

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

A PROTEST AGAINST CAMPBELLISM.

PART I.

Dear Brother,—

In September last Elder Donald Crawford of this Island replied, in your columns, to certain strictures of mine on his Campbellite teachings as presented in some previous issues of the *Messenger*. Permit me now at length to offer some remarks in regard to Mr. Crawford's articles as above indicated. It seems necessary that I should do so, that I may not, in this case, "let judgment go by default," as the lawyers phrase it. I will not, however, weary myself or your readers by laboured attempts to follow Mr. Crawford through all the windings of his debate. I shall present a *protest*, rather than an argument; drawing out my protest in a few particulars; committing the whole, as heretofore, to the judgment of the God of truth, and to the candid consideration of the friends of truth.

I. First of all, then, I protest against Mr. Crawford's unworthy insinuation, and lofty assumption.

1. As to *insinuation*: I had said, "Mr. Crawford, in his recent communications, uses me courteously. I desire still to reciprocate courtesies with him." Now in what way is this met? Thus Mr. Crawford chooses to write:—"He . . . states that he is under the necessity of exploring and denouncing my errors; and winds up by saying that I have used him courteously, and *laments his lamblike desire still to reciprocate courtesies with me.*" In the words which I have italicized as above lies the insinuation of which I here complain. According to Mr. Crawford, my courtesy is mere pretence. And why so? Simply because I had been severe upon his maltreatment of that great testimony to the Divinity of our Lord at John i. 1-3. I am glad now to learn, repeating an expression formerly employed, that Mr. Crawford "is of one heart with John in the honour which he would ascribe to Jesus." But if he would have credit for his Scriptural soundness on this point, he must hereafter abstain from such terms and reasonings as are suited to bring his soundness into question. And as to courtesy, he ought to understand, if he would but discriminate, that it is one thing to attack an error, and another to inflict personalities upon him who holds that error. If, however, it be really an offence to suggest that Mr. Crawford can fall into error, I must plead guilty to that offence, "criminal" and "unjust" as it may be to commit it.

2. As to *assumption*. Mr. Crawford has a habit of writing as though his teachings were of like authority with those of the New Testament; of which we have here some illustration. Thus I had spoken of his "old baptismal fallacies." Therefore he takes occasion to ask; "And what, kind reader, are these 'baptismal fallacies'?" Neither more nor less, "he replies," than declaring what "began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him," &c., &c." Thus he endeavours to make out, that I oppose myself, not to his teachings, but to the teachings of the Lord from heaven. Whereas the very contrary is the case. I do not oppose the teachings of Scripture; but I do oppose Mr. Crawford's interpretations of those teachings. The former I dare not knowingly controvert. But the latter, all uninspired as they are, I have a clear right to controvert; even as he has a right to controvert my interpretations of Scripture, or those of any other uninspired man, without being told that he contradicts what "began to be spoken by the Lord." I do not bow here to Mr. Crawford's dictation; nor to the like dictation when he writes in this strain:—"If he [that is myself] will be advised, I would suggest that he hold fast the gospel and law of pardon that Jesus gave." Now this is the very thing that I endeavour to do. But it is Paul's "law of pardon," and Christ's "gospel," to which I would "hold fast," and not Mr. Crawford's. And he clearly sins against the New Testament "law of liberty," while he thus offensively admonishes me, as though he were something more than a poor creature of earth no greater, and no more inspired than I myself am.

II. I proceed to protest against Mr. Crawford's misrepresentations.

He constantly writes as if he were quite a paragon of piety. Yet I would venture to ask, whether he ever read David's petition, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee?" David was a pious man, and

waited upon his God. But he desired to be an honest man as well as a pious one, and to vindicate his piety by his honesty. Hence his petition as above cited,—*"Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee."* Now, "if [Mr. Crawford] would be advised, I would suggest, that he hold fast" to David's style of godliness, and vindicate his piety by his honesty. If he had so done, he would not have fallen into the misrepresentations so profusely scattered throughout the articles to which I here refer. Thus he writes,—*"To say that Jesus, in his gracious charter of pardon to a condemned world, spoke in ambiguous words, or used them in a doubtful sense, is to accuse Him who tasted death for every man of trifling with a world's salvation."* And again,—*"While so many are contemptuously opposing believers' immersion, and pleading for infant sprinkling, it is pitiable to see Baptist ministers upholding their hands, and joining to denounce this positive institution of the Son of God as a trifling non-essential; alleging that the one who breaks this command is as sure of heaven as he is who obeys it."* And yet again,—*"His [that is, my] logic, if I understand him, is this,—It is false in Mr. Crawford to say, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; for good men who broke this command are saved without it."* And yet once more,—*"It I understand him, [that is me] he concludes as follows:—that the law of pardon contained in Jesus' commission, and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, was all true and right in the apostles' day, and will be true and right again by and by; but owing to the vast number of pious Postbaptists who now live, and have lived, that law is not true nor right now, nor has it been for a long time past."*

Now I have no answer to make to all this, nor to anything else of the like kind that may be found in the articles on which I here animadvert. It is just a repetition of the old and mean artifice, practised from the days of Sallust downwards, (see Neb. vi. 8.) which attributes words and thoughts to an opponent which never really belonged to him, and then proceeds to treat them as though he had actually been their author and origin. I defy Mr. Crawford to find any statement in all that I have written that can be tortured into any such sentiments as he here chooses to impute to me. He caricatures, he slanders me, in the passages above cited. Had he given my own propositions in my own terms, and sought to demolish these, I might have attempted some defence; but I am not bound to defend the unworthy fabrications which he has reared, and then called them mine: nor shall I engage in any such task. Oh! that Mr. Crawford were as honest as he is pious. But as it is, alas! alas! for his piety itself! And alas! for the cause whose advocates resort to weapons such as he sees fit to employ.

Of course I am not ignorant of his plea in this case. I will not put baptism where he puts it in the scheme of salvation. I insist upon it that men are saved, not by Christ and his ordinances, but by Christ, and Christ alone, in distinction from ordinances. I maintain, that ordinances are simply means of grace, and not channels indispensable to its conveyance. I teach, that in them we own and celebrate a salvation already realized, and do not attain to a salvation which could not be realized without them. And then, I am maligned as though I undervalued ordinances, and encouraged men to disobey their Lord. Well, if men will thus break the ninth commandment, they must do it, and abide the consequences. Meanwhile, I am well content to await here the verdict of heaven; quite certain that the Master will never hold me guilty for refusing, in the great concerns of salvation, to adulterate with the waters of baptism his own thrice precious and infinitely efficacious blood.

And here for the present I stop; proposing to complete this my protest hereafter.

Your fellow-labourer,

J. DAVIS.

Charlottetown, P. E. I., June 20, 1870.

For the Christian Messenger,

ARTICLES AND DOCTRINES—A CRITIQUE.

Reference was made in a recent number of the *Messenger* to the pamphlet of Ed. E. Orvis, containing the "Declaration of Faith and Practice" and an address to the ministers and members of the Baptist denomination.

The writer, with others, as it seems, has been favored with a copy of said tractate. There are those who will consider it a capital thing, and quote its author as a very Goliath, standing forth for the defence of the "ancient faith;" but we must confess to very different views

concerning the author and his work. Indeed, in rising from the perusal of the pamphlet we felt more fully assured than ever of the truthfulness of those precious doctrines of scripture he presumes to assail. It would be difficult to say which is the most conspicuous, the author's incompetency to discern between things that differ; his ignorance of scripture interpretation, or his egotism in the statement of his opinions. The work itself is not worthy a passing notice, but as it is an attack upon the denomination, and as it affords an apology for the presentation of truth that needs to be enforced, it will not be considered amiss to remark on a few of the statements it contains. In his address Mr. Orvis claims to "belong to the church of Christ," and upon this grounds his right to be heard. Whether his premise be correct or not I will not say, but his logic is sorely at fault. The apostle says "I would they were cut off which trouble you." (Gal. v. 12.) They must therefore have been members of the church. But according to E. E. Orvis, they could claim a right to be heard, a right to hold forth their heretical opinions, a right to enjoy the fellowship of the brethren since they were members of the church of Christ. The same apostle, in the 5th ch. of 1 Cor., instructs the church to exclude some evil doer, "Do not ye," he asks, judge them that are within;" and he enjoins "therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." But if that "wicked person" could have been instructed by Mr. O. he might have protested against such a mode of treatment. "Brethren" he would say, "I claim to belong to the church of Christ; He hath said 'Let there be no divisions among you,' We are 'members one of another,' and I demand protection in the name of the Lord Jesus as a part of his body." I do not say that Mr. O. would venture so far, but this is just the point to which his logic conducts him.

Mr. O., after endeavoring to show, what nobody denies, that one may be a member of Christ's church—a brother in Christ and yet be weak in the faith, proceeds to remark, "If therefore in my judgment you are weak in the faith that is no reason why I should not recognize you as brethren . . . If you have erred from the truth, and thereby sinned against God, you may be brethren still. It is my duty in such a case to receive you; but not to doubtful disputations; to try to convert you from the error of your ways. And whatever is my duty towards you is also your duty towards me under like circumstances." But suppose I will not be converted from the error of my ways, what will Mr. O. do with me? Will he say—"well brother since I cannot convert you, you must enjoy your opinions, but do not say any thing about them?" Peace may be the result, if I see fit to submit to such dictation. But how if I will not yield to the injunction? How if I say "You are in error, error that I cannot countenance, error against which I shall employ all the power and influence I possess? Can he and I agree to walk together? Impossible, one or the other must be convinced, or we must separate. We have an illustration at hand—A. Campbell, and his followers began to scatter the seeds of heresy among the Baptist churches of America. They remonstrated, and reasoned with their erring brethren. They tried according to apostolic injunction, to "convert them from the error of their ways, but in vain. Instead of submitting to reproof, they used every possible means to gain converts to their own opinions, and to divide the church of Christ. What was the duty of the denomination? Manifestly to withdraw from those who were thus walking disorderly. There was no other alternative. Fidelity to Christ and to his truth demanded it.

Mr. O's remarks on the sole authority of scripture in matters of Faith and Practice will find no objector among consistent Baptists. This has been their glory from the first, that they reject human traditions, and in all matters pertaining to religion inquire—"What saith the scriptures?" He however presents a grave indictment against the Baptists of Nova Scotia. *If you really and firmly believed that Christ is the Head of the Church . . . You could never have stultified yourselves before the world by sending forth this Declaration, since the making of it implies that in your estimation Christ has not given us all things that pertain to life and godliness;—and that the scriptures are not your only rule of faith and practice (P. 14.)* Stripped of its verbiage the charge is thus expressed, "Your 'Declaration of Faith and Practice' proves that you have renounced Christ's authority as Head of his church, and stultified—i. e. made fools of yourselves before the world." According to Mr. O: any denomination of christians who avow their sentiments, by so doing reject Christ and his word, and exhibit them-

selves as fools. By parity of reasoning, the same may be affirmed of any individual. But a good many of Mr. O's friends, including Mr. Campbell, the originator of his sect, have declared their faith and practice; therefore they too are fools, and rebels against the authority of Christ. We will leave Mr. O. to settle this matter with his friends.

This abuse of the denomination for what is commonly termed "Articles" is exceedingly common with certain parties. In their work of proselyting they are sure to declare this that they have no creed, and are therefore more scriptural than any other; while they hurl, with peculiar satisfaction, their anathemas against the Baptists for presuming to put forth, before the world, a declaration of their faith and practice; most untruthfully affirming that they do not consider the holy scriptures a sufficient guide in all matters of godliness.

But what are the facts of the case? Simply this, Baptists have given in a condensed form a statement of what they understand the scriptures to teach concerning the leading doctrines of the gospel. They have found this necessary as a prerogative against the many errorists that have arisen; and if it should seem that by this means such persons as Mr. O. are excluded from their fellowship, the fact itself would afford a fine illustration of the value of a written Declaration of faith.—They have found it useful in defending themselves against the aspersions of their enemies. In brief space it exhibits the leading doctrines of the gospel, so that it is impossible for an honest opponent to misrepresent them; while it affords those who desire it, the means of ascertaining their views of doctrine. In this they exhibit a spirit of honesty, which some of their traducers, would do well to imitate. If they required persons joining the church to subscribe to "Articles," there might be some show of reason for the charge preferred against them; but even then if they maintained the absolute authority of scripture, it would be grossly unjust. They do not, however, require subscription. Ordinarily the question is not put, concerning the candidates faith; or rather, views of doctrine. If he has faith in Christ, and desires to follow him, and unite with his church, it is presumable that he is willing to be taught. It however sometimes happens that persons of matured views wish to unite with the church. They, properly enough, first inquire, "Can I work in harmony with the brethren?" and hence "What are their doctrinal views?" Does the church reply "Come among us and we will instruct you—he will spurn the proposal. Does the church say, "The scriptures are our only guide, search them if you would know our doctrines,"—he will say "Do not mock me. What christian denomination exists that does not profess to follow the teachings of scripture; be honest, and do not deceive me." And he could not be deceived. Baptists, for the honor of the truth; from a desire to maintain "the unity of the Spirit," and for the sake of the future usefulness of their brother, cheerfully furnish to his hand all the information that the case requires. If, however, he should not accept all the leading doctrines, usually received amongst them,—if he be "weak in the faith,"—he would not for that reason alone be rejected, unless his error were fundamental. If, for instance, he denied the divinity of Christ; if he rejected the doctrine of regeneration by the Spirit; if he came as an unpardoned sinner, hoping in the waters of baptism to obtain the forgiveness of his sins, he would, very properly, be rejected. They have always contended for a regenerated church membership, and can never afford to lower the standard. They might, by so doing, increase their numbers, and build up a church, but it would not be the Church of Christ.

So far as the having, or not having a creed is concerned, Baptists do not differ from the sect with which Mr. O. is connected, than which there is none that adheres more tenaciously to a peculiar set of doctrines; or holds in greater reverence the founder of their system, and their religious guides. They can never be guilty of such an utterance as we find in the "Christian Review" of the 23rd Nov. last. The Editor commenting on the, to him, perverse utterances of some of their preachers, remarks, "We are not much in sympathy with those whose mission it is to 'undo much of what Mr. Campbell did.' We are not in favor of this undoing. There is mischief in it. We are watching the process as it is going on, and not falling in love with it any more as it advances. It is leaking out here and there, more and more all the time. One man discovers that 'in the name' never means by the authority, as the first men in our reformatory movement, taught us. Another discovers that the precious phrase