

Ed. Jno. Smith

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## A NARRATIVE,

*Of the proceedings of the last Elkhorn Association,  
held at Silas Meeting House, Bourbon county,  
Ky. on the 14th, 15th. and 16th days of August,  
1830.*

AN appropriate and admirable introductory discourse was delivered by brother Gates of Paris, on the subject of brotherly love and christian forbearance. After this affectionate and intelligent discourse, the letters from the churches were called for and read at the Stage, which is nearly a mile from the Meeting House, to which the Messengers repaired after the reading of the letters. While the letters were reading at the Stage, Messrs Vardeman and E. Waller (who burnt the New Testament) acted most turbulently and disorderly, by crying out, order, and repeatedly calling on the Clerk to stop, when there was nothing going on, but the reading of the letters, as usual. Vardeman, after repeatedly trying to force the Moderator to stop the reading of the letters, and failing, arose with his cudgel in his hand, and said angrily, and most imperiously, with his stick drawn, brother Moderator, I **MUST** be heard and I **WILL** be heard. Before all this, the venerable Lewis Corban had interposed his age and influence, and somewhat moderated the violence and outbreking of Vardeman's passions. But when he arose so furiously, with his stick drawn, after Elder Corban's mild and Christian entreaties had failed to pacify him, the congregation being in a most confused and tumultuous appearance, the Moderator fearing the consequences, stopt the assistant Clerk from reading. The causes of the turbulence of those two men were these. The Elkhorn Association held in Lexington, in 1829, passed the following resolution, without any Church requesting it, or without referring it to the churches for their consideration.

*“Resolved, That hereafter the churches composing this association shall be represented by votes in the following manner, to wit:—Every church shall be entitled to two votes; and one for every additional hundred members. And we recommend to the churches in our connection to send messengers to the association agreeably to the number of votes they will be respectively entitled to, according to the above ratio.”*

The churches had the right either to approve or disapprove of this “advice” (decree) just as they pleased, at the next session of the E. Association. We say, that according to all principles, laws and constitutions known among the Baptists, and all who maintain the independency of individual churches,—that the churches in the Elkhorn Association, had the inalienable, fundamental and constitutional right guaranteed to them either to receive or reject the “advice” (decree) of the Association of 1829. If they had not this right, we should be pleased for some doctor of “divinity” to tell us the difference between the powers

of the E. Association, and a popish council. If it did belong to them, why all this turbulence by these two men? Why was this right taken from the churches—and why were they called to an account for exercising it, and punished for it. These are questions, which some of the churches remaining in the association had better ask this “advisory council” to settle. The whole matter just resolves into this: Have churches the RIGHT to reject or disobey a resolution, a recommendation, an advice, a decree, (or whatever you may call it) of an Association? If they have, why punish them for exercising this indisputable right? If a man has the constitutional RIGHT to vote for sheriff, legislator, governor or president, at the polls, in Fayette county, why grow tumultuous at it, or punish him for exercising this right as an American citizen? When one of the members from the Providence church, asked for the charge in writing, for which she was dropt from the Association, one of the members of the Association replied, it was because she had disobeyed the resolution of the Association last year. The leaders about Georgetown said, before the Association met, that they would cut off uncle and myself, on account of the July Budget. The following is the crime of the Providence church, as published in the Chronicle of August, and we presume it will be found verbatim in the Minutes of the Association of 1830.

“Resolved, That the church at Providence be dropped from further correspondence with this Association, for non-conformity to the rules of the Association, and for receiving into her membership, a preacher, (Jacob Creath, Jr.) who has, in faith and practice, departed from her constitution; and who has taken a part in constituting minorities, who have also thus departed.”

From all this the reader will see that there are two verbal crimes for which the Providence church was cut off, and two written charges. We will take the written charges, as being the most correct. The first written charge against the Providence church, is non-conformity to the rules (the decrees) of the Association. Doctor Ainsworth, the author of the Latin Dictionary, defines the word, non-conformity thus: *qui se ecclesie lege stabilita non conformat*. One who does not conform himself to the established church. Moshem, Hannah Adams, and Buck, give the same interpretation of the word non-conformist. The term is especially applicable to those ministers who were ejected from their livings by the act of uniformity passed by the British Parliament in 1662: when the number of 2, 00 ministers were deprived of their congregations and livings in England, because they would not wear the surplice, the cap and Episcopal gown, as did the Episcopalians under the reign of Henry the VIII. of England. The famous Conventicle Act was enacted shortly after. (See Neal's History of the Puritans.) If they worshipped without these superstitious trappings of Rome, and the Mother of Harlots, they were fined for the first offence, either five pounds or three months imprisonment; for the second offence, double this; for the third, they were to be banished to the American plantations. About this time the refugees landed at Plymouth, in New England. Religious liberty and American independence all grew out of,

and were connected with, these contests, between the King's party and the Puritans, between the sufferers for conscience sake, and the monarchists, between those in power and the advocates of pure, simple and Apostolic religion, between "conformists" to the established superstition, and non-conformists to the decrees of Baptist councils. The Versailles and Providence churches fell sacrifices to the famous Acts of Conformity and the Conventicle Acts of the Elkhorn Parliament, of which Acts, Mr. Vardeman was the *prime mover*.

We again say, that the Providence, Versailles and South Elkhorn churches, being firmly persuaded that every measure was to be carried in the E. Association by counting hands, (as was predicted in the July Budget) contrary to all law, reason, precedent and rule, had the constitutional right, to send in self defence, ten messengers a piece, not to oppress and injure the other churches, but simply to glove their hands, to prevent their bruising us. We say that we had nothing "arbitrary or unreasonable" in view, in sending these ten messengers from each of these churches, -- but our object was simply to prevent their doing unjustly and unlawfully **WHAT** they have done, and **WHAT** we knew they would do, and **WHAT** we had the constitutional right to prevent them from doing. So much for the first written charge against the Providence church, for the crime of disobeying the famous act of "non-conformity," passed by Elkhorn in 1829. The next written charge is, that she received me (J. Creath, jr.) into her membership, who has, in faith and practice departed from the constitution of the Association, &c. We submit the following statements in answer to these charges. First there is not one word in the constitution requiring "conformity" to the resolutions (decrees) of the Association,--and consequently where there is no law there can be no transgression. Secondly, according to this act of conformity, Providence church has no right to receive into her membership any preacher, without first consulting the Elkhorn Association,--if she does she must be punished for it, by being dropt. If the Association has this much power over the churches, then the churches have no more liberty than a man's negroes, nor indeed so much. Thirdly, I say, and am ready to prove, that no individual nor church, ever told me individually, or before any church, that I had departed from the faith and practice of the Elkhorn Association. Fourthly, no church in the Elkhorn Association, ever hinted or suggested to the Providence church, that she had departed from the faith and practice of the Association. The Association caught the Providence church from home, accused, judged, condemned and executed her, without observing one law, one precedent or rule, known in Heaven or on the earth,--it was never suggested that she had broken or departed from one law, human or divine, until they had killed her. All this is well known to the Association and to the public, who know that their sole object was to slaughter me. We ask the Association, if one church in her body asked her to pass the resolution respecting the ratio of representation, if any or all the churches ever bound themselves to obey implicitly, the decrees of the Association? Did the Providence, Versailles and South Elkhorn churches, have the

right to send ten Messengers in self-defence? If they did not, have they any rights at all? If they had the right, why punish them for exercising it? Is there one clause in the constitution of the Association requiring the churches to send a definite number of Messengers, and no more? If there is not, there was no transgression? There is nothing in the terms of Union forbidding it. The Providence and the Versailles were both dropt contrary to the terms of Union, contrary to all precedent, to all rule, which have heretofore governed Baptist Associations—It was done according to the law of numbers, of force and of prejudice. As Bishop Vardeman said, “speaking, argument, and evidence were unnecessary, they had made up their opinion before they came,” they had come to do a certain work, and he had written a letter to Edmund Waller, before the Association came on to send numbers to slaughter the Creaths, one of whom has been a warm friend and defender of Vardeman for twenty-five years,—and a yokefellow. The other cause of the turbulence of Waller and Vardeman was, Bro. B. S. Chambers, the former clerk of the Association, allowed me to assist him to read two letters,—I assisted him last year, and there was not one word said against it. This year, on Monday, Bro. Bryce read for the Association, and there was not one word said against it. Bishop Vardeman said in his speech on Monday, that if the three churches had not agreed to withdraw their surplus numbers there would have been a *scramble*, and until we agreed to withdraw the surplus numbers and give up the papers, on Saturday, after we met in the meeting house, it was more like the assembly at Ephesus, than a Baptist Association. After repeated and solemn pledges given on Saturday evening by the party now in power, to us the ‘non-conformists,’ that if we would give up the surplus numbers sent from the three churches to glove their hands, that they would observe the usual course, that they would violate no former usage nor precedent, nor the constitution of the Association,—we at the solicitation and recommendation of Elder Thos. Campbell and Elder John Smith, agreed to withdraw the surplus numbers. On Monday every one of these pledges were violated—for according to the arguments of John Payne and Vardeman, respecting the process of serving the writ on the Versailles church, by the Clear Creek church, that the regular process was not observed, consequently, in dropping the Versailles church, all precedent, law and rules were violated.

The following is the decree against the Versailles church by the Act of Uniformity passed in 1830, copied from the Chronicle.

“On complaint of the church at Clear Creek, and of the Franklin Association, against the church at Versailles, that she has held in membership, preachers who have taken a part in constituting minorities of churches that have departed from the faith and constitution of this body; on motion of Elder Jeremiah Vardeman,

“*Resolved*, That the church at Versailles be dropped from further correspondence with this Association.”

The committee appointed to arrange the business for Monday, were Wm. Suggett, Moderator; U. B. Chambers, Clerk, John Payne and

Edmund Waller. Whether the report was made out by these men, or by Noel and Dillard, who sat by the high Sheriff on Monday, and whispered their orders into his ears, and he into the Moderator's, and he into the body's ears, we will not say. There was a request sent from the Providence church to the Association, of this there was no notice taken by this committee; which neglect was contrary to all precedent and law. Secondly, this motion to drop the Versailles church, was made by Vardeman, who had probably forgot that he split the South Elkhorn and Bryant Station churches twenty years ago, and this motion he made because he was going to leave the country and knew that he could, therefore, incur no responsibility,—he knew well that his father-in-law, the venerable and upright Thos. Bullock, the former Moderator of Elkhorn Association, and the best Moderator in the State, was a member of this church, and he knew well that his old and tried friend and yoke-fellow J. Creath, Sr. was a member of this church, but he said he loved Rome more than all these,—he broke through all these natural and religious ties of friendship, rather than to see the "ministry dismantled and his monied springs dried up." As he could not be allowed to use his cudgel on Saturday, he Parthian like, shot his arrows over his shoulder as he was fleeing from the particulars and the reformers. He may yet be overtaken in the gaps, between these two thieves, where he has tried to die like our Saviour, but could not. He may yet have complaints lodged against him louder and fouler than the one from Clear Creek, without being able to answer them. It is said that traitors are generally the worse men, and that all parties lose confidence in them. He may yet fall under the smoothing and healing hand of orthodoxy and clerical balm. Notwithstanding he and Noel had no confidence in each other before this; yet their confidence revived on this occasion. He volunteered to abuse Campbellism on Saturday, hoping that the Particulars would elect him to preach on Sunday, but they have no confidence in him. After they were done, he got up and put his hand to his face and pretended to cry, because he was going to move to the Missouri. In October 1826, Bishop Vardeman, declared to many men of the first respectability (as we shall hereafter prove) that he would never go to but one more Association, and that would be to the next Elkhorn Association, (in August 1827) in order to have it converted into a worshipping assembly—he said if they would not let him put the knife to the calf's throat, they would never see him at another. He accordingly had the following resolution passed to that effect,—but he took care to make the calf mob Doctor Fishback before he cut his throat and skinned him; and this year he has turned his Bulls loose upon his father-in-law, and old Jacob Creath. Whether he has told the truth or not, the public will judge.

The following resolution was adopted by the Elkhorn Association unanimously, in 1827, at David's Fork, (with the exception of one vote) when Vardeman was a full blooded Campbellite. We thought the Association this year could not break over this resolution, after acquiescing in it three years, without giving good reasons for so doing. But this resolution was no more than a cob-web.

"Whereas many difficulties and great disorder have frequently taken place in this Association at our annual meetings by the introduction of queries from the churches in her connection in relation to their internal concerns and difficulties, much to the injury, we believe, of the cause of Zion and vital piety amongst us. Therefore, Resolved, that we recommend to the churches composing our body, to endeavor by all means in their power to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; to mark those that cause divisions amongst them, until the last solemn effort known to the Holy Scriptures be made to prevent it. The Churches themselves are the highest ecclesiastical authority known in the word of God, and we earnestly advise them never to bring their difficulties to the Association for adjustment, because we believe the Association to be an improper tribunal for the settlement of the difficulties and disorders of the churches, and unfitted for the task by the nature of its creation and for the want of the high authority of Heaven to sanction its acts of adjudication in such cases."

There are three things which we wish our readers to notice in this resolution. First, the churches are the highest ecclesiastical authority known in the word of God. Second, the Association advises the churches not to bring their difficulties to the Association for adjustment. Third, Clear Creek church broke this resolution by sending their difficulties for adjustment, after three years acquiescence in it. Fourth, it says Associations are improper tribunals for the settlement of difficulties in 1827, but they are proper in 1830. Fifth, they are unfitted by their nature for the task in 1827; but fitted in 1830. Sixth, they want the high authority of Heaven to sanction its acts of adjudication in 1827; but in 1830, they only want the high authority of Vardeman, the mover of this resolution; of John Payne and the lawyer clergy, to sanction its acts of adjudication; and this too, according to their own acknowledgment, contrary to all law, precedent and constitution. So much for the Versailles church, which was the great bee-gum, where there was much honey expected.

On Thursday before the Association, brother Hewett fled from Versailles to South Elkhorn, one of the oldest and most respectable churches in the Association, in order to avoid these pursuers, and to allay their thirst to cut off Versailles. Finding that he had taken shelter there, and I at Providence, they made a motion that both of these churches should be cut off, in order to catch young Hewett and young Jacob. But this was dispensed with. And what next? A committee (inquisition) was appointed to bring this church back to the faith, and to labour to get her under the dominion of the lawyer clergy, if possible. Hewett and the church are put under an arrest, until they do penance and feel humble for trying to save their lives. Hewett is forbid to go as a corresponding messenger to any Association, without ever bringing or charging him before any church, they catch him at the Association, and proceed to put him under an arrest, for fear he may do some mischief,—not one rule, law, or precedent, human or divine, is observed. The church has rebelled against the lawyer clergy,

therefore she must do penance or die. Hewett was asked by Pope Suggett, if he believed, or was sound in the Philadelphia faith? Hewett responded that he was in a society, which recognized the terms of Union, every item of which he was willing to subscribe to, as terms of union or correspondence.

On Friday before the Association, knowing something of a good Calvinistic spirit, from the history of John Calvin and Servetus, from the council of Dort and of Geneva, and from my knowledge of Calvinistic piety and zeal, I took shelter at Providence, thinking that if they broke over all law and precedent, and over the resolution of Vardeman in 1827, to get at my uncle, that probably it would be too barefaced for white men in open day time to cut off Providence in Jessamine, consisting of one hundred and fifty-three intelligent, devout and humble men and women, simply to satiate their thirst with my blood. I have heard it as a political maxim, that one hundred guilty persons had better go unpunished, than for one innocent person to suffer. But these men have endeavoured to reverse the maxim, they think that one hundred and fifty-three innocent persons should die, rather than they should fail to drink my blood. It has been said that if my body had been cut to pieces, and a piece put in every church in the Elkhorn Association, that they would have dropped every church in the Association, rather than not slake their thirst with my precious blood. They could not forget my essays on creeds, and the two Budgets in which I have roasted the clergy.

We ask the public to compare Bishop Vardeman's declarations and conduct in 1826 and 27, with his conduct at Silas in 1830. We ask, if the last solemn effort known to the holy Scriptures were taken with these mangled and slaughtered churches? Did the Association design to bless us or persecute us by the course she pursued? Admitting our guilt and the truth of every charge, did the Association observe any law, human or divine, in dealing with us? On Monday the following persons were selected to act in this drama. R. T. Dillard, a lawyer from the school of particularism, who it is believed wrote the bill of indictment for Clear Creek against Versailles, to whom belongs the balance of the churches in Elkhorn, besides those which he has drawn off by carrying water on both shoulders, was chosen prosecutor by the King's party, the Parkerites. After whining and droning in a sing song manner about one hour, he at length found both law and evidence for an Association to cut off a church. And what was the law? He brought forward a fable, spoken by Doctor Franklin in Europe, respecting an eagle catching a cat. This fable convinced forty-two persons that they ought to drop the Versailles church out of the Association, contrary to all law, precedent, constitution, rule and every thing else.

Bro. Bryce was so well convinced that it was unlawful to drop this church, that he proposed that a committee should be sent to deal with the Versailles church. Bro. Clack also spoke in favor of it. Bro. T. Dudley said, that it was the proper course to send a committee. But he fable made in England was too strong for all things besides.

John Payne, of the Great Crossings, who has long been a grief to his family, friends, and the church, was chosen High Sheriff. One great advantage of Associations is, that a man of his character can govern them; provided he is only sound in the Philadelphia opinions. Elder Vardeman sat at the right hand of the King of Elkhorn, and whispered his pleasure into the High-sheriff's ear, and told him what to do; and if it had not been for his cold, ill-natured speech, the other Parkerites would not have cut off the Versailles church. J. Creath, Senior, was the defendant of church rights, and plead that the prosecutors ought to proceed according to law, rule and precedent, and that if his enemies would prove that he, or the Versailles church, had violated any law, human or divine, that he would not refuse to die. But the fable spoken in England convinced more Parkerites than his masculine and herculean eloquence, which like the mountain tornado swept every thing before it; except prejudice and fables. Forty-two of the seventy-one messengers were as blind to reason, law, precedent, authority, constitution, and the resolution of 1827, as owls are in the day time, they were as deaf to every voice, except that of prejudice and fables, as adlers, they were as hard as nether millstones—or the adamant. It appeared as impossible for arguments to reach them, as for straws darted against the walls of China to demolish them. About the time he finished his speech, there was a cry that the gallery was falling, which rendered his speech doubly impressive, and almost as famous as Patrick Henry's speech in the Virginia Convention. There was but one voice among the outside people, and that was, the association did wrong to drop the Versailles church. Notwithstanding this complaint comes from the lawless and called meeting in Frankfort and from the Clear Creek church both, it was demonstrated before the Association that they had never taken the gospel steps with the Versailles church. Neither the lawless meeting in Frankfort nor the Elkhorn Association ever told the Versailles church that she had done wrong. The C. Creek church never had any thing against the Versailles church, only against two of her members, as we shall hereafter show. The whole plan was concerted by the Parkerites, before the association came on, in order to drop the preachers in Versailles out of the association, and thereby to stop the reformation.

Another instance of the tyrannical proceedings of the Parkerites in the last association was,—that they allowed the minutes of a fraction of the North District Association to be read, containing charges against the North District Association,—but they would not hear the minutes of the North District read, in which these charges were ably refuted. And brother John Smith was not allowed to reply without frequent interruption, and he was catechetically interrogated. The fraction of that Association containing parts of eight churches, was acknowledged by Elkhorn as the North District Association, while eighteen churches standing upon the constitutional ground were cast off by the followers of the "western goat."

J. CREATH Jr.

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