

History of the Christian Church in the West

by Barton W. Stone

The sermon recounts the history of the Christian Church in the West, focusing on the revival in the western country and the subsequent conflict with the Presbyterian Church.

Scripture: Proverbs 9:1, Isaiah 55:1, Luke 2:10, Luke 14:16, John 3:16, Romans 8:32, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 1 John 4:14, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Salvation Doctrine", "Gospel Message"

Description

Barton W. Stone preaches about the doctrine of the gospel, emphasizing the love of God as the moving cause of salvation and regeneration, the universal offer of salvation through Christ to all, and the necessity of faith in receiving the benefits of the gospel. He highlights the belief that Christ died for all, the free gift of salvation in Christ, and the readiness of God to save sinners without requiring any qualifications or rewards beforehand.

Transcript

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

No. I

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, there was an unusual death in the professors of religion, throughout the western country, both among the preachers and the people. In the commencement of the present century, the more pious became seriously alarmed at the prevalence of vice and the declension of vital piety. They agreed to meet often in prayer to God to revive religion, which appeared ready to die. These meetings were frequent, and began to attract general attention. The humble Christians prayed fervently, and sang the praises of God with warm devotion. Their prayers reached the ears of the Lord; he answered by fire; for he poured out his spirit in a way almost miraculous. This powerful work was first experienced //75// in Tennessee, and in the lower parts of this state, among the Presbyterians, in the summer or fall of 1800.

At this time I had gone to Virginia and North Carolina. From Carolina I was returning to Kentucky in company with Dr. Hall, who was going on a mission to Natchez and the low countries. Never shall I forget the events that transpired on our journey. We were met by a company returning from Tennessee, who had letters to Dr. Hall. We stopped in the woods. The Doctor began to read silently; but soon cried out aloud, and burst into a flood of tears. At first we were at a loss for the cause; but soon learned from the bearer of

the letters, and from the letters themselves, that which equally affected us all. It was an account of a wonderful meeting at Shiloh in Tennessee - that many had been struck down as dead, and continued for hours apparently breathless, and afterwards rose, praising God for his saving mercy - that the saints were all alive - and sinners all around weeping and crying for mercy - and that multitudes were converted and rejoicing in God.

The work spread and progressed like fire in a dry stubble. The sparks, lighting in various parts of the field, would quickly raise as many blazes all around. So the Christians from various and distant parts met together; and returning home in the spirit and power of religion, they became preachers, successful preachers, in their neighborhoods, by simply stating what they had seen, heard, and felt; and so spake that many believed and turned to the Lord. I knew an old Presbyterian in a barren neighborhood. He heard of this strange work, and went 60 or 70 miles to one of these meetings. The work was very great and strange. He felt the flame of it in his own heart, and returned home in the power of the spirit. He had a very wicked son. He went to see him, he burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, O my son Reuben. The son was instantly convicted of his sins, and immediately repaired to the woods, and cried for mercy; nor did he //76// cease till he obtained it. He straightway began to exhort and warn his companions in wickedness to repent and believe the gospel; and many turned to the Lord. From that period to his death, about 20 years, he laboured without ceasing, in the vineyard of the Lord, and was eminently useful.

In the spring of 1801, the Lord visited his people in the north of Kentucky. In Fleming, and in Concord, one of my congregations, the same strange and mighty works were seen and experienced. On the fourth Lord's day in May, we had an appointment for a communion at Concord. Various causes collected an unusual multitude of people together at this time, - between five and six thousands, of various sects, and many preachers. The house could not contain them, and we repaired to the woods. Worship commenced on Friday, and continued without intermission day and night, for four or five days. From this meeting, the flame spread all around, and increased till the ever-memorable meeting at Caneridge, in August following. Here an innumerable multitude collected, estimated at 25,000 souls. The meeting commenced on Friday, and continued six or seven days. It was truly a solemn scene to see the multitudes coming together, and the number of wagons and carriages bringing provisions and tents to stay on the ground; for it was found that no neighborhood could entertain and support the multitudes that came together. The members of the church and the neighbours brought their provisions to the encampment, for themselves and strangers. Long tables were spread with provisions, and all invited to eat. This was the beginning and introduction of camp meetings. During this time, night and day worship continued. Hundreds were lying as men slain in battle; many engaged in prayer for the distressed in every part of the camp; many in the woods around crying for mercy; many rejoicing aloud in songs of praise. In other parts many of the preachers of various names, were proclaiming the gospel of salvation. The number of converts could never be ascertained: it is thought to have been between 500 and 1000.

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The doctrine preached by all was simple, and nearly the same. Free and full salvation to every creature was proclaimed. All urged faith in the gospel, and obedience to it, as the way of life. All appeared deeply impressed with the ruined state of sinners, and were anxious for their salvation. The spirit of partyism, and party distinctions, were apparently forgotten. The doctrines of former controversy were not named; no mention was made of eternal unconditional election, reprobation, or fatality. The spirit of love, peace, and union, were revived. You might have seen the various sects engaged in the same spirit, praying, praising, and communing together, and the preachers in the lead. Happy days! joyful seasons of refreshment from

the presence of the Lord! This work from this period spread throughout the western country.

It should not be concealed that among us Presbyterians, there were some, both of the preachers and private members, who stood in opposition to the work, and the doctrine by which it was promoted. They did not like that the doctrines of their confession should be neglected in the daily ministrations. They therefore became jealous lest those doctrines should be entirely rejected by the churches; they began to preach them, and oppose the doctrine of the revival. The other sects began to take the alarm and to oppose the doctrine of Calvin. The war commenced; and now there appeared to be more solicitude to establish certain dogmas, and to enlist members into a particular party, than to preach the gospel, and win souls to Christ. The pious wept at the sight, and were groaning at the devastations of Zion, the breach of union, and the unhappy check put to the work of God! Never before did partyism to my mind appear so hateful, so destructive to the progress of truth and vital piety, and to the salvation of souls. Many saw it in the same light, and felt determined to stand fast in the gospel of Christ, and labour to promote his work.

But here we were not permitted to rest. We must come into the party views and party spirit of the denomination //78// by which we were called, and cease from preaching that doctrine which was considered contrary to the doctrines contained in our confession of faith, contemptuously called Arminian. These doctrines were, that the provisions and calls of the gospel were for all, and to all the family of Adam; that Christ died for all, and was the constituted Saviour of all; that the poor sinner must believe in him, and that he was capable to believe from the evidences given in the gospel. In this strain of preaching, a number of the Presbyterian preachers had been for some time past engaged. But these by no means suited the sticklers for orthodoxy. Richard McNemar, a member of Washington Presbytery, was zealously engaged in preaching these views. At the session of this Presbytery in Cincinnati, Oct. 6, 1802, a lay elder, a member of the Presbytery, arose and entered a verbal complaint against McNemar, as a propagator of false doctrine, and desired the Presbytery to look into the matter. Though McNemar protested against this measure as disorderly, yet he was overruled, and the Presbytery, as a court of inquisition, proceeded to examine him, on the doctrine of particular election, human depravity, the atonement, the application of it to sinners, the necessity of a divine agency in the application, and the nature of faith. The result of the examination was, that his views were essentially different from Calvinism - and that his principles were strictly Arminian, "which, (say they) are dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion." A copy of their judgment was ordered to be sent to all the churches under their care. What appeared extraordinary is, that this same presbytery in the same session, in which they passed a vote of condemnation on his principles, as dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion, appointed McNemar to preach among the vacancies, as usual, as their minutes shew.

At the next session of this Presbytery in April 1803, a petition was presented, praying Presbytery to examine McNemar on the fundamental doctrines of religion; //79// and that the Rev. John Thompson undergo the like examination. The Presbytery rejected the petition as improper; and presented McNemar a call from Turtle Creek, which he accepted. The minority of Presbytery protested against these acts of the majority.

In Sept. 1803, the Synod met in Lexington. Here the books of all the Presbyteries were to be examined, and their improper conduct arraigned at the bar of this court. Through the committee of overtures, the business of the Washington Presbytery in their sessions in Cincinnati and Springfield with respect to McNemar and Thompson, was laid before the Synod. The Synod soon determined, that the Washington Presbytery acted orderly in examining McNemar, and of publishing their vote of condemnation of his

principles, as dangerous, and contrary to the constitution of the Presbyterian church, and that they were disorderly in giving him appointments to preach. They also determined that the Presbytery acted disorderly in rejecting the petition to examine McNemar and Thompson at Springfield, and in presenting McNemar the call from Turtle Creek. It was now evidently seen that the way was prepared to censure any minister of the gospel without charge, witness, or prosecution, through the short medium of Presbyterial inquisition. We, who were of the same sentiments, now plainly saw that the proceedings of the Synod not only involved the fate of McNemar and Thompson, but equally our own. We saw the arm of ecclesiastical authority raised to crush us, and we must either sink, or step aside to avoid the blow.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

From: THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER, 1(24 March 1827), 97-101

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HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

No. II

Under these circumstances we retired, during a short recess of Synod, to ask counsel of the Lord, and consult with one another.

When we came to converse on the subject, we found it had struck each of our minds precisely in the same point of light, without any preconcerted plan. To appeal to the general assembly, so long as human opinions were esteemed the standard of orthodoxy, we had little hope of redress. We therefore determined to withdraw from the jurisdiction of Synod, and cast ourselves upon that God, who had led us hitherto in safety through many trials and difficulties; and who we believe, will lead us safely on to the end.

We then concluded to draw up, and enter our protest against the proceedings of Synod. While we were doing this, the Synod were employed in debating on the propriety of proceeding on in the new inquisition, as will appear from the following extract:

"Whereas the Synod have taken into consideration certain petitions and papers respecting the conduct of Washington Presbytery at Springfield, &c. which conduct this Synod have said was out of order, &c. On motion, resolved that Synod now enter upon the examination of Messrs McNemar and Thompson, according to the prayer of the petitions, and the charges therein stated; and also that this Synod resolve the questions of doctrines, seriously and reasonably proposed in their petitions."

"While Synod were deliberating on the propriety of adopting the above resolution, Messrs Marshall, Stone, //98// Dunlavy, McNemar, and Thompson, appeared in Synod, and having given their reasons for not attending sooner, they presented a paper through Mr Marshall, which that gentleman stated to be a protest against the proceedings of Synod, in the affair of Washington Presbytery, and a declaration that they withdrew from the jurisdiction of Synod, this paper was read and is as follows:

"To the Moderator of the Synod of Kentucky.

"Rev. Sir - We, the underwritten members of Washington and West Lexington Presbyteries, do hereby enter our protest against the proceedings of Synod, in approbating that minute of the Washington Presbytery, which condemned the sentiments of Mr McNemar, as dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all true religion; and the proceeding therewith connected: and for reasons which we now offer, we declare ourselves no longer members of your reverend body, nor under your jurisdiction, or that of your Presbyteries.

1. "We conscientiously believe, that the above minute, which you sanctioned, gives a distorted and false representation of Mr McNemar's sentiments, and that the measure was calculated to prevent the influence of truths of the most interesting nature.

2. "We claim the privilege of interpreting the scripture by itself, according to section 9, chapter 1, of the Confession of Faith; and believe that the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures.

"But from the disposition which Synod manifests, it appears to us that we cannot enjoy this privilege, but must be bound up to such explanations of the word of God, as preclude all farther enquiry after truth.

3. "We remain inviolably attached to the doctrines of grace, which through God have been mighty in every revival of true religion since the reformation. These //99// doctrines, however, we believe, are in a measure darkened, by some expressions in the Confession of Faith, which are used as the means of strengthening sinners in their unbelief, and subjecting many of the pious to a spirit of bondage. When we attempt to obviate those difficulties, we are charged with departing from our standards, viewed as disturbers of the peace of the church, and threatened to be called to account. The proceedings of Presbytery have furnished the world with ample encouragement in this mode of opposition; and the sanction which those proceedings have now received from your reverend body, cuts off every hope of relief from that quarter, from which we have at least faintly expected it. We therefore feel ourselves shut up to the necessity of relieving you from the disagreeable task of receiving petitions from the public, and ourselves from being prosecuted before a judge [NOTE: Confesseion of Faith] whose authority to decide we cannot in conscience acknowledge.

Rev. Sir - Our affection for you as brethren in the Lord, is, and we hope shall ever be the same; nor do we desire to separate from your communion, or to exclude you from ours. We ever wish to bear and forbear in matters of human order or opinion, and unite our joint supplications with yours for the increasing effusions of that divine spirit, which is the bond of peace.

With this disposition of mind, we bid you adieu, until, through the providence of God, it seem good to your reverend body, to adopt a more liberal plan respecting human creeds and confessions.

ROBERT MARSHALL,

JOHN DUNLAVY,

RICHARD McNEMAR,

BARTON W. STONE,

JOHN THOMPSON.

"Done in Lexington, Ky. Sept. 10th, 1803."

The introduction of the above protest put a sudden check to the examining system. The protest was then //100// read, and shortly after, we retired from the house.

Synod then appointed a committee to converse with us, as you will see in the following extract from their minutes:

"On motion, resolved, that Messrs D. Rice, Matthew Houston, and James Welsh, be a committee, seriously and affectionately to converse with Messrs Marshall, &c. to labour to bring them back to the standards and doctrines of our church, and report Monday morning."

"On motion, resolved, that Mr. Joseph Howe be added as a member to the committee appointed to converse with Messrs Marshall, &c."

The result of this conference you have in the report of the committee as follows:

"The committee appointed to converse with Messrs Marshall, &c. report as follows, viz: - That the aforesaid gentlemen agree, that they will confer with Synod on points of doctrine, in the following manner, viz: - they will answer any questions proposed to them by Synod, which may be stated in writing, in writing again; and that they are ready to enter upon the business as soon as they may receive notice for that purpose.

N. B. The whole of the questions shall be given in at once."

To this committee we further stated, that we were willing to return, and be considered under the care and jurisdiction of Synod as formerly, provided they would constitute us into one Presbytery; and if they had any charges to bring against us, with respect to doctrines, or otherwise, let them come forward in an orderly manner, according to the book of discipline, criminate us as a Presbytery, and bring our sentiments to the word of God as the standard, and we were willing to stand trial.

To these proposals we received no answer. It appears that Synod had considerable debating among them, whether they would comply with the proposal contained in the report of committee, in conferring with us in writing; and that there was a diversity of opinion //101// on that subject. A resolution being introduced for that purpose, it passed in the negative, 12 to 7.

Why Synod did not accede to the proposal we could not then tell, for they sent us no answer. However, one of their reasons, as we afterwards understood, was that the whole of the questions must be given in at once. The weight of this reason we leave to the reader to determine. We were not only willing, but anxious to have our sentiments fairly and fully investigated, provided we were put in a situation to have a fair hearing. This we knew we could not obtain, while the leading members of Synod were in their present spirit. We did not expect to have the privilege of discussing the subject before Synod in the capacity in which we then stood; and were unwilling to bring our necks again under a yoke, which we had so lately thrown off. The only fair way, then, to prevent quibbling and misrepresentation, was to do it in writing, as we could not do it any other way, unless we revoked our protest, and came again under the jurisdiction of Synod.

But the Synod had another objection to our proposal, viz: they could not confer with us as a body, because they could not acknowledge the legality of this body. Time has a wonderful power in legalizing bodies! a few years have legalized the self-created bodies of Luther, Calvin, and all the different sects of Christians since the reformation! A few more years may legalize our body in the estimation of Synod, when we hope they will condescend to confer with us, and unity be restored.

Though we had withdrawn from the jurisdiction of Synod, it was of necessity, rather than of choice. We found we must forsake them, or what we believed the truth: the former were dear to us, but the latter was dearer. Under these circumstances we again committed ourselves to God, and constituted ourselves into a Presbytery, known by the name of the Springfield Presbytery.

TO BE CONTINUED.

From: THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER, 1(25 April 1827), 121-5

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HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN

THE WEST - No. III

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

DEAR BRETHREN: By the time this letter shall have reached you, you will, no doubt, have heard, that a separation has taken place between us, and the Synod of Kentucky, and the presbyteries to which we belonged. The reasons which induced us to withdraw, you see in the above copy of our protest; which reasons we intend more fully to unfold as soon as we can obtain the minutes of Synod, and those of the Washington presbytery, which are referred to in said protest. But lest you should form an improper opinion of the nature or kind of separation, we take the liberty of giving you a short statement of it. We do not desire, nor do we consider ourselves to be separated from the presbyterian Church, as christians, whether ministers or people; we still wish to continue united to them in the bonds of love; we will admit to communion as formerly, and desire to be admitted. It is not our design to form a party. We have only withdrawn from the jurisdiction of those bodies, with whom we stood connected, because we plainly perceived that, while that connexion subsisted, we could not enjoy the liberty of reading, studying and explaining the word of God for ourselves, without constant altercation and strife of words to no profit. We pass no uncharitable censures on those reverend bodies for their strict adherence to their standards; but as we accountable to God for ourselves, so we must act for ourselves //122// as in the sight of God; and can own no standard of faith but the word of God; and we desire ever to look to him for his Spirit of wisdom to lead us into all truth. Brethren, we wish to pay all due deference to the Confession of Faith, and other writings of our pious fathers; but we plead a privilege, which is granted in the Confession of Faith, chap. I, sec. 9, 10, as we mentioned in our protest; that the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture, is not the Confession of Faith, nor any human writings whatever, but the Scripture itself. On this ground we have attempted, and still mean to proceed to hold forth the word of life, peace and pardon to sinners, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. But as we are by some suspected of having departed from the true

doctrines of the Gospel, we design as soon as convenient, to explain to the public our views of the Gospel. In the mean time we are determined, by the grace of God, to preach the Gospel, and administer ordinances as formerly.

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

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

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

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

"Rev'd. and Dear Sir: - We received your resolution from a member of your committee, requesting us to give //123// you a statement of our objections against some parts of the Confession of Faith. We have taken the matter into consideration and resolved to comply. But it is out of our power to state them to you as soon as you require: but will without fail give you a statement at your next annual session. A party is not our aim; and this we hope to evince to you, and to the world at your next session. In the mean time we design to proceed no farther than circumstances may require. Brethren, you are in our hearts to live and die with you: our hearts are bound to you in love. We hope your intentions in doing what you have done, were good; but we still believe as stated in our protest. In the mean time let us unite our prayers to our common Lord and Father, that he would in his kind providence heal our divisions, and unite us more closely in the bonds of love.

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

"ROBERT MARSHALL,

"JOHN DUNLAVY,

"RICHARD M'NEMAR,

"BARTON W. STONE,

"JOHN THOMPSON."

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

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

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

"On motion, the following resolution was introduced, and on a vote being taken, was carried in the affirmative. Whereas, Messrs. Robt. Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard M'Nemar, Barton W. Stone, and John Thompson, have declared themselves no longer members of our body, or under our jurisdiction, or that of our presbyteries; //124// and whereas, it appears from their remonstrance laid before Synod, that they have seceded from the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and no more wish to be united with us, until we adopt a more liberal plan respecting human creeds and confessions; and, whereas, a committee has been appointed, seriously and affectionately to converse with the above members, in order if possible to reclaim them to the doctrines and standards of our church, which committee has proved entirely unsuccessful; moreover, whereas said gentlemen came into Synod and informed us that they had constituted themselves into a separate presbytery, and have refused to comply with every solicitation to return to their duty, but persist in their scismatic disposition: Therefore, Resolved, that Synod do, and they hereby do, solemnly suspend Messrs. Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Barton W. Stone, Richard M'Nemar and John Thompson from the exercise of the function of the Gospel ministry, until sorrow and repentance for their scism be manifested; leaving it however to the several presbyteries, to which the above members may have belonged, to restore them as soon as they give satisfactory evidence of repentance; and their congregations are hereby declared vacant.

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

"A true copy,

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

Here it is worthy of our most serious attention, to observe that the Synod had no legal grounds to proceed farther against us after our withdrawing from under their jurisdiction. For if the power of suspension is //125// not legally vested in a Synod, their assuming and exercising it, must appear indeed an empty flourish. We would humbly enquire upon what ground they proceeded? Their standard affords no pretext for such a step: the power of Synod is limited to certain bounds which you will see, Form of Gov. chap. x, sec. 2; you see not a word there of a suspension; their highest authority is to advise the presbytery in such a case, (Form of Proc. chap. ii, sec 11). It is unnecessary to prove a negative. We say they had no such authority from the word of God, or the form of Government. But seeing much has been said in support of their authority in that case, it is necessary we should pay a particular attention to the subject.

If our suspension be orderly and according to the will of God, the consequences are serious indeed. We are bound on earth and bound in Heaven; cast out of the vineyard as fruitless, withered branches; in no better circumstances than heathens and publicans; running unsest; and all that bid us God speed, must be partakers of our evil deeds. On the contrary, if we have been called of God to minister in Holy things, and have done nothing to forfeit that authority; and if any man, or set of men, should rise up and command us to be silent, and forbid the people to hear us; the consequences may be serious to them in the end. It is

certain Synod had no authority from the Book of discipline to suspend us; their authority then must have been either from the word of God, or from such existing circumstances as required them to dispense with order.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

From: THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER, 1(25 May 1827), 145-51

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HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN

THE WEST - No. IV

It is difficult to find, from the preceding minute of Synod, what was the real crime alleged against us. They tell you that we have seceded from the Confession of Faith; that they have labored in vain to bring us back to the standards and doctrines of the 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; who 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 them how it could possibly extend to us, when we declared we were neither of their persuasion, nor under their jurisdiction? Because their committee 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 constituted //146// 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 //147// 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 churchy; 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 enlightened 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 contained 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 or 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 authority. //148// 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 withdraw 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 or words to no profit, on those subjects which the wisest and best of men differ.

All judicial 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 //149// course. Our voluntary act in putting ourselves under the care of Presbytery, put it in their power to license, 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 particular 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 Doddgridge'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 transacting //150// 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 //151// of the Roman pontiff, and that of consequence, the sentence of excommunication, which was daily expected, from Rome, was entirely superfluous and insignificant. [NOTE: 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.]

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.)

From: THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER, 1(25 June 1827), 169-73

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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 //170// her power of ordination was also invalid. This proves at once, that the ordination, not only of Luther, but also of Calvin, and every other protestant minister, is null and void; seeing that all received their ordination from that corrupt church. Therefore if the filthiness of the church of Rome is taken to plaister the character of our reformers, it will render the apostolic authority of our Synodical brethren not only suspicious, but absolutely a blank.

As the proceedings of Synod were evidently arbitrary and unauthorized, we need not wonder that we are charged to the world, under the odious name of schismatics, without any fair statement of the crime, or evidence to support it. A schismatic is one, who aims at dividing the church into sects and parties; not only by separating from its communion and drawing away disciples after him, but also, by loving the pre-eminence in the church, receiving not the brethren, forbidding them that would, and casting them out of the church, as did Diotrephes, 3 Epis. of John.

We have before proved that, merely forming a separate association, is not schism: provided that association be not intended to dissolve the union and communion of the church. But the Synod takes it for granted that a separation from their reverend body, is a separation from the church; thus implicitly declaring, that they are the only church on earth. We would hardly have thought that a body of men so liberal in their principles, as to admit Christians of other denominations to their communion, would exclude those of their own, for merely renouncing what others never acknowledged. Is it not confessed by all that a schismatic spirit, and a party spirit, are the same? If so, let the reader judge on which side the party spirit operated through the whole of the business. Was it a party spirit that induced the preachers at first, to lay aside those points of controversy, which had been a means of keeping the children of God apart? What spirit prevailed at Fleming, when the late revival first commenced; when Dr. Campbell and Mr. Northcut, a methodist preacher, gathered their flocks together, and fed them at the same table? It was justly confessed that Heaven smiled upon the union. Was it not under the same spirit of union, that the flame spread to the east and to the west? Let bigotry blush, and be ashamed at the recollection! But when former things were thus forgotten, and former differences laid aside, whether was it //171// a spirit of union or a party spirit, that prompted some, who were spectators only of this glorious work, to bring forward those speculative opinions, which, at that time, were neither publicly disputed, nor combated; and involved the church in a controversy? This may be emphatically said to be dangerous to the souls of men, and hostile to the interests of all vital religion. We neither felt nor expressed a wish to leave our own society, nor proselyte others to follow us: but on this ground we could not long remain in peace: The bible doctrine

was too simple for those, who had been accustomed to solve riddles and reconcile contradictions.

The Synod have again raised their standard, which, for these happy years had been gathering dust. The lines will probably now be cleared; the enemies of orthodoxy, however pious, be driven out of the pure church; drowsy bigots recalled to arms, and another bold push made to Calvinize the word. May Heaven prevent the furious onset, and revive in the breasts of christians a spirit of forbearance and love! And may we, while we go under the name of schismatics be ever kept from the thing.

It is not uncommon to give the blow and raise the cry. We are brought up to public view, pronounced as the leaders of a party thundered against by the bull of suspension, and our congregations declared vacant! Could the Synod imagine that we would be silent? no: The measures carry too strong marks of ecclesiastical tyranny, to influence us farther than we are driven.

If any enquire why we did not appeal to the General Assembly, we answer: it appeared to us unnecessary; because the business must naturally come before them through the minutes of Synod. David did not immediately go to his father-in-law, to learn his disposition towards him; he chose rather to remain in the field, till the flying arrows determined his doom. If we learn from the minutes of the assembly, that they are for peace, we are near at hand, and ready to obey the signal: but if otherwise, our empty seats must so remain.

We have stated notorious facts, and now let every impartial friend to order, judge for himself. If the prosecution was unprecedented and disorderly from first to last, let the candid reader say, whether it was not an orderly step for us to withdraw. We have said in our protest that we only withdrew from the judicatories with which we stood connected, //172// and not from the church; we say so still. They have beaten us uncondemned, being presbyterians, and then would cast us out of the church. Nay, their letter of suspension will not do. We must again call for order: and desire that body to produce authority, not from the annals of the church of Scotland, but from the word of God, or at least from the constitution of the presbyterian church in America, to justify their proceedings. If they have suspended us without authority, the General Assembly will have to say whether they were in order or not. So long as we believe their proceedings were out of order, that belief will bind us more firmly to the church. The hireling may flee when his congregations are declared vacant, and his salary called in: and set out in search of another benefice. But we pledge ourselves, through the grace of God, to stand fast in the unity of the Spirit, and without respect of persons, endeavor to gather into one the children of God, who have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. How this solemn pledge was redeemed, will be seen in the progress of this history. It will be also seen how little dependence can be put in the pledges of men! Who could have believed that such a noble purpose should so soon be blasted?

After the adjournment of Synod we returned to our several homes with a sorrowful heart, and with many tears. We were soon followed by the authorized heralds of Synod, proclaiming our suspension, and declaring our congregations vacant. The mournful scenes of those days can never be forgotten by me, nor by thousands who were witnesses of their evils. Who without a sigh could see torn asunder the pastor and his flock, united in the closest ties of friendship and christian affection, strengthened too by the growth of years? Who without a tear could see the flood gates of strife raised, and the sweet spirit of religion swept from the sanctuary of God, where peace, love and union had long delighted to dwell? Who, that had been accustomed to see the great congregation collecting from every quarter on every Lord's day at the house of God to worship together with solemnity and joy, - who, accustomed to this, but must feel a holy indignation at the men, who should raise their voice and forbid the people to worship together under the

penalty of excommunication? This was done. Future ages will be incredulous; for many in the present day can scarcely believe it. But why all this mischief? //173// What evil had we done? This was our crime, we preferred the Bible to the Confession and preached the doctrine of the former rather than the doctrines of the latter. We could not believe both, for we saw they widely differed; we could not preach both without preaching contradictions; we could not serve both, for who can serve two masters? We were under the necessity of cleaving to, or of rejecting one or the other. We could not conscientiously bear a party standard, or fight under it against our brethren.

The great majority of our congregations cleaved to us and to the word we preached. Their confidence could not be shaken. The Presbyterian preachers generally thinking their cause in danger, expended much zeal and labor to crush our influence, and divert the attentions of the people from us. But all their efforts were apparently vain. Their endeavors to defend and establish the peculiarities of their system, rather tended to open the eyes of the people to its deformity, and opposition to what they deemed the gospel of God, and to strengthen their attachment to the doctrine we preached. The Methodists, thinking that we would all unite with them, were very friendly, and treated us with brotherly attention.

In the mean time we were busily engaged in preaching and defending our views of the gospel. To the Bible we paid assiduous attention, determined to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified. The people followed our example in studying the Bible, and knowledge and true piety began to shine forth in the professors of religion. We prepared and published our apology, including our views of the gospel, and our remarks on the Confession of Faith. This publication had a happy effect on the public mind; not only to soften their prejudices against us, but also to convince many of the truth, of which they became zealous advocates. It is now thought necessary to give a concise view of that doctrine we published and preached continually at that time, that the world may more correctly judge and determine respecting us, and of the justice or injustice of our opposers.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

From: THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER, 1(25 July 1827), 193-8

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HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE

WEST - No. VI

The doctrine we preached at the commencement of the Revival, and which we urged before and for some time after our separation from the Synod of Kentucky, were not novel, except among the Presbyterians. We labored to convince the unconverted that they were lost sinners, and must be borne again, or never enter into the kingdom of Heaven. We endeavored to point out the means of regeneration, as divinely ordained, and urged the sinner to a speedy compliance. These means we declared to be the Gospel, believed and obeyed by the sinner - that in the use of these means he should be born again, be saved or made alive unto God, by his holy spirit given to him. We continually taught that God was the author of this great change, and confirmed the doctrine by such texts as the following: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." "Of his own will begat he us." - Eph. II. 10; Jas. I. 18, &c. But we

as continually taught that God's revealed plan of effecting this change was by the means of the word or gospel. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." - Jas. I. 18. "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." - I. Corinth. IV. 5, &c. We also every where taught that this gospel had no power, and could produce no good effect on the heart of the unregenerated, "till it was believed by them." The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." - Rom. I, 16. "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." - Heb. IV. 2.

This doctrine preached by us, was considered a novelty and innovation by many of our Presbyterian brethren. For this we incurred their displeasure, and suffered much opposition from them. It is a fact which cannot be denied //194// that the doctrine of Trinity and atonement, which we afterwards received, and for which we have suffered such bitter opposition, were at that time never preached by us; and indeed, the doctrine of atonement was unknown to any of us, till sometime after our separation from Synod; and I believe the common notion of trinity was by all of us believed, except by myself on the point of the pre-existence of the Son of God. The doctrine of satisfaction to law and justice, we preached without having once debated its correctness. [See Apology, p. 68.] The truth of this statement may be doubted at this day by many, who can hardly believe that this doctrine, which we then preached, could have been opposed by Presbyterians. To remove this doubt, I will briefly state the difference between our doctrine and theirs. We both viewed the sinner in a state of death and alienation from God, exposed to eternal damnation: We both agreed that the gospel was the divinely appointed means of salvation, or regeneration: But we contended that this means would never prove effectual salvation or regeneration, till the sinner believed it; and we insisted that he was capable to believe. They contended that the sinner was as unable to believe as to make a world; and therefore if he was saved, God gave him faith, or wrought it in him by some mysterious divine power, a power extraneous from the word. - We taught that the spirit and all the promises of the new covenant were given through faith, or were received by the believer. They taught that the spirit, though a promise of the covenant, and faith, were given to the sinner in unbelief. This difference was viewed by us all as very great. - The one was connected with the whole system of Calvinism; the other with the gospel of God, as we humbly believed.

Justice requires me to state the Presbyterians have become more liberal in their conduct since that boisterous period. To prove this I will state a fact: Soon after our separation two learned and pious presbyterian preachers, Thomas B. Craighead and John Todd, were deposed by the Presbyterians for preaching the same doctrine, that a sinner can and must believe the gospel, and by this means receive the spirit, and be saved. - But some years after, the presbytery restored Mr. Craighead without one acknowledgement of his error, or any change of his sentiments. They also restored Mr. Todd in the same manner, as I have been credibly informed. This proves that the voice of their confession //195// of faith has but little authority, and it is hoped, will shortly be lost in the loud cry of the gospel.

I will now make a few extracts from the Apology by which our views of the gospel at that time shall be clearly exhibited.

The gospel we defined in the language of the Angel, to be "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke ii, 10. An epitome of which is, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii, 16. The love of God is the spring, or moving cause of all the benefits of the gospel. His love to the fallen world is absolute, and must be so declared to mankind. To say that God loved us on condition that we should love him, would destroy the very idea of the Gospel. "We love him because he first loved us," 1 John iii, 10. 19. - The

whole world of mankind is the object of God's love, and to which he has given his Son without exception. This truth we confirmed by the following arguments.

1. Because Christ is the constituted savior of the world: "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," 1 John iv, 14. John iii, 17. xii, 47. vi, 33. 1 Tim. iv, 10. &c.

2. Because all are invited and called to believe and come to him as their Savior, Isai. xlv, 22. Matt. xi, 28. Isai lv, 1. Rev. xxii, 17. &c. How can we account for these invitations, and offers, made to all, if Christ be not given to all? How could we reconcile the conduct of a prince or sovereign, who should propose terms of pardon and peace to his rebellious subjects, when at the same time substantial reasons existed, why he could not accede to his own proposals? If Christ be not given to the whole world, then that part, to whom he is not given, have no right to any thing in him more than the fallen angels, nor can they be invited to receive Christ or his benefits in truth and sincerity. Besides how can their punishment be aggravated for rejecting Christ, when he never was, nor could be sincerely and truly offered to him?

3. Because he died for all, 2 Cor. v.14-15. 1 Tim.ii,6. Heb.ii,9. 2 Pet.ii,1. John i, 29. That Christ died for all we farther argued, because sinners who heard the gospel shall be finally condemned for not believing and obeying it. "He that believeth on him is not condemned. He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. //196// John iii, 13.2 Thes.i,7-8. John xii,58. Jas.ii,12. 1 John iii,23. But how can this be required of those for whom Christ did not die? Would not such be required to believe an untruth? And can we think that the judge of all the earth would condemn his creatures for not believing a lie? If Christ died exclusively for a part of the human race, unbelief follows of course. The scheme furnishes no proper foundation for any one to make an application of the promises to himself; and no one, holding this system, can believe till his mind is drawn off from it, and his attention fixed on the promise of a faithful God. We farther taught, that with Christ is freely given all his fulness, or all that is in him; for we have no authority to believe that a partial Christ is offered to any. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Rom.viii.32. In him is the fulness of grace, life, salvation, pardon, wisdom, righteousness sanctification, redemption, and the spirit without measure. All these he received as gifts for men, even for the rebellious, ps.lxvii,18. Acts ii,39-40,&c.

These are the provisions of the gospel, equal to our most enlarged capacities, boundless as our desires, and infinite as our wants - all treasured in Jesus, and with him given, freely given, and offered to a lost world. They are represented, (Prov.ix,1-5) by a feast, prepared for sinners: Those, invited, had no hand in preparing the provisions - all were ready before the guests were invited - they were only to come and receive what was already prepared for them. - The same truth is taught by our Lord himself by the figure of a supper; the servants sent to invite the guests were authorised to say, "Come, for all things are now ready," Luke xiv, 16-25. - No qualification was required in the guests. - Their believing the report of the servants did not set one dish on the table; nor did their coming give the food its nourishing quality - all things remained the same whether they came and partook or whether they staid away.

The Lord Jesus requires no excellent distinguishing qualifications to bring us within the reach of his Almighty arm. He saves freely and voluntarily. He delights in the work of saving sinners. His very heart breathes forgiveness; and he rejoices over them as a bridegroom rejoiccs over his bride. He wants no reward before the work is done. In this respect every sinner stands upon equal ground; there is no difference //197// between the king and the beggar. He lays down before he takes up, and strows before he gathers. Neither does he require the vigorous help of his helpless creatures; his own arm brin

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