

An Appeal For Peace

From "The Writings of Elder R. A. Biggs"

AN APPEAL FOR UNITY

Trusting it may tend to peace and be a help to unify our beloved brethren on some points of doctrine and good order, in which there seems to have been some difference of opinion among our people, the Primitive Baptists, I feel it a duty to give what our people have and do subscribe to on some vital points.

First: On predestination, I have understood our people to believe that God's predestination embraces everything needful in the salvation of his people from sin, and that God is the author of his predestination, together with its results, full establishing his foreknowledge of all conditions and events harmonizing in His election of His people to salvation in Christ Jesus, in the effectual calling, justification and the final glorification of his people in heaven.

Second: I have always understood our people to believe that Christ made a special atonement on the cross for all the sins of all His elect people.

Third: I have understood them to believe that His elect people are sons and daughters of Adam's fallen family.

Fourth: That they (his people) are in time regenerated, or born again in soul and spirit and that their bodies will be in their resurrection.

Fifth: That man in regeneration is passive and receives eternal life from God as a free gift.

Sixth: That after regeneration God's people are complex, possessing two natures, human and divine; two lives, natural and spiritual; two men, the outward man and the inward man, hence the continual warfare.

Seventh: That the child of God is active in obedience; that he obeys from the heart that from of doctrine delivered unto him, that the grace of life in the soul is the efficient cause, and all acceptable obedience thereafter is the effect or fruit of the good tree or renewed heart.

Eighth: That the man that is quickened or regenerated in soul and spirit loves God, mourns over and hates his sins, hungers and thirst after righteousness; but that man in body sins, makes mistakes, goes astray; man in body dies, man in spirit goes to heaven at the death of the body; man in the body goes to the grave, but in the resurrection the body will be quickened, made spiritual, immortal, and spirit and body reuniting, then man in his entirety will be changed and glorified in heaven.

Ninth: That divine life in the soul precedes hunger, thirst, love, faith, joy, peace, and all holy aspirations; life is the efficient cause and that which life produces being the effect.

Tenth: That the child of God as a complex being can do wrong and live after the flesh and thus lose his spiritual enjoyments here in this present world.

Eleventh: That the child of God by the grace of God in the soul, can mortify the deeds of the flesh and keep his body in subjection and glorify God in his body and spirit which are His.

Twelfth: That sin is a transgression of God's Holy Law by his creatures.

The above I have understood our people to heartily believe, and I heartily subscribe to it as the truth, recommend the same to our people as a basis of agreement among them, that unity of sentiment may abound everywhere among us.

ORDER

Under this head, I have understood our people to regard it disorder for any faction to assemble and declare themselves the church proper without first having proved that the church departed from the faith and order that Christ established for the government of the church in her act of excluding them. And any and all persons are acting disorderly who are or may be engaged in gathering or attempting to gather any such excluded members and advising them to declare themselves the church in order. Our people generally regard it disorder for any minister who may have a grievance against another brother preacher to take it to his church and have his home church to raise a complaint against his brother before he takes the matter up with his brother and makes an effort to adjust their differences. And they regard it disorder on the part of any church who will hear such a complaint before her member has made any effort to adjust his matter of grievance with his brother. They also regard it disorderly for a minister or any other member of the church to take up the report against a brother and circulate it to the injury of the brother and the cause before the church has time to investigate the report and see whether it is true or false (also to deny the truthfulness of a report after investigation by any church only by proper gospel steps.)

This seems to be a growing evil and should be condemned by all the churches. And any preacher or any other member of the church who is guilty of such conduct should be rebuked by their churches, and if they persist in such conduct should be disciplined by their churches.

I submit the above and recommend it to our brotherhood at large, hoping thereby to kindly and tenderly in love place beyond our borders all offenses false sentiments and practices, not embraced in God's Holy Word.

DISCIPLINE

My observation through life has been that, generally speaking, our churches have had more trouble and difficult cases from a lack of discipline than from any other one thing. Strict discipline is the life of any kind of organization, without it no organization of any kind will last long. I have known of long, wearisome cases in the church because the order laid down in the Bible was not observed. Such a lack will always lead to unnecessary trouble. When cases of trespasses occur, and the offended party goes off and tells the trouble to others, they themselves thereby become transgressors, because the Bible rule is plain and simple, and says, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go to him alone and tell him his fault." This is the only right course to pursue in cases of trespassing, "go to him alone," not to others with it. I think when anyone is aggrieved at another, if they fail to go to the offender, and go out to others and tell of their trouble they should be mildly rebuked and advised to go to the party whom they claim has hurt them, and try to get a reconciliation. If they succeed, no one else need to be burdened with it. But if the event they should fail to get satisfaction, then take one or two more, and then if they succeed in getting the matter settled, let it stop right there; never bother others with it. But should they fail to get the matter adjusted, then let it be reported to the church, and not before. Moderators sometimes are responsible for trouble in the church, by allowing a matter to come into the church before it has been gospelly treated. I think a moderator, when such cases are reported to the church, should inquire into the matter, and if he finds it has not been gospelly treated, refuse to allow it to come before the conference until it is gospelly treated. If found to have been gospelly treated, then let the church take hold of the matter, and after duly laboring to save and reconcile, should she fail, why then exclude. In public offences such as "theft, fornication, adultery," etc., these are not private trespasses and do not require private dealing. All that is necessary in such cases is for the church to have the evidence that the parties accused are guilty then cut them off or exclude them from the church for the apostle says: "Such have no inheritance in the church of God." The honor of God requires this, His holy cause requires it, the well being of the church and her peace and fellowship require this.

Now I wish to say that sometimes our brethren and sisters get up unnecessary trouble. We ought to be forbearing people. I think sometimes we become too sensitive and take offence when we should have borne it. I never have had any trouble with any member of a church to which I belonged. I have had some hard things said about me, but I bore it, never even told my wife of it, and I feel today that it was best. I saved the church perhaps a great deal of trouble, besides the parties were saved by my forbearance.

I feel sure that a brother or sister has a perfect right to bear the faults of others, and to do this is to keep it in your own bosom, to tell it is not to bear it. But if you feel you cannot bear it, then go as the Bible requires, and tell him or her their faults, go in the spirit of love, considering that you, too are imperfect. When this rule is strictly followed in the love of God, and His cause, there is seldom a case of trespassing but what is agreeably adjusted.

There is according to my observation too much exacting on the part of some. We should all remember we are all imperfect creatures here, and should make due allowances for the words and actions of others toward us. Always remember the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and a great deal of unnecessary trouble would be avoided. Let all cultivate the spirit of love and forbearance one toward another and try to curb hatred and malice and envy, and times will be better with us. Don't you think so?

PRIVATE TRESPASSES, AND PUBLIC OFFENCES

I will express some of my thoughts concerning "private trespasses," and "public offences." First, I will say that private trespass is only against the one offended, while a public offence is against the whole body (or church.) In the private trespasses I will say it is the duty of the one that is offended to go to the trespasser and try to get satisfaction unless he aims to "bear" it, and first I will say, any one has a right to "bear" with a brother if he feels it is right to do so, then in that case the matter should never be mentioned to anyone. I have known cases where one brother felt offended at another and would go around among the brethren and tell every one of it but would say I want peace; I do not want to make any trouble about the matter so I will bear it. Now I think such a course is just the thing to make trouble. If a brother wants to bear with his brother that is all right but he is not doing so when he is telling everybody he meets about it, but if he wishes to bear it then never say anything about it to anyone, that is bearing it. But if he feels that he cannot bear it, he should go to the trespasser, and tell him his fault alone, if satisfaction is made then the matter is ended, never to be brought up again. But if not then take one or two more, and try again to get satisfaction and if it is obtained, there it ends, no one else is troubled with it. But if you still fail to get satisfaction then tell it to the church, now it becomes public and the church should take hold of the matter and try to get the trespasser to make satisfaction; should she fail, then withdraw fellowship from him. Thus I have briefly stated what I consider to be a private trespass, and the course to be pursued in such cases, and I will say in regard to public offences, that a public offence is a wrong committed publicly, and such are against the whole church, no more against one member than another, but against the whole body, and, the cause is exposed, and I consider it the duty of the church as soon as she comes in possession of the facts to take it up and through some of her members have the offender appear before her and make satisfaction to the church then the church should forgive, otherwise withdraw from him; but such offences as "fornication," and such like should be withdrawn from as soon as the church comes in possession of the facts, until the offender by an orderly walk gives evidence that he has turned away from such a course; then he may be restored to fellowship in the church. These are some of my thoughts in regard to "private trespasses" and "public offences" and I feel sure that if this rule was followed up strictly among all our people, a great many troubles would be obviated.

MY LAST APPEAL FOR PEACE

In as much as there is, and has been some differences of opinions among our people, the Primitive Baptists in Texas on some points of doctrine and order, producing confusion, and in some places divisions; and desiring to see all this stopped among us, and if possible see our people and churches united in peace and love, I humbly submit the following as a basis upon which all may come to an agreement, hoping kindly and tenderly in love to place beyond our orders any occasion for further strife and discord among us that is contrary to God's word and express in wholesome words our sentiments of the truth.

1. On predestination: We believe God's predestination embraces everything needful in the salvation of his people from sin, and that God is the author of his predestination, together with its results, full establishing his foreknowledge of all conditions and events harmonizing in His election of His people to salvation in Christ Jesus, in the effectual calling, justification and the final glorification of his people in heaven.

2. We believe Christ Jesus made a special atonement on the cross for all the sins of all His elect people.

3. We believe His people are sons and daughters of Adam's fallen family.

4. We believe they, his people, are in time regenerated, or born again in soul and spirit and that their bodies will be in the resurrection.

5. We believe God's people in regeneration is passive and receive eternal life as a free gift.

6. We believe that after regeneration God's people are complex, possessing two lives, natural and spiritual, two natures, human and divine, two men, the outward and inward man, hence the warfare.

7. We believe this complex person is the child of God.

8. We believe the child of God is active in obedience, that he obeys from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto him, that the grace of life in the soul is the efficient cause, and that all life in the soul is the efficient cause, and that all acceptable obedience thereafter is the effect or fruit of the renewed soul.

9. We believe the person thus regenerated or born again in soul and spirit loves God, mourns over and hates his sins, hungers and thirsts after righteousness that this person in body or flesh sins, makes mistakes, goes astray; this person in body dies, this person in spirit goes to heaven at the death of the body, that this person in body goes to the grave; that in the resurrection this person in body will be quickened made spiritual and immortal, the spirit and body then reunited, then this person in his entirety will be changed and glorified in heaven.

10. We believe that divine life in the soul precedes hunger, thirst, love, joy, faith, peace and holy aspirations, life is the efficient cause, and that which life produces being the effect.

11. We believe that the child of God as a complex being can do wrong and live after the flesh, and thus lose his spiritual enjoyments here in this present world.

12. We believe the child of God by grace of God in the soul, can mortify the deeds in the flesh and keep his body in subjection, and glorify God in his body and spirit which are his.

13. We believe sin to be a transgression of God's holy law by his creature, man.