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A LETTER:

— TO —

REV. W. CAREY CRANE, D. D., LL. D.,

President of Baylor University;

One of the Vice-Presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, etc., etc.,

*Admonishing him of his Complicity in the
Moral Abjectness and*

GENERAL DEBASEMENT

OF THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, HOUSTON, TEXAS.

BY A LAYMAN.

"Speak, ye that ride on white asses; ye that sit in judgment and walk by the way."
—Judges V, 10.

"His watchmen are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark."—Isa LVI, 10.

"There are occasions when a man must speak boldly out, even at the risk of plucking the beard of fair authority somewhat rudely. If he does not do so he is a coward and a poltroon, and not the less so because he has nine hundred and ninety-nine lily-livered followers at his back."—Prof. John Stuart Blackie, Univ. Edinburgh.

HOUSTON, TEXAS.

1880.

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If, in the judgment of some of my readers; I should seem in the following pages, to have sometimes indulged in a vein of levity not quite in keeping with the gravity of my theme, I would say that this is referrible—not entirely to my own total depravity, but should be charged, at least in part, to the account of those miserable scape graces that enact the grotesque incongruities therein set forth. To demand of a man that he keep from laughing while his gaze is fixed on the antics of “the fool” in a pantomime would be making a requisition on his “power of face,” that the most imperturbable order of owl-like gravity would hardly suffice to meet. In the present case, moreover, the moral deformity of the actors serves only to enhance the farcical drollery of their performances.



To the Rev. W. Carey Crane, D. D., LL. D.,

Etc., etc., etc.

REVEREND SIR :

The book of God forbids us to become "partakers of other men's sins." I address to you this epistle because you have made yourself preeminently obnoxious to the charge of setting at naught this prohibition. As a pastor, as a professor, as a president of a Baptist college you have, to say the least, silently acquiesced in the fraternal recognition of an ecclesiastical organization which is notoriously heretical in doctrine and lax in discipline; tolerating in its fellowship men who are grossly intemperate in their lives and obscene and profane in their discourse.

But lest, by thus challenging your remissness and inaction, I should be subjecting myself to the imputation of a pragmatic obtrusiveness, I shall here reproduce some things that have already been published to the world in regard to the moral enormities perpetrated by members of the First Baptist Church of Houston, and condoned and sanctioned by the "brethren" that make up that "household of faith." You indeed have long been cognizant of these scandals, but this pamphlet will fall into the hands of many who are not. And if to this latter class of readers the facts here stated should seem too foul and forbidding for credence, this other fact, that while holding a prominent position in that Association of churches of which the First Baptist Church of Houston is a constituent, *men like yourself* have, year after year, remained mute and quiescent in relation to these enormities—this fact, I say, will awaken even greater astonishment and evoke stronger expressions of deprecation than will even the gross immoralities herein set forth.

And first as to false doctrine. It is well known that the *Texas Baptist Herald* for years past has signalized itself by repudiating the doctrine of "Justification by Faith only." The *Herald* instructs us that such a tenet as this is utterly foreign to the teachings of the New Testament, and was never heard of until the days of Luther. It further admonishes "believers" that if they desire *justification* they must procure it for themselves or go without it, for that Christ has no agency whatever in procuring it for them, but that each "servant of God" will be justified or "condemned"—even so!—according as his own personal obedience comes up to, or falls short of, the full standard of God's law.*

Until about a little more than a year ago, Mr. Link, who set agoing this theory in the *Herald*, was, and for many years had been, a member, and part of the time pastor, of this same First Baptist Church of Houston. The present lieutenant-editor, the Rev. O. C. Pope, is also a member of this church; and as Mr. Link's deputy does, as in duty bound, preach up and write up the same doctrine. The Rev. Jous Johnston, who has a very large "interest" in the *Herald*, is also an elder and a member of this brotherhood, and as he is in full fellowship with O. C. Pope in particular, as well as with the church in general,

*The reader in pondering over the succeeding pages will find abundant proof and confirmation of a reflection made by Abraham Booth, that "Many persons think it incumbent upon them to support the sinking credit of good works, much more by talking about their necessity than by performing them."—*Reign of Grace.*

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he undoubtedly holds the same doctrine as the rest of the editorial coadjutants of the *Herald*. The Rev. J. M. C. Breaker, D. D., who is another elder of the church and also its pastor, holds likewise the same sentiments with the *Texas Baptist Herald* and Mr. Link. I heard him once make his confession of faith* substantially on this wise:

“What J. B. Link believeth,
That believe I too;
And what the *Herald* teacheth,
That hold I for true.”

[“*Milk for Babes*,” slightly altered.]

I need not remind you that through many successive years as regularly as “Union Association” has met, that body has formally endorsed the *Texas Baptist Herald* and its teaching. And as little do you need to be told how contrary this teaching is to what *all* Baptists have *always* and *everywhere* held, or how utterly subversive it is of “the gospel of the grace of God.” I will only say further on this subject that, I do not believe that there could be called from all the writings of Theodore Parker anything so closely approximating *blasphemy* as some of Mr. Link’s utterances in the *Herald* on the subject of *justification*.

And now let us glance at the reflex influence of this teaching as shown in the moral complexion which matters wear in this “church.” As one of the samples of its make-up then, nothing can be more appropriate than to adduce the Rev. O. C. Pope. His prominence as an elder in the church and as the editor of your religious organ for “Union Association,” and for the “Baptist State Convention,” gives him a preeminence which entitles him to this precedence.

When I state then that this “brother” has been openly and specifically charged with acts that are grossly immoral—that his accuser is more widely known and has been far more prominently identified with the Baptists of the South as a religious worker than Mr. Pope ever has—and when I state further that despite of all this, the church of which Mr. Pope is a member and an elder has never instituted the slightest enquiry into the truth or falsity of these allegations, I am merely stating what to you is utterly stale and trite.

The party who made the charges, as you know, is Mr. Vallie C. Hart, who while a resident of Houston had been superintendent of a mission Sunday-school established under the auspices of the First Baptist Church. He is better known, however, as “Major Penn’s Sankey.” And as if to show that it was not from any lack, on the part of Mr. Hart, of that moral force which may be supposed necessary to command respect and regard, that his charges were unheeded, this same First Baptist Church at Houston did, and that not without prolonged and earnest effort, procure Mr. Hart’s services to aid Major Penn in carrying on a series of meetings early last spring (1880).

*This was at a “church meeting” when reference having been made by one of the members to Mr. Link’s teachings as unscriptural and unbaptistic, Dr. Breaker at once interposed on behalf of his patron, and stoutly maintained the “orthodoxy” of the sentiments assailed. The argument in proof of the *orthodoxy* was *precisely* that given above, only without its *rhythmus*. As for the members of the church generally, I do not for a moment suppose that one in ten of them has the slightest idea of what is meant by *justification*, or concerns himself in the least about it, one way or the other.

And now as to the charges, I copy from a pamphlet published at Anstin, in this State, and dated October 8th, 1878. According then to Mr. Hart's testimony as conveyed in the annexed statement, it will be seen that—

The Rev. O. C. Pope is a Profane Person; that He Curses, and Makes One of Mr. Hart's Sunday-School Youths Fetch His Lager from a Drinking Saloon.

Says Mr. Hart:

"In a difficulty growing out of a transaction between Mr. O. C. Pope and my brother, in which, feeling deeply indignant at the gross injustice done my brother by Mr. P., I denounced the latter as a 'contemptible scoundrel,' whereupon Mr. Pope exclaimed 'I'll be damned if I'll take that.' I reproved him for using such language. He said, 'I do not care a damn if I am a Baptist preacher; I swear I'll not let any man attack my honor.' Now as to Mr. Pope's using the above 'cuss words,' I say that he did. He says that he did not. I do not know who was present, and did not think to look out for witnesses—never once thinking that he or any other man would deny it. But as he has denied it, I have taken the trouble to secure a certificate in writing, which you will carefully examine."

"Again, when Dr. Breaker informed Jonas Johnston that I had charged Mr. Pope with getting the beer from the bar-room and using profanity, he (Johnston) said to Dr. B. that Mr. Pope did get the beer, and further said he would not have been surprised if he (P.) had struck me instead of using profane language; so I was informed by Dr. B. Why was not Mr. Johnston surprised? The following will explain.

"Houston, Texas, Aug. 30, 1878.

"We whose names are hereto signed, do hereby certify that we are well acquainted with Rev. O. C. Pope, of Houston, Texas, and that we were employees in the office of the *Texas Baptist Herald*, at Houston, Texas, and that we are aware of the fact that said Pope was in the habit of sending to the bar-room for ice-cold lager beer for his own use in said office—furthermore, that we have heard said Pope often use very rough and indecent language, such as 'son-of-a-bitch' and other kindred expressions, and that the same was not used as repeating what others had said.

"Witnesses: J. O. W. BARNETT.
A. DEWALL.

W. B. HART
J. S. BARNETT."

"We whose names are hereto signed do hereby certify that Mr. Geo. Davis, an employee in the *Texas Baptist Herald* office, says that he could sign the above document, but would not because he was afraid of being discharged from said office by Mr. Pope.

"W. B. HART.
"J. O. W. BARNETT.
"A. DEWALL.
"J. S. BARNETT.

"Houston, Texas, August 30, 1878.

"The originals of the above statements are in my possession."

With regard to sending an innocent and uncontaminated young man to a drinking "saloon," embellished, if not with lascivious, at least with voluptuous, pictures—a resort where the tempter lies in ambush with a lure for every sense and an incentive for every appetite; Mr. Hart tells us that the youth in question whom Mr. Pope commissioned to perform this service, was J. S. Barnett.

"He had been." Mr. Hart continues, "a member of my Sabbath-school while I was living in Houston, and connected with the *Herald* office, and had been committed to my care by his mother, who particularly charged me to keep him away from bar-rooms and all such-like places. On being interviewed on the subject, the bar-keeper stated that he had sent up beer for the editor generally twice, sometimes oftener, during the day."

It is, perhaps, only fair to Mr. Pope to say that he claims that, though a catechuman of the church, the youth in question was also the "devil" of his office, and therefore the proper person to send for the editor's lager.

How Mr. Pope was charged with an offence which the laws of the United States make a felony, subjecting the offender to a heavy fine and a long imprisonment, and how by a disgraceful expedient the ends of justice in this case were frustrated and Mr. Pope saved from being presented before the grand

jury of the District Court of the United States after the witnesses had been summoned and were all in attendance at Galveston, is a matter well known to you as it is to everybody else hereabouts. To save time, however, and avoid prolixity, I shall make no further reference to this incident.

As soon as these varied performances of Mr. Pope's had begun to obtain notoriety, he very naturally bethought himself of taking such steps as should seem best adapted to obviate all results wearing a threatening aspect, that might seem to be impending. Accordingly among other devices for discrediting the charges to which he had made himself obnoxious, he published in the *Texas Baptist Herald* what purported to be a statement emanating by John W. Barnett, disavowing the latter's signature to a document emanating from the employees of the *Herald* office, which Mr. Vallie C. Hart* had published with the name of John W. Barnett appended as one of the witnesses.

[The document containing the signature thus alleged to be disowned by Mr. Barnett, has already been given on page 5.]

Such a disavowal would of course have subjected Mr. Hart to the imputation of a most heinous offence. But conscious of his entire rectitude in the matter he lost no time in seeing Mr. Barnett and explaining to him how matters stood. Mr. Barnett as promptly accompanied him to the office of a notary public, and there made the following affidavit:

COPY.

"WHEREAS O. C. POPE, Managing Editor of the *Texas Baptist Herald*, has published in that paper in its issue of January 16, 1879, what purports to be a certificate signed by myself, I hereby denounce such certificate as false, fraudulent, and a forgery. I did indeed at Mr. Pope's urgent request sign a statement which, as he read it to me and as I intended it, merely set forth that personally I knew nothing about the merits of a certain controversy as between him and Mr. Vallie C. Hart, nor of the truth or falsity of the allegations contained in a certain document signed by my son and certified to by other employees of the *Herald* office, implicating Mr. Pope in the habitual use of vulgar and obscene language. If he has my true sign-manual appended to any document having a verbal correspondence to that which he has published, then such document must have been interpolated or otherwise tampered with subsequently to my having signed it.

JOHN W. BARNETT.

Sworn to and subscribed before me at Houston, Texas, on this the 17th day of February, A. D. 1879.

[SEAL.]

E. P. TURNER,
Notary Public, Harris Co., Texas.

It may be well enough to remind you here that—aside from the *affidavit* business—the facts thus set forth in regard to Mr. Pope are given on the authority of Mr. Vallie Hart's *published* statement. And to show you how unexceptional a witness Mr. Hart is, I may further state that several months after he had published his charges against Mr. Pope, the latter seems to have relented towards his accuser and to have repented him of the harsh and uncharitable manner in which, at the outset, he had allowed himself to resent his good brother's faithful rebukes. Be that as it may, he did, in any case, put forth a declaration duly signed and attested, and had the same formally published, as became a document of such regal import, in all the Baptist papers of Texas, setting forth his unabated esteem for his brother, Vallie C. Hart, and his fixed resolve henceforth to regard and treat him as a gentleman and a Christian.* And as if in further confirmation of the heartiness and sincerity

*See note on page 7.

of this avowal, Mr. Pope did almost daily, during Major Penn's meetings in Houston, publicly "invoke the divine blessing" on what Major Penn had said and on what Vallie C. Hart had sung. Now it is certain that "gentlemen" and "Christians" don't tell lies about their brethren or neighbors—and we have the authority of Rev. O. C. Pope for saying that Vallie C. Hart is a *gentleman* and *Christian*, just as we have the authority of Vallie C. Hart for saying that the Rev. O. C. Pope before he had attained to that high diplomatic honor that has now given him "sic. exaltation," was wont to curse and lie, to use bad and unbecoming language and to send a young, uncontaminated catechumen of the Baptist Church to fetch for him his daily allowance of ice-cold lager from a neighboring drinking saloon.

Now under the pressure of circumstances of such gravity as these, confronted with charges so heavy and attested by a witness so credible, it is no marvel that Mr. Pope should have felt that he stood in need of a little *doctoring*. He must too have felt that his fleece had become somewhat begrimed, and that generally his "sheep's clothing" would be none the worse for careful readjustment and a little drawing together. The thought also would naturally enough occur to him that his "livery" would look all the better for some extra embellishment and some burnishing up. Well, Mr. Pope is a man of expedients, and showed himself, in this case, fully equal to the emergency which had overtaken him.

Old Æsop tells us that once upon a time a Wolf suffered great pain through a bone which had got stuck in the greedy creature's throat, and that no efforts of his own availed to rid him of the obstruction. In this perilous exigency he offered a liberal reward to any or all of the animals round about that would come to his rescue and deliver him out of his danger. At length the Crane, having carefully balanced the chances and revolved the risks, allowed his cupidity so far to prevail over his fears that he consented to run his long bill adown the Wolf's gullet, and was at once successful in drawing forth the bone. This accomplished and the sufferer relieved, the thrifty Crane now intimated that he was ready to receive the *solatium* to which this happy issue of his labors entitled him. "Be off, thou hateful ingrate" growled out the Wolf, "enough that thou hast withdrawn thy head unhurt from my mouth. That is thy reward, and nary an *obolus* shalt thou get from me."

As if acting then on the hint which this incident conveys, Mr. Pope did a few weeks ago present himself before the *Senatus Academicus* of Baylor University and, as a tribute to his virtues and his scholarship, was duly invested with the Academic *pallium* of a Doctor of Divinity by the President of that learned body.

By this act, you and Baylor University endorse Mr. Pope's theology, his piety, and his scholarship, and plainly say to the world that you don't care one iota what a man's principles or what his practices may be, so long as you can, or think you can, bring grist to your own mill by subsidizing him. The

*If some degree of perplexity should here arise in the reader's mind in consequence of the anomaly involved in Mr. Pope's pronounced—and even ostentatious—recognition of a man as a *Christian brother* and a *true gentleman*, whom he had before held up to public scorn as a liar, a forger, a "villian [*sic.*] and midnight assassin,"—for by these latter terms Mr. Pope characterized Vallie C. Hart in the *Memphis Baptist*,—I can only remind him that I am not responsible for his embarrassment.

man that professes to believe that in this proceeding you were influenced by any more worthy consideration is simply to be pitied for his credulity.

On the principle, "like priest like people," we shall be fully prepared after what we have now seen and heard of this redoubtable "elder," for the following presentation of the condition of things in the church whose fellowship he adorns. I proceed then to furnish you with evidence that cannot be gainsaid, showing the condition of moral degradation and abject sottishness to which the First Baptist Church of Houston has sunk. And in doing so I shall restrict myself mainly to the statements of a pamphlet and other published documents written by a member of that church and entitled, "Leaves from an Unpublished Chapter of Church History." The writer shows that—

Members of the First Baptist Church of Houston Find Pastime and Enjoyment in Revelry and Drunkenness, in Debauchery and Murder.

Our author, who is no other than J. A. Cushman,* says, that

"Such of the members of the First Baptist Church [at Houston] as are friends to the *Herald*, and give liberally 'to the church,' may, and do, commit every offence interdicted by the decalogue, with absolute impunity. Accordingly, it is no unusual thing for these favored 'brethren' to be seen reeling about the streets drunk, getting into scrapes in gambling saloons, where deadly weapons are drawn and a fatal rencontre barely averted. Peace officers and the police courts alone have sufficed for quelling these deadly feuds, and by the arrest of the parties preventing bloodshed. A case of precisely this character occurred a few weeks ago on a *Sunday* morning.

"One brother, moreover, who is regarded as exceptionally pious and exemplary, paying, as he does, \$50 a year to the church towards the minister's salary, and contributing to all other objects on a like liberal scale—as well as being a constant reader and prompt-paying subscriber to the *Herald*, was, only the other day, principal in a duel, and was plucky enough to be on the ground with pistols, seconds and doctors to the moment. [See the *Galveston News* of May 2, 1878.

"The other party was too discreet to stand the encounter, and did not put in an appearance. This peaceful termination of the affair would seem to have been regarded by some of the brethren as a providential intimation of his favor which Heaven bears to those who pay liberally towards the support of the preacher, and even as realizing the declaration of Solomon, that 'when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' This brother may now be considered the hero of the body, and will likely enough soon be made a deacon of."

The following by the same writer, containing a more specific reference to the foregoing incidents is extracted from an "Address to the First Baptist Church at Houston," made in obedience to a formal request from the "brethren" in "conference assembled," with no other alteration than that of substituting (for obvious reasons) fictitious for the real names of members. In the case of other parties named, no disguise of this sort has been thought necessary.

"I proceed to state that on a certain Sunday morning Brother Isaac Fitgood had an altercation on the streets with a gentleman well known here as a prominent member of the

*For the information of those who are not acquainted with him I will here state that Mr. Cushman is an old Texan and ranks with our most respected citizens. He is a native of central New York, and landed in Galveston as long ago as May, 1846. He was then a young man of only some twenty summers. He came here as a working mechanic and by skill and industry in his calling and by his unswerving integrity soon "gave the world assurance of a man." The reverses that overtook him during that little episode in our national affairs—that we all wot of—he is rapidly recovering from. His foundry on the north side of the Bayou is barely adequate for dispatching the amount of business now pressing upon him. His entire family are members of the First Baptist Church. His son, a young man who has not very long ago attained his majority, was lately elected a deacon of that church; but he had too much judgment and too much principle to accept an office which—under the conditions imposed on him—his father found it incompatible with his personal integrity to retain. There is not a man in the church, from J. M. C. Breaker, D. D., down to O. C. Pope, Editor of the *Texas Baptist Herald*, that dares to impugn the truth of any statement made by J. A. Cushman or for which he is responsible.

public press, Dr. McBride. Brother Fitgood, being the aggressor, was fined a small amount in the Recorder's Court, with costs; and the Doctor, though arrested, I believe was discharged. I will not mention in the presence of ladies some other and more revolting and degrading broils in which Brother Fitgood has figured, and which all readers of the local press were familiar with at the time. How he signalized himself by his drunkenness and profanity at our last municipal election, I suppose must be equally well known. How in about the middle of May last he was principal in a duel, and was on the ground at the appointed time to fight it, must be a matter of equal notoriety to all who are accustomed to scan the columns of our daily papers. How it is that despite all these immoralities he enjoys absolute immunity from church censure and 'discipline,' and is even petitioned and put on church committees is better known to you, Brother Moderator, and to the members of the Committee of Inquisition than to any body else besides. These are questions into which I will not intrude—from all such mysteries as pertaining to the ruling order, I reverently stand aloof.

"If I have referred to only two or three incidents as illustrating the profligacy of the life our brother leads, you know, (despite those airs of judicial reserve which pastor and deacons may now affect—you know, I say, and *they* know, that there is scarcely a month in the year, may, scarcely a week in the month—I might almost say scarcely a day in the week—that does not contribute its quota in elucidation of the fact of his unintermitting profligacy. You know, too, that this has been the condition of affairs to almost an equal degree for several years past."

And as illustrating the inveterate persistency of the "*law of continuity*," at least where evil is concerned, I invite you to ponder the following taken from the *Houston Daily Post* of August 1st, 1880.

"At this point [during the proceedings of the Democratic Nominating Convention] Mr. Isaac Fitgood jumped up and announced that he would be an Independent candidate for the office, on the principle that there were so many good and bad liars in the convention. He accused Mr. Charles Renne of offering to sell his vote for \$25. This created quite a momentary storm. Mr. Renne started toward Fitgood, but was caught and stopped by Mr. Albert Erichson. Fitgood kept on talking boisterously; the lie and other very dirty epithets being hurled between him and Renne. It was some time before the sergeants-at-arms could quiet the row, but it was finally accomplished."

I am no politician, very rarely casting a vote for anybody or any office, and therefore cannot judge of Mr. Fitgood's chance of getting elected to the office he aspires to. From the remarks that one hears falling from the lips of many of the *brethren* however, it is obviously a general impression with *them* that Mr. Fitgood's defeat would materially change the aspect of his religious and ecclesiastical relations. If circumstances should so turn out as to make him perhaps oblivious or unmindful of past arrears, if such have accrued, or should they be such as to make him remiss in taking up his cross and paying down his assessment in the future, why then there is little question that he will be forthwith "dealt with as the law etc., etc., demands." Members of this church can have the most plenary indulgences for all the lapses that frail humanity is subject to, if only they will comply with the very moderate terms on which they are dispensed. The penitent, however, must fork out promptly or it is no bargain. No one, however, understands this better than brother Fitgood does.

The following is also clipped from J. A. Cushman's "Address" to the church, and will still further serve to indicate the moral *status* of its prominent members:

"Brother Quintus Fillup, I am glad to believe, is become somewhat more *circumspect* when practising his debaucheries than he was wont to be some four or five years ago. There is less of that recklessness and abandonment which aforesaid was so marked a feature in his conduct. But though less frequently seen staggering on the streets under the influence of liquor, still if familiar with his haunts you will have no difficulty in finding him in a state of inebriety almost any night in the week after 9 or 10 o'clock. The chances are that while I am speaking, he forms one of a party sitting around a card table, in a cozy retreat at the back of the *Casino* saloon, on Congress street, playing 'seven-up' for drinks, and that an hour or two hence will find him kicking up a row at Otto Erichson's shooting gallery next door to the saloon, or in some other way annoying the proprietor of that popular resort."

Mr. Cushman towards the end of his *Address* proceeds thus :

"You all know that I have only glanced at a comparatively few of the fearful 'irregularities' that prevail amongst us or of the outrages that have been perpetrated by the clique that have so long dominated in this church. Facts speak for themselves, brethren, it is plain to you all and patent to the world, that men may live in revelling and wantonness—may be gamblers, and drunkards, and whore-mongers, and *murderers* too—may become a blot on society, and a by-word among all decent citizens, and still be members in 'good standing' and 'full fellowship' of the Baptist Church at Houston—provided only that they contribute liberally to the church treasury, subscribe for Mr. Link's paper, and do nothing to incur the displeasure of those gentlemen who represent the *Texas Baptist Herald* and its interests in this church."

"An article published some three years ago in the *Central Baptist*, of St. Louis, contains the following statement in regard to this church and the general declension of its members. If the fearful disclosures which it makes have ever been called in question, then I am not aware of the fact:

"A large proportion of its members systematically absent themselves from the services of the Lord's day, and for years past have not been present at a communion season; and some I believe have never communed at all since their baptism, and have, therefore, yet to make their 'first communion.' Others of them—and these comprise, I venture to affirm, some of the most exemplary members of the body—see nothing to revolt their consciences or to discredit their principles in becoming 'sponsors' at Episcopalian christenings, and promising in the name of the little innocent about to be 'grated' by the grace of sacerdotal manipulation 'into the body of Christ's church,' that it 'should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh—that it should believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life (!)'"

As the writer in the *Central Baptist* proceeds to say: "These are some of the blessed fruits resulting from a belief in the doctrine of 'justification by works,' a doctrine whose beneficent and elevating tendency is so confidently vaunted by Mr. Link in the *Texas Baptist Herald*."

I will not further continue the sickening recital, though as you yourself doubtless know, the theme is far from being exhausted, and the worst far from being told.

According to the principles recognized by Baptists from time immemorial, your own and your brethren's complicity in these monstrous abuses is self-evident. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is a sentiment worthy of the wretch who uttered it. From "the remotest depths of antiquity" the testimony comes to us that the ancient *Anabaptists*

"Maintained that the true church ought to consist of none but holy and just men. While Augustine defended mixed membership, the Donatists did not shrink from the logical consequences of their radical position, but asserted that the toleration of known evil in a church, not only destroys that church but contaminates every church in fellowship with it."—"*The Church in the Wilderness*" American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia.

And all the world over where Baptist churches are not "twice dead," the same principle is still firmly held and when occasion calls for it, sternly acted on.

And assuredly the perilous times in which it has pleased God that our lot should be cast, render it doubly incumbent on every true believer in Christ and his gospel to "strive the good strife," whether the antagonists to be encountered be foes without or traitors within. An atheistic philosophy and a heathenish ritualism are just now, no doubt, elements of malignant and unintermitting energy, rife for evil; but I risk nothing in saying that they live and grow wanton on the faithlessness and corruption of men who falsely

“profess and call themselves Christians.” It may not be given us to expose and refute the insidious sophistries of the scientific atheist, but by God’s grace we can live righteous and godly lives in this present evil world. By this argument, moreover, we shall far more effectually “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” than we should by vanquishing them in a dialectic encounter. But when a church like this First Baptist Church of Houston becomes steeped in moral infamy and degradation, perverting the truth and outraging the purity of Christ’s gospel, it is then seen to bear on its very frontlet the brand of God’s reprobation, and instead of a blessing it becomes a pest and a plague diffusing “a savor of death unto death” among all that come within the range of its baleful influence. It is “twice dead” and merits only to be “plucked up by the roots.” For “if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” And those that give it countenance and comfort, manifestly bring themselves under a like condemnation.

But then these brethren, with O. C. Pope included, are “sound Baptists (!)” They are great on “Baptist Succession” and “a Converted Church Membership (!)” And if they do happen to be a little lax and negligent about “the weightier matters of the law,” it can’t be denied that they are scrupulously punctilious and precise in doling out the prescribed modicum of mint, anise, and cummin. “And should not the soundness of their views,” it may be asked, “in relation to ‘Believer’s Baptism,’ and a Converted Church Membership be accepted as in some sort a set-off against the iniquity of their practices?” God forbid! For as an adequate exponent of the power there is in language to embody in its utterances a severe and exhaustive expression of divine rebuke and indignation, these words stand, and must forever remain, a solemn memento, unrivalled and apart—“For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of MEN WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.” May God in his infinite mercy help us all to weigh well their solemn import.

A. LAYMAN.

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