

Baptists and Disciples.

A Paper Presented Before the Joint Conferences of Baptist and Disciple Ministers in Washington, D. C., October 31, 1904, by Rev. C. F. Winbigler, D. D., Pastor of the First Baptist Church.

AGREEMENTS.

Much has been said and written concerning the union of the forces of the Baptists and Disciples. That the two denominations have many beliefs and practices in common none will doubt; there are some beliefs and practices unlike, none will dispute. It is only possible to form a union on the things in which they agree, each manifesting a tolerant spirit towards the other concerning teachings and practices on which there is not at present an agreement. The things changed or given up by each would be gradual and would in a large measure depend on how vitally essential they are held to be, viewed in the light of each other's interpretation of God's word.

The agreements are more than the disagreements. They both take God's word and especially the New Testament to be their rule of faith and practice. The differences of their present beliefs and practices are due to their different understanding and interpretation of the word of God. The agreements might be classified as fundamental and incidental.

FUNDAMENTAL AGREEMENTS.

1. That the Bible is the only authoritative rule of faith and practice. It is tacitly understood and plainly stated by the prominent teachers and preachers in both denominations that the new Testament especially is the Christian's law book. However, the great principles, the blessed truths the marvellous history, and the wonderful prophecies of the Old Testament are accepted as God's word as related particularly to the Jews and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Campbell in his debate with Rice, said, "Bring all things to the discriminating test of God's word. What accords with it, receive believe and practice." Baptists say the same thing. For such statement and testimony they were persecuted, imprisoned and burned. "To the law and the testimony," has been their cry, not to councils, popes, bishops, or ecclesiastical gatherings to learn God's will, God's word, unchangeable, infallible and inspired is the Christian's rule of faith and practice. Human creeds, opinions, confessions, and speculations may come and go, but "God's word abideth forever." These two denominations accept God's word as their rule of faith and practice. And this is a fundamental agreement.

2. That man is sinful and depraved and that he must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the truth before he can "see or enter the Kingdom of God." Campbell in "The Christian System," says: "Those out of Christ are, then in their sins condemned, unboly, alien, and lost; while those in Christ are pardoned, justified, sanctified, adopted into the family of God and saved." This has been the teaching of the Baptists from their earliest existence. Both Baptists and Disciples teach that a soul is regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the truth. In the disagreements I shall consider the difference of statements and the peculiar emphasis placed on the statement of the instrument of regeneration. But both teach the same doctrine as to depravity and the necessity of an instrument and agent of regeneration.

3. That only those who believe in and confess Christ should be baptized. Accepting this statement as scriptural the Baptists and Disciples alike hold that infants are not proper subjects of baptism. Campbell says: "When will my pedo-Baptist friends learn this lesson, that Christianity is a personal affair? Those called sons of God are all born again. The radical misconception of all pedo-Baptists is that the Jewish commonwealth and the Christian church are built on the same principle, and that principle, the flesh. No, it is not flesh, but faith, and not hereditary, but personal faith." Baptists were imprisoned for teaching this. (See history.) Dr. Jacobs, of the Church of England, eloquently voices the Baptist thought on infant baptism when he says: "Notwithstanding all that has been written by learned men on this subject, it remains indisputable that infant baptism is not mentioned in the New Testament. No notice is recorded there; no allusion is made to its effects, no directions given for its administration." Baptists and Disciples alike teach that believers, and believers only, should be baptized.

4. That immersion of the believer in water in the name of the Trinity or the Lord Jesus is the only Christian or New Testament baptism. Campbell says, and Baptists say the same thing: "That he who has never been immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has never received Christian baptism." These two denominations are willing to practice what they find in the New Testament, and finding immersion only as baptism they preach and practice that only.

5. That churches should be composed of baptized believers only.

That churches should be independent of one another and that each should rule itself according to the teachings of the New Testament; Baptists and Disciples believe that the New Testament churches were not diocesan, state or national, but local organizations complete in themselves and ruling themselves independently of each other. The Disciples have more of the Presbyterian form of government than the

Baptists. They both believe that no assembly, no synod, no conference, no bishop, no pope, no representatives can or should authoritatively dictate what churches should or should not do. "They are a law unto themselves" but as to the Lord, their Master and Head. They are independent and interdependent in council and co-operation in benevolent and missionary and educational work.

7. That the Lord's Supper should be regularly celebrated. Baptists and Disciples are together on the meaning and import of the Supper. The Disciples observe it weekly and the Baptists weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. The Disciples do not as a rule give an invitation to communion and are thus like the Baptists in that respect. They both agree that there should be a regular celebration of this ordinance.

So much for the fundamental agreements.

INCIDENTAL AGREEMENTS.

1. They both believe that anyone desiring to preach the gospel should set apart by the church of which he is a member. This may be done alone by delegates as advisors or representives may be invited from other churches to sit in council and give advice as to the expediency of ordaining the candidate to the ministry. The Disciples have less formality about this than the Baptists. They alike believe that the council is only advisory and not authoritative, i. e. that if the council, after the examination, deemed the candidate unfit or unqualified for ordination and the church thought otherwise (rather exceptional) the church could take the matter into its own hands and ordain the candidate to the ministry. The council would have no right authoritatively to dictate otherwise and such dictation would be unheeded under those circumstances.

2. They both believe that the scriptural officers of a church are elders, or presbyters, and deacons or helpers. Disciples accept and make more of the office of evangelist than Baptists. Under disagreements I shall refer to some further differences.

3. They both agree that Bible things should be called by Bible names (see disagreements.)

4. They both believe in educational institutions and missionary work.

5. They both believe in keeping the state and the church separated.

6. They both believe in the generally accepted theology. The Baptists being more Calvinistic and the Disciples being more Arminian. These distinctions are gradually wearing away. They both desire to have and preach a biblical theology.

7. They both have a short but comprehensive creed. It is "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his will and word."

There are other incidental agreements that need not be mentioned, inasmuch as they are common to all evangelical denominations.

DISAGREEMENTS.

The agreements between the Baptists and the Disciples we found were numerous, and we shall, I think find the disagreements not a few.

1. The Baptists put more stress and meaning on the Old Testament than the Disciples. Neither accept it as the rule of faith and practice in the church or in individual life. The Baptists believe that the New Testament was concealed in the old, and that no one can understand the New except in a measure they understand the Old, and conversely. The Old Testament is not only the history of the Jew, but it is the prophetic book of the world, containing eternal principles for individual, social and national life. The Baptists look upon the New Testament as an elaboration, exemplification, personification of those principles. Hence the principles of salvation, relationship to God, righteousness—personal corporate and social conduct, etc., were the same in Old Testament as in the New. The Baptists put more stress in this respect on the Old Testament than the Disciples and accept the New Testament as the supreme rule of faith and practice as heartily as they do.

2. The Baptists give greater emphasis to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their relationship and official capacity. This is seen in their prayers, preaching and theological teachings. The Baptists are not wise beyond what is written, and do not profess to be, but they believe that what they teach is written in God's word.

3. The Baptists accept God's word as the disciples do, as the only authoritative creed, but also believe the statement of belief which they have formulated is spiritual and can be accepted by any one who accepts the word of God.

4. The deity of Christ is a cardinal and fundamental doctrine of the Baptist denomination which is accepted by many Disciples, but which suffers at the hands of many others of them. The explanation given by some Disciple preachers in conversation and in print leaves one uncertain as to what they mean by the "Divinity of Christ." The Baptists have always been open and frank in saying that "Christ is God," and that he was the manifestation of God. There is more uniformity among the Baptists than with the Disciples in the statement.

5. The Baptists believe that the Holy Spirit ordinarily operates through the truth to regenerate a soul, but unlike the Disciples they would not limit Him in his operation and say that he cannot and does not at times operate independently of the Word.

In other words the Baptists make a general statement,

and a universal which admits of no exceptions. The advanced wing of the Disciples now accept the Baptist position in this.

6. The Baptists and Disciples differ somewhat in the form of statement that "faith and repentance" are essential to salvation. The former often stating it as "repentance and faith, the latter generally stating it as "faith and repentance". Disciples say that faith is mere assurance and acknowledgement of facts. Faith to Baptists means assent of the mind and consent of the heart and trust of the will in the personal Christ as a Saviour. It is more than belief, it is belief and trust. When Baptists or Disciples become so critically exact as to take exception to the form of statement "faith and repentance" or "repentance and faith" as to which word ought to come first, they are wasting time. There is doubtless a theological statement which might theoretically settle the matter for the time being, but practically the difference is as if we should discuss which is first through the board, the hole or the rifle ball; they both go through at the same time. Both statements are scriptural and any one can see by the context what is meant.

7. The Disciples put more stress on baptism as being the last step before formal pardon is secured, or as having saving efficacy, than the Baptists. The Disciples look upon baptism as the last condition to be complied with before one has the remission of sins. The Baptists deny that baptism has anything in it, other than typical teachings and obedience to procure God's pardon for sins committed. Disciples say the design of baptism is to wash away and procure the remission of past sins. To this the Baptists take exception. They believe that baptism is, negatively (1) not to save; (2) not to wash away sins. But positively represents (1) the burial and resurrection of our blessed Lord; (2) the washing away of sins; (3) the dying to sin and living to the new life of Jesus Christ; (4) the identification or union with Christ; and (5) the fulfilment of Christ's command.

This article precludes the consideration of texts quoted by Disciples to support their view. They have cited Baptist authors and commentators as favoring their view or statement of the design of baptism. I have investigated these quotations and find that the quotations are fragmentary.

Mr. Errett says in "Our Position" on the design of baptism: "We part company with the Baptists, and find ourselves more at home on the other side of the house" (meaning with the pedo-Baptists). It is undeniable that the Disciples believe that no one is pardoned for past transgressions unless they are baptized. This of course, is the view of people who believe in "baptismal regeneration." We may call the Disciples' view baptismal remission, but the difference is not much.

8. The Disciples are tenacious for certain names by which they may be specified as people and churches, and in this respect are unlike the Baptists. The former may be too particular and the latter not careful enough. The Disciples use one or two names almost exclusively. The name Christian, a name not given by Christ but by scoffers at Antioch. They speak of the church as the church of Christ, which is not a spiritual phrase. There is but one phrase in the New Testament like that, and it is "Churches of Christ," but the word "Christ" in the phrase biblical scholars say is not correctly translated from the original. "The Church of God" and "Churches of God" are phrases used all the way through the New Testament. The name for the church is one of distinction and it would probably be well were human names generally discarded and the names given in God's word taken. Much confusion would be avoided.

The Baptists make a greater distinction than the Disciples between elders and deacons, believing that these are two essential New Testament classes in church organization. The Baptists make no distinction between teaching and ruling elders, not making two classes of elders as the Disciples do.

Rev. W. L. Hayden, a Disciple, in his book on "Church Polity," says, on page 64: "There is not a sufficient warrant for the distinction between teaching elders and ruling elders, as aptness to teach as well as to rule is a requisite qualification for the office." Mr. Campbell came to see and say that in the interests of good order it was every way better to restrict the right to baptize and administer the Lord's Supper to those the church might select and set apart. This is substantially the view and practice of the Baptist churches.

9. The Baptists and Disciples differ somewhat on the communion observances. Many Baptist churches invite persons of like faith and order to commune. Many other never give an invitation. This is the practice of the Disciples in many places. I have been informed that they give a general invitation in some of their churches. It is generally understood that they practice open communion. It seems to an outsider very strange that the Disciples believe that a man has not been formally pardoned unless he is baptized yet that he should be invited to the Lord's table with them. To believe that a man is not saved until he repents, believes, and is baptized and yet invite him to commune, looks like a serious and palpable contradiction. The Baptists believe that Christ by precedent or command, by himself or through his apostles has given certain conditions which should precede communion. No fair minded