

THE "CANADIAN BAPTIST" AND DR. RYERSON.

REPORT
OF THE
COUNCIL

To the Editor of the

SIR,

I will thank you to do me the act of kindness and of justice (as far as in your power) to insert the following communication to the Editor of the *Canadian Baptist*, as he has refused to insert it, though it contains not one word of controversy on doctrine, and is as brief an *explanation* as possible in reference to the matter of a gross attack upon me in the Editorial of that paper. The reasons of the *Canadian Baptist* for refusing to lay my explanation before his readers must be obvious to every reader of my letter to him. I will make no comment upon his conduct. I believe honorable and honest Baptists, as well as others, will stamp that conduct as it deserves.

On the 11th of January the Editor of the *Canadian Baptist*, after, as he himself said, he had "perused it with a good degree of interest and pleasure," *deliberately* pronounced a decided judgment on both the *necessity* and *character* of my book on Christian Morals. Whatever he may now say for nameless purposes cannot obliterate what he said on Christian and patriotic grounds the 11th of January; and his now attacking me for what he commended me for weeks before for having done, is as pitiable for himself as it is honorable for me, apart from the absurdity of his charge that I had made "an outrageous assault upon the cherished religious belief" of any denomination, contrary to the whole course of my public life; or of the supposition that other members of the Council would have concurred in such an act, had I been foolish or base enough to propose it.

Yours respectfully,

E. RYERSON.

TORONTO, *February 26th, 1872.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "CANADIAN BAPTIST."

SIR,

I have only this hour read in the *Canadian Baptist* of the 8th instant an editorial (cut out and enclosed by a friend), in which you object to the part of my little book on Christian Morals, relating to Baptism and the privileges of baptized persons. You commence your article by saying: "Our first examination of this new Text Book for Canadian Schools and families, was somewhat cursory;" and you conclude your article with the words "Our denomination must, in some organized way, make its voice heard in the Council of Public Instruction, in our Provincial Legislature, and by the Executive Council itself, if need be. Indeed, we cannot doubt that all lovers of religious liberty and equality will gladly make use of every effort within their power to banish from the Schools of our Province, a book that at least four different denominations cannot fail to regard, in its present form, as anything else than an outrageous assault on their most cherished religious beliefs."

Now, Sir, I will quote the words of your own editorial of the 11th January—just four weeks before you published your second editorial of the 8th instant, and before the influences which have prompted your second editorial were brought to bear. Your own words of the 11th of January show whether you made a "cursory" or a careful examination of my little book when you say that you had "*perused it with a good degree of interest and pleasure, and regarded it as, on the whole, a safe and useful handbook of religious instruction.*"

PROBATION

In the title of contents of my little book those of the Ninth Lesson are as follows: "Lesson IX. Duty to one's self (continued): self-consecration: its nature: reasons for it; what required in it—Baptism—the Lord's Supper: reasons for; what implied in; how to celebrate the Lord's Supper."

Now, I think, it may be left to yourself or to any person of common sense to say whether when you "*perused* my book with a good degree of interest," you did not peruse what related to *Baptism*; and if it contained "an outrageous assault on your most cherished religious belief," would you not in a moment have perceived and resented it? Your own words on the 11th of January in regard to my book are as follows:

"The object of this little treatise is to supply for our Public Schools a text book containing the elements of moral and Christian truth. We have perused it with a good degree of interest and pleasure, and regard it as, on the whole, a safe and useful hand-book of religious instruction. There can be no doubt that it will supply a want that has long been felt in our Common School system. We rejoice that the venerable author is spared to bring forth fruit like this in a green old age; and we have good hope for the future of our country, if the minds of the rising generation are imbued with the important truths contained in this valuable little work, which gives evidence of wide research, vigorous thought, and judicious arrangement."

What you thus wrote and the words you employed on the 11th of January speak for themselves; but I may add, that I am not aware of ever having in my life, either delivered a discourse or written an article, discussing the theological question of Baptism, as between the Baptists and other Denominations; and that the three paragraphs of my book on Baptism were intended to be written as much in the spirit of a Baptist, as of a Pedit-baptist; and I can, if need be, demonstrate every part of it from the works of Baptist writers.

Nor is this all; the "voice" of the Baptist Church is "heard in the Council of Public Instruction;" for on my recommendation, the Government appointed, in the place of the Reverend Dr. Ormiston, the Honorable William McMaster, member of the Council—perhaps the oldest, the most widely-known, and I may say, most representative member of the Baptist Church in Toronto, if not in Canada. When my book was going through the press, I had copies of it, as it was printed, sent in slips to the several members of the Council, in order that I might be informed of, and be able to modify or correct anything to which any member of the Council might take exception. The book, when printed entire, was submitted to the Council in my absence, and was referred to a Special Committee, of which Mr. McMaster was a member. I was present when the Committee reported, recommending the book for use in the Public Schools for those children whose parents should not object to it. Mr. McMaster had found nothing in the book of which he disapproved, and he approved and recommended it for use in the Public Schools, as did two clergymen of the Presbyterian Church, and two clergymen (Dean and Archdeacon) of the Church of England. So carefully was I not to have anything in the book to which any Baptist might take exception, that I specially requested Mr. McMaster's careful attention to it; and on one occasion, on the eve of leaving town, I called upon Mr. McMaster at the Bank of Commerce (of which he is President), stating that the next slips of my book, which would be sent to him, would contain what I had written in regard to Baptism, and wished him to let me know if what I said met his approval.

The recommendation was as follows, as printed in the preface of the book itself:

The Council of Public Instruction for Ontario, having examined the "First Lessons in Christian morals for Canadian families and Schools, by the Rev. Egerton Ryerson, D.D., LL.D., recommend it for use as designed," in Canadian families "and Public Schools," with the proviso in the case of Schools (as contained in the Consolidated School Act, section 128), that:

"No person shall require any pupil in any School to read or study in or from any religious books or to join in any exercise of devotion or religion objected to by his or her parents or guardians; but within this limitation pupils shall be allowed to receive such religious instruction as their parents or guardians desire, according to any regulations provided for the Government of Common Schools."

I will only ask you, Sir, in conclusion, whether the above facts and your own words of the 11th of January bear out your assertion that I have made the least, much less, "outrageous assault on your most cherished religious belief."

Yours most respectfully,

E. RYERSON.

Toronto, Feb. 13, 1872.

