



In hope of  
Eternal life  
Joseph Hostetter

## Biographical Sketch On The Life Of Joseph Hostetler

The subject of this sketch was born in Shelby county, Kentucky, February 27th, 1797. His father and grandfather were natives of Pennsylvania; but his great-grandfather was born in Germany, near the Rhine. His mother, Agnes, was the daughter of Anthony Hardman, about whose ancestry nothing is known.

About the year 1795 his parents emigrated from Pennsylvania, and settled in Shelby county, Kentucky. Though no longer in a German settlement, they still retained in their family the German language; and Elder Hostetler distinctly remembers the difficulties he encountered in acquiring the rudiments of the English.

When in his seventh year he entered a common school, kept by a queer little Englishman of strong Roman Catholic proclivities, though a member of the Episcopal Church. Intoxicating beverages were then freely used by people of both sexes; and, in this particular, the school-master was wholly conformed to the world. Yet he maintained inviolate the form of godliness; and, on every Friday afternoon, required his pupils to form in a circle about him and repeat after him, with great solemnity, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed!

To this school he was sent three months each year until he was twelve years old. By this means he acquired the arts of reading and penmanship; and also completed the arithmetical course, which extended only to "the Single Rule of Three." Except the medical lectures, which he subsequently attended, this was all the instruction he ever received at school.

His parents were both exemplary members of the German Baptist or Tunker (or Dunkard) church, which, even at that early period, had adopted the New Testament as its only book of discipline. It was their chief care to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and the mother, especially, spared no pains in teaching her little ones to pray; and in instructing them in what she conceived to be the doctrine of Christ. Under her teaching, Joseph became greatly interested in reading the scriptural account of patriarchs and prophets; and often did he pray to be like little Samuel, or like faithful Abraham, who "was called the friend of God."

Along with these wholesome lessons, many superstitious notions were inculcated by an old German woman, who came frequently to his father's house and related frightful stories about ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, etc. Each of these served "to point a moral;" and all together deeply impressed him with the reality of a future state and the awful penalties visited upon evil-doers. It was to be supposed that one brought up under such circumstances would readily walk in the way of the righteous. But he was naturally of a very mischievous disposition; at times highly passionate; and "as prone to evil as the sparks to fly upward." When, therefore, he grew older and became less in the presence of his parents, he often set at naught all their counsel to walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

In the winter of 1810-11 there occurred, in his native county, a great revival, which, beginning among the Calvinistic Baptists, soon extended to the Methodists and Tunkers. His grandfather and his uncle Adam Hostetler were the principal Tunker preachers, the former speaking in German, the latter in English. Under their earnest preaching and the excitement that generally prevailed, his early religious feelings were revived; and, but for the intervention of his parents, he would have covenanted to walk in a new life. They, however, thought him too young; and prevailed upon him to postpone for a brief period his union with the church.

In the mean time he listened to the several surrounding sects; and his faith was not a little shaken by their contradictory teaching.

Finally he heard one of his schoolmates relate to the Calvinistic Baptists an "experience," which, it seems, ought to be incorporated in his history, because it exerted a powerful influence on his life, and because it is a valuable though sad exponent of the religion of those times. When asked to describe the work of grace upon his heart, the poor lad sobbingly replied, "I don't know as I has any works of grace to tell. I is a poor sinner." "Do you believe in Christ?" said the blind leader of the blind. "yes, ever sence I can recollect," answered the boy. Being asked if, when he found himself a sinner, he had dreamed any thing remarkable, he proceeded to relate, in substance, the following:

He said that he had retired, as usual, in great distress of mind; and had dreamed that as he was going he knew not whither, the devil met him in the way, seized upon him, and was hurrying him off toward hell: that having been conveyed a great way, and thinking himself lost forever, a young man met them, and rescued him from the grasp of the destroyer; and that on being thus liberated he had awoke in a transport of joy. At this point a gray-haired deacon sprang to his feet with a shout. "Brethren," said he, "I've been a Baptist for twenty-five year, and ef ever I heerd a experience o' true grace this boy has give us one. So it is with all poor sinners—they are going they know not where till the Lord meets 'em as he did this boy. I can interpret his dream—he's 'powerfully converted.' Glory to God." This was the opinion of the church, and they received the young candidate into their fellowship, without a dissenting voice.

Hearing this experience, and reflecting on the fact that such dreams were the only foundation of the hope of hundreds, he became skeptical;

banished all thoughts of religion; and was soon regarded as a ring-leader among the "rude fellows of the baser sort." Among these he was a kind of clown, who, after attending a meeting, would, for the amusement of his companions, and with mock solemnity, reproduce the sermon in substance, tone, and gesture.

Subsequently, through the efforts of his uncle Adam, he was induced to "ponder the path of his feet." He grew more serious; read the Bible through; and became convinced that his skepticism was based, not on the Scriptures, but on the contradictory theories and absurd speculations of professed Christians.

This conclusion reached, he again became a seeker; but the "whisper of peace," as formerly, strangely delayed its coming.

Finally he discovered by his own reading what the believer must do to be saved. He revealed his discovery to his uncle, who at once accepted his views and on the next Lord's day taught the people openly that they should repent; confess the Lord Jesus; and be baptized in His name "for the remission of sins." On that day Elder Hostetler—then in his nineteenth year—made the good confession and was immersed into the "one body."

Though he took this one proper step, yet he by no means comprehended clearly the Christian system, nor did he at that time realize the importance of the difference he had discovered between it and the systems commonly taught. On this account he drifted heedlessly with the popular tide; until he was again borne far away from the faith of the gospel.

Immediately after his immersion he began to take part with his brethren in prayer and exhortation, and to labor for the reformation of his wicked associates, some of whom are indebted to him, under God, for their hope of eternal life.

About this time a wealthy speculator in lands, whom he attended during a protracted illness at his father's house, gratefully offered to give him a classical education, upon the single condition that, for one year immediately after his graduation, he should remain, as a tutor, in his patron's family. The proposition he gladly accepted, for from a child he had thirsted for "the Pierian spring." But to his great mortification his father positively forbade him from entering into any such arrangement: alleging that "high larnin" only fitted a man to be a villain; and that he might as well sell his soul to the devil at once, for no lawyer could ever gain admission to the kingdom of God!

This cherished design thus thwarted, he turned his thoughts into a different channel; and, on the 20th of July, 1816, was married to a pious sister who still survives.

Shortly after this event he was authorized, by the congregation of which he was a member, to preach the gospel and baptize believers according to the custom of the Tunker church. His uncle being absent for the most part, he at once assumed the principal care of the home church; and in a short time he accompanied his kinsman on a preaching tour through the counties of Nelson, Franklin, Washington, Mercer, Casey, Nicolas, and Fleming. His ministry was fruitful from the very first, on which account, as well as by the expressions of his friends, he was greatly encouraged.

In the fall of 1811, he removed to Washington county, Indiana. Settling upon a tract of uncleared land, he devoted the most of his time and energies to the opening out of a farm; yet our Lord's-days, and usually on two evenings each week, he proclaimed all he knew of the gospel. Being yet in his minority he was denominated "the boy preacher." This appellation usually attracted a large audience; and, even at that early period, his influence as a preacher began to be felt.

In the Spring of 1819, he removed to Orange county, near Orleans, and again settled in the woods. Here also he worked hard by day; and at night was equally diligent in the study of the Bible and an English dictionary, which two volumes made up the greater part of his library. Though he occasionally went into Lawrence county, yet his labors were for the most part confined to Orange; and in the fall of 1819 he and Elder John Ribble organized in his neighborhood, and on the foundation of apostles and prophets, a church of some thirty members. This was the origin of what is now known as Old Liberty church—one of the oldest, firmest, and most flourishing in the state. One night in August of the next year he dreamed that he saw on the farther side of a river, a large field of wheat and several persons importuning him to come over and help them harvest. As dreams were then of great significance in matters of religion, he inferred from this one that God had called him to preach the gospel in the region beyond White River. He was not disobedient unto what he supposed "the heavenly vision," but set out straightway for the field indicated.

The first man—a blacksmith—to whom he revealed the object of his mission, said to him, "Sir, you have come to a poor place for your business. I have not been to meeting in four years." Yet, commencing at that man's house he preached at several points in that imaginary Macedonia, everywhere relating his dream, which made a deep and solemn impression upon the people; because it led them to believe that God had been mindful of them and had sent his servant to warn them. Having immersed eight

persons and left appointments to preach again at each point in four weeks, he returned home.

On his next visit he immersed about twenty, among whom were the smith's wife and daughter; and a short time afterward a church was organized near Abraham Kern's, in Lawrence county.

This year (1820) the Tunker churches in Indiana and Kentucky determined to form a separate Association, being unwilling to conform to all the rules observed by the brethren in Ohio, Pennsylvania and other states. On a specified day the delegates met, organized, and proceeded to enact new laws for the government of the church. Against this action Elder Hostetler, John Ribble of Salem, and Peter Hon of Kentucky, solemnly, but vainly, protested. "Old men for counsel, young men for war," said the venerable controllers of that ecclesiastical body.

The following year this Association met at Old Liberty, at which session Elder Hostetler was regularly ordained as a minister of the grace of God.

As a part of the ceremony his uncle Adam presented him a small Bible, saying, "Preach and practice only what you find in this Holy Book." This remark, made at that solemn moment when he was on his knees before his Maker, deeply impressed him with a sense of his responsibility. Hitherto he had humbly submitted to the dictum of those who had the rule over him, and had felt that they were chiefly responsible for his ministerial action. But now he realized for the first time that it was his duty to study to show himself a workman approved unto God, and that to his own Master he should stand or fall. Hence he applied himself more closely than ever before to the study of the Scriptures; and he was not long in discovering



radical differences between the church described by the apostles and the various religious organisms by which he was surrounded.

Pursuing the subject of creeds, he perceived that their number constantly decreased in each preceding age, until, arriving at the apostolic period, he found but "one Lord, and the name one." By this fact his confidence in the popular systems of religion was greatly shaken; yet he quietly adhered to the church of his fathers for two or three years, during which period he baptized about as many hundred persons.

But the eyes of his understanding were being gradually opened; and his preaching was becoming more and more in accordance with the oracles of God; so much so, indeed, that, at the session of the Association in 1825, he was accused, by some of his brethren, of disseminating heterodox opinions. No decisive action, however, was then taken against him; and he continued to preach during another year, with more and more freedom from all human authority.

In the mean time, the first volume of the Christian Baptist fell into his hands. This he read with eagerness though not with entire approbation; for being yet identified with a sect he felt that the blows descended too fast and too heavily. But still the light entered; the faith once delivered to the saints and long obscured by the traditions of men, became more and more apparent objections to creeds and sects continued to be multiplied until he found it impossible longer to refrain from a full and public avowal of his sentiments. Accordingly in the spring of 1826, he gave notice that, on a certain day, he would preach at Orleans on the subject of primitive Christianity. The news was carried far and wide; expectation was on tip-toe; and on the appointed day about a thousand persons, including several of the preachers of that section, assembled to hear the promised discourse. He spoke for an hour

and a half from that proposition which affirms that " the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch," discussing,

I. The Name.

II. The Manner of becoming a Disciple.

III. Creeds.

It was a day of great excitement. After he concluded the people were seen in groups earnestly discussing the merits of the anomalous discourse. Though many doubted, not a few were convinced that Elder Hostetler had shown them a "more excellent way." The preachers present attempted no reply; but adopted a policy which was then, and still is, more effective than a manly opposition. "Oh," said they, "what a great pity that one so young, so useful, and so promising, should thus destroy his influence by bringing in damnable heresies and attempting to change the customs of our fathers." "You ought," said they to his brethren, " to talk to him; and unless he recant you should bring him before the proper authorities and expel him." This advice was listened to; and he was accordingly notified that at the next meeting of the Association he would be required to answer to the charge of heresy.

In the mean time, desiring that all his brethren should understand clearly the things whereof he was accused, he visited all the churches that were to have a voice at his trial; proclaimed to them the ancient gospel; and baptized about a hundred, who gladly received the word. Thus did God cause even the wrath of man to praise him.

When the day of this trial came he made an able defense, showing that he opposed no practice for which the word of God furnished either precept or example; that he had taught only what was clearly expressed in words which, the Holy Spirit teacheth; that he had exhorted to no duty not enjoined by the apostles; and that he had only repeated to the people the exceeding great and precious promises of God, assuring them that He is faithful that promised. In conclusion he referred to the intolerance of all creed-makers, and to the long list of martyrs that have been "beheaded for the witness of Jesus," asking his brethren if, actuated by the same spirit, they were willing to give their voices against him. "No, no," was the audible response; and a vote being taken, all but five were found to be in his favor. Thus he escaped excommunication; and, in escaping, he made more proselytes to primitive Christianity than he had ever before done in one day.

So great was the confidence reposed in him that his brethren appointed him to deliver the annual sermon at the convening of the next Association. Seeing this, he said to himself, "This day death passed upon this ecclesiastical body. About this time next year it will breathe its last; and my discourse shall be its funeral."

Such was, indeed, the case. Public sentiment rapidly underwent a change in favor of the Bible as the only platform on which all Christians could and should unite; and when the Association came together there were present delegates from the Dependent Baptists and the Old Christian Body, or Newlights, duly empowered to co-operate with them, the Tunkers, in forming a union of the three parties upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.

In this important movement they were successful. "With few exceptions, all the churches of each sect throughout south-eastern Indiana, came

promptly into the Reformation. Party names, and unauthorized assemblies such as were their Conferences and Associations, were dispensed with; and Christ became " all and in all."

From this date (1828) Elder Hostetler is to be reckoned among the public advocates of the current Reformation.

The year 1828 was fixed in his memory by other and sadder events. He was brought to death's door by a fever which seized upon him while on a preaching tour to Kentucky. He recovered; but two of his brothers were suddenly cut down, each leaving a widow and three children who became, to some extent, dependent upon him.

Depressed by these afflictions of Providence, and to better provide for his family and, if need be, for the families of his deceased brothers, he turned his attention to the study of medicine. During the year, therefore, he travelled but little and enlisted but few soldiers in the army of the Lord.

During the summer of 1829 he and Elder Peter Hon travelled extensively and preached the gospel with great success. They visited Oldham, Nicolas, Bourbon, Montgomery, and Fleming counties, Kentucky; Highland county, Ohio; and Lawrence, Harrison, Clarke, and Jackson counties, Indiana. They were frequently engaged in protracted meetings and they closed their labors for that year with about four hundred additions to the rapidly-increasing number of the disciples.

The next year he and Elder Hon revisited nearly all the churches for which they had preached the year before; held meetings at several other points;

and brought, in all, about five hundred persons to the obedience of the faith.

In the Spring of 1832 he removed to Illinois and settled not far from Decatur. There he performed hard labor as a pioneer preacher as well as pioneer farmer; for the public mind was in a worse condition to receive the "incorruptible seed" than was the natural prairie to receive the corruptible seed. During his first Summer in that place he immersed some fifty persons; and in October he organized, near home, a church of fourteen members, which included more than half of the adults in the neighborhood. The church still exists, having now more than one hundred communicants.

Among the first and principal points at which he preached was Decatur, where he encountered the Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians in force. They bitterly denounced his teaching as Campbellism, Romanism, Infidelity, etc., yet the people believed and were baptized; and in 1833 he organized what is still the church of Christ at Decatur.

The same year he went into McLean and Sangamon counties, where he baptized a considerable number; organized one new church; and brought into the Reformation a small congregation of his former Tunker brethren, who were still clinging to the traditions of the fathers.

In the spring of 1834 he removed to Decatur and engaged in the practice of medicine, though he still continued to preach with tolerable success. Among his proselytes was a Baptist preacher by the name of Bushrod Henry, who has since established a number of flourishing churches in Moultrie and Shelby counties, and rendered other important service in the cause of the Reformation.

In May, 1836, he returned to Indiana and settled on another tract of unimproved land near Bedford, in Lawrence county.

In September following, he attended once more the Annual Meeting, held near Salem; and enjoyed a happy reunion with many of his former yoke-fellows. Hundreds of people were in attendance, many of whom camped upon the ground; and after several days of refreshing the meeting closed with some sixty additions to be saved. Among these were fourteen young ladies who, dressed in white, walked out together into the stream where they were immersed by Elder Hostetler.

Elder Jacob Wright stood on the shore, watch in hand, and when they had all come up out of the water, he announced with a loud voice that the baptizing had occupied just fifteen minutes. He added that he had never seen as many sprinkled in so short a time; and that he hoped the scene just witnessed would convince all present that it was not impossible for the three thousand to be immersed on the day of Pentecost.

Elder Hostetler, sometimes assisted by Elder William Newland and others, held additional meetings this year at White River Union, Salt Creek and other points, baptizing in all about three hundred persons.

From 1838 to 1842 he devoted a portion of his time to teaching classes in English Grammar, a respectable knowledge of which he had acquired from a book presented him by a friend. In this respect he may be honorably contrasted with most uneducated preachers who, all their lives, trample under foot the laws of syntax rather than address themselves to the work of self-instruction.

Teaching, however, was never permitted to interfere seriously with his duties as an evangelist; and during the greater portion of his time he continued to preach the gospel to the churches in Lawrence and the adjacent counties, baptizing never less than a hundred, and sometimes as many as five hundred per annum.

In addition to his other labors in 1842, he held two debates with Mormon preachers, which sect, about that time, made a strong effort to gain a footing in Indiana. With the assistance of Elder J. M. Mathes, he also wrote and published, that year, a small pamphlet entitled "Calumnies Refuted." This pamphlet was in reply to another, entitled "Campbellism Exposed," which other was published by a Methodist preacher by the name of Holiday. Many copies of the two little works were stitched together by the Christians and circulated among the Methodists.

During the greater part of the year 1843 he labored as an evangelist in Clark and Scott counties, discipling some, but mainly endeavoring to revive and instruct the churches. It seems that in some of these were entertained singular views of Christian obligations, one of which was that it was the duty only of elders to pay the evangelists that came among them! The bishops, it was held, were commanded to "feed the flock of God;" and this they must do in person or provide food at their own expense. Under such circumstances he received but little support; and his services being required in other and more promising fields of labor, he left the brethren of that locality to eat the fruit of their own way. But this error, not being embalmed in a creed, soon vanished away; and the few that had held it, began to manifest proper zeal and liberality in behalf of the gospel.

The progress of the truth was greatly retarded by the political campaign of 1844, yet Elder Hostetler turned a few from the darkness of sin or of mystic Babylon to " the light of the glorious gospel of Christ."

In the Fall of that year he consulted his memoranda and notes of travel; and found that he had, in the course of his ministry, baptized over three thousand persons, and that he had spent more than a thousand dollars in the service for which he had received from his brethren less than half that amount. That he was able to do this is owing to the fact that his family as well as himself were industrious and economical; and that he was very fortunate in his business transactions. He has acquired the most of his earthly possessions—and they are amply sufficient for the wants of his old age—by buying wild lands, clearing them up; and selling them at greatly advanced prices. In all things he seems to have been the man of whom it was said, " whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

In 1845 the even tenor of his way was again interrupted by a debate which took place near Fayetteville, in Lawrence county. His opponent was the Rev. Mr. Forbes of the M. E. church.

In 1849 he purchased two thousand acres of land in Wisconsin, to which state he removed and entered into the practice of medicine. But he still continued to preach as formerly, and, in a short time, established two churches, which were among the first in the far north-west.

In 1855 he returned to Salem, Indiana, where he continued to reside for several years, preaching the gospel with wonted success throughout Washington and the surrounding counties. Among other points he visited Sullivan county, where, in company with Elder Jos. W. Wolfe, he held several interesting and very fruitful meetings.

He also returned in 1858 to Old Liberty church (in Orange county), which he had established nearly forty years before. Time had wrought many



changes; and as he strolled sadly through the old church-yard, he read, on the monumental stones, the names of many with whom he had labored and rejoiced in early life.

In the Spring of 1861 he removed to Lovington, Illinois, where he still resides. After an absence of twenty-four years, he is once more a member of the congregation on Okaw creek, which church he organized in 1832. He is at the present time employed as county Evangelist; and the pleasure of the Lord continues to prosper in his hands.

Presuming that this sketch will be read by many of his brethren, after his decease, he has furnished a short address to them, a portion of which is here inserted agreeably to his wish. He says:

"As I shall soon take leave of this world, and as all I can do must be done quickly, permit me, my dear brethren, very briefly to address you.

"When I, with hundreds of others, came out of Babylon, we were a praying people; a Scripture-reading people; a church-going people. Our sisters were not ashamed to talk about Jesus or to pray to him in the public assembly. Our brethren carried their Testaments into their fields, their workshops, their stores and offices. The word of truth was spoken in the love of the truth. There were then no choirs to monopolize the songs of Zion, but the word was, 'Let the people praise Him; let all the people praise Him.' All joined in the sacred song; and the unrheterical, though fervent, prayer was responded to by all with hearty 'amen.'

"But how are we now? "We used to read the holy word—comparing our lives, as well as our doctrine, with the doctrine and lives of the primitive

Christians; but now, alas! we too often compare ourselves with one another or with the pious among the sects. We now have a great many learned preachers, who deliver elaborate discourses, but seldom rebuke sin except at a distance. (Note: Elder Hostetler would not be understood as opposed to an educated ministry; and the fault which he justly finds with modern preachers no doubt appears greater when contrasted with the plain, blunt manner of the "former days." Thus they have many disciples. But, alas! if the favorite preacher is not to be there, only a few come out even on the Lord's day. If any old-fashioned preacher comes along, and talks about old-fashioned religion—such as 'To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and keep himself unspotted from the world'—they say, 'Ah, this will never do—this is old fogyism!' Thus we are becoming more and more conformed to the world. In theory we are right, but in practice how far do we fall he- ' the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ!'

"The light of the world! The salt of the earth! 'If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!' If the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted?'

"What else than unfruitfulness can we reasonably expect if we walk not habitually with God? If we have no pleasure in obeying him; no pleasure in his holy ordinances; but if we have pleasure in the things of earth—its goods, its honors, its fashions, its follies, its forbidden joys—whatever our professions of Christianity may be we can never stand justified before the Judge of quick and dead in the great day of eternity.

"Long after I shall have gone to the grave, and, as I trust, to rest, these words may meet the eyes of thousands who have heard my feeble voice within the last forty-five years. Let me therefore, for the last time, and standing, as I do, near the brink of the grave, entreat them to live for Christ,

for Heaven, for the success of the glorious cause in which they are engaged.

'Why should we love the things of time? This world is a Golgotha; and during every hour of the cycles of earth, thousands are breathing their last; and tens of thousands are weeping around their dying beds. Truly 'The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.'

"Shall we not then so live that, when the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, each may say, with happy John, 'Even so, come. Lord Jesus.'

"In the hope of eternal life,

"Joseph Hostetler."

Elder Hostetler is about five feet eight inches high, heavy set, and weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds. He possesses extraordinary vigor of both mind and body. His years seem to press upon him lightly.

Though by no means a scholar, yet he has gleaned, by the wayside, a great deal of useful knowledge. He is well acquainted with history—especially the history of the church and of the religion of different ages and nations.

As a speaker he is of the "rough and ready" style—especially the "ready." Indeed he is particularly remarkable for the ability and apparent ease with

which he can preach without previous preparation. His words are always at hand; his ideas clear; his gestures numerous and earnest.

In his daily walk he endeavors to live peaceably with all men; but in religious matters, he is fond of controversy; and indisposed to make any compromise that requires the sacrifice of one jot or tittle of the word of God.

He is a man that has many warm friends; and one, too, who has need to pray—as he no doubt does—for his enemies. He loves the truth of God, and jealously defends it at whatever sacrifice of ease or popularity.

If he has fought, it has been a good fight; and his character is such—take him all in all—that there is reason to believe there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness.

—Biographical Sketches of Pioneer Preachers Of Indiana, by Madison Evans, pages 57-74

Joseph Hostetler

Kentucky, 1797-1870, Illinois.

Joseph Hostetler was a remarkable man. He is properly classified with the pioneer preachers of Indiana, but his services in Illinois entitle him to this notice here.

He was of German blood and German Baptist parentage, Though a typically mischievous boy, under the influence of his mother he very early in life learned to love the Scriptures, particularly the biographies of the Old Testament characters. In the great revival of 1811 he wished to enter the church, but his parents thought him too young. But one of his companions, of his own age, was received upon the following experience, which illustrates the prevalent thought of the time on the subject of conversion. When asked to describe the work of grace upon his heart, the lad sobbingly replied: "I don't know as I has any work of grace to tell. I is a poor sinner."

"Do you believe in Christ?" asked the leader.

"Oh, yes, ever since I can recollect."

When further asked if he had dreamed anything remarkable, he related, in substance, as follows: He went to bed as usual in great distress; dreamed that he was going he knew not where, when the devil met him and was hurrying him off toward hell; thinking himself lost forever, just then a young man met them and rescued him; and that he then awoke in a transport of joy. Whereupon, a gray-haired deacon arose and said: "Brethern, I have been a Baptist for twenty-five years, and if I ever heard a experience of true grace, this boy has given us -one. So it is with the poor sinners. They are goin' they know not where 'tel the Lord meets 'em. I can interpret this dream. He's powerfully converted. Glory to God." This incident impressed young Hostetler deeply. As he had no such experience, he read the Bible through and with remarkable persistence searched the New Testament,

where he learned that his faith in Christ and repentance toward God should be expressed in his public confession of the Lord Jesus and his baptism "for the remission of sins." In his nineteenth year he was thus received into the German Baptist Church by his uncle, Adam Hostetler.

Shortly thereafter he was married and about the same time authorized by the church to preach. On that solemn occasion his uncle presented him 'with a small Bible, saying: "Preach and practice only what you find in this Holy Book" Many things were yet confused in the thought of this young preacher, but he made daily use of the Bible and an English dictionary. About 1824 the first volume of the Christian Baptist fell into his hands, which he read with eagerness, but not with entire approbation. He was strong, self-reliant, clear-minded, purposeful, and with a tremendous capacity for work, both physical and mental. In mature life he spoke both the English and German languages with equal ease and fluency. He was noted for the accuracy of his speech, both in his private conversation and in his public addresses.

Mr. Hostetler came to Illinois in 1832 and settled on a farm about twenty miles east of the then village of Decatur. There he served as a pioneer fanner and preacher, organizing in that year what was then called the Okaw Church. He entered Decatur the same year to preach. The Methodists and Presbyterians had preceded him, and, according to the custom of those days, bitterly denounced his discourses as Campbellism, Romanism, infidelity, etc. Such men as he are never intimidated, and a number of the people, hearing his message, believed in Jesus Christ and were baptized. The first church in Decatur, that was Christian only, was organized there by him in 1833. He moved there the next year, and during his two years' residence supported his family by the practice of medicine, for which he had fitted himself by his unflagging industry. He returned to Indiana in 1836.

During this period of four years, he met Bushrod W. Henry, a mighty, resolute and deeply religious Baptist preacher. He also met John W. Tyler, also a Baptist minister of fine mind. Both of these men had come from Kentucky to Illinois in the early thirties under the guiding influence of Mr. Hostetler, Mr. Tyler discarded his "articles of faith" for the Scriptures solely and dropped his denominational name for Christian only. Mr. Tyler conducted the obsequies of Mr. Hostetler, and in his funeral discourse stated this fact as it related to himself. Mr. Hostetler returned to Lovington, Ill., in 1861 where he passed the remnant of his days. He was a self-reliant and aggressive leader of men.