



CONTENTNEA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

This Association held its annual session at Pleasant Plains meeting house, Wayne county, on the 23d, 24th, and 25th days of October, 1835. Elders Thomas Dupree, Mark Bennett, George W. Wallace, Benjamin Bynum, Samuel Moore and Ichabod Moore attended. Letters from 19 churches were received. During the past year, in the several churches, 39 were baptized, 4 received by letter, 3 restored, 21 dismissed by letter, 10 excluded, 12 deceased—771 members. The 17th article of the Constitution was amended to read as follows:—

Art. 17. We will not countenance any preacher who shall travel without the bounds of our Association, establishing societies for the collection of money, or who may himself be collecting money to support any institution whatever. We will not fellowship any member or members of Missionary, Bible, Tract, or Sunday School Union Societies, nor advocates of Theological Schools, nor any person who does fellowship them; nor will we hold any such in our churches.

The next Association is to be held at White Oak meeting house, in this county.

The following is the Circular Letter.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Contentnea Association, now sitting at Pleasant Plains Meeting House, Wayne county, this 25th day of October, 1835, to the Churches they represent.

BELOVED BRETHREN: No doubt you will be looking for a Circular Letter, written upon some subject of importance. We have no other subject on our minds at present but the memorable subject of Religion, from which if God will, we shall undertake to offer you some few thoughts, and in doing this it behoves us to offer some definition of the word religion. The understanding we have of this word is divine faith and worship and reverence of God. However, it is defined by others, binding together; by others, inward piety of heart whereby God is acknowledged; while another says, it consists in the resolution of the will for God, and to avoid whatever we are persuaded he disapproves. The word religion only occurs in scripture (perhaps) five times, and if the whole heathen mythology was searched, we know not whether it is to be found. Although there was nothing said about religion, or the term not used in scripture till the days of the apostles, religious devotions were practiced in a very early age of the world; for we hear in scripture, men began to call on the name of the Lord, which implies they worshipped God. Again: Abel offered to God a sacrifice which was accepted—see Genesis. But Cain brought of the fruit of the ground for his offering, which was not received. Therefore we see plainly two systems of religion set up in the world, the one a pure religion, and the other a false or spurious one. 1st. A false religion or the principles of it was communicated to our fore parents in the garden of Paradise, and has been in exercise more or less from that day to this; false or spurious religion proceeds from our depraved nature or a false conception of God; and in proportion to the views we entertain of ourselves and God, so we set up our forms of worship. Man in his depraved state is not without some knowledge of the Supreme Being; but the views which he entertains of him, can never enable him to worship in a pure or holy manner. But to prove the fact stated, we bring the following scripture: For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse, Romans, i. 20. We only shall divide religion into four general heads, viz: the heathen religion, the Roman religion, the Mahometan religion, and the Christian religion. To enlarge on all we have proposed would extend far beyond the bounds of a Circular, nevertheless we will glean a little as we pass on.

First. It is evident that the heathen had some knowledge of the true and living God, or they would not have had so many idol gods, which it is not expedient for us to name here; but it is a plain proof that there is one true God, and we read of no other characters denying his existence but the fool, and he said in his heart, "there is no God." The heathen gods were dumb and deaf, could neither see nor smell, and yet on critical occasions, or in times of distress, they invoked these gods. This is proven by the impudent act of Goliath of Gath. Again: by the case of Nebuchadnezzar, when he wanted Daniel to worship his gods—see Daniel. However, some of their gods were beasts, which were no better than stock or stone. Notwithstanding they done sacrifice to them, and reposed confidence in their gods, they could not save them. Moreover, it is said the heathen religion can hardly be entitled a system, since the votaries thereof are subject to the most gross vices.

2d. Under the tyranny of the pagans the followers and worshippers of God suffered many very many abuses, and even death itself. See the unlawful decree of Nebuchadnezzar, recorded by Daniel the prophet, as well as others. The second thing we shall notice is, the religion of the Church of Rome, which is said to have been in infancy a branch of the true church of Jesus Christ. We will ask the reader if the church at Corinth in Greece was not entitled to the same honor—the church at Philippi, in Macedonia—the church at Galatia—the church at Colossia, and the seven churches in Asia, with many others? Therefore, we do not see any cause why the church at Rome should claim any pre-eminence over those other churches, as to age or quality; and if she did ever possess any over the rest, it is now nothing to her glory; for it is certain from the best authors we have who wrote of her proceedings, that she swerved from the Christian faith from time to time, until she and her votaries went into lasciviousness, and went on to elect popes, cardinals, and peers, and establish persecution against the true church or followers of Jesus Christ in several kingdoms, wearing names, titles and offices which Christ and his apostles never did, nor intend should be given to officers of the church; which names are unwarranted in the New Testament. And by their influence they troubled kingdoms, established ecclesiastical laws, put many saints to death, proclaimed themselves Vicar of Christ, successor of St. Peter, having power to forgive all manner of sins, past, present, and to come; which is more than Christ himself ever assumed to do. Moreover they established universities, theological seminaries, the mass, infant sprinkling, preaching (as they said) men out of purgatory, selling indulgences, pardons, and in the mean time forbidding to marry—would not have wives of their own,

but wanted every other man's—and went so far as to worship the relics of the dead. Many other errors they were guilty of, which we shall not now notice. And popery is only paganism refined, or nothing better, and if you want a proof of all this, see Fox's History of Martyrs, the Biography of John Wickliffe, Zuinglish, Patrick, Hamilton, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Buck on the Church of Rome, and many other writers on the same subjects. Some of these men in the years 11, 15 and 1600, set her at defiance and proved to the world that she was nothing more or less than the beast which the revelator saw having seven heads and ten horns; and made it appear she was anti-Christ. We shall only now observe, that Christian Rome, (as it is called) done more injury to the followers of God, and put to death more saints, than ever pagan Rome did.

3d. We now come on to take a short notice of the Mahometan religion. It appears Mahomet was a Persian, or born under the reign of the Persian empire, about the beginning of the seventh century. His father being poor and dying when his son was young, he was necessarily raised by his friends and married a rich widow, which gave him many advantages; and he made use of them for the purposes of establishing a new system of religion and to break down paganism; which religion he was successful in setting up in several countries in a short time. He first fixed his plan, converted his wife and near relations, and rich and noble friends; and by his own intrigues and the assistance of his friends, he prescided a sufficient number of men and took the sword and forced his religion. The reason why men embraced the Mahometan religion was, they were afraid of Mahomet's sword; and it is presumable the overthrow of this religion will be caused by universal war, inasmuch as we think Mahomet is the false prophet that John saw in the Revelations, and the beast the law religion. And the beast was taken and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone, Revelations, 19th and 20th. This religion is founded pretty much in the belief of one God, and that Mahomet was his prophet. They believe the most of the Old Testament is of divine authority. Mahomet sets himself nearly upon an equality with Jesus Christ, but says he is the last prophet. He also has a number of other sentiments which there is not room here for. This religion is no better than the former, as men cannot be saved without Jesus Christ; therefore, we shall leave it and come to the last thing proposed—see *Buck on Mahomet*.

4th. We shall now proceed to notice the Christian religion, and in order to set it forth in its proper colors, we shall try to find what kind of religion the church at Antioch possessed, or believed in. Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, &c. It is also said some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch spake unto the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Barabas was also sent, whom when he came, preached (we believe) the Lord Jesus—however, the scripture said, saw the grace of God and was glad, and exhorted them all with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord. He then went to Tarsus, and found Saul, and they returned to Antioch and assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch, see Acts, 11th chapter, from the 19th to 27th verse. Barabas was a man full of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul was a Christian and believed in the Christian religion, and practiced the worship of them and taught Christians, with the rest of the apostles, the perfect rule of faith and practice, as you will see in all his epistles to the Christian churches. A few words relative to what the primitive Christians believed. They believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was the Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners; that he was God manifest in the flesh; that he was God one with the Father. They believed the Holy-Ghost was one with the Father and the Son, and was engaged in the work of redemption; for there are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. This language proceeded from John's own lips. God never was manifest to Adam in a trinity of persons till after the fall, yet he did exist as such; which appears from his own words: Go to, let us make man in our own image. We could bring many other proofs, see the New Testament abound with proofs, but we have no time to insert them here. We next proceed to inform you that no unregenerated man is a Christian, let his profession be what it may; but is a foreigner and an alien without hope and without God in the world. Thus having incorrect views of the Supreme Being, and of himself, he always worships incorrectly; in a word, a bad principle never produces a good work, which agrees with the words of our Saviour: Make the tree good and the fruit will be good also. But men in these modern times say, they are making Christians almost as fast as they want, but by what means? Most ministers, or our Arminian ministers, tell the people the atonement is general, and the spirit of God strives with every body, and if they will believe, which is possible for them to do at any time, and reform, that is enough. God is merciful and he will save them, say they, this is the Christian religion. We have not so learned Christ, and we never knew any tree to change itself or its fruit, neither have we ever known any tree to change another tree or alter its fruit; when the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may an unregenerate man make himself a Christian; and then may men make Christians, and not till then.

To prove our position we will state a case. Suppose here is a spring which in former times produced good water, but some enemy poisoned the spring and of course it produced poisonous water, and before it is fit for use the spring must be cleansed. We ask, therefore, can the spring cleanse itself, or can any other cleanse it? we think not. The Arminian says, the way to cleanse it is to send your servants and make them work upon the stream below, and cleanse all the waters that run out of the spring and that is the right way. If that be the way, what will be done with what runs out, after such cleansing, seeing the fountain remains untouched? the waters will be like the original. Will they work on the outward passions of men, and the heart from whence all the actions flow is untouched. And when they sin again (say they) they have fallen from grace, when it should have been they fell for lack of grace. There is another set of preachers that are manufactured over, according to the schemes of the day, that say, O no, brother Arminian, you are a little mistaken;

let us prescribe a plan whereby sinners hearts can be cleansed, or that spring above named. They then proceed to say, destitute places, souls are going to hell in ignorance for want of the gospel preached to them; the Brahmins are perishing for the word of life, and Hindoos, &c. and we have just studied out a plan to save them. What plan, Sirs? Why let us erect theological schools, State conventions, religious schools in different parts of the United States, and polish men to work upon the bad spring above named, or sinners hearts; and learn them to persuade men and beg them out of their money, and in a short time we can have servants a plenty. (Agreed, for if you want martins set up a plenty of goods and you will have them.) However, they have proceeded to all the above, and are sending lazy young men, who are not willing to work, that can beg even a shilling from a negro, and all he can get from others in better stations of life, to carry their point. Say to him (or any of his class,) Sir, who sent you to preach, and what is your motive? He (perhaps holding a temperance paper in his hand) will answer, such or such a Board of Missions sent me. They are in want of a little money, and cannot you help us to some? They have learned to cry to congregations and to private individuals, God loves the cheerful giver and deceive the people and carry off their money, and perhaps preach them an Arminian or a money begging sermon, and leave the spring uncleaned or their souls unsaved. We will just remind the reader, where the money beggars are gone to Hindostan there is a salubrious climate, a fertile country, gold and silver mines, and no doubt but a rich reward like this will be an effectual call to a number of these fellows. What is the sign of their call to the ministry? 1st. Every power of their souls being filled with the love of money, which is the root of all evil. 2d. To put on a cloak of hypocrisy. 3d. To beg well. 4th. Put on two coats. 5th. From the study of Dr. Gill's divinity an exposition of the scriptures, and others. 6th. The glory of the schemes of the day, &c. and thereby deceiving the people. But there are two or three ways by which they are known: 1st. by their wearing two coats; 2d. by their begging of money; and 3d. by their sowing discord among the brethren. All such religion is nothing better than popery. So they leave the hearts of men unclean.

Next we shall proceed to show how the fountain is cleansed, or the way to cleanse it. Begin in the very bottom of the fountain and take away every thing that defiles it, and the water will be good. And this is the way God cleanses the hearts of men, and makes them Christians. God the Holy Ghost kills the poison of sin, and kills the sinner to the love and practice of sin; changes the heart and shows the sinner the unholiness of his nature; brings to his view his own perfection and holiness, and the man dies to his former prospects of getting to heaven. The apostle said, sin revived and I died; and again, God granted repentance unto life, and gives faith by which the man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is thus born again, as the apostles and primitive Christians were, born not of the flesh nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. This is the way the hearts of men are changed, and from thence proceed good fruits as the United Baptists, who are changed as they were in Antioch, and follow the same rule of faith and practice. Again: pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world; which shows it must be a pure heart to perform this work. For when the Christian does this work he has no claim on the Supreme Being at all. In his visit to the house of mourning his religion is pure, because it proceeded from a pure heart or soul. He discharges a Christian duty, prays for the afflicted, and perhaps comforts them, knowing not but God may bless his visit to their souls good; for God evidently saw the end of all his work before he pushed it into existence, and appointed his means to effect his work. One means is the preaching of the word—for it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. But see one of God's preachers come forward and say, Sir, who sent you to preach, and what sign do you give of your call? He will say, I believe Jesus Christ called me; now for the sign—I was once a hater of his kingdom, and had no delight in holiness, but I hope he has changed my heart, for now I love a holy life and the more like Jesus any Christian is, the better I love him; and after this change took place, the worth of souls was impress on my mind, the welfare of Zion, the honor of the Christian cause and the glory of God; all these lay so heavy on me I had an extreme burden, &c. and necessity was laid on me to preach the gospel, and wo is me if I preach not the gospel. So the man goes without hire or reward, only he carries his reward with him. So he goes and strikes right at the fountain of sin in the heart; God the Holy Ghost sending conviction home and changing the heart as at Antioch. Of such are the Baptists in this Association, and some others, made Christians by the eternal God. Therefore, beloved brethren, make it manifest that you are in possession of pure religion, this dark time of the night. Pray without ceasing, and fill your seat in meeting houses, and be temperate but not abstain; and above all things, love one another and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Read the Bible every day of your lives, that you may know what the will of the Lord is. Hold out faithful to the end, and you have the promise of a crown of life; for the day will surely come when we, (if we be Christians,) shall all meet in that great Association above, where parting shall be no more and sorrows never come. May God grant us a happy entrance into that Association, for Christ's sake. Amen.

DOMESTIC.

Melancholy.—On Saturday morning last, Mr. Jesse Couverse met with an unfortunate end, while at his work in his saw-mill, on Muddy Creek. Some unknown cause brought him in contact with the saw, and he was sawed entirely through diagonally from the shoulder to the hip.

Crawford (Penn.) Messenger.

The number of candidates for different offices, at present before the people of Mississippi, is estimated at about four thousand!

Captain Bossier.—Statements heretofore published have made known the nature of the contest between Capt. Bossier, Baltimore, and Mr. Bayless, of Washington City. The former was indicted for an assault on the latter, and the case was decided on Saturday last by the honorable acquittal of the captain, who plead his own cause. It is stated that Mr. Bayless publicly acquitted Capt. Bossier of all impropriety of conduct towards his ward, and exonerated her from all censure.—*N. Y. Sun.*