

## The Christian.

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## EDITORIAL.

## WHAT CALLEST THOU THYSELF?

Sometimes those who are pleading for the restoration of primitive Christianity, and who therefore refuse to wear any denominational name, are, on account of such refusal, regarded as exclusive and presumptuous. The charge is made that they appropriate to themselves names that belong to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. But surely it would not be wrong for the apostle Paul if he were to return to earth to decline to wear any one of the denominational names that today are so numerous, and by some so highly esteemed. If he should insist on being known by the names he wore when here before, who would dare object? Any attempt to fasten upon him a name that did not honor his Lord would, we doubt not, be warmly resented. If it was possible in the days of the apostles for people to be Christians without wearing a denominational name, why should it be impossible for people to be Christians only today? It is not impossible.

When we call ourselves Christians, Disciples of Christ (or by some other scriptural designation), we do not, however, use the terms in an exclusive sense. We do not claim to be the only Christians or the only Disciples of Christ. We do not say what other people are or are not. We simply state what we are. When a man claims to be an honest man he does not state nor imply nor insinuate that all other men are thieves. While claiming, as has been said, to be Christians only, we do not claim to be the only Christians.

But look at the names the different denominations wear, and then think of the inconsistency of the charge made against those who persistently and successfully refuse to be known by a similar name. Are the Baptists the only people who baptize? No; with one or two insignificant exceptions every denomination claims to practise that ordinance. They are not the only people who *in fact* baptize. Why, then, should they wear a name which (if the charge made against the Disciples of Christ be well founded) implies what they are? Are the Congregationalists the only people who hold to the congregational form of church government? No; strictly speaking the Baptists and several other religious bodies have just as much claim to the name. Are the Congregationalists presumptuous in appropriating it? Are the Episcopalians the only people who have overseers? (The Greek word *episcopoi* means overseers.) No; other religious bodies claim to be patterned after the apostolic church in this particular. Who, then, can excuse the Episcopalians for taking this name to themselves? Are the Methodists the only people who believe that work should be done methodically? No; every denomination, probably, claims to

be just as devoted to methods. Why, then, do they not object to this use of the term? Are the Presbyterians the only people who believe in having elders? (*Presbuteroi* is the Greek word for elders.) No; many denominations have elders. Why, then should one denomination appropriate this name? The trouble with these names, as names for Christians, is that, of themselves, they do not indicate any relationship to Christ or to God. A heathen with them alone to guide him, would not suspect that those so designated claim to be followers of the Christ. Upon learning their historic significance his ignorance would be dispelled.

The Disciples of Christ, laboring to reproduce the Church of the first century, believes in baptism as much as the Baptist; for in the days of the apostles they that gladly received the word were baptized. He believes in the congregational form of church government as much as the Congregationalist; for he sees it exemplified in the New Testament. He believes in having overseers as much as the Episcopalian; for the Church in Ephesus had overseers. He believes in doing his work methodically as much as the Methodist; for all things should be done decently and in order. He believes in having elders as much as the Presbyterian; for in apostolic times it was customary to have elders in every church. He believes in all this because he believes apostolic Christianity should be restored.

But he believes in more than this. He believes in observing the Lord's Supper; but he is not going to take his name from that sacred ordinance, though he might as well do so as take it from any other ordinance. He believes that the church should now, as in the days of Paul, have deacons; but he is not satisfied with a name that, of itself, simply indicates that fact. He believes in singing and praying and working, but he wants a name that shows on its very face that he believes in more. He is ambitious to wear a name which, of itself and at once, proclaims him to be a follower of Jesus.

There are irrefragible reasons why we should resolutely refuse to be known by names which unduly emphasize ordinances or forms of church government or the officers of the church; and just as good reasons why we should determine to be known by names that honor our Lord. Let him have the pre-eminence. When we give him his proper place there is little danger of our dishonoring any of his appointments.

H. W. S.

GOD IS LOVE.—Mr. Spurgeon saw on a country weathercock what he thought was a strange motto, "God is love," and asked his friend if he meant to imply that the divine love can be as fickle as the wind. "No," said he; "this is what I mean: whichever way the wind blows, God is love. Though the cold north wind, the biting east wind, still God is love, as much as when the warm, genial breezes refresh our fields and flocks." —*Ex.*

## Original Contributions.

## A PRACTICAL QUESTION.

E. C. FORD.

(Continued).

To make good the claims of the Disciples that they are *not* a denomination, and that their plea is not sectarian, it is but necessary to show that they are not only in harmony with the Bible, but that their position is practically admitted by the different denominations. Hence things that are held in common can neither be sectarian nor denominational. It is true there are some things taught and practised by the denominations that are neither believed nor practised by the Disciples. On the other hand, it is claimed that the things the Disciples do believe and practise are virtually admitted to be true by the denominations. Thus while these different religious bodies teach and practise some things peculiar to themselves and which clearly distinguish the one from the other, the position of the Disciples, being practically admitted to be scriptural, is not peculiar but common. If this can be made clear then those brethren in these denominations who "are becoming dissatisfied" may find a religious home in which they may be free from the bondage of sectarianism, and still hold to all that is true and according to the Word of God.

Let us look at the position of the Disciples to which they are calling the attention of the religious world today, and to which they are inviting those in the denominations who are dissatisfied with sectarianism and who would love to stand upon the Word of God alone.

1. *They take the Bible as their rule of religious faith and practice.* Do any of the denominations object to this? I think not. True they add to it a human creed and such articles as they think wise, but their contention is that these are good because they are in harmony with the Bible. Thus the position of the Disciples as to the divine origin of the Bible is accepted by all; hence not sectarian.

But any human creed must be peculiar to the denomination which formulates it and becomes the rule by which it is governed. It is thus denominational. The Bible is not sectarian. To stand then upon the Word of God alone is to be free from the bondage of creeds and confessions of faith, etc.

2. *The Disciples of Christ believe in a personal creed.* That is, they require faith with the whole heart in Christ, the Christian's creed, and not in some theory about Christ. They accept Christ as the Son of God and their Saviour. To believe this with the whole heart and confess it with the mouth is the only experience demanded of those who would come to Christ for salvation. Is this peculiar to the Disciples? Will any one object to this hearty faith in Christ and to an honest confession of it with the mouth before the world? Most assuredly not. Then is this faith and confession common and not sectarian. Nor is the repentance which is a result of a hearty faith in Christ peculiar to the Disciples, for all the religious bodies of the Christian world hold to this. This, too, is common ground.