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.

VOL. I.] GEORGETOWN, KY. MAY, 25, 1827. [No 7.

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-

tuted ourselves into a separate presbytery, is this crime of such magnitude that scripture authorizes such to be suspended? If so, they have no right to preach in the sight of God. To suspend us for constituting a separate presbytery, is not this to cut off at a blow every minister since the Reformation? Luther and his followers constituted a presbytery separate from the Church of Rome; Calvin separated from Luther, and with his followers constituted a separate presbytery; and so have the various sects of Christians ever since. Have these therefore no right to preach, according to the word of God? If not, the Synod in their act of suspension, have virtually suspended themselves and every minister of the reformation since Luther.

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

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

In our lincensure and ordination, this question was proposed us "Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the word of God; and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?" Which we answered in the affirmative. We had also to promise "to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and the purity and peace of the church; whatsoever persecution or opposition, might arise to us on that account." Form of Gov: Chap: 13 & 14. These things we believed, and were laboring zealously and faithfully to maintain the truths of the *gospel;* not the dogmas of the Confession, for in the light of the gospel we saw many of its doctrines wrong. We were zealously and faithfully engaged to fulfil our engagements, also to maintain the purity and peace of the church; not the Presbyterian church only, but our longing souls embraced the whole church of God on earth. We had learned that purity and peace could not be promoted by jarring creeds and party-spirits; but by love, faith, and obedience. Can it be possible in this enlighted day, that the Ministers of the Presbyterian church are bound to study the purity, peace and unity of their sect alone? and to preach nothing but what is coniained in the Confession alone, or what may be agreeable to it? If so, there is an end of liberty among them—they must be Presbyterians always—they must not change one sentiment nor opinion, which they professed to believe at their entrance upon the ministry; nor oppose one doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith! And if any should change their views, they must be hypocrites to profess and preach what they disbelieve; or if honest, they must be deposed from the ministerial functions, excluded from the church, and branded with the crime of perjury, as having rejected the Confession, which they once professed to adopt and receive! Are they not completely imprisoned within their own party walls?

Can it be a crime to withdraw from those with whom we could not remain in peace? No! it is the inalienable right of every moral agent to withdraw from any society, when he thinks the rights of conscience are invaded. If the government of the Presbyterian church deprives its subjects of this privilege, it must be tyrannical. But there is not a sentence in that book to criminate any person for renouncing its author-

ity. Its compilers were too well acquainted with the rights of man, either to deny the privilege of withdrawing, or to inflict censure on any one for doing it. For proof of this, read attentively their introduction to government and discipline.

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

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

All juridical authority, which any society has over an individual, is in consequence of a voluntary compact tacitly or explicitly made, by which he is connected with that society, and under its laws. When such compact is dissolved, which may be done at any time, by the voluntary act of the individual, the authority ceases of

course. Our voluntary act in putting ourselves under the care of Presbytery, put it in their power to licence, ordain, watch over, censure, suspend or depose, so long as we stood in that connection; but when we voluntarily withdrew, being under no judicial censure, it may be properly said that we withdrew from them all that power over us, which we had given them.

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

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

Some have supposed that the legal authority of trans-

acting church business, wholly independent of the Spirit of grace, has been committed to the rulers of the church; so that the transactions of those, thus authorized, and those only, are legal. Now upon this principle none have legal authority to preach, administer ordinance, &c. unless he has received it through regular succession from the Apostles. This regular succession has been so often broken, that it is impossible ever to get into order again, unless we make the church of Rome the standard, and return into uniformity with it: For every division and subdivision from that has shared the same fate of suspension or deposition. This was the case with Luther. "He was commanded," (says Dr. Mosheim,) "to renounce his errors within sixty days, and cast himself upon the clemency of the Pope, on pain of excommunication. At first he purposed to appeal from the sentence of the lordly pontiff to the respectable decision of a general council: but as he foresaw that this appeal would be treated with contempt at the court of Rome; and that when the time, prescribed for his recantation was elapsed, the thunder of excommunication would be levelled at his devoted head, he judged it prudent to withdraw himself, voluntarily from the communion of the church of Rome, before he was obliged to leave it by force; and thus to render this new bull of ejection a blow in the air, an exercise of authority without any object to act upon. At the same time he was resolved to execute this wise resolution in a public manner, that his voluntary retreat from the communion of a corrupt and superstitious church, might be universally known, before the lordly pontiff had prepared his ghostly thunder. With this view, on the 10th of December, in the year 1520, he had a pile of wood erected without the walls of the city of Wittemberg, and there, in the presence of a prodigious multitude of people, of all ranks, and orders, he committed to the flames both the bull that had been published against him, and the decretals and canons relating to the Pope's supreme jurisdiction. By this he declared to the world, that he was no longer a subject of the Roman pontiff, and that of consequence, the sentence of excommunication, which was daily expected, from Rome, was entirely superfluous and insignificant.* For the man who voluntarily withdraws himself from any society, cannot with any appearance of reason or common sense, be afterwards forcibly and authoritatively excluded from it. However he only separated himself from the church of Rome, which considers the Pope infallible, and not from the church considered in a more extensive sense; notwithstanding, in less than a month after this noble and important step had been taken by the Saxon reformer, a second bull was issued against him, by which he was expelled from the communion of the church, for having insulted the majesty, and having disowned the supremacy, of the Roman pontiff. He was also condemned the next year by the diet of Worms, as a schismatic, a notorious and obstinate heretic; and the severest punishments denounced against those who should receive, entertain, maintain, or countenance him, either by acts of hospitality, by conversation or writing. And his disciples, adherents, and followers, were involved in the same condemnation." (Mosheim's Eccle. History, Vol. 4, page 51, 52, 55.) Against this edict the reformed party protested, by which they got the name of *Protestants*.

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

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE CHRISTIAN EXPOSITOR.

(CONTINUED.)

In the last number, we endeavored to establish the proposition that the scriptures are the cause and foundation of faith. We now proceed—

2ndly. That the proper object of our faith, as present,

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

ed in the scriptures, is, that "Jesus is the Christ, the son of God." "*These* are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God." This truth is the life and soul of revelation—the focus where all the rays of divine light converge, and thence diverge to enlighten the world in darkness, and give life to the dead in sin. This truth is established by the best evidence ever given, and to it is affixed the seal of Heaven.

John the Immerser, an acknowledged prophet, a burning and a shining light, testified, "I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God." The Father spoke with an audible voice from Heaven, "This is my beloved, Son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus frequently testified that he was the son of God, and that God was his Father, and appealed to the miracles he performed as proof of his words; "For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works which I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. "The disciples confessed him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Nathaniel, in whom there was no guile, said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God." Martha professed her faith, and said, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God." The centurion, who presided at the crucifixion, and they that were with him, when he saw the wonderful events which transpired then, said "Truly this was the Son of God." The Ethiopian Eunuch professed his faith to Philip's satisfaction; "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Jesus was declared by his resurrection to be the Son of God. Rom. i. 3. Paul, after his conversion, "straitway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the son of God." John wrote his gospel to confirm this fact—"These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." This doctrine was considered of vital importance, a *sine qua non* of religion; for "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God; God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

It may be asked, what is the import of believing that Jesus is the Christ? The terms *Christ* in Greek, and *Messiah* in Hebrew, are of the same import, and signify *the anointed one.* It was an ordinance of God under the law, that every prophet, priest and king of his people should be anointed with oil before they dare officiate in those relations. Till this was done, it was considered rebellion against the government for any man to act in either of these offices in Israel. This oil of consecration, by divine appointment, was perfumed with the sweetest odors in nature, and all Israel were forbidden to make any like unto it under the penalty of death. When this oil was applied to the person to be consecrated to any one of these offices, the perfumes flowing from his body rendered his presence agreeable to all around him. Thus the pleasantness arising from the view of brethren dwelling together in unity, is compared to the oil poured on Aaron's head—p. 133. This oil represented the Holy Spirit, the true "oil of gladness," with which God anointed Jesus. Were the perfumes of the oil under the law sweet and pleasant? How infinitely sweeter to the believer are the perfumes of the oil of gladness, the Holy Spirit flowing from Jesus, the Christ of God? The spirit without measure, the fullness of the Godhead, emanating from him in divine beauty and glory, produces gladness, joy and pleasure, known by none but the inhabitants of heaven, and obedient believers on earth.

When God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit, then was he consecrated prophet, priest and king. As a prophet he taught the truth of heaven, and revealed the benevolent purpose of the Father to the world, all that was necessary for us to know—as a priest he made reconciliation for iniquity; and as a king he established the kingdom of heaven on earth, gave laws for its regulation, and reigns in Zion. To believe that Jesus is the Christ, is to believe that he is anointed of God to execute these offices, or to be the Saviour of the world. He must certainly be qualified for this work, if God anointed him; if not, both the anointer and anointed

must be disgraced; because they failed in the execution. If a believer be not saved, it follows that Christ was unable to effect the work for which he was sent.

It may be again enquired, What is the import of believing that Jesus is the Son of God? We answer: When we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we believe the inexpressible and astonishing love of God to the world. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life." John 4, 9, 10. John 3, 16. "God hath commended (displayed) his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Rom. 5. It was the love of God that raised up, qualified and gave Moses to be the prophet, king and leader of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. How much greater would his love appear, had he sent and given his angel Gabriel! How inconceivably great does it appear, when "he spared not his *own* Son, but delivered him up for us all"?—his *own* Son, his *only* Son, his *only begotten* Son, in whom he delighted? These epithets declare his dignity, and distinguish him from all in the universe of God. No man, nor angel was ever called God's *own* Son, God's *only begotten* Son. "For to which of the angels said he (the Father) at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?—and I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" Heb. 1, 5. His dignity so far exceeds that of angels, that they, yea all of them, are required to worship him. Heb. 1, 6. Who that believes in Jesus, does not see the love of God to sinners, in the gift of his Son? What believer, seeing this love, does not feel his enmity slain—his rebellion subdued—his heart disposed in love to God and to his Son Jesus—his eyes flowing with floods of sorrow at the remembrance of his sins, and at the sight of his unworthiness? He sinks in humble submission at his feet—confesses his sin and unworthiness—yields obedience to his commands, and determines to spend the remnants of his days in his service. While he is humbled in the dust with a sense of his own unworthiness, his thankful soul rises to heaven in praise. "We love him because he first loved us."

The belief that Jesus is the Son of God, induces us more confidently to trust in him. Were he a mere man we should fear; were he the tallest angel in heaven we should hesitate to trust in him,—but being the Son of God, having received the Holy Spirit without measure, we unhesitatingly trust his power, wisdom, and grace, assured that he is able to save us, and to keep that we commit to him faithfully to the end. With his laws and government we are pleased, and in his ways are all our delight.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

To the Editor of the Christian Register.

SIR, I inclose you a small document of some interest, which originated in North Carolina. The author of it is a respectable minister of the Methodist persuasion.

A CORRESPONDENT.

Charleston, S. C.

An Address to the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist Churches.

DEAR BRETHREN.—From the variety of opinions on doctrines and Church Government, that exists among you, as bodies of Christian people, it does appear that a spirit of forbearance and moderation is indispensable. And, as it has been my misfortune, (if I may call it a misfortune,) to differ with each and all of you, in many things, I have only to solicit your forbearance, until a better understanding can be obtained between us.

If you, or any of you, think it right that there should exist in the Church, a diversity of opinions, then, in that case, you are bound to exercise forbearance. It behooves you, who think all Christians ought to see alike, in every thing that belongs to the doctrines of

the Church, to use those means which are best calculated to accomplish that end. And surely there is no better method than to enlighten your brethren who differ from you in sentiment.

It might be thought too bold a step in me, to mark out the course to be taken, to accomplish this desirable object. But this I think I may say, that reason and sound argument, instead of declamation and denunciation, will be the only effectual method to accomplish it.

All mankind being made of the same materials, all possess the same nature, feellings and prejudices, in a greater or less degree, according to their opportunites and advantages in life. Darkness is the privation of light, and ignorance is the want of understanding, or the means of understanding. Now, to possess the means of understanding, and withhold them from our fellowmen, and then to censure and condemn them, would be unjust and cruel. As I cannot take shelter here, so as to accuse you justly, having the same means common to all, I only solicit a fair and impartial investigation of our differences. Let our doctrines be properly understood, the reasons and evidences fairly and justly stated, and then let them be compared. Candour and honesty would compel him who has least grounds to support his doctrine, to submit.

Whatever may be your differences of opinions in other points of "*theology*," you are agreed in the doctrines of the "*trinity*," "*total depravity*," and *atonement*;" and here I beg leave to differ from you,

If the *Trinity* be a doctrine of the Bible, why is it not to be found in so many words, neither in the Old or New Testaments? Why did the fathers of the Church confess that the doctrine could not be found there? If the doctrine of *total depravity* be found in the Scriptures, in what book, chapter and verse is it so written?

If the doctrine of an *infinite satisfaction to divine justice*, be true, why is it not once mentioned in the Scriptures?

Whenever these things can be made to appear to my satisfaction, I shall no longer hesitate to believe with you. And until they are made to appear by some of you, it is to be hoped that a difference from you, will not amount to "*damnable heresy*," seeing you so widely differ from each other in many important points of doctrine.

Orange County, N. C. May 20, 1824.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

NO. 2.

Our preacher, as we have already seen, objects to the doctrine of eternal punishment, because it appears to him unreasonable. Can he then consistently maintain that God is the Governor of the natural and moral worlds?

Why are not all countries, especially those in the same degrees of latitude, equally healthy, the soil in those countries equally good, and the local advantages equal in all respects? Why is there so much timber in many places where there seems to be but little, or no use for it; and none in others where it seems to be much needed? Why does the Almighty suffer the hurricane, that sweeps furiously over the land, and destroys in an hour the labours of man, and the works of his own hands which he has been preserving for ages? Why are we sometimes flooded with water, and at other times famishing for want of it? Why do industrious husbandmen sometimes see the labor of their hands, their families' hope of sustenance, blasted by the withering drought, and the fell monsters pestilence and famine, furiously invading their once peaceful dwelling? Why does the earth open her mouth, and, in a moment, swallow up the good and the bad; the gray headed sinners and the infant that has never done good nor evil?

Why are some members of a family possessed of good constitutions, and sound understandings, while others are lunatics or idiots? Why does he permit the wicked, who fear not God, nor regard man, often to loll in the lap of ease, having all of this worlds goods

that heart could wish, while the humble pious poor are as often destined to linger out a miserable existence, in the vale of misfortune and want, unaided and unpitied by the world?

How will our preacher solve these difficulties upon the principles of reason? Will it be answered to the questions proposed, from a view of the course of things in nature, that there, every thing is conducted according to certain fixed laws? Granted; But who established those laws? Certainly the God of nature. The questions proposed then, remain untouched; nor can they be solved by us upon the principles of reason.

That things frequently do exist, and take place as we have stated we know, but why they do so exist, and so take place, we know not. If then, we meet with many things, in the economy of the natural and moral worlds, the reasons of which are inscrutable by us, is it strange, that in the economy of redemption, some things should be above the grasp of our reasons? And as we are not disposed to reflect on the goodness, or wisdom of God, because of the seeming imperfections, which we behold in nature; shall we reject the doctrine of eternal punishment, because it appears to us unreasonable? I trust not. The humble christian therefore, rests satisfied, that "the Judge of all the earth will do right," although "his judgements are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." But after all, where is the great absurdity of the eternal punishment of the finally impenitent? Will it be answered, that because men are but a moment (comparatively speaking,) offending, that therefore, their punishment should be of short duration? We cannot admit this reasoning as good; for it is contrary to the settled principles of all good government. For many crimes, which are trivial in their nature, and consequences, but to commit which it required a considerable time, only a momentary punishment is inflicted.

Whereas, for many others, of great magnitude, which are committed in a moment, the offenders are punished with a punishment, almost, or even quite commensurate with their lives. Thus in human governments the object of the law is to apportion punishment to crime. But are we able to conceive the extent of criminality, which attaches to that man, who spends his days in sin, tramples under his feet the mercy of God, wades through the blood of Jesus, and uses all his influence against his kingdom and glory? Can we say of such a man, that, having rejected eternal life, he should not experience eternal death?

We do not, however, rely upon reason to support the doctrine in question; nor to support any point in theology.

We believe the idea of eternal punishment is taught in the new Testament. To that book, therefore, we shall resort to establish it; believing that no argument can be as conclusive, to the Christian, as that this, or that, is true, because God has said it.

Now, candid reader, turn over your New Testament, to the 25th of Matt., and read particularly, from the 31st verse to the end of the chapter; and we have no doubt, you will find the points clearly established:—1st That God has appointed a particular period, yet to come, in which he will judge the world; (for this, by the way, our preacher also denied.) And 2dly, That at *that* period, he will punish the wicked, with banishment from his presence, into eternal punishment. For, there it is positively stated, that, "when the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, &c. But to them on his left hand he will say, "depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; (or as Campbell translates it, *eternal fire,*) for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," &c. And he con-

cludes the chapter in these remarkable words, "And these (the wicked) shall go into everlasting punishment, (or eternal punishment, as Campbell translates it) but the righteous into life eternal." Now reader, let me *ask:* If I had the privilege of choosing language, to establish the two positions I have taken, could I have selected any more appropriate, than that cited, and referred to? I am satisfied you will answer no. For it is clear that all nations have never yet been gathered before the son of man, and divided, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from his goats. Then the first position, "that God has appointed a particular period yet to come, in which he will Judge the world," is proved.

And it is equally as clear, that at *that* day of Judgement to come, "the wicked will go into eternal punishment." Our second position then is as clearly proved as the first. Now, let me ask the advocates of the system I am opposing, if the declaration of the Saviour that "the wicked shall go into eternal punishment, does not prove, that they will be eternally miserable? Can his declaration, that "the righteous shall go into life eternal," prove, that they will not be eternally happy? We think not. We believe the learned all agree, that the words *eternal* and *everlasting*, as used in the portion of Scripture under consideration, in reference to the life of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked, are translated from the same word in the original Greek. We believe, therefore, that every argument advanced against the eternal misery of the wicked, is equally levelled against the eternal happiness of the righteous; and that if the language the Saviour has employed, in relation to the punishment of the wicked, does not prove that it will be endless, no language can.

But, said the preacher, we read of an "everlasting covenant made with the children of Israel—of the land of Canaan being given to them, as an "everlasting inheritance," of "everlasting hills," &c. But some of these things have had, and all of them will have an end: why then may not the "everlasting punishment" of the wicked also come to an end? And why not add, going

upon the same ground, that the "everlasting happiness" of the righteous will come to an end; for it is clear to me, that there is as much reason for the one as the other. But it should be considered, that the everlasting covenant, the everlasting inheritance of Canaan, the everlasting hills, are things of time, for we are taught in the Scriptures, that the everlasting covenant has waxed old and vanished away; that the everlasting hills shall be burned up; and matter of fact teaches, that the Jews have long since lost Canaan, as an inheritance. But the punishment of the wicked as spoken of in the portion of God's word, which we have been considering, will take place in eternity, after the general judgement: Nor can it be proved from the Bible, that it will ever terminate. Let it be shewn as clearly that the punishment of the wicked will come to an end, as we have shewn, that, the everlasting covenant has come to an end, and we will concede the point. Until this is done, although we may still be represented as maintaining a cruel, and unreasonable system; one which casts a dark veil over the divine character; we shall continue to regard such charges as entirely gratuitous, and believe with Paul, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

I am not unaware, however, that passages of Scripture are reluctantly pressed, by universalists, into their service to prove their favorite point, that the punishment of the wicked will come to an end. But their efforts, when scrutinized, clearly show that their cause labors. For you will find them frequently resorting to dark prophecies of the Old Testament, of doubtful meaning, to help them out. In this course it must be confessed that the subtlety of the serpent is manifest. For their system bears looking at much better in the pale glimmering lights of Moses and the Prophets, than in the clear and effulgent beams of the Sun of righteousness." Not that I suppose, the law or the Prophets, give any more countenance to the system, than the Gospel; but in those dim lights its advocates have a better chance of hiding its deformities. But if dark

prophecies, and detached scraps of Scripture, torn from their connexion, are to be considered as sufficient to support a doctrine. Then, "what whimsies may not be invented, what errors may not be broached, and what blasphemies may not be uttered under the sanction of the Scripture?" Let the almost countless sects, in Christendom, with their jarring creeds, all claiming the Bible as their basis, respond to these questions. Alas! they declare in language too loud not to be heard, and too plain not to be understood, that the most absurd and blasphemous systems ever broached, that the most puerile whimsies ever invented, receive countenance from them.

And what else can we expect, while predjudice, pride, bigotry and self-will, so predominate in the minds of professed christians; and while they read the Bible, not so much to know the mind of God, as to support their pre-conceived opinions, and thus to minister to their vanity, their pride and prejudice? But when Christians shall learn to cease from man, to cease from themselves, to bring their reason into subordination to revelation, and learn of him who is meek and lowly in heart, then we may expect to see and experience a happier state of things in religion. That blessed period, we rejoice to believe is just at hand—may Heaven hasten it!

TIMOTHY.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Remarks on the Circular letter, written by Elder SILAS M. NOEL, *to the Churches, composing the Franklin Association.*

The object of this Circular is, no doubt, to support two creeds, (the Bible and a human creed,) though the writer does not distinctly avow it. All will agree, that the Bible is a good creed book, and of course every society ought to refer to it, as a standard, by which to determine the qualifications of its members. Under this view, this creed, in the present state of society, is both lawful and expedient. But that other creed, so plainly hinted at, in the Circular, by a little attention to the

writer's reasoning respecting it, as may be easily seen, carries its own refutation with it, as we shall in a few instances make appear. The writer, speaking of excluding corruptions from the church, says, "It is vain to say the Bible is sufficient for that purpose;" of course it is not vain to say the creed book is sufficient; which makes the human creed of higher authority than the Bible. This is plain. Speaking of the enemies of human creeds, the Circular declares, "They will cease to despise a remedy merely because it has not healed every malady, cured every disorder. For the same reason they might pour contempt upon the *Holy Bible*." In this he makes the Bible superior to the creeds; admitmitting it to be more powerful in healing maladies, and curing disorders, than his creed.

Again, it says, "no Protestant ever professed to regard his creed, considered as a human composition, as of equal authority with the Scriptures, and far less as of paramount authority." It then follows, that a church, that acts under the authority of a human creed, acts with less authority than she would, were she to take the Bible without her creed. Further, the writer acknowledges, that "the Bible is the word of God, the *only perfect rule of faith and manners*." Why then submit to an imperfect rule, when a perfect one is in your possession. If the Bible, be the only perfect *rule*, it necessarily excludes every other rule. In this the whole question is yielded. Also, the writer declares the Bible to be "the only ultimate test in all controversies." The ultimate test is the last, or final test. Let us pause—does not the Circular attempt to show, that the Bible will not do for a test or standard, by which to keep the church pure? that it has ever failed while the little creed book, is the most excellent for this purpose? And does not every one know, who has any knowledge of a creed book, that when a supposed heretic is arraigned for trial, he is tried by the creed of the church, and not by the Bible? that beyond the creed, he may in vain look for any test, that the creed is the ultimate test, &c.

Take all the above together, and it looks as hetero-

geneous as the groupe of which the writer complains in his Circular. It cannot be expected to purify, with impurity. The writer of the Circular being judge, they cannot be wrong, who take the Bible as of Supreme authority as the ultimate test, being himself, compelled to admit it.

The question asked in the Circular is this, "Is it lawful and expedient, to adhere to a creed, in the admission of members into the fellowship of the church; and particularly in the admission of candidates into office?" If the Bible were intended, we would answer in the affirmative; but as a separate Confession of Faith, made by poor fallible man or men is designed, we are constrained to say it is not lawful. When it is asked, is it lawful to do this, or that? if the answer be given in the affirmative, it is natural to enquire by what *law* is such answer given. Does the Bible say the Church should make out an epitome of her faith, and call it a creed, and adhere to it in the admission of members into her fellowship? I answer no: Any thing which is *lawful* must be authorized by some law; and as there is no law of heaven, which authorizes a human creed, by which to govern the church, it follows, that all who attempt it, act without any authority from Heaven.

If we go to the Scriptures, where has our Saviour, or his Apostles, given authority to any man or set of men, to prescribe articles of faith, and judge men for their opinions? Why should our Lord have commanded us to hear and understand, if others are to hear and understand for us.

If Christ intended the task of examining, thinking, deciding, and judging, should be confined to a few favored persons, who should affix to themselves the name of the church, why has he given no intimations of such intention? This would have given much peace and comfort to many, who have thought it their duty to search with prayerful earnestness for the true meaning of the Scriptures, and to adopt from knowledge and conviction the principles of their faith.

All doubts might thus be easily removed; for as soon

as it were believed, that the church has the authority to fix the true meaning of Scripture, nothing would remain, "but to believe as the church believes." Instead of searching the Scripture, it would only be necessary to search the creed of the church. The Bible might be laid aside; for why should it be read if all its important truths can be found in a much smaller compass?

If we must have a creed, distinct from the plain letter of Scripture, it is worth while to enquire from what source it is to be obtained? Shall we go to some person or persons in whom we have unlimited confidence? Shall we go back to ecclesiastical assemblies, synods, and councils? But these have all differed. What articles of faith, among the many contradictory ones, which have been sent out under the authority of great names, for the purpose of putting down heresy, shall we adopt? Until this can be settled we had better take the Bible.

It must be plain, that if, as is contended in the Circular, creeds do not supersede the Bible, the Bible does supersede creeds: 2 Tim. 3, 16, 17; "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Observe; 1st "The Scripture is profitable for doctrines:" If there be any doctrine in human creeds, not found in the Bible, all will agree. it ought not to be there. If the Bible contain the same doctrine as a creed, then the creed is unnecessary. 2dly, "For reproof." If any should need reproof, the Bible furnishes the means, a creed book can do no more. 3dly, "For correction." Should any err in faith or manners, the Bible has truth sufficient for correction. Can a little confession, called a creed, do more? 4thly, "For instructiou in righteousness." Whether this be regarded as refering to the heart, or exterior behaviour, the Bible is amply sufficient. Lastly, That by means of the Scriptures, "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The word perfect has in itself a superlative meaning.

and consequently excludes every idea of amendment? It follows, the Bible supersedes all human creeds. The man of God, by it, is thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Of course, any thing added is precisely that much more than the Almighty intended the man of God should have. The solemn question may be asked of all creed makers, "who hath required this at your hands? Was my book defective?" for it is evident that every creed is predicated upon some deficiency in the Bible. The writer of the Circular says, that by a creed he "means a summary exhibition of what the scriptures teach." If the Lord had thought a summary of the whole Bible would be better than the whole, no doubt he would have given it. But he did not, therefore the whole, in its present form, is best. I am sure the scriptures never taught that there are three persons in the Godhead, yet the writer in the Circular asserts there are three. He would have this in his epitome, or creed.

The Apostle writes to the Corinthians thus, "we have not dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand:" 2 Cor. i, 24. That the Franklin Association by her Creed, wishes to have dominion over the faith and consciences of her members, is evident from her complaints against those, who oppose human creeds. Hear her in the Circular: "And according to their plan, each one is allowed to interpret for himself; to place his own constructions upon the scriptures. It denies to the Church the right to interfere in these matters of conscience." Merciful Lord! has it come this; that it is a grief to some, in this land of liberty, that each one of God's childred should interpret the Bible for himself! Then Elder Noel or some others, must interpret for the members of the Church. Nor is he allowed the privilege of putting his own construction upon the scriptures. He must of course put the construction given by the Church in the creed under which he may live, and probably sentenced to the devil if he should depart from it. Thus, the poor creature is *in* prison.

(CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.)

WILLIAMSPORT, O. March 13. 1827.

DEAR BROTHER—With pleasure we comply with the request of our brethren when met in conference the 12th inst. in giving you a brief detail of our affairs, and our arrangements for communions the ensuing season in Deer Creek District. We are happy to inform you that in many Churches religion is increasing and truth prevailing. On Hay run since last fall 20 have been added to the fold of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls To the Church at Union has been added a good number of believers. At the heads of Deer Creek and Beaver, a Church has lately been constituted, and many have since been brought in fellowship with it. Another Church has recently been constituted at the Round Prairie. Up the Scioto the Lord is carrying on a good work We are glad to say, that the cause of God is gaining ground throughout this district, in spite of all the impediments our opposers are throwing in the way.

We send you a copy of our arrangements for communions, and wish you to insert it in the Christian Messenger, that as many of the brethren as feel disposed to come and help us, may know where and when to meet us.

We, the Elders and Brethren present, do agree to hold, annually, in Deer Creek District, a Union Meeting, at which all the Elders and as many Brethren as can come, are requested to meet in order to renew our union, harmony and peace– to become more perfectly acquainted with each other, and to settle all difficulties among ourselves, should any exist. This meeting is to commence on the Friday before the third Lord's day in August, at the Boiling Spring, Concord Church On Tuesday following will commence our conference at the same place We design camping on the ground, and request the brethren to come prepared for it, with tents and provisions. Without this preparation, the neighborhood would be oppressed, and not able to supply the miltitude expected.

The 4th Lord's day in June, a communion will be at Richard Wilson's. The 2d do. at Hay Run The first do. in August, at Br. Miller's on Scioto. The 3rd do. in September, at Union Church. The 4th do at Brother Graham's Deer Creek. The 1st. do. in October, at Brother Horny's, Sugar Creek. The 3d do at heads of Deer Creek and Beaver. The 1st. do. in September, at Pisgah, near Round Prairie.

FERGUS GRAHAM,
ENOCH HARVEY.

We have just received the Minutes of the Christian Conference on the Wabash, from which we copy the following: "Unanimously agreed, that in the opinion of this Conference, it would be to the glory of God, and tend greatly to the Redeemer's kingdom, to have a General Christian Conference established in some convenient place in the Western States, in which all the Christian Conferences in those states should be represented."

The attention of the different Conferences is now invited to this subject, and the result of their deliberations is requested to be forwarded to the Christian Messenger, through which medium the minds of all can be known to each other. It is wished that the ch-

jects of the proposed general Conference had been disclosed by the brethren who desire it. This might have influenced our Conference to coalesce in the proposal. EDITOR.

The names of the Elders and unordained Preachers in the Conference, north of Kentucky:

Elders—B. W. Stone, J Hughes F R Palmer, Tho. Smith, John Morrow, Wm Morrow, John Rogers, L J. Fleming, M P Wills, John Roberts, T M. Allen, J Shawhan, J. Longley, J. Powell, H. Osborne, M Rice, L. Hamblick, Rowland Burns, J. Durham, A. M'Lean, P Mauzy, Aaron Sanders, Cummins Brown.—23

Unordained—S. G. Marshall. S. Ellis, W. Parker, P. Cox, J. Caldwell.—5.

OBITUARY.

DIED, March 7, at his own residence, in Scott County, Kentucky, ROBERT WARFIELD NUCKOLS, son of Mr Lewis Nuckols, and son-in-law to the Editor, aged 24 years He suffered long and severely; but his sufferings were sanctified to the good of his soul. A few weeks before he died, he sought and obtained the favor of God, and continued a happy expectant of immortality till he quit these mortal shores A few days before he expired, feeling the near approach of death, he said, "I am not afraid to die—I am going home—I am going to Jesus" With joy he repeated these words: "Hereby we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." He raised his hands, and said "O! I love every one that loves Jesus" Often with pleasure he repeated these texts: "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" The morning previous to his death, he suddenly laid his hand on his breast; being asked by his mother the reason of his doing so, he said he felt an unusual sensation. Then lifting his eyes to heaven, he calmly said "Thou Lamb of God, resign to me thy will; if this is death let it come, and come as easily as possible. Mother, said he, I am not deranged; it is death— the Lord Jesus is with me in the valley and shadow of death" Being asked whether he feared death, he answered, "Oh! no." Soon after, without a struggle or groan he fell asleep in Jesus. A great multitude of weeping mourners attended his funeral. He left a wife and many respectable relatives, in whose breasts his memory is embalmed.

☞ *The Editor conceives an apology due his patrons for the bad quality of the paper, on which his present and last number were printed. Better paper will be procured for the next and future numbers.*

G. L. FINNELL, PR.—GEORGETOWN, KY.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

BY BARTON W. STONE,

AN ELDER IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

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

VOL. I.] GEORGETOWN, KY JUNE, 25, 1827. [No 8.

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

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

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