

Duncan Robertson

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The Canadian Evangelist.

"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

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THE Canadian Evangelist

is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ; and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with his own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

The Disciples and Christian Union.

At the last annual convention of the Co-operation of the Disciples of Christ in Ontario, held in Owen Sound, June 6 to 10, 1890, a special committee was appointed to prepare for publication in the Toronto papers a paper on Christian Union, from the standpoint of the Disciples. The appointment of the committee was said to be due directly to the fact that at the convention the possibility of union between the Baptists and Disciples, and between the Christian church and the Disciples, engaged attention. A somewhat elaborate paper has been prepared by the Committee and published in several of the Toronto dailies.

We are sorry that the length of this paper precludes us from publishing it in full. A considerable part of it might stand almost equally well for a statement of the faith and practice of Baptist churches—such passages, for instance, as those in which it is declared that the Disciples "recognize no ecclesiastical authority over the consciences of Christians and the liberty of the churches in faith and discipline;" that "their churches are churches of Christ, and the Convention is composed of delegates from churches and of life and annual members, and its object is simply co-operation in mission, educational and benevolent work;" that "these cannot entertain any condition of fellowship more exclusive than those existing in the original constitution of the church as found in the New Testament;" that "as human creeds have destroyed unity, unity can be restored only by destroying human creeds and confessions as symbols of faith and tests of fellowship, and restoring to its rightful place the Word of God as an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice and a revelation of the Divine character and will," and that "The Word of God, the Divine creed, and believers' baptism, restored to their rightful place and authority, continued loyalty to Jesus in faith and life, or Christian character, should be the only test of fellowship within the body, as it was in the beginning."

We are sorry to see, however, that the Committee issuing this document reiterate the illogical, not to say absurd, claim that the Disciples are opposed to "sectarianism" or "denominationalism," and have a mission to protest against it,

while, as must be obvious to every disinterested observer, they themselves are among the most active and aggressive of sectaries. The mere fact that the members of a sect may call themselves "Christians," or "Disciples," instead of "Baptists," or "Methodists," does not make them any the less a sect, so long as their doctrines and practices are peculiar and lead to separation. In truth, an outcry against "sectarianism" may itself be made the shibboleth of a sect, as the history of the Disciples themselves shows, if they will pardon us for saying so. We do not know any denomination that would not be heartily in favor of union on the condition which the Disciples seem to approve, that, viz., of having all others adopt its own peculiar views and name. That the denominational names are all more or less unfortunate, as giving undue prominence to a single practice or tenet, we readily admit. For that reason many of the most intelligent members of our own denomination regret that it should have been labelled with the term "Baptist," a name which has the effect of making their churches appear to be built upon a single distinctive practice. But the mere name is not of vital importance, and it is now probably too late to make a change.

Two or three paragraphs in which the Committee of the Disciples undertake to point out the error in the Baptist faith and practice which, in their opinion, must prevent union with the Disciples, call for special notice. We do not know whether the authors of the statement are instructed or expected to lay it before the approaching Convention at Woodstock, or whether it is likely to come up there for discussion or action. Should that be the case the Convention may deem it desirable to correct certain misconceptions which the Disciples evidently have touching certain points of Baptist faith and practice. Otherwise we may recur to these points in a future number. Meanwhile we must content ourselves with observing that, as it seems to us, most of the objections to the Baptist position which are really of weight are the result of misapprehension and most of those which are rightly conceived, essentially unimportant. The reasons for these opinions will be given hereafter.—*Canadian Baptist.*

The Disciples on Baptists.

Referring to the statement of belief and practice recently published by a Committee representing the Disciples, we pointed out that up to a certain point the statement would answer as well for Baptists as for Disciples. We also intimated that we might refer in another number to one or two paragraphs of a different kind in said statement.

The Committee present as follows what they conceive to be one of the points in regard to which the views of Baptists and Disciples are irreconcilable:—

The Disciples understand the Baptist theory of conversion to rest fundamentally on the doctrine of total hereditary depravity. Logically this demands the doctrine of miraculous regeneration. Faith is the result of regeneration, and is consequently

miraculous. The knowledge of forgiveness is attested experimentally in the feelings of the individual; baptism is "because of the remission of sins." As long as this theory, instead of faith in Jesus, is made a test of regeneration and of fitness for baptism, and as long as Baptists hold this theory between them and Disciples, as a test of Disciple orthodoxy, there can be no union. Disciples reject all theories as non-essential to salvation, and as barriers to union. They would rather be right with the Word of God, though condemned by the creeds, than be orthodox with the creeds, and condemned by the Word. Disciples hold, with the Scriptures, that all men are sinners; that the Word of God is the instrument of regeneration, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever"; that the Word must be heard and be believed in the heart; that, quickened and convicted by the Word as the instrument of the Spirit, they must turn and seek forgiveness; that forgiveness is the act of God in view of the sinner's turning; but that the change of heart and purpose wrought in the individual is not the evidence of forgiveness, and that he is not instructed in the Word of God to look for it within himself, but in the definite promise of the Word of God: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Changed and repentant and trusting in the blood of cleansing, he appropriates to himself the promised forgiveness, which he receives by his own faith.

We quote at some length in fear of misrepresentation. It will probably be now to our readers to learn that it is an article of Baptist belief that "faith is the result of regeneration," rather than the means by which the change is wrought; that "the knowledge of forgiveness is attested experimentally in the feelings of the individual," instead of coming as the result of unfaltering trust in Christ and the sure promises of His word; and that "baptism is because of the remission of sins," instead of an expression of faith in Christ and an act of obedience to His command, in which act is symbolized death to sin and resurrection to newness of life, as the outcome of living faith in a slain and risen Saviour.

Our purpose in this article is not controversial. Hence we shall avoid all criticism of the passages in which the Committee undertake to defend the views of the Disciples in regard to faith, baptism and regeneration, further than to say they seem to us somewhat elaborate and refined, not to say obscure, for a body of Christians who claim as their distinctive merit that they "reject all theories as non-essential to salvation" and have no creed but the New Testament. Further on in the same discussion the Committee say that "when Baptists make faith in Christ and repentance a sufficient fitness for baptism, one of the barriers to union will be removed." To those who understand how closely Baptists cling to the New Testament doctrine and practice in this respect, as evidenced by their simple baptismal formula, "On profession of thy faith," etc., this statement needs no comment, save a note of surprise.

To only one other point in the Committee's statement have we space to refer, and to that we refer only that we may again point out the Committee's misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the Baptist position. They speak

of the "New Hampshire Confession which contains the Baptist faith," and add:—

Disciples insist that a creed, whether Nicene, Westminster, New Hampshire or other, as a symbol of faith and test of fellowship, becomes of equal, if not paramount, authority with the Word, and by becoming an exponent of the Word the right of private judgment is destroyed, and the ability of the Scriptures to interpret themselves is practically denied. Disciples insist on going back of all creeds to Jesus and the Apostles and "take up things as the Apostles left them, that we may stand with confidence on the same ground on which the church stood at the beginning."

The New Hampshire Confession is, we are aware, used by many Baptist churches, though by no means by all, as a convenient general epitome of the essentials of Baptist faith and practice. But those must have read Baptist history and studied Baptist practice to little purpose who can represent the New Hampshire or any other man-made articles as constituting the Baptist faith, or creed, in any such sense as that in which the Westminster and other Confessions are accepted as creeds by other denominations. If the Disciples, or any other body of believers, "insist on going back of all creeds to Jesus and the Apostles," were consistently and persistently than the Baptists have done through all their course, and do to day, when it is indeed high time that a new chapter should be added to the history of the churches. The old versions must be sadly misleading.—*Canadian Baptist*

Good Advice for Young Preachers.

Professor Doolittle, in the *Christian at Work* emphasizes the value of the study of the English Bible by candidates for the pulpit. He says:—

"The greatest and best thing that can be said of a minister to day is a re-echo of the commendation paid to Apollos, viz., 'That he was mighty in the Scriptures.' To expound the meaning of the word of life, and to apply its regenerative precepts to conscience and character, is precisely the object, the first and imperative object of which the order of the ministry has been divinely ordained. And when the church ceases to be the pillar and ground of the truth, she has dropped her heavenly commission and fallen to the rank of a merely secular organization; and, like Sampson, shorn of his locks, she is weak, spiritless, ready to be bound by the Philistines of error, and to become the blind mockery and sport of her enemies. This, in fact, was the condition of the church before the Reformation, but when Martin Luther discovered that old Bible chained fast to its place and seldom opened, and when he broke the clasps, translated its contents, sent them flying on oracular leaves through the land, proclaimed them in thunder tones from his pulpit, or arrayed them as the one supreme authority against Popes and Councils, then men began to cry aloud for the salvation of Christ and exhibit new lives. . . . It furnishes the Divine manna on which the soul feeds, and by which it grows into the Divine image; and as well might you expect

to build up a human body with its bones, blood and fleshy tissue, without bread or food of any kind, as to secure the re-birth of a soul and its rehabilitation, with eternal graces, without the quickening, inspiring, uplifting agency of the truth which God Himself has given as the only means of satisfying the soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

"What, then, follows: What, pray, but this? that the preacher should be so saturated through and through with the thoughts and illustrations and the very language of his English Bible, that he shall reflect it in all that he does and says; reflect it unconsciously, even as the face of Moses did the brightness of Jehovah after holding intimate communion with Him in the Mount. It is beginning to be generally felt that our pastors do not study their English Bibles as much as they ought; and the blame is to be attached in a large measure to our theological seminaries. So much attention is bestowed in these schools of the prophets upon Hebrew and Greek, and Arabic and Syriac, and church history, and the discussion of heresies, that little time, if any, is reserved for a daily, earnest, simple, practical and thoughtful comparison of Scripture with Scripture. It is no exaggeration to say that many professed exponents of Holy Writ are to themselves comparative strangers to large portions of it, and, of course, are deprived of the intuitive insight and the comprehensive and easy grasp of interpretation which spring from knowing, not a part, but the whole of God's message to man."

Changed to Harmony.

There is a story that a German, with an ear sensitive to music, one day entered a church and, being distressed by the discords of the singing, put his fingers in his ears; but there penetrated through them a single clear rich soprano, singing in such perfect tune that he was moved to listen. The singer neither faltered because of the jarring notes, nor increased the volume of her voice, to drown them. She kept steadily on till one after another came into accord with her sweet tones, till she brought the entire congregation into harmony.

The true servant of Christ, in a church whose members are disagreeing with one another, does not drop into silence from disgust. If he is strong and positive in his views, he is much more tempted to sing too loud or too high, and crack his own voice. But if he would win for his Master, he must sing for his Master's ear till discord becomes heavenly music. We are divinely called to live and work with imperfect men and women. Let us remember that they are dust, and so are we.—*Congregationalist.*

What you have to do, do while you think of it.

It is not enough that we have once swallowed truths; we must feed on them as insects on a leaf, till the whole heart is colored by their qualities and shows its food in even the minutest fibre.