

Social Circle, Ga., Jan. 20th, 1877.

Elder P. D. Gold—Beloved Brother:

I have thought much of late of the difference between *false* and *true* religion. I speak in common parlance, false religion imposes no restraints on its votaries; true, certain things are required, but they do not crucify the flesh nor its lusts. If they lose any of the supposed earthly pleasures, they are made up by sensational songs and anecdotes. If theater going is denied, the nearest approach possible is presented in the style of their preacher, his jestures, the modulations of his voice. If reading novels is forbidden, it is made up by religious fiction in the shape of tracts, or by drawing on the imagination in the telling of pathetic stories, calculated to arouse the passions, and make men forget themselves in religious enthusiasm. Instead of order and decorum, sobriety and reason, the wildest scenes are enacted to appal the serious beholder. Yet the more extravagantly they are carried on the better the meeting. False religion is always aggressive; it always strives to make proselytes by compassing sea and land. It is in continual dread lest the devil may spoil its work, or capture some one that ought to be its subject. For this purpose the infant mind is taken in charge, and there is a race gotten up to see if "Jesus" cannot be written on the blank mind before "devil" is written.— Proving that they think if they can get the first start that salvation is secured, thereby assuming that Jesus precious blood, unless by their assistance, which of course proves that the blood of Jesus is not, of itself, sufficient to cleanse from all sin. This theory, too, supposes that the power of the devil is equal to that of Christ, and without their aid the devil is greater. Salvation, on this principle, is entirely uncertain to any, and to those who are not taken in youth, and brought into their system, trained up for Jesus, there is but little hope; for the chief of sinners, who are of adult age, there is scarcely any. If this system is of God, and they are to be believed, then for over 5,000 years the true system was never heard of, nor even was it ever thought of until about 1,600 years after the scriptures were written.— What a long night of darkness for the world to grope on in with the scriptures in hand! What became of the children then without the modern nurseries? And yet this is the most corrupt age that the world ever saw; yet at no time was there so many professors; never so much money made up to keep in motion a system not only entirely unknown to the scriptures, but prohibited by them.

It is no wonder that the young are pressing into this false system; they are naturally fond of the novel and the marvelous; have not the power of reason and argument and are easily captivated by speciousness. The meetings must all be as attractive as possible to insure their attendance, every means and appliance must be used to get them under this false, working system, all are represented as their enemies, the enemies of true religion, who, in any manner oppose

the system. Hard names are attributed to those who oppose false positions, and ignorance is said to be characteristic of the opposition; these appliances are studiously used to make them appear as ridiculous as possible, and to frighten the young from their company. They are held up in their papers as opposed to every good word and work; but they thank the Lord that there are but few of them left, and but a short time will suffice for the earth to be rid of them and their hateful doctrine. It looks rather ungenerous to heap such vile epithets upon such a weak and expiring foe. And yet when they are attacked with the word of God, and the mask of deception is attempted to be removed, that is called "fighting." All hate that, as it hurts feelings. If one is not misrepresented, but the truth is told in love, how could that be "fighting?"— When they themselves are quoted from their own publications, and that compared and exposed by the word of God, there could be nothing more fair nor legitimate. Upon this principle truth has in all ages of the world contended with error. The danger is in suppressing truth by the strong arm of the law, and not letting it be free to combat error.

But perhaps enough has been said on false religion, of its effects, and means to sustain itself. True religion is the gift of God. It does not depend upon man for its inception nor origin. He is in no way nor manner the means, instrument, or agent by which God saves sinners. If he was, then salvation would be conditional; the condition might fail, and man would be lost. Not for want of desire on the part of God to save, but for want of faithfulness in man. True religion makes its votaries love God for the sake of what he has done for them. It discards all exciting scenes, all pathetic songs, set to music to influence the passions. It makes man humble, poor in spirit, willing to be counted the offscouring of all things for Christ's sake; willing to be a fool, and to be killed all the day. It makes them desire, above all things, to be guided by the unerring word of truth, to abstain from every thing it condemns. They feel confident that God has all power both in heaven and earth, that he will do all his pleasure, that he can and will save all his people, whether infants or the hoary headed, independent of their natural, depraved will, independent of how man may feel called upon to assist. "His own arm shall rule for him." True religion wants no outside aid from the government. All it asks is to be let alone, to be allowed its lovers to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness. True religion delights to visit the widow and orphan in their afflictions and poverty, to visit and encourage, not to beg, and then demand a part of their scanty store to supply, as they say, the empty treasury of the Lord. It looks to God alone for the fulfillment of all he has promised, being sure that he is able to perform. It has no swarm of hungry beggars filling the land, in order to extort from the hard, honest earning of the credulous that which is needed at home,

but which is sent abroad in order to help God do what he cannot do without it. It has no religious fairs, picnics, or any of the many other modern devices, gotten up to order, in the name of benevolence. True religion is quiet and unobtrusive; is willing to suffer persecution, the loss of all things, in order to be accepted of him.

But it is needless to try to show all the differences between the two; but they are as marked and palpable, as distinct and different, as light is from darkness, as heaven is from hell, as truth is from falsehood. The scriptures represent the one as of God, the other as of the devil. Each has its own father. Their impress is stamped on their offspring, which are as different as their parentage. Is it not strange that intelligent men, even though they make no profession, should be so deluded as not to see the difference? But stranger still that those who profess to be born again, to be the followers of the meek and lowly Lamb, should be so bewitched, so infatuated, so confident that they are doing the will of God, while doing the very things he has forbidden, and not be able to discern it. Not content with this they are made to believe—by those who ought to know better—that it is their duty to train up their children to worship their dumb idols; train them up to believe that God is well pleased with them, even while setting at naught the blood of Christ and substituting their own righteousness in its stead.— Strange that men would spend thousands and millions by a system of beggary and oppression here, in order to drive out idolatry in heathen lands, and yet make an idol of their system, their own inventions. The Chinese, over whom so many pious tears have been shed, so much money expended, who are said to be heathens, far outstrip our nation in much that is useful.

I will stop. Was much pleased to receive your short precious favor.— Such tokens of love from one whom I so greatly love are truly grateful.

Yours in love and union,

WM. S. MONTGOMERY.

Rocky Mt., N. C., March 23rd, 1877.

Dear Brother:—

Having a knowledge of some transactions of business, done by some of the churches of the Contentnea Baptist Association, N. C., in point of discipline, I think it would be best to have them published for the good of the cause of Christ. I will simply state some of the circumstances and leave it to your better judgment to manage for the press.

Sometime during 1875, I think, a colored brother, whose name is Abram Wooten, then a member of the church at Autrey's Creek, Edgecombe county, N. C., applied for a letter of dismission to join some church near him, of the same faith and order. His object, he said, was simply for convenience, as he could not attend his church meetings regularly. The church granted him a letter, expecting him to join at Great Swamp, or at Grindle Creek, in Pitt county, which were in his immediate neighborhood.

Sometime during the year 1876, I think, I will not be positive in regard to the date, the church made inquiry in regard to this matter, and on Saturday before the 4th Sunday in July, the church appointed a committee to visit this member and cite him to attend the next meeting that they might know what disposition he had made, or intended to make of his letter. His answer to the committee was, that he should not attend their meeting unless his church said so. He had gone to Washington, D. C., and offered his letter, there being, I understand, an organized body of colored Baptists, who have a man by the name of John Bell (col) as their pastor. The church entered a charge against said member for dissembling and obtaining a letter under false pretenses; and he was excommunicated from their fellowship.

There was also a member of Sparta church, Edgecombe county, N. C., named E. Pitt (col), who had a letter granted him by the church, that he might join a church nearer which would be more convenient to attend. I was present with the church when Ephriam's letter was granted, and was also present when he presented a note, signed by John Bell, Moderator, stating that he had been received by that church, it being of the same faith and order. The question was asked Ephriam if he went to Washington city. He said that he did not, but that he sent his letter by Abram Wooten. The church entered charges against him of getting a letter under false pretenses and excommunicated him from their fellowship.

My main desire in having this published is, that the churches and brethren with whom the church at Washington city corresponds and holds in fellowship might know how things are being carried on. If said John Bell is an ordained minister, and a man of intelligence, as I have heard he was, he surely does know that a member could not be received into the church without being present to receive the right-hand of fellowship. I will add also that said Abram Wooten is going about continuing to preach and causing divisions in many of the churches between the white and colored members, some preferring to follow him than remain with the church. I believe that Christ has but one dove, one undefiled, the only one of her mother.— The ministers of God, I believe, should preach peace and for peace, such alone as Jesus can give. The eminent apostle Paul admonishes the believers in Christ to follow him as he followed Christ. So preachers of God's grace should show themselves patterns of good works and be examples to the flock, otherwise how could one rebuke a church or a private member. Should a man go and preach peace when there is no peace? Should I preach to others to live honestly and I myself steal? Of what benefit could such preaching be? I believe and feel that there is a great responsibility resting on God's ministers, so much so I conclude I am incompetent for the task.

I will close, submitting what I have written to your disposal. May grace, mercy, and truth be multiplied