

THE  
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES  
OF  
BAPTIST CHURCHES.

BY  
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## INTRODUCTION.

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IN introducing to the British public the present work, it is scarcely necessary to speak of its author, either in respect of his personal worth, his religious position, or his literary rank. All these are probably too well known to those who are likely to become readers of this volume, to need expanded or emphatic reference.

On the work itself—of which it is, of course, proper that I should say something—I make, in the first instance, two general observations.

In the first place, its title does not fully express its contents. “The Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches” in the United States, are treated in thirty-two out of the fifty-two chapters of which the volume consists, or about two-thirds of the whole; the remaining third, or twenty of the chapters, are devoted to a consideration of the question,—how the vast demands of the Far West for a more numerous ministry may be most effectually met.

In the second place, “The Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches” are by no means systematically or completely treated. Among matters not noticed, for example, are these:—the method of receiving members, and the proceedings usual on the formation of a church; both of them matters of considerable importance, and, in a systematic treatise, not likely to have been omitted.

The volume, however, it is but fair to add, does not pretend to be systematic. It consists, as the author candidly informs us, of a series of newspaper articles; in penning which, the author was led on, often by a slender thread of connexion, and sometimes by purely accidental associations, without a complete treatment of any subject having at any time been designed; and it is, consequently, of necessity, fragmentary.

These remarks are due to the reader, in order that he may know what he has to expect. It may now be added, that, as there is an interest in the general subject, there is so, likewise, in every portion of it which the author takes up; and that every portion of it is treated in a lucid and judicious manner, and in a Christian and catholic spirit.

I have just expressed my opinion that there is an interest in the general subject of this volume,—“The Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches” in the United States. If it were necessary to justify my opinion, I might derive arguments from two sources. On the one hand, the Baptist churches in the United States exhibit one large and influential aspect among the many which Christianity has assumed in the New World; on the other hand, these churches are descended from the Baptist churches of the Old World, and are thus nearly akin to ourselves. It cannot be without interest to English Baptists, I think, to have an opportunity of observing how far the children continue to bear a resemblance to the parents, and how far the novel and quickening circumstances in which they have been placed may have either modified or improved the family likeness.

Before proceeding to more particular notices of the

work, it may be proper to apprise the reader, that he must understand the word “Baptists,” as employed by the author, with very considerable limitation. It appears from the best authorities, that there are, in the United States, Baptists of no less than nine different denominations. Now, it is of but one of these that Dr. Wayland speaks. This body would seem to be known in the Western World by the appellation of Regular Baptists, and they are nearly identical with what would be called in England, Calvinistic, or Particular Baptists. These churches constitute by far the largest religious body of the Baptist denomination in the United States.

In his first chapter, Dr. Wayland brings prominently forward the well-known fact, that Baptists have no authorised standard of faith and practice but “the New Testament,”—or, as I should rather say, the Sacred Scriptures; and he justly assigns as one advantage of this, its influence in producing and preserving their doctrinal and practical unity, by means of a universal and constant endeavour to realise a body of pure and perfect truth. In addition to this, I think he might have named another advantage, namely, the possibility—I might say, the facility—which such an attitude affords, for rectifying, at any period, those deviations from pure and perfect truth which human infirmity is always liable to occasion, while the adoption of human standards inevitably tends to perpetuate the errors they contain.

An interesting and important illustration of this latter advantage, is to be found in that change of theological sentiment which, the author tells us, “has, within the last fifty years, gradually taken place in

the views of a large portion of" American Calvinistic Baptists. The change to which he refers is—to express it in English phraseology—a change from high Calvinism to moderate Calvinism; the former as represented by Dr. Gill, the latter by Andrew Fuller. A similar change has, during the same period, taken place in the kindred body in our own country, but I am not sure whether to an equal extent. From the language used by Dr. Wayland, I should infer that a considerably larger amount of high Calvinism lingers among the Baptist churches of Old England, than is now to be found in those of New England. It might be interesting to inquire, to what causes a more rapid and extensive change of sentiment on the other side of the Atlantic is to be ascribed. That the English mind has, in every way, been to a great degree emancipated from its long-worn shackles, since its powers were developed amidst the free institutions of the West, is, I suppose, a universally admitted fact; and to the participation of religious thought in this general emancipation it may be owing, that juster views—for I hold the distinctive views held by a moderate Calvinist to be more scripturally just than those held by a high Calvinist—of evangelical truth, have made more rapid progress there than among ourselves.

Dr. Wayland is careful to explain, however, that he does not ascribe the comparatively large success of Baptist preachers to their theological views, which are held in common by Christians of several denominations, but rather to this circumstance,—that the early Baptist preachers in America were almost entirely uneducated men. His words are these (p. 8):—

“In the first place, our ministers were commonly, I might almost

say universally, men of no classical education. They were men who had left some secular—generally mechanical—employment, for the sake of preaching the gospel; and, in doing this, they had suffered, not prospective, but actual loss. They were impelled to the ministry by the conviction that they could not conscientiously do anything else.

“There was frequently a struggle in their minds in thus giving up all for Christ, not unlike a second conversion. As the result of this, it followed that they threw their whole souls into the work, in the form of a second and unalterable consecration. This, I think, gave an earnestness and persistence to their efforts, and a simplicity of reliance on the power and grace of Christ to aid them, and render their work effectual, which have not been so apparent in later times.

“There was at this period, to a very considerable extent, a prejudice against learning. This was by no means unnatural. They saw that education, rather than piety, was, in many denominations, the test of ministerial qualification; and, instead of assigning to it its proper and subordinate place, they abjured it altogether. This was, doubtless, an error. Are not we now liable to the very error against which they contended?”

From the concluding sentence of this extract, it appears that the author takes occasion, from the method of the generation past, to read a lesson to the present. Not, indeed, that he wholly approves the conduct of the fathers. They had “a prejudice against learning;” and, “instead of assigning to it its proper and subordinate place, they abjured it altogether.” “This,” says Dr. Wayland, “was doubtless an error.” But, he adds, “Are not we now liable to the very error against which they contended?” The error here in question was certainly a very grave one. “They saw that education, *rather than piety*, was, in many denominations, the test of ministerial qualification.” Against such an error they were right to strive, and to strive earnestly, for, undoubtedly, an uneducated ministry is a less evil than an unconverted one; but is it in any degree possible, that the Baptist churches in America are drifting towards *this* error now? If Dr. Wayland’s question is

to be strictly taken, this must be his meaning; and if the case is really so, I cannot but rejoice that the course of education for the ministry *among us* is from so pernicious a taint entirely free.

Several following chapters are occupied by the author with the subject which he has thus started, and on the whole it may seem doubtful whether he is favourable to a collegiate education for the ministry at all. That it is the privilege and duty of all the disciples of Christ to "preach the gospel," according to their ability and their opportunity,—that the regular ministry should not be so fenced about that uneducated men should find themselves unable to enter it,—and that a system of collegiate education *may be* so pursued as to render the gospel ministry unduly professional and perfunctory,—all these are positions in which Dr. Wayland has our hearty concurrence; and we are truly sorry to gather from his words the conclusion, that the collegiate system of education for the ministry among the Baptist churches in the United States, has, in fact, wrought injuriously to the diffusion of the gospel. But surely so serious an evil may be corrected, without the annihilation of the educational institutions themselves, which, on many grounds, must be deemed of too great value to be lightly abandoned. I agree fully with Dr. Wayland, however, that if the invaluable and indispensable qualifications of the uneducated ministry cannot be retained in combination with, and in supremacy over, the advantages of an enlarged literary and theological course, it would be better to raze every theological seminary to the ground, and to scatter their elements to the four winds, than, by the loss of them, so fatally to enervate the preaching of the gospel.

I have already intimated that, among the practices of Baptists in the United States, the author says nothing of what is usual among them in relation either to the formation of churches or the admission of members; an omission which, I confess, the more I think of it the more I regret, both on account of the illustrations which such an account would have supplied of the course of thought and feeling among our brethren, and of the lights which it might perhaps have afforded to ourselves. In his first chapter he lays down an important principle, when he says, "We believe, in the fullest sense, in the independence of every individual church of Christ." So do Baptist churches on this side of the great water, and a vital principle we hold it to be; but we might have been both interested and profited by being informed in what manner this principle has been carried out by our brethren, and whether it has been as fully acted on as it is distinctly avowed.

It is not for me to pretend to supply what the author has left wanting; I may, perhaps, however, be allowed to say, that some whispers have reached England to the effect that, to some extent, in the United States, the independence of Baptist churches is rather a theory than a fact. We have been told that, while the principle is loudly proclaimed, it is not perfectly carried out, but that every individual church is bound to all the rest by a kind of connexional tie, and subjected to a practical domination by which its freedom is materially abridged.

And I must confess that the single illustration which the author affords us—that supplied by the ordination of a pastor—by no means tends to dissipate a suspicion

that this is the fact. I beg permission here to make a short extract from page 87 :—

“A single church does not ordain. It calls a council, generally representing the churches in the vicinity, who are present by their minister and such private brethren as they may select. At the time appointed, these delegates meet, and organise themselves by the choice of a moderator and clerk. The doings of the church calling the council are read. The candidate gives a narrative of his conversion, views of the ministry, and of his call to the ministerial office, and presents a brief synopsis of the doctrines which he believes and purposes to preach. If these are satisfactory to his brethren, they resolve to proceed to his ordination. The various services are assigned to the several brethren composing the council. The candidate is set apart by prayer and laying on of hands. The minutes of the council are recorded in the church books, and thus the service is completed.”

“So far as the theory is concerned,” says Dr. Wayland, with great simplicity, “we seem, in this matter, to need no change.”

But where, then, is the independence of the church? Is there not in this case—the most interesting and important case possible to themselves—a strictly church transaction surrendered by them to others, or perhaps taken out of their hands by others, who, on the principle of the independence of the churches, have no right to interfere with it?

And where, I ask again, is the scriptural authority? “Our rule of faith and practice,” says the author, emphatically, in page 1, “is the New Testament.” But where in the New Testament is any “rule” for, or example of, such a mode of ordination as this? One might almost conjecture that the American New Testament contains a chapter which the English one does not.

If the plea of necessity should be urged, and the evil consequences likely to result from allowing every

church to choose its own pastor, I might say several things in reply. As, first, that we have no right to entertain any such question. For us, the New Testament is not only a rule, but an all-sufficient and exclusive rule. Secondly, that such a plea possesses great elasticity, and may be indefinitely extended, until the entire liberties of the churches be taken away. And, thirdly, that the operation of the practice is by no means such as to recommend it.

After asserting the theory, Dr. Wayland, in a manner at once kind and faithful, exhibits the practical aspect of the case; and an exhibition more melancholy I certainly have never met with. Undoubtedly, the act of ordination, according to the conception here formed of it, is of great solemnity and awful responsibility; but, if it be in practice what the author describes it, the entire process would be much better abandoned, and the whole affair left to the prayerful wisdom and the fervent love which, in the hands of the churches, it would be sure to evoke.

Thankful, indeed, am I to say, that the Baptist churches in England know nothing of such a method of ordination as this; and, assuredly, not all Dr. Wayland's earnestness will recommend it to them. I do not know, indeed, that any very definite idea of the nature of ordination itself prevails among them; and I rather think that, to a large extent, less and less importance is gradually attached to the transaction in any form. A church chooses its pastor, and their act of choice is held to constitute him such, whether with or without an ordination service. If a public religious service is held, in which neighbouring pastors and brethren join, it is rather for the *recognition* than the

constitution of the union, and for the expression of Christian sympathy and congratulation.

Out of the conception of ordination as the act of persons already pastors, seems to have arisen the collateral conception of the pastorate as an office in itself, independently of any church to which it may relate. In this sense I suppose Dr. Wayland to speak, when he says,—“By ordination a licentiate is admitted *permanently* (*sic*) to the pastoral office, and it is generally understood that he is to make this the great work of his life.” It would thus seem that ordination attaches to the person ordained, a “permanent” and indelible character; a character generated in the first instance, perhaps, by his relation to a particular church, but ever afterwards remaining, although neither that relation nor any similar one may exist. The high ecclesiastical notion of the indelible character of orders, thus finds its way even among Baptist churches in the United States, and among them, as in the churches of England and of Rome, ordination constitutes a kind of spiritual aristocracy,—or, I may say, perhaps, a hierarchy,—a class of ordained men, who are socially a head and shoulders taller than their fellows. I do not doubt that our American ordained brethren bear their honours meekly; but I confess that I prefer our English method, according to which the pastoral office implies the actual holding of a pastoral relation, and pastors ceasing to have a pastoral charge are no longer pastors.

The same assumption of ecclesiastical authority which is exhibited by our transatlantic brethren in the ordination of pastors, appears to me to be exhibited also in what is called the licensing of ministers.

In his 18th and 19th chapters, Dr. Wayland treats on the “Mode of Admission to the Ministry.” This, it seems, is, among Regular Baptists, retained in the hands of the church; and the author successfully vindicates their practice against the Episcopalians, the Lutherans, and the Presbyterians: but it yet remains, I think, to show its conformity with the New Testament. But let us have some account of the practice itself. After stating, at considerable length, the primary nature of a call to the ministry, as existing in a man’s consciousness, he proceeds thus (p. 81):—

“But this is not enough. We may frequently mistake our motives. We may overrate our capacity. We may thus run before we are sent. Hence, we frequently see men in the ministry who have manifestly mistaken their calling, who are useless as preachers, while they might have been very useful in some other situation. What, then, in addition, is needed, in order to assure a man that he has not mistaken the voice of God in this matter?

“I answer, He, in the next place, lays his convictions before his brethren, who know his walk and conversation. He asks them to tell him, in the fear of God, whether or not their convictions correspond with his own; whether or not they in truth believe that he is called to undertake this work. They are bound to take up this subject with solemn deliberation. They do wrong if they do not employ all the means in their power to come to a right decision. They must hear him preach until they are able to form an opinion of his gifts, his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his aptness to teach. If, after a sufficient trial, they cannot be convinced that the brother possesses ministerial gifts, they must honestly tell him so. He may then conclude that he has mistaken his duty, and that with a good conscience he may devote himself to some other calling. It was well that it was in his heart to build the temple of the Lord, and he shall have his reward, though the Master sees fit to commit the work to another. If, on the other hand, his brethren are convinced, by their knowledge of his Christian character, aptness to teach, and acquaintance with the Scriptures, that he is called to the ministry, this union and harmony of *his* convictions with *theirs*, may assure him that he has not mistaken the voice speaking within him, but that it is his duty to devote himself, either wholly or in part, to the ministration of the word.”

The author admits the possibility of this method being severely handled; but, he says, with more warmth than, I think, appears anywhere else in the volume (p. 82):—

“I know of no better way than this by which a man may be introduced to the work of serving Christ in the gospel of regeneration. If any man knows of any better, let him propose it. It is not sufficient that he think lightly of this way. This is not enough. Let him propose *his* more excellent way. Let him do it openly, plainly, without disguise, and make no higgling about it. Let us have both ways plainly set before us; let the people of God place them side by side, and determine which is according to the teachings of the New Testament.”

If, upon so grave a matter, a smile—a momentary smile—may be excused, I crave leave for one as occasioned by this *naïve* reference to “the teachings of the New Testament.” What New Testament has Dr. Wayland met with, that it contains anything about the licensing of ministers? “Openly, plainly, without disguise, and making no higgling about it,” I venture to say at his challenge, that, according to my view of New Testament teaching, the church has no more right to license a man to preach the gospel, than a bishop or a presbytery has. The whole scheme, indeed, seems to me to proceed on a fundamentally erroneous conception of the work of the ministry. Surely every Christian is both at liberty to preach the gospel, and under obligation to preach it, as he may have opportunity. Where in the New Testament any shadow of evidence appears, that a church has any right to interfere with the action of its members in this respect, either to withhold or to sanction, I am quite at a loss to understand; or who has empowered them to give authority (!) to any person to preach the gospel of Christ. Dr. Wayland writes as though “the ministry” was a term expressive of *office*,

as the kindred term, the *pastorate*, is; but I cannot think so. The offices instituted by Christ in his church are but two, those of the pastor and the deacon; in the Baptist churches in the United States there are evidently three, those of the pastor, the deacon, and the licentiate.

I respectfully propose, then, my “more excellent way.” It is, that the churches should let this matter entirely alone, and that every disciple of Christ should preach the gospel, to the utmost of his means and the best of his ability. The acceptance with which he meets from his brethren, and the blessing with which he is honoured by his Master, will soon determine his position and value.

I do not know, however, that I can represent this as the universal, or even the general opinion of our churches in this country. In former times it was extensively, if not universally, the practice of the churches to give young men a call to the ministry, and this practice is far from having died out. I believe, however, that it is decaying, and ready to die. And one reason of this probably is, that the system cannot be worked honestly. It is plain, from the volume in my hand, that it is not so worked by our brethren in America; and it is certain that it has not been so worked by the churches in England. I have said, and I fully mean it, that it *cannot* be honestly worked. Influences tending not merely to bias the judgment, but to prevent the sincere expression of the judgment formed, are inevitable and irresistible. Personal or relative considerations, a desire to gratify friends or an unwillingness to wound them,—the position of the candidate in the church, or perhaps in the family of



the pastor, a disinclination to criticise severely, or an apprehension of disturbing the peace of the church; these, and many similar sources of embarrassment, are obvious, and they lead with great force to the conclusion that the practice is not worth retaining. Surely, what cannot be done faithfully had better not be done at all.

I have already intimated, that the mode of admitting members to the churches is not touched upon by Dr. Wayland. Without attempting to supply this deficiency, I shall take the opportunity now afforded me of saying a few words on the usages prevalent among ourselves.

So far as I know, the admission of a member is invariably the act of the church. It is not, of course, without the concurrence and the preliminary action of the pastor and deacons; their action, however, is only preliminary, and every case comes ultimately to the church, at a church meeting, for decision. It was, I believe, a universal custom—a rule—for each candidate to appear before the church, and to give an account of his or her experience. This practice is certainly less extensive than it was; a letter being in many cases accepted instead of a personal appearance, and in some instances testimony alone. The act of reception is, I believe, in all cases, consummated by the pastor's giving the right hand of fellowship, either at the church meeting or at the Lord's Table.

On this matter I do not pretend to say that either the one course or the other is according to the New Testament. The whole is, in my judgment, a matter of usage and custom. That every church of Christ is entitled to require evidence, in the judgment of

charity satisfactory, of the piety of the candidate for admission, seems to me to be involved in the nature of the case, and the practice itself is sufficiently exemplified in the New Testament; but I can go no further. Everything relating to the manner in which this evidence shall be obtained and communicated, appears to be scripturally left to Christian discretion and love. The end being to know, as nearly as human judgment may ascertain it, whether the party is indeed a disciple, the church wishes to have the best evidence attainable, but to attain it in the gentlest and most affectionate method.

Now, if this be the true state of the case, two inferences may be drawn: first, that the mode of receiving members is fairly open to great diversity; and, secondly, that some of the modes which have been adopted are open to serious censure.

In particular, it seems to me that the requirement of a personal appearance before the church, in order to give an account of one's religious experience, is a direct and grievous violation of both parts of the method laid down. That it cannot be carried out without a large expense of feeling, or without putting the candidate in some instances to great distress, is obvious; and the fact has been too often seen to need the adduction of evidence. Now, unless this is necessary, it is unkind, and altogether inconsistent with the Christian love appropriate to such an occasion. And to the question, whether it is necessary, I answer without hesitation in the negative. I have admitted that the church is entitled to the best evidence attainable of the candidate's piety; but to place him in the presence of the assembled body, and to require him to narrate his

experience there, is assuredly *not* the way to get the best evidence attainable of his conversion. In some cases, for example, we have sensitive young persons whom the very position overwhelms, so that they stand trembling and confused, and are utterly unable to utter a word; in some cases, answers yes and no, to leading questions put by the pastor, can just be obtained; in some cases, a few indistinct words are breathed by the candidate into the pastor's ear, to be repeated by him to the church; in some cases, a fair and manly account is given; and in some cases, we meet with a disagreeable and unconvincing loquacity. To subject a candidate to a searching and critical examination before such a tribunal, which, as to the suffering generally occasioned by it, may be little short of a martyrdom, elicits nothing particularly worthy of confidence; since, in the circumstances, parties are often so confused as scarcely to know what they say. Certainly, much better evidence of conversion must be attainable by private conversation, as it may be conducted either by the pastor, or by other members of the church, whether appointed or not for the purpose, and combined with inquiries, either direct or collateral, respecting the habits and conduct of the party.

While, however, I have felt it right to maintain that admission to our churches should be made as easy as possible as to the mode, I am far from being disposed to favour any relaxation of principle. A habit may be formed, sometimes *is* formed, of receiving as church members persons who seem well disposed towards religion, but who afford no evidence of decision for God. I cannot but regard such a habit with entire disapprobation, and deep regret.

As to the formation of churches, of which also the volume in my hand says nothing, but which is generally understood to be effected not without the convening of a Council, somewhat after the manner of an ordination, I need only say, in passing, that, in this country, a Baptist church is formed by any number of Baptist professors who please to form one, and where and when they please. There is no power which pretends, or is able, to say, You may not, or you may; you shall, or you shall not. If the parties like to consult one or more neighbouring ministers or brethren, they do so; if not, their proceedings are equally valid without it. I believe it is generally preferred that the actual formation of the church should be conducted by a pastor of some other church; but even this is a matter of taste, and is sometimes dispensed with.

That this method of doing things has its disadvantages, cannot be denied; sometimes churches are formed in places and under circumstances undesirable: but it is a fair question, whether a system of repression would not entail disadvantages of greater magnitude. As a matter of principle, however, it seems to be the only method consistent with the real independence of the churches; and it is clearly a case in which interference has no semblance of New Testament prescription. It might seem a fair corollary from the fact that a church has been formed by the decree of a Council, that it might also be dissolved, as some have been "disfellowshipped," in a similar manner; but I do not know whether the system has ever, in the United States, been pushed to such an extreme.

It appears to me to result from the preceding obser-

vations, that the Baptist churches in Great Britain have a larger measure of practical independence than those of the United States; nor do I know how to help inferring that the Baptist churches in that region have, in this respect, retrograded since the settlement of the founders of that denomination in New England. I do not profess to know very much of our denominational history, and I speak, therefore, subject to correction; but I am not aware that any such condition of restricted liberty has ever existed among our churches in this country: and, if not, the noble and venerated band of emigrant Baptists cannot have taken its elements with them. How this system of spiritual bondage (for I can call it by no milder name) can have grown up where, in most other respects, the growth of liberty has been so luxuriant, and the love—I might say, the pride—of liberty so intense, is to me a mystery, of which I scarcely feel myself to possess the solvent.

Some light on this not uninteresting question, however, I derive from the 25th and following chapters in the present volume, in which are treated the "points in which" American Baptists "have erred by imitation of others." "Within the last fifty years," the author observes, "we have in various particulars conformed to our brethren of other denominations." And he adds, "In many cases it must, I think, be observed, that we have fallen into practices by no means in harmony with the doctrines which we hold." Of this, several sufficiently obvious instances are given; but, without at present noticing these, I shall here only say, that I think this tendency to depart from the real independence of the churches may be

added to the list. It is that which our brethren see around them in various forms, all in this respect identical. The Episcopal, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and perhaps other bodies, all cultivate an ecclesiastical unity, and exercise ecclesiastical authority. Our brethren seem to have found something in this method too fascinating not to be imitated. Every Baptist church, under penalty of ostracism, must be a member of some Association,—in Great Britain scarcely more than half the churches are so,—while all the Associations are connected by a tie which constitutes that glittering fallacy, an ecclesiastical unity. There is rather one Baptist church, than twelve thousand Baptist churches. I shall not enter into argument on this subject: of course, our brethren may herein be nearer the New Testament than we are; I may suggest, however, that their practice might fitly modulate to a softer tone their boast of maintaining, "in the fullest sense," the *independence* of the churches.

One can hardly help wondering, indeed, at the repetition of this profession, even in the softest tone, after the occurrence of such proceedings as are narrated in the 31st chapter of the present volume. "When state conventions were first proposed," says Dr. Wayland, "it was by many believed—and of these I freely confess myself to have been one—that through them we might establish a general Baptist organization;" and to what a marvellous extent, and with what a marvellous resoluteness, this scheme was carried out, the Doctor proceeds frankly to tell. Honour be to those genuine Baptists by whom, "after a protracted debate, this measure was negatived by so decided a

majority that the attempt was never repeated." "I now rejoice exceedingly," says Dr. Wayland, "that the whole plan failed, and that it failed through the sturdy common sense of the masses of our brethren." He adds, "We look back, at the present day, with astonishment that such an idea was ever entertained." May the fate of the Baptist Triennial Convention attend every effort to establish a spiritual domination among Baptists in every part of the world!

Among "the points in which" our brethren "have erred by imitation of others," Dr. Wayland notices a modification of the formula of baptism, which has evidently been borrowed from the Episcopalians. In some cases, it seems, the administrator mentions the appellation of the person baptized, as, "John, I baptize thee," &c. Leaving, however, this ridiculous morsel of mimicry to the just rebuke of the author, I shall take the occasion afforded me by this reference, to make a passing remark on the formula of baptism in use among ourselves.

I suppose it will be admitted on all hands, that there is in the New Testament no prescribed formula of baptism. All that is enjoined is, that the administrator baptize the party "in [or into] the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" by what additional words this fact shall be expressed, is entirely discretionary. What is most customary among us, I suppose, is this, or something like it: "My brother [or sister] in Christ, upon your profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, I baptize you into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The use of the words, "On your profession of repentance towards God, and faith towards

our Lord Jesus Christ," is dictated undoubtedly by our conviction that baptism is scripturally an act of profession, in strict propriety founded upon, and succeeding to, a verbal profession previously made.

If, in relation to the practice thus described, I ask the question, when and where the verbal profession has been made—since it is not usually made on occasion of the baptism itself,—I shall no doubt be told, that it has been made to the minister, or at the church meeting. But, without calling this fact into question, I raise the further inquiry, whether a profession so made, constitutes a satisfactory ground for the administration of the ordinance. The ordinance of baptism itself, in the scriptural conception of it, seems to be essentially public, or open to general observation; should not the profession on which it is based be public also? The world sees the act of profession, why should they not also hear the words of profession? They are told that these words have been uttered elsewhere; but that is neither so appropriate, nor so convincing, as the actual hearing of them would be, and may in some cases be far from literally true.

And, while the words of profession seem to be naturally in close connexion with the act of profession of which they are the basis, it must be admitted, I think, that the utterance of them contributes materially to the impressiveness of the ordinance itself, both on the baptized and on the spectators. It tends to produce a deep solemnity, and gives to the act of baptism at once a meaning and a soul.

If I am now asked whether I would require every candidate to speak at the water-side,—I, who would not have them required to speak before the church,—

I reply that the method is at once simple and easy. I suppose myself about to administer the ordinance, and I address the candidates as follows:—"The apostle teaches us that 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' I ask you, therefore, whether you hereby profess repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ?" To this question the candidates simultaneously reply, "I do;" and, on their profession thus made, I baptize them.

That the profession thus required presents no difficulty to the candidate, must be obvious; and that the service thus conducted is deeply solemn and impressive, I know from experience: for this, for many years, has been my mode of administering the ordinance, and I feel justified in recommending it to my brethren.

In exhibiting the views held by Baptist churches in relation to the ordinance of baptism, Dr. Wayland has exposed himself in one point,—unnecessarily, as I think,—to the criticism of his Pædobaptist brethren. On this subject, he says, in his 16th chapter:—"The fundamental principle on which our difference from other evangelical denominations depends, is this: We profess to take for our guide in all matters of religious belief and practice, the *New Testament*, the *whole* New Testament, and *nothing but* the New Testament." From this statement it appears that some American critics have taken occasion to accuse the Doctor of "denying the inspiration of the Old Testament." To this imputation he most justly says it is needless for him to reply, and he promises a further discussion of the question thus raised,—a promise which we shall

be happy to see fulfilled. In the meantime, without entering on so wide a question as the mutual relation of the Old Testament and the New, I may say a few words on the jealousy which extensively exists among Baptists of allowing any reference in the baptismal controversy to the Old Testament. We say emphatically, with Dr. Wayland, the *New Testament* is our rule, and *only* the New Testament; as if we were afraid that, if the Old Testament were admitted into the argument, a reference to it would be injurious, or perhaps fatal, to our cause. I do not wonder that our Pædobaptist brethren should notice this jealousy, and take occasion from it to lay more stress on their favourite argument, if not to chuckle over it, as evidently felt by Baptists to be unanswerable.

Now I beg with great frankness, to express my conviction that this jealousy of the Old Testament, as a witness on the subject of baptism, is altogether without foundation. Its testimony is perfectly inoffensive as it respects the views of Baptists, and of not the slightest service to our opponents. I am not ignorant of what I have, not unfairly, I think, called their favourite argument for infant baptism,—namely, that as infants were once in the church of God, they cannot be supposed, under a system of ampler privilege, to be excluded from it; but surely Baptists are not to be terrified by such a mere *petitio principii*—a begging of the question—as this. Infants were once in the church of God. How so? Because the posterity of Abraham, through Isaac, constituted the church or God. Now, undoubtedly, infants were among the posterity of Abraham; but that the posterity of Abraham ever constituted the church of God, however quietly

assumed by our brethren, requires to be proved,—and, in my opinion, never can be proved. I cannot deem it less than an egregious blunder, however eminent or venerable the men who have fallen into it, that a body of pure types should have been mistaken for the things they typify, and the secular so grossly confounded with the spiritual. For my own part, however, I am quite as willing to learn baptism from the Old Testament as from the New.

There is something very interesting and suggestive in the whole of that portion of this volume in which the author treats of the errors by imitation into which American Baptists have fallen,—chapters 25 to 29; and I shall here briefly notice the topics he introduces.

I certainly can make no apology for bad singing in the worship of God; on the contrary, I look with complacency on every judicious and well-executed effort to improve this interesting portion of divine service; but I must entirely concur with Dr. Wayland in deploring and condemning the extreme to which such efforts have been carried by Baptist churches—not by Baptist churches only, indeed—in the United States. When the congregation leaves the Psalmody exclusively in the hands of the choir, and the choir perform it in a studiously professional manner, so that “the congregation listens in silence to a mere musical performance, precisely as the audience at a concert or an opera,” things have assuredly gone much too far. And there is doubtless a root of this mischief lying much deeper than the mischief itself, and this can scarcely be less than a decay of the spirit of worship. If their hearts were warmly devout, the audience *would* sing. It is truly gratifying to know that, on this

matter, “a reaction has commenced;” and I say heartily with the author, “May the reform be universal!”

Dr. Wayland next touches the subject of church-architecture, and rebukes, at once justly and judiciously, the rage for splendid and costly churches with which it seems the Baptist churches in the United States have suffered their neighbours to inoculate them. Some of his English readers may, I think, profit by these remarks. The group of smaller instances of conformity which he notices in the 27th chapter, are of importance as supplying another indication of decaying spirituality in the Baptist churches. When Dr. Wayland says, “I have known the worship of God interrupted to inform the congregation that some itinerant showman would admit Sabbath school scholars to visit his panorama, on a certain day, at half price,” and adds, “A multitude of cases of this sort will, I doubt not, occur to the recollection of most of my readers,” the conclusion to be drawn is but too plain.

The most serious mischief, however, which the author exposes in the present condition of the Baptist churches, is that which he treats with great clearness and fidelity in his 28th chapter. Some religious bodies in the United States, it appears, “make out of a company of worshippers two separate organizations, called ‘the Church’ and ‘the Society.’ The church consists, in this case, of the communicants, of whom the pastor is chairman; the society consists of the pew-holders, who form their own rules, elect their own chairman, and keep their own records. These two organizations have co-ordinate jurisdiction on most questions affecting the interests of the whole.” And from these bodies

the Baptist churches have taken an example! By what unworthy motives they have been actuated, and how fearfully the system works, may be seen in the chapter to which I have referred. I thank God that this pernicious practice has not yet found its way into the British churches; and I should be very glad if the tendency, which has in some instances shown itself, to pay undue deference to the congregation, should be checked by so striking an exhibition of its ultimate result.

Having noticed all such portions of the volume as seemed to me to require remark, nothing now remains for me but the agreeable duty of commending it as a whole to the best attention of the reader. It is but simple justice to say, that he will find it everywhere interesting and instructive, full of sound judgment and wisdom, written in charming English, and never violating a Christian spirit.

J. H. HINTON.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I AM happy to learn that the "NOTES ON THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF THE BAPTISTS" are to be republished in England, under the supervision of the REV. J. H. HINTON. I am well aware that the work needs such supervision; for it was written under the pressure of other important avocations, and was addressed to churches with whose condition I might reasonably consider myself tolerably well acquainted. Of our churches in Great Britain, my knowledge is but imperfect. With the aid of Mr. Hinton's suggestions, I hope that it may be useful on the other side of the Atlantic.

The general design of these papers is twofold. In the first place, I have endeavoured to present a popular view of our distinctive principles and practices, indicating, at the same time, their harmony with the precepts of the New Testament; and in the second place, I have laboured to impress upon my brethren the importance of a firm adherence in practice to what they believe to be the truth. Principles are of small efficacy, unless they are realized in the conduct of those by whom they are held. I fear that Baptists, unmindful of this obvious truth, have been too much disposed to adopt the practices of those whose beliefs, in many important respects, differ from our own. Our testimony is thus, to a great degree, rendered valueless to the church of Christ. Taking, as we suppose, for

the sole foundation of our belief, and the only rule of our practice, the teachings of Christ and his apostles, we can afford to be singular; and the more apparent this singularity becomes, the more distinctly shall we make known to the world what we believe to be the true nature of the kingdom of Christ.

Nor in this is there anything like bigotry. Implicit obedience to what we consider the commands of Christ, is one thing; to hate, or envy, or in any manner to undervalue, those whose belief differs from ours, is certainly another. We love and honour all the disciples of Christ, by what name soever they may be called: if we did not, we could not be disciples ourselves. This, however, affords no reason why we should adopt those practices which we believe to be founded in error, or cease to speak and act, ever, according to our conscientious belief.

That the republication of this little work may do something to confirm the spirit of Christian independence and of brotherly love, is the sincere prayer of the Author.

F. WAYLAND.

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, U. S. A.

March 30th, 1861.

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