TO AGENTS AND PATRONS.

To our agents and patrons we once more appeal. The ninth No. of Vol. 2, is now presented. We design prosecuting the work in a third Volume, should we meet with sufficient encouragement. Our subscription list is respectable; but unless our agents and patrons are more prompt in making payment, we shall be under the necessity of stopping the work, and to our serious loss. Should there be any who are unwilling to patronize the work, any longer than the end of Volume 2, they will please to inform our agents, or the Postmaster at whose office the numbers are sent, and they will be so kind as to give us information, at farthest by the middle of October. This will save us from a great loss:—For we have sent to many without knowing they had discontinued. Money can be remitted by mail at our risk. We should be glad that our agents would procure some more subscribers, such as will receive and pay for their numbers. The ministers in the Christian Church, we solicit to engage in this work; and any others who may feel interested in it. Let such send me the names of subscribers for the 3d Volume against the middle of October. Agents will please write the letter A on the left hand lower corner of their letters: none else, unless post-paid, will be attended to. EDITOR.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D. PURVIANCE's communication is received, and shall appear in our next. We have also received a communication from a "Bible Christian." Had he given us his name, we should more cheerfully have given it a place in our columns. We insert no communication without the author's name. It may appear in our next, if not pushed out by more useful matter; though it shall be the last we shall publish without the author's name.

Elder JOHN GARRISON, of Pike County, Ill. earnestly solicits the help of preaching brethren. The prospects there are good, and certainly should induce such as can, to go.

Bro. WM. D. JORDAN requests that all letters and periodicals, addressed to him, be hereafter sent to Burksville, Ky.

An error appeared on the last page of No. 8, and observed too late for correction. Instead of "*Christian Book*," read "*Christian Hymn Book*."

Revivals continue among us as stated in former numbers.

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. II.] GEORGETOWN, KY. AUGUST, 1828. [No. 10.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT ANTIOCH, CLINTON COUNTY, OHIO.

BELOVED BRETHREN:—I have read your communication to the editor of the Christian Messenger. So much has been written on the subject of church government, and the order of her ministry, that it is with a degree of diffidence and reluctance that I again enter upon it; but as your epistle is written in the spirit of meekness, and you appear to be searching for the good and the right way, I shall beg your indulgence, to submit a few friendly remarks, to the consideration of you and other brethren.

You say, "The word, *ordain*, occurs a number of times in the New Testament, and always appears to have one invariable meaning."

Again: "It simply means, to choose, appoint, elect, or set apart by a decree."

Now, I think, it seldom, if ever, signifies to choose, appoint or elect. Read Rom. vii. 10–13. 1 Cor. ix. 14. Gal. iii. 19. Eph. i. 10. Heb. v. 1. You quote Mark iii. 14. and Luke vi. 13. in proof of your definition. Those texts seem to favor your construction; but Jesus says, "I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go, and bring forth fruit."—(John xv. 16.)—which may imply, that they were first chosen and then ordained. If the words are synonimous, one is redundant, as used by the Saviour—it is perfect tautology.

You say: "Tradition says Paul was ordained at Antioch." You believe that hands were laid on him, to impart the gifts of the Spirit. Let us attend to the word. Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As

they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Your construction appears to me, to be irrelevant and unnatural. To what were they called and separated? Let Paul answer: Rom. i. 1, "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." The natural construction is, that he was called by Jesus Christ and sent to preach, and that he was separated, set apart, or ordained to the work, or office, by fasting and prayer, and laying on the hands of the presbytery. But I shall not dwell on this point. Let the remarks of Br. Stone suffice.

The main question is, Who is (or are) authorized to ordain a man to the office of a bishop or elder? and what is his duty?

You say, "The import of the term is, to choose." Again: "We are fully of the opinion that they (the churches) were not idle spectators—but were active in giving their voices in the selection of their elders or bishops." And again: "We cannot see the impropriety of the apostles and evangelists superintending the election of them."

When we are left to act without law, or according to the best of our judgment, we may with propriety say, "we are fully of opinion" &c.—and every man's opinion may pass for what it is worth; but if we acknowledge Christ as our head and lawgiver, when we perform an official act, we ought to be able to shew our authority, to cite chapter and verse: otherwise the act may be deemed illegal and void. In every organized government, each officer ought to be able not only to put his finger on the section of law, which authorises any act which he performs officially; but also to shew that he holds his office according to law—and if he cannot, his acts are nugatory.

1 Tim. iii. 1. "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Suppose in such a case, the church should elect, ordain him. Where is the law? Is it in the New Testament? No: The scripture says nothing about it. But "We are fully of the opinion" &c. In my view such an ordination would be of no validity. But you "can see no impropriety in the apostles and evangelists superintending the election of them;"—*i. e.* I suppose, to act as judges of

elections, to see they are fairly and legally conducted. It is unbecoming in us, to talk of propriety or impropriety as respects the law of Christ, but to inquire what it is, and act accordingly. Titus was left in Crete, not to superintend elections, but to ordain elders, and instructions and special charges were given to him, (and not to the churches) as to the requisite qualifications of an elder

You say, "The history of the church for the first three hundred years, abundantly confirms the fact, that the assembly of the people chose thereof teachers." As to that, I confess I am not well informed, but am content to follow the scripture, which is given by inspiration of God.

Christ is the chief shepherd, the head and husband of the church, which is his body. According to my understanding of his word, he has constituted a gospel ministry, to continue till the end of the world. (Mat. xxiii. 20.) He has committed to them a high trust, and assigned to them important duties, one of which is to examine and judge of the call and qualifications of those who desire the office of a bishop. (1 Tim. iii. 1. Tit. i. 5, &c.) That which is committed to their trust, they are to commit to other faithful men, who shall be able to teach others. (1 Tim. vi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 2.) They are to feed the flock—take the oversight thereof, and as fellow laborers, to be subject one to another. (1 Pet. v. 2–5.) He enjoins upon the flock, to *remember* and *obey* them; "for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account." (Heb. xiii. 7, 17.) If they received their authority from the church, it would be consistent, that "to the church alone they should be accountable." But they are made accountable to their master, "the chief shepherd," and subject one to another; and if they are faithful, when he shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (1 Pet. v. 4.) But I shall not be further particular, or recapitulate what has been written by Stone. Kinkade and myself, in the Christian Messenger.

I may be charged with aiming to establish a ministerial despotism. But I am simply aiming to shew what Jesus Christ has established; and if this is the order of God, let us not reply against him. I admit that the office of the ministry has been, and may be abused; so under the law there were wicked priests and false prophets, but that did not vacate the office of the priesthood, nor did God cease to send prophets to Israel.

It appears to me that some good people, by viewing the divisions, party spirit and strife which have been excited by preachers, have become impatient, and so indignant against those evils that they are disposed to put down the ministry altogether—especially, those we call sectarians. But let us on the other hand take a view of the good they have done. How science has flourished under their patronage—how much piety and morality have been promoted by Presbyterian and other preachers, notwithstanding their Calvinism; and how many souls have been converted under the Methodists, notwithstanding their sectarian spirit.

If I understand your scheme, it tends directly to the point above stated,—viz: The abolition of the office of the gospel ministry.

Bear with my plainness while I state, that I have been credibly informed that Bro: ——— has said, "that he once believed he was called to preach the gospel, but has since been convinced that he was mistaken, and that the office is extinct;" that he has been chosen as an elder in the church at Antioch, and thinks his ministerial labors ought not to transcend her limits. Permit me to inquire, Whether christians were not not fed and blest, sinners converted, and churches established, under his ministry? Whether he did not often enjoy the sensible manifestation of God's presence, and the aid and influence of his good Spirit, in preaching the gospel? And whether he was not more extensively useful then than he is now? If these things are so, I must conclude he is mistaken now; for I believe he is an honest man.

You say, "In Eph. iv. 11. The apostle makes an enumeration of spiritual gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists pastors and teachers. These gifts were given for a certain purpose, to-wit: 'for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' They were given for a specified term, to-wit: 'Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God,' &c. When the end was answered for which these gifts were given, they were as perfectly out of use, as the first covenant, after the kingdom of Christ was established on earth. See Gal. iii. 19."

The gifts here enumerated compose the gospel ministry: though elders and bishops are not expressed, they are but different terms or names which pertain to the office, or work of the ministry; having reference to their several duties.

An elder is a bishop, (Tit. i. 5. 7.) a pastor and teacher, (1 Tim. iii. 2. 1 Pet. v. 2. Jer. iii. 15.) Those gifts according to your plan are "as perfectly out of use as the first covenant," &c. It is written with respect to the first covenant; "it waxed old and is ready to vanish away." (Heb. viii. 13.) But there is nothing said in the scripture of those gifts vanishing away, or being superseded. It is written, "If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." (2 Cor. iii. 11.) Has any thing succeeded those gifts, which is more glorious? They were given for the perfecting of the saints, &c. How are the saints perfected and the body edified, since they are perfectly out of use? Perhaps you will say—read the word—search the scriptures—they are now complete, which was not the case, in the apostolical age. But "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." This appears to have been the plan, which God ordained, and I cannot find that it has been changed or abolished. To set aside the ministry, is to derange the whole gospel plan. Who is authorised to administer gospel ordinances? You may say, teachers, church-elders. But if any man who does not profess to act under the commission given by Christ, Mat. xxiii. 19, 20, presumes to baptize, I ask him to shew his authority? Is it from God or from man? The church elected him. I ask again for the authority of the church? Is it assumed or delegated?

You infer a limitation from the phrase, "Till we all come to the unity of the faith," &c. You say, "This end was answered, or from what did the churches apostatize." It is certainly as necessary for the saints to be perfected, and the body of Christ edified now, as it ever was; and the following passages may serve to shew that your rule of interpretation as respects the word, "*Till*," is incorrect. 1 Tim. iv. 13: "*Till* I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," &c. Surely Paul did not mean that after his coming, Timothy should read no more, or exercise his ministerial function no longer. Hos. x. 12—"For it is time to seek the Lord, *till* he come and rain righteousness upon you." By this text we cannot understand that when God answers the prayers of his people and rains righteousness upon them, they shall quit seeking him or never pray again. I appeal to the experience of all christians, whether any thing is more

conducive to their perfecting and edifiying than the preaching of the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

But perhaps you do not believe that there is any such preaching in the present day. It is supposed that your scheme has originated from the editor of the Christian Baptist; and I understand that he limits the commission, Mat. xxviii. 19, and also the gift of the Holy Spirit, to the apostolic age. I have not read him on the subject: no doubt he is a man of talents and erudition; but whatever deference may be due his opinion, yet according to the scheme he cannot claim to be infallibly inspired, and I should doubt his capacity to designate the parts of the New Testament which are obsolete and do not belong to us. Till this is done, I am disposed to claim the whole. Setting aside the commission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, how shall we use the following scripture: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." If the commission is void, no one is authorised to baptize. If the Holy Ghost is not given, we cannot claim the promise, though we are called. In my view the scheme is calculated to make havoc of the word of God, to rob christians of the bread their Father has designed to provide, and sinners of the means of salvation. Rom. i. 15, 16.—"I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."—"For it is the power of God unto salvation," &c. But Paul and Peter and John are no more; gospel preaching has died with them. We can no longer say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace," &c. (Isai lii. 7.) But can the word of the Lord fail? Isai. lxii. 6.—"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." No, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge be increased. God will send his heralds abroad to publish salvation, until the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Farewell.

DAVID PURVIANCE.

A FEW REMARKS

On a sermon, lately published by Mr. S. Steele, a Presbyterian preacher, on baptism.—No. II.

We promised in our last No. to consider the direct proof for the right of infant church membership and baptism, drawn by Mr. S. from the New Testament.

1st. He says, pa. 20, "We present you with the testimony of Jesus Christ himself. Mark x. 13, 14 And they brought young children to Jesus, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But Jesus said unto them, suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." This kingdom Mr. S. on the same page, understands to be God's church on earth, which was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles.—It might be queried, whether our Lord by the kingdom of God meant the Jewish church or christian church;—if the former we know that little children were of that kingdom; and our Lord speaks in the present tense, "of such *is* the kingdom of God." Now to us it is evident that the church or kingdom of Christ was not established till the day of Pentecost, nor were the Jews as a church or congregation of the Lord rejected till that time. No church existed but that of the Jews, when Christ spoke of these little children being of the kingdom of God.

But as this is the strong hold of Paido baptists, we will pay a little more attention to it.

1. The probable age of those *young children*, or *infants*, as Luke calls them, and *little children* according to Matthew.

2. The purpose for which they were brought.

3. The declaration, "of such is the kingdom of God."

1st. The probable age of these little children. The word translated *little children* is *paidia*, a diminutive noun from *pais*. Such nouns do not always express helpless infancy; for in Matt. xviii. 1—14, a little child (*paidion*) was called to Jesus, and was declared capable of believing in him. Such an act does not pertain to helpless infants. In Mark v. 23, Jairus besought Jesus greatly, saying my little daughter (*thugatrion, adim: from thugateer*) lieth at the point of death.—This little daughter was twelve years old. v. 42. The very language used by Jesus shews that these little children were old enough to understand language, to walk, to come to him at his call. "Suffer them to come unto me;" and Luke says, Jesus called them unto him. Had they been

helpless infants, he would not have called them to come to him. But the following verse, although never noticed, is decisive that these little children were old enough to believe and receive the kingdom of God: "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Now all, acquainted with the syntax of language, know that *a little child* in the text, is the subject of the verb *receiveth*, or *shall receive*, understood. The verse would then read properly thus, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child *receiveth* it, he shall not enter therein.—Thus Paul says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child,"—*i. e.* I spake as a child speaks, I understood as a child understands, I thought as a child thinks. This remark we think incontrovertible, and at once determines that these little children were capable of moral agency; for they could act in receiving the kingdom of God; and were capable subjects under the reign of God, of obeying his laws and institutions.

But it is said that Luke calls them "infants," (*Gr brephe*) therefore it is thought they were helpless sucklings. This is inconclusive; for Paul applies to Timothy the same word when he (Timothy) knew the holy scriptures. 2 Tim. iii. 15. "From a child (*brephous, an infant*) thou hast known the holy scriptures." In Matt. xxi. 15, 16, it is written, "When the Chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." There are no words in the Greek language more expressive of helpless infancy than those used in the preceding text (*nepios* and *thelazon*) and yet these babes and sucklings were crying, *Hosanna*. So Paul when a child as before remarked, spake, understood and thought as a child (*Gr. nepios, a babe.*)

What is more common in our day than to see little children affected with the truth, and receiving the kingdom of God, or submitting to his reign on earth? Such little children we hesitate not to baptize and receive into the church of Christ. Yet even in this day, many, like the disciples of old, would forbid them.

Having now considered the age of these children, and proved that they were old enough to receive the kingdom of God—We proceed to enquire,

2ly. The purpose for which they were brought. The purpose is plainly expressed, that he might touch them, or lay his hands on them and pray. In compliance with the request, It is said, "he laid his hands on them and blessed them." Had it been the mind of Jesus that helpless infants of believers should be baptized and received into the church, surely he would have explicitly taught it here, or somewhere in his ministrations on earth. But this he has never done, nor his inspired apostles after him. We have wondered, why pœdo baptists so universally resort to this text to prove the right of helpless sucklings to church membership and baptism. Were they to urge it as an argument that such were members of the Jewish church there would be much more plausibility; but even this would fail when the text is duly considered. The third thing I designed to consider, has been expressed in the preceding remarks. I shall pass on to Mr. Steel's next direct proof for infant baptism and church membership. It is—

1 Cor. vii. 12, 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." It is contended that this holiness of the children entitles them to church membership and baptism; though neither of these are once hinted at in the whole context. There are difficulties in this text on the side of pœdo baptism, that can never be removed, and which must destroy its weight in support of this practice. These I will state:

1. If because the children are said to be holy on account of the faith of their parents, and have therefore a right to church membership and baptism; then it follows that all the children of believers of every character have a right to the same privileges; the one of 20 or 30 years old, unbelieving and wicked is as holy as the infant of a day, seeing their holiness is not of themselves, but of the believing parent: therefore they have all an equal right to baptism and church membership. Will any pœdo baptist act on this principle and baptize and receive all such into the church? We think not; and yet to act consistently, they should do it.

2. If because the children are said to be holy on account of the parents' faith, and therefore they should be baptized

and received into the church, then ought the unbelieving wife or husband be also baptized and received into the church, because she or he is made holy or sanctified by the believing husband or wife. Surely if the husband is made holy by the believing wife, and if the children are holy by the same means, then the unbelieving husband has as good right to these privileges as the children; and who, acting consistently can refuse them? The words *sanctified* and *holy* in the text, are the same word in different forms, one being a verb, and the other an adjective, and therefore the unbelieving husband and the children are holy in the same sense. I would farther remark that the word *apistos*, translated unbelieving, properly signifies *unfaithful*. Paul had, just before he introduced this text, been speaking of the impropriety of believers being married or joined with such characters, seeing by this alliance they become one body. "Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." From these and other expressions of the apostle, the Corinthian believers might be led to think that such of them as were already married to unfaithful wives or husbands should leave them. Though he dissuades from engageing in such marriages, yet he says to the believers who are already married, Let not the wife depart from her husband, nor the husband from the wife. For if the unfaithful wife please to dwell with her husband, let him, though a believer, not put her away; and let not the woman, who is a christian, depart from her unfaithful husband. He then introduces the text as an argument, why they should dwell together, "For the unfaithful husband is sanctified by the wife," &c. The word, rendered, *is sanctified*, is *hegiastai* in Greek, and every Grecian knows that this is the perfect tense, and should be rendered *has been sanctified*. This frees the text from that obscurity which has puzzled many. It will then be properly read, The unfaithful husband *has been sanctified* by the wife—This is fact, known often in this day, as well as in the days of Paul. To this Peter alludes when he says, "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wife; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." 1 Pet iii. 1. That this is really Paul's meaning is evident from the following views; "For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save

thy husband? and how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" The argument of the apostle is this. It is true in fact that unfaithful husbands have been won, sanctified, and saved by the christian wife, therefore let her dwell with him—and so let the believing husband dwell with his unfaithful wife, and be the means of sanctifying and saving her.—He adds, "else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."—The word *unclean* is in the Greek *akatharta*, which is properly rendered *unpurged*, and stands in opposition to holiness. The apostle's argument is, Instances have been known, that the unfaithful husband has been sanctified and saved by the chaste and pious conversation of the holy wife; and the unfaithful wife has been sanctified and saved by the pious conversation of the holy husband; therefore dwell together. For if you should separate, or one of you should remain unfaithful, unsanctified and not saved, your children would be unclean, not purged from their ignorance and wickedness; but should either of you be the happy instrument of converting the other, then by your joint instruction and good example your children would become holy, being brought up in the nurture, fear, and admonition of the Lord. In the primitive days of christianity, that man was in low esteem in the church, and was forbidden the office of a bishop or deacon, who had not his children in subjection with all gravity, and who did not rule them and his house well. 1 Tim. iii. But why do pœdo baptists baptize and receive into the church infant children on the faith of one of the parents, while the other is an unbeliever? This cannot be done on the principle of federal holiness; (such holiness is unknown in the New Testament.) for if both of the parents be not sanctified the children are *unclean*. From these few remarks it is plain that this text can have no reference to infant church membership nor baptism, nor are we sure that we have given the true exposition of it. We now proceed to Mr. Steele's third direct proof for infant baptism.

3. This is drawn from the accounts of whole households being baptized by the apostles. We find three examples of household-baptism in the New Testament, that of Lydia, the Jailor, and Stephanas. It is argued from probability that there were infants in these families.—Let us calmly enquire.

1. It appears there were no infants in the household of Stephanas, which Paul baptized. 1 Cor. i. 16. For Paul speaks of this household, 1 Cor. xvi. "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."—These things cannot be said of helpless infants. It also appears that there were no infants in the household of Lydia which were baptized: Acts xvi. 15. For we are expressly informed that "They went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." Acts xvi. 40. Helpless infants cannot properly be called brethren, nor can we conceive how the apostles could comfort them by the gospel. As to the Jailor's household, which were baptized, it is plain there were no infants in it. For that is said of it, which excludes the very idea. Acts xvi. 32–34: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

2. How many households can we enumerate, in which there are no infants; and such too as are baptized?

3. By the same argument, that infants ought to be baptized, because three households are recorded as being baptized, we can prove more certainly that helpless infants have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and feared God.—This is a doctrine which we presume, but few admit, though Mr. S. (p. 19) and a writer in the Christian Advocate, defend it as true. This only proves to us that their cause must labor. In Joh. iv. 53, it is recorded that, "The nobleman believed with all his house." In Acts xviii. 8, it is written, "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house." In Acts x. 1, it is recorded of Cornelius, that he feared God with all his house.—In the three cases of household-baptism before noticed, we have certain evidence that there were no infants in them. But in these last three cases we have no such evidence. But will any one, understanding the nature of faith, assert that there were infants in these last mentioned houses, who believed and feared God? We wish to do Mr. S. justice; though he argued (page 19) that infants were capable of believing; yet (p. 26) he contradicts it. On this last page he argues we think sophistically, from the assumption that *not to have faith*, and *disbelieving* are tantamount ideas. We doubt not but that the sentiment proceeded from inattention, not from design.

4. If from *household-baptism*, the propriety of infant baptism is argued; with greater propriety, may be argued the baptism of the whole household from the faith of the parent or masters—Certainly the old and young, bond and free, the unbeliever as well as the believer in the household, all have an equal right on this principle. Thus would the church of Christ in its character be changed, and no longer be distinguished from the world.

[*To be continued.*]

For the Christian Messenger.

TO THE EDITOR.

Dear Sir,—In the number of your Messenger for May last, I have noticed a letter addressed by you "to a Presbyterian preacher." I presume you have no objection to have your opinions brought to the test of scripture in a christian manner and with a proper spirit, for you say your mind is open to conviction. If such be the fact you will no doubt insert the following communication—it is the result of a careful examination of your letter.

In the first place, you make some quotations from the Westminster Confession of Faith respecting the doctrine of predestination, and then give your reasons for rejecting that doctrine.

The *first reason* seems to be because in your estimation it is altogether inconsistent with man's free agency.

It is evident that the Bible alone can decide this point, and to that decision we hope you will not object. Let any man examine attentively the sacred volume and cast from his mind all human systems, and we rest assured that he will find there clearly revealed the doctrine of predestination, and also the doctrine of man's free agency. If we can prove this to be the fact, we hope no one will contend that they are inconsistent with each other, for God reveals not inconsistencies.

It will be sufficient for our purpose to prove that some of the worst actions performed by men have been foreordained of God, for it is against this idea that the natural mind seems to revolt; and here we will take you on your own ground.

You say B commits murder, and ask whether he was free in this act, provided it was decreed from eternity? And you immedately answer No, and acquit B of all blame. Now, my dear sir, is it not strange that you should be so conversant with your bible, and yet have forgotten that the grossest murder recorded in its pages was foreordained by Jehovah. We have the proof of this in Acts iv. 27, 28, and do. ii. 23. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed, both Horod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, *to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*" "Him being delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain." Here, sir, is the record of a horrible murder—the murder of one that was entirely innocent; and you must admit that it was perpetrated by free agents, they did it "with wicked hands,"—that is, they committed sin in this thing; which could not have been the case if they had not been free. But observe they did precisely what God's hand and counsel *determined before to be done.* God foreordained the death of Christ from a good motive, to save sinners from their sins; for without this costly sacrifice none of us could be saved: but they fulfilled the decree from a wicked motive, to gratify their own malice; and you know it is the *motive* that characterizes the act, and makes it either holy or unholy.

You say concerning a murder thus decreed by the Almighty, that "no man with his eyes open would hesitate to impute the sin of it to God, for who could resist his power?" Do you think Peter's eyes were not open when he spoke of the murder of the Saviour? Will any man in the present day arrogate to himself more wisdom than that inspired apostle? Do you not see that he teaches most explicitly that God determined before hand that Christ should die? And do you not also see that he imputes the sin not to God, but to those persons who fulfilled God's decree? It becomes us all to cease trusting to our own reasoning powers, when we have a "thus saith the Lord" to rely on. And as to your question "who could resist his power?" it seems in its connection very much akin to one asked in Rom. ix. 19: "Why doth God find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" That question was put into the mouth of one who objected to the doctrine of predestination, on the same grounds that you do, but you

may there find that Paul silenced the objection, by quoting from the Old Testament a passage asserting positively the sovereignty of Jehovah.

You assert as your belief that this doctrine of predestination would set aside the use of means. Permit me to say with all due respect for your age and talents, that you seem to me to judge differently from the apostle Paul. It was his lot as we find in the 27th chapter of Acts, to suffer shipwreck. The persons on board had given themselves up for lost, but Paul informed them that an angel of God had decreed to him that all of them should be saved. This was God's positive decree, then, concerning the matter; and we find that the apostle firmly credited the revelation. But did this belief cut the nerves of *his* acting? Did it prevent him from using the means requisite to ensure safety? Did he abuse the doctrine by saying—well, as I am sure of safety I shall give myself no farther trouble about the matter? Not at all, for he declared to the Centurian respecting the men who were going to flee, "except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." Some objectors to the doctrine of predestination would laugh at the apostle for his apparent inconsistency. They would say, did he not inform us that God had determined to save every one in the ship, and now he speaks of their death if any of them should flee away; what strange contradiction! Thus, my dear sir, does every man who trusts to his reasoning powers run foul of the truths taught by God's inspired servants. Paul credited God that every one of them should be saved. This was believing in God's decree. Paul, however, did not fail to use the means suited to their critical situation, and thus the decree was fulfilled, and yet the means of acting were not cut. I beseech you, consider with candour, whether your letter does not savour much more of John Wesley, than of the great apostle of the Gentiles.

The case of Joseph and his brethren teaches clearly that God foreordains events, and that man acts freely, and often wickedly, in bringing these very events to pass.

His brethren sold him into Egypt as a slave, which all will acknowledge was a great sin; and we know they told a wicked lie to their father to conceal their guilt. But what did Joseph afterwards say to them? "So now, *it was not you that sent me hither, but God.*"—"As for you, ye thought *evil* against me; but God meant it *unto good.*" Joseph's dreams

clearly evince that God previously determined that his family should be subject to him. His brethren understood the meaning of the dreams, and set about preventing their fulfilment; but behold the wisdom of God—his purposes were fulfilled by that very action which they calculated would prevent the *dreamer* from having rule over them.

Now sir, will you ask as many do—*How* can these things be? *How* can man be free in doing that which God has positively decreed? I answer, no man can tell *how* it is, or explain *the nature* of the connection, simply because God has not revealed it. The *facts* of the case are clearly revealed, and ought to be received *as facts*, without troubling ourselves about the *how*, and the *why*, and the *wherefore*, which are not revealed. When Paul says, "*God works all things after the counsel of his own will.*" I believe it, because it is revealed; and should consider any one presumptuous who would say, with these words before them, that any thing takes place which God does not work after the counsel of his own will. When God calls on the sinner to repent and believe the gospel, and sets motives before him to urge him to these duties, I am taught by this that the sinner is a free agent, and has all the faculties or powers of mind necessary to enable him to choose the good and refuse the evil. And I do not torture my mind by attempting to discover the link in the chain that unites these doctrines together. This is beyond my reach; but I can trust to the Lord to make all things plain hereafter, which are now obscure.

Much more might be written in illustration of this idea—viz: that *predestination*, and *man's free agency* are both clearly revealed in scripture; but the above must suffice. And permit me to remark, in conclusion, that it will be a happy day when all will be so humble as to receive the word of God just as it reads, in its plain common sense acceptation, without cavelling at apparent inconsistencies; and such we conceive to be the state of mind calculated to put an end to all bitter controversy. With persons of this disposition, a "thus saith the Lord" will have more weight in deciding an argument than a thousand of the most plausible reasons that can be furnished by any uninspired man on earth.

Wishing you happines in this world, and that which is to come, I subscribe myself

A BIBLE CHRISTIAN.

REPLY TO THE BIBLE-CHRISTIAN.

We notice this anoymous piece, because it is written in a christian spirit, and is believed to be the production of a presbyterian preacher of some note in the world. The arguments are very common, but we believe the best that have been ever used on his side of the question.

We agree with the writer, that in the Bible are clearly revealed the doctrine of predestination, and also the doctrine of man's free agency. On the latter doctrine our opinions may be one; but on the former they are very dfferent indeed. For he endeavors to prove that "some of the worst actions performed by men have been fo ordained of God, even the murder committed by *B* on his neighbor—yea more the murder of our Lord Jesus Christ by his enemies; and yet that the murderers acted freely and were justly guilty of the crime. Without wondering into the endless and dark mazes of speculation, we will at once attend to his scripture proof. 1 Acts ii. 23. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The first inquiry is, Who delivered Jesus? We answer without doubt, that it was Judas. Matt. xxvi. 14, 15. "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscarit, went unto the chief priests and said unto them, what will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" Judas *delivered* or *betrayed* him, (for these words are translated from the same word *paradidomi* in the Greek) to the Jews. Matt. xxvi. 21. "Verily I say unto you, That one of you shall *betray* (or deliver) me." Mark xiv. 18. Luke xxii. Joh. xiii. 21. The Jews having taken him delivered him to Pilate. Joh. xviii. 35, 36. "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?" Acts iii. 18. Joh. xix. 10, 11. "Then saith Pilate unto him—Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that *delivered* me unto thee hath the greater sin." Pilate had no power, acting under the Roman law, to crucify Jesus, because the crime of which the Savior was accused was not cognizable according to that law. His power to crucify him was given him from a higher authority, viz: from the chief priests, acting under the law of God, for they falsly accuse him of

blasphemy, which crime subjected the offender to death. Comp. Lev. 24, 14–16 with Matt. 26, 65, 66. Therefore said Jesus, He (Judas and the Jews) that delivered me unto thee, hath the greater sin." None can presume to think that God *delivered* or *betrayed* Jesus to Pilate; If he did, he is declared to have committed sin, and a sin greater than that committed by Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified! From these few remarks it is evident that Judas first delivered Jesus to the chief priests, and they delivered him into the hands of Pilate and the Gentiles.

2. This event was "by or according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." By this expression we understand, that Jesus was delivered, condemned and crucified according to prophecy before written. Luke xxii. 21, 22. "But behold the hand of him that betrayeth (*delivereth*) me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was *determined*: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed (*delivered*)." Matthew and Mark say, "The Son of man goeth as it is *written* of him, but woe unto that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed (*delivered*)." Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark xiv. 21. Here the word *determined* is explained to mean *written*, and it would be almost unnecessary to prove that this means *prophesied*. It was prophesied that Judas should betray or deliver him up. Ps. xli. 9. Acts i. 16. Joh. xiii. 18. And that it was prophesied that Jesus should be crusified, and slain, and that he should rise from the dead, is a truth every where taught in the New Testament. See Acts iii. 18—xiii. 27–29—xvii. 2, 3—xxvi. 22, 23, &c.—These events were all foreknown and predicted by God through his prophets. In the same manner we understand the other text, Acts iv. 27, 28. This determination you understand to be God's foreordination of this worst act of men. We have made it appear that it means that these things were done according to prophecy. Some of the best critics read these verses with a little transposition, thus: "For of a truth, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." This reading effectually removes the notion that God predestinated that Pilate, the Gentiles and Jews should kill the Savior, but that they rose up against the Savior, whom God had anointed to do his will, or execute his counsel in the

redemption of man. That this event, of the combination of the wicked against Jesus, was a prophecy, is evident from the two preceding verses. Yet our writer expounds it all as the predestinating decree of God, and imputes the sin, not to God, who decreed it, and executed the decree, but to those by whom he executed it.

We had said on this subject before, "Who could resist his power." The writer thinks this expression so much akin to that in Rom. ix. 19: "Why doth he find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" that he reasons on them as if they were the same. Surely he must see an infinite difference between them: He has power to make saints of rocks and trees; but he does not will it. He has power to create more worlds, countless more worlds; yet he does not will it. He has power to crush or annihilate creation at this moment; yet he has no will to do it. The predestination of God in Rom. ix. was according to his will; and who will assert that he predestinates or decrees any thing, but what he wills or chooses? Whatever he decrees he wills, and whatever he wills is right—there can be nothing wrong, since whatever comes to pass is decreed or foreordained by him, according to your Confession. In the same confession it is declared that God executes his own decrees, by ordering, directing and disposing all creatures, actions and things from the greatest unto the least. For illustration. You decree to murder your neighbor—You also decree to do the murder by your servant—you order your servant to do it; he hesitates; you direct him how and when to do it, he yet is reluctant; you then dispose him to do it, or you give your servant a disposition to do it by promises of reward, or by threats of punishment; he now does the horrid deed. Will any man judge you guiltless? Will not all condemn you?—

Our writer says, "It becomes us all to cease trusting to our own reasoning powers, when we have a "*thus saith the Lord* to rely on." O that he would set us the example!—gladly would we imitate it. Could we see a *thus saith the Lord*, that he hath foreordained every thing that cometh to pass, &c. we would humbly submit to the doctrine, and might labor with him to shew that man was free; though *governed*, *directed* and *disposed*, not barely *permitted*, but powerfully *bounded*, by almighty power. We might labor to reconcile these doctrines, but must labor in vain. The writer says, against this doctrine the natural mind seems to revolt. By

this we suppose he means, that the unregenerated mind revolts against it. Does he then think that all the Armenians, Methodists, and nine tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths of Presbyterians, and Baptists, who reject this doctrine, are unregenerated?—and does he think that the Mahometans, Sceptics and Deists, with himself and a few others who receive this doctrine, are the regenerated only? We would humbly hope that he designed not this idea—we are persuaded he did not. Yet we are sorry he used the expression, especially when he observed afterwards, that our doctrine savors much more of John Wesley, than of the great apostle of the Gentiles.

The writer refers us to Acts xxvii. for proof that his views of predestination, and free agency are entirely consistent. The Lord in this case revealed to Paul his will or decree that not one of the ships company should be lost—Yet Paul said, "except these men abide in the ship they cannot be saved." How did Paul know this? Surely it was made known to him as a part of God's will or decree, which was that none of the company should be lost, on condition that they abode in the ship. Such, indeed are the decrees of God concerning his intelligent creatures; and such we think are in perfect accordance with free agency. Thus; David enquired of the Lord; "Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his (Saul's) hand? Will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard?—And the Lord said, He will come down—and they (the men of Keilah) will deliver thee up." 1 Sam. xxiii. 10–12. This we may call a decree, but it was on the condition that David remained in the city. For David left the city immediately; and Saul hearing of this halted his army and returned, nor did the men of Keilah deliver up David to him. Had David remained in Keilah, Saul would have come, and David would have been delivered up. So if the ships company had left the ship, they would have been lost. These decrees were conditional, and this condition depended on the free agency of man.

The case of Joseph is introduced by the writer in proof of his doctrine.—His brethren sold him into Egypt, and lied to their father respecting it. These were great crimes; yet Joseph says "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God"—"As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."—We see nothing of predestination, nor decrees in this whole passage. It barely states that God

sent Joseph into Egypt, and meant it for good.—Did God actually sell Joseph to those merchants? or had he any agency directly or indirectly in the commission of this crime? We think there are none, who would answer affirmatively. If he had no agency in the deed, how is it said, he did it? We answer; in the same sense, as he tempted David to sin in numbering Israel—in cutting off Job's property and children—in smiting and bruising the Son of God—in persecuting to death, or turning his hand upon, the little ones, the Lord's people, &c. These crimes none will dare to say were done by God immediately, nor by the means of another, *governed*, *directed*, and *disposed* to do them. In either case God must be the author of the sins, and how in justice can he charge them on his creatures, and punish them as guilty? In this sense we must view him as the author of every crime in his vast empire. We simply understand that God suffered these crimes to be done in his government, or did not actively interpose to prevent them. But he determined that all things should work together for good to them that loved him. So it was in this affair of Joseph—He and his father and brethren were blessed through the means of selling Joseph. This is the character of God's government, so comfortable to his saints in every age.

The writer adduces another text, "God works all things after the counsel of his own will." He considers it presumption in any one to say, with these words before him, that any thing takes place, which God does not work after the counsel of his own will. According to the writer's views, God not only decrees every thing, but does every thing, good or bad; men must be mere tools, or machines, moved to action by his invisible hand. How then can he judge or punish his creatures for crimes? How can he address them or deal with them as free agents? Can his character be as lovely and glorious as represented in his word? We grant that all God's works are right; but the works of men are not his works.

The writer with pleasure anticipates the happy day when all will be so humble as to receive the word of God just as it reads, in its plain, common-sense acceptation, without cavilling at apparent inconsistencies." This with what follows are noble sentiments! worthy of all acceptation! But if he thinks *his* doctrine of predestination will at that happy day be found so clearly read in the Bible, and that all the hum-

ble and none alse will see it there, we expect he will be disappointed. This doctrine with many others of a similar character will not at that day be read in that book. We cordially reciprocate the prayer of our unknown brother.

EDITOR.

REVIVALS.

The July No. of the Gospel Luminary gives us cheering accounts of revivals in many parts in the East. Opposition rages there as well as here against us as a people. In Kentucky large additions are continually made to the Church. To particularize would be unnecessary. It is sufficient to say that the churches were never in a more prosperous state.

In appears that the different sects have amalgated, and do systimatically direct their opposition against us every where. A brother in the state of Georgia thus writes to the Editor of the Gospel Luminary: "The opposition still continues. But in this theological contest, our opponents have been driven from the field by the testimony of the scripture. But they have renewed the attack upon a different plan; that is, not to reason, but to defame, reproach and slander us; calling us Arians, Socinians, Schismatics, Heretics, Deists, and the Revilers of Christ. This they do to prevent people from coming to hear us preach; yet many will hear for themselves, and say we preach the truth." Such are the weapons used against us here, and these are well known to be the most powerful in the possession of our opposers. We wonder at the temerity of the popular preachers of the day in their zealous, if not furious, declamation against us. One, in his public exhibitions, would rather his son should join a banditti of horse thieves or high way robbers, than to join us; because there would be hope of reformation in the first case, but none in the latter. There must and will be a reaction not long hence. These arguments will become too stale and disgusting to Bible readers to be received. The great object of the partizans seems to be this, to exclude us from the ranks of christians, and to convince the world that we have no good claim to the name or privilege of a christian. This is no novel plan, it was practised by the Jewish priests against the Savior. When arguments failed them, they endeavored to persuade the people that he had a devil—that he was a deceiver, &c. Let the people be once persuaded to believe that we are as

represented by the *orthodox*, they are then secure from our influence, and learn to despise and persecute us. This state of things will not long continue. Truth will prevail. Let us, my brethren, not be too sensitive, but labor to possess our souls in patience under all these trials. Beware of receiving that spirit which you see and condemn in others. Trust in God, and live the life of holiness and piety. Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Persecution never promoted truth, nor was ever used by truth for support or defence.

EDITOR.

OBITUARY.

Died, July 21st, Elder CLEMENT NANCE, of Indiana. He had been a professor of the Christian religion fifty-two years, and a preacher of the gospel forty-six. The editor has been intimately acquainted with him at least 40 years, being his neighbor in Virginia, and can clearly say that his character as a christian has ever been irreproachable. He was a Methodist preacher, and continued such till he withdrew from that connexion with James O. Kelly and others, many years ago. He moved to this state near 30 years ago, and united with the Christian Church soon after its constitution in the West, and continued a useful and laborious preacher till he died. He has left a good testimony of his unwavering faith in Christ, and is now gone to receive the reward of his labors. In him the church has sustained a great loss, but we feel thankful that he has been lent us so long. May the Lord supply his place with one of his own choice!

Also, died, July 6th, Mrs. LUCINDA WILKINSON, wife of James G. Wilkinson, of Bolivar, Tenn: after a painful illness of three months. She was a pious member of the Methodist church, and a christian *indeed*. As the hour of dissolution approached, her confidence in the Lord increased, and her joy abounded. She died in the triumphs of faith and hope of a glorious resurrection, and a happy immortality. She left a husband and child to bear the great loss.

CONFERENCE MEETING.

Our yearly meeting in Conference will commence on Friday before the third Lord's day in September next, at Antioch, Bourbon county, Ky.

ORIGIN OF EVIL.

The following anecdote, cited from Brandt, occurs in Jortin's Dissertations.

"Two of their (the Contra-remonstrants* of the synod of Dort) divines, elated with victory, insulted a poor fellow, who was a Remonstrant,* and said what are you thinking of, with that grave and woful face? I was thinking, gentlemen, said he, of a controverted question—who was the author of sin? Adam shifted it off from himself, and laid it to his wife. She laid it to the serpent. The serpent, who was then young and bashful, had not a word to say for himself; but afterwards, growing older, and more audacious, he went to the synod of Dort, and there he had the assurance to charge it upon God."

* The remonstrants were the Arminians—the Contra-remonstrants, Calvinists.

NOTICE.

Now in press, and will shortly appear, a Discourse delivered at Carlisle, Ky. on the 4th of July last, on civil and religious liberty, by Elder John Rogers. We have examined the manuscript, and hesitate not to pronounce it the best production we have seen on this subject. We recommend it to the patronage of all who love civil and religious liberty. The pamphlet will contain 30 or 40 pages, and can be sold at 12 1-2 cents. Such as wish to have them will direct their orders with the money to Mr. N. L. FINNELL, P. M. at Georgetown, Ky. who will remit the pamphlets by mail. EDITOR.

Our 4th letter to a Presbyterian preacher, is deferred to our next No.

We are advised by some of our patrons, to cease, for a while, publishing any more communications on Church-Government. We have determined to receive the advice, as nothing new appears to be advanced. EDITOR.

ERRATUM.

In Vol. 2nd page 190, line 35, Instead of *some of the Presbyterian members, &c.* Read, *one of the Presbyterian members, &c.* The error was not designed.

T. M. ALLEN.

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. II.] GEORGETOWN, KY. SEPT. 1828. [No. 11.

From the Christian Advocate and Journal:

MURDER WILL OUT!

"Fear them not, therefore, for there is nothing *covered* that shall not be *revealed*, and *hid* that shall not be *known*.

"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the house tops."

Jesus Christ.

Mr. Editor,—For some months it has been cautiously rumoured in my region of country, that one or more travelling agents have been itinerating through the land, calling together the ministers of the gospel in every city and neighbourhood, for the purpose of a secret conclave. It has been stated that at these conclaves, a certain SECRET of vast and paramount importance, has been entrusted to them under a solemn promise of secrecy for a specified time. This is all we common people, the vulgar herd, or swinish multitude, could learn of this matter, and not a little curiosity has been awakened among us, which, until lately, was not gratified.

But behold, a Morgan has been among them, or mayhap a bird has flown,—already the SECRET is on the four winds of heaven, and as many of your readers may be anxious to learn the true reason of the midnight deeds of these modern missionaries, so novel in their character, I send you the stupendous and appalling account of the whole matter, which I humbly conceive to be a conspiracy against the people's rights, which needs all the secrecy with which it has been enveloped; for when disclosed, it must be abhorred by every lover of civil and religious liberty.

Be it known then that for some months, one or more agents have been travelling through the United States, calling meetings of the clergy in every place, and after obtaining a promise of *secrecy*, entrusting them with the following propo