

The Archdeacon of Durham on certain religious errors

W. Kelly.

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To A. M. P.

Dear Brother, - It is a pity, that Archdeacon Prest should have entered the field with (to say no more) so little information on the points in question. Those who have provoked him, however zealous, seem to me rather ill-taught souls who, having but a small spice of truth commonly seen among "Brethren," are using it in ways which "Brethren" would deplore as decidedly as the Rector of Gateshead. The "Tyne Evangelist" you have sent me is a sorry sample of christian teaching.

But the Archdeacon, if he deemed it wise and right to censure these people at Gateshead, should not have ventured to speak of Christians elsewhere of whom he knows so little. He quotes extracts from the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, as unfounded in statement as can be, written (I presume) by an Irish Presbyterian Minister called Croskery. When a dozen or so of his charges were cited by Mr. Isaac Ashe in the *Record* some time ago, I gave them a distinct contradiction. Not a word more was heard of them then; one is sorry to see a respectable Christian repeating such things now. It is false that "Brethren" hide from the converted their convictions on ministry, the law, baptism, or any other truth. It is true that with the unconverted they adhere as exclusively as possible to the gospel of God's grace or His warnings for despisers. What but malice or ignorance could put an ill-construction on that which is so plainly according to God?

As to the detailed charges Mr. P. makes, let me say in few words, that no brother known to me (and I know them well for nearly thirty years) holds sanctification in the sense which excludes personal and progressive holiness. We all insist on practical growth in this respect, but we *also* hold, what most now deny, absolute sanctification from the beginning of God's vital work in the believer. (1 Peter 1: 2 ; 2 Thess. 2: 13.) Probably the best refutation ever written of Wesley's "Christian Perfection" came from the pen of a brother. I do not believe one person in communion with us holds the perfectionism in flesh which is here imputed to us as a whole. Next, we should put away (as we *have* put away) anyone for denying the duty of confessing our sins to God. Again, I have myself written an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, in which it is expressly laid down that "forgive us our sins" belongs only to those who can truly say "Father;" as it is a question of His daily government with His children, not of the unrenewed who have never found remission of their sins by faith in Jesus. The prayer was for the disciples' use, before the Holy, Ghost given; afterwards they were to ask the Father in Christ's name, as we do now. As to the law, I am not surprised at the want of knowledge displayed about both the scriptures and our views. Suffice it to say here that we abhor Antinomian license as heinous iniquity, and acknowledge our unqualified obligation to obey every word of God, more especially or distinctively to have our mind, walk, and worship, framed and governed by the New Testament or apostolic scriptures. But this does not warrant the assertion of the law as the christian rule of life. On the contrary, scripture is explicit that by them who are under the law" the Spirit intends the Jews (Rom. 3); as we are distinctly said to be "not under the law but under grace," where the apostle is discussing christian walk, and net justification. (Rom. 6.) But we should denounce him who would disparage the law, which is good if a man use it lawfully: whether the Archdeacon does so may be doubted by those who will gravely compare 1 Timothy 1: 9 with his use of it. Further, when he says that we exclude children, servants, and other unconverted persons from family prayer, he is confounding us with the Separatists or Walkerites, the very antipodes of "Brethren," and is grossly deceived. So he is as to

ministry: for we hold it to be a permanent and divine institution, though we deny the corruptions of it among Romanists and Anglicans as well as Dissenters. He combats a phantom; for nobody among us holds that all are teachers or preachers, or any save those whom the Lord gives and sends. At the same time Mr. P. is wrong to put ministry on the ground of common sense; for it really is a matter of faith, and, like every other christian privilege, depends on the Holy Spirit who glorifies Christ. Again, as to baptism, it is enough to say that Mr. Prest is wholly in error in supposing that it is ever done among us as a sign of leaving, a denomination for "Brethren." We should all repudiate such an enormity with one heart and mind. Many among us baptize the children of believers; many not satisfied that christening of infants is scriptural have been baptized as an individual question (and this I have known in the English Establishment and elsewhere too). But all repudiate re-baptism. The pamphlet of which Mr. P. speaks emanates from a party *opposed* to us, unless I am greatly mistaken: certainly "Brethren" are in no way, responsible for it. I purposely abstain from commenting on irrelevant matter; but the Archdeacon will own that I have joined issue fairly on the charges made. Ample disproof of them he will have already received in the form of tracts, etc. sent by book-post. There is but one course under such circumstances open to conscience and candour, not to speak of love.

Ever yours in Christ, W. K.