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NO DEBATE IN PARAGOULD, ARKANSAS

SOME months ago the Editor received a challenge for a debate from the Baptist minister at Paragould. We declined personally, but assured the gentleman that one of our "Pilgrim" brothers would serve in a Christian manner for the edification of the Truth. The following is the outcome:

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

I have no doubt but what the Lord had some good [R4101 : page 366] purpose in permitting me to come to Paragould, but it evidently was along different lines from what we had anticipated. The challenger is a little country preacher, one of apparently little ability, and if we had known the man it would have been better to ignore his suggestions. However, the Lord knows best, and by his grace I shall make the best use of the occasion. If the Baptists fail us we will explain matters in papers and advertise fact that we will take both sides, showing what Baptists believe and why, and why we know that they are wrong, and what is right. If they will not show their weakness we will have to do it for them.

LATER. – The challenger had tried to engage a man who possessed great eloquence and no spirituality – much fighting ability but little Scriptural knowledge of a desirable sort – Rev. _____, one of the last men in the world anyone would want to talk Scripture with. He told me himself that it would depend on the deacons of the Baptist Church as to whether he would debate at this time or not; but I suppose they would not agree to pay him enough, for he decided not to take part. However, before he left he asked me to sign some propositions which accompanied a resolution regarding a debate in December, and of course I refused. This was merely a ruse to enable them to

circulate a report that the debate was not held because I would not sign the propositions.

Not content with that they had us locked out of the school house, in which we purposed to hold other meetings. The school house has been open for religious services of every kind, but we were obliged to secure an unoccupied house for our meeting place. The first night our audience had to sit on the floor. What a miserable substitute for Christianity these people have!

The experience has confirmed my old idea that it is not the representative religious people of each denomination that are asking for debates, but rather the little country preachers, who owing to lack of better ways of using their time are anxious to stir up a fight and have some excitement and have their people attend, not to learn, but to applaud their preacher.

There are only six or seven believers here and I trust our visit may prove to be a blessing to them and to a few others who are willing to hear. The Baptists may write about a debate later, but I told them that if you had known the real condition of things you would not have noticed their request and that future communications would be ignored.

However, there is a blessing for me in this experience and I am trying to get all the good I can out of it. Am giving discourses on the various propositions, and hope to tract the town before leaving. With much Christian love,

BENJ. H. BARTON, – *Pilgrim*.
