

of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." And he further said in his first epistle "to the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, the like figure wherunto even baptism doth now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." And Paul to the Romans: "We are buried with him (Christ) by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Does not Christ, does not Peter, does not Paul, in these passages of scripture, make baptism a saving ordinance? Then neither do we. But I will suppose my hearers now to ask me right out the question, Do you believe and mean to preach that baptism is essential to salvation? I answer, We believe that baptism is not what is frequently denominated a non-essential, a mere rite or ceremony, a mere outward bodily act. But we believe it—as I think we have shown it to be—an act of the whole person—body, soul and spirit, the test act of our faith and change of heart, the act by which we are admitted into the kingdom of heaven on earth, the act which the Apostle Paul calls the washing of regeneration.

But still the question returns: "Do you believe and mean to preach that baptism is essential to salvation? Taking it for granted, now, that the querist agrees with us on what baptism is according to the definition we have just given of it, I ask in my turn, "What do you mean by salvation?" "What by the phrase 'essential to salvation?'" And how far back and forward would you go? How many embrace and whom exclude? Am I answered, "We mean by salvation everlasting happiness in heaven, and by essential to salvation we mean necessary for every individual of the human family."

I answer emphatically NO. We do not believe nor do we mean to preach that baptism is essential to salvation in this sense to every body. For Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel and myriads of others who lived and died in faith, under the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations have all gone to heaven, and we have no testimony and consequently no faith that any of them were baptized. They have gone to heaven, we say, for the Lord speaks of it as the highest privilege of his elect that they "shall come from the east and from the west and from the north and the south and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Am I answered: "We mean by salvation everlasting happiness in heaven, and by essential to salvation we mean necessary for all that have lived and now live since Christ set up his kingdom upon the earth."

I answer NO, for of the human family there since have been and now are many infants and deaf and dumb persons, and millions in heathen lands who never heard and never will hear the gospel, and consequently could not and cannot believe and obey it by being baptized. Their not being baptized consequently will not exclude them from an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in the future world.

Am I answered: "We mean by salvation everlasting happiness in heaven, and by essential to salvation we mean necessary for all who hear the gospel preached."

I answer again NO, for there have been many who have heard the gospel preached, and there are doubtless very many now living who do not understand that connected with the gospel is the command to be baptized. There are many, too, who understanding this do not understand

what baptism is. From the false teaching which they have received in childhood and youth, and prior and subsequent to hearing the gospel, they sincerely believe (think) or suppose, rather, for where there is no testimony there can be no faith, that baptism is a sprinkling or a pouring, and under these impressions have been sprinkled or poured upon for baptism. They have believed with all their heart that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. They have repented of their sins, they have turned to God. They have loved God and yet they have died, and they die under these mistakes—unbaptized. I do not, I cannot find it in my Bible, nor in my heart, to shut heaven and exclude from eternal life such persons as these.

(To be concluded in our next).

Original Contributions.

OPEN LETTER.

NO. II.

Our former letter dealt with your last question. In this letter, we will answer your first question. i. e., "What should our attitude be toward the denominations." I suppose you mean by this—should we associate or worship with those whose orthodoxy we do not accept. I conclude by this, that the subject is not really settled in your own mind; although it is hardly supposable that you or any one would exclude themselves from religious society, because of theological differences. If to associate with those whom we think are in error, is compromising the truth, then such association would be wrong, and we would be obliged to withdraw our association from all churches and run a church of one, for where is the church to-day that has not more or less error? Many brethren who are very dear to us, and with whom we worship regularly, have their faults and their errors, but none would say we were sanctioning their errors, because of our association with them. But you say there are errors of doctrine that are vital, that destroy the essential doctrine of salvation, and should not be recognized as right and safe. This is admitted. But this does not touch the question. What we say is this: that our association and worshipping with such, is not recognizing them right and safe. Take the command, to "lay by our offerings as the Lord has prospered us," to give to the Lord according to our means. Is this not a vital doctrine? Is there any truth made more obligatory than the giving our means to the Lord according as he has blessed us?" and yet there are those who are violating this essential element of life and salvation, who are giving little or nothing out of their abundance. Will you say that our association and worshipping with such is recognizing them as right and safe? If you say—no, then you have granted the position we have taken, that the mingling and associating with those whom we may suppose are wrong even in vital doctrine, is not sanctioning their errors, nor compromising the truth. I think you will admit that if such association was a compromise of truth, we would need a whip of small cords at home. We say, therefore, that our attitude toward other churches should be friendly, and an exchange of pulpits and union services, when the conditions were favorable. We should carry out the golden rule in our religious work as well as in our secular interest.

Now for your second question: "If you believe in a cosmopolitan religion, what benefit is there in it." We don't like the word "cosmopolitan," it does not express the friendly relation existing between churches. We admit it means one who is at home in every place, but its true meaning is better

expressed in the one who has no fixed home, a sort of a tramp, one who is running here and there and everywhere, getting his religious food without cost. You mean, undoubtedly, to ask, What benefit is there in this union of service, when there are such divisions in doctrine. I answer, much every way. It helps break down the religious intolerance that is now such a hindrance to the prosperity of Christianity. It does not follow, that because we cannot agree theologically, that we must be spiritual ecclesiastical porcupines. In every age of the world, religious intolerance has been rampant. We are thankful, however, that it has not the power now that it had in former times, yet the spirit still exists, to brand one a heretic who may differ in doctrine. While we may not employ literal stones to silence our opponents, yet there are the stones of slander and falsehood, and subtle social influences, that damage our reputation, and depreciate our character. This unfortunate condition of intolerance, is greatly lessened by our tact and contact. We need by our example, to teach the doctrine of charity. The *Morning Star* says:—"The church has greater things to contend against than mutilated baptism, a mutilated charity is a much greater evil." Friendly associations and investigation will help us to seek out our agreements, and wherein we disagree, love will apply the plaster rather than rub the sore. We may not be able to unravel this skein of undenominationalism just now, but common sense will teach us, not to cut the knot we can't untie. We do not want to hide the light under our bushels, but let it shine brightly in any place, and among all classes. We have nothing we are afraid of losing. "Our creed cannot be outgrown—we have only to defend what is the common heritage of Christians." Now is our time to make known the gospel of Christ. The consensus of human thought to-day is in favor of union; and who has the true basis of Christian union to-day, if not the Disciples? The best minds to-day are admitting this. The noted Dr. Armory Bradford, president of the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, said last year at Chautauqua, in his address before a large assembly of the foremost minds of the country: "that in a return to Christ, set forth in the basis of union by the Episcopal Church, he would place beside it the beautiful basis of union urged by the Disciples of Christ: 1. The primitive creed—"Thou art the Son of God." 2. The primitive ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper. 3. The primitive life—the life and example of Christ." He, with those assembled, assented to the efficiency of such a basis of union. Is it not true, as Cardinal Gibbons has lately said, "that denominations and creeds and confessions are going to pieces before our eyes." Should this not induce us to make this our opportunity to help shorten and lessen human creeds?

We should be as wise as the "children of this world," and study conditions and circumstances, and take every advantage of all the forces that will lead to prosperity. We must go out into the highways of life, and into the aedges of this tangled and mystical world of ours. This is not the age of hermits. The evidence of true discipleship is not in possession of the truth, but in its fruit. Life is the fruit of truth. The one talent servant might as well had a counterfeit in his napkin as a talent. One would be as much good to him as the other if not used. Truth is no better to us than error, if not used. Take the truth right into society of all kinds, and let it win other precious souls to Christ.

H. M.

Heart-work must be God's work. Only the great heart-maker can be the heart-breaker. If I love him, my heart will be filled with his Spirit, and obedient to his commands.—Baxter.