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DR. MULLINS REPLIES TO FALSE CHARGES.

THE SEMINARY AND ALIEN IMMERSION.

Please allow me space in your columns for a brief statement regarding reports and rumors which are becoming current over the state as to a recent ordination in the Fourth Avenue Baptist church, and the part taken in it by Dr. J. R. Sampey and myself. There are so many erroneous or false things alleged about it, I scarcely know where to begin. The charges are as follows:

1. That "the brother originally meant to put his letter in another Baptist church in Louisville, but was influenced by Dr. Sampey and myself to put it in the Fourth Avenue church, so
that he could be ordained in spite of his alien immersion views”. This is absolutely and wholly false. Neither Dr. Sampey nor I to this day know when he put his letter in the Fourth Avenue church nor why he did so, nor did we know until recently of his views as to alien immersion.

2. That “Dr. Sampey and I were members of the examining council”. That is entirely incorrect. Neither of us was a member.

3. That “the council recommended to the church not to ordain the brother because he declared for alien immersions in his examination”. This is quite incorrect. The council made no recommendation, but expressly left the matter of ordination to the church, stating that his examination was satisfactory on all points, excepting that he favored the reception of alien immersions. The council, being divided as to the wisdom of ordaining one holding such views, referred the matter to the church for its action.

4. That “the council was unanimous in its decision that the brother ought not to be ordained.” This is incorrect. The council was divided on this point and only on this, some being in favor of his ordination. Hence the recommendation as above.
5. That "the whole matter was prearranged by Dr. Sampey and myself to get the brother ordained." This is absolutely untrue. I knew nothing of the applicant's alien immersion views, nothing of his desire for ordination, nothing of the calling of the council or the examination, until it was all done and the report ready to submit to the church. I learned all the above facts first at Hot Springs at the Southern Baptist Convention. I did not know when the matter was to come before the church for action until almost the hour of meeting, when the pastor requested me by telephone to be present.

6. That "Dr. Sampey and I made the church ordain the brother against its will". That is absurd. A member of the Fourth Avenue church laughed at the idea of anybody making it do anything, when this was mentioned to him. It is a reflection on the intelligence and independence of one of the wisest and best churches I know.

7. That "I, in particular, made a speech which unduly influenced the church in the matter." The fact is, I did not utter a syllable until the matter was virtually decided by laymen who preceded. If I had not spoken at all, it would have gone the same way. I spoke perhaps one minute and a half, to the
effect that while I believe in regular baptism and object to receiving alien immersions, on grounds of order and regularity, I agree with many representative Baptist leaders all over the South that we should not make this matter a test of fellowship or visit penalties on those who hold to "alien immersions". Dr. Sampey spoke to the same general effect, and both of us voted for the ordination on this ground. The vote was taken with the express understanding, stated by the pastor, that it did not involve at all the question whether the church would or would not receive "alien immersions".

8. That "the vote of the church was nearly as strong against as for the ordination". The fact is that two, or at most, three, voted against, all the rest for, the ordination. There was a good attendance present.

9. One other charge added later, apparently to reinforce the above charges, is to the effect that I "am trying to bring about organic union of the Baptists and the Campbellites". This charge is absolutely false in every particular. A comparative doctrinal statement is being drawn, but it will expressly declare that it is not intended to be a basis of union. I rejoice in all signs of greater doctrinal agreement between Baptists and all

In conclusion, Dr. Sampey and myself, and, in general, the Seminary stand exactly where the Seminary professors have always stood as to "alien immersion". We favor and teach regular baptism, but we do not and will not make it a test of orthodoxy, or visit penalties on those who hold differently from us. We leave this matter to the local church. We abide by its action, while standing for our own views as individuals. This is exactly the position of Boyce and Broadus and their colleagues of the first faculty.

The teaching of the Seminary on this subject may be seen from the following extract from Dr. E. C. Dargan's Ecclesiology, which is the text-book used in the Seminary in the department where the subject is discussed:

"How far it may be right to go in tolerating irregularities in confessedly peculiar and exceptional cases is always a difficult question to determine. And it is the part of both prudence and charity to be not censorious of those who may see reason to admit exceptions from the regular order where it seems best to us
not to admit them. But it is both unwise and dangerous to elevate exceptions into rules, and to harden into accepted practice what is confessedly a departure from regularity and consistency. Upon the whole, the weight of argument and the consistency of the Baptist church order, taken as a whole, seem to lie against the propriety of accepting any of these so-called 'alien immersions'. But where churches insist upon receiving them, they have an undoubted right to decide the doubtful question for themselves."

The following extract from a letter of Dr. J. P. Boyce to Dr. J. R. Graves, in connection with the alien immersion controversy in the case of Prof. William Williams, indicates the attitude of liberty on this matter which has characterized the Seminary from the beginning:

"You allude to 'facts stated' and 'guarantees given'. I only wish that brethren should understand that we placed the Seminary upon no other position than it has always occupied.

"As to the question of alien immersions, we were very particular in stating that upon such disputed points as that the Seminary could and ought to take no such position. . . . . But I could not pledge them not to teach any principle favoring 'alien immersion' or
what some call 'pulpit communion', because, as I contended in my speech, these are questions upon which the denomination is divided and upon which we cannot enforce particular views upon any one. Besides, I do not know what may be the opinions of professors who may hereafter be elected. And I certainly did not mean to pledge that Dr. Williams should not express his views if he should choose."

In the Seminary we shall continue our policy of patient and earnest work, of faithful and loyal effort to co-operate with Kentucky Baptists, and to further in all possible ways our Baptist cause and work in the state. We ask brethren to obtain facts from us instead of publishing or believing rumors about us, and we firmly believe that Kentucky Baptists will make a strategic mistake of serious import if they strive to force a wedge between the Seminary and our state denominational interests, instead of using us as a friend and ally and fellow-worker in the common cause.

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