

The Kehukee Declaration

Halifax County, North Carolina 1827

THE KEHUKEE DECLARATION
A DECLARATION AGAINST THE
MODERN MISSIONARY MOVEMENT
AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF MEN

In a resolution adopted by the Kehukee Association,
while convened with the Kehukee Church,

Halifax County, N. C.

Saturday before the first Sunday in October, 1827.

1826 Session of the Kehukee Association convened on Saturday before the first Sunday in October, 1826, at Skewarky, Martin County, N. C. . . .

Matters were now becoming so unsatisfactory to many of the churches and brethren in regard to missionary operations, Masonic Lodges, Secret Societies generally, etc., etc., that it seemed necessary to take a decided stand against them, and thereby no longer tolerate these innovations on the ancient usages of the church of Christ by fellowshipping them. Accordingly, we notice in the proceedings of the session held at this time the following item: "A paper purporting to be a Declaration of the Reformed Baptist Churches of North Carolina (read on Saturday and laid on the table this day, Monday), was called up for discussion and was referred to the churches, to report, in their letters to the next Association, their views on each article therein contained."

1827. The Association met at Kehukee, Halifax County on Saturday before the first Sunday in October, 1827. . . .

1827. This session of the Association was one of the most remarkable ever held

by her. At this time came up for consideration the Declaration of Principles submitted at the last session to the churches for approval or rejection. And upon a full and fair discussion of them, the following order was made, viz.: "A paper purporting to be a Declaration of the Reformed Baptists in North Carolina, dated August 26, 1826, which was presented at last Association, and referred to the churches to express in their letters to this Association their views with regard to it, came up for deliberation. Upon examination, it was found that most of the churches had given their opinions; and after an interchange of sentiments among the members of this body, it was agreed that we discard all Missionary Societies, Bible Societies and Theological Seminaries, and the practices heretofore resorted to for their support, in begging money from the public; and if any persons should be among us, as agents of any of said societies, we hereafter discountenance them in those practices; and if under a character of a minister of the gospel, we will not invite them into our pulpits; believing these societies and institutions to be the inventions of men, and not warranted from the word of God. We further do unanimously agree that should any of the members of our churches join the fraternity of Masons, or, being members, continue to visit the lodges and parades, we will not invite them to preach in our pulpits, believing them to be guilty of such practices; and we declare non-fellowship with them and such practices altogether." In adopting this resolution there was not a dissenting voice. It was unanimous. Before the vote was taken there was a diversity of sentiment, and brethren freely interchanged views on the subject. Some of course were favorable to the toleration of these innovations, and pleaded for them with all their power; while those opposed to them as being contrary to ancient usage and pernicious in their consequences, boldly denounced them and contended for their abolition. On taking the vote, it was found that a large majority were opposed to these new men-made schemes; and then it was agreed to make the vote unanimous; and the same was accordingly done. It may therefore be set

down as having the entire sanction of the Kehukee Association, composed of thirty-five churches, holding 1,951 members.

Those messengers of the churches in the Association at that time who favored those new things appeared before the adjournment of the body to be thoroughly convinced of their error. They gave signal demonstration of their acquiescence in the final decision, embraced the brethren who took opposite views, fell upon their shoulders, and seemed to be overwhelmed with joy. Never perhaps in the whole period of her existence, either before or since that time, did such a melting scene occur in a session of the Kehukee Association as did then. All present seemed to be fired with love for each other, and thankfulness to God that He had conducted the controversy to such a happy issue.

The Moderator, Elder Philemon Bennett, adjourned the Association with an affectionate address and prayer. Here was a stand taken against corruptions which had sprung up in the American churches about twenty-five years before, and had taken rapid hold on many of them, so that they were exceedingly loath to give them up.

It was a noble stand taken by the Kehukee Association, and would have done honor to bold defenders of the faith in any age of the world. The men of that day were renowned in Zion. Their memories will be cherished by future generations. They emancipated the churches with which they were connected from priestcraft and religious fetters that were becoming more and more intolerable every year.

This was the first and great decisive stand taken by the Baptists on American soil against worldly institutions, as being necessary for the propagation of the gospel and the salvation of men. Some had resisted them at the very outset, and all along through their progress; but now they could be borne with no longer, and it was resolved to cast the entire trumpery overboard.

This example of the Kehukee Association, then sixty-two years old, was encouraging to other similar bodies; and from 1827 to 1840 there was a stir among churches and Associations all over the land, and many followed the example of old Mother Kehukee.

In September, 1832, a number of churches belonging to the Baltimore Association convened with the church called "Black Rock," in the State of Maryland, and took the position that had been taken by Kehukee; so that, in the Northern States, Primitive or old-fashioned Baptists were called "Blackrockers," and in the Southern States they were known and stigmatized as "Kehukeeites."

The Country Line Association withdrew her fellowship from these things, their aiders and abettors, in August, 1832, in session with Deep Creek Church, Alamance County (then Orange County); and so one Association after another in North Carolina and in other States threw off the despotic yoke of priestcraft and idolatry, and asserted their entire disconnection with these things. They declared non-fellowship for these new men-made institutions, and resumed their ancient order. A war of words was the result of these divisions, and in every instance those leaning over toward these new things were sure to predict the speedy extinction of those whom they left behind. Those brethren contending for the ancient landmarks of Zion were denounced by their fashionable brethren of the New School party as being old-fashioned, ignorant people, who would all soon die out and give place to the younger, fashionable, educated men, who expected soon to occupy the whole land, and gather in their tithes without any murmuring or complaint on the part of those who were being fleeced, or any one else who should defend their rights. . . .

The history of the Kehukee Association, in this respect, is but the history of all Associations throughout the length and breadth of this broad land that were similarly situated.

They can therefore sympathize with her, and she with them, and all can bear testimony to the wiles of the enemy, and to the falling away both in doctrine and discipline of those who claim to be Missionaries or New School Baptists. With a departure from the ancient usages of the church went a departure from the faith also once delivered to the saints; so that at the present time there is scarcely one of their ministers in a hundred who preaches the gospel of Christ, or salvation by grace alone. One may as well expect to hear Christ preached as the Way, the Truth and the Life among Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Quakers, Campbellite or Catholics, as to hear such preaching among New School or Missionary Baptists. They have evidently departed from the faith of the gospel, and given heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, as much so as any of the numerous sects with whom they so cordially fraternize. The same schemes are adopted by them to excite the passions of men, women and children that are put in operation by the Wesleyan Methodists, a sect that arose in England during the eighteenth century under the leadership of John Wesley, who was a communicant of the Established Church, so-called, of England.

. . . The Kehukee, at her session in 1829, explained and confirmed the position taken by her in 1827, and this action appeared to draw the line of demarcation distinctly between the old and the new order of Baptists then and until the present time. The barriers were then permanently erected between those who opposed and those who favored the man-made institutions of that day and this, as being aids and even superior to the church of Christ. The Kehukee Association, with her numerous churches, stood firm and unyielding in this great battle from 1829, and even from 1827, and onward. She did not have to go off or withdraw, even from the apologists for human wisdom and human righteousness; but they departed and went out from her, to make it manifest that they were not in principle with her. She remained steadfast in the Apostle's doctrine and in

fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers; while those who left, whether of her own churches or those of other Associations, departed first from the Apostle's doctrine (salvation by grace alone), then from fellowship, then from breaking of bread, then from prayers.

One departure made way for another. Imbibing false doctrine led to false practice. The idea of salvation by works caused a dependence on works for salvation. When once confidence in God was lost, then it was placed on man. As soon as a religionist believes that God is unable or unwilling to save sinners, then he sets about the work himself, and soon concludes that he can do it alone and without God's assistance. So soon as disbelief in God's word entered the mind of Eve she believed the lies of Satan, and that belief in his false statements produced the action, on her part, of reaching forth and partaking the forbidden fruit. So soon as Baptists in America, during the present century, imbibed "Fuller's gospel" – all complete, they were ready to carry it out in practice, by the examples set them in England by Carey and Fuller.

So that we feel called on to state it as a historical truth, not successfully to be denied, that whenever Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Sunday Schools, Dorcas Societies, Mite Societies, Religious Fairs and Festivals, Temperance Societies, Sectarian Schools and Theological Seminaries in America prevail, there the doctrine of Phariseeism (modernly called Arminianism) prevails, there the doctrine of saving the souls of men from sin and from hell by works which men may do for themselves and for each other prevails. There the mark of the Beast and there persecution prevail. There fraternization with these in all sects and societies (Pedobaptists included) where salvation is reckoned of men prevails . In all these new things, comminglement and fraternizations, the New School party disprove their identity with Primitive Christians, and repudiate the faith and practice of the Apostles of the Lamb.

The Virginia Portsmouth Association went off with similar Articles of Faith to those of the Kehukee, but it is presumed they did not last her long, as she has long since been identified with the isms and worldly contrivances of the present century.

The Chowan Association, which organized under the Kehukee Articles of Faith, soon repudiated them – adopted others more suitable to her doctrinal notions, then changed them, we understand, and finally thought it more consistent with her free-will doctrines to have none at all.

The Neuse Association also adopted the Articles of her old mother when she was dismissed, but renounced them and eventually abandoned her organization.

The churches that were dismissed to form the Tar River Association went off professing undeviating faith in the old Articles, but, in organizing, lost sight of them, and fell completely under the influence of the work-mongers.

For twenty or thirty years after the separation among Baptists, and the departure of the “Do and Live” party from those who stood by the ancient landmarks, the contention was pretty sharp, each party denouncing the other in no very gentle language. It seemed lamentable that the old soldiers of the cross, instead of preaching Jesus and the resurrection all the time, did take up a good portion of their time in defending the faith and denouncing those who had brought in these heresies.

The other party treated the Old School with a great deal of contempt on account of the paucity of their numbers, their old-fashioned creed, their experience of grace, their want of education, and general deficiency in human polish. And they declared wherever they went (supposing no doubt it would be so) that the Old Party would soon become extinct – out of the way entirely, and give them no further trouble. Various names were applied to the Old School by the New, such as “Hard Shells,” “Straight Jackets,” “Ignoramuses,” “Lawrenceans,”

“Osbourrites,” “Antinomians,” etc., etc. After thirty or forty years’ experience, since the separation, however, it was ascertained that the Old School were not all dead, that some were still in existence, and by some unaccountable means they were in a state of outward prosperity to all human appearance. This so astonished the New School that they, supposing a good name was becoming popular, and might be some cause for success, suddenly changed their tactics, and assumed the name of “Old School or Primitive Baptists” to themselves, which they had themselves given to the Bible Baptists, and had for many previous years been aspersing and holding in the greatest contempt!

For some few years now prior to the writing of this history, their ablest minds, through the medium of pulpit and press, have been endeavoring to prove themselves the veritable Primitive Baptists of in the nineteenth century! It is likely their affliction will increase as the prosperity of Zion becomes more and more manifest, and the well established among themselves forsake them and go where they rightfully belong, to the citizenship of the saints and the household of God.

This claim on the part of the New School has been set up by some of them, perhaps, since the year 1870. Lectures have been given, sermons delivered, newspapers have teemed, magazines have been filled, and books have abounded with argument, declamation and sophistry, to prove that the New School are the Old School – that the Old School are the New School – that white is black, and black is white – that the pharisaical, money-loving, money-hunting, money-begging, mesmerizing, passion-exciting, “do and live” Baptists of the present day are the Simon-pure, old-fashioned, Primitive Baptists of a hundred years ago; and that Kehukeeites and Black-Rockers need not lay claim to any such title at all! Thus it is seen after all what advantage there is thought to be in a good name. It was for this reason, we suppose, that

seven women were to “take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” (Isaiah 4:1) What a pity that some people now desire to eat their own bread (the doctrine of the Pharisees) and wear their own apparel (self-righteousness), and yet greatly desire to be called “Primitive Baptists”! Primitive Baptists in reality are they who are “of the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

We proceed now to prove the Missionaries, so-called, of the present day, to be the New School party; that their worldly institutions, under the garb of religion, have divided the Baptists – that they are only about fifty to seventy-five years old in the United States, and that they have gone away from the original fold or church of Christ, and have made it manifest that they were not with her in faith and practice. Also that the constant tendency of the Missionaries is from the doctrine of predestination and election as set forth in the Bible to the doctrine of a Conditional Salvation, made sure only by man; that they have abandoned the true church of Christ, and made a confederacy with the daughters of Babylon and of Papal Rome; and that the Mother of Harlots herself has as good a doctrine¹ to preach to the millions of her deluded followers as have a large number of the Missionary Baptists, so-called, either of Europe or America. The more is the pity and the more is the shame, because these people, as Baptists, had a noble origin. They never belonged to Babylon – they did not come out of her. Their predecessors from the beginning fought against and denounced Antichrist as the great spiritual evil in the world, that was poisoning the minds of men with false doctrine and destroying hecatombs of victims from generation to generation. They denounced her till the Reformation, so-called, under Luther, and

¹ This statement of father’s is a strong one; but, as I have demonstrated in the previous part of this volume, the doctrine of salvation by works, instead of salvation by grace, is the essence of Greek and Roman Catholicism, and has unfortunately come to be the essence of nearly all Protestantism as well. Protestants have a great advantage over Catholics in being emancipated from innumerable degrading superstitions.

Melanchthon, and Zuinglius and Calvin; they denounced her since the Reformation; they denounced her daughters, the Established “Churches” of Germany, Switzerland and England, whose hierarchies hated and persecuted Baptists as they hated and threatened Rome. Baptists stood independent of all other religious organizations and acted their part nobly, until in England they succumbed to the principles and practices of Rome (save her persecutions) under the leadership of Fuller and Carey, and in America under that of Judson and Rice. Now, therefore, we behold those calling themselves Baptists, and recently calling themselves “Primitive Baptists,” fused with numerous other sects and societies, and with the non-professing world also, in order to carry to a successful issue their craft and schemes of aggrandizement, born of worldly wisdom.

In the first place, we take it to be a self-evident truth that a project never submitted to the consideration of the Kehukee Association for the first thirty-seven years of her existence, when it was submitted, was then a new project to her. The subject of Missions was proposed to her by Martin Ross in 1803; it was never proposed before that time. The Association was constituted in 1765, and was therefore thirty-seven years old before the subject was brought to her notice. The subject was therefore new to her then, and those originating it must of course be called a “new order” or “New School Baptists.” Then and there (at Conoho, in 1803) originated the “Missionary” cause, so far as the Kehukee Association and all within the bounds of the State of North Carolina were concerned. The age of the concern, therefore, in its incipient state, in North Carolina, is much less than a century.

Younger and younger still are those who, from time to time, have since then set up for themselves – unfurled their “Missionary” banners to the breeze – joined the armies of the aliens, and made war against the old original panel, the church of Christ.²

² History of the Church of God, by C. B. and Sylvester Hassell, pages 735-740, 747-750.

The Holy Spirit declares to us by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 11:5, 6) that salvation is either all of works, or all of grace. – S.H.