when they hated the religion, its authors, and its ministers. The apostles baptized none but such as believed and received the gospel, and voluntarily submitted to its ordinances.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. From this expression, some, who should know better, having a little learning, and a little common sense, have inferred that the language "is baptized" signifies *has been baptized*. This is done in order to induct people into the Church, who had been baptized in infancy. Were this the meaning of the commission, then must we conclude that the apostles had no commission to baptize any, seeing the nations to whom they preached the gospel were previously baptized, according to this hypothesis. By whom could they have been baptized? If baptized, were they baptized into those names of which they had never heard? It is a fact, that the apostles did baptize all that believed, and this is a sufficient refutation of the opinion.

Faith and baptism are the divinely instituted means of salvation. The apostles preached the gospel, the people believed, and were baptized; and through these means they were saved. This is the plan of heaven; but from this plan the Christian world has almost entirely departed; and has invented and practised plans subversive of that instituted by Christ. Some contend that a person must be saved, pardoned, and regenerated, and be enabled to give to the Church a satisfactory experience of having passed from death unto life, before they should be baptized. Had they, instead of Christ, given the commission to the apostles, they would thus

have ordered. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, *he that believeth and is saved, shall be baptized.*" This is mere human device, and stands in direct opposition to the plan of infinite wisdom. Is it not inverting the order of God, by putting the end, which is salvation, before the means, which is baptism?

Others more completely pervert the plan of Christ. They contend that none can believe till they are made alive or regenerated by some mysterious physical divine power, extraneous from the word, and independent of it as a means; their plan is, that the sinner is as dead as Lazarus in the grave; that God mysteriously infuses divine life into them, and regenerates and saves them; then, and not till then, they are enabled to believe—and then they are to be baptized. We cannot possibly conceive of a plan more directly in opposition to the plan of Christ than this; and had all the wisdom of the world been combined to have invented one more opposite, it could not have been done. Future generations will wonder at the ignorance and presumption of the present race of Christians. And yet nothing can turn them from their course. Had they given the Commission to the apostles, it would have been this: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to—not every creature, for they are all as dead as Lazarus, it is not for them—but preach it to such as are divinely made alive, regenerated and saved by the almighty power of God—they will and can then believe; and when they are saved and believe, then baptize them." Thus they have completely perverted the truth, and have put the end, which is salvation, before the means of salvation, which are faith and baptism. Can such men expect the smiles of God, or his plaudit, *Well done good and faithful servant?*

Others have substituted another plan, which is to baptize the subjects before they believe, and are saved. They baptize infants, which cannot believe; this they (the infants) are left to do, or not to do, at some future period of life. Why is it that all have so universally, and for so long a time, departed from Christ's plan? It cannot be that it is difficult to be understood; for nothing can be plainer. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." On this plan the apostles acted. Peter preached the gospel—the Jews heard it, and believed, for faith, in those days, came by hearing—they say, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answers, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts, 2. Had one of our *orthodox divines* been present, would he not have said, 'Peter you are wrong: these people must have the remission of their sins, and they must have the gift of the Holy Ghost, before they shall be baptized'? Would not Peter have replied, 'I was taught and commissioned thus to act, by my Lord, Jesus Christ; and, pray sir, who taught you the contrary?' What could he answer? Shame must have made him hang his head in silence.

Saul believed and was praying in agony, yet his sins cleaved fast to him. The Lord takes his own plan to save him. He sent Ananias to him, who said, "Why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins.*" Saul obeyed, and was baptized; his sins were washed away, and he saved. How would a *modern* doctor have acted in this case? Something like this would have been his language: 'Poor Saul, you are in a pitiable condition; I cannot help you; pray on; it may be you shall be heard, and God in his *own time* will send his spirit to cleanse you from your sins, and save you; after you have experienced this, I advise you to be baptized.' Oh! how different, and how far from truth!

Philip went down to Samaria. There he preached the gospel—the people believed, and were baptized, both men and women. It is not said that these men and women brought their infants to Philip, and had them baptized too, according to modern custom—a custom we hear nothing about in apostolic practice, or indeed in the commission of the Saviour. These Samaritans were baptized previous to their reception of the Holy Ghost; for this they received afterwards, when the apostles prayed for them. Philip in the mean time was sent by

the spirit after a poor distressed Ethiopian eunuch, to shew to him the way of life. He preaches to him the gospel; the eunuch believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Philip required no more, but baptized him; he received the Holy Ghost according to promise, for he *went on his way rejoicing*. Acts 8.

It will be objected, 'Ah, you make baptism a saving ordinance. I have not made it such; for I have proved that it was made so eighteen hundred years ago by the great Head of the Church, and practised as such by his inspired apostles and evangelists. But do people think the water itself, into which a believer is immersed, washes away sins? I ask, did the waters of Jordan, into which Naaman dipt himself at the command of Elisha,—did these waters literally wash away his leprosy? or was it not the power of God through this act of obedience? So baptism saves us, and washes away our sins; not the water, but the grace and power of God through this act of obedience.

It is again said, God has saved myriads of souls, who have never been baptized according to the order instituted by Christ, and therefore that order is not essential to salvation. It is granted, that from this order the institutor himself departed at first, when the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, were filled with the Holy Ghost before they were baptized. This was necessary; for had not this been done, Peter and the Christian Jews with him, could not have been prevailed upon to baptize them, and induct them into the church. This reason they assigned for their justification before the Church in Jerusalem. But if God has long borne with our ignorance, and has shewn his saving mercy to those who have departed from his plan, shall we still presume, and continue in our error, when it is now plainly made known? If any man, like the eunuch profess to believe with all his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and like him, apply for baptism, who dare refuse it? He is to believe with all his heart, that is, with the full determination and purpose of the heart to follow and obey him through life.

We hope to receive from our brethren communications on this important subject. Let the free spirit of the meekness and wisdom of Christ be ever exercised in all our attempts to restore the primitive order of Christ in his church. EDITOR.

COMMUNICATED.

Fayette county, Jan. 3, 1827.

Brother Stone:—As one of the objects of your paper is to diffuse religious intelligence, I have thought it proper to call your attention to the recent revival of religion in the vicinity of the Union meeting house, in this county. It is now a little upwards of three years since the Church of Christ was constituted at the place above mentioned, with but six members. From the time of its organization up to last fall, there was an occasional increase and some additions. The crowded and attentive assemblies, witnessed to all the deep regard they entertained for truth, and manifested their ardent desire for the spread of the gospel. About the first of last November, the good seed began to bring forth its fruit: the work of the Lord began in power; and twenty-two have since that time been added to the church; and the work is still going on; our meetings are yet crowdedly attended. The people of the Lord are made to rejoice: sinners are weeping and crying for mercy, and mourners obtaining comfort. Oh! that the Lord would abundantly carry on his gracious work amongst us. We have now a large church, all engaged in the work of God, and from appearances no doubt can be entertained, that many more will soon be added. Although this revival may be generally known in our land, yet by calling your attention to it, our brethren in distant lands may learn the success and march of truth, and like Paul, when he met his brethren at the three taverns, "*thank God and take courage.*" Indeed I hope the brethren in different parts of the country will avail themselves of your paper, as a medium through which they will communicate such intelligence as the above; for surely to Christians nothing can be more pleasing than to hear of

additions to the number of the faithful. While you are therefore vindicating truth and exposing error, I know it will be cheering to our brethren to hear of the effect of truth upon the minds and hearts of the people. Those who have recently been added to our church, have simply, as the book requires, professed the *one faith*, and under its influence received the *one baptism*, and are now *rejoicing on their way*. We ardently hope soon to see the *ancient order of things* restored among us, and truth having its intended effect on the hearts of mankind.

Before I close this communication, let me request you early to commence giving us a history of the rise, progress, and present standing of the Christian Church. It no doubt will be read with pleasure; and many circumstances render it necessary that it should not long be delayed. Information upon that subject is much required by our brethren; and while it will have the effect of informing the members of the church and an impartial public correctly on this important subject, it will also silence those slanderous reports, propagated by the enemies of truth, with a single view to our prejudice and injury. *A Member of the Church of Christ.*

☞ We inform our brother, and the public, that we have commenced the history of the Christian Church, which shall occupy a few pages in our subsequent numbers. EDITOR.

COMMUNICATED.

From a letter just received from Elder Samuel Kyle of Ohio, we are cheered with the information of the prosperous state of religion within his bounds. Above sixty have been lately added to the churches where he has laboured.

CHILLINGWORTH'S THOUGHTS.

"By the religion of protestants I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the confession of Augusta, or Geneva; nor the catechism of Heidelberg; nor the articles of the Church of England; no, nor the harmony of protestant confessions, but that, wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions; that is, the Bible. The Bible, I say the Bible only is the religion of protestants. Whatever else they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, undeniable consequences of it, well they may hold as a matter of opinion; but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and *schismatical* presumption. I, for my part, after a long and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon this rock only. I see plainly, and with my own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of Scripture only, for any considering man to build upon. This therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe; this I will profess; according to this I will live; and for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but gladly lose my life, though I should be sorry that Christians should take it from me. Propose me any thing out of this book, and require whether I believe it or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart; as knowing no other demonstration can be stronger than this; God hath said so, therefore it is true. In other things, I will take no man's liberty of judging from him; neither shall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worse man, nor the worse Christian; I will love no man the less for differing from me in opinion. And what measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully persuaded that God does not, and therefore that man ought not to require

any more of any man than this: to believe the scripture to be God's word, to endeavor to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it. This will be found, not only a better, but the only means to suppress heresy and restore unity. For he that believes the scripture sincerely, and endeavors to believe it in the true sense, cannot possibly be a heretic."

HALE'S DEFINITION OF HERESY.

"Heresy is an act of the will, not of reason; and is indeed a lie, not a mistake; else how could that known speech of Austin go for true: *Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo*,—I may err, but I will not be a heretic. Indeed Manichæism, Valentinianism, Marcionism, Mahometanism, are truly and properly *heresies;* for we know that the authors of them received them not, but minted them themselves; and so knew that which they taught to be a lie."

This definition seems well to accord with that of Paul to Titus, iii, 10, 11. "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, *being condemned of himself.*" A heretic, according to Paul, is a factious person, one that foments parties, and division. Rom. xvi, 17, "Mark them that cause divisions among you contrary to the doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them." Now it is well known that the doctrine of Christ enjoins unity and leads to it. But the man, who teaches for doctrine the commandments of men, or his own opinions for truth; and makes *these* terms of Christian fellowship, and by this means creates and foments partyism and division, what is he, but a heretic?

EDITOR.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Mr. Editor:—As your paper appears to be a medium through which religious instruction is communicated, the following is respectfully submitted to your consideration. Should you think it of any utility to your readers, you may insert it in your useful Messenger.

It has been frequently stated from the pulpit, whence nothing but truth should be heard, that the law given to Adam was infinite—that the transgression of it was an infinite evil—that its penalty was infinite, and that none less than an infinite Being could fully satisfy it. These things appeared strange, passing strange, to me, who had never troubled my mind with human systems of religion, but had assiduously applied myself to learn the religion of the Bible. My attention was drawn to these subjects, which I had heard so confidently stated, and zealously preached. I searched for them in the Bible; but that book contains not one of those items, but teaches doctrine subversive of them all.

1. They say, the law is infinite. If so, the obligation was infinite. What can we conceive more unjust than to require an infinite obedience of a finite creature, as Adam was? Would not this be to require an impossibility? And what should we think of God to inflict infinite punishment upon his poor creature for not performing an impossible obedience? What should we think of an earthly father, who should command his little son to pull up a large oak from the earth, and then beat him to death for not performing it? Would not such a wretch be universally execrated as a monster in wickedness? Shall we dare impute this character to the God of infinite benevolence? Far from us be the thought! Again, if the law be infinite, then God in giving it to a finite creature, laid him under an absolute necessity to sin, and was himself the author of sin; and how could the righteous judge condemn him? Should a despotic law-giver make a law, enjoining on each of his subjects, under the severest penalties, to pay him an annuity of ten thousand talents; what could be more cruel, oppressive, and unjust? Probably not one in his empire could obey; every one by this law is laid under the fatal necessity of disobedience, and consequent punishment.

But none of the laws of heaven, given to man, are of this character. That commandment of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, is perfectly adapted

to the capacity of man. It is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Here is perfect justice; because it requires nothing more than all the heart, mind, and strength. The weak and ignorant, the strong and the wise, are required to love and serve God, according to their several abilities, and nothing more is required. To demand more would be tyrrnnical injustice. As upon this commandment hang all the law and the prophets, we may fairly conclude that the law given to Adam was not an infinite law. I have heard the advocates for an infinite law argue, that the law must be infinite, because it proceeded from an infinite God. This argument I acknowledge the most weighty I ever heard advanced in proof of the doctrine; but one moment's reflection will shew it to be light as air. We and all creation proceeded from God; are we—is all creation therefore infinite? I wait not an answer.

I proceed to the consideration of the second *item* in the chain, that the transgression of this law was an infinite evil. This is a mere deduction from the notion of the law being infinite. As the premises are proved to be false, the conclusion must bear the same character. I hesitate not to pronounce it unscriptural, unreasonable and false. If sin be an infinite evil, then it follows that every sin is infinite, and consequently there are no degrees of evil, the least sin being equally infinite as the greatest. This notion is universally condemned by the Bible. To adduce proof is deemed useless. Paul said, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Were sin infinite, how could grace be much more than infinite?

Again, they say the penalty is infinite. This is an inference from an inference, drawn from false premises. By infinite punishment, they must understand either a punishment infinite in degree or duration. If the punishment be infinite in degree, then it is plain a finite creature cannot suffer it. That law-giver must be infinitely unjust, to give a law impossible to be obeyed in its precepts and penalties. If the penalty for transgression be infinite, then must infinite punishment be inflicted for the least sin, as well as for the greatest. How then can we account for such expressions as these, which we find in the Bible—of some, beaten with few stripes and others with many?—of its being more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha than the unbelieving Jews?—and of sorer punishment? These expressions convey plainly the idea of degree in punishment, and therefore destroy effectually the idea of punishment, infinite in degree. Punishment infinite in degree is certainly the idea designed by the advocates of this doctrine; for they acknowledge that Christ did not suffer an eternal punishment, but that which was equivalent, that is, a punishment infinite in degree; and this, they say, was a complete, full, and proper satisfaction to the law in its penal demands of the sinner. Hence we fairly conclude that the law-giver required this impossibility of the sinner, and that Jesus Christ did honor to a law which in itself was infinitely unjust and dishonorable. Can we possibly believe it? I think not. If by infinite punishment is meant, punishment in infinite duration, or everlasting punishment, we have no objections, for this is a scriptural truth. But we have shewn that this is not the idea intended by those, whose opinions we are examining.

The last link of the chain is, that none but an infinite being can suffer an infinite punishment, and make satisfaction to law and justice. This argument is used to establish the notion that Jesus, who suffered, was himself the infinite and true God. Surely the doctrine that Christ is the very God, must labor, when such helps as this are introduced to establish it. Is it possible that its advocates can seriously believe that the very God suffered, and died on Calvary? If they do, surely they depart from gospel light, and go into worse than pagan darkness—they depart from their own professed Creeds, which declare that God is without *passion*. The better informed among the advocates for these notions, revolt at the idea of the very God suffering and dying; yet still maintain that the penalty was infinite,

and that Jesus suffered it. But they say, nothing but humanity suffered, which was supported by divinity to suffer infinitely. By this the argument for Christ's supreme divinity is lost; for on the same principle, God could support any man to suffer as much. These are mere speculations, as infinitely distant from truth, as darkness is from light. If Jesus was supported to suffer by the very God, why did he say, "My God, my God, *why hast thou forsaken me?*" But if the law was not infinite, the transgression of it was not infinite evil, therefore the penalty was not infinite in degree, and therefore an infinite Being was not required to suffer it, in order to make a full, or an infinite satisfaction.

On the doctrine of satisfaction to law by the sacrifice of Christ, I may hereafter give you my thoughts, and I shall endeavor to prove that the doctrine is a mere device of erring man, and has no foundation on scripture.

Yours in love,

AMICUS.

FROM THE BAPTIST RECORDER.

In the variety of topics I hear discussed from the pulpit and see from the press, the subject of avarice or covetousness is seldom touched, though it is among the most pernicious crimes spoken of in the Bible. This sin is, I fear, greatly misunderstood and much overlooked by many professors; were it not, the remark would not be so often made: "Such a person is a *good Christian*, but a *covetous man;*" whereas, it might with as much propriety be said, "such a woman is a *virtuous lady* but an *infamous prostitute*," for the latter is not more contrary to sound sense, than the former is to the positive declarations of God's word. When we hear people in common, talk about covetousness, we are tempted to look upon it as a mere trifling fault; but, when we turn over the volume of heaven, we find it pronounced *idolatry*, and deemed a capital crime, while Jehovah denounces damnation against the wretch that is guilty of it. When by usury, extortion, and oppression, they grind the faces of the poor, and lay up that in their coffers, which of right belongs to the needy, who have laboured for them, the rust of which shall be a swift witness against them at another day, and shall eat their flesh as it were with fire.

Is not the gospel dishonoured? is not the church plagued by such professors? Such persons, whether more light in their dispositions and conduct, or more grave in their temper and behaviour, are like the children of the devil and the slaves of sin, and are on a level in the sight of God, with the most profane. As to the covetous, those votaries of mammon, whatever dislike they may have to their associates, they stand ranked in the book of God, with no other company, than the extortioners and thieves, drunkards and adulterers. Yes, they are branded with the most detestable character, for they are called idolators. It may be enquired, "In what then, does this aggravated sin consist?" I answer, covetousness, in the language of inspiration, is the desire of having more; the desire of obtaining or increasing in wealth. Whoever, therefore, is habitually desirous of riches, is, in the estimate of heaven, a covetous man, whatever his situation in life, and profession of religion may be. The language of the covetous heart, is that of the horseleach's daughter, give, give. The covetous man is always desirous of more, whether he has little or much, and if a professor, he will always find some pretext to hide the iniquity of his idolatrous heart. But however such a professor may cover his crime under plausible pretences of any kind, or however safe he may imagine himself, as being a member of the visible church, and free from her censure, the time is coming when the mask will be stripped off, and then shall it be known where his affections have been, and what God he has served. Then it shall plainly appear, whether Jehovah or mammon, swayed his affections and ruled in his heart. Perhaps there are but few sins for the practice of which so many excuses are urged, as that of covetousness or a love of the world; consequently, there are few sins against which professors have

greater occasion to watch. It was not therefore without reason that our Lord gave that solemn caution to all his followers: "Take heed and beware of covetousness."

8.

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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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