

THAT SECT.

In the days of Paul there were certain parties who did not belong to the Church of Christ who desired to hear from the great apostle himself, saying, "For as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." We presume the churches of Christ known by many of its enemies as "that sect," has never seen the day from Paul's time to the present that it has not been spoken against. We have been forcibly reminded of this saying by having just read an article in the *Christian Index*, Georgia, written by a correspondent and headed, "Why Baptists do not Write in Campbellite Papers." This article is one of the most bitter and unreasonable attacks we have seen from our Baptist friends for a long time, and we are not certain that the *Index* has added any thing to its good name by printing it. This writer gives for his first reason why Baptists do not write for "Campbellite" papers the following: "For the same reason, we suppose, that they keep their articles out of infidel papers." We hardly know just how to take this statement. Does it mean that in faith and practice our papers and people are no better than infidels? Or does it mean that Baptist doctrine is not even able to stand the criticisms of infidel papers, and therefore its advocates are unwilling to submit it to a fair test? But the writer further says:

Baptists, if worthy of their name, are a people of spiritual discernment, while the followers of A. Campbell, unless better than their creed, have no such discernment. They are by us understood plainly to deny the existence of what Baptists call an "experience of grace" in which, spiritual life is obtained prior to and independent of baptism. In doing this they put themselves on infidel ground, if Baptists are to be judges in the case.

Indeed! Do we understand this to be the "spiritual discernment" of Baptists in a "nut shell?" The "spiritual discernment" of this writer is certainly of a very high order, for when he finds "the followers of A. Campbell" he finds a people about whom we know absolutely nothing. If he refers, however, to the *followers of Christ*, then we have to say that we make no pretensions to be better than our creed, for seeing that we take the Bible alone as our creed, this little acknowledgement by our brother that "spiritual discernment" as

Baptists understand and practice it, is not found in our creed, we think is a splendid reason why it should be dispensed with along with all other human and unscriptural practices and names. We believe as firmly as does the writer in an "experience of grace" as taught in the New Testament, but we do not believe in having the experience *before the grace*. Neither does this grace in which spiritual life is obtained come "prior to and independent of baptism." Our friend is likely to find no such an "experience of grace" this side of the judgment. Paul teaches us that we are baptized *into Jesus Christ*; hence if Baptists obtain spiritual life prior to and independent of baptism, they obtain it prior to and independent of getting into Christ. They are perfectly welcome to all "experience of grace" they can find *outside of Christ*. We prefer telling our experience when we have one to tell! The writer says, "Baptists profess to be judges of what a genuine Christian experience is, hence they ask applicants for places in their ranks to tell what the Lord has done for them." Here then we find both his "spiritual discernment" and the "experience of grace." When one pursues the Scriptural course it is not necessary to ask the "applicant to tell what the Lord has done for him," for that can be plainly read and is definitely settled in the Law of the Lord. The promise is, that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." But Baptists require the applicant to give Christ and his apostles the lie in telling that the Lord *has done* something for him that He has never promised to do, namely, to save him before and independently of baptism, yet we are told that when a "spiritual church, after hearing such experience," "unanimously vote him membership, he has received the highest external testimony to the genuineness of his regeneration!" Notwithstanding all this, we are still silly enough to prefer the authority of Christ and inspired men to any external testimony that Baptists can give.

But the writer seemingly forgets himself and closes his article with this wonderful paragraph. He says:

Besides this, no people, perhaps, rejoice in controversy more than do the "Disciples." It is their native element. They come out of the water ready for disputation. They have covered much of the land by means

of it, with their delusive teaching. If Baptists would only argue with them in their own papers, their zeal must rise and stand at the highest point, and their editors, meanwhile, grow stronger in the deadly creed of the sect. * * * Our consolation remains, however, that none of God's elect can be finally deluded. The great enemy must have some sort of employment for those who are his, that they may be kept in darkness till the last.

Now it occurs to us that here lies the real secret why Baptists do not write for our papers. Like Paul of old who came out of the water at Damascus and straightway preached Christ in the Jewish synagogues, spoke boldly in the name of the Lord and disputed against the Grecians, and held a debate in the school of Tyrannus for two years so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks, so we as the Lord's servants are always ready to earnestly contend for the faith. We, like the apostles and primitive Christians, have no time to be placed on "probation." Perhaps this Scriptural course is the reason why we have been able to cover

much of the land with our teaching. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken, than the fat of rams." But what we wish to know more particularly is, something about our brother's "consolation that none of God's elect can be deluded?" Does this writer know that our reformatory movement began among the Baptists, and that a large number of our recruits from that day to this have come from the Baptist ranks? Were these not all required to tell what the Lord had done for them? Did they not all tell that "Christian experience before baptism," and experience that new life independently of baptism? Were they not voted on by the church and thus subjected to that "highest external testimony" to the "genuineness of their regeneration?" If so, then one of two things must be true, either that this much prided and unscriptural voting test practically amounts to nothing in determining the genuineness of regeneration, or that the doctrine of election and final perseverance of the Saints as Baptists teach is not true. They can choose which horn of the dilemma they like. In the mean time we shall be satisfied in following the example of the apostles and evangelists in receiving people into

full fellowship on an open confession with the mouth that Jesus is the Christ, and *prompt* obedience to his will.

A PRESENT NEED.

It is a settled Scriptural fact that the churches of Christ are the highest divinely appointed agencies on earth for the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls. These local congregations are independent organizations in one sense and hence capable of self government, but in another and higher sense they are all one and should be perfectly and harmoniously united in carrying forward the work of converting the world. But in order that this may be successfully and Scripturally done, one of the present and pressing needs of the day is a more efficient board of officers to govern and prosecute the work of the churches. The elders and the deacons of the New Testament are the divinely constituted officers of the churches, and they not only have a work to perform, but that work is clearly pointed out by the Holy Spirit and is expressly obligatory. The responsibility and work of these officers is a great one, and the necessity of such servants of the church is clearly apparent from their appointment. Now when these officers fill the mission for which they have been appointed and ordained, other things being equal, the church under their charge will be a prosperous and happy one. But should these officers not possess the Scriptural qualifications or fail to discharge their whole duty as the true stewards of God, the church to that extent will suffer for the bread and water of spiritual life. Neither do we believe this work can be properly done by proxy. If the Lord expected the work of these officers to be done by some one else, the elders and deacons would never have been appointed. Now we state a simple fact well understood by our readers when we state that in many of our churches the official ministry of the congregation practically amounts to nothing. Instead of the elders being shepherds to the flock, looking after it, and thus not only ruling it but leading it to and from the green pastures and the still waters, they either suffer the flock to scatter and graze at will, or else take a fright and run away with them, or still worse run over them. The deacons instead of taking charge of the secular matters of the