not tell him, that he calumniated his Maker? Would you not say to him, that this central gallows threw gloom over the universe; that the spirit of a government, whose very acts of pardon were written in such blood, was terror, not parental love; and that the obedience which needed to be upheld by this horrid spectacle, was nothing worth? Would you not say to him, that even you, in this infancy and imperfection of your being, were capable of being wrought upon by nobler motives, and of hating sin through more generous views; and that much more the angels, those pure flames of love, need not the gallows and an executed God, to confirm their loyalty? You would all so feel at such teaching as I have supposed; and yet how does this differ from the popular doctrine of atonement? According to this doctrine, we have an Infinite Being sentenced to suffer as a substitute the death of the cross, a punishment more ignominious and agonizing than the gallows, a punishment reserved for slaves and the vilest malefactors; and he suffers this punishment that he may show forth the terrors of God's law, and strike a dread of sin through the universe. I am indeed aware that multitudes, who profess this doctrine, are not accustomed to bring it to their minds distinctly in this light; that they do not ordinarily regard the death of Christ, as a criminal execution, as an infinitely dreadful infliction of justice, as intended to show, that, without an infinite satisfaction, they must hope nothing from God. Their minds turn by a generous instinct from these appalling views, to the love, the disinterestedness, the moral grandeur and beauty of the sufferer; and through such thoughts they make the cross a source of peace, gratitude, love and hope; thus affording a delightful exemplification of the power of the human mind to attach itself to what is good and purifying in the most irrational system. But let none on this account say, that we misrepresent the doctrine of atonement, the primary and essential idea of which is, *the public execution of a God*, for the purpose of satisfying justice and awakening a shuddering dread of sin. [*To be continued.*]

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

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

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

selves as in the sight of God; and can own no standard of faith but the word of God; and we desire ever to look to him for his Spirit of wisdom to lead us into all truth. Brethren, we wish to pay all due deference to the Confession of Faith, and other writings of our pious fathers; but we plead a privilege, which is granted in the Confession of Faith, chap. 1, sec. 9, 10, as we mentioned in our protest; that the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture, is not the Confession of Faith, nor any human writings whatever, but the Scripture itself. On this ground we have attempted, and still mean to proceed to hold forth the word of life, peace and pardon to sinners, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. But as we are by some suspected of having departed from the true doctrines of the Gospel, we design as soon as convenient, to explain to the public our views of the Gospel. In the mean time we are determined, by the grace of God, to preach the Gospel, and administer ordinances as formerly.

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

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

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

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

"*Rev'd. and Dear Sir:*—We received your resolution from a member of your committee, requesting us to give you a statement of our objections against some parts of the Confession of Faith. We have taken the matter into consideration and resolved to comply. But it is out of our power to state them to you as soon as you require: but will without fail give you a statement at your next annual session. A party is not our aim; and this we hope to evince to you, and to the world at your next session. In the mean time we design to proceed no farther than circumstances may require. Brethren, you are in our hearts to live and die with you: our hearts are bound to you in love. We hope your intentions in doing what you have done, were good; but we still believe as stated in our protest. In the mean time let us unite our prayers to our common Lord and Father, that he would in his kind providence heal our divisions, and unite us more closely in the bonds of love.

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

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

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

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

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

"On motion, the following resolution was introduced, and on a vote being taken, was carried in the affirmative. Whereas, Messrs. Robt. Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard M'Nemar, Barton W. Stone, and John Thompson, have declared themselves no longer members of our body, or under our jurisdiction, or that of our presbyteries;

and whereas, it appears from their remonstrance laid before Synod, that they have seceded from the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and no more wish to be united with us, until we adopt a more liberal plan respecting human creeds and confessions; and, whereas, a committee has been appointed, seriously and affectionately to converse with the above members, in order if possible to reclaim them to the doctrines and standards of our church, which committee has proved entirely unsuccessful; moreover, whereas said gentlemen came into Synod and informed us that they had constituted themselves into a separate presbytery, and have refused to comply with every solicitation to return to their duty, but persist in their scismatic disposition: Therefore, Resolved, that Synod do, and they hereby do, solemnly suspend Messrs. Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Barton W. Stone, Richard M'Nemar and John Thompson from the exercise of the functions of the Gospel ministry, until sorrow and repentance for their scism be manifested; leaving it however to the several presbyteries, to which the above members may have belonged, to restore them as soon as they give satisfactory evidence of repentance; and their congregations are hefeby declared vacant.

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

"A true copy,

"JAMES WELSH, S. C. S. K."

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

If our suspension be orderly and according to the will of God, the consequences are serious indeed. We are bound on earth and bound in Heaven; cast out of the vineyard as fruitless, withered branches; in no better circumstances than Heathens and publicans; running unsent; and all that bid us *God speed*, must be partakers of our evil deeds. On the contrary, if we have been called of God to minister in Holy things, and have done nothing to forfeit that authority; and if any man, or set of men, should rise up and command us to be silent, and forbid the people to hear us; the consequences may be serious to them in the end. It is certain Synod had no authority from the Book of discipline to suspend us; their authority then must have been either from the word of God, or from such existing circumstances as required them to dispense with order.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE CHRISTIAN EXPOSITOR.

John 20, 30, 31. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But 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 this text are contained several important ideas.—1. The first idea suggested is that the Scriptures, or

written word, is the cause and foundation of our faith.

2. That the object of our faith is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

3. That the Scriptures afford sufficient evidence of this fact to produce faith.

4. That eternal life is the fruit of this faith.

To each of these ideas we will briefly attend.

1—That the Scriptures, or written word, is the cause and foundation of faith.

This proposition appears to us a maxim in theology, and therefore needs no proof. But lest a doubt should exist in any mind, we will introduce a few testimonies. Jesus said to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me." John 5, 46. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. 10, 17. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word." John 17, 20.

There are not a few honest, though mistaken men, who reject this plain truth. They affirm that faith in Jesus, is an immediate gift from Heaven; or an immediate operation of the spirit; and therefore, the written word is not the cause nor foundation of it. In proof of this strange position they introduce a number of detached Scriptures, and labour to make their views accord with their systems of divinity, and with Christian experience. They continually refer to Eph. 2, 8. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God," and Heb. 12, 2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith." Waiving all criticism, we all agree that he is the giver, author and finisher of the Gospel, which is the foundation of faith, and which is the revelation of himself, his will and his plan of redemption. This Gospel or revelation, he has confirmed by signs, wonders and miracles, which are written that we might believe. When we receive the evidence, we believe the fact, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. With propriety we may say, that God is the giver of this faith; for had he not given us this revelation, with its divine evidences, we had never believed. I inform my neighbors that at a certain time and place, I saw A kill B. They believe. They have faith. Who gave them this faith? who was the author and finisher of it? All will acknowledge that I was the giver and author of it. How? Simply by stating the fact. "So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

To say that the Scriptures are not the cause and foundation of our faith, but some immediate, mysterious operation of the spirit on the mind, involves so many insurmountable difficulties, that we are obliged to reject it.

1—It makes the Gospel the greatest curse that was ever imposed on the world. For the Gospel requires us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, John 3, 2, 3. Unbelief is declared to be a damning sin, the sin of the world, and enhances the condemnation and punishment of the unbelieving. John 3, 18. Matt. 11, 21, 22. An impossibility is then required of the sinner, and an aggravated punishment, everlasting punishment inflicted on him!! Is this the Gospel of God?

2—It veils the glory of the divine character and government, as revealed in the Scriptures, and manifested in Jesus. What father so unreasonable, so cruel, as to command his little son to pluck up a large oak, and in wrath beat him to death for not doing it? Would not every rational being execrate the wretch? Would not every child of this monster dread his cruelty, and endeavor to fly from his presence? And dare we apply this character to God and his good government? They surely do it, who say that the sinner can no more believe in Jesus, than create a world, or stop the sun in his course. Should God command every son and daughter of Adam to make a new world, and inflict everlasting punishment upon every one, who failed to do it; would not every one cry out with one voice, it is an unreasonable and cruel command? But if *to believe* be as impossible as *to create* a world, where is the difference? There is none. So habituated are many to such language that they have never seen the blasphemy contained in it; nor have they considered the horrors, infused into many minds, of such a government.

3—Were the doctrine against which we plead true, it certainly was known by the great Teacher from Heaven, who is called the truth. If so, how could it be said consistently with his spotless character, that *he marvelled at their unbelief?* How could he marvel if he knew that it was as impossible for them to believe as to create a world? What should we think of him, had he commanded them to make a new world, and then have marvelled that they did not do it?

4—If man cannot believe the Scriptures from the evidence given in them, they are useless to him, as not being the cause nor foundation of his faith. I was in a neighborhood, not long since, and went with the crouds to hear a very celebrated preacher. With great confidence he addressed the listening multitudes on the subject of the total depravity of man. To illustrate his subject he introduced the figure of a dead corpse floating rapidly on the floods of the Niagara, and in a minute must be borne over the dread precipice, and ingulphed below. The corpse saw no danger, feared none, made no exertion to escape, nor called for help. The preacher then supposed that God immediately touched him into life. The poor creature now saw his danger, now was filled with fear, now exerted every power to escape, and cried with every breath for help. This was the representation of the sinner's case. This was the burden of his sermon. The same evening I listened to another preacher in a private circle applauding in the highest terms the discourse we had heard. Having exhausted this subject, he commenced another, descanting on the great utility of Bible Societies, and the happy prospects of sending the Bible to the Heathen nations. The contradiction was so obvious, I could not longer forbear; for I had sat a silent stranger till now. I begged the liberty of suggesting a difficulty, which oppressed my mind, and wished light on the subject. If the doctrine we have heard to-day be correct, of what use is the Bible to the Heathen nations, or to sinners amongst us? They are as dead as the corpse floating down the Niagara; they cannot see, understand, nor believe it, till God

by immediate divine power, makes them alive. Can he not as easily do this divine work for the Pagan nations without the Bible, as with it? Why then such an immense expence and trouble, to send them the Bible? It can only increase the condemnation and punishment of the reprobate part of them, and the elect are made alive without it. I farther remarked, that the doctrine we have herd to day, stands in direct opposition to the Scriptures of truth; for they every where represent divine life as the fruit, or consequence of faith, and expressly declare that, *he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

5—If the doctrine against which we plead be correct, we cannot see the sincerity of God in expostulating with the sinner in such language as the following. "Why will you die?" "What more could I have done for my vineyard, that I have not done?" &c. Might not the sinner justly reply—The reason of my death is, because thou dost not give me faith? Thou mightest have done more for me, for thou mightest have given me faith, or afforded me that divine operation which produces it.

6—If faith be the gift of God in the sense, against which we contend, then it follows, that God in his favors to the children of Adam, is partial. For if all are equally dead, and it is equally impossible for any to believe, then it is demonstrably plain, that if God gives faith to one, and withholds it from another, that he is a partial being; and how he can condemn to everlasting punishment the poor sinner for not having faith, we confess our entire ignorance: nay, more; we confess, that to us it appears directly contrary to his character, his government, and his Gospel. He is frequently declared as *no respecter of persons.* "The wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." James 3, 17. If by *the wisdom* in the text he understood the Gospel, or the divine effects produced by it in the mind, it matters not; God is the source of it; and certainly approves of it; partiality must, therefore, be contrary to his nature and

his Gospel; and the wisdom that teaches it did not descend from above.

7—To plead that man cannot believe the Scriptures, is to dishonor them, as well as their author. For it is plainly implied, either that they give evidence insufficient to demand our faith, or that our capacities are insufficient to receive it. This is the strong hold of the deist, from which he cannot be dislodged by those who use the same arguments with himself. Christians should blush to allege such reasons, which are calculated to confirm the infidel in his infidelity—to lull the sinner to sleep—to predjudice him against God, for commanding impossibilities, and then damning to eternal fire for not performing it.

What has induced many good, but mistaken men, to plead for this notion is, because it so well accords with that system of religion which they have received as truth. Were they to receive the plain truth, that man is capable of believing his God, it would dissolve their system. Therefore they reject it. They thus reason; mankind are represented as dead—a dead man cannot act—but faith is an act—therefore, man cannot believe—he must be made alive before he can perform the act of faith. This reasoning is in perfect accordance with their system; but perfectly contrary to the word of God. The Scriptures represent mankind as dead, and yet alive—dead to God and divine things; but alive to the world and things below. When they are converted, they are represented as alive to God, and dead to the world. This change from life to death, was effected in Adam by unbelief, the sin of the world; and this change from death to life is effected in the sinner by faith. Adam in a perfect state of holiness was as morally disqualified to disbelieve God, as his unholy children are to believe him. Yet fact proves that Adam did disbelieve his God unto death; and fact and Scripture prove, that his unholy children do believe unto life, and salvation. "He that believeth—shall be saved." "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4, 5. "The

hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." John 5, 25. "Hear, and your soul shall live," &c. This subject shall be hereafter more fully discussed. From these plain declarations, it is evident, that the sinner is not so dead, but that he can hear, and believe unto righteousness, life and salvation; and that these blessings are received by none prior to their believing; for "He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

They farther argue that man is blind, and that they cannot understand the Scriptures, and therefore cannot believe, before God by some mysterious and immediate operation on the mind, enables them to see and understand. The Apostle Paul, in Heb. 11, particularly exposes the fallacy of this notion. There he defines the faith by which we are made just, to be *the evidence of things not seen;* and he confirms his definition by many examples, as "Through faith, we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God." Paul and his cotemporaries had not seen the worlds made, yet they believed the fact, from the testimony of the Scriptures. "By faith Noah being warned of God of things *not seen as yet*, moved with fear prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Had he acted on the principle, against which we contend, he would have waited till *he saw the flood*, and then it would have been too late to prepare an ark; and thus he and his house would have been swept off with the world of the ungodly.—We awfully fear that while the sinner is cavilling, and saying as taught, that he cannot believe before he receives spiritual sight or perception, that a more awful deluge of fire, will sweep him to endless ruin. Let him remember that faith depends not on sight, but on evidence, as Paul has taught us. This doctrine he learned from his Lord, who said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20, 29.

They also labor to make their views of faith accord with the experience of Christians. I remember, says one, that once I would have given a world, if at my dis-

posal, to believe in Jesus; but I could not. Should this person be asked, how much he would have given to believe in Mahomet? He would readily have answered; not a cent. Why? Because he believed Mahomet could not save him. Why give so much to believe in Jesus? Because he believed Jesus was able to save him? This is the fact. He already believed, but had not received the fruits of faith, as love, joy, peace, and the witnessing spirit. This was what he wanted, and for which he would have given a world. By not distinguishing between faith and its fruits, many have been mistaken on this point.

We are told that the faith for which we plead is a natural faith. We are assured it is not supernatural. If it were it could not in justice be required of natural men, it would be infinitely above our reach. The inspired John said, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." John 5, 9. Thus are we taught that we believe God in the same manner that we believe men; that is, by testimony. The Apostle Paul has given us a perfect chain on this subject. "It is written, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?—So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10, 13, 17. The first link is *the word*—the second is the preaching of it—the third is hearing it—the fourth is believing it—the fifth is calling upon the Lord—the last is salvation. This supersedes all human systems and notions; and if attended to, would eventuate in eternal life, and complete salvation.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

COMMUNICATED, FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

From the best authorities it appears that the Church of Christ was one in communion and fellowship as Christians, till the year of our Lord, 381. Till this period,

they generally (with few exceptions) believed in one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father. On this belief converts were admitted into the church, and the saints enjoyed communion one with another. It is true that during that period there were different opinions and sharp contentions among them on several subjects; but they continued in the unity of the spirit, and in fellowship in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. In 325 a creed was begun by the council of Nice, but was not finished till 381 at Constantinople. Then the trinitarian creed was established and made the term of communion, and all who would not subscribe it were excluded from the church. They who were cast out formed new sects, new creeds, new terms of communion, and new names. In this situation, so lamentable and so degrading to Christianity, and so pleasing to the enemy of all righteousness, has the church of Christ continued to this day.

Shall we be reprobated and cast out from the communion of the saints, as damnable heretics?—we, who a few years ago made the first stand as a society against human authoritative creeds, names, and sectarian terms of communion; and are yet making every effort in our power to restore the unity of saints, so desirable and glorious? Be it so. They may cast us out from their communion; but they cannot exclude us from the favor of God, or shut against us the gates of heaven; nor can they take from us the consolation that we are labouring to do the will of God, and that his truth will ultimately prevail, and sweep from the church those party creeds, names, and terms of Christian communion, which have so long disgraced it. Our hopes brighten from the frequent news, that the plan of union on gospel principles, is taking effect in different parts of the world, and among different sects. Like fire, the harder the storm the more furiously will it burn; so this divine principle will spread with the increasing storm of opposition.

My brethren, let us unwearyedly persevere in the good work, and faint not. Let us prove by our works, as well as by our words, that we are what we profess to

O

be, *Christians*. This will be more effectual in restoring primitive order, than volumes of divinity without it. May God prosper Zion's cause. Amen. T. S.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Brother Stone:—I noticed in a late number of the Baptist Recorder, a communication over the signature of Edmund Waller, by which the public is informed, that he tried, condemned, and actually BURNT the translation of the New Testament lately published by A. Campbell. This reminded me of the circumstance of Herostratus burning the temple of Ephesus, who confessed, when put to the torture, that his object was to transmit his name to posterity. Whether Mr Waller was influenced by the same motive, I am unable to say. If fame was his object, it would be more honourable for him to be known for his deeds of virtue, rather than for those of rashness and intolerance. Simply to be known is no advantage. "It is a privilege," says Mr Johnson, "not less enjoyed by Constantine than Timocreon of Rhodes; of whom we only know from his epitaph, that he had eaten many a meal, drunk many a flaggon, and uttered many a reproach."

But *with what judgment* did Mr Waller judge the book? He informs that he gave it one reading, compared it with the one he has loved ever since he was thirteen, and condemned it; but he was merciful enough to put off the day of execution for two or three months. He does not understand the Greek language; therefore was not qualified to compare it with the original, nor to sit in judgment upon it. If he made king James' translation the standard, he ought certainly to have been able to show that that translation was correct, and to have given us evidence of its correctness, and the incorrectness of the other, which he condemned. But admitting he had known the new translation to be incorrect in some things, (as all translations commonly are) would not prudence have dictated a different course from that pursued by him? I am persuaded it was not the spirit of Christianity, revealed in that version, which Mr Waller has

loved so long. I do not mean by this that Mr W. is not a Christian; for I have a better opinion of his religion than his own language imports; for when he was pleading in the last Elkhorn association for the propriety of holding to the name *Baptist*, and rejecting that of *Christian*, one of his principal arguments was, that he knew he was a *Baptist*, but did not know that he was a *Christian*.

There are many who appear to have a zeal, but not according to knowledge; and the greatest zealots for *orthodoxy* frequently trample under foot the grand characteristics of religion in their efforts to preserve what they call the essentials of the gospel, and in lending their aid to confessions of faith, the sinking guardians of clerical dominion. The truth of God needs not the wrath of man to support it. It stands confirmed by incontestible evidence. They, who wish to glorify Jesus, should manifest the spirit of truth in the defence of the gospel. When a person manifests an intolerant spirit, and opposition to a calm and friendly investigation of their views, it is a reasonable supposition that they are actuated by the spirit of faction, rather than by the love of truth; and that they possess more bigotry and implicit faith than genuine religion, "which," says a learned pædo-baptist, "is ever found a reasonable service and as completely amiable as the other is hateful.

A FRIEND TO N. TESTAMENT *orthodoxy*.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

An account of the exclusion of Samuel Simpson and Dr. J. S. Davis, from the regular Baptist Church, written by the Doctor.

In every occurrence of human affgirs, that implicates the character of individuals, there are some circumstances that may be construed to the detriment of those concerned, by the enemies of social enjoyment, and eternal happiness. Therefore I will give the public a concise narrative of the cause and circumstances of the exclusion of Samuel Simpson and myself from the Regular Baptist Church. I shall also intersperse a few ob-

servations on the conduct of the church, with a few remarks on our reasons given for objecting to their principles. The reasons which have induced us to this publication, are, that the Baptists point us out as excommunicants, without stating the cause of our exclusion; and for this reason many refuse to publish meetings for Simpson.

When we first joined the Baptists, it was in the time of a revival under the ministry of Elder Isaac Hodgen and others, whose names we remember with warm and grateful affection. The doctrines they preached were simple: *repent and be baptized* were urged with power and success. There were no cavillings about religious tenets; every heart was inflamed with zeal for the Redeemer's kingdom. Each dark vale and secret recess, resounded with the prayers of the saints for the outpouring of God's spirit, and that benighted souls might enjoy the light of the gospel. But alas! these happy seasons came to an end, and the spirit of the world succeeded. The church having lost the reviving spirit, began to be very tenacious of their peculiar doctrines, eulogizing their confessions of faith, and anathematizing the doctrines of other Christian sects. This led Simpson and myself to examine and compare the doctrines of our Church with those taught in the Bible. We soon found their disagreement, and were convinced that it was dangerous to confide in any thing as a rule of faith and practice, except the word of God. This at first we were afraid to avow, but becoming more confirmed in the belief that the scriptures were all that we were required to believe and to be governed by, we began boldly to advance this doctrine, and Simpson being a licenced preacher publicly preached and defended it. This, with his disbelief of the church covenant, caused the leading members of the church to talk with him. They asked him whether he designed leaving them? He replied, he was willing to live with them and enjoy his belief of the scriptures.

This they could not long bear, for they soon perceived that our doctrine, or *heresy* as they called it, was fast

gaining ground, and if not speedily checked, might overthrow the church. They therefore called Simpson to an account for his doctrine (I at that time not living in the neighborhood.) The Church covenant was presented to him to fellowship, which he refused. It was then proposed and agreed to defer acting on the case till next Church meeting, that they might have time to investigate the matter thoroughly. Of this I received information, and determined to attend, and defend our principles; for it was agreed that the question should be discussed in the church by each party.

The church met according to appointment, at Hopewell, August 7, 1824, with their pastor, J. King, and two assisting ministers, Lewis Ellison and William Burbridge. Simpson and myself attended, humbly praying to be corrected if wrong; but if right, that our opposers might be convinced of their error. We hoped to find the church in the same spirit, but we were sadly disappointed. Our opposers treated us unkindly, and spoke in a manner as peremptory and dictatorial, as a Spanish inquisitor. It made the blood run chill in my veins to hear fallible men speak as authoritatively and as positively, as though they held the keys of death and hell, and were appointed to judge the world! When the reference to Simpson's case was read, the pastor, being moderator, asked him whether he fellowshiped the church covenant? Simpson answered, he did not, and began to make some remarks relative to the case, but was soon called to order. I began to suspect that we should not be permitted to make a defence; and my suspicions were soon confirmed; for the moderator began to remark how dangerous it was to disbelieve their articles of faith. This he did in the language and tone of those who enforce the belief of their doctrines by fire and sword Simpson frequently commenced speaking, but was as often ordered to silence. He soon saw it useless to attempt to say any thing, for he plainly saw they were determined in their course. They appeared doubtful of the correctness of their principles, because they refused to have them scrutinized by men, as intel-

ligent as themselves. They well knew the foundation of our defence, which was, that all men are fallible and liable to err, and that no man nor set of men could write any thing as correct as the scriptures themselves: that these were sufficiently explicit in giving directions for faith, practice, and government; and therefore superceded the necessity of man-made creeds and confessions of faith.

They hurried the business as if they were afraid their rash acts would kindle the indignation of Simpson's personal friends. It was soon motioned and seconded, to take the question. It was put in the following manner: "All those who do not fellowship Mr Simpson, for not fellowshiping the church covenant, that binds us together in Christ, hold up the right hand." I felt awfully strange to hear men, professing to be guardians of the souls of mortals, attempting to impress on the minds of the young, unthinking, and illiterate part of the congregation the horrid idea, that their church covenant bound them together in Christ! Four members voted against Simpson, and two for him, James Simpson and myself. Without farther ceremony the clerk was ordered to record our names on the church book, as excluded for disbelieving the church covenant, with the epithet of *heretic* attached to us. Thus we were tried and condemned as *heretics* by this ecclesiastical court in the presence of a large assembly, without allowing the privilege of defence.

When excluded we asked the church to give us an instrument in writing, stating the cause of our exclusion. The moderator refused, saying, they would bear no man's expences from their church to another. We then retired, consoling ourselves that they could not exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. I hope the example of these clergymen will show the world the disposition prevailing among the creed supporters. I hope the time is not not far distant, when all the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, will abandon all human creeds and adopt the Bible as the man of their counsels, and walk hand in hand to the mansions of eternal felicity.

L. S. DAVIS.

The Elders and brethren of the Church of Christ, north of Kentucky, assembled in Conference, to the Christian Churches in Kentucky.

DEAR BRETHREN:

We have just closed our annual meeting of conferenc in love, peace and unity. A considerable number of elders, preachers, and messengers met together. Many of the letters, addressed to us by the churches, gave us cheering accounts of the march of truth, and its glorious conquests over poor sinners, in subduing their rebellion, and bringing them in humble, cheerful submission, to the government of heaven. All the churches appear to anticipate happier days, and are joyfully waiting for their approach.

The church on Flat run, recommended to us our brother William Parker, for ordination to the ministry. We concurred with that Church that it was proper, and appointed brethren to attend to this matter in that church, of which he is a member. It was proposed for our consideration, By whom shall this brother be ordained? By the church? or by the church and eldership conjunctly? or by the eldership alone? After mature deliberation on the subject, it was agreed that as we have no account in the New Testament of ordination to the ministry being done by the church alone, or by the church in conjunction with the eldership; but that as we have particular accounts of its being done by the eldership or presbytery, therefore the eldership alone with the recommendation of the church, had the authority to ordain, when they concurred with the church in regard to the qualifications of the person to be ordained.

It was deemed proper to address the churches a letter, embracing this and several other particular subjects, which we consider important. We wish you to understand more fully our views of conferences—of the independence and order of Christian churches—of bringing up our children in the way they should go—of aiding your labouring preachers—and of the propriety of coalescing in the glorious work of colonizing the

free people of color. On each of these topics we wish to address you freely.

As a conference we disclaim legislation for the churches *in toto*. We also disclaim the right of adjudicating on any case in the government of the church. Our sole business is to confer together on the state of religion among the churches, to arrange our appointments so as to supply the churches which may need our aid in preaching, administering ordinances and attending to the ordination of elders, to worship together, to strengthen the bonds of union, and to encourage each other in the work of the Lord.

We consider the churches independent one of another, and that each church has the right to govern itself according to the New Testament. It is the highest and only court, ordained by our Lord in his kingdom below, and from which there is no appeal on earth. Every church in gospel order, has a bishop, overseer, or elder.

We are grieved to see such inattention to the religious education of children. Too much care cannot be bestowed on them from the earliest dawn of reason, to instruct the tender mind, and fill it with the treasures of heavenly wisdom in a manner suited to their capacities—to check with mild authority the budding of vicious passions and propensities—to restrain them from every improper course, by prudent counsel; and if this fail, to correct them in mercy, labouring to impress it on their minds that duty and love impel you to act thus towards them. To correct in an angry, bitter spirit, has never promoted good to the child or servant, but much evil. Let parents always set before their family the pattern of piety, meekness, gentleness, and every virtue. In vain will be our counsels, reproofs, and corrections, if our children see us acting contrary to our own instructions. Teach them by precept and example to devote the Lord's day to religion.

We have long been grieved to see merchandize made of the gospel; yet we are sorry to see the inattention of many churches in aiding their labouring servants in the work of the ministry. They who preach the gospel

should live by it. This is truth. If the avarice of men has perverted and abused it, still it is truth and claim a sacred regard. We wish the churches seriously to lay this to heart, and make provision for such as may need their help, especially for such as devote all their time to the work.

We feel a deep interest in the colonization society. The object of this society is to colonize the free people of colour in a fertile part of Africa, where they may enjoy full liberty, and become messengers of the gospel to that injured quarter of the globe. This subject has arrested the attention of America from Maine to Louisiana. The legislatures of many of the states, as well as our own, have embraced the subject with their warm approbation. Shall we be silent? Shall we be idle? No; let us unite with our countrymen in forming societies wherever we can, and co-operate with the parent society in Washington in this laudable work. Many of this unhappy population have already been borne over the Atlantic to Liberia, where they live happily and freely. Many more are preparing to bid farewell to the shores of America, and hail the land of their forefathers. Be persuaded, brethren, to engage in this work, and thus lay up treasures for yourselves in heaven, and secure the blessing instead of the curses of our greatly injured fellow-creatures. We wish it to be distinctly understood, that the object of this society is not to compel any to emancipate their slaves, but to obtain a fund by which the society may be enabled to colonize those already free, and those who may hereafter be free.

We have altered the time of our annual meeting, which is hereafter to meet on the Friday before the first Lord's day of September. Our next meeting will be at the Republican meeting house, near Lexington, on the Friday before the first Lord's day in September.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

THOS: SMITH, Pres.
THOS: M. ALLEN, Clk.

Indian Creek, March 31, 1827.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Dear Sir:

Permit me, through the medium of your paper, to call the attention of your readers to a *new system* of universalism, which I heard broached in a sermon not long since. For the honor of the divine founder of the Christian religion, and the welfare of Adam's fallen, wretched race, it is humbly hoped that this system has not and never will have many advocates.

The preacher was a young man, and seemed to possess fine talents and an accomplished education, and manifested a zeal and earnestness to support his views, worthy of a better cause. But alas! what are talents, education, zeal and earnestness when misapplied, but powerful engines, to scatter ruin far and wide! But that the reader may judge for himself, I will bring to view some of the most prominent features of the system, which were the following:

1. "The design of God in making mankind, was good—was to make them all happy. If therefore any of them be lost, his design must be frustrated."

2. "To say that God gave a man an agency, by which he might render himself eternally miserable, would be to say, that he made him for that very end—eternal misery."

3. "It was necessary to the happiness of man, that he should know evil, moral and natural, experimentally, that he might know good; because it is (said he) impossible to know any thing without knowing its opposite."

4. "In the view of the Almighty there is no evil in the world—"Whatever is, is right." All things are moving on according to his will."

5. "All rewards and punishments are confined to this life. Virtue rewards the virtuous, and vice punishes the vicious. God alone inhabiteth eternity, therefore there can be no room for a devil or a hell there," &c.

Having thus briefly stated the outlines of the preacher's discourse, I shall proceed to the examination of its merits. The first proposition which I have stated, as exhibited by my preacher, is well calculated to deceive the superficial observer, for it seems perfectly reasonable to suppose that God intended us to be happy. But the great error in this proposition lies in this: that it supposes God intended us all to be happy—to be saved *unconditionally, without any respect to our agency*. But this we positively and confidently deny; and we defy the world to produce any clear evidence from the Bible, (which must decide all our controversies on religious subjects) to show that God made us to be eternally saved, absolutely or unconditionally. "From the Bible," we say; for we are not disposed to enter into the dreary and lonesome wilderness of vain speculation, where scarce a way-mark is found to direct the traveller; for here, alas! thousands we fear, have lost themselves forever. We choose rather to rove through the fertile and pleasant land of Canaan, which flows with milk and honey, and through which a high way is cast up, which leads along the banks of the ever-flowing river of the water of life, to the city of the living God.

It is difficult however to reason with metaphysical theologians without taking them upon their own ground. But to come to the point. We have asserted that it cannot be proven that God made us to be happy unconditionally. We lay it down as a truth, which we presume but few will deny, that man is a moral agent; that he is a proper subject of moral government; capable of moral good or moral evil, as he pleases. Mr Campbell in his Christian Baptist, vol 4, no 4, p. 76, says: "It is essential to moral good that the agent act freely according to the last dictate, or best dictate of his understanding. Moisture is no more essential to vegetation than this liberty of acting according to the views or feelings of the agent is to moral good. Please consider that if a rational being were created *incapable* of *disobeying*, he must on that very account be incapable of obeying. He then acts like a mill wheel, in the motions of which there is no choice, no virtue, no vice, no moral good, no moral evil. A little reflection is all that is wanting to see that a race of beings created incapable of disobeying (i. e. infallible) are as incapable of moral good or moral evil, of virtue or vice, of rewards or punishments, of happiness or misery, as the stones of the field." So we think. And indeed we wonder that a man can draw any other conclusion from all that is said in the book of God, and from all that he beholds in the actual condition of man. What mean all the threatenings and promises of the word of God? Are they not based upon the principle that man is capable of moral good or moral evil? And that, therefore, the threatenings are calculated to prevent the commission of crime, and that the promises are calculated to encourage us to walk in the paths of virtue. In a word, are not all the revelations of God to man, are not all governments, whether human or divine, predicated upon the moral agency of man? Most assuredly they are. And upon any other principle would it not be as proper to enact laws or establish governments to govern the trees of the woods or the beasts of the forest, as man? Most certainly. As it is clear then, that every legislator and every governor of a family, practically acknowledges (whatever may be his theory on the subject) that man is a moral agent; and as all the revelations of God to man are evidently founded upon this principle, away, away, with all your speculations upon the fore-knowledge of God, and his secret and eternal decress. But said my preacher, "to say that God gave man an agency by which he might render himself eternally miserable, is to say in effect that he made him for that very end." Strange idea to be sure. Does not the hypothesis which admits that man has an agency by which he may render himself eternally miserable, also admit that he has an agency by the proper use of which he may be made eternally happy? Certainly. If then man has an agency by which he may prepare himself for eternal misery or eternal happiness, will it not appear that God made him for both eternal happiness and eternal misery? For certainly, if man's possessing an agency by which he may render himself eternally miserable proves that God made him for that very end, his having an agency by which he may render himself eternally happy, will prove that he also made him for endless happiness. So that

our preacher's reasoning proves too much for him, and therefore proves nothing in his favour

But it is thought exceedingly unreasonable that God should punish a sinner eternally for a momentary offence. Aye, indeed! Then reason is to be our guide and not the Bible! For although the Saviour teaches that these (the wicked) "shall go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life," (Matt. chap 25, and last verse Campbell's translation,) yet the doctrine is unreasonable!! Let the Bible then be burned, as unfit to teach and direct the people of this age of refinement and invention, in their researches after religious truth Let it be considered, like the systems of many ancient philosophers, as suitable only to the dark ages that produced them, nay, as scarcely suitable to any age; and let reason, almighty reason, unfettered, unrestrained, range the vast field of nature, in search of truth; and we may soon expect a system of rational religion, like Mr Owen's, which acknowledges no God, no virtue, no vice in the universe!!

Let no one accuse me of under-rating reason, from any thing I have said, for I believe it is this, chiefly, which exalts man above the brute, that makes him a proper subject of moral government. The provinces of reason in matters of religion, I conceive to be these: 1st, to inquire into the claims of the Bible to divinity. Having done this, and ascertained satisfactorily the justice of those claims, it is the further province of reason to inquire critically into the meaning of the contents of that book. These are provinces of reason as taught in the book. The evidences in support of the divinity of the Bible are addressed to our rationality, and challenge our belief; for says John, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The *matter* of that book also is addressed to our rationality, and demands investigation: "Search the Scriptures," says Jesus The "Bereans (says Paul) were more noble than those in Thesalonica, because they searched the scriptures to see whether the things they heard were so"

But shall we set up reason to dictate to the Almighty what is fit and right? Shall we, who are of yesterday, presume to arraign the wisdom, the justice, the reasonableness of his plans, which embrace time and eternity? plans of which we know so little, which at best we only see "through a glass darkly"? Now, it is to reason, thus let loose in the wild fields of speculation, unrestrained by the Bible, that I object And that our preacher has suffered his reason thus to rove unrestrained, will appear in the progress of this investigation.

TIMOTHY.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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

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