

What Baptists Stand For.

ABSTRACT OF AN ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT E. V. MULLINS, D. D., LL. OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST SEMINARY.

The question is equivocal. Does it mean what Baptists actually stand for? If so, the reply is that some so-called Baptists stand for virtually nothing, others stand for one or two doctrines, and some stand for many doctrines, but in such a spirit that they neutralize the good effects of their position. I take it, however, that the question means: What have Baptists as a historic denomination stood for? In reply I will say in general, the Baptists stand for this: a whole gospel for the whole world. Most of the errors of the ages have begun as half truths. A fragment of the truth out of place may virtually be a falsehood. Coming to the main points that are embraced in this statement, I will say they stand:

1. For a whole Bible. We do not stand for a mutilated Bible. The first article of the Seminary statement of doctrine is as follows: "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience." This brief summary is a good statement of what we believe to be the relation of the Scriptures to our faith. Our Scriptures are our authority in the sense that they are the literary expression of the revealed will of God through Christ. The teachings of Scripture, of course, must be interpreted by the mind and heart enlightened by the Spirit of God, and when the mind of the spirit is discovered there is no appeal from that for Baptists.

2. A whole Doctrine of God. This includes a real doctrine of the Trinity. We believe that God is revealed to us as one in nature and three in personal attributes. The word personal is, of course, employed in this connection in a somewhat figurative way. We do not mean three separate and distinct individuals as when we speak of three human persons; for this would be tritheism. But we believe that no adequate statement of the Scripture teaching can be made which does not express a real distinction in the Godhead, which is best expressed by the word person. Among others the word hypostasis has been suggested as a substitute. But it has not won a place in general theological language which has enabled it to displace the word person.

3. We hold to a whole Doctrine of Man. Nothing is more far reaching in theology than defective doctrines as to sin. We believe that the human race was involved in the sin of Adam. Some explain this connection by a federal headship, others by a natural heredity. The chief point is that the race is involved in such a way that it is helpless save as enabled by the spirit of God. All men are not equally bad, nor are all men as bad as they can be; but according to the teaching of the Scripture all men need the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Human depravity means that all the powers and faculties of every man have been affected by sin.

4. A whole Doctrine of Salvation. We believe in a finished work of Christ whereby the sinner is justified upon the exercise of faith and accepted in Christ. And in this sense we can speak of the finished salvation which Christ brought, and the finished salvation which has become ours when we believe. This starting point of salvation, however is to be progressively realized in this life and is to be completed in the world to come in the "salvation that is to be revealed at the last time," that is to say, a perfected character conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Election grows out of the doctrine of God as sovereign. The first verse and first chapter of the first book of the Bible sets forth the doctrine of the sovereignty of God—"In the beginning God." This statement properly understood involves all that is meant by predestination and election. If God is first, then everything else must in some way be dependent upon him.

Vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice grows out of the doctrine of God as holy love, and out of human guilt. Christ's atonement was not only manward, but also Godward.

Regeneration grows out of the doctrine of sin and depravity, and is a cardinal doctrine of Baptists, involving far reaching consequences as to their general position.

The doctrine of sanctification grows out of the doctrine of regeneration. Sanctification is the unfolding of the germ implanted in the regenerating act of God.

Repentance and faith result from the doctrine of human freedom. Divine sonship is not imposed upon man, but is received by man by the exercise of human choice and the gift of God. Electing grace operates by awakening human faculties. Repentance and faith are the exercise of human faculties in response to the grace of God.

Out of the doctrine of freedom and human responsibility arise a group of doctrines which are of great importance. One of these relates to the baptism of believers only. The doctrine of human freedom and personal responsibility cuts up by the roots the doctrine of infant baptism.

Another outgrowth of the doctrine of freedom is the doctrine of religious and civil liberty, which I cannot enlarge upon, but which is familiar to Baptists.

Still another is the right of private interpretation of the Scripture, including the freedom to investigate truth in all

realms. This has been a great safeguard of Baptist doctrine from the beginning. Leave a man who is in earnest for the truth under the influence of the spirit of God in the study of the Scripture, and the probability is he will become a Baptist.

The doctrine of future endless punishment is also a corollary from the doctrine of human freedom. Hell is the result of a human choice of evil. The Bible did not make hell. Hell came as the fruit of disobedience. Hell will be endless because disobedience will be endless. This is one of the most solemn and moving facts of man's spiritual nature. Let us not fail to recognize and proclaim it in the spirit of the Master himself. Of course the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and the future judgment are included in the doctrine of last things as held by Baptists, and along with these the glorious doctrine of endless joy in a state of activity in heaven.

5. Baptists believe in a whole Doctrine of the Church. Here also the fragmentary method of dealing with the truth has led to serious consequences. They have as a historic body held to a whole doctrine of the church, both as to its organization and constitution, and as to its mission. There are two senses in which the word church is used in the New Testament. Baptists of all ages have admitted the two senses. One is the universal sense and the other the local. The New Testament in certain passages clearly uses the word in the universal sense. Recently among Southern Baptists a discussion has arisen as to whether the universal sense applies in time or eternity. All parties, however, hold to the two senses. The Seminary article on the subject of the church is as follows: "The Lord Jesus is the head of the church, which is composed of all his true disciples, and in him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or churches, and to each of these churches he hath given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he hath appointed. The regular officers of a church are bishops or elders, and deacons." Baptists stand for the local church, for its independence and self government; they stand for the integrity of the ordinances for the immersion of believers only as Christian baptism; they believe that nothing else is baptism; and they believe in the admission to the Lord's Supper of the immersed only and of those who have an orderly Christian walk.

Baptists have stood for a whole doctrine of the church as to its mission. The mission of the church is to evangelize the world. It is, of course, to maintain the doctrines and the ordinances in the community, evangelize the neighborhood, build up Christian character. But looking at its mission in the largest and most comprehensive sense, it is appointed to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

I have, of course, not been able to touch upon every detail of doctrinal view as held by Baptists. The above is the briefest kind of a sketch only, the nature of the subject preventing my going into detail to any greater extent here.—Western Recorder.

Reconverted Christians.

BY THEODORE E. CUYLER, D. D.

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." These words were not addressed by the Lord Jesus Christ to an impenitent sinner; they were addressed to Simon Peter before his disgraceful denial of his Master. "Simon," says the heart-searching Saviour, "Satan has asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat; but I have made supplication for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." Three important facts stand out in this declaration. The first one is that Peter was not at that time a stranger to true religion; for Christ recognizes that he has "faith." The second fact is that while Satan was about to sift poor Peter with a terrible temptation, Christ had interceded for him, that he should not fall away into utter apostasy. The third fact is that Christ foresaw that after his disgraceful fall there would be a recovery, and the impetus Peter would be one of the most powerful of his apostles.

The word "convert" in the New Testament signifies to face about or to turn around. It describes the movement of a ship when it is "put about" on an opposite course—or the action of a flower when it turns towards the sun. Reconversion is not regeneration. The Bible gives no hint of a second or third new birth of the soul. Reconversion is neither a second awakening of a sinner, nor a second regeneration of one who is a true Christian. It is simply a penitent return to God and to the path of duty on the part of an erring and backsliding believer. Peter did not cease to be a Christian on that night of his shameful denial. Nor does many a church member cease entirely to be a Christian during his or her seasons of spiritual declension. There is life there, but it is life at a pitifully low ebb. Like an apple-tree in mid-winter, their roots may be still alive under all the biting cold; but there are no fruits of the spirit on their bare and barren branches.

Peter's heart-process in reconversion was similar to that in original conversion in two vital particulars. He sorrowed for his sin and repented of it. He came to Jesus in genuine faith and entered on a new path of obedience. Reconversion is a turning unto God; it differs from a first

conversion, in two respects—viz, the point set out from is a different point, and the distance traveled over is vastly less.

Tens of thousands of church members are in painful need of a thorough reconversion. The church gets very little from them except their names on its roll and their appearance at its communion table. The community gets no benefit from their religion. Not only do they not help the work of the church, they are a hindrance and a reproach. No "revival" is more needed than a reawakening and a reconversion of backsliding church members. I once heard the venerable Dr. Lyman Beecher say that during a powerful revival in Cincinnati there was a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the "Lane Theological Seminary," of which he was then the president. Several of the students whose religious experience had been very shallow and whose spiritual life was feeble, abandoned their hopes, and dug down deeper to find the Rock. They were reconverted; and the doctor said that these reconverted men were especially effective when they got into their public ministry.

The first thing for every backsliding church member to do is to come back to Christ. If, like penitent Peter, he weeps bitterly, all the better for him. "He restoreth my soul." That is, Jesus Christ reinvigorates the life, imparts new vitality to the heart's blood, new strength to the spiritual sinews, and new elasticity to the footstep in the path of duty. It is not enough for a backslider to cry out, "Oh, that I could again be what I once was!" That is not the point to be aimed at. My friend, instead of vainly trying to get back your former self, and to reach your old mark strike out for something better! You cannot run your experience again in an old mould. The less you think of your former self and the less you attempt to stereotype an old experience, the better it will be for you. Beseech your Master to give you new power, new inspiration, strength for new service, and lay hold of the first lines of useful activity that you can discover. Put off that "old man" with his deeds and put on the new man in Jesus Christ. That means reconversion.

Having thus come back to Jesus Christ in heart contrition and self-consecration it might do your soul good to make an honest confession, not only to your Master, but to your fellow Christians. A member of my church who had wandered off into scandalous practices came into our prayer meeting one evening, and standing up before the pulpit made a square, manly acknowledgement of his backsliding. He asked his brethren to forgive him, and prayed God to forgive him. From that time he never alluded to the painful subject again, but threw himself into zealous Christian work, in which he continued until his dying day. There could not be a more profitable and God-honoring service in our devotional meetings than for those who have been delinquents or deserters to make frank confession of their sins and short comings. General confession of sin in public prayer is cheap and worthless; but to stand up and acknowledge guilt and the wounding of Christ "in the house of his friends" demands an aroused conscience and sincere penitence; it is a genuine evidence of reconversion.

I have no doubt that the sad story of Peter's sin and recovery is given in the Scripture for the instruction of those who have fallen into spiritual declension, as truly as the experience of Joseph is given to teach the virtue of charity, or that of Daniel to teach the virtue of courage, or that of Elijah to illustrate the power of prayer. Peter's honest tears of penitence and his subsequent "thou knowest that I love thee" were the prelude to his glorious apostleship. A stronger and more sympathetic man than ever, he was able to help and to strengthen his weaker brethren. With what earnestness might he have sounded that solemn caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!"

Perhaps this article may come under the eye of some members of Christ's flock whose spiritual thermometer is sinking to zero, and who having a name to live are not much better than dead. Don't rely on a bygone experience already become musty and mouldy. Repent afresh and "do thy first work." Let your earnest prayer be, "O God, renew a right spirit within me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!" Then with Christ's help, begin to live and speak and act and work as a reconverted Christian—Christian Intelligencer.

Uncle 'Lij's Opinions.

BY JUDSON KEMPTON.

Uncle 'Lij' on Mossbacks.

"Mornin', 'Lijah. Ain't seen you much lately. What's th' matter? Ain't y' feelin' tip-top?" And the grocer looked at his customer anxiously, for several old men in Carroll Corners had lately been "fallin' fast."

But Uncle 'Lijah declared he felt as "fine 's a fiddle."

Then without more conversation he grasped the arm of the store chair, turned it with the back to the window and the front to the stove, opened up his Chicago paper and after that a New York magazine, and studied them without a word and, if you except the occasional adjusting of his glasses to suit the different varieties of type, without a motion, for what seemed like three-quarters of an hour. Then he folded up the periodicals, deposited them in the pockets of his overcoat, one on each side, and looked at the grocer as if to ask him whether he spoke.

"Well, Uncle 'Lij," he said, "you look more satisfied