

A BAPTIST'S REPLY TO ALLEGED PRESBYTERIAN STATEMENTS.

RECENTLY I took the trouble to expose the misrepresentations contained in a leaflet entitled "Why Educated Members of the Protestant Church are unwilling to Worship in a Baptist Congregation," and I have now received a similar leaflet headed, "WHY EDUCATED PRESBYTERIANS ARE UNWILLING TO WORSHIP IN BAPTIST CONGREGATIONS." It evidently issues from the same source as the former, and I have good reason for believing that it is the work not of a Presbyterian, but of a "Churchman."

The title and the first reason—

("Because they observe:—1. That Baptists are not willing to worship in their congregations, from which they infer how wide the gulf must be which separates them") are both at variance with the truth. "Educated Presbyterians" do often in many places worship with Baptists, and Baptists with Presbyterians, while the ministers of both denominations frequently exchange pulpits. Presbyterians know that the gulf which separates them from the Baptists is not nearly so wide as that which separates them from the Episcopalians.

"2. That Baptists indeed reject their Faith, their Sacraments, their Ministry."

Baptists are practically one with the Presbyterians in regard to the "Faith," the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and "Ministry." They differ only on baptism and individual church-government, a point of which our friend seems ignorant.

"3. That 'High' Baptists attach extravagant importance to the quantity of water used in Baptism, and to the benefits of the rite as ministered by them."

"4. That 'Low' Baptists are ignorant, wavering in opinion between the 'High' and the 'Broad,' creedless, if well-meaning pietists."

"5. That 'Broad' Baptists deny the truth of the Holy Trinity, and, consequently, of the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to mention such lesser things as the obligation of the Lord's Day, the Lord's Prayer, &c."

"6. That the Baptist Union refuses to count faith in these fundamental verities necessary for communion, the 'Broad' party being apparently able to command a majority of votes."

"7. That the greatest Baptist of our day, perhaps of any day, denounces the Baptist Union for this unfaithfulness, and has separated himself from it."

The division of Baptists into "High," "Low," and "Broad," sounds like an echo of my former statement concerning the Episcopalians, and is such that no "Educated Presbyterian" could make. The division does not exist. Our Church friend in Presbyterian clothes is mistaken in every point here advanced. *All* Baptists hold that there must be sufficient water to *immerse*, but they attach no importance to the "quantity of water" beyond that; they ascribe *no* "benefits to the rite." I suppose our author would say that John the Baptist attached "extravagant importance to the quantity of water," when he baptized in Ænon, "*because there was much water there,*" or when he baptized our Lord in Jordan. If by "Low" is meant "Evangelical" according to its meaning in the Anglican Establishment (and all Baptists, with few exceptions, are Evangelical), then the audacious assertion is made that Mr. Spurgeon and Dr. Maclaren, and many other noble men "whose praise is in all the churches," are "ignorant" and "creedless"! "Educated Presbyterians" would never say so, and they would repudiate the statement when made

in their behalf. Taking "Broad" to mean those who are tainted with "modern thought" views, the pupils of the Anglican Broad Churchmen, I may only say that the points mentioned are not the points on which they are in error. The Baptist Union, so far from refusing to "count faith in these fundamental verities necessary," has passed a declaration in which the doctrine of the Trinity is distinctly avowed, and as distinctly the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. I suppose it is useless to tell our critic that the Baptist Union is a voluntary association of ministers and churches, exercising no jurisdiction over individual congregations, and that while Mr. Spurgeon has separated himself from the "Union," his relation to the Baptist *Denomination* remains unchanged. But let me say that it is altogether beside the mark to taunt one particular body with "down-grade" tendencies. There is an epidemic of "modern thought" passing over the sister isles: the Established Church of England is most affected by it; Baptists and other Nonconformists in England have suffered somewhat from it; and the Presbyterians in Scotland are at present in great trouble concerning it. It becomes the duty of the godly in all the denominations to keep free from it themselves and endeavour to preserve others from its baneful influence. We are thankful that Baptists in Ireland are unaffected by it, and, as far as we know, the same may be said of the Presbyterians, but we are sorry to observe that the so-called Protestant Church of Ireland, if free from this phase of error, has of late developed such a strong tendency to Ritualism and Romanism; witness Dublin and Derry.

"8. That another leading Baptist, the Rev. A. E. Clarke, laments the 'divisions, the dislikes, the worldliness, the down-grade theories prevalent among some Baptist congregations.'"

This is amusing. The writer has evidently seen the pamphlet recently published by the Rev. A. E. Clarke, and he ought to know that that gentleman, so far from being "a leading Baptist," has just joined the Baptist Denomination, having been before a clergyman of the Church of England, and in his pamphlet has most strongly denounced the errors of the "Baptismal Regenerationists." But the falsehood contained in this reason is ridiculous; read the whole "Educated Presbyterians are unwilling to worship in Baptist congregations, because they observe that the Rev. A. E. Clarke has said so and so." How many Presbyterians have ever heard of Mr. Clarke, or seen his book, which has only been published a few weeks? We are to suppose that a general revulsion of feeling against the Baptists has taken place among Presbyterians because such a statement has been made by this ex-clergyman!!! If Presbyterians and others will read the book, which we heartily commend, they will be more likely to feel a holy horror of the unscriptural practices of the Anglican Church, which Mr. Clarke denounces.

"9. That Baptists count almost all Christians but themselves to be unbaptized, and therefore living in disobedience to their Lord's command; not truly "disciples" of Jesus Christ, S. Matt. xxviii. 19; probably in their sins, and without the Spirit, Acts. ii. 38; probably not 'buried with Christ' nor 'risen with Christ,' Col. ii. 12; probably outside the Kingdom of God, St. John. iii. 5."

This is one of the propositions of the former leaflet furnished afresh, and it rightly points to the great difference between us and all Pædo-baptists. We do believe that only those who are immersed as believers are scripturally baptized, and that all Christians, not so baptized, are living in disobedience to one of Christ's commands. At the same time, we do

not charge our Presbyterian brethren with conscious wilful disobedience. Every other "probably" is the writer's own, and we decline to be held responsible for it.

"10. That Baptists count little children incapable of receiving Divine grace, although John Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb, although Jesus 'took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them,' although Peter said, 'The promise of the Holy Ghost is unto you and to your children,' and although Paul calls the children of a Christian parent 'holy.'"

Our friend artfully tries to speak as a Presbyterian, but his statement is not true. Baptists do not "count little children incapable of receiving Divine Grace." They believe all the passages cited, but deny that there is any reference in them to Baptism.

"11. That Baptists deny to little children admission into the visible Kingdom of God, although, should such die, they most illogically would not deny them admission into the invisible Kingdom, and although Jesus said, 'Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven,' and 'Except any one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'"

The writer does not fully understand the Presbyterian position, for "Educated Presbyterians" do not generally apply the 3rd of John to Baptism. In any case, there is nothing illogical in the Baptist position. We believe that Christ will admit to the Kingdom of heaven those dying in infancy, but He has nowhere said that infants are to be admitted to His Church on earth by baptism. There is, however, something very illogical in the position of all who baptize infants. Christ instituted the two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the same requirements are demanded for participation in each; Pædobaptists admit infants to the one, but most inconsistently keep them back from the other. Those who in the 3rd century introduced infant baptism were more logical, for they coupled with it *infant participation in the Lord's Supper*. Why is that not done now?

"12. That Baptists reject the rite of ordination observed by the Apostles, Acts vi. 6; xiv. 23; 2 Tim. i. 6; by 'Prophets and Teachers,' Acts xiii. 3; by the 'Presbytery,' 1 Tim. iv. 14; by Timothy himself, 1 Tim. v. 22; by Titus, Tit. i. 5; and preserved in every branch of the Church ever since."

I have in my former reply dealt with most of these passages, giving as the reason why Baptists do not practise the "laying on of hands" at the election of office-bearers, that the passages show that some gift was conferred in Apostolic times, and, not having power to bestow the gift, we do not use the form, which is not commanded in the Word, to be used. Presbyterians, while retaining the form, do not, we are glad to say, make the startling profession of the Episcopalians, whose Bishops assert that, at ordinations, they do actually bestow the Holy Ghost, and grant power to forgive and retain sins! Presbyterians simply, by the ceremony, recognize the choice of the churches. The two fresh passages adduced (Acts xiv. 23 and Titus i. 5.) say nothing about "laying on of hands," but imply that the "elders" were elected by the churches, much as Presbyterians and Baptist churches elect their office-bearers, and publicly and solemnly "recognize," or separate them to the work to which, they believe, the Holy Ghost has called them.

"13. That Baptists consequently have no Presbyters,—Elders,—Bishops, because these were thus ordained from the beginning, and Baptists have no power to invent any new way."

What I proved in my previous paper is here admitted, that Presbyters and Bishops are synonymous terms, and in that case the whole system of modern "Episcopacy" is overturned. Baptists invent no new way of obtaining Presbyters or Bishops; they believe that as at first, so now

“pastors and teachers” are the gifts of the ascended Christ (Eph. iv. 11); that Elders or Bishops are made so by the Holy Ghost (Acts xx. 28); and that it is for the Church to recognize the gift, and by its election ratify the choice of the Spirit.

“14. That Baptists, therefore, plainly reject the primitive and practically universal testimony of the Churches of Christ to the Faith and Orders delivered unto them.”

“15. That Baptists thereby really undermine the very foundation upon which Faith in the written Word of God rests; for if the primitive and universal testimony of the Churches of Christ as to the Faith and Orders delivered unto them be unreliable, it is at least equally unreliable as to the ‘Oracles of God.’”

Similar statements I have answered before, only here the ground is slightly changed, under the pretence of speaking for the Presbyterians; but again I say, no “Educated Presbyterian” would think of making such a statement. If Presbyterians are right in their interpretation of the early Church’s testimony concerning the form of Ministry, then manifestly Episcopalians are wrong, and might as well be accused of undermining the foundation of the Written Word. We maintain that Baptists are practically one with the early Church in regard both to Faith and Ministry, but our appeal is to the *Word alone*.

“16. That bodies of Christians like the Baptists, who disregard the primitive and universal testimony of the Churches, who have no regular ministry, no confession, no articles of faith, or ‘form of sound words,’ 2. Tim. i. 13, are always peculiarly liable to fall into fanatical extravagance and grievous heresies.”

Once more I say no “Educated Presbyterian” could make such a statement about the Baptists. Presbyterians know that Baptists have a “regular ministry,” in the full Scriptural sense. I believe there is not a Presbyterian church in the world which would not feel honoured in opening its pulpit to the ministrations of C. H. Spurgeon or Alexander MacLaren. They are not so foolish as to believe with the Episcopalians, that only those “ordained” in a particular way constitute a “regular ministry;” and they know that, though it suits the writer of this leaflet to speak as if he believed in the regular ministry of the Presbyterians, Episcopalians do not recognize Presbyterian or other Dissenting ministers as “regular;” for if the most gifted Presbyterian minister wished to enter the ministry of the Episcopal Church, he would have to submit to Episcopal ordination, while the most obscure and inefficient Roman Catholic Priest, without such ordination, would be allowed to enter the ministry of that Church, which so proudly arrogates to itself the title of “*the Protestant Church*.” I have before stated that Baptists have a creed, although they do not place it above the Bible or on a level with it. After all, it would puzzle any one to show that the Apostolic Church had any other creed or confession than the Word of God. Every creed, in so far as it is true, is but an attempt to interpret that Word, and in intelligent interpretation of, and steadfast adherence to, the Word of God, Baptists yield to none; while their whole history shows that no denomination has been preserved more free from “fanatical extravagances and grievous heresies” than they.

In conclusion, let me say that Baptists never wish to shrink from fair controversy, but we do think those who write about us should remember an old injunction which does not seem to have been in our opponent’s thoughts when he wrote his leaflets, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” It may be that his next effusion will be “Why Educated Methodists, or Roman Catholics, or Unitarians are unwilling to Worship with Baptists;” but as I have sufficiently answered these slanders, I do not propose to take notice of any more.