

Origin and progress of the Christian Connexion.
The body of people called Christians or Christian
Connexion, sometimes erroneously pronounced
Christians by their opposers, had their origin
about the commencement of the present century.
Unlike most other religious bodies, they do not
owe their existence to any one particular individ-
ual, whom they look up to as a leader or founder.
The organization was the result of a growing dissat-
isfaction, in several parts of the United States,
with the sectarian spirit which pervaded most
of the sects, and with the illiberal principles by
which they were governed. In three different
parts of the United States, - New England, Kentu-
cky, and North Carolina, a number of individuals
about the same time, came out from their respec-
tive denominations, and assumed the position
in nearly all its features now occupied by the
Christian Connexion generally. These three
different divisions labored for a considerable length
of time without any knowledge of each other, or
without knowing that there were any others, whose
views harmonized with their own. As soon
as they became acquainted with each other and
found so great a correspondence in their sym-
pathies and views, they were considered as one body.
The secession in Kentucky was from the
Presbyterians, in New England from the Baptists
and in North Carolina from the Methodists.

Among those who ~~seceded~~ seceded from the Presbyterians in Kentucky, the principal were Robert Marshall, John Dunlap, Richard Mcnemar, Barton, W. Stone and John Thomson, all ministers in regular standing in their various presbyteries and pastors of flourishing societies. The causes which led to the separation were as follows. In the year 1800, a powerful revival of the work of God, was enjoyed in several parts of Kentucky and Tennessee. It was confined principally to the Presbyterians, but many other sects joined also in the work. Party spirit was laid aside and a full and free salvation was proclaimed. Hundreds under the influence of this preaching were led to forsake their sins and seek salvation. While this work was going on, the doctrines of Calvinism and the confession of faith were entirely neglected. To promote holiness of heart was the great aim of all their sermons, and it was proclaimed without any qualifications, that every sinner who would seek God could obtain the pardon of his sins. Soon, however, many of the more strict presbyterians became jealous because the doctrines of the confession were neglected in the daily ministrations, and they sounded the alarm. Mr Mcnemar and others were accused before the Presbytery of Arminianism and were suspended from their several charges.

The matter was carried into the synod and Messrs
McNemar, Dunlavy, Thomson, Marshall, and Stone,
finding that they would not be allowed to appeal
to the scriptures to sustain themselves against the
charges of preaching erroneous doctrine, but that
they would be tried by the confession of faith alone,
resolved to enter their protest against the action of
the Synod and withdraw from its jurisdiction, as
they could not reconcile their consciences to teach
that a part of mankind were foreordained to eter-
nal destruction and a part to eternal life, while
the bible taught that all could obtain salvation
who would accept it on the terms proposed by the
Gospel. After their withdrawal, they did not at
first give up the Presbyterian form of church
government, but they organized themselves into a
Presbytery, which they called Springfield Presbytery.
This Presbytery was entirely independant of any synod
or general assembly, and all its members without
subscribing to any creed were permitted to teach
those principles, which, by a candid investigation
of the scriptures, they were convinced were true.
In 1804, they resolved to dissolve this presbytery,
to allow each church to be entirely independant,
and to call themselves simply Christians. Several
reasons lead them to this conclusion. They had
from the time of their separation from the old
church, ardently opposed all human creeds as
tending to divide the people of God and as
calculated to fetter the mind and bind

the conscience of many ~~few~~ honest and sincere inquirers after truth. And now they became convinced that party names also had a powerful influence in causing these divisions, and that to be consistent with their principles, they must also abandon these. They also thought that propriety demanded that they should confine themselves as much as possible to scriptural phraseology, and to the simplicity that characterized the early followers of the Savior, and when they considered that the name Christian was given by divine appointment to the disciples of Christ, they felt that the church had no liberty to adopt any other title. All other names also seemed to them too narrow, and limited to designate the true idea of a church of Christ. Such names as Presbyterian, Congregationalist, ^{and} Episcopalian, only indicated the form of government, by which the society was regulated, which was but a small part of the object, for which a church of Christ was organized. ~~Names also which indicated any particular doctrine of a religious ^{society} appeared to them too narrow and necessarily exclusive.~~ They wanted something large enough to express the grand object for which a religious society was established. Names also which indicated any particular doctrine of a religious society appeared to them too narrow and necessarily exclusive. The name Baptist, when applied as the title of a church indicated that the members were believers in immersion, and hence a person who was not

a believer in immersion could not connect himself with such a church, though he were ever so good a Christian, since he would be saying to the world that he was an immersionist, when he was not. The name Unitarian also when applied as the title of a church indicated that the society were antitrinitarians, and hence a trinitarian could not consistently join such a church as he would be saying to the world that he was a Unitarian, while he was a Trinitarian. In accordance, therefore, with the principles upon which they had begun, that there should be no test of fellowship, but vital piety and Christian character, and that differences of opinion in regard to the various rites of religion and dogmas of Theology, should not divide the people of God into sects and parties, they concluded to assume no other name than simply the name Christian. This denoted that they were followers of Christ, and were endeavoring to obey his precepts and follow his example, and they thought it to be of a great deal more importance that this should be designated in the name, than any of those doctrines which could in no way affect man's salvation.

Under the influence of these liberal principles, they commenced a thorough examination of every point in Theology, and soon they were led to believe that the common doctrine of the atonement ~~was~~ entirely inconsistent, which represented Christ as suffering to appease the wrath of God, was entirely inconsistent with the character of the Deity,

and the result of their investigations was a renunciation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and a belief in the Unity of God and the proper Sonship of Jesus Christ. The subject of baptism also claimed their consideration, and by an examination of the instances in the scriptures where this rite was performed, and by an investigation of the original meaning of the word Baptize, they were led to the conviction that Immersion was the only Christian Baptism, and they accordingly submitted to the ordinance in this way. As their principles were that the weak in the faith ~~were~~ should be received, and that persons should not be rejected, because they had not arrived at the full stature of men in Christ Jesus, they accordingly were not disposed to cut off those of their brethren who could not see that immersion was the only Christian baptism. They did not regard baptism as an ordinance required to initiate a person into the church, and all who were unbaptized as out of the church of Christ, but they regarded it as an institution in the church as the Lord's Supper; hence they could look upon the Maker, or the person who submitted to aspersion, as members of the true church of Christ, although they thought both were unbaptized. They pursued a different course from those who administer the ordinance in whatever way, the candidate wishes.

Believing the command when properly translated

to be "Teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" they felt that they could not be fulfilling the command by performing any action different from immersion. Those ministers and people among them, however, who saw differently were not hindered from acting according to their own conscientious beliefs.

But by a mutual interchange of thoughts, and an investigation of this subject in friendship and with a Christian spirit, nearly all were soon convinced that immersion was the only Christian Baptism.

This same liberality ~~among~~ of sentiment in refusing to make baptism a prerequisite to the communion and fellowship of the church, is still ardently cherished by this people. The attempt by Mr Alexander Campbell and others, to introduce into ~~the churches~~ some of their churches in the southern and other states, immersion as a test of fellowship, has been firmly resisted. And those churches which did embrace those sentiments have seceded from the connexion and assumed a different name. The Christians by their liberality in this respect have been enabled to draw many to ~~their~~ their own views upon the subject of baptism, who otherwise would have been driven away from them. An instance within my knowledge has occurred during the last year in Ohio, where a minister from another denomination which practiced sprinkling joined the connexion, and by his own private investigation of the subject was led shortly

after to change his views upon the subject and submit to immersion. And throughout the body generally there are few persons who come into the church, that are not soon immersed, although they may have received a profession previously.

These general views, which were ^{as I have described them} embraced by the western division, are those which now generally prevail throughout the connection both East and West. As soon as these principles were made known, they spread rapidly throughout all the western states, and there are now numerous Christian churches throughout Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Elder Abner Jones of Portland Vermont, then a member of the regular Baptist church, was the first who embraced these principles in New England. Near the close of the 18th century, his mind was very much exercised in relation to sectarian names and human creeds. He was so deeply impressed with the great evil, they were to true religion, that he resolved to abandon them, and stand alone. In September, 1800, he had the pleasure of seeing a church of about 25 members gathered in Lyndon Vt. In 1802 he gathered another church in Bradford Vt and in March 1803 another in Piermont N. H. He was soon joined by several other preachers from the regular Baptists and the Free-will Baptists. Preachers also were raised up in the churches already organized,

many of whom travelled extensively, preaching with great zeal and success. Churches were organized in Portsmouth N. H. Boston Mass, and throughout all the New England States, and also in New York. A large number of churches have also been planted in the Canadas and New Brunswick. The first Christian preacher, who came into the state of New York was Elder Jasper Hagen of Woodstock N. Y., the present Editor of the Christian Palladium. He preached in Green Co., for some months and organized a church in New Baltimore. This was in 1812. In 1813 a church was organized in Charlestown Montgomery Co., by Elders J. S. Thomson, and Labey Shinn, both of N. Y. In 1814 churches were organized in Solway, Ballston, and Greenfield Saratoga Co. The first person who was raised up and commenced preaching in the state was Elder L. Millard in 1815. From this time their principles spread rapidly throughout the state, and there is now more of the order in New York, than any other state. Among their ministers in this state there are many men of decided ability.

While the American revolution hurled a death blow at political domination, it also diffused a spirit of liberty into the church. The Methodists had spread to some considerable extent in the United States, especially South of the Potomac. Previous to this time, they had been considered a branch of the church of England, and were dependant on English Bishops for the regular administration of the ordinances.

But as the revolution had wrested the states from British control, it also left the American Methodists free to transact their own affairs.

Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury and others, set about establishing an Episcopal form of church government for the Methodists in America. Some of the preachers, however, had drank too deeply of the spirit of the times, to tamely submit to lordly power, whether in judicial vestments, or clad in the gown of "prelate". Their form of church government became a subject of spirited discussion in several conferences. James O'Kelly of North Carolina, and several other preachers of that state and of Virginia fled for a congregational system, and that the New Testament be their only ~~rule~~ creed and discipline. The weight of influence, however, turned on the side of Episcopacy and a human creed. Francis Asbury was elected and ordained bishop. Abr O'Kelly, several other preachers, and a large number of brethren, seceding from the dominant party. This final separation from the Episcopal Methodists, took place voluntarily, at Manakin. Down. N. C. Dec. 25th 1793. At first they took the name of "Republican Methodists", but at a subsequent conference resolved to be known as Christians only, to acknowledge no head over the church but Christ, and no creed or discipline but the bible. They have since acted in conjunction with the other branches East

and West. The whole number of communicants in the connexion in the United States and Canada may be estimated at about 150,000, the number of ministers at about 1,500, number of churches 1,500. There are also many in England, who occupy nearly the same position among whom is the celebrated Joseph Barker, who recognizes no name but Christian and no creed but the bible.

Throughout the connexion, local conferences are organized, embracing all the ministers and churches within a convenient distance. They are composed of ministers and lay delegates from each of the churches. The design of their annual gatherings is to promote their acquaintance with each other to consult upon general measures for the advancement of the cause and to re-examine the standing of the ministry. Such associations, soon after the ~~own~~ rise of this body, were found to be indispensable to prevent imposition, as persons, who had been expelled from other denominations for immoral conduct, would go about professing to be Christian preachers and thus bringing disgrace upon the cause. A United States conference was proposed in 1820 and convened in Portsmouth N. H. Several of these were held ~~for~~ ⁱⁿ successive years, but it was found that the travel was so great, that there was but little representation from a great distance. The design was to keep up acquaintance and promote cooperation in every part of the body. At length it was thought that this

could as well be done through their local conferences and periodicals. The last United States conference was held in New York city in 1892.

Among the librarians there have been a number of able and talented writers, of whom the late Elder Simon Blough of New York city is not least. The volume of sermons and original essays, which he has left, will commend itself to every reader of good taste and lover of sound thoughts.

The work entitled 'Bible Doctrine by the lamented Wm Shinkade of Illinois, consisting of an examination of the evidences of Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity and atonement, and a refutation of the Calvinistic view of Election, is written in a clear and logical style, and produces conviction wherever it goes. Two editions of this work have already been published and Elder Yellows of New York city proposes shortly to issue a new edition. The power of this work has been so much felt by the Orthodox, that when a part of the last edition accidentally fell into the hands of some Orthodox gentlemen of Rochester N. Y. they refused to sell them at any price, but actually destroyed them. The true Messiah, a candid examination of the scriptural doctrine of the Messiah by Prof Millard and his travels ^{in Egypt} in Arabia Petrea, and the Holy Land, have been received with universal commendation. Various other ministers have written ^{various} pamphlets and sermons on doctrinal ^{and} practical subjects.

Many others of their best writers who have appeared in public in no other way, have contributed ~~largely to their periodicals~~ largely to their periodicals of which there has been quite a number.

The first periodical ever published in the connection was called the Christian Magazine. It was commenced at Portsmouth N. H. in 1807. Edited by Elder Elias Smith and appeared monthly in pamphlet form. It continued but one year. In 1808 Elias Smith commenced a periodical in Portsmouth N. H. called the Herald of Gospel Liberty. This was a quarto half sheet issued once in two weeks. It had an extensive circulation and closed its existence in 1817. This is said to be the first religious newspaper published in this or any other country. In 1818 Elder Robert Foster commenced the Christian Herald in Portsmouth N. H. At first it was published in pamphlet form and for several years monthly. In 1835, it was purchased of its proprietor by the Eastern Christian publishing association, and was for four years published semi-monthly on a royal sheet under the name of Christian Journal, Elijah Shaw, Editor. In 1839, it took the name of Christian Herald again and is now published weekly at Newburgport Mass. Elders E. Shaw, M. R. Russell and D. D. Drake Editors. In 1823 Reuben Potter commenced the Gospel Palladium at Warren, Rhode Island. It was published semi-monthly for one year on a medium sheet in quarto form.

In 1824 Edward B. Rollins commenced a periodical in ~~Brain~~ Braintree Vt called the Bethlehem Star. It was published in pamphlet form once in two months, but continued only one year. In 1825 the Gospel Luminary was commenced at West ~~Andover~~ Bloomfield N. Y. under the direction of the New York western conference, David Willard Editor. It was published in monthly numbers for three years. In 1828, it was removed to New York city and Simon Blough became associate editor. During 1828 it was published semi-monthly on a quarto half sheet. In 1829 it was published weekly on a royal sheet. In 1830, it was changed back into a monthly pamphlet, and continued so until it was bought by the Christian book association in 1833, when it closed its career. In 1826 Jasper Glazen commenced a semi-monthly newspaper at Woodstock Vt called the Gospel Banner. It continued one year. In 1832, E. B. Rollins commenced a periodical in Vt called the Christian Luminary. He continued it one year after which it passed under the editorial care of J. P. Glendon. It was published semi-monthly and closed its career in 1835. In 1829 Barton W. Stone commenced the Christian Messenger at Georgetown Ky. It was a monthly pamphlet, and was published in the connexion at Georgetown Ky and Jacksonville Ill. until 1836.

In 1832, the Christian Palladium was commenced at West Abendon N. Y. under the direction of the Genesee Christian Association Joseph Badger Editor. For two years it was published monthly in pamphlet form. In 1834 it was removed to Union Mills N. Y. and became the organ of the Christian General Book Association. Since that time it has been published semi-monthly on a royal sheet. It is now published at Albany N. Y. weekly, Edited by L. Hagen. In 1835, a small semi-monthly periodical was published in Boston by L. T. Himes. It continued only one year. In 1841 Elder Matthew Gardner commenced the publication of a monthly paper at Ripley Ohio, called the Christian Union. It continued only one year. In 1843 the Gospel Herald, a semi-monthly paper was commenced at New Berlin, Ohio under the direction of the Ohio Christian Book Association. It was Edited the first three years by Elder J. N. Walter. It is now published at Springfield Ohio and edited by Elders J. Williamson and L. W. Morvin. In 1844 a monthly periodical commenced in Raleigh N. C. called the Christian Sun, which continues at the present time. In 1845 a semi-monthly periodical commenced at Oshawa, C. W. which continues at the present time. A beautiful and neatly executed monthly religious periodical in pamphlet form, called the "Christian" has also been commenced the

first of the present year at the city of Philadelphia by Elder Charles Henry Plummer, a member of the Christian connexion. A tract society has also been formed in the connexion within the last year and is now issuing from Union Mills, N. Y. a series of interesting Christian Tracts on various doctrinal and practical subjects. The cause of general education has also received the support of this body of people. They have three institutions of learning, one located at Durham N. H. one in North Carolina, and the other at Starkey Gates Co. N. Y. An increasing interest ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the subject of education, is at present prevailing throughout the whole body. They have never required of their ministers a classical education. Their motto has been "Let him that understandeth the Gospel teach it". And they have frequently found among men of an ordinary education, many who fully understood the sublime truths that Jesus taught, and who were able to forcibly impress others with the importance of these truths. To such they have always been disposed to bid God's speed in sounding the Gospel trumpet. In fact to such men this body is indebted for the strong hold it has in many parts of the western country. Men, whose hearts have been touched with a coal from off the altar of God and who have been imbued with the self sacrificing spirit of their master, have gone forth and planted themselves in the

wildernesses of the west. They have labored by day in the field to procure a subsistence, have studied at night by the light of the midnight oil, to gather some thoughts that might be valuable, and have gone forth on the Sabbath wherever they could gather an audience to talk to the people about heavenly things. And thus they have prepared the way for the establishment of permanent societies. This people have always felt that to such men all honor was due; there have however been in the connexion many good scholars and eloquent speakers. Those however who have been able to attain to eminence in this respect have done it by their own constant exertions and unflinching energies, and by making personal sacrifices. The young men, who are now entering the ministry are generally making efforts to acquire a competent education. Many of them are attending various institutions of learning, practicing self denial, and laboring with their own hands, ~~that they may be able~~ to procure the means by which they will be able to acquire knowledge and treasure up thoughts that will prepare them for future usefulness. The facilities afforded in this institution promise also to be a great aid to them in this respect. The facilities, which are now afforded for planting new churches and raising the standard of liberal christianity in new places, are greater than they have been previously, as

so ministers instead of making so much personal sacrifice, can now receive aid from the home missionary societies. They have three regularly organized missionary societies in the connexion, one in New England, one in New York and one in Ohio. These societies have a number of men in their employ planting the gospel standard in new places. The universal mode of preaching among the ministers is to speak extemporaneously. They find that in this way there can be much more zeal and energy than in any other way, and that they can be more effectual in bringing the truth home to the hearts of men, and in making their hearers feel the force of what they say. Those modes of religious influence called revivals of religion, have prevailed among the Christians to a great extent, and have greatly aided in building up their societies. While they avoid the fanaticism, the rant, and extreme excitement, which has sometimes prevailed in what are called revivals, they still believe that there are particular times and seasons in which men may be awakened, and powerful impressions be made upon the minds of the unconverted. Men are often ~~and~~ sufficiently convinced that their course is wrong and sinful, but they need something to make them feel if the expression would

be allowable, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, to rouse them up, and give them no ease or rest until they abandon their wicked ways and find peace with God. Such an influence is often exerted in these seasons of revival, and thousands upon whom the ordinary ministrations of the pulpit, have no effect, are on these occasions incited to abandon their course and become religious.

The Christians as a body have also not been indifferent to the various moral and philanthropic movements of the age. Their ministers have depicted in its true light the horrors of war, and have entered their strong protest against the barbarous practice of Christian nations resorting to the sword to settle their difficulties. The cause of temperance and the reformation of the degraded inebriate have also received their support, and among their ministers have been found some of the most efficient temperance lecturers.

While they have been opposed to spiritual domination and ecclesiastical tyranny, they have also felt called upon in accordance with their principles, to condemn in the strongest terms, that system of oppression which enslaves both mind and body and which degrades man from his high position as the image of God, to a chattel.

Among their members have been found some of the most ardent friends of the slave.

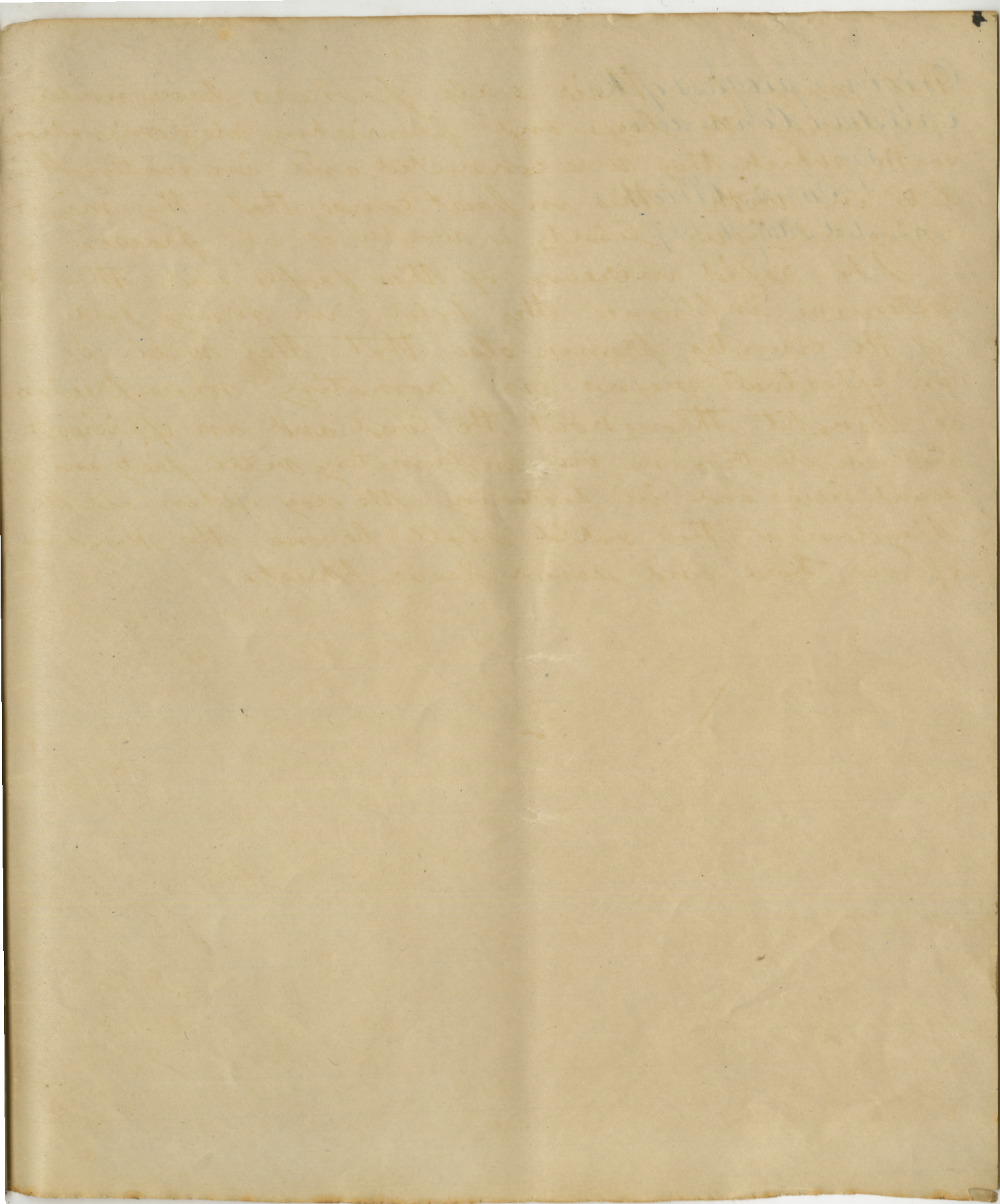
Among those who deserve to be mentioned on account of their hostility to slavery is the late Elder Sam Shinkade of Illinois. ~~The~~ About the year 1818, in the commencement of the state government of Illinois, he was chosen a member of the Senate. The great question then was whether slavery should be tolerated in Illinois. The slavery party made the most desperate efforts to carry their points and they even threatened with personal violence, those who would not accede to their proposals, so much so that they were obliged to carry weapons about their persons for defence. Amidst all the threats Shinkade's voice was heard manfully and eloquently pleading the cause of freedom against slavery and showing in a masterly manner, the crooked and selfish spirit, of those who would fasten upon the free soil of Illinois such a system as slavery. To his influence the success of the Anti-slavery party in the Senate was attributed and the final vote gave just a majority of one against slavery. Elder Seth Ford another ~~an~~ Christian minister was at that time a member of the lower house. He was offered \$2,000 to come over and use his influence in favor of slavery. This offer he spurned, saying that he came not to serve himself, but his country. Seeing two members dressed in their humble homespun, who were neglected by the rest, he sought

a private opportunity to inquire of them whether they were under a pledge, and learning that they were not, he reasoned with them and secured them against slavery. After a warm contest the slavery party were defeated by two votes. Among others of the Christians, the Honorable D. Campbell of Ripley, Ohio, formerly a United States Senator from that state, deserves to be mentioned. He not only emancipated a number of slaves that he received by inheritance, but in those times of trial, when the little band of abolitionists were hunted as incendiaries, and were exposed to insult and violence in every quarter, he was willing to sacrifice his personal influence, and join in their number, preferring the consciousness that he had recorded the rights of man, rather than to secure the favor of the world.

Two thirds of all ^{adopted} ~~passed~~ the conferences in the connexion have ~~passed~~ resolutions strongly condemning slavery, and the two leading papers maintain a decidedly anti-slavery aspect, while it is hoped that the other papers which have not taken a stand will soon move in this work. In conclusion, in the rise and progress of this body of people, in the firmness with which they have advocated independence of thought, and protested against all bars and restraints, that prevent men from arriving at the truth, we think all must grant that there is much that is commendable. The personal sacrifices

that many of their early pioneers, have undergone, in leaving the large and flourishing denominations with which they were connected, and in casting their lots in with this infant cause, that they might enjoy religious liberty, is worthy of all praise.

The rapid increase of this people and the extensive influence they hold in many parts of the country, promise also that they will be an effectual means in promoting more freedom of thought throughout the land and an efficient aid in destroying vice, in promoting vital piety and sound views and in hastening the day when all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



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Christian Connexion.*

by

James Elliott.

presented May 11. 1847.