

### *THE BAPTIST SUCCESSION DELUSION.*

We find the following admirable reproof of some popular Baptist ideas in a leading Baptist paper :

"The Baptist papers of the South-west have committed themselves to the theory that there has been an uninterrupted succession of Baptist churches from the days of the Apostles until now. This is a theory that has great attractions for men of a certain type of mind, and desperate attempts are made from time to time to make out the details of the succession. In order to do this it has been necessary to claim as Baptists most of the 'heretical' sects that are mentioned in ancient and mediæval Church history, down to the Reformation period, from which a succession is easily enough traced.

"The history of Church succession has not grown out of the study of history, but out of the exigencies of the so-called 'Landmarkism,' which is the only orthodox Baptist doctrine recognized by a section of our Southern brethren. The essence of this theory is that nobody is to be recognized as baptized unless the ordinance was administered by a minister regularly baptized. To make his baptism regular, he must have been himself baptized by a regularly baptized minister, and so on back to the Apostles. But in order to establish this chain of regular baptisms, it is evident that there must have been a succession of churches administering baptism on this principle from the days of the Apostles to our own. If this were not the case, no man living could feel sure that he had been properly baptised on the Landmark theory. Since a Baptist succession

is needed to round out a theory, there must have been such a succession. The logic is beautifully simple, and if any obstinate facts get in the way so much the worse for them.

"There is not a single Baptist living, who has given sufficient attention to the study of Baptist history to be in any sense an authority, who holds this succession theory. In none of the Baptist Seminaries is there a Chair of History whose occupant would venture to teach it. By every competent scholar it is scouted as the sheerest nonsense, unconfirmed by a shadow of evidence. No Baptist historian, save one, has ever attempted seriously to trace out the succession, and the History of Orchard is absolutely worthless because he has done so. There is but one testimony from those who are competent to speak on this subject, and that is that the historical succession of the Baptist churches of to-day cannot be traced further back than a century before the Reformation, if so far as that.

"Macaulay has exercised his unrivalled powers of ridicule to show the absurdity of the theory of Apostolic succession held by the High Churchmen of the English Church, and adopted from them by the Episcopalians of this country. But that theory is reason itself compared with the theory of a baptismal succession such as is held by the 'Landmarkers.' The Apostolic succession theory fails at only one point ; it is impossible to show that the Apostles ordained bishops as their successors in the early churches. But grant that, and the task of tracing an outward succession down to the present day becomes easy. But baptismal succession fails at a score of points.