

The doctors had their convention here, but they were very quiet about it. I did not hear that they had discovered any new system of therapeutics, so I suppose people will get sick and die just the same as ever. Then we had the Oddfellows. I cannot tell you much about them, only that they had a "moonlight hop" on the same night that all the churches have prayer meeting, and I know a good many were on board the steamer who ought to have been at the prayer meeting in the different churches. I do not think any true Christian can encourage such work by their patronage. Think of the work Christ has given us to do. Think of the souls perishing, and then ask, Am I doing my duty to my God and to my fellowmen? In the *Sunday School Times* of Aug. 6th I read a good thing by one of the contributors on this subject. It is as follows: "It is the one and only business of the church to fill the world with its doctrine." That is what the church was established for, and nothing else. You might not think so, judging from what you see the church doing; for there are many churches which never seem to have the faintest idea as to what their primo duty is. Judging by their acts, you would think that the church was established to have eloquent preaching about indifferent things, and above all, fine music. In others you find the largest amount of effort put forth in festivals, fairs, entertainments, and the like; while the filling of the town or village with the doctrine of Jesus is the last thing to which they pay attention. Is not this so? For this reason many are sickly, and many sleep. For this reason the gospel seems to have lost its power, and worldliness to have gained ground. The world is always been trying to spread its doctrine, while the church sleeps. What is the best way to revive a slumbering church? Let it get again to its legitimate work of filling the world with the doctrine of Jesus, and it will soon be wide awake. There is no other way that I know of. Do you know of any?" The foregoing words may be read profitably by every Disciple of Christ. We also had a visit from Cardinal Gibbons; I had laid away a few extracts from a short address he gave here, with the intention of giving them to you, but I find I have mis-laid them. And now we have the "Seventh-day Advents" at work in a tent. At first they gathered quite a crowd, but now the novelty is being worn of, there is not so many. I went a few times, but the last time I went, the scriptures were so horribly mangled I was afraid to go again. I never heard such a perversion of the word of God in my life. This is a town of about three thousand inhabitants, and on a recent Sunday no less than ten different religious organizations were at work; you will see by that that it is a pretty hard place to build up a church. Still we must earnestly contend for the faith once given to the saints. Our work moves along slowly, I wish I could get it to go faster, but I cannot. I suppose we all would like to see more done. But let us work and pray on till the Master comes. We are sure to do some good in this way and will receive the "Well done" at last.

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### Miscellaneous.

#### THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

I. What is the creed of the Disciples? You say: "You repudiate all creeds, do you not?" By no means. The Disciples do indeed reject, as of authority, all statements of faith of human construction; but this is a very different thing from repudiating all creeds. While we repudiate all human authoritative creeds, we accept and hold fast to the divine creed. It is often said, and in a sense it is correct, "The Bible is my creed."

When the issue was an infallible church or an infallible book as at the time of the reformation of the sixteenth century, Protestants very naturally took a stand in favor of the Bible as a creed. It may be affirmed that it is inspired, that it is authoritative, that it is intelligible, that it is moral, that it is perpetual, that it is catholic, and that it is perfect.

If you ask me, therefore, what the creed of the Disciples is, I reply: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ the Son of the living God. We accept and are satisfied with this fundamental confession—this rock on which Christ built His church. "But," you say, "do not all Christians believe this?" Yes, but "with us, the Divinity and Christhood of Jesus is more than a mere item of doctrine—it is the central truth of the Christian system, and in an important sense the Creed of Christianity. It is the one fundamental truth which we are jealously careful to guard against all compromise. To persuade man to trust and love and obey a Divine Saviour, is the one great end for which we labor in preaching the gospel, assured that if men are right about Christ; Christ will bring them right about everything else. We therefore preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We demand no other faith, in order to baptism and church membership, than the faith of the heart in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God; nor have we any term or band of fellowship but faith in this Divine Redeemer, and obedience to Him. All who trust in the Son of God and obey Him, are brethren, however wrong they may be about anything else; and those who do not trust in this Divine Saviour for salvation and obey His commandments, are not our brethren, however intelligent and excellent they may be in all beside."

II. I mention a second peculiarity. The confession required before baptism, and church membership; what is it? You remember that Jesus said, "Whosoever \* \* shall confess Me before men I will confess before my Father which is in heaven." The apostle Paul said in his epistle to the saints in Rome, "That if thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And the beloved disciple said: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." The divine test of orthodoxy is, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? We ask every candidate for baptism: Do you believe with your whole heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and your Saviour? Do you earnestly desire to obey Him? This precise form is not essential; but the thought is. Every applicant for baptism must in some form confess with the mouth that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is accepted as a personal Saviour. "We submit no other tests but faith and repentance, in admitting persons to baptism and church membership. We present to them no Articles of Faith other than the one article concerning the Divinity and Christhood of Jesus; we demand no narration of the religious experience other than is expressed in a voluntary confession of faith in Jesus; we demand no probation to determine their fitness to come into the church; but instantly, on their voluntary confession of the Christ, unless there are good reasons to doubt their sincerity, they are accepted and baptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are thus wedded to Christ, and not to a set of doctrines or a party."

III. I mention a third peculiarity, I speak now of baptism. As to the form of baptism, Disciples agree with immersionists. Jesus walked across the country forty miles to be baptized of John in the river Jordan. He had before His eyes every text in the Old Testament that mentions sprinkling;

but He acted as I have indicated. There is something in baptism that requires persons to arise that they may attend to the divine requirement. Saul of Tarsus, weak and faint from intense mental excitement, and from days of fasting, is told to arise and be baptized. What not baptize him in a reclining posture? Afterward, in speaking of his baptism, he described it as a burial. When speaking of baptism to the saints in Colosse, he said: "Buried with Him (Christ) in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. We are told also that John baptized "in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there." These references, and others, seem to indicate immersion as the act which Jesus enjoined when He commanded penitent sinners to be baptized.

As to the persons who have a scriptural right to baptism, Disciples say that this divine ordinance is only for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and truly repent of sin. Here, again, we stand on undisputed territory. Infant baptism lacks the stamp of Catholicity, while believer's baptism has it. There is controversy about infant baptism; there is no controversy about the baptism, of believers.

As to the purpose, the design, of Christian baptism, I have to say, first we repudiate the idea of baptismal regeneration. We find no warrant in God's word for thinking that baptism has power to work a moral or spiritual change. On the other hand, we do not teach that baptism is a mere form or ceremony by which persons are admitted into the visible church. Jesus says: "Come unto Me." In holy baptism the sinner makes his response. In this sacred ordinance he says: "Lord; I do come to Thee. I formally, and solemnly, and truly give myself to Thee here and now."

IV. I mention a fourth peculiarity. This relates to the Lord's Supper. The Disciples are not close communionists. That baptism precedes communion is the teaching of all Christians. The real question at this point is, What is baptism? We find no authority in Scripture to sit in judgment on this or that person and say, Thou shalt not. Nor on the other hand, are we open communionists. I cannot make an argument to show that persons who have not submitted to Christ in baptism, as I understand Him to enjoin, shall come to the Lord's Table. This our open communion brethren do. There are now men and women whose loyalty to Christ cannot be doubted; they believe in Him; they love Him; the general current of their lives is in the way of obedience to Him; of this there is no doubt in the mind of any reasonable person; now, what shall I do? Shall I say to them when the Lord's table is spread in the public assembly: You shall not join us in this sweetly solemn service? I can not do so. I will not. I will read from the Divine Testimonies and say: "Examine yourselves." We observe the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week; for thus the primitive Christians did. We do not invest the ordinance with the awfulness of a sacrament; but regard it as a sweet and precious feast of holy memories, designed to quicken our love for Christ and cement the ties of our common brotherhood. We therefore, observe it as a part of our regular worship, every Lord's day, and hold it a solemn, but joyful and refreshing feast of love in which all the disciples of our Lord should feel it a great privilege to unite. "Sacred to the memory of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" is written on this simple and solemn family feast in the Lord's house.—B. B. Tyler.

#### CHANGE OF VIEWS.

A late Los Angeles (Cal.) paper contains the following under well displayed headlines:

"Rev. J. M. Hervey and Rev. W. C. Stevens are pastors of the recently organized Gospel Tabernacle congregations at Temperance Temple. The former gentleman was the first pastor of the United Presbyterian Church, and has since been actively employed in city missionary work. Mr.