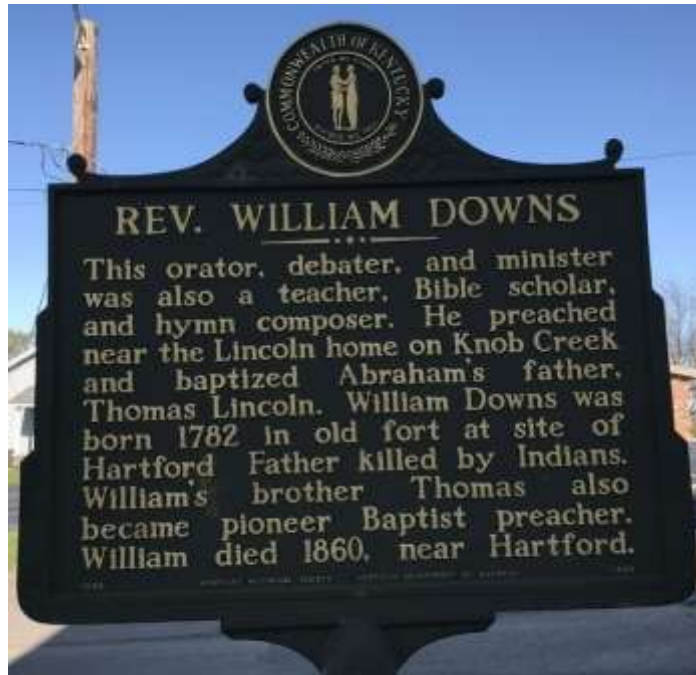


Rev. William Downs (1782-c1860)

By Jerry Long
c.2024



Historical marker unveiled on 25 September 1988 by the KY Historical Society and KY Department of Highways; marker #1834. Marker is in Hartford, Ohio County, KY behind the Ohio County Historical Society Museum, 415 Mulberry Street.





The Commonwealth, Frankfort, KY, Wednesday, 26 October 1836, p.4:

From the Elizabethtown Register, Oct. 12.
GRAND RELIGIOUS TOURNAMENT.

On to-morrow the inhabitants of the village at the Falls of Rough Creek in Grayson county and of the “region round about,” will be entertained by a controversy of no ordinary kind, between two great champions of the faith. — Mr. Mann, the great advocate of *universal salvation* in this section of country, at a late assemblage in that neighborhood threw down his gage of battle and defied the Christian host to send forth their bravest, boldest, and most powerful knight to tilt in single combat with him, the leader and mighty warrior of the Universalist camp. Forth went the challenge, borne on trumpet tongue and sent by noisy heralds on every breeze, till it readied, at his quiet cottage far from the noise and din and bustle of warfare, the ears of a once tried and celebrated knight of the Cross, named William Downs. The spirit of the old warrior was roused with indignation at the audacity of the said Maun, and quick his herald proclaimed that the gage of Mann wag accepted, in the language following — to wit:

“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that defies the armies of the living God.” I have recently been informed that a certain Mr. Mann has challenged the Christian world on the doctrine or universal salvation. Not willing to suffer his challenge to pass unnoticed, I have determined (if spared) to meet him on the 13th day of October next, at the Falls of Rough, Grayson county. Goliah defied the armies of Israel, his challenge was accepted by a stripling, who assisted by the God of Shem, slew the mighty gasconading bully. The Christian world has as little to fear from modern Goliahs as had the armies of Israel from the bully of the Philistines

Sept. 8, 1836

WILLIAM DOWNS.

To the citizens of Grayson, Ohio and Breckenridge.

We prophesy woe to the friends of Universalism, for their champion and their doctrine will lie low before the well directed and heavy blows of Billy Downs. Never will the hero of New Haven and Hardin’s Grove yield to this boasting sprite of Universalism, but as sure as they meet in battle array, the voice of Downs will go forth like the “silver shout of the trumpet” until he last low wailings of bis adversary shall be drowned. At all events we predict that *Down will have the last word.*



An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, KY.
(Edwardsville, Il: Leo McDonough & Co., 1876) p.17:

EARLY PREACHERS.

Thomas Downs and William Downs, brothers, were among the early Baptist preachers, both entirely self-made men and reared in the wilderness. Their father was killed by the Indians near the old stockade fort at Vienna, now Calhoon, on Green River. Thomas was a man of fair capacity, great piety, and indomitable energy in his holy mission. He devoted his life to his Master's cause, was always poor, and for many years traveled on foot from ten to forty miles to meet his

appointments and attend the sessions of the Association. Every person loved and respected Thomas Downs. William Downs differed much from his brother. William was a man of splendid intellect, fond of religious controversy. Being what was known as a hard-shell Baptist, he warred with the United Baptists as energetically as with Methodists, Presbyterians, or Catholics. At one time John Calhoun and others secured a challenge from Downs to a Catholic priest, and its acceptance, for a religious debate. At the time and place named Downs was on hand, having traveled on foot about seventy miles. Great preparations had been made, and fully 2000 people were around the rude stand erected in the dense birch grove. At the hour, Downs mounted the stand, took a seat, and after waiting near an hour, raised himself up to his full height, and after minutely surveying the immense crowd for some ten minutes, (and no priest being in sight), broke forth in tones which echoed far and wide through the forest.

"Where? oh, where is that uncircumcised Philistine who assumes the power of the living God?"

The excitement was intense. The air was rent by the shouts of the multitude. Downs quietly took a text, preached an able sermon, never alluding to Catholics. Downs did not walk home. He returned home superbly dressed, and for some time seemed to be flush with silver dollars, halves, and quarters. Uncle Billy, with all his ability, seems not to have been heavily burdened with piety, was bitterly opposed to total abstinence organizations.



Hartford Herald, Hartford, Kentucky, 23 May 1877, p.1:

Fragments of the Early History of Ohio County.
By H. D. Taylor, Chapter VI

... In 1806 an upper and a lower precinct, or place of voting, seems to have been formed; the upper place of voting was at the house of Stephen Cleaver – Thos. Gill and John Oldham appointed judges, and Cleaver, clerk; and the lower at the house of Geo. Ashley – with Benjamin Field and Anthony Thompson, judges, and Rev. Wm. Downs, clerk...

[preceding was also published in the book, Ohio County, Kentucky, in the Olden Days, by Harrison D. Taylor (Louisville, KY, 1926) p.22]



Hartford Herald, Hartford, Kentucky, 27 June 1877, p.1:

Fragments of the Early History of Ohio County.
By H. D. Taylor, Chapter XI

... Thomas Downs was also a Baptist preacher, but as the field of his labors was mostly in the section now included in McLean and Daviess counties, little is known of his reputation. His brother, William Downs, was likewise a preacher of considerable ability, in controversial debate, lived for many years in Hardin and Nelson counties, where he was said to have waged war to the knife with the Catholics...

[preceding was also published in the book, Ohio County, Kentucky, in the Olden Days, by Harrison D. Taylor (Louisville, KY, 1926) p.70]



History of Daviess County, Kentucky,
(Chicago, IL: Inter-State Publishing Co., 1883):

pp.57-58: Early Preachers

Thomas Downs and William Downs, brothers, were among the early Old-School Baptist preachers, both entirely self-made men, and reared in the wilderness. Their father was killed by the Indians near the old stockade fort at Vienna, now Calhoon, on Green River. Thomas, who resided south of Panther Creek; 1815-'35 and afterward, was a man of fair capacity, great piety, and indomitable energy in his holy mission. He devoted his life to his Master's cause, and was always poor, and for many years traveled on foot from ten to forty miles to meet his appointments and attend the sessions of the Association. Every person loved and respected Thomas Downs. William Downs differed much from his brother. William, a resident of what is now Ohio County, was a man of splendid intellect, fond of religious controversy, being what was known as a hard-shell Baptist, he warred with the United Baptists as energetically as with Methodists, Presbyterians or Catholics.

At one time John Calhoon and others secured a challenge from Downs to a Catholic priest, and its acceptance for a religious debate. At the time and place named Downs was on hand, having traveled on foot about seventy miles. Great preparations had been made, and fully 2,000 people were around the rude stand erected in the dense birch grove. At the hour. Downs mounted the stand, took a seat, and, after waiting nearly an hour, raised himself up to his full height, and, after minutely surveying the immense crowd for some ten minutes (and no priest being in sight), broke forth in tones which echoed far and wide through the forest, "Where, oh, where is that uncircumcised Philistine who assumes the power of the living God ? " The excitement was intense. The air was rent by shouts of the multitude. Downs quietly took a text, preached an able sermon, never alluding to Catholics. Downs did not walk home. He returned home superbly dressed, and for some time seemed to be flush with silver dollars, halves and quarters. Uncle Billy, with all his ability, seems not to have been heavily burdened with piety, and was bitterly opposed to total abstinence organizations.

pp.64-65: Bill Smothers

They built a fort at Hartford, on Rough Creek. When they were besieged they found that the Indiana generally came from lower Kentucky, wading Gren River at the falls. They established a fort there and called it Vienna. At first, of course, it was only a fort; afterward a town was laid out there and called Vienna. It is now called Calhoon. The father of Wm. and Thomas Downs, a Baptist preacher, was the last man killed by the Indians here, which was in 1790'2, within a few hundred yards of the fort.

pp.660-661: Masonville Precinct – Churches – Bethabara Baptist Church

This church was constituted Oct. 5, 1825... Polly Stout... acted as clerk for a time, during which the church called Elder W. Downs to the pastorate. He accepted and served the church with profit. At an early day the church united to the Goshen Association. At the May meeting, 1831, Elder Downs was again chosen pastor. In 1832 a new meeting-house was built some 400 or 500

yards north of the present house, on the lot of ground now used by the church as a burying-ground. About or near this time Elder Reuben Cottrell moved into the neighborhood and became a member of this church, which had become prosperous, holding frequent meetings from house to house, and adding many members to her number. In 1835 Elder Cottrell was called to the pastorate in connection with Elder Downs, and in 1836, was elected pastor of the church...



**A History of Kentucky Baptists From 1769 to 1885, Volume I,
J. H. Spencer (Cincinnati, OH: J. R. Baumes, 1885) pp.162-166:**

Rolling Fork Church was located in the southern part of Nelson county. It was constituted in 1788, and united with the Salem Association the same year. It reported to the Association seventeen members. It was probably gathered by Joshua Carman, an enthusiastic Emancipationist. This church sent with its letter to the Association, the year after it obtained admission into that body, the following query: Is it lawful in the sight of God for a member of Christs church to keep his fellow-creatures in perpetual slavery? The Association judge it improper to enter into so important and critical a matter at present. This answer was unsatisfactory. The church continued to agitate the subject of slavery till, in 1796, it withdrew from the Association. It returned to the Association in 1802, but was disturbed by a factious spirit, and a disorderly preacher of the name of William Downs, and continued to wither till 1825, when it dissolved (Minutes, Salem Association).

Joshua Carman, who appears to have been the founder and first pastor of Rolling Fork, was probably a native of western Pennsylvania. He was among the early settlers of Nelson county, Kentucky. For a number of years he was an active minister in the bounds of Salem Association, and was several times appointed to preach the introductory sermon before that body. He was regarded as a man of good ability, and was much beloved by the brethren. But, becoming fanatical on the subject of slavery, he induced Rolling Fork church to withdraw from the Association, in 1796, and declare non-fellowship with all slave-holders. He attempted to draw off Cedar Creek church, of which, according to tradition, he was pastor at that time. But, failing in this attempt, he collected the disaffected members from that church, Coxs Creek and Lick Creek, and, with the assistance of Josiah Dodge, constituted an Emancipation church, about six miles northwest of Bardstown. This church soon withered away, and Rolling Fork church returned to Salem Association. The exact date of constituting this Emancipation church, or the name it bore, is not now known, but it is supposed to have been the first organization of the kind in Kentucky. Mr. Carman, finding himself unable to bring any considerable number of Baptists to his views, moved to eastern Ohio, where it is said he raised up a respectable church, and preached to it till the Lord took him away.

William Downs was the next preacher in Rolling Fork church. He possessed extraordinary natural gifts, and was one of the most brilliant and fascinating orators in the Kentucky pulpit in his day. But he was indolent, slovenly, and self-indulgent. This rendered him almost useless to society, and perhaps worse than useless to the cause of Christ.

William Downs was a son of Thomas Downs, an early settler in what is now Ohio county, Kentucky. He was probably born in a fort where the county seat of Ohio is now located about the year 1782. His father, having moved to Vienna Fort, on Green river, where Calhoun is now located, was killed by a party of Indians, about the year 1790. He left two sons, Thomas and William, both of whom became Baptist preachers - the former, a man of great usefulness. William was brought

to Nelson county, and placed under the care of Mr. Evan Williams, by whom he was brought up. He received a fair English education, for that time, and adopted the profession of school teaching. In early life he professed religion, and united with Rolling Fork church. He commenced exercising in public soon after he was baptized, and gave evidence of such extraordinary gifts that the church too hastily had him ordained to the ministry. He had preached but a short time before he was summoned before the church to answer the charge of being intoxicated. To avoid the trial, he sought membership in the Separate Baptist church, and was received. Rolling Fork church, however, publicly excluded him, and requested Salem Association to advertise him. This was done in the minutes of that body in 1805.

Mr. Downs, however, continued to preach among the Separate Baptists till he raised up a large church of that order, called Little Mount. It was located about three miles northeast of Hodgenville, and contained a number of highly respectable citizens. Mr. Downs was fond of controversy, and engaged in several debates. His exceeding familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures, his ready wit, keen sarcasm, and brilliant oratory, attracted the attention and won the admiration of the most intelligent and refined people within the limits of his acquaintance. Hon. Benjamin Hardin, one of the leading lawyers and statesmen of Kentucky, greatly admired his oratory, and embraced every opportunity to hear him preach. During an informal discussion with a Catholic priest, Mr. Downs wit and sarcasm so irritated the reverend father that he struck his troublesome adversary in the face with his fist. This afforded Mr. Hardin an opportunity to arrange the terms of a public debate between the priest and Mr. Downs. Mr. Hardin presented his friend Downs with a handsome suit of clothes to wear during the debate. The priest opened the debate with an hours speech. Not knowing Mr. Downs church relationship, he attempted to confound him by proving conclusively that all the Protestant sects had received their baptism from the Roman Catholic church. Mr. Downs admitted his proposition, but denied being a Protestant. The priest exhibited his disappointment and confusion by saying to Mr. Hardin: You have brought me an Anabaptist to contend against: had I known this, I would not have debated with him. Greatly to the gratification of his honorable friend, Mr. Downs gained a complete victory.

About the year 1830 Mr. Downs moved to Ohio county, and again joined the United Baptists. Here an opportunity was soon afforded for the display of his controversial powers.

A Universalist preacher, of the name of Mann, had been for some months preaching at Hawesville, in Hancock county, occasionally. At the close of each discourse he challenged his audience to furnish an orthodox preacher to debate with him. Finally a gentleman present accepted the challenge. The terms of debate were agreed on, and the time appointed for it to commence. Punctual to the time, Mr. Mann, who was a very handsome man, and dressed very elegantly, made his appearance. Mr. Downs had worn out the suit of clothes which Mr. Hardin had given him, and was now clad extremely shabbily. He had on a pair of coarse, short, tow-linen pantaloons, an old wool hat, with a piece of leather sewed in the crown and a pair of coarse cow-skin shoes, without socks. He and Mr. Mann were formally introduced. The latter expressed his astonishment and disgust by asking the question: Is this the man you have brought here to debate with me? Mr. Downs replied promptly: Never mind, Mr. Mann, I am only fit to do the dirty work of the church. The debate proceeded. The Universalist fop, in debate with the old experienced controversialist, was as a pigmy in the hands of a giant. Mr. Downs played with him as a cat plays with a wounded mouse. At the close of each argument, presented with irresistible force, he quoted from Paul, leaving out the word every. Let God be true and man (Mann) a liar. At the close of the debate, the crest-fallen Universalist beat a hasty retreat, and was never afterwards seen in Hawesville.

In the split among the Baptists of the Green River country, on the subject of missions, about the year 1835, Mr. Downs went off with the anti-mission faction. After this he had a controversy with a Campbellite preacher. But while he always displayed splendid abilities in the pulpit, his moral character was so defective that he exerted little influence for good. He died in poverty and obscurity, about the year 1860.

[ed. note: The preceding sketch mistakenly reported that Rev. William Downs was the son of Thomas Downs. His father is proven by other sources to be William Downs, Sr.]



**A History of the Daviess – McLean Baptist Association in Kentucky,
Rev. Wendell H. Rone (Owensboro, KY, 1943) pp.261-262 & 251:**

WILLIAM DOWNS

The above is a brother of Thomas Downs, and was born in the old fort at Hartford about the year 1782. After the death of his father near the old fort at Vienna (Calhoun) he was brought to Nelson County, Kentucky, and placed under the care of Mr. Evan Wilson, by whom he was reared. He received a fair education for the time and soon began to teach school. In early life he united with Rolling Fork Church in Nelson County He began to "exercise" in public soon after he was baptized and gave evidence of such extraordinary gifts that the Church too hastily ordained him to the ministry. He had preached but a short time when he was summoned before the church on the charge of having been intoxicated, a weakness manifest in his later life. To avoid the trial he sought membership in a Separate Baptist Church and was received. Rolling Fork Church publicly excluded him, however, and asked Salem Association to advertise him. This was done in the minutes of that body in 1805. Elder Downs continued to preach among the Separate Baptists until he raised up a Church of that order called Little Mount. This Church was near Hodgenville, Ky., and contained a number of highly respectable citizens. As Elder Downs was fond of controversy, he engaged in several debates. His exceeding familiarity with the Scriptures, his ready wit, keen sarcasm, and brilliant oratory attracted attention and won the admiration of the most intelligent and refined people within the limits of his acquaintance. He held a debate with a Catholic priest and came off more than victorious. The priest argued from the proposition that all Protestant sects received their baptism from the Roman Catholic Church. Elder Downs admitted the proposition but denied being a Protestant. The priest exhibited his disappointment and confusion by saying to Hon. Benjamin Hardin, one of the leading lawyers and statesmen of Kentucky, and an ardent admirer of Downs, "You have brought me an Anabaptist to contend with; had I known this I would not have debated with him." Greatly to the gratification of his honorable friend, Downs gained a complete victory.

About the year 1828, Elder Downs moved to Ohio County, and again united with the United Baptists (Missionaries as they were then known). Here an opportunity was soon afforded for a display of his controversial powers. He held a debate with a Universalist preacher by the name of Mann at Hawesville, in Hancock County. Downs played with him as a cat would play with a wounded mouse. At the close of each argument, presented with irresistible force, he quoted from Paul, leaving out the word "every"-"Let God be true and MANN a liar." At the close of the debate the crestfallen Universalist beat a hasty retreat and was never afterwards seen in Hawesville.

In the split among the Baptists of the Green River Country on the subject of Missions in the year 1835, Downs went off with the anti-missionaries. After this he held a debate with another

Catholic priest in Owensboro and a Campbellite preacher and again came off the victor in both contests. While he displayed splendid abilities in the pulpit, his moral character was so defective that he exerted little influence for good. He died in poverty and obscurity about the year 1860.

From the records of the Church Elder Downs is shown to have pastored Bethabara from 1829 to 1835. During this pastorate the Church experienced a rapid growth and a new building was erected in 1832-1833. He also pastored Bell's Run Church from 1833 to 1839 and during this time made an effort to constitute two new Churches named Sardis and Shiloh but both became extinct and the members returned to the mother Church. His anti-mission proclivities finally brought about his downfall. He went into the constitution of Panther Creek Association of United Baptists (Anti-missionaries) in 1843 but never reached the heights ascended before. Downs was never fond of Temperance Societies by precept or practice. His life is indeed a contrast to that of his more illustrious brother, Elder Thomas Downs. It also shows that abilities may be misused.

SARDIS

This was a very small body organized as a Baptist Church by Elder William Downs about the year 1839, and located in Daviess County about midway between Bethabara and Bell's Run Churches some four miles from both. Its influence, perhaps, was not seen in the community as an inducement to sinners to repent, but it seemed to be better able to retard the progress of the Gospel rather than to advance it owing to their opposition to all the benevolent work in the denomination and to all efforts to preach the Gospel to the regions beyond. Although Elder Downs held his membership in the Goshen Association for a number of years he could not harmonize with that body in her work, and this gives another evidence of his hostility to missionary work and plans. This little Church was never associated with any others as far as information goes, though there was some effort made to identify it with an Association claiming to be Regular Baptists located in Henderson and Union Counties, then known as Highland Association, but before the necessary arrangements could be completed the Church and the Association both became extinct. Although Sardis had a name to live yet was dead, and a few names which had not defiled their garments; yet there was not salt enough in the body to preserve it, and therefore it was cast out. This is a sad commentary upon a body claiming to be a Church of Jesus Christ.

SHILOH

This small Church was constituted by Elder William Downs in February, 1838, on eight members, three males and five females, and was located in Ohio County some eight miles from Hartford on the Owensboro road. At the April meeting Elder Downs was called as pastor for one year, which he accepted on the condition that if the Church at any time during the year should wish to dispense with his labors they should tell him so. At the July meeting it was agreed to send a letter and messengers to the Goshen Association asking admission to that body on the condition that "The Association reject her present attachment to missions and missionaries, we then pray to be received as a member of your body." The Church was not received until her messengers agreed to withdraw the condition. They acceded to this and the Church was received. In April, 1840, Elder Jasper Bristow was called as the pastor, he accepted and continued with the Church until March, 1841. Elder Ancil Hall was then called but would not accept the care of the Church as there was much contention among the members over the subject of missions. The Church despairing of success finally agreed to disband giving all her members letters of recommendation to join elsewhere. Most of them returned to the Bell's Run Church from whence they had come. During

her existence as a Church she received 7 members by experience and baptism and 4 by letter. Thus another enterprise came to an end because of anti-mission proclivities.



A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter
(Montgomery, AL: Herff Jones-Paragaon Publishing, 1974) p.202:

Downes's Hymn Book, containing many original hymns, compiled by Reverend William Downes. Published in 1837. (Rare. A copy of it is now in the library of Col. R. T. Durrett, Louisville, Kentucky.



Genealogical Columns of Agnes Ashby Ohio County, Kentucky,
Michael L. Cook, editor (Utica, KY, McDowell Publications, 1979):

page 9

[Column of Agnes Ashby (1894-1972) published in the newspaper, Ohio County Times, Hartford, KY, on 8 January 1970]

Old letters are one way of tracing ancestors. The following was written by William Downs [Jr.] for Evan and Sarah Williams, April 16, 1820. This letter was in an article by Captain Charles Hoye published in "The Glades Star" quarterly magazine of Garrett County Maryland Historical Society in 1934, and went on to say, "This letter is neatly written on both sides of a sheet of heavy paper, legible and well preserved after 114 years."

"Dear Sister,

I gladly embrace this opportunity to inform you that we are still in the land of the living, though through affection and infirmity we are tottering on the verge of eternity, ready to drop into the house appointed for all the living, yet withstanding our state of infirmities we have reason to thank God that our situation is no worse.

We received a letter from you last spring, requesting us to write you the state of our relatives in Kentucky, as respects the Ashbys and Williams.

Old Grandmother Ashby is dead. Your brother-in-laws George and Henry Ashby are both dead. Jesse is living in Ohio County on Rough Creek. All his children are married. The family is well as far as we know. Peter is living in Hopkins County. As to the state of his family, I know nothing about it as they live upwards of 100 miles from us. To undertake to give you an account of all the Ashbys would be a task too tedious to undertake.

Your brother Edward still lives in Ohio County on Green River. The exact state of his family we cannot exactly state, but suppose they are all in health.

Brother Noah has moved but where we know not, but it is thought somewhere over the Ohio River. The state of their children we cannot say. We should be glad to hear of all of your welfares, but the probability is that we shall never see each other again in time, but there is an Eternal residence in the Kingdom of Glory. May we all be so happy as to meet where parting can never come.

Dear Sister, we are old, so are you, and according to the course of nature cannot expect to live long - the infirmity long since complained of in my head, yet afflicts me. Please give our best regards to all your children and to all inquiring friends.

Yours until death,
Evan and Sarah Williams

page 221

[Column of Agnes Ashby (1894-1972) published in the newspaper, Ohio County Times, Hartford, KY, on 29 January 1970]

DOWNES AND ASIIBY AND CORNWELL AGREEMENT, May 15, 1805

Articles of an agreement made and entered into this 15th day of May 1805, Between William Downes of the county of Ohio and state of Kentucky of the one part, and John Cornwell of Muhlenberg County and state aforesaid of the other part witnesseth that the said William Downes on his part, agreeth to teach three of the above mentioned Cornwell's Sons (to-wit) Silas, Thomas and Jerry for three years, to instruct them in the following branches (to-wit) reading, English grammar, writing common arithmetic, algebra and the theory of surveying so far as the capacity and capability of the said Downes, will admit and provided the said Silas, Thomas and Jerry should prove fully capable to receive the same and he, the said Downes, is to furnish the above mentioned sons of the said Cornwell, with boarding, washing and mending during the three years and furthermore that he, the said Downes, is to pay strict attention to his school except on Saturdays, which days the said Downes excepts to himself and if he, the said Downes should be obligated to loose any time, he is to make it up. Now they, the said John Cornwell and George Ashby, his security, on their part and in consideration of the above mentioned service performed by him, the said William Downes, obligates themselves their heirs, etc. to pay unto the said William Downes, his heirs, etc., the just and full sum of four hundred and fifty dollars thereof to be paid in cash, that is to say, one hundred and fifty dollars thereof, the remaining one hundred and fifty to be paid in beef, pork, or part of each at market price to be paid and delivered at the mouth of Rough Creek on the North Side of Green River, the beef to be delivered on foot. The above mentioned four hundred and fifty dollars to be paid in three payments, that is to say, one third to be paid on the twenty-first day of next December, the balance two-thirds to be paid the half in twelve months after the first payment is made, and the other half to paid at the expiration of twelve months from the second payment and they, the said Cornwell and George Ashby, his security, to furnish said Cornwell's three Sons with necessary books, papers and materials to complete their learning and oblige them to carefully attend the school for the true performance of which the parties bind themselves, their heirs, etc. Each to the other three in witness whereof the parties hereof do set their hands and affix their seals the day and date above written.

William Downes, John Cornwell, George Ashby

page 13

[Column of Agnes Ashby (1894-1972) published in the newspaper, Ohio County Times, Hartford, KY, on 5 February 1970]

Last week [column of 29 January 1970] I had an article about an old school. The article was taken from Deed Book AA, page 135. This one is found in Deed Book BB, page 457. The two give some idea of the children who attended. Those of John Cornwell were the only ones

mentioned by name. This school was in Walton's Creek Community and was located one mile northeast of Centertown. William Downs was teaching a Loud School in this same building as late as 1842. The contract for this school is also found in Deed Book AA, page 136 and page 458 in Book BB. All are similar but no where mentions term. Three months was usual in those lays but \$50.00 a month would have been a large salary for a teacher in 1805.

Deed Book BB, page 457: Article of agreement made and entered into this 10th day of May 1805 between William Downs of the one part and George Ashby of the other part witnesseth that the said Downs on his part obligates himself to teach school near said Ashby's house for the term of three years from and after the first day of August next to teach reading, English grammar, common arithmetic, algebra and the theory of surveying agreeable to the capability, age and capacity of the scholars and to pay attention to the school every day in the week except Saturdays and Sundays and if he the said Downs should loose any time he to make it up and now he the said George Ashby and John Cornwell his security, their heirs on their part obligates themselves to furnish the said Downs with a commodious school house in a pleasant situation near to the dwelling house of said Ashby to furnish necessary fire wood for the use of the same and to privilege the said Downs to take in any number of scholars not exceeding thirty and receive any price for the same, that he said Downs may fix for his own use except the children of the said Ashby, Sally Field, John Ferguson and William Tanner and for the said performance made by the said Downs the said George Ashby and John Cornwell his security obligates themselves to pay the said Downs, his heirs, the just sum of \$450.00 in the following manner: \$150.00 in cash the balance to be paid in beef and pork or any other necessary article that the said Downs may stand in need of to be paid to the said Downs from time to time as may conveniently suit the parties whereof the parties do hereby set their hands and affix their seal the day and date above written.

Signed and Sealed: William Downs, George Ashby, John Cornwell
Witness: James Love, Daniel Barry



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 30 July 1987, p.10B:

Ohio County Museum Current and Coming
By Dorothy Gentry

... in Volume I, *Abraham Lincoln*, by Albert Beveridge, "During this event year, Thomas Lincoln became a member of a congregation of Separate Baptists known as Little Mount Church and was baptised in Knob Creek by the Rev. William Downs. The church was about five miles distant from the Lincoln cabin."

Another reference states: "Two preachers that directly influenced the Lincolns more than any others were William Downs and David Elkin. They were strong emancipators, and the boy Abraham heard both of them preach..."



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 1 September 1988, p.13B:

Ohio County Museum Current and Coming

By Dorothy Gentry

... History also shows that Thomas Lincoln was baptized by William Downs in Knob Creek, Hardin County, in early 1816. Later that year, Lincoln moved to Indiana and joined a church founded by William's brother, Thomas.

Bell's Run is the only church on record as having had both Downs brothers as pastors, with William succeeding Thomas in the pulpit in 1832 and continuing until 1839...



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 22 September 1988:



Hartford Mayor Earl Johnson unveiled a new Highway Historic Marker on the Museum grounds at 1:30 p.m. Sunday. The marker honors Rev. William Downs, pioneer debator, orator, preacher, and who was born in the fort at Hartford in 1782. Distinguished guests included Danny Downs, his father, Robert F. Downs, and his father, Morton Downs, all of Owensboro, and descendants of the Rev. William Downs.



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 6 October 1988, p.13B:

Ohio County Museum Current and Coming
By Dorothy Gentry

The Society was honored to have Danny Downs, his father, Robert F. Downs, and his father, Morton Downs, all of Owensboro, for the unveiling of the Rev. William Downs Highway Historic Marker on Sunday, September 25.

Bobby Downs, who has made a study of his ancestors, furnished us with copies of The Two Downs Families of Daviess County, relating to Rev. William Downs, and his brother, Rev. Thomas Downs.

William, also a composer of hymns and spiritual songs, was in Hardin County for the publication of a book of his compositions by Gerard & Berry, Printers, of Frankfort, in 1816.

Bobby also furnished the Museum with a copy of the front cover of the historic hymnal for which the Society is grateful.



**Back Home In Kentucky, Jan.-Feb. 1990, Vol.13, No.1
(Bowling Green ,KY: Cockrel Communications, Inc.) p.9; and
The Kentucky Explorer, February 2014 (Jackson, KY:
Charles Hayes, Jr.), pp.45-46:**

Log Cabin Preacher

By Danny Downs

The year is 1860. The place is Ohio County, Kentucky. On a farm just north of Hartford stands a little log cabin. Inside an elderly man sits motionless in a rocker. He is William Downs, one of the first Baptist preachers and school teachers in western Kentucky. Broke and overcome with the infirmities of old age, he lives with his son's family, reflecting back on days gone by.

William was born during 1782 in a fort at Hartford. Traveling from Pennsylvania, his parents were among the first settlers in Kentucky. In 1784 the family moved to Fort Vienna (Calhoun). They lived here until 1790, when tragedy struck. William's father, Thomas Downs Sr., was killed by Indians while looking for cows that had wandered off in the wilderness. He was found in the bushes, scalped and savagely mutilated. Soon after, Mrs. Downs died.

William's seventeen-year-old brother, Thomas, Jr., was old enough to make his own way. Eight-year-old William was sent to Nelson County. Here, not far from the mouth of Knob Creek, he was placed under the care of Evan Williams. William received a fair education, professed religion, and joined the Rolling Fork Church. In 1799 he married Rachael Ashby in Muhlenburg County. She was 13 years older than he.

It was probably in the Rolling Fork Church that William was inspired to become a minister. Joshua Carman, the pastor, was an enthusiastic Emancipationist. Soon after he was baptized, William began preaching in public. He was one of the most fascinating and brilliant orators in the Kentucky pulpit in his day. Many times during his ministry, William engaged in debates. He was fond of controversy. His exceeding familiarity with the scriptures, his ready wit, keen sarcasm, and brilliant oratory attracted thousands.

William possessed such extraordinary gifts that the church too hastily had him ordained. He had preached but a short time when he was summoned before the church. The charge was intoxication. He soon sought membership in a Separate Baptist Church to avoid the trial and was received. In 1805 Rolling Fork Church publicly excluded him and requested Salem Association to advertise him.

In 1809, William Downs formed a large church near Hodgenville called Little Mount. Among the members were Thomas and Nancy Lincoln, and their son Abraham. William would become the first to have a direct antislavery influence on Abraham. By 1810, William was composing hymns and poems for the members to sing. In 1816 he published an entire hymn book for Kentucky Christians of all denominations. Also in 1816, Abraham's teacher, Caleb Hazel, and Mary Stevens were married by William. Before the Lincolns moved to Indiana, William baptized Thomas in Knob Creek.

William dressed very shabbily. He wore a pair of course, short tow-lined pantaloons, and course cow skin shoes, without socks. He also wore an old wool hat with a piece of leather sewed in the crown.

While William lived in Hardin County, he traveled back and forth to Centertown to teach school. He instructed the students in reading, English grammar, common arithmetic, algebra, and the theory of surveying.

About the year 1828, William moved back to Ohio County and held debates with preachers of other religions, always coming away the victor. From 1829 to 1835 he pastored Bethabara at Habit. He preached at Bell's Run from 1833 to 1839. In 1838 William built Shiloh and in 1839, Sardis. Both of these churches were built near Pleasant Ridge, Ky. In 1843 he joined the Panther Creek Association and began retirement.

William Downs died in poverty and obscurity in 1860. In remembrance to his years of service, the Kentucky Historical Society honored him with a highway marker on September 15, 1988. The marker stands at the entrance to the Ohio County Museum.



Sign near Highway 231 in Pleasant Ridge, KY – From 1838 to 1841 This Was Shiloh Baptist Church; 1838 & 1839 Elder William Downs pastor, 1840 Elder Jasper Bristow pastor. The church, built by William Downs in 1838 near Pleasant Ridge, KY, was relocated and rebuilt by Wallace English in 1968 in Pleasant Ridge, KY.



The History of Bells Run Baptist Church, 1820-1990,

Rev. Wendell H. Rone (Utica, KY: McDowell Publications, 1990) pp.40-43:

William Downs - The Second Pastor - Served in 1831-1838. William Downs (1782-1860) was the son of William Downs, Senior and wife. More concerning them is found in the sketch of his older and illustrious brother, Thomas Downs. he was born in the fort at Barnett's Station, Jefferson County (later Ohio County), Kentucky in 1782, He died in Ohio County, Kentucky after the census of 1860, about seventy-eight years of age. His body lies buried in an unmarked grave on a small hill overlooking the site of his birth, located about two miles northeast of the county seat, Hartford, Ohio County, Kentucky.

After the death of his father in 1788 by Indians, he was taken to Nelson County, Kentucky and placed under the care of Mr. Evan Williams by whom he was reared, He received a fair education for the time and soon began to teach school in Nelson and later Ohio Counties.

In early life he professed faith in Christ as Saviour and was immersed as a believer into the fellowship of Rolling Fork (1788) Baptist Church in Nelson County, Kentucky, probably by its

pastor, Joshua Carman. Both the church and its pastor were strongly emancipationist and had broken with and withdrawn from the old Salem (1785) Association in 1796 declaring non-fellowship with all slave-holders. Young Downs was thus instilled with a strong anti-slavery sentiment. Carman's efforts to start anti-slavery churches failed and he soon moved to the state of Ohio.

Soon after Brother Downs had become a Christian and united with Rolling Fork Church, he began to testify, exhort, and witness in public. He gave evidence of such extraordinary abilities and gifts that the Church too hastily ordained him to the Baptist ministry, he was soon called to succeed Joshua Carman. It was not long thereafter that he began to show a weakness in his life, resulting in his being summoned before the Church to answer the charge of being intoxicated. To avoid the Church trial he sought membership in a Separate Baptist church and was received therein. As Rolling Fork Church was a Regular Baptist congregation and had returned in 1802 to the Salem Association, he was publicly excluded from it and the Church requested the Salem Association to advertise the fact of his severance from it in its Annual Minutes in 1805, which was done. But he continued to preach among the Separate Baptists.

William Downs was united in marriage to Rachael Ashby on a Muhlenberg County license in November, 1799. He had come to the county with his brother, Thomas Downs, in 1798 and was about sixteen years of age at the time. From the 1850 Ohio County census records she was several years his senior - being listed as eighty years of age at that time. She died in September, 1855, in her eighty-fifth year. They became the parents of at least, two sons and one daughter. They were: William C. Downs (b. c. 1807), who married Penelope King on an Ohio County license on January 5, 1836. Both are buried on their farm in "the bend" north of Hartford and their graves are marked with field boulders; Thomas Ashby Downs (b. April 9, 1809 - d. July 6, 1869), who married Palmyra N. Ray on June 19, 1838 on an Ohio County license. She was born on March 18, 1814 and departed this life on October 15, 1876. Both are buried in the West Providence Cemetery, Ohio County, Kentucky. The dates and family of their children are given in "The Family Tree" by Agnes Ashby; and a daughter, Nancy Downs (b. c. 1811), who never married and was living with her father in late 1858 and may have died before 1860.

Records show that William Downs returned to Ohio County as early as May, 1805 and engaged in the private tutoring of the children of John Cornwell and George Ashby and others in a school house furnished by the latter. This contract was enlarged upon in 1806 and continued for some time. He also purchased 100 acres on Rough Creek in that county in 1806 and added 200 acres to it in 1807. To this was added 150 acres on Walton's Creek in 1809.

Having sold some of the land and having met his teaching obligations, he returned to Hardin County in 1810 and soon organized a Separate Baptist Church called Little Mount. it was located about three miles north of Hodgenville and soon grew rapidly to contain a number of highly respectable citizens, among them being the father of a future president - Thomas Lincoln - who was baptized in the Nolin River into the fellowship of Little Mount Church by Pastor William Downs. Abraham Lincoln, his son, was seven years of age, having been born in a log cabin nearby on February 12, 1809. This was in early 1816. Shortly thereafter, in December, 1816, the Lincoln family moved to what is now Spencer County, Indiana on Little Pigeon Creek. Thomas Downs and John Weldon had only recently organized the Little Pigeon Baptist Church where Thomas Lincoln and Nancy (Hanks) Lincoln moved their membership soon by letter from Kentucky. William Downs was probably the first preacher that young Lincoln ever heard. it is also highly probable that Lincoln and his parents also heard Thomas Downs, the brother of William Downs, preach at Little Pigeon Church or at Ohio Church nearby Rockport.

Pastor William Downs was very fond of religious controversy as a means of disseminating Bible truth and engaged in several debates, a common practice in that day. J H. Spencer, in his monumental work on "The History Of Kentucky Baptists" (1885), Volume I, pages 164-166, has this to say concerning Downs' actions:

"His (Downs) exceeding familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures, his ready wit, keen sarcasm, and brilliant oratory attracted the attention and won the admiration of the most intelligent and refined people within the limits of his acquaintance.

"Honorable Ben Hardin, one of the leading lawyers and statesmen of Kentucky, greatly admired his oratory, and embraced every opportunity to hear him preach. During an informal discussion with a Catholic priest, Mr. Downs' wit and sarcasm so irritated the reverend father" that he struck his troublesome adversary in the face with his fist. This afforded Mr. Hardin an opportunity to arrange the terms of a public debate between the priest and Mr. Downs. Mr. Hardin presented this friend Downs with a handsome suit of clothes to wear during the debate. The priest opened the debate with an hour's speech. Not knowing Mr. Downs' church relationship, he attempted to confuse him by proving conclusively that all Protestant sects had received their baptism from the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. Downs admitted the proposition, but denied being a Protestant. The priest exhibited his disappointment and confusion by saying to Mr. Hardin: 'You have brought me an Anabaptist to contend against; had I known this, I would not have debated him.' Greatly to the gratification of his honorable friend, Mr. Downs gained a complete victory."

Having returned about 1828-1829 to Ohio County and having again united with the United or Regular Baptists, Brother Downs soon had another opportunity to display his powers of debate. Mr. Spencer related the experience in the reference noted above:

"A Universalist preacher, by the name of Mann, had been for some months preaching at Hawesville, Hancock County, Kentucky, occasionally. At the close of each discourse he challenged his audience to furnish an orthodox preacher to debate with him. Finally, a gentleman present accepted the challenge. The terms of debate were agreed upon, and the time for it to commence. Punctual to the time, Mr. Mann, who was very handsome and dressed elegantly, made his appearance. Mr. Downs had worn out the suit of clothes which Mr. Hardin had given him, and was now clad extremely shabbily, he had on a pair of coarse, short, tow-linen pantaloons, an old wool hat with a piece of leather sewed in the crown and a pair of coarse cow-skin shoes, without socks, he and Mr. Mann were formally introduced. The latter expressed his astonishment and disgust by asking the question: 'Is this the man you have brought here to debate with me?' Mr. Downs replied promptly: 'Never mind, Mr. Mann, I am only fit to do the dirty work of the Church.'

"The debate proceeded. The Universalist, fop, in debate with the old experienced controversialist, was a pigmy in the hands of a giant. Mr. Downs played with him as a cat plays with a wounded mouse. At the close of each argument, presented with irresistible force, he quoted from Paul, leaving out the word 'every.' 'Let God be true and man (Mann) a liar.' At the close of the debate the crest-fallen Universalist beat a hasty retreat, and was never afterwards seen in Hawesville."

Brother Downs' continuing ministry among the Separate Baptists in the Hardin County area finally culminated in the organization of the Nolynn Association of Separate Baptists at Little Mount Church on November 6, 1819 in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky; which came about, in a peaceful separation, for the sake of convenience of the old South Kentucky II Association. William Downs became the first clerk of the new association who continued in this capacity for years. In 1820 he wrote the Circular Letter for the association which strongly affirmed the Deity of Christ. Little is known of his activities in the period 1824-1828.

In 1829 he had returned to the Ohio County area and had purchased 200 acres from Joseph Barnett, Jr. on Rough Creek. At the same time he had united with the Green Brier Church where his brother, Thomas Downs, was the pastor, he, his brother and John C. Howard served as the messengers from the Green Brier Church to the Goshen Association that same year. The two brothers and Terry Tharp served in the same capacity in 1830. The 1828 tax records show him owning 50 acres on the Nolin River in Hardin County. In 1837 he and his sons, William C. and Thomas A. Downs, owned the same in Ohio County plus the Hardin County property. By this time he had deeded the same to his sons.

In 1831 William Downs became the pastor of the Barnett's Creek (1820) Church. Its name had been changed to Bells Run in the Goshen Association minutes in 1829-1830. When he came as pastor in 1831 the name was changed again to Little Flock. It continued under that title throughout his pastorate, only to be changed back again to Bells Run in 1839 in the Goshen minutes for that year, by which the church has been known to the present.

The coming of Brother William Downs proved to be of great significance. A great revival began in 1831 and the membership took a great leap forward as 38 were received by baptism, 10 by letter and 2 were restored and reclaimed. The membership jumped from 6 to 56 that year. It continued to increase to 71 by 1835. Then decline began to set in. The reason - controversy over mission operations, Sunday Schools, temperance societies, schools, etc., including the printing and distribution of Bibles.

William Downs vigorously opposed these innovations, spurred on by a fellow preacher, Jasper Bristow. During the time he was pastor at Bethabara Church in Daviess County in 1829-1835, he enjoyed a great enlargement in that church's ministry and life including the erection of a new house of worship in 1833. He was aided by Reuben Cottrell in this endeavor. But Jasper Bristow had been his predecessor at Bethabara and had left over the subject of mission endeavors. Finally in 1838 Brother Downs led eight persons to leave the Little Flock (Bells Run) congregation and organize a new church called Shiloh. Although it became a member of the Goshen Association in 1839, the agitation over missionary organizations and operations within its fellowship finally brought about its dissolution in 1843 and most of its remaining members returned to the "mother" church. It was located near the present site of Pleasant Ridge, near the Daviess-Ohio County line. Brother Downs served the church in 1838-1840. He was succeeded by Brother Bristow in 1840-1841 when he resigned. After being turned down by Brother Ancil Hall in 1841 the church declined to extinction. Also, about the year 1839, Brother William Downs organized a small Baptist church named Sardis located in Daviess County about midway between neighboring Bethabara and Bells Run Churches, some four miles from both. It made effort to unite with the Highland (1820) Association which had turned anti-missionary, located in Hopkins County mainly but died out soon after it was accomplished. In 1843 he went into the organization of the Panther Creek Association of United Baptists with Jasper Bristow and factions from the Panther Creek II (1815) and other churches who were non-missionary.

Having served Cypress (1808) Church and Little Flock (1840) and North Providence (1839) Churches in 1840-1843, the first being in Muhlenberg (now McLean) County and the latter two being in Daviess County, he dropped out of sight. He appears with his wife and daughter, Nancy, in the 1850 Ohio County census and alone with his sons in the same county in 1860. His death took place shortly thereafter. While in the Goshen Association in 1829-1838, he often served as a fraternal messenger to other associations. He went to Green River (1800) Association as such in 1829, 1831, and 1834-1836; to Little Pigeon (1821) Association in Indiana in 1830-1835; and

to Highland (1820) Association in 1830-1836. Often he attended these associations with his brother, Thomas Downs.

One of the most fascinating facts concerning William Downs is that he wrote and had published in 1816, A New Kentucky Composition Of Hymns And Spiritual Songs: Together with A Few Odes, Poems, Elegies, Etc. The front also informs us that it is "By the Rev. William Downs of Hardin County, Ken." A short four-line poem also appears on the front., which states:

"Singing inspires the soul with joy.
And doth her frantic views destroy;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
And lifts the heart to things above."

It was printed, we are informed, at Frankfort, Kentucky by Gerard & Berry, Printers. The Kentucky Historical Society at Frankfort, Kentucky has a copy of it. Col. R. J. Durrett, the Kentucky Historian, had an edition of it published in 1837. On the first page appears a poem entitled: "On The Public Fast" dated January 12, 1813 with this added statement - "Made to be sung at Little Mount Meeting-House, Hardin County." Its four by eight inches size contained about 375 pages. In the preface, William Downs informs us that "This composition of Hymns, Spiritual Songs, etc., have occupied my leisure hours for upwards of six years." This means that he had worked on it from about 1810. He also said that "finding that labor of this kind had a tendency to wean my affections from worldly pursuits, I continued composing until about one hundred were finished" and that he continued until the work "swelled into its present size." It reveals the true heart and soul of the author.



McLean County News, Calhoun, KY, 14 January 1993, p.3A:

... Sometime during his time around Hodgenville, Downs made the acquaintance of the Thomas Lincoln family. After son Abraham became famous he was asked had most influenced his young life. Lincoln replied, "Rev. William Downs."

Some reports state that Thomas Lincoln was baptized by William Downs, but other point to a lack of proof. What is known is that Thomas Lincoln joined the Baptist church in Kentucky and, from Abraham's statement, did know William. After the Lincolns moved to Indiana, they joined a church organized by Thomas Downs, William's brother...



**Ohio County, Kentucky Court Order Books 1 & 2,
Shirley Watson Smith (Utica, KY: McDowell Publications) p.25:**

Ohio County Order Book 2

"January 10th 1807: William Downs-locates 400 acres of land in Ohio County, situated on the south side of Rough Creek, beginning on a large poplar or poplar marked W. Downs in Morris Brady's 2030 acre entry, 600 pole line and running with said line west to said Brady's upper and west corner thence south too Walton's corner thence with said Walton's line eastward to Jesse Ashby's corner in the same line. Thence south ward ___ and eastwardly to said poplar for quantity to include the improvement where on William now resides."



Ohio County Kentucky Records, Volume 1, Michael L. & Bettie A. Cummings Cook (Evansville, IN: Cook Publications, 1986) p.233:

Ohio County Deed Book AA

p.383, 17 June 1811, William Downs and Rachel Downs, his wife, of Nelson County to Evan Williams for sum of \$500 conveys a tract of land on Rough Creek. Corner of Morris Brady's 2,050 acre tract. Thomas Downs, Bailey Kindall, witnesses. Recorded Nelson County 7 October 1811. Recorded Ohio County 16 October 1811.



**The Primitive Baptist Library of Carthage, Illinois
A Conservative, Old-Line Primitive Baptist Website
Summer 2019:**

LETTERS OF ELDER WILLIAM DOWNS.
The Pastor who Baptized Thomas Lincoln.

The quotation ... from Spencer's History of the Baptists of Kentucky, gives the reader sufficient evidence, to understand why Elder Downs himself, in the letters following, would speak so disparagingly of Mr. Spencer's associates who were editors of the Baptist Banner & Western Pioneer. He uses such words as "vituperative bilingsgate, slanderous scandal, scurrility, recrimination, falsehood, deception, misrepresentation, base intrigue, persecution, abuse, and death itself, from hirelings, money beggars, pharisaical hypocrites." This will be very well understood by all those who see what was printed, that he refers to. Elder Downs defended himself, and his cause, very well.

Spencer obviously had no use for any man who differed with him on the mission innovations. We have not yet obtained a copy of what was written in the Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer.

Elder William Downs, 1782-1860, was a contemporary of Thomas Lincoln, 1778-1851. Elder Downs was a composer and compiler of hymns. His hymn book was titled, A New Kentucky Composition of Hymns and Spiritual Songs; together with a few Odes, Poems, Elegies, &c., by the Rev. William Downs, of Hardin County, Kentucky. Gerard & Berry, Printers, 1816.

For the Western Predestinarian Baptist,
Hartford, Kentucky, June 25, 1842.

VERY DEAR BRETHREN NEWPORT & CRAIG:-- I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your Western Predestinarian Baptist, and must acknowledge my surprise at some of the ideas advanced in No. 7, (which is the only one come to hand,) which is to me astonishing. Does the Old Baptists intend to provoke a separation amongst themselves on philosophical terms and metaphysical distractions on subjects no way interesting, or do they intend to throw fire brands into their own ranks? Whatever the devil is, he is so by the appointment of God in his purpose.

That he is a devil and a powerful devil, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, is clearly taught by the divine volume. The devil is denominated in the Scriptures a Serpent, Rev. 12, 9. As such, he is a creature of God, Gen. 3, 1, 2, a Dragon, Rev. 12, 9, as such he is fierce and cruel. 3rd, He is called a liar, John 8:44. 4th, A deceiver, &c., as such, he is opposed to truth, honesty and fair play. His devices are great, enchanting, bewitching, cunning, deceitful, captivating, &c., and I have no doubt but he is at the head of the protracted dispute about him. All the above facts are clearly taught by the Bible, but the Bible no where teaches that he is self-existent, almighty or supreme, but that he is commanded to worship God and that ultimately he is to be confined in chains in the bottomless pit. If the devil be self-existent, neither men nor angels can ever comprehend that feature in his character, no more than they can infinity. If God made him a devil, it was to answer some wise purpose of his own, in the glorification of his son and salvation of all his elect people. If he made him originally good and suffered him to fall as he did Adam, it was so eternally in his purpose, and as it is impossible for God to err, he can in neither case be the author of sin, as our vain philosophy sometimes prompts us to imagine. Be the Devil whom he may, he is infinitely below Jehovah in wisdom. His character and self-existence [if he be so,] what would it profit me, if I knew that he existed without any cause? I could not know any thing about a causeless cause, neither by philosophy, opposition of science nor scholastic divinity. But as the devil is a tempter, it at all times behooves me to guard against his wiles. God is God, the devil is satan -- God is light, the devil is darkness --- God is truth, the devil is falsehood -- God is immortal, the devil is mortal, &c. If the devil is self-existent, God is not, as such; the above catalogue must be changed, vice versa. I am a sinner, as such, I am so by the eternal purpose of God. This fact no honest Predestinarian will deny. If I am a sinner in the counsel and purpose of God, I am as much self-existent in that respect as is the devil. Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, says, Luke 10, 18, I beheld satan as lightning fall from Heaven. Whatever may be the true rendering of this text, to me it is certain, that he was once in a place called heaven, and that he fell from that place. Christ also says, John 8, 44, he is a devil, and abode not in the truth. As such, is it not evident that the devil was once in the enjoyment of truth, but did not continue in that enjoyment. Let these suffice, while I enter my decided protest against all speculative opinions about the devil. I dissent from Milton, from Parker, and from all others who dissent from what is revealed in the Scriptures of divine truth. All the philosophy, logical limas, scientific researches, &c., can never comprehend God, the origin of sin, nor of the devil. As such let all Old School Baptists be still and know that God is God, the devil a devil, and sin destructive to man's happiness. Dear Brethren, I am now an old man - as such, I crave indulgence and must be allowed to say to you both, suffer no more argumentative pieces about the devil to defile your valuable periodical; for sure am I that all such disputings originate from corrupt minds and must tend to strife, confusion, and ultimately division. If my eternal salvation and the elect of God depended upon correct views of the origin of the devil, all men would be justifiable to earnestly contend for the real origin of the devil. But since a knowledge of the origin of the devil is not the pivot on which salvation is either offered or procured, I am resolved not to trouble my brains about it. The seemingly ill-natured remarks in the Signs of the Times, between brethren Trott and Goldsmith, have, I have no doubt, been injurious to them both, if not to the cause generally. May all such controversy cease and each of us learn to imitate the beloved disciple John, and thus know nothing but to love one another. I am taught by the Bible that there will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust, that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man Christ Jesus, whom he had appointed heir of all things, and that at that day the son will deliver up the kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all. That the righteous will not rise to

be judged, but to enter into possession of the joys prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

Another subject of controversy hath showed itself in your 7th number, that is the Saviour's meaning about the new birth, John 3, 5. Although this is a subject of vital importance, it is certainly a subject not comprehended by all who think they understand what the Saviour meant. To be born again, implies to be born another time. Here the second birth is contrasted with the first, as such it seems to me that literally the first birth is a birth by water, not figuratively, but elementary, as such it is called a birth of the flesh. This birth always does, and of necessity must, precede the second birth. The process by which the first birth is brought about is all natural from Adam up to the present day. The process by which the second birth is accomplished is throughout in all its bearings supernatural and divine; as such it is a birth by the spirit; and since grace is infused into the soul by the Holy Spirit, that grace quickens its dead faculties or makes the soul alive. This I deem regeneration which means cleaning or washing, and since grace is represented figuratively to water in its divine application, the second or new birth may be said to be a birth by grace and the spirit. Though Nicodemus was a son of Abraham by descent, the birth that made him so could never give him spiritual enjoyments nor yet entitle him to a station in a spiritual kingdom. Hence the necessity of his being born again, or another time, or in other words, created in Christ Jesus, or Christ formed in the soul, the hope of glory. The above phrase, with the subsequent, to be circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, made alive, renewed in the spirit of the mind, &c., are all synonymous terms, meaning the same thing, the new birth or a birth by the spirit, or if you please, by grace and the spirit. The birth spoken of in the above text by water, in its literal application to fact, certainly means the first birth or the birth of flesh; if not, there is, it seems to me no meaning in the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus. Christ says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh. You must be born again." While in the 8th verse, Christ puts the whole subject to rest, since he denominates the birth by the spirit is the new birth, and applies it alike to all who receive it. Dear Brethren, I hope this letter may not prove offensive to any person; for I can assure you I have not designed to give offence to any, but purely to put a stop to unnecessary disputation amongst the Predestinarian Baptists. I am perhaps one of the oldest Baptist preachers in Kentucky, having been preaching about forty years. I have carefully read the New Testament through 12 or 14 times, and yet I fall short of understanding it all. Yet I think I know there is an incomprehensible God, a mysterious Devil, a general judgment, and a second birth or a regenerating process necessary to prepare men and women for the enjoyment of God, both here and hereafter. If I am saved, called, justified, regenerated or created in Christ Jesus, I am saved by grace eternally given me in Christ. If I am called with a holy calling, I am called unto obedience. If I am foreknown in the eternal counsel of God, I am predestinated; if predestinated, I am called; if called, I am justified; if justified, I am glorified; and in the end, I shall be redeemed from death, ransomed from the grave and fashioned like unto the glorious son of God, when and where I shall see him for myself and not for another.

WILLIAM DOWNS, of Ohio County, Kentucky.

For the Western Predestinarian Baptist,
Hartford, Kentucky, June 25, 1842.

BRETHREN BEEBE & JEWETT:

Suffer me to say to you both, exclude from your columns all argumentative communications about the origin of the devil. If you do not, you will assuredly cause a division in

the ranks of the Old School Baptists. The great, pious, and devoted Apostle Paul determined to know nothing among the Churches but Jesus Christ and him crucified. I would rather know Christ to be my Saviour than to know all about the devil. If the devil is self-existent, be it so. I hope he is no friend to me. If he was once an angel of light and with God in heaven, he was there by the appointment of God. If he sinned and fell from that station, it was in the eternal purpose of God so to be, to answer some wise design of his own. If he was created previous to the creation of Adam and fell from his original purity, be it so, I am content. If God made him a devil to answer some wise purpose of his own, be it so. If the devil created himself, still he is a devil and will, I think, remain so. He often tempts me. He is every where present, but in heaven, from that incorruptible place he is excluded or shut out. He is mighty but not almighty. He is powerful but not all-powerful. In a word, he is the prince of darkness; the king of the bottomless pit; the enemy of God, of course, to his chosen people. He is the father of falsehood, the deceitful hypocrite; the inventor of every hateful thing. His character is odious; his devices mischievous; his pretensions hypocritical, &c. As to the character of the devil, all who believe the Bible will agree in, as to his origin, none can comprehend it. Why then all this ado about it? The devil is well gratified when he can instigate God's people to quarreling about him. As such, I am determined to never lift my pen to write any thing about his origin, since his origin is only known to God. Be that what it may, I am content and am writing to be still and know that God is God. A God possessing all wisdom, all goodness and all power; as such he knows who the devil is, from whence he came and what use to make of him. To me, God is good, superlatively; good, in delivering me from the wiles of so powerful a devil. He is all-powerful in the destruction of him who holds the power of death, to wit: the devil. The dispute about the resurrection and future judgment between brethren Trott and Goldsmith, had well nigh caused some to withdraw their subscriptions from the Signs of the Times, and should it be revived, I have no doubt but such will be the result. The controversy never in the least affected me, since I am fully, I think, established on that subject. Brother Trott's views thereon, are mine in toto; yet I think brother Trott used some unsavory expressions about Brother Goldsmith's opinions. I never understood Brother Goldsmith to discard the idea of a future judgment and a general resurrection. If Brother Trott so understood him, he was justifiable in charging upon Brother Goldsmith the crime of Hymenaus and Philetus. As to the charge of Brother Goldsmith's ignorance of the new birth, that was altogether gratuitous - for this I am gratified to Brother Trott making reparation to Brother Goldsmith, which proves that Brother Trott is both the gentleman and the christian. May more such magnanimous patriots for the Christian religion as is Brother S. Trott wield their pens in defence of its genuineness and divine origin. Brethren Beebe and Jewett, will please publish this communication to them, in the Signs and Advocate, if they think it worthy of a place in their columns. If not, they will lay it by. I am, with profound respect, yours in christian fellowship,

WILLIAM DOWNS, of Ohio County, Kentucky.

For the Western Predestinarian Baptist.

DEARLY BELOVED BROTHERS NEWPORT AND CRAIG:

In the multiplicity of business in which I am at this time engaged, I have consented to borrow a few moments to send to you the following communication for the Predestinarian Baptist should you think it worthy a place in its columns. I own to you both that I am somewhat alarmed and deeply distressed in reflecting upon the portentous occurrences of the present day. The christian world is at this day miserably distracted and torn to pieces, by division, discord and faction, and especially the denomination called Baptists, once deemed the light of the world, the

salt of the earth, and the spiritual Israel of God. But what are they now? A ruined, split up, and contemptible mass of fragments divided and subdivided into at least a dozen sects, all arrayed against each other, with as much hatred and intolerance as the fiend of the bottomless pit could almost wish. Those different sects are every where hateful, and hating each other. Is there not for all this state of things a cause? Certainly. In the purpose of God, it is first to be found, by him designed, and intended: 1st. To purge his church by separating the tares from the good wheat. 2nd. It is found in the general union entered into between the Regular and Separate Baptists. From that union (falsely so called) has grown up the present distress. That union was hypocritically entered into; as such it was unquestionably an unlawful marriage; as such the children resulting, or growing out of that unlawful union, are all the children of illegitimacy. The complete heresy; the Stone and Marshall-schism; the Missionary innovations with the Stinsonite abomination, are, I awfully fear, naught but the children of this unlawful connection, all partaking more or less, of the errors of the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. St. Paul, II. Thess. 4:3, prophesies of this very day, for, says he, Let no man deceive you, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4th verse, Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God showing himself that he is God. From the above I infer that intolerance is the man of sin found in the succession of the Popes of the church of the see of Rome. If my views of this subject be correct, the following conclusions are also true. 1st. There never was any Apostolic church set up in the world, the pillar and ground of the truth, but the original church first planted at Jerusalem by Christ and his Apostles. 2nd. That church, I clearly believe, is at this day only found with the Regular or Predestinarian Baptists. That church for about three hundred years with its branches remained in the general, sound in the faith and practice of the gospel, with few exceptions. In the year 324 or 325, Constantine the great, out of a false zeal for Christianity united it with state policy, which soon proved a flood of poison poured into the lap of the church. This anti-christian zeal of the Emperor laid the foundation of all the subsequent abominations that characterizes the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Almost instantaneously sprang up, a thirst for College bred preachers; those when stationed in power sought to ride rough-shod over the laity; next came Missionary friars to tease the laity out of their hard earnings to aggrandize the Clergy, but by hypocritical pretense to immortalize christianity by raising it above the state, in direct opposition to the orders of christianity itself. Out of this arrangement grew a thirst for distinction. This was soon obtained; humble preachers of the cross was soon displaced, and Priests with badges of distinction made to officiate in their stead. Out of this order, grew Bishops, archbishops, prebendaries, prelates, and lastly, a Papal or Pope, or universal Bishop, vicar of Christ, etc., which St. Paul means by the man of sin. At his bidding the world was convulsed, and then ensued persecutions, famine, carnage, blood shedding, roasting, burning, &c., all hereticks by his holiness, so denominated. From these cruelties and abominations fled the pious Waldenses, Vocdesis, Petrobrussisns, Nestorians, and others, and thus was the church of Christ split up into fragments or fractions and scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd, while the great majority remained under the influence of the man of sin, swallowed up in all his abominations. But God, who is rich in mercy never did, nor never will entirely forsake his Elect people, chosen in Christ and grace given to them before the world began. II. Tim. 1:9. To the deliverance of his Elect Israel, he raised up a Cyrus, a Darius, and others to rebuild his house, and lead them out of Babylonian captivity. In this manner did God raise up a Wickliffe, a Huss, a Luther, with others to reprove the abuses of his spiritual Israel; this they measurably did by reforming some of the abuses brought on by the man of sin. Their reformations gradually progressed, until an effectual reformation was

completed in Wales by the Predestinarian Baptists there. Their confession of faith may at this day be seen, in what is denominated the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. In the above extracts, I have traced the church from Christ to Constantine; from thence to the man of sin; from thence to Wickliffe, Huss and Luther; from thence to the Predestinarian Baptists, in Wales, where she is again occupying original ground; from thence she has progressed with very little molestation, or alteration up to the year 1800. Though during this time she has been opposed, hated, and set at nought by the whole array of the arminian phalanx, and Pedobaptist Rantism, yet has she, almost proselyted the world on the subject of baptism. I next compare the above eras with the present state of the church as connected with the above prophecy, II. Thess. 2, 3, 4. About the beginning of the 19th century, the Baptists were visited with a great revival of religion. In this revival thousands were added to their churches. Just at the close of this revival the union between the Regular and Separate Baptists were concluded, which introduced in a short time almost every heresy arminianism was capable of introducing; so that Luther Rice, in the year 1812, instigated by the love of money, brought on to Kentucky the Missionary fever under the pretense of sending relief to Judson and Carey, then stationed in the Burman Empire. Rice making a great profit by imposing upon the unsuspecting part of the Baptists, with others, caused hundreds of money loving preachers to embark in Rice's projects. Thus was introduced into the churches a host of money institutions, such as Missionary Boards, with a host of officers, such as Presidents, Vice Presidents, Managers, Life members, etc., all looking up for distinction and remuneration. Add to this unscriptural society, the bible, the temperance etc., societies, with their distinctions and salaries annexed, and you see, at least, of innovating abominations all growing out of love of money, and others for distinction. These abominations are now almost every where imposed upon the churches, to their disquietude and division, so that it may in truth be said, that the gold is again become dim, and that the glory has departed from Zion, while her sons and her daughters are now setting disconsolate and weeping as did the Elect Israelites in the Babylonish captivity. O melancholy picture. In my humble opinion what at this day is denominated the United Missionary Baptists are aiming to bring on as late of things not a whit better than existed in the reign of Pope's Gregory VII and Leo X. Then existed intolerance, persecution, and slanders, never in any age of the world excelled. At this day, the same abominations are almost predominant, which characterize the Missionary churches as they did, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. It is true that the exercise of their cruelties is let or hindered by civil authority which will prevent the execution of their intolerant designs. But how long this may be the case, I am unable to say. But let those intolerant aspirants get the reigns of civil authority (as did the Pope of Rome) into their hands and rivers of pious blood would again drench the earth. The shrieks of pious men and women would again be heard, from the midst of torturing flames. These things are by the great majority of the American people hooted at as though no danger is to be apprehended; in like manner did the great majority hoot at the gradual approach of Papistical supremacy in days that are past by and gone. The Popes in their crusades to unlimited power were asserted by large councils filled up with designing ambitious clergymen. Many of these councils set for years (one at least at one session 38 years) deliberating the destruction of the common and religious rights of the laity to aggrandize the Clergy, who like greedy wolves, were seeking their own profit at the expense of all others. In like manner we see the execution of the Missionary innovation upon original christianity, treading in the same steps as did their predecessors and exercising similar means, presenting the same colors, and venting the same spleen in their anti-christian papers, regardless of the pressing injunctions of the New Testament of God's grace; anciently the church was ruined by intrigues, councils being friars, false glossaries, and ambitious money lovers. At the present day, they are ruined, distracted, split up

and rent in pieces by general associations, petty councils, hireling preachers, venters of slanders against the brethren. New schemes to make gain constantly following each other in succession, and to palm these impositions upon the ignorant and unsuspecting, the divine book is ransacked from chapter to chapter, with detached verses and fragments of verses perverted and metamorphosed so that the Bible is made to say what its divine writers never intended it should say. The cause of all the 460 sects, now existing in the christian world have all been produced by disappointed aspirants who have coveted to be rulers, or independent leaders. Such failing to realize their wanted expectations, have set up for themselves, and thus drew parties after them as at the present day out of the original Welsh Baptists, known as the Particular, Regular, or Predestinarian Baptists, have grown, the General, the Separate, the Dunkard, the Seventh Day, Baptists, all of the arminian stamp. But of the general Union, have grown the Campbellites, or Reformers; Stinsonites, Missionaries, Mormons, Middle Ground etc. Baptists (falsely so called). Not one of the above sects deserve the name; yet they have all arrogated it to themselves, and are busily engaged in nick-naming the real Baptists. They call them Antinomians, Parkerites, Iron Jackets, Hard Sides, Infant Destroyers, etc. These, though all arrayed against each other, all unitedly vent their poisonous spleen, and unheard of slanders against those who are Baptists indeed. So do all the other sects. Thus do all unitedly misrepresent, belie, and slander the Old Baptists, as though they were not the creatures of God. Let the original Baptists, then, to a man, stand to their posts, by earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, Jude 3, and ere it be long, error will hide its deformed head, and the whole elect of God will, in union become to their enemies as terrible as an army with banners. In my humble opinion, every individual who contributes to the Missionary operations is ignorantly contributing to the downfall of the American Republic. The leaders and inventors of this anti-republican institution, have long since been convinced that they could not speedily attain to their wanted prospect, until they trained up votaries enough to revolutionize both church and state. Thus they are now busily engaged to do as may be seen in their numerous protracted meetings in which they make to themselves thousands of proselytes, mostly out of little boys, girls, and negroes, all intended for show, and to intimidate the weaker soil of those who are Baptists indeed, and it is remarkable, that all their protracted, or distracted meetings excite no interest with the people, but a small distance from them; hence it is, that as soon as their efforts are withdrawn, the excitement ceases. Dear brethren, I must close by praying Almighty God, to give you both wisdom and christian prudence, sufficient to the crisis in which you are placed. I am in the best of bonds, your unworthy brother in Christ.

WILLIAM DOWNS, Ohio Co., Ky., September 27, 1842.

[Western Predestinarian Baptist, Paris, Ill., Vol. 1, No. 15, June 1, 1843, pages 235-238.]

Richland, Ohio County, Kentucky, September 27, 1842.

BELOVED BROTHER CRAIG:

I send you a few lines, the purpose of which, you will see, when you read them. Some weeks back, I was all night with Bro. Griffin Kelly, Henry Co., Ky., who has in his possession a bundle of my writings on various religious subjects, one of which was the equality of he Father and the Son, in their relation to each other. In an expression found in the writings, I am informed that you took some exceptions. Before I advert to the passage, or sentence, you objected to, I will give my views on that incomprehensible subject, I. Tim. 3:16.

1st. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Son of Mary, his Virgin Mother, as such, he is perfectly God, and perfectly man. So that in him is two distinct natures, Col. 2:9, Col. 1:15.

2nd. I believe that Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is equal, co-equal, and eternal with God in wisdom, power, and glory. But as the Son of Mary, he was made a little lower than the angels, Heb. 1:14.

3rd. I believe Jesus Christ is one in essence with his Father, the second adorable person in the Godhead, Col. 2:9.

4th. I believe Jesus Christ as the Son of God, was in his generation, Eternal, but not so, as the Son of Mary, John 1:14, Col. 1:15.

5th. I believe the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus Christ, Col. 2:9, which sense he is God manifested in the flesh, I. Tim. 3:16, etc. Romans 5:19,30.

6th. I believe Jesus Christ as the Son of God in union with Divinity is infinitely self-existent, but not so, as the Son of Mary.

This brings me to the sentence you objected to. I said, and I still say, that Jesus as the Son of Mary, is not infinitely self-existent, neither is he as such infinitely good, infinitely wise, or infinitely holy. As my justification in the above belief, see the following scripture proof. 1st. He is the Son of Mary, Matthew 1:25th verse. 2nd. He was a young child, Matthew 2:8, 11. Luke 1:27, Luke 1:44, 80. Luke 2:12, 21, etc. 12:72. 3rd. He says he did not know the end of the world, Mark 13:32. 4th. He objected to be called good, Matthew 19:17. 5th. He said, he of himself, could do nothing, John 5:4. 6th. He said, my Father is greater than I, John 14:28. All these sayings, evidently, refer to his human nature as the Son of Mary, but not to his divine nature as God; thus it is, that the unity of the Godhead, or the adorable Jehovah is clearly presented in my mind by the scriptures of divine truth, in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom, and whom alone divine honors are equally due, from me, at least. If my views are wrong, I ask some of my brethren to instruct me, and lead me into the truth. I am resolved to have no controversy with my Predestinarian Baptist brethren; I am an old man, and an old sort of a preacher; yet I am not too old to covet instruction, and would as soon receive it from you, as from any of God's other dear children. Dismissing that subject, I have to request your indulgence for writing so much on a single sheet. My apology for so doing is that when I write I wish to communicate much, and since the postage of letters are high I could not find money to pay postage should I send many communications to you, and to palm postage on you or the office would neither be honorable nor just. My next communication to you, I intend being on the Union of Christ and his church. Your brother in Christ,

WILLIAM DOWNS.

TRANSPosed PROSE TO VERSE.

To me, there is but one God, The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, To whom divine honors are due, the same as to the Father. The Holy Ghost is also God Almighty to whom divine honors are equally due, to be but one in essence, will, and mind, neither divided, or compounded in their nature, in personal relations, all of which are divine. The Father is of none, nor yet begotten, the Son is eternally begotten. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father, a pure spirit, Through the Son, Yet all but one God.

These are my views of this incomprehensible subject, both in verse and prose. These with the above letter to Bro. Craig you will publish, if you see proper.

VERSE.

One God I own divinely true,
One Jesus Christ to him is due,
Who now's enthron'd the God in heaven.
One Holy Ghost, a God of power,

That with God and Christ adore,
Yet all but one in essence joined,
One in will, and one in mind,
The Father God, he is of none,
Eternal is his only Son,
The Holy Ghost from God proceeds,
Through Christ the Son who intercedes,
For all the gift, the Father gave,
All which the Holy Ghost will save.

Yours in Christ, WILLIAM DOWNS.

[Western Predestinarian Baptist, Paris, Ill., Vol. 1, No. 16, June 15, 1843, pp. 243-244.]

FOR THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.
Hartford, Ohio Co., Ky., July 15, 1841.

WORTHY AND BELOVED BROTHER IN CHRIST: I must acknowledge that I have too long neglected a correspondence with you, and too long been silent in speaking through or by the Signs of the Times. The cause of my silence has not been out of any disrespect to the cause you so ably advocate and so masterly defend; but, from an aversion I have had in general to all religious periodicals: which aversion, in me, has been created by my unabating prejudice against the Baptist Banner & Western Pioneer (falsely so called). The merits of that paper, in my opinion, entitle it to the estimation it has acquired, as a vehicle of vituperative bilingsgate, slanderous scandal and scurrility, uniformly directed against the truth. Sure I am, that it deals in slander, recrimination, falsehood, and deception. And in so doing, it professes to sustain the cause of the United Baptists, (falsely called) who have so grossly apostatized, even from the articles of the general union, that they are no longer considered the same people they were thirty years ago. Instead of preaching salvation by grace, as did Paul, they preach effortism, human agency, instrumentality, and the highest colored arminianism, to gain proselytes to carry out their unrighteous system; they constantly keep in the field a set of hirelings or money beggars who, to prove successful in their ungodly efforts, have erected anxious seats, mourning, or work benches, by means of which, and the exertions of their devotees, they are daily filling up their churches with pharisaical hypocrites - with little boys and girls, who know no more about experimental religion than Nicodemus did of the new birth, by water and the Spirit. Experimental religion is by them but lightly esteemed, if esteemed at all. The operation of the Spirit in the conversion of the soul to God is by them irreverently spoken of, as a thing too much harped upon by Old School Baptists, and baptism or immersion almost converted into the laver of regeneration or the new birth. In their churches, they keep up no orderly regular scriptural discipline; but, in all their proceedings, trickery, intrigue, and low devices are resorted to, with an eye to the support of their human institutions, regardless of the word of divine truth. I own it is wrong to speak evil of any person; but, contend that truth is truth, and that Israel should be shown her sins, and Jacob his transgressions: that, as directed by Jude, I believe it my duty to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. This cannot be done without exposing the errors of the day. If the Baptists were right in the days of Gill, Toplady, Stennet, Bunyan, Booth, Beddome, &c., they are certainly wrong now. Since no such things as at this day practiced by the United Baptists were ever known to their several churches: anxious seats and mourning benches are of modern contrivance amongst the Baptists as such; I awfully fear the invention of some foul demon, designed and intended to tarnish their fame as the only church of Christ: slander, misrepresentation, falsehood, and base intriguing are the weapons

of their warfare, if the "Banner & Pioneer" be a sample of their dispositions. If not, they are either foolishly bewitched or designedly wicked to support it. Myself, with brethren Dudley, Newport, Keith, Tabor, Ricketts, Bristow, and others are shamefully abused, tantalized and basely belied by the Banner and its anti-christian devotees. Perhaps if the Banner had kept my name out of its lying pages, I might have remained silent as to its vulgarity. But, since its editors have published three or four base publications against my moral and religious character, I have determined, as long as the "Sign of the Times" continues to publish the truth, to forward to its editor a monthly number at least, for publication in its pages. I have about one hundred pages already written in answer to each publication in the Banner, each charge therein exhibited against me, I have proven irrefutably false - by the associations, churches, and individuals of the first respectability. These writings, I intend sending on to you, which I wish published following each other, until the whole is published. Were I, and those worthy brethren, the only sufferers in their bishop-Bonner-like crusades against the truth, I might content myself in silence; but, since their slanders are designed to effect and tarnish the true church of Christ, and overturn the truth, to pave the way, to get into their power, (papist-like) the reins of government, I have determined to oppose all their ungodly schemes, hoping thereby to prevent the lovers of truth from enlisting under their infamous banner. For sure am I, that no man who regards primitive christianity can for a moment patronize the anti-christian Banner & Pioneer whose columns present very little short of slander, misrepresentations, falsehood and perversion; in which its editors prove themselves hateful, and hating their brethren. There are Waller, Buck, Peck, and others, as intolerant as was bishop Bonner in the reign of Queen Mary of England; they are only restrained by civil authority from burning (as the papists did Cranmer, Rogers, Philpot, and others,) - myself, and many others, who have shared their wanton abuse. I have no hesitancy in saying that the Mormons were sent over from England to revolutionize this country; as such they are abolitionists. The missionary system had its origin with the papists, and Great Britain, who are all in England abolitionists - thousands of which have obtained footing in America. And although Waller places me below the Mormons, I place him exactly identified with them, and all his devotees.

Brother Beebe, I wish you to publish this letter in the "Signs of the Times," as my preface to what I intend sending on to you for publication. You will please send me on two copies of the Signs of the Times, for the year 1841: send me on all the back numbers for 1841, and I will remit to you the money for the two papers, as I wish to take them for the whole year. I hope you will not think of quitting, for at least ten years. Every occurrence proves the utility of your paper, and that it is growing more and more in demand. I, myself, would maul rails at twelve and a half cents per hundred, before I would be without your useful Signs of the Times. Just so long as you edit the Signs of the Times, I am a subscriber for it, provided it deals in the truth as it heretofore has done. I am in every sentiment of respect, your unworthy brother in Christ,

WILLIAM DOWNS.

WORTHY AND BELOVED BROTHER BEEBE:-- It is with unfeigned satisfaction that I announce to you the receipt of your papers, the "Signs of the Times;" those numbers have already been to my soul like good news from on high, since they have dissipated my fears, relieved me from many doubtful disputations, and established me in the sovereignty of all abounding grace. I am greatly delighted in reading the epistles of your worthy correspondents, and much interested, especially, with editorial remarks. Although there are some opinions given in some of the communications to you, and one at least in the editorial remarks, that I cannot as yet give in to; yet

they may be right and my views wrong. And since I am unknown to you by face, and most of the brethren that communicate with you, I have concluded it nothing wrong to let you know who I am, what I am, and whither bound, before I communicate any more pieces to you for publication.

I was born of the flesh, October 28, 1782, in Nelson Co., Ky., and I hope I was born of the Spirit, Oct. 1801, in Mecklenburg county [ed. note: this should be Muhlenberg], Kentucky. I joined Cedar Creek church, Nelson Co., Kentucky, on the 4th Sunday in May, 1802; in October same year, I was licensed to preach, by the above Regular Baptist church, constituted on the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. In the sixteenth year of my natural life I embraced the views and opinions advocated by Thomas Payne, in his "Age of Reason," and then commenced abusing the Bible as a book unworthy of my attention, believing or feigning to believe it a book of lies, contradictions and burlesques on common sense; the invention of designing priests to awe the world into subjection to their ambitious designs. About three years I was trying to disbelieve the Bible as a revelation from God, supposing that the laws of nature were all sufficient to teach me every thing about God desirable for me to know. But God who is rich in mercy, did not design that I should thus remain; in his providence I was directed to attend at a place of worship in Mecklenburg County, Kentucky, where Elder Benjamin Talbert was to preach; a man I esteemed as a fine jovial fellow. I took my seat in about the middle of the house. After he was done preaching he commenced singing a hymn and shaking hands. I thought he fixed his eyes on me; at all events, he moved towards me and reached out his hand to me: I said, Every dog shake his own paw, and refused him my hand; he smiled and passed on, but as he passed me he laid his hand on my shoulder: as he took it off, this awful sound like thunder horrified me, "God will pass you by in the great day of accounts." I trembled, and was near falling on the floor; after meeting was dismissed I got out as well as I could, believing the eyes of the people were all fixed on me: however I got to my horse and made for my home. My reflections were such as I cannot describe; I considered myself ruined or totally undone, since the christians all knew there could be no mercy for me, having abused the Bible, denied the Saviour, and ridiculed religion, and my former associates would laugh at and scorn me. I continued in this awful situation about a week, when I concluded I would go and see two of my deistical associates, hoping they would by their conversation with me drive these melancholy reflections out of my mind - all proved ineffectual, and I returned home, worse burdened than ever. I next tried the "Age of Reason;" its arguments were disgusting so that I burnt it. I then concluded I would quit all my bad practices and keep the law, since I thought I believed in the Bible, and also believed in Christ. In this way, I continued for at least a month; yet the awful thunder, God will pass you by, would demolish all my hopes, and sink me back into almost hopeless despair. I was next solemnly impressed with the duty of prayer; but how to perform it I knew not; for weeks I faltered or lingered in this way, and I well recollect the first time I ever attempted to get upon my knees; I was alarmed with this awful reflection, whom are you going to pray to? The God you have said is a bastard, and imposter, &c. This awful reflection drove me from my knees and suddenly hurried me from the place; still I was impressed to pray and often made attempts; I began, supposing that as God had not killed me for praying to him I might pray on; I did so, and soon began to conclude I could pray pretty well; I had quit swearing and all my immoral actions: I concluded it was not a bad with me as I had supposed. In this Pharisee-like way I went on, for two or three weeks, until this alarming text thundered in my ears, He that denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father, &c. I now was brought clearly to see that I had sinned against God and his gospel, as well as against Moses and the law; I also discovered that obedience was due to faith as well as to the law, to God as well as to Moses. The purity and spirituality of law was here brought to view, which I never could keep,

since I was carnal, sold under sin; here the commandment came, sin in me revived, and I died; here I discovered that original guilt, the corruption of my heart, that was truly like a cage of unclean birds, deceitful and desperately wicked. This awful discovery made me cry out; oh! wretched man, I am forever undone; keep the law I never can; reconcile an offended God, I never can; here I was made to cry, Lord, save, or I perish: Lord, have mercy, I am undone. In this way I went on for weeks in glimmering hope, hoping against hope, sunk almost into irretrievable despair; getting as I supposed worse and worse, whether awake or asleep I was either thinking or dreaming over the above awful words of Jesus, him will I deny, &c. Then did my sleep depart from me, and I concluded I was one for whom Christ did not die, or he would have never suffered me to blaspheme his holy name; these reflections drove me into despair, so that I cried in bitter anguish of soul, salvation for me is forever gone. I recollect one evening, I was laying on the bed, and I suppose fell into a doze; at all events I imagined I was suspended over hell, kept out of it by a brittle thread fastened to my breast, and the sword of the Lord turned round and round, and in every turn, it came near to the thread; the next turn I felt confident it would cut the thread and let me drop into hell; I screamed out, Lord, save or I perish, and instantly left the bed. This was on Monday evening. In this state of almost hopeless despair, I continued until Thursday about 3 o'clock p.m., then it was that I was made to yield. All hope apparently seemed to be fled; my tears were dried up; all doing power was gone. To pray I durst not, the heavens appeared as brass; God was to me, I considered, a consuming fire; all nature seemed to frown upon me, and I was brought to a stand still. Here I perceived the justice of God in my banishment from him into endless perdition. To be reconciled to my fate was more than I could then bear - I trembled over the yawning gulf of hell, expecting every moment to be plunged therein. In this almost hopeless situation I felt a desire, if I were sent to endless perdition, which I thought I justly deserved, that I might be prevented from sinning against God, even in hell - instantly I felt resigned to the will of God. If he sent me to hell I knew I deserved it. This resignation was instantly followed by an impression to pray to God once more. I began to bend my knees, when these ravishing words rolled into my mind, Come unto me and rest, you that are troubled, rest, &c. My guilt vanished, my burden was removed, my fears all quelled; all nature smiled; such feelings as I then enjoyed I cannot describe; I felt calm and serene, at peace with God, with myself, and all around me. But this transport of joy was almost instantly followed by doubtful disputation. I concluded this was not the way God gave religion, since my feelings came in a way I had never thought of, and I commenced praying for my burden back again. In this doubting way I continued, from October until January; some moments I could feel as though God was my friend, but that feeling, when gone, left me doubting again, until I concluded it was all delusion; for surely Christians are not like I am. In this cold doubtful state, I was one evening traveling up a long hill, pensive and alone, a proper time and place for reflection, my mind being grievously burdened by a sense of my deceived condition; I burst into a flood of sorrowful tears and anguish of soul, I cried out, Lord, save me from this awful delusion I groan under now. Instantly, as though one spoke to me from on high, these glorious words sounded into my soul, "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. These words instantly banished all my doubts, which filled my eyes with tears of joy, unspeakable and full of glory, so that I cried out, Glory to God in the highest. Yet strange to tell, in less than thirty minutes I was assailed with the most grievous temptations to renounce the Bible and all pretensions to religion, as the articles of designing priests, then it occurred to me, he that is an heretic after the third admonition is to be rejected. It occurred to my mind, this is the third time that you have thought you were happy, but now you see it is all delusion, God hath surely been mocking you: this I felt inclined to think might be the case. In this awful way of temptation I went on for weeks, praying if I were deceived that the Lord would

undeceive me and send me back my trouble in proportion to my sins. During all this time I never had a view of how faith justified by laying hold of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, nor was I enabled to see the difference between the old man (or the flesh), and the new man (or the Spirit) until on the third night of January, I was sitting ruminating upon my wretched state, and often venting a bitter sigh. All at once a thought crowded upon my mind, to take the Bible and open it, and the first verse I cast my eyes upon would exactly describe my state: I arose from my seat, advanced to the Bible, and as I took it up, I trembled, fearing I should read in it my just condemnation; but to my unspeakable surprise, the Bible opened to the 5th chapter of John's gospel, 2nd verse, "Now are ye clean through the words I have spoken unto you." Instantly all those previous joyful feelings, with the scriptures applied, presented themselves to my view - a heavenly calm ensued, joyful transport in still accented whispers run through all the powers of my soul: while I stood so amazed at the sweet consolation, these words sounded in my ears, "Be not faithless, but believing." The application of these words presented Jesus as my righteousness, my wisdom, my sanctification and redemption. Here I think I saw how God could be just, and the Justifier of his people or the sinner, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Thus, brother Beebe, I have given you the outlines of my hope in Christ, whom I own as my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; for sure I have none beside him. I confess with Jacob, that God found me in a waste howling wilderness, deaf, dumb, blind, and dead in trespasses and sins, that he unstopped my deaf ears, opened my blind eyes, let loose my stammering tongue, quickened or made alive my dead heart or soul, gave me repentance unto life not to be repented of, and with the cords of eternal love brought me to see how he can remain just in the justification of one who with Paul owns himself the chief of sinners. I acknowledge myself a sinner, and daily stand in need of the advocacy, intercession, &c., of Jesus Christ, my surety and eternal redemption, my life, light, strength, liberty, and crown of rejoicing, my all in all. This is my hope; take this from me, and I am eternally gone - gone. But thanks be to God, who (I hope) hath given me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ, hence the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, the rage of devils, the malice and efforts of men, with the abominable institutions, inventions, and intriguing designs of the day can never overturn that hope which enters into that within the veil, and thus becomes the anchor of my soul. Although my journey through life is rough and boisterous, and made more so by the persecutions I daily have to encounter, yet I rejoice in the promises of the gospel of the grace of God, that persecutions, more or less, is the lot of all God's dear children. This I believe is one of the all things that shall work together for good to them that are called according to his purpose. In a word, my hope is in the eternal, electing love of God, and if saved from sin, it is by grace through faith, and that not of myself, all the gift of God, being his workmanship, his creation in Christ Jesus. This, brother Beebe, is the old fashioned religion, taught by Christ and his Apostles upwards of 1800 years ago; against this religion, all the New School parties are now fighting, such as Campbellites, or pretended reformers, Christians, Marshall-ites, with all the effort-men of the day, such as Missionary Boards, Sunday School Societies, Bible Societies, Temperance Societies (falsely so called), with every other ite and ism, all designed and tending to destroy experimental religion, and tarnish the beauty of the gospel by introducing another gospel predicated upon the wisdom of men. Hence the struggle to get a supply of theological colleges to manufacture (or to use their own words, to qualify) thousands of fops, dandies, and money lovers, to ride rough-shod over the dear people of God. This was once done, and is being aimed at to be done over again. As such, shall we who are the soldiers of the cross lay down our arms in the hour of danger, and surrender the citadel of God to them? God forbid, - "My voice I must confess is still for war," not against men, but against principalities - against spiritual

wickedness in high places, against all the man-made inventions and innovations palmed upon the Baptists in modern days. The weapons of my warfare being spiritual, not carnal or worldly, I can with propriety reject the sword of Gideon, and use only the sword of the Lord, which is the sword of the Spirit, or written word of God; the unerring rule of my faith and practice. This sword will cut its way in spite of all opposition, either by men or devils. As such, my dear brother, the Old School Baptists have nothing to fear but themselves: let them keep themselves from idols, or from running after the abominations of the day, and all is safe. Though we in ourselves are weak, and in the estimation of the ungodly, few in number; the Captain of our salvation is strong, and at the head of an innumerable army - all in martial array; all clothed in clean white linen, the righteousness of faith - their helmet is salvation; their girdle is truth; their breastplate righteousness; their shoes the preparation of the gospel, and their banner is grace - all-abounding grace, while their escutcheon is "The Lord their righteousness." Against such an army, in vain shall the powers of darkness or effort-men contend,* already are they defeated, vanquished and driven to new shifts to rally their scattered forces to again measure strength with the Old School Baptists, or the army of the living God; and were not their Captain the Captain of their salvation, both in the front and in the rear; both on the right hand and on the left, they would certainly be defeated, since the world, the flesh, the devil, and all carnal or effort professors are arrayed against them. O then, ye soldiers of the cross, gird on your buckler of defence - march to the contest - hoist the cross, your glory; present courageously your faith as the standard in your camps, dispute every inch of ground, and thus shall victory perch again on your banner. Old School Baptists ask not the aid of the sword of Gideon, being thoroughly furnished unto every good work, having in their possession the sword of the Lord, or the written word of God.

May their God at all times, and on all occasions teach them how to use successfully this divine sword. I am with sentiments of profound respect and christian fellowship, Your unworthy brother in Christ,

WILLIAM DOWNS, Hartford, Ky., Nov. 2, 1841.

* The beast hath received a deadly wound, the inquisition put down; the supremacy of the clergy, overthrown, &c.; all intended to be revived by the effort-men of the day.

Hartford, Ky., June 13, 1842.

BELOVED BROTHER BEEBE:--It has been some time since I wrote to you, in consequence of which I ask you to indulge me in this epistle to you. I did expect to have sent on ere this time many pieces for the Signs of the Times; but since many of my previous enemies are now begging quarters, I have agreed to be silent until the "Banner & Pioneer" makes it necessary for me to again resume my defence. I received six numbers of the Advocate and Monitor, edited by brother Jewett, and after carefully reading them, I am convinced they ably advocate the doctrine of the gospel, and wisely admonish all christians to flee the abominations and deep rooted heresies of the present century, it being an age of error and gross darkness. The Advocate as well as the Signs, I hope will in the end conduce to the declarative glory of God, and to the peace and welfare of his Zion. To the Advocate I would cheerfully contribute by becoming a subscriber did not my poverty or want of funds forbid it. You know that I am a subscriber for two copies of the Signs of the Times yearly: these numbers I regularly receive and joyfully read. You know also that these papers advocate the same truths, having the same object in view, i. e., the declarative glory of God, the presentation of the christian religion unsullied, the promotion of Apostolic piety and evangelical holiness. They both equally strike at the man of sin, expose the mother of harlots, and

abomination of the earth; both of which are being aimed to be again palmed upon the christian world, as clearly seen in the many man-invented institutions in this dark midnight age of error and love of money. The advocates of those institutions every where fulminate abundance of slander and wanton abuse against the truth, and its advocates, which consequently proves that they have drunk in the spirit of the harlot mother, and as such are daily struggling to raise her to the earthly grandeur she once enjoyed. Thousands (I hope pious christians) follow after those designing men, not knowing the deep designs they have in view. I am led to this conclusion by facts every day manifesting themselves to the world, such as hundreds leaving their ranks and joining the Old School Baptists. The Missionary churches in this section are miserably torn to pieces, public opinion is pretty generally prevailing that the object of those designing men is to unite church and state, and that the general associations are to be metamorphosed into so many inquisitions. Those designing men can now advocate without a blush the most heaven daring project ever yet aimed to be imposed upon the christian world, i. e., that the Bible must be so translated to keep pace with the improvement of the world, as to make it more acceptable to the polite, the rich, and the well-bred. This is at once saying the holy word of God is vulgar and nonsensical, as given to the church upwards of eighteen hundred years ago.

Brother Beebe, in my humble opinion, the days of the Arminian or Ishmaelitish brood are numbered, and fast approaching their final destiny. The art of making proselytes by protracted or distracted meetings I view like a pile of loose straw in a flame, soon takes fire, and as soon dies away: hence it is that all their effortisms, instrumentalities and human agencies eventuate in light ashes of no value - as such those amazing over-righteous Pharisees are constantly losing the confidence of the thinking part of the community - as such the opinion every where prevails that their sin is to aggrandize the clergy at the expense of the laity. In a word, I again repeat it, that it is generally believed in the circle of my acquaintance that the object of the labors of the Missionary faction is to establish religion by law, (i. e., their plans and notions about religion) as their theological colleges to manufacture preachers are in advance of their design, that thousands who are as destitute of real piety as was bishop Bonner or Pope Leo X., may ride rough shod over the people of God, and thus wallow in luxury as did the pontiffs of Rome. Sister E. Barlow in one of her communication to brother Jewett, seems to console his hard lot in the many trials and difficulties he has to encounter, in the performance of his arduous tasks assigned him: but sure I am that those trials and difficulties should give no trouble, since they are the common lot of all God's chosen little ones. Persecution, slander, abuse, and even death itself are the heritage of the elect of God, and especially his preachers, the sure test of their discipleship and call to the work: all the above are included in the all things that work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. I sometimes think I can glory in persecution if it be for Christ's sake, and when faith is in exercise can take it patiently. I often pray God that I may never act in such a way that will reproach the cause of God, and bring just reproach and scandal upon myself or profession. I am often led to fear that I do not possess that which real christians do, owing to the imperfections and corruptions of my nature. I often fear that God has never called me to preach his everlasting gospel especially when I compare what the preacher should be, with what I am, the chief of sinners, and the least of saints. If a saint at all, so that my whole life is one continued struggle, the flesh warring against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that I cannot do the things that I desire to do. Often am I led to conclude that my ignorance and lack of christian piety forbids the idea of my attempting to preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God; yet when tempted to surrender up my charge to the churches I attend, it is often thundered in my ears, that woe is me if I preach not the gospel, with all those trials and difficulties. I am constrained

many times to ask, who is sufficient for these things? All which murmurings and disputings are alone quelled as they were with the Apostle: "My grace is sufficient for thee." If I am a child of God I am so by the will of God, and by him chosen in Christ before the worlds were framed. If I am called of God to preach his everlasting gospel, no agency nor instrumentality of men nor angels can qualify me for the task, seeing it is the special gift of God to me, determined by him so to be in eternity. All those doubts and difficulties with me, death will soon decide for me, since I am fast approaching my eternal destiny. I have been striving in my weak and imperfect manner for about forty years to preach the gospel of God's grace, and yet consider myself but a feeble pupil in the school of Christ.

Brother Beebe, through the Advocate and Signs of the Times, I send my christian love to Sister Esther Barlow, whom I love in the Lord for her able defence of truth. Brother Jewett apologizes in September Advocate for publishing so many communications from the dear sisters. Indeed I think none is necessary, since I at least consider them the best writers on religion in the world, all their communications with few exceptions being of an experimental cast, or abounding in practical knowledge without a resort to vain philosophy or opposition of science, falsely so called. I find in the Signs of the Times the letters of Sister E. Barlow, E. Preston, Mary Culver and others, all of whom are excellent writers and sound advocates for the faith of the gospel, with others whose letters are published in the Advocate and Monitor. May more such able advocates of primitive christianity swell their list and wield their pens in the defence of the truth as it is in Christ.

I tender my unfeigned love and christian fellowship to all my Old School Baptist brethren and sisters in Christ, and subscribe myself yours in the best of christian bonds,
WILLIAM DOWNS.



Ohio County, KY 1810 Federal Census, p.75:

Downs, William	4 males 0-10	1 female 26-45
	1 male 26-45	



Nelson County, KY 1820 Federal Census, p.43:

Downs, William	1 male 0-10	1 female 16-26
	1 male 16-26	
	1 male 26-45	



Ohio County, KY 1830 Federal Census, p.232B:

Downs, William	1 male 20-30	1 female 15-20
	1 male 40-50	1 female 50-60



Ohio County, KY 1840 Federal Census, p.114B:

Downs, William, Sr.	1 male 60-70	1 female 20-30
		1 female 70-80



Ohio County, KY 1850 Federal Census, p.51A, household #7-7:

Downs, William	67	m	Reg. Bap. Clergyman	KY
“ Rachel	80	f		VA
“ Nancy	39	f		KY



**Ohio County, KY 1860 Federal Census, p.573, household #417-418,
Hartford District, post office Buck Horn [now Beda]**

Downs, William C.	53	m	farmer	real estate \$1000	KY
“ Penelope	52	f			KY
“ William P.	22	m	farmer		KY
“ Osborn T.	20	m	farmer		KY
Williams, Thomas	29	m	farmer	real estate \$2000	KY
“ Betsy A.	23	f			KY
“ Andrew J.	2	m			KY
“ Laura A.	6/12	f			KY
Downs, William	78	m	boarder		KY



Rev. William Downs was last listed in the Ohio County, KY tax lists in 1858; in this list it was noted that he was exempt from paying the county levy. He was last found in the records of Ohio County in the 1860 census.

See also articles, “William Downs, Sr. Killed by Indians in 1788” and “Rev. Thomas Downs (1773-1850)”, by Jerry Long, on website, [West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy](#).

