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A

BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE

RISE, PROGRESS, AND TERMINATION

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SYNOD OF KENTUCKY,

RELATIVE TO THE LATE

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERY:

IN WHICH IS BROUGHT TO VIEW A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND
PRESENT STANDING OF THE PEOPLE USUALLY DENOMINATED

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS;

AS TAKEN

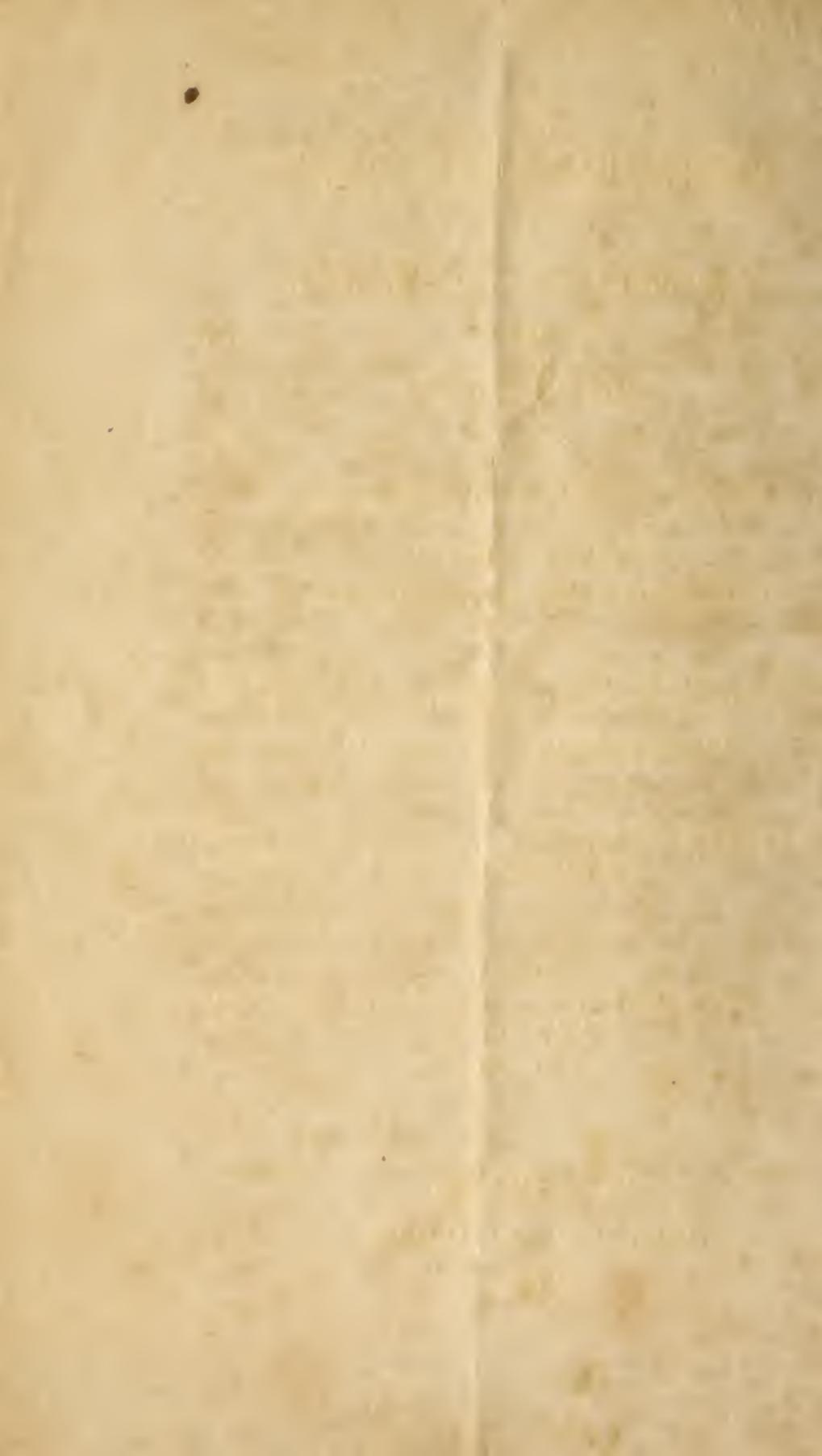
FROM OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND FACTS IN POSSES-
SION OF SYNOD.

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A BRIEF HISTORY, &c.

THE Synod of Kentucky, having been repeatedly advised of the necessity, expediency, and utility of laying before the public at large, but more especially the churches under their care, a plain and correct account of their proceedings relative to the late Cumberland Presbytery, have, in compliance with those solicitations and advices, deemed it proper to present the following statement of facts, substantiated by official documents, and references to the records of the several judicatories relative to the origin, progress, and termination of their proceedings in the very unpleasant case of that Presbytery. This they have undertaken under a full conviction that information on this subject is imperiously required, particularly for the benefit of those who emigrate from distant sections of our Church, and fall within the range of those people who style themselves "Cumberland Presbyterians;"—a people who have no ecclesiastical connection with us whatever; and moreover, are not recognized by us as being in correct Presbyterial standing.

It is the intention of the Synod to give a fair and impartial statement of facts and circumstances as they actually transpired, that the candid and the judicious may be enabled to judge, whether, as sound and consistent Presbyterians, we were not justifiable in endeavouring to arrest the progress of a branch of our connection which had greatly erred from presbyterian usage, and order; and which appeared to us to threaten a total overthrow of the Presbyterian Church in the west; whose interests and prosperity had, until then, gradually increased, and promised an almost unrivalled prospective strength and permanency.

The first Presbytery organized in Kentucky was at Danville, on the 17th day of October, 1786. It was compo-

sed of five members, and called "Transylvania Presbytery;" belonging to the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, having been by that Synod, at their sessions in May preceding, divided off from the Presbytery of Abington. With the increase and population of the country it grew in numbers, until about the year 1798, when the Presbyteries of "West Lexington" and "Washington," were erected out of its Eastern and North Western sections, making the Kentucky river its eastern boundary. The Synod of Kentucky was constituted in the year 1802,—made up of the Presbyteries before mentioned, and the Transylvania Presbytery. At the first meeting of the Synod of Kentucky, they divided the Transylvania Presbytery again, and formed the Cumberland Presbytery on the West, including the Cumberland settlements. This Presbytery held its first meeting in April, 1803. The disorders and irregularities, which required at length the interference of Synod, originated in Transylvania Presbytery previous to their last division, at their fall sessions in 1801, held at "Muddy River Church." At this meeting, after much altercation, four men, viz: Messrs. Anderson, Ewing, King, and M'Clain, who made no pretensions to the literary qualifications required by our Form of Government, "offered themselves to the Presbytery for the service of the Church," and were "appointed to the business of exhortation and catechizing. They were also directed "to prepare discourses" on different subjects "to be read at the next spring session of Presbytery." (Records, p. 35.) Their next stated meeting was held at "Beaver Creek Church," in Barren County, April 13, 1802. It was then and there "resolved, that Alexander Anderson, Finis Ewing, and Samuel King, be permitted to come forward and read their pieces assigned them at the last stated sessions." (p. 49.) It was further "ordered that Mr. Anderson prepare a sermon as a specimen of trial on Luke xiii. 24." (p. 53.) So that Mr. Anderson appears, from the records, to be the only one of these three candidates, at that time, approved, and continued by the Presbytery. Re-

specting the fate of the other two, the record is silent, and it is presumed they were discontinued.

The Presbytery being under the controul of the lower members almost exclusively, and which had been the case for twelve months, held their next stated meeting in October following at "Springfield Church," still further westward, and consequently at a greater distance from those members who were known to be opposed to the contemplated procedure; and therefore it was carried still farther off,—the object of which even charity, which thinketh no evil, can scarcely avoid discerning. At this meeting there were present, according to the enrolment, *eight* ministers and *fourteen* ruling elders;—all belonging to that section of the Presbytery. *Eight* ministers more, and all residing in the eastern section of the Presbytery, were noted as absent. This circumstance will readily account for that triumphant assertion in the 6th page of the "Reply to a Pastoral Letter of West Tennessee," which states, that "the next Transylvania Presbytery [not the Cumberland] took them up, and by a ~~LARGE~~ majority licensed Anderson, Ewing, and King, to preach the everlasting gospel." The majority, indeed, was large, being 17 to 5;—*three* ministers and *two* elders, having strenuously opposed the proceedings without success, entered the following dissent:—

"We, whose names are under written, dissent from the judgment of the Presbytery in licensing Messrs. Ewing and King, because, though they were rejected by the last session of Presbytery, as persons unfit to be continued as candidates, and were now received by petitions from the people, which we think ought not to have been received, as they had a tendency to influence the minds of the members who were bound by solemn vows to judge impartially of their qualifications, and because their trials on that occasion consisted only in one short sermon, and an examination on experimental religion and divinity, being destitute of classical learning, and they discovered no such extraordinary talents as to justify such measure."

The Presbytery, in assigning reasons for their departure

from common usage in this matter, state, on their record, that "several petitions having came forward from many of our vacancies earnestly and importunately praying Presbytery to license them to preach the gospel,"—“and after mature deliberation, considering this matter as coming under the view of that extraordinary case excepted in the book of discipline,” &c. licensed them to preach the gospel. (p. p. 59, 60.) This licensure took place on the 8th day of October, 1802, in the same month, *only six days prior* to the *first* meeting of the Synod of Kentucky, and nearly 200 miles from the place where the ~~Presbytery~~ met. So that at the first sessions of the Synod, these proceedings could not be reviewed; nor indeed could the Synod then be apprized of them, by reason of the shortness of the time and the great distance that intervened. This accounts also for the general absence of the eight members of the Presbytery before mentioned,—they having determined to attend the meeting of the Synod which was essential in order to form a constitutional quorum. Apprehending no danger, therefore, the Synod proceeded to the formation of a new Presbytery, by the name of “Cumberland Presbytery;” which, pursuant to the appointment of Synod, met at the “Ridge meeting-house, the 5th of April 1803.” A few days before this division took place by the act of the Synod, the Transylvania Presbytery, having been, as before observed, for some time almost entirely under the controul of the lower members with a ruling elder from every small vacancy, and thus constituting “a large majority,” had adjourned to meet in the spring at “Mount Pisgah,” on Red River. Just before that adjournment, near the close of their proceedings, it is stated that “Mr. James Hawe, a regular member of the Republican Methodist Church, made application to connect himself with the Presbytery, and was cordially received.” This same James Hawe had been well known to many in Kentucky as a violent opposer of Presbyterians, and a great declaimer, both from the Pulpit and the Press, against what he ignorantly or disingenuously charged upon

them as Calvinism, dressed up in a very hideous and ludicrous manner, the better to suit his purpose in stigmatizing and depreciating the influence of his opponents. This man was nevertheless "*cordially received*," and admitted to a seat in a Presbyterian Judicature, without any recantation,—any examination on doctrine,—and without being required to adopt the standards of our Church. He was accordingly enrolled with the members of the new Presbytery at their first meeting, and was their moderator when called before the Commission of Synod.

The Cumberland Presbytery now went with great rapidity in their own way:—many offered themselves, and were (to use the words of the Presbytery) "licensed as regular exhorters," and "authorized to make public appointments in any congregation or settlement within the bounds of the Presbytery." Messrs. Crawford and Dooly were "licensed to exhort in the bounds of the Presbytery, or wherever God in his providence may call them." The churches under the care of the Presbytery were ordered "to contribute to the exhorters" for their pecuniary support. "Each licentiate to exhort" was ordered "to exercise himself in composition on any subject he might choose, and show as many pieces of such composition to the nearest minister as he could with convenience." Some were received as candidates for the holy ministry on the delivery of a discourse as the first evidence or specimen of their abilities. Those who were licensed to preach, and those who were ordained, were required, at their licensure and ordination, to adopt the Confession of Faith, so far *only*, as they believed it to agree with the word of God; which, according to Presbyterian law and usage, was *irregular* and *unconstitutional*. This opened a door to any one who might choose to enter, no matter what his creed might be. This covering, of such loose and wide dimensions, suited very well such men as James Hawe and Reuben Dooly, and others, who could turn round and round in it, without interrupting its shape, or disturbing their own conscience.

In this way matters went on, until the number of these men, including exhorters, licentiates, and a few who were thus *unconstitutionally* ordained, amounted to nearly *thirty*. Some were now entitled to a seat in Synod, and began to appear there. A number "of young societies," as they state, had been organized, and the most of them represented by their elders, who, from their numbers, were about to create an overwhelming majority in the Synod. They also established what they called "Circuits," which were principally supplied by the licentiates. The meetings of the Presbytery were very frequent for licensures and ordinations;—and had not their progress been impeded in some way or other, there is little doubt but *that* Presbytery, by its rapid movements, in a very short time, would have gained such an ascendency in the Synod, as to have completely swayed that body in any measure which they might wish to carry. This will not be considered either an unjustifiable or extravagant calculation by any one acquainted with their rapid march afterwards, or their present standing, as it respects the number of their ministers and elders. But in *that* Presbytery there were a few, who, in whatever else they may have been considered blameable, were evidently justifiable in their bold and continued opposition to those measures which they viewed as unwarrantable and dangerous encroachments, calculated to overthrow the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church altogether.

At the next meeting of the Synod, (in September, 1803, at Lexington,) there was not a member from the Cumberland Presbytery present; nor were their records sent up for review. It was not, therefore, until October, 1804, that this business was taken up by the Synod, which they then found impracticable to investigate; and consequently did nothing more than order citations to be given to all parties to appear at the next stated meeting. The minority and the majority of the Cumberland Presbytery, as they were afterwards called by way of discrimination, appeared to be, and actually were,

considered two parties before the Synod,—as accusers and accused. The Synod met in October, 1805, at Danville. Only two members from Cumberland Presbytery were voted as present, who brought with them their Presbyterial Records,—which were reviewed and found very defective,—the history obscure and discordant,—and the mode of transacting business frequently violating the rules of our discipline. The remonstrance of the minority, setting forth their grievances, and their dissent, had been before the Synod at their last meeting. Synodical interference was now loudly called for, and imperiously required. The time had arrived when duty and prevailing irregularities called on the Synod to do something speedily. But they found not the parties yet fairly before them. They had not the evidence of the disqualification of the young men, so loudly complained of, sufficiently clear, to act upon:—nor was there any *official* record, that they had been licensed and ordained in the *irregular* and *unconstitutional* manner charged against the majority, they having omitted to record that fact, i. e. the partial and reserved adoption of the Confession of Faith, in their proceedings. The Synod was in a state of great perplexity and anxiety. They were at a loss to know what was the most eligible course to adopt. The evil had greatly extended, and was still progressing. The remedy had already been too long delayed. To lay the matter over another year, was impolitic and dangerous. To adjourn their annual meeting to the lower country was objectionable in two points of view;—first, that the time would be too long, as Synodical interference was immediately required;—the second, was the great liability to failure in obtaining a constitutional quorum;—the upper Presbytery being mostly in the state of Ohio, and the lower considered as standing at the bar of the Synod;—and it may be added further,—the Constitution of our Church, at that time, not affording the facility of obtaining a quorum that it did some time after, in consequence of its amendment in that respect. The object before the Synod was to suppress the

growing irregularities in the west, and yet save one of her Presbyteries from disruption and final ruin. In this state of anxiety, after ample discussion and mature deliberation, the plan of a Commission of Synod was suggested and adopted. The appointment of this Commission has been, through ignorance, or some other cause, frequently reprobated as tyrannical, and unprecedented in the annals of Presbyterianism; and the minds of many have been thus improperly prejudiced against both it and the Synod. The General Assembly having reviewed and approved of the measure, the false and ungenerous insinuation should have ceased. The following extract from *Stewart's Collections* of the acts of the Church of Scotland, ought to put the subject to rest:—"What matters General Assemblies cannot undertake themselves, they do refer to their Commissions; in propriety of speech they do import the same thing with committees; yet, *de praxi*, a committee is appointed only to prepare matters, whereas a commission determines in matters committed to them, and from whose sentence therein lieth no appeal to the ensuing General Assembly, though a complaint may be tabled before the next General Assembly against the Commission on account of their proceedings." *Stewart's Collections*, Book I. Title 15. See also *Buck's Dictionary*, Art. *Seceders*.

Here let it be remarked, that not merely a Commission was appointed to determine a certain case in peculiar circumstances, but standing Commissions appointed to determine all unfinished business. The propriety of this we shall not defend, but the fact shows the ignorance, or something worse, of those who have assumed the name of Presbyterians, and declare that this Synod acted without a precedent in appointing the foresaid Commission. To say that it was an Assembly, and not a Synod, that afforded the precedent in appointing these Commissions, and therefore not a rule for us, will avail nothing; for the Assembly being the highest court, and including Synod, must be the proper court for affording precedents to the subordinate judicatories.

But now a difficulty yet remained respecting the *practicability* of the measure;—can there be found members enough who will pledge themselves to attend, so that a disappointment may not be sustained? Such a pledge was immediately obtained:—the way appeared fairly to be open:—the Commission was made up, and here follows its appointment:—

"On motion, Resolved, that the business of the Cumberland Presbytery be again taken up. After considerable deliberation, it was resolved, that the Rev. John Lyle, John P. Campbell, Archibald Cameron, Joseph P. Howe, Samuel Rannalls, Robert Stuart, Joshua L. Wilson, Robert Wilson, Thomas Cleland, and Isaac Tull, together with Messrs. William M'Dowell, Robert Brank, James Allen, James Henderson, Richard Gaines, and Andrew Wallace, ruling elders, or any seven ministers of them, with as many elders as may be present, be a Commission, vested with full Synodical powers, to confer with the members of Cumberland Presbytery, and adjudicate on their Presbyterial proceedings which appear upon the minutes of said Presbytery, for the purpose aforesaid, and taken notice of by the Committee appointed by Synod to examine said minutes—that the said Commission meet on the first Tuesday in December next, at Gasper meeting-house, Logan County, in the bounds of said Presbytery, for the purpose aforesaid. That notice be given to the members of said Presbytery, by the stated Clerk of Synod, to attend on the day and at the place aforesaid,—so that a full, fair, and friendly investigation may take place. That the said Commission take into consideration, and decide upon a letter from the Rev. T. B. Craighead and others," &c.

This Commission met the 3d of December, 1805, about six weeks after its appointment; at the time and place appointed. The members were all present except Messrs. Campbell, Henderson, and R. Wilson. Prior to the meeting, the most ungenerous and unsavourable representations respecting the motives and designs of the Synod were extensively spread in the region round about where the Commission

was to meet:—consequently, the most unfavourable impressions were made on the minds of the people there. Prejudice, in her most scowling aspect, had fled like lightning before the Commission, and taken her seat in the bosoms of all classes. The Commission was stigmatized with the unhallowed name of an “Inquisition,” sent down by the Synod to destroy the revival of religion, and to cut off all the young preachers, because they had not learned Latin and Greek. Mr. Rankin, the minister of the place, who afterwards became a Shaker, delivered an inflammatory address to his people, on the evening preceding the communion, and in the presence of the Commission, accompanied with threats, or language indicative of personal violence and opposition. The most of the members of the Commission were *nick-named*, and given some appellation intended either to affix a stigma, or confer an encomium, as the fruitful and ingenuous inventors thought the individuals were favourable or unfavourable to their cause. Under such very unpleasant and forbidding circumstances, did the Commission meet and transact their business.

The second day of their sessions they “took under consideration the case of Mr. James Hawe, as stated in the report of the committee” (of the Synod) “and were unanimously of opinion that the Presbytery had acted illegally in receiving him, as a regular minister of the Methodist Republican Church, without examining him upon divinity, or requiring him to adopt the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church.” (Min. Com. p. 4.) They next invited, and entered into a friendly conference with the Presbytery, and thereby, together with their records, received all the evidence necessary to the establishment of the “charge of licensing and ordaining men to preach the gospel contrary to the rules and discipline of the Presbyterian Church.” Being fully satisfied on this point, “the Commission then requested, in a friendly manner, the majority of the Cumberland Presbytery to give the reasons, why, in licensing and ordaining persons

to preach the gospel, they required them to adopt the Confession of Faith so far only, as they in reason think it corresponds w^t the scriptures?" The answer was, "that the Confession of Faith was human composition and fallible, and that they could not in conscience feel themselves bound any further than they believe it corresponds with Scripture." Whereupon the Commission adopted the following preamble and resolution:—"Whereas it appears to the Commission of Synod, from the Records of Cumberland Presbytery, from the dissent of the minority of said Presbytery, and from the open confession of those who were at the time of the dissent a majority, that they did license a considerable number of men to preach the gospel, and administer ordinances in the church, contrary to the rules and regulations of the Presbyterian Church in such cases made and provided;—and whereas, those men have been required by said Presbytery to adopt the said Confession of Faith and Discipline of said Church no farther than they believe it to be agreeable to the word of God, by which no man can know what they believe in matters of doctrine;—and whereas, it is alleged, by said Presbytery, that those men possess extraordinary talents, by which they have been induced to license and ordain them, without attending to the method prescribed by the Book of Discipline;—therefore, on motion, Resolved, that the Commission of Synod now proceed to examine those irregularly licensed, and those irregularly ordained by Cumberland Presbytery, and judge of their qualifications for the gospel ministry."

To this resolution the majority of the Presbytery, who had been active in bringing these young men into the ministry, objected, and refused to surrender them to an examination, alleging, that "they had the exclusive privilege of examining and licensing their own candidates, and that Synod had no right to take the business out of their hands." The young men also, when called upon, refused, individually, to submit to the examination required, consequence of all which conduct, the following resolution was adopted by the Commis-

sion, viz: "Resolved, that, as the above named persons never had regular authority from the Presbytery of Cumberland to preach the gospel, &c. the Commission of Synod prohibit, and they do hereby solemnly prohibit the said persons from exhorting, preaching, and administering ordinances in consequence of any authority which they have obtained from the Cumberland Presbytery." No further steps were taken by the Commission relative to the majority of the Presbytery who refused submission to their authority, but to cite them to appear before the next Synod, to answer for their conduct, and likewise to answer to a charge of common fame, for "propagating doctrines contrary to those contained in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church."

It was by "the record of these proceedings" passing the review of the General Assembly, that they came to the knowledge of them; or, to use their own language, that "the marked attention of the Assembly was attracted." They pronounced them "at least of questionable regularity," and advised the Synod, in a friendly letter written at their annual sessions in 1807, "seriously to review those proceedings." With this advice the Synod, without hesitation, complied, at their annual meeting in the fall of the same year, and the result was, a firm adherence to their former proceedings. This was communicated, as the Synod expected, to the next Assembly, by an address containing their explanations, and defence of their former conduct; which, however, through some mismanagement, or neglect, did not reach the Assembly that year. As the Assembly mention this letter, at a subsequent meeting, as a document explaining and defending the proceedings of Synod "in a respectful and able manner," it is deemed advisable here to insert that part of it which relates to the subject in hand:—it is as follows:

"The Synod assure the General Assembly that they have carefully reviewed their proceedings which were by you deemed of questionable regularity, and beg leave to lay be-

fore you the result of their proceedings, with a summary of the reasons on which they founded their decisions.

"The attention of the Synod was first directed to the following question, arising from the Assembly's letter:—Were the proceedings of the Synod, in requiring the young men irregularly licensed and ordained, to be given up, regular? The Synod determined, by a large majority, that they were regular. In support of this decision, the Synod offer the following reasons:—We find that a very extensive power is conceded to Synod, by our Book of Discipline, in these words:—'The Synod have power to redress whatever hath been done by Presbyteries contrary to order.' The Synod do not suppose they have the power of licensing and ordaining candidates. This they think is the duty and prerogative of Presbyteries. But the Synod do conceive that, when a Prestery has introduced insufficient men into the ministry, and there is evidence to believe that the majority of the Prestery are so disposed as to leave no rational probability that the evil will be redressed by them, it becomes the duty of Synod to inquire into the qualifications of the persons in question, and confirm or disannul their licensure. And inasmuch as the Book of Discipline has prescribed no form in which Synod should proceed in redressing disorders of this kind, we thought ourselves at liberty to exercise a sound discretion, and choose that mode which appeared best to us, provided we did nothing contrary to our directory, or the decisions of the General Assembly. The Synod further observe, that they were called upon, by a letter containing complaints, and a petition, in October, 1804, to issue a matter in dispute between the majority and minority of the Cumberland Prestery. The minority, namely, five members, complained, that incompetent men, and men unsound in the faith, were introduced into the gospel ministry. The majority, being six members, asserted, that those men possessed extraordinary talents, and were competent to the work of the ministry. The only alternative, therefore, was, either to disregard the dissent and com-

plaint of the minority, or examine the men whose qualifications were in question; for the Synod conceived that the manifestation of their qualifications was the only evidence on which the controversy could be decided. Further, Synod thought, that among so many young men, there might be found at least a few who would shortly be qualified for the office of the gospel ministry, could they be induced to use the proper means. The Synod are of opinion, that they did not suspend the young men irregularly licensed and ordained, as intimated in the Assembly's letter. They think no person can be suspended from the exercise of the ministry, who has never been *regularly introduced* into that sacred office. The Synod think, that the persons in question never had any *regular standing* as ministers:—therefore, did simply prohibit them from exhorting, preaching, or administering ordinances, in consequence of any authority derived from the Cumberland Presbytery, as appears from the record. (p. 93.)

“Another point which the Assembly's letter brought under the review of the Synod, was, the conduct of the Commission in forbidding the young men irregularly licensed and ordained to preach, &c. and without process had in their case. In justification of their conduct in this particular, Synod take the liberty to remind you that the irregularity of the licensure of these men had been a subject of dispute between the majority and the minority of Cumberland Presbytery for more than two years. The Presbytery had been cited to appear before Synod to render an account of their licensures. They did not appear. The Commission was then appointed,—the records of Presbytery were produced,—the open confession of the majority was made that the sacred office had been conferred without regard to the requirements of our discipline, and the young men refused to give any evidence of their qualifications for the ministry. Synod, therefore, supposed it a sacred duty, which they owed to the Church of Jesus Christ, to declare, solemnly, that these young men were introduced to the important work of preaching the gospel contrary to our

constitution, and in a manner which imperiously demanded their prohibition from every part of the ministry with us. Therefore, all the processes were had which the nature of the case admitted."

This matter was again taken up by the Assembly in 1809, accompanied by the foregoing address, with the further explanations and support of three Commissioners from the Synod. The issue was highly honourable to the Synod, as will appear from the following decision of the Assembly on that occasion:

"The Assembly took into consideration a letter from the Synod of Kentucky; and having carefully reviewed the same, and having also read another letter from their records, which by accident was detained from the last Assembly, were of opinion, that the Synod have, in these letters, exercised their unquestionable right of explaining their proceedings, which they have done in a respectful and able manner, and to the full satisfaction of this Assembly: and the Assembly think it due to the Synod, to say, that they deserve the thanks of the Church for the firmness and zeal, with which they have acted, in the trying circumstances in which they have been placed." (*Assembly's Digest.* p. 140.) This decision was highly favourable to the interests of our Church. It strengthened the hands of the Synod, whose censure and condemnation had been eagerly desired, and zealously sought after, by the friends and abettors of the Cumberland Presbytery, without any proper acknowledgment, on their part, of their irregularities and ecclesiastical aberrations, or even appearing before the Assembly in an attitude to enable that Judicature to form a legal decision. This will appear from the following extract of a letter, addressed by the Assembly, to Mr. M'Adow and others, in 1807:—"Brethren, the Assembly have received your address, in which you inform them, that the Synod of Kentucky have suspended you from the ministerial office, and in which you request this Assembly to interpose in your case without delay. The Assembly are grieved at

finding that any unhappy differences exist in that part of the Church of Christ in which you reside. The conduct of the Presbytery of Cumberland, in licensing and ordaining a number of persons not possessing the qualifications required by our Book of Discipline, and *without explicit adoption of the Confession of Faith*, appears to have been the origin of the evils of which you now complain. The Assembly are constrained to express their decided disapprobation of this conduct, as being *highly irregular and unconstitutional*; leading to the most dangerous consequences. But inasmuch as you have not *regularly appealed to this Assembly*, they do not consider themselves as called judicially to decide in your case. The Assembly have advised the Synod of Kentucky to review their proceedings with regard to you, and to their decision we refer you."

The Synod did review their proceedings, as we have seen, and the result was, a firm adherence to their former proceedings, which ultimately gained the approbation of the Assembly, as has also been shown. The complaining party never appeared before the Assembly in the attitude of appellants, and consequently they could pass no judicial decision in their case. It soon became more and more evident, that the regular course was not the one by which they desired to obtain redress, otherwise they might have adopted it, seeing it was perfectly open and plain. Time and circumstances have long ago fully established the correctness of the course pursued by the higher judicatories in arresting the "*highly irregular and unconstitutional*" conduct of the Cumberland Presbytery. Even their distant advocates at length became silent, and gave up all hopes of ever reclaiming them to the sound and correct faith and discipline of the Presbyterian Church.

Such was the disjointed and enfeebled state of things in the Cumberland Presbytery, that the Synod found it necessary to dissolve it; which they did accordingly, at their meeting in October, 1806, and annexed the regular members of

which it was composed to the Presbytery of Transylvania. And at their next meeting, in 1807, all the unfinished business, arising out of the late Cumberland Presbytery, embracing the case of those under suspension by the Synod, and those under citation, was transferred to the aforesaid Presbytery of Transylvania; who, at their semi-annual meeting, in October following, adopted what they conceived to be the most pacific, friendly, and eligible course that possibly could be devised in matters of such magnitude, involved too, as they were, in mazes of great perplexity and difficulty. They therefore addressed the following letter to Messrs. Hodge, Rankin, McGready, McGee, and M'Adow;—the two first were under suspension by the Synod, and the rest under citation.

“Dear Brethren,

“We are anxious to see you, and have a friendly interview with you respecting the difficulties which exist in your case. The Synod of Kentucky have directed us to endeavour to settle the business which lay before them respecting you. We hope you will meet with us at Glasgow, in Barren County, on Wednesday the 22d day of March next, and bring with you as many of those men who were declared by the Commission to be destitute of authority to preach the gospel, as you may think proper, that they may be sharers in the friendly interview. May the Lord direct us, and heal every disorder. Farewell.”

At the time and place appointed the Presbytery met, and Mr. Hodge appeared alone on that occasion. With him the Presbytery had a friendly interview, and to use their own language, “after seven hours spent in conference with Mr. Hodge, in a friendly and familiar way, without coming to any certain determination relative to his case,”—“and he wishing further time to deliberate on this matter, Presbytery, in conformity to a particular and final request of Mr. Hodge,—that they should write him and his brethren in connection a letter, stating the terms on which a reconciliation could be effected,” agreed to address the following:

"Dear Sir,

"Agreeably to your request, Presbytery have thought proper to address you by letter, and through you, all those likewise who are interested with you. We again renew our declaration of an earnest solicitude and unfeigned anxiety, that the unhappy breach which has taken place between us may be healed, and the present existing differences removed. And as you have requested a direct and formal statement from us of the terms on which that desirable and important object may be effected;—we, with the same friendly spirit that was manifested in our late conference, and we hope with that honesty and integrity of heart which ought to actuate the servants of our Divine Lord and Master, do proceed to state those terms and requisitions, which, to descend to the lowest stage of accommodation, we think are necessary. And in the first place, as to yourself, we think the ground of your suspension by the Synod, just, and consequently the reasons for that procedure right and proper. With this impression, we conceive that your restoration can only be effected by a proper acknowledgment of the faith, and submission to the authority of our Church, as contained in our Book of Discipline, to which you are referred. The same will be required of those brethren who are yet under citation for not submitting to the authority of Synod as exercised by their Commission. Any thing less than this, would subject us to the censure of that body, a part of which we compose, and of whose adjudications, in the case of the late Cumberland Presbytery, we approve.

"In the next place, with regard to the young men licensed and ordained by the aforesaid Presbytery, we do humbly conceive, that a formal examination of them, respecting doctrine and discipline, is indispensable, as the only way, under present circumstances, for us to be satisfied, as a Presbytery, respecting their sentiments, and consequently, whether we are agreed in points of doctrine, without which a union would be inconsistent, and afford no security for further peace and har-

mony in the Church. From hence it may be readily inferred that an unequivocal adoption of our Confession of Faith is also indispensable. This would only be placing them upon the same ground upon which we ourselves stand, and any other could not be advisable or desirable to either those young men, or ourselves. For them to adopt the Confession only *in part*, and we in the *whole*, would by no means, in our opinion, effect a union according to truth and reality,—and we conceive a mere nominal union would not prove a sufficient security against future difficulties. And whatever inference may be drawn by others respecting what is called fatality, from our views as expressed in the Confession respecting the Divine sovereignty in the decree of predestination and election, we conceive, that no such conclusion can follow from the premises as there laid down. After our desires, that the great head of the Church may interpose and direct you and us, to that which is right and proper, with every sentiment of conciliation and esteem, you have our best wishes for your welfare here, and happiness in a change of existence."

This measure produced the desired effect in part; for on the 6th day of December following the Presbytery met at Greensburg, for the special purpose of restoring Mr. Hodge and others, as will appear from the following minute on their records:—"Mr. Hodge appeared before Presbytery, and informed them, that he came forward as an individual, and made such statements, acknowledgments, professions of sorrow for past irregularities, together with a determination to submit to the authority and discipline of our Church,—and that he fully and unequivocally adopted and adhered to the Confession," &c. that he was without hesitation restored to his former standing in the ministry. There were also present two of the persons irregularly licensed and ordained by the late Cumberland Presbytery. The mild, indulgent, and pacific conduct of Presbytery towards these men, will be amply manifested from the record of their proceedings, as follows:

"Messrs. Thomas Nelson and Samuel Hodge, two of the

young men formerly licensed and ordained by the late Cumberland Presbytery, and prohibited by the Commission of Synod, came forward and expressed their desire to submit themselves to the wisdom and discretion of this Presbytery:— Whereupon, Presbytery proceeded to consider their case, and lengthily and particularly examined them so far as was thought expedient; and on account of the difference of their situation from that of ordinary candidates, Presbytery thought it unnecessary to record the parts of trial in detail, and being satisfied with Messrs Nelson and Hodge, in respect of their doctrinal qualifications for the gospel ministry, their aptness to teach, and after their adopting the Confession of Faith and Discipline of our Church, and promising, in a solemn manner, conformity to the rules and regulations of the Church, and submision to their brethren in the Lord,—their former licensure and ordination were recognized and confirmed unanimously, and they were authorized to exercise all the functions of the gospel ministry agreeably to the rules of our Church. They were consequently recognized as members of this Presbytery, and invited to take their seats, which they did accordingly."

After this, it is truly astonishing, that any accusation or complaint should ever lie against the Presbytery and the Synod, that all efforts for reconciliation, &c. were fruitless and unavailing. Surely candour cannot bring such a railing accusation, and credulity itself will not believe it. The return of Messrs. Hodge and M'Gready to the order and discipline of our Church;—their unreserved submission to and cordial acknowledgement of its authority and doctrines, and the final apostasy of Mr. Rankin to the abominations of Shakerism, deprived the complaining party of the three principal leaders and promoters of the irregularities that caused the interference of Synod. None of the old members now remained, of that party, except Messrs. William M'Gee and Samuel M'Adow, who were both under citation for their non-submission to the authority of Synod, for which Messrs. Hodge and

Rankin had been suspended by the Synod. The suspension of Mr. M'Adow, by the Transylvania Presbytery, took place on the 5th of April, 1810, and that of Mr. M'Gee shortly afterwards, by the Presbytery of Muhlenburgh. Prior to these events, the complainants had excited the sympathy, and enlisted the support of distant individuals, as their friends. Their cries were very loud and reiterated against the Synod of Kentucky, which had been, in their estimation, very disorderly in violating the constitution and discipline of the Church. They used every ungenerous effort, and adopted every irregular method, to obtain the censure and condemnation of the Synod, without one single acknowledgment of error and irregularity on their part. The Assembly could only reach the Synod and bring them before her through the record of their proceedings; but the complaining party, as we have seen, never did, and appeared cautiously to avoid appearing before the Assembly by way of appeal, or in any other way whereby a judicial decision could be obtained. They formed, and for some time continued in what they denominated, a "Council," until on the 4th day of February, 1810, they were constituted into Presbyterial form by Samuel M'Adow, Finis Ewing, and Samuel King, who, in Buck's Dictionary, have styled themselves, "regularly ordained ministers of the Presbyterian Church," notwithstanding the General Assembly, in their letter to M'Adow and others, in 1807, almost three years before, declared that very act of the Presbytery in licensing and ordaining Ewing, King, and others, *without explicit adoption of the Confession of Faith*, as being *highly irregular and unconstitutional*. (See *Assembly's Digest*. p. 139.) These two last named persons were, in consequence of their irregular induction into the ministry, laid under a prohibition by the Commission of Synod, which they without foundation call an "unconstitutional act," alleging, that "they only prohibited from the exercise of an authority derived from Cumberland Presbytery, whereas, they maintain, that "it was the Transylvania Presbytery that licensed this Mr. Ewing and

King to preach the gospel," and that, "therefore, their license at least remains untouched by any church judicature."^{*} This, to say the least of it, is a mere quibble, and exhibits at once the weakness and fallacy of the plea for regular ordination. We have already seen how these men were licensed by a "large majority" of Transylvania Presbytery, a few days only before its division, and while entirely under the controul of that section who were, in consequence of that division, called Cumberland Presbytery. *Nominally*, therefore, it was Transylvania Presbytery who licensed Ewing and King; but *virtually*, it was the Presbytery of Cumberland, being the very same members who, after the division, were called by that name; and *officially*, it was that Presbytery who afterwards *ordained* them; and both as to licensure and ordination it was the *illegal act*, (no matter by what name the Presbytery was called,) that really was condemned by the Synod, whose conduct was approved by the General Assembly. So that every candid man, in any measure acquainted with our ecclesiastical authority and discipline, must judge, with what propriety these two men could be styled "regularly ordained ministers of the Presbyterian Church," especially when that Church, by her highest judicature, has disavowed the recognition of those Presbyterial acts, whether done by Transylvania or Cumberland Presbytery; and declared them to be *highly irregular and unconstitutional*. A mere omission or inadvertence in the name of the Presbytery, surely cannot be plead by honest men, as validating an *illegal act*, which the higher judicatories all along meant to condemn. These observations will be further confirmed by bringing to view here the real ground on which these people, as a religious community, are viewed by the General Assembly, expressed in the Extracts from their minutes of 1814, and the Digest. p. 157. "The Committee to which was referred the consideration of the manner in which certain persons should be treated, who for-

^{*}Reply to a Pastoral Letter of West Tennessee Presbytery, p. 23.

merly belonged to the Cumberland Presbytery, and who, since the dissolution of said Presbytery, continue to style themselves the Cumberland Presbytery, reported; and their report being read, was adopted, and is as follows, viz:

"That those persons were under the censure of the church at the time of their constituting as a Presbytery,—that they had neglected to take the regular steps for the removal of that censure,—that they erected themselves into a judicatory contrary to the rules of our discipline,—that the grounds of the separation from us were, that we would not relax our discipline, and surrender some important doctrines of our Confession of Faith:—Wherefore, Resolved, that the aforesaid persons be viewed as having derived no authority from us to exercise discipline, or administer the ordinances of the Church, and that our regular members cannot treat with them as a body, but only as individuals."*

This is the final conclusion of the Assembly, and the last sentiment they ever expressed on this subject. It is clear and explicit, and leaves the matter just where it should be, and where it is likely to rest. The legality and authority of the Commission of Synod, as a court of Christ, cannot be justly questioned. And if it should be, its proceedings have been sanctioned and confirmed, both by the Synod and General Assembly; and therefore, the conclusion is fair, that the origin of the present Cumberland Presbyterians, as an ecclesi-

*It is the opinion of some that there is good and legitimate ordination among those of the self-made Cumberland Presbytery, or, as now styled, Synod. Without saying any thing more on this point than we have said, we would state that according to their own documents and acknowledgements, they cannot be recognized as any branch or section of the *Presbyterian* Church, because they have set aside some of the important doctrines and regulations which belong to legitimate ordination in said Church. If they have legitimately ordained ministers among them, they have them not according to Presbyterian rules, and therefore we are certainly correct in disowning them.

astical body of the Presbyterian order, is spurious and illegitimate, inasmuch as two of the ministers who organized and constituted their *first* Presbytery, were not only *illegally* and *unconstitutionally* ordained at first, but likewise that ordination itself pronounced null and void by our highest judicature several years anterior to the event. Their line of ordination cannot, therefore, upon sound and correct ecclesiastical principles, be traced to a legitimate source.

It is moreover due to the cause of truth and candour, as well as to our church at large, and the public generally, to correct a statement, or solemnly disavow the truth of a statement, widely circulated in the account given of the Cumberland Presbyterians in "Buck's Theological Dictionary," (fifth edition, by W. W. Woodward, p. 419.) It is there stated, that the "Commission exhibited many charges, &c. all of which were chiefly comprised in the two following, viz:—
1st. Licensing men to preach the gospel who had not been examined on the languages. 2d. That those men who were licensed, both learned and less learned, had been only required to adopt the Confession of Faith partially, that is, as far as they believed it to agree with the word of God." This latter charge is true, but the former is not. And for the truth of this disavowal, we appeal to the testimony of those members of the Commission of Synod who are yet living. We appeal to the records of that Commission, where no such charge can be found specified or tabled against the Presbytery on that occasion. We appeal to the fact of the Transylvania Presbytery's having subsequently, under the connivance and approbation of the Synod, received two of those young men alluded to in the statement in question. And we appeal to the expressions of the Synod, in their explanation and defence to the General Assembly already given, which says: "Further, Synod thought that among so many young men there might be found at least a few, who would shortly be qualified for the office of the gospel ministry, could they be induced to use the proper means." It is therefore denied

that the charge under consideration is true. Admitting, however, the truth of the statement, the Synod entertain no fears that any disorder, disgrace, or odium, has ever been attached to their cause on that account. Nor are they willing to believe that any correct, judicious, and orderly Presbyterian, either of the clergy or laity, ever thought the less of the Commission, or even for a moment called in question their conduct in point of orthodoxy or discipline, by reading in Buck's Dictionary the charges before mentioned. And while the progress of Theological Seminaries and Education Societies maintain their course, and the increasing thirst and demand for an able and orthodox ministry continues in our Church, she has thereby afforded unto her an ample pledge, that the aforesaid charges will never diminish her credit nor tarnish her glory. And this is one principal reason why she has been so long tardy or indifferent respecting her disavowal of the correctness of the statement in question.

The article in Buck's Dictionary further says: "As to the first ground of complaint, the Presbytery not only pled the exception in the Discipline in 'extraordinary cases,' but also the example of a number of Presbyteries in different parts of the United States." This declaration is based upon a false construction of discipline, and consequently the reference to Presbyterial precedents is irrelevant. The "extraordinary cases," called "the exception in the Discipline," refer not to the literary qualifications of the candidate, but *to the term of time allotted for his theological studies*. The words are: "That the most effectual measures be taken to guard against the admission of insufficient men into the sacred office, it is recommended, that no candidate, (except in extraordinary cases,) be licensed, unless *after* his having completed the usual course of academical studies, he shall have studied divinity *at least two years*. (Form of Gov. Chap. xiii. Sec. 4.) The plain construction is this; that *after* academical studies, no man should be licensed, without having studied divinity *at least two years*, except in *extraordinary cases*. This is also the idea conveyed

in the margin of former editions of the Discipline opposite the article under consideration. Some men of literary qualifications, of sound faith, of public habits, and of advanced age, might in such extraordinary cases, be licensed probably in six months after becoming candidates. But the conduct of the Cumberland Presbytery, as it respected extraordinary cases, was certainly unprecedented. They had nearly *thirty* such cases, according to their construction of that article of the Discipline, and the most extraordinary case of all, and which exhibited a perfect anomaly in Presbyterianism, was that of James Hawe, "the regular member of the Methodist Republican Church." And if we predicate their practice upon the same rule of construction, their cases have all been extraordinary to this day, i. e. their licentiates, without literary qualifications, are, generally, if not all, men of extraordinary talents. Such a rule is so vague and uncertain, that it may be applied equally to one society, as another, even where no pretensions to literary qualifications are set up.. These observations are not designed either to impugn or call in question the motives and conduct of those Presbyteries who have occasionally introduced men, destitute, in part at least, of literary qualifications, into the ministry. Such cases, however, rarely happen; and no Presbytery in the United States has ever afforded such a precedent as is pleaded for by the author of the article in Buck's Dictionary. It is therefore to be regretted, in so far as candour and truth are concerned, that such an article, bearing upon its front the indubitable marks of insincerity and untruth, should ever have been admitted by an American Publisher into an original work, without the privity or sanction of the author; and thereby afford an almost unlimited currency to a statement so exceptionable, and at least, as it respects some parts of it, so unsounded in truth. Such a conduct was ungenerous towards the author of that highly and deservedly popular work; and also clearly unauthorized by modesty, as well as the dictates of prudence and sound policy. Equally so is the conduct of the Cumber-

land Synod, as they are termed, in which, to use their own words, they "have ventured to model, to expunge, and to add to, the Confession of the General Presbyterian Church." In doing which, they have not only mutilated our Confession, and altered our Shorter Catechism, which thereby has shared the same fate, and consequently greatly marred its beautiful symmetry, its just proportion, and harmony of its parts; but also, by such conduct, have manifested a lack of independence, of modesty, and of generosity; and have moreover displayed a hardihood and temerity, in garbling and mangling those works, that no people ever thought of, or attempted before. With such a book, modelled, expunged, and added according to their own taste and fancy, and adopted as a symbol of their faith, with the imposing and beguiling name of *Presbyterian*, it is not to be wondered at that a number of our connection, emigrating to those parts within the range of these people, should readily be imposed upon, and beguiled into their communion as a matter either of convenience or indifference, because of the supposed affinity and similarity held up to view between the orthodoxy and discipline of the two connections. It is deemed our duty, therefore, to make known to all who have a predilection for, and wish to retain their standing in the Presbyterian Church, that it is their duty to adhere to our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, in their original and unbroken form, as all along delivered to them; and likewise to our late improved, and highly approved Form of Government and Discipline, "as amended and ratified by the General Assembly in May, 1821." In doing this they will avoid the charge of inconsistency; they will not jeopardize their own standing in their Church, but will continue to promote its interests; will add strength to themselves towards obtaining a stated ministry according to their desire, and will avoid the imputation of being connected with a people whose origin and standing is at least of questionable regularity.

