

### The First Christian Church.

DEAR EVANGELIST.—The above is the title of a communication, which appears from the pen of a Methodist minister, in the *Christian Guardian* of recent date, a paper published in the interests of the Methodist Church. And in order that your readers may fully understand the following remarks, we would ask you to insert said article which is as follows:

#### "THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH?"

DEAR SIR,—We have been more than a little surprised that the *Banner*, which should be the source of true teachings on Scripture lessons for Methodist youth, should adopt such a title, from other sources, for the lesson of July 17th. We often meet with the "Christian Church" or "Apostolic Church," phrases which are not found in Scripture. But what is the meaning of the title, "First Christian Church?" The phrase is misleading, and embraces an unscriptural error. If by this heading it is implied, which is manifest, that the Church of Christ was organized on the "Day of Pentecost," then we submit Methodists ought to be ashamed to teach such an error, even by implication. To place its organization, then, is to put into history the transactions of that day, what is not to be found in the narrative, and to pretend to find it there is to support one of the most patent errors in the Christian teachings of the present day. We trust and hope that Methodist youth shall be taught to place the origin and organization of the Church of Christ on earth where the Scriptures place it, both as to time and place of the transaction. Organized as the Church was in the household of Abraham, to whom the Gospel was preached, and justified believers at the time of its organization became its first members. (See Gal. iii. 8 and Rom. iv.) The history of the organization is fully given in the Book of Genesis, and was never repeated by God or by the apostles of our Lord, but the converts on the day of Pentecost were added to what remained still of this Abrahamic organization; so, then, they that are of faith are still the children of faithful Abraham.

We send you this note, not with the intention of provoking controversy, for there should be none among Methodists on this teaching, but to draw the attention of Sabbath-school teachers of the Methodist Sunday-schools to the teachings of Scripture, and to enter a protest against the misleading title of the lesson. As for those who can believe and advocate the error protested against, and plead that the Church was organized on the day of Pentecost, they are generally forever disqualified for reasonably looking at anything that may endanger their unscriptural dogma of immersion baptism.

#### Exeter. METHODIST MINISTER.

In commencing his article, "Methodist Minister" is not a little surprised that the *Banner* should adopt such a title as "Christian Church," or "Apostolic Church," as such terms are not found in the Scriptures and are misleading. But further on in said article, he says: Why not place origin and organization of the Church of Christ where the scriptures place it, viz: "In the household of Abraham."

You observe, he is quite agreeable to call it the "Christian Church" if allowed to locate the organization where he thinks it should be.

The purpose of this article is to show that his exegesis can not be borne out by God's Word.

In reference to the phrase "Christian Church" being unscriptural, we think there is in scripture undisputed authority for it. We read that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, and when these Christians meet together they are designated by the name Christian Church. But in the Old Testament scriptures the word "church" is not once found, "even by implication."

All evangelical denominations will agree that the following truths are essential to the existence of the Church of Christ, or Christian Church, viz:

1st. That Christ died for our sins.

and. That he was buried and rose again from the dead.

3rd. That Christ ascended into heaven and sent down the Holy Spirit as his advocate.

4th. That Baptism is by the authority of the Lord Jesus and into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5th. That salvation is in the name of Jesus Christ, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved, but by the name of Jesus. Any body of Christians or church which did not believe the above items would be repudiated by every religious sect in existence.

It is universally acknowledged that the Christian Church can not exist without these items, and if it can not now, it follows that it never existed without them. Then just so far back in the world's history as we can find these essential items, we find the church to which they are essential; and since these items are essential to the existence of the church, we have to look this side of the Cross for the establishment of the church.

The day of Pentecost is the first day that we find all present, as that was the day when the Holy Spirit first descended as the advocate and comforter. It was announced for the first time on that day that Christ arose from the dead. The world had never before heard that Jesus had been crowned Lord and King.

There is another argument which places the question beyond dispute, a few years after Pentecost, when the apostle Peter was rehearsing to the other apostles his going in to the Gentiles and preaching to them, he defends himself by saying that as he began to speak to them the Holy Ghost fell on them, as it did on us at the beginning (Acts xi. 15), undoubtedly referring to the day of Pentecost, as that was the day the Holy Spirit was first sent down from our coronated Lord and King.

The day of Pentecost was the beginning of a great number of important essential truths, but we will only point out a few of them (as we do not wish to take up too much of your valuable space)

1st. "It is the beginning of the new covenant," Jeremiah said, "Behold a new covenant will I make with the house of Israel, etc." The old covenant was a fleshly covenant but the new covenant is spiritual, and only those who believe, love and obey Christ are members of it.

But "Methodist Minister" would have it that the Jewish and Christian covenants are identical, and says the same Gospel was preached to Abraham as was promulgated by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and that the converts on that day were only added to what remained still of this Abrahamic organization. If that is a true exegesis, then we who are living in this present dispensation would be as likely to become Jews as Christians under the preaching of the Gospel. Their Gospel or glad tidings of a rest in Canaan did not profit them because of unbelief.

2nd. "The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Christian dispensation." The three dispensations have been represented by Adam, Moses and Christ, each one had its peculiar priesthood, ordinances and sacrifices. The worship which was acceptable under one was not so under the other.

3rd. "The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the great salvation."

Paul in writing to the Hebrews, urges that we neglect not the great salvation, "which at first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. ii. 3). It follows then that if Christ first began to speak it—no one spoke it before him, we living in the present dispensation do not go back to the Old Testament, or dispensation to

find out the way of salvation, but we go to the New Testament to find out how we may become reconciled to God.

The Old Testament stands as a witness to the New.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." Rom. iii. 21-22.

In concluding his remarks, "Methodist Minister" says: "As for those who can believe and plead that the church was organized on the day of Pentecost, they are generally forever disqualified for reasonably looking at anything that may endanger their unscriptural dogma of immersion by baptism." This is a very ambiguous sentence, but he undoubtedly means that those who advocate that the church was organized on the day of Pentecost would be placed under the necessity of preaching baptism by immersion. But if he could locate the organization of the church back in the time of Abraham, then that obstacle would be removed. By disregarding the fact that these grand features in the Christian system had their beginning on the day of Pentecost, the religious world has been filled with confusion. A great many of the doctrines in the various forms of sectarianism have their origin beyond that day; hence the confusion.

In conclusion my earnest prayer is, that "Methodist minister" may be enabled "by allowing God's word to interpret itself," to rightly divide the word of truth and preach the gospel in its fulness with impassioned earnestness; then, as darkness is dispelled by the light of the sun, skepticism will be overcome—honest doubt vanish, the weak be made strong, sinners be won to Jesus, and find peace and joy in believing.

D. F. K.

#### How they do things in Australia.

##### FAREWELL TO BRO. WALDEN.

On the evening of June 16th a large number of brethren and sisters from all parts of Melbourne gathered in the Lygon-street chapel to say good-bye to Bro. G. T. Walden. Of course there was the usual tea fight. We don't find fault with tea meetings specially, but it strikes us that the advantage gained by them does not compensate for the trouble and expense of getting them up. Well, this tea meeting was a good one, everybody eating as much as they could, besides what they carried—; but there, now, we won't follow that thought any farther, as it might get us into trouble, but will devote our attention to the after meeting. Bro. W. C. Craigie presided, and being a Scotchman and not an Irishman, as we understood him, did not take up much time in opening the meeting. Bro. J. W. Shepherd, from Sydney, who will be a fellow passenger to England with Bro. Walden, led in prayer. Bro. J. Pittman told the meeting, when he got up, that he did not know what to say, but for all that succeeded in saying a lot in a short time. We have noticed before that those who have nothing to say at these tea meetings generally make good speeches. Bro. Ewers was so frightened at Bro. Pittman's sudden stop that it took him some time to collect himself, or at least he said so. For many reasons he was sorry Bro. Walden was going away, but the principle one was because the "other man of the *Pioneer*" was gone, and he would now have nobody to blame. Bro. H. M. Black gave us two rules for making a perfect picture: 1st, get the right colors; and, put them in the right place; and then said that Bro. Walden was the right man in the right place. If this be true, and we think it is, when he goes to London he will be the right

man in the wrong place. We are not sure that this is logic, homiletics or exegesis, but that's just the way it strikes us.

Bro. P. A. Dickson made us all laugh, for which we were glad. He said he and Bro. Walden had travelled together, 'een sick together, slept together, and were married together, the last, however, being simply a slip of the tongue, and is fortunately not true, as Bro. Dickson is a confirmed, not an *infirm* mind you now, bachelor. He got as far as the introduction, and then had to stop, promising us the address another time. We expect something good. Bros. Dunn and F. McLean, on behalf of Missionary Committee and Church in Lygon-street, presented addresses expressing the high esteem in which Bro. Walden was held by the Brotherhood. Bro. Selby, who is to succeed Bro. Walden at Lygon-street, then spoke, devoting his time to kindly words of appreciation of the guest of the evening.

On Bro. Walden rising to respond, he was greeted with great applause, and was much affected by the kindly feeling manifested by all. He said that when he arrived at Lygon-street between three and four years ago, he experienced much kindness, which had been extended to him all along, and had culminated in this splendid meeting to-night. In every branch of church work he had met with the heartiest co-operation of the members, and to this co-operation he attributed much of the blessing which had accrued from their labors. The future of Lygon-street was hopeful. They were, in Bro. Selby, getting a good speaker, and a man of high Christian character; in Sister Selby they were getting a good helper in the Sunday school, she having already arranged to take the ladies' Bible class. He referred to the unfortunate leakage that had taken place in many of the churches, and thought this ought to make the churches more careful in the oversight of the members. He thought that the outlook of the brotherhood was most encouraging. There was a greater missionary spirit being developed; there was a kindly feeling existing even among those who differed in opinion; there was a great family likeness in the churches in Melbourne and suburbs, and they all worked harmoniously together. In closing, he bade them all a loving farewell, and sat down amid loud applause. Bro. Moysey led the meeting in earnest prayer for the safety of Bro. and Sister Walden and their little ones; and after the benediction, all joined in heartily singing "God be with you till we meet again."—*Australian Standard*.

#### "Our Movement."

Our esteemed contemporary of San Francisco, *The Truth*, is in distress over the editorial use, in the *Christian Oracle*, a few weeks since, of the expression "our religious movement." The expression was used in the following personal mention of Sydney Black: "Sydney Black, of London, Eng., as will be seen in 'Chicago Notes,' will preach at the First Christian church (Oakley avenue) next Lord's day. He is returning from Australia, and is spending his time while in this country studying our religious movement."

Over the foregoing *The Truth* breaks out with a wail and ends in burlesque, as follows:

"Oh dear! When will all this talk about 'our religious movement' cease! Why not say Bro. Black is spending his time becoming better acquainted with the Church of Christ and learning the way of the Lord more perfectly. If Paul were resurrected and should get a copy of the *Oracle* he would conclude that the Apostasy had resulted in a

watch factory, English, American, Elgin and 'Our Movements!' Over here 'studying our movement!' Wonder what (or who) the main spring is? What are its 'attachments?' How often do you wind it? With what do you wind it? A key? Being a thing of such recent invention, a product of our progressive nineteenth century, it probably has a "stem winder." Better stick close to the 'Old Book.' Call Bible things by Bible names. It is the only safeguard against sectarianism and apostasy. If you must have your little watch with 'our movement,' steer clear of a chain with all its 'successive links' and wear an apostolic guard on it!"

And now comes the *Church Register*, published at Plattsburg, Mo., with its endorsement of *The Truth's* criticism, saying:

"We like the ring of the above. It has the old Jerusalem gospel ring. Brethren, let us stick to the 'Old Book' in all things that pertain to life and godliness. All such expressions as 'our movement,' 'our church,' etc., we ought to leave off. They are wholly unscriptural and, therefore, they should not be used. Furthermore, they foster the idea of sectarianism or denominationalism. As individuals, we are simply Disciples, Saints or Christians. As congregations or churches, we are simply churches of Christ or churches of God. This is enough. This is just what God's children are called in the New Testament. Let us be satisfied with this. It is best to 'stick close to the Old Book.' Call Bible things by Bible names."

Now it strikes us that *The Truth* and the *Register* are needlessly disturbed over the use of the expression "our religious movement." It looks like a disposition to magnify a matter of little importance for the purpose of indulging a spirit of hyper-criticism, and in so doing, instead of aiding the progress of the truth they are rather hindering it.

Our contemporaries fail, in their criticisms on the use of the term "movement," to remember that while the fundamental principles of the Church of Christ are unchangeable, the manifestations of error with which the true Church has to contend both within and without are continually changing. Accordingly, in the use of the term "movement," "if Paul were resurrected and should get a copy of the *Oracle*," instead of his concluding that "the Apostasy had resulted in a watch factory," he would understand at once, that the great apostasy which he had himself foretold was being overcome by a counter movement—a return to apostolic doctrine and practice.

If the Church had never apostatized from the simplicity of gospel doctrine and practice, there could be no movement back to original ground, and no possible place for the use of the significant expression, "our movement." Hence, dear *Truth*, instead of the Apostle Paul, according to your supposition, on getting "a copy of the *Oracle* concluding that the Apostasy had resulted in a watch factory," he would understand at once that there had been a *Christian union factory* established, whose object was the making of apostolic Christians. He would further see, too, that the mainspring of the "movement" was the Christ, the Son of the living God; its motive power, "love of the truth as it is in Jesus," and that it is "full jeweled" and every one radiant with the light of divine truth.

Again, the expression "our movement" is in harmony with "our plea" for the restoration of apostolic Christianity both in doctrine and practice.

If "our plea," however interesting and true and beautiful it may be, does not result in a movement it is like "faith without works, being dead."

In conclusion, we will say, that the gifted brother of the Editor of *The Truth*, Bro. Z. T. Sweeney, has, in this issue of the *Oracle*, in a communication just received, exposed himself unwittingly to the castigations of our California contemporary, as well as the *Oracle*, by using the heretical (?) expression under consideration. The *Oracle* is in splendid company and has good backing. Bro. *Truth*, in its use of "our movement."

But the expression, as we have shown, is in harmony with our position—before the world, and is pre-eminently sound, sensible and proper, as indicating a special phase of the work of the Church of Christ at this particular stage of its history.—*The Christian Oracle*.