

A HISTORY  
— OF —  
KENTUCKY BAPTISTS.

FROM 1769 TO 1885,

INCLUDING

MORE THAN 800 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

BY

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HAZLE CREEK church, located a few miles from Greenville in Muhlenburg county, is the oldest now existing in the State, west of the Louisville and Nashville railroad, except Severns Valley in Elizabethtown. It was the second church constituted in all that portion of Kentucky lying south of Green river. Union, in Warren county, long since dissolved, being the first. The history of the settlement from which the church was gathered is lost. There seems to have been a man of the name of [Walter?] Thomas, (father of the late Judge Walter Thomas of Allen county), an emigrant from North Carolina, among the first settlers. There was also a family of Downses among these

pioneers. Among the members of Mr. Thomas' family was a young Baptist preacher of the name of Benjamin Talbot, a step-son of Mr. Thomas.

In 1797, Mr. Talbot gathered four Baptists, besides himself, from among the settlers, and the five were constituted "the Regular Baptist church of Jesus Christ on the Hazle Fork of Muddy river, December 3rd." It has since been known as Hazle Creek church. The nearest church to it was at a distance of fifty miles. It seems to have grown very rapidly, under the pastoral charge of Benjamin Talbot: For, in April, 1799, it established "an arm" at George Clark's on the west side of Pond creek. This year it first sent messengers to Mero District Association, a fraternity that had been formed in the northern part of Tennessee, in 1796. It remained in this Association, till 1803. At that period, Mero District Association was dissolved, on account of the bad conduct of a notorious preacher of the name of *Joseph Dorris*. Dorris was a man of very considerable talents, and was a member, and the pastor, of one of the churches in this association. He was accused of grossly immoral conduct. His guilt could not be proved, but was almost unanimously believed. The association could neither get rid of him nor fellowship him. In this dilemma they resorted to the singular expedient of dissolving the association, and forming a new one of the same churches, leaving out those which adhered to Mr. Dorris. The new fraternity was called Cumberland. Of this association, Hazle Creek became a member. Three years after this (1806), the association became so large that it divided into two. The northern part took the name of Red River Association. Hazle Creek church either remained a member of this body or went into Green River Association where it remained till it entered into the constitution of Gasper River Association, in 1812. It still belongs to this body. In 1801, the notorious "Jo Dorris" found his way to Hazel Creek church, and was excluded from [the pulpit of] it, December 5, for preaching open communion. During this year, the pastor, with others, was sent to the settlement on Trade Water in Henderson county, to receive members into Hazle Creek church. In 1804, the church had become large enough to begin to send out colonies. Leroy Jackson was ordained to the ministry. "The arm" on the west side of Pond creek was constituted a

church now called Unity. Eighteen members were dismissed to form the church now called Midway. These churches were constituted in 1805. In 1806, 18 members were dismissed to form the church, at first called Long Creek, but since known as Cana. In 1808, a council was appointed to constitute Cypress church, and ordain Wilson Henderson for its pastor.

Hazle Creek church continued to prosper till 1834, when its first pastor died. Since that date, it has changed pastors at least seventeen times. It must have possessed great vitality to maintain an existence under such treatment. In 1876, it numbered 133 members.

BENJAMIN TALBOT is supposed to have been a native of North Carolina. He was born about 1760. At what time he moved west is not known. He was among the early settlers of what is now Muhlenburg county, Ky. So far as known, he was the first preacher that settled in the lower Green river valley. He raised up Hazle Creek church in 1797, and at once became its pastor. He was a man of great energy and dauntless courage, and, from his little spiritual fort on Hazle creek, sallied out in all directions, bearing the message of peace to the settlers in a strange land. He planted many of the oldest churches in the lower Green river valley, and ministered to them until God raised up other preachers to take care of them. There is a tradition that Mr. Talbot was in Kentucky during the Indian wars. At one time he was shot through the thigh by an Indian rifleman. It was only a flesh wound, and he soon recovered, but carried the scar to his grave. In this encounter with the savages, he was separated from his company, and remained in the woods seven days without any food, except one "Johnny cake," which he had in his haversack. It was during this period of privation and danger, according to the tradition, that he was awakened to a sense of guilt before God. But where, or by whom, he was baptized and brought into the ministry, is unknown.

He continued to labor among the churches he had raised up, till the fall of 1834, when the Lord called him to his final reward, about the 74th year of his age. A handsome marble slab marks his resting place, near where stood his last earthly residence, in Butler county.

"Elder Talbot," writes Elder J. D. Craig, "was a man of

great decision of character. His purposes once formed were seldom changed. Heavy rains, hard winds and high waters were seldom obstacles between him and his churches. He was a man of rare talents. His gifts in exhortation and prayer were seldom equaled. He was a man of great earnestness, zeal and duration. He rarely delineated the sufferings of Christ except in tears. He traveled and preached much, and received very little compensation."

E. P. O'BANNON, a preacher of small ability, was one of the pastors of Hazle Creek church. He was raised up to the ministry in the lower Green river country, was a warm, zealous exhorter, and a very earnest worker in the cause of his Master. He labored seven years as a licensed preacher, and was ordained in 1852. He was quite useful as a missionary, and was a valuable worker in protracted meetings. The Lord was pleased to add many seals to his ministry. He died of consumption of the lungs, June 25, 1861, aged about fifty years.