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The New Year.

I see not a step before me  
As I tread on another year,  
But the past is still in God's keeping,  
The future His mercy shall clear,  
And what looks dark in the distance  
May brighten as I draw near.

—Mary G. Brainard.

Reader, can you realize that 1891 is here? If you can, you can do more than the writer of this can. Did you ever notice how people drop into poetry—their own, or some other body's—at this season? We have two or three bits here which strike chords we like; perhaps, some of our readers will enjoy them. The lines which we have placed at the head of this article beautifully describe the attitude of mind the Christian should maintain in view of the natural anxiety of man with regard to the future, which may bring speedily upon him sorrow and trouble.

These verses that follow remind us that, notwithstanding our forebodings, each year of our lives has brought to us unnumbered blessings:—

The New Year is gently knocking at the door!

With a basketful of blessings he hath come,  
Give a welcome to the laden one who bringeth

Goodly presents from the happy Heavenly Home:

He hath clusters from the Vine that never faileth;

He hath honey from the flowing Riven Rock;

He hath nectar for the thirsty, wine to strengthen—

Let us open to his soft and gracious knock.

The New Year is gently knocking at the door.

As a visitor he cometh to abide  
For a twelvemonth in earth's cottage,  
and I reckon

We shall soon be loth to lose him from our side.

Let us treat him with the friendship of affection;

Let him never hear the anger of reproof;

But with kindness and with singing entertain him,

As a visitor of honor 'neath our roof.

And here is a word fitly spoken by way of exhortation "To Better Life":—

Speak a shade more kindly than the year before;

Pray a little oftener, love a little more.

Cling a little closer to the Father's love,

Life below shall liker grow to thine above.

—An. n.

Baptists Against Themselves.

I.

The Committee of Disciples appointed to prepare a statement on union gave expression to the opinion that Baptists teach that "faith is the result of regeneration."

The *Canadian Baptist*, in an article we published in our Dec. 1st number, said: "It will probably be news to our readers to learn that it is an article of Baptist belief that 'faith is the re-

sult of regeneration,' rather than the means by which the change is wrought." This is as much as to say that the Committee of Disciples "misunderstood Baptist teaching as to the relation of faith and regeneration.

"C. G.," an eminent Baptist, in the *Canadian Baptist*, of Nov. 27th, has this to say to the editor:—

"The statement that it would be news to the readers of the *Baptist* 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,' seems to me directly to imply, if it did not declare, that Baptists do not believe that faith is the result of regeneration, and that they do believe that faith is the means by which regeneration is wrought. As Baptists, so far as their belief on the point can be known from generally accepted statements of Scripture doctrine, and the declarations of their representative theologians, really believe what this editorial utterance implies they do not, and as it implies that they believe what not one of their representative writers, so far as I can learn, has accepted, it seemed to me the statement ought not to go unchallenged."

This is as much as to say that the Committee of Disciples did not misunderstand Baptist teaching as to the relation of faith and regeneration.

Herein is a marvellous thing that these two representative Baptists should squarely take issue on this matter. We say representative Baptists, because the editor of the *Canadian Baptist* is, or ought to be, a representative Baptist, and the editor of the *Baptist*, in the Dec. 4th number of his paper, includes "C. G." among "representative Baptists." "How can these things be?" One thing is clear: if the Committee of Disciples misrepresented the Baptists on the matter in question, so does the eminent "representative" Baptist, "C. G." Another thing is likewise clear: that if "C. G." be correct in his contention, then the editor of the *Baptist* and those who think with him are not Baptists. And the editor is not alone, as the columns of the *Baptist* testify. Indeed so far as the columns of the *Baptist* furnish indications, it would seem that "C. G." is alone; no one, we believe, has written in support of "C. G." Are there none among the readers of the *Baptist* who stand with him? Is he the only representative of old-fashioned Baptist theology in Canada? Or, being "a host in himself," is it thought unnecessary for other friends of the old doctrine to rally to the rescue? In the Dec. 4th number of the *Baptist*, a correspondent who signs himself "J. D. K." comes out on the editor's side in these words:—

"The simple student of the Bible must be satisfied to leave the 'Metaphysics of Theology' to editors and learned professors, while he rests without cavil upon what the Spirit has revealed. In such passages as these, 'Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,' 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,' the wondrous fact that belief in Christ is the means of regeneration is clearly stated, but the fact itself is neither analyzed nor explained. Enough for us that it is God's appointment, and any discussion as to terms and order of time must be dreary and unprofitable speculations."

Now we would say to "J. D. K.," "That is not bad doctrine at all, but if 'C. G.' is right, it is not Baptist doctrine, nor are those who hold it Baptists."

Another who thinks himself "a good Baptist" endorses the editor in this wise in the Dec. 11th number of the *Baptist*:—

"I was much pleased when I read your remark on the statements of the Committee of the Disciples that it would be news to Baptists '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.' It has been for years from Bible study my conviction that 'saving faith' is not a fruit of regeneration but the condition through which regeneration is wrought by the Spirit. My theological instructors taught that faith is the result of regeneration and not the means by which eternal life is attained. This, I think, is generally taught by our theologians, but I, for one, and I think I am a good Baptist, cannot find warrant for this teaching in the Word, and I am inclined rather to follow the Scriptures, which seem fairly plain on this subject, than 'The Metaphysics of Theology,' which seems in the interests of a system to contradict the Scriptures. See Mark xvi. 16; John i. 12, iii. 14, 16, 18, 36; Acts xvi. 30, 31; Rom. iii. 22, 25, 26; Eph. ii. 8, etc. If our good brother, 'C. G.,' will show from the Word of God that regeneration precedes faith he will confer a great favour on at least one who sincerely desires to know the truth."

No, "L.," according to "C. G." you are not "a good Baptist"; but you need not feel very badly about that, because, you know, you can be "a good Christian," even though you may not be "a good Baptist." The Committee of Disciples may well be excused for accounting that Baptist doctrine, which, on the testimony of "L.," is generally taught by Baptist theologians, and, on the testimony of "C. G." (*Canadian Baptist*, Dec. 11th), is held by "the presidents of all the Baptist Theological Schools." And we risk nothing in saying that the same committee would be gratified by the assurance that the editor of the *Baptist*, "J. D. K." and "L.," rather than "C. G.," "the presidents of all the Baptist Theological Schools," and Baptist theologians generally, truly represent the Baptists of Canada to-day as to the relation of faith and regeneration. When the Committee receives such assurance we are sure they will cheerfully "stand corrected." Before passing from this point let us remark that it is refreshing to observe that "L." has outgrown his theological instructors, and is inclined rather to follow the Scriptures, which seem fairly plain on this subject, than "The Metaphysics of Theology," which seems in the interests of a system to contradict the scriptures.

II.

Moreover, the editor of the *Baptist* and "C. G." are against each other as to whether the Baptist churches of Canada have adopted the New Hampshire Confession of Faith. Referring to your statement in Dec. 1st number of THE EVANGELIST, that the Baptist churches of Canada have either formally or virtually adopted the New Hampshire Confession of Faith as a test of fellowship, the editor of the *Baptist* says (Dec. 11th):—

"It is not correct that the Baptist churches of Canada have adopted the 'Baptist Church Manual' as an authoritative creed. The proof is that there are some, and we believe many, churches that have not adopted and will not adopt either this or any other man-made creed; and there are many individual Baptists in good standing in the churches who would not, on any consideration, subscribe to any such creed."

In the same number of the *Baptist* (Dec. 11th), "C. G.," replying to the criticism of "J. D. K.," given above, uses the following language:—

"Perhaps this explanation may relieve the learned authors of the Confessions of Faith, accepted by virtually all the Baptist churches of this continent, and the presidents of all the Theological Schools, from the charge of cavilling at God's Word"

Now, compare the statements of the *Baptist* and "C. G.," and you will find that while the *Baptist* contradicts our assertion, "C. G." supports it, and

goes further by extending his declaration to "all the Baptist churches of this continent." When we used the language, "formally or virtually," we did so advisedly, and we are not a little gratified to find ourselves justified by so eminent and well-informed a Baptist as "C. G." But a careful and critical reader may be saying, "Not so fast, O editor! Do you not observe that the editor of the *Baptist* affirms that the Baptist churches of Canada have not adopted 'The New Hampshire Confession' as an authoritative creed?" To such a reader we reply, we do observe that most particularly, nevertheless we declare that the Baptist churches of Canada have virtually adopted "The New Hampshire Confession" as an authoritative creed as a test of fellowship; and in proof of our assertion we quote from "C. G." in the *Baptist* of Dec. 4th:—

"But if Baptist churches are not allowed to have any statement of doctrine whose rejection would disqualify for church membership, then they tie their own hands and meekly consent that their churches become a common breeding ground for all the heresies which may there choose to hatch out their evil broods. If anyone can discern a logical *via media* between the two, he will have thought to better purpose than I. But is it a fact that Baptists have accepted this position? Every new church, before reception into the denomination, has to be recognized, and before it is recognized its soundness in the faith is tested. Every candidate for the ministry is examined by a council, and if he is found unsound in doctrine, he is refused ordination. In the United States, churches that have departed from the faith have been excluded from the denomination. Who has not known of instances in which members of Baptist churches have been excluded for heresy?"

Let the reader note that "C. G." implies not only that Baptist churches are allowed to have a statement of doctrine whose rejection would disqualify for church membership, but that in fact they have and use such a statement. We may add that the grounds on which we based the opinion that the Baptist churches of Canada had either formally or virtually adopted "The New Hampshire Confession" as a test of fellowship were these:—

(1) We had been informed upon good Baptist authority that the Baptist churches in Canada were generally organized upon the basis of "The New Hampshire Confession," that is, had formally adopted it; and adopted it as a test of fellowship as shown by Art. I., sec. 1 of the "Rules of Church Order," included in the "Baptist Church Manual."

2. The statement that the Baptist churches in Canada were generally organized upon the basis of "The New Hampshire Confession," implied that some Baptist churches were not organized upon that basis, had not formally adopted it, and we referred to them in the word "virtually." How so? (a) By sending representatives to a council which recognized as a regular Baptist church a congregation which had formally adopted "The New Hampshire Confession" as a statement of faith and practice. We think it a reasonable presumption, since the Baptist churches are generally organized on the basis of the aforesaid Confession, that there is not a Baptist church in Canada that has not taken part in such a recognition service, and thus virtually adopted the New Hampshire Confession itself. Should there, however, be Baptist churches which have not taken part in such services, our affirmation still holds good, or (b) when such a church was itself received into the Baptist denomination it endorsed the churches already in the denomination, most of whom had formally adopted the Con-

fession, and so endorsed—virtually adopted—the Confession itself. It therefore follows that every Baptist church in Canada, and every individual member of the churches is committed to the New Hampshire Confession, and they have no just ground of complaint if they are held to approve the faith and practice set forth in that document.

The *Baptist* says: "There are Baptist churches which have not adopted and would not adopt any man-made creed, and that there are individuals in Baptist churches who would not on any consideration subscribe to such a creed. These churches and individuals are, we believe, theoretically right, but practically wrong. Every church of them and every individual of them should withdraw from the Baptist denomination, and so bring their practice into harmony with their theory. "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them," saith the Saviour.

What Constitutes a Baptist?

The *Canadian Baptist* of Dec. 11 contains an editorial with the above heading, replying to ours in the Dec. 1 EVANGELIST. We have pleasure in acknowledging the courtesy of the present editor of the *Baptist* in promptly replying to our questions as to Baptist faith and practice. In the Dec. 4 number of his paper he answers our question as to whether a person must subscribe to the New Hampshire Confession of Faith or be denied admission to a Baptist church, in the following paragraph:—

"The question in the last sentence is a fair one, and is entitled to a straightforward answer. The answer is 'No.' This answer is a simple matter of fact, and is given not on the sole authority of the editor of the *Baptist*, but on that of all the representative Baptists to whom we have had opportunity to put it, including two Doctors of Divinity, and even our well-known correspondent 'C. G.' himself. It does not involve a contradiction of the statement our contemporary quotes from 'a leading Baptist,' which is, we dare say, also a matter of fact" (i. e., that the Baptist churches in this country are generally organized upon the basis of the New Hampshire Confession).

We think it is a fair inference from this statement that though the Baptist churches have generally adopted "The Baptist Church Manual," they do not live up to it. For by reference to that Manual, as shown by us before, we find that before a person can be baptized and received into the membership of a church that had adopted the Manual, he is required to adopt "the views of faith and practice held by this church, as set forth in the foregoing Declaration." Are we to understand from the *Baptist* that this rule is a dead letter? We have before us a letter from a friend who a few years ago was received into the fellowship of a Baptist church without being called upon to subscribe to the Manual; but two weeks after he was received, the document was read to some others who were being received into the same church. The practice of that church was variable, partly according to the statement of the *Baptist*, partly not. Can the *Baptist* explain that?

We regret that lack of space prevents us from giving in full the *Baptist's* reply to our question: "What it is that differentiates a Baptist from any other person professing to be a Christian?" We copy one paragraph here from the introductory part of the article:—

"Before coming to the exact point of THE EVANGELIST'S question, we should, perhaps, make one or two remarks touching the main body of its article. Being at present chiefly concerned with the faith and practice of