

Original Contributions.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES.

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The October number of the *New England Messenger* contains some items concerning the progress of the Truth, in the State of Maine and elsewhere, which should cause us to rejoice.

I select the following from a number of interesting items.

There is a small body known as the Free Christian Church, which flourishes in certain parts of Maine, the members of which have much the same "doctrine and practice" as the Disciples of Christ.

This body cordially received one of our preaching brethren at a conference recently held by them and were to have sent a delegate to our October New England convention. This the editor of the *Messenger* thinks may lead to a closer union in work.

One of our evangelists, J. V. Coombs, lately visited Popham Beach, Me. He says, "No denomination, nor even religious society, is known here. The gospel is preached, men and women obey, and then all meet and worship together. . . . They are opposed to sectarianism and approve of Christian unity. They heartily accept in theory all I say, and I have preached the old gospel in its simplicity."

The barriers between the Disciples of Christ and the Church of God in Maine, which are now quite few, are being gradually removed. Elders J. C. Caswell and B. Aber of the latter church have written strongly against the Mourners' Bench practice, which, it appears, prevails to some extent in that church. The union committee of these two churches were to have met at the October convention of the Disciples of Christ. Their union appears to be only a question of time.

The above facts are encouraging and furnish us with food for thought. To me they are signs that the people are dissatisfied with denominationalism and that they desire to get back to the old paths.

These things are not only true of New England but I am persuaded of the Maritime Provinces also. The east has been looked upon as a hard field for the Disciples of Christ. The tide, however, seems to be turning in our favor.

The little experience I have had has taught me that there are many in the country districts of New Brunswick who would gladly receive the Word if it was properly presented to them. The minds of the people are changing. They no longer cherish that spirit of contention which is a necessary out-growth of sectarianism.

These things being so they will naturally seek the ground upon which union can be obtained and strife done away with. That ground is not denominational. Neither is it "our" ground. It is Christ's.

If we believe that the foundation laid by Christ is the only one on which a united

church can be built, how zealous should we be in proclaiming it.

I am afraid that we too sometimes foster a denominational spirit. We will not push into a new field without being fearful as to whether we will be able to increase our numbers. If we would obey the command "preach the gospel to every creature," leaving the result with God, there would be no cause to complain of the results. Results belong to God and sinners. We should remember that no circumstances will justify the withholding of the Word.

The Disciples of Christ claim that they preach the Word in its purity. In the Maritime Provinces, however, the simple gospel, unfettered by man's traditions, is not making the progress we might naturally be led to expect from the preaching of the Word in its simplicity. This, I think, can only be accounted for on two grounds. Either we do not interpret the Word correctly, or, having a correct interpretation, we do not apply it as we should.

I think our error consists almost exclusively in the latter particular. That we are negligent in spreading the truth is apparent not only from the results but from our actions also.

If we were true to our principles we would be the most evangelical body. Denominationalism very often says that one set of opinions is as good as another—although they but seldom act accordingly. This indeed is the only ground upon which they can justify their existence. The Disciples of Christ on the other hand contend that there is nothing so good as the truth. We say that, according to the Word, the gospel must be obeyed before the promises attached thereto can be claimed. Denominationalism is often indifferent on this question. We hold that the Spirit acts through God's Word. Most other bodies contend that he speaks directly to the sinner.

If we act upon our beliefs on these and other questions we will be more zealous than sectarianism in our efforts to spread the truth. And yet the sects often teach us a lesson in this respect.

Some figures given by a writer on "The Sects," in the September number of the *Contemporary Review* furnish us with suggestions on this subject. He thinks that the work of the ten leading non-conformist bodies shows a great deal more favorable growth and work in proportion to their numbers than the established church. And the figures he gives would appear to bear him out. The results he thinks cannot be accounted for on the ground of wealth, for he considers the established church far more wealthy than the other bodies. Neither can it be reckoned by considering the respective membership nor efficiency of the "working clergy." The Church of England have 20,495 clergymen, while the nine leading non-conformist bodies have only 8,369. He accounts for the results largely from the fact that the "lay" members of the non-conformist bodies enter more heartily into the work than those of the established church. The nine leading non-conformist bodies mentioned have 49,947 lay preachers, while the established church has only 1,653.

Now we believe that every Christian is delegated and indeed bound to preach the Word as far as he has ability. We do not recognize any such distinction as clergy and laity. It is true that some of our brethren devote their time exclusively to the work of

the ministry—and this is but right. But all should proclaim the message as far as it is in their power.

Many of our brethren are well-informed in the Bible and have ability to speak. Let all who can, carry the Word of Life to the dying. Let us, preachers and other members alike, go more into new fields. We stay too much at home. The early disciples went everywhere preaching the Word. I am afraid, from our actions, we have not the conviction and confidence in the truth that we should have. If we would make the same efforts that our early pioneers made we might expect the same results. If the Disciples of Christ in the Maritime provinces keep on this way, we will shortly require another Campbell or Stone to start another "Restoration" movement.

"Preach the Word."

GIDEON'S BAND.

H. MURRAY.

God is able to accomplish his work without human agency. But his rule has ever been to work through natural, ordinary means when it was possible. This is why he chose his servant Gideon to be his agent in delivering his people from the enemy. The wisdom manifested by Gideon in accomplishing the work is worthy our consideration, and should be accepted as a rule and example in our labors against the foes that would destroy us.

Gideon had the combined efforts of his army. It had to be a co-operative, united effort. This must be true in our labor. Unless we work together we will never succeed. The church is God's army, an organized co-operative body, and must therefore be united. The success of Gideon did not depend on the extent of his workers, but on their unity. All were workers and all worked together. Those who did not intend to work had no business to be in the co-operation, and so being tried they were sent home. A person who does not mean to work in the body in which he is identified ought to be sent home, that is the place for him. He is an injury to the workers. Three hundred men were enough for Gideon when all were working, and working together.

These are the kind of men we need today. Men who mean business at any cost. Men who will work with their brethren. Men who love the work and love the working. Men who cannot be bought nor sold, who cannot be moved away from the truth until the work of God is accomplished. Men who, when the work is not being done to suit them, will suit themselves to the way others are doing it. Gideonites, all at it and all together. Such men are an honor to the cause of God. They are the kind of men who move the hand that moves the world.

There were no idlers nor cowards in Gideon's "three hundred." May all the members of the Lord's army see and realize that the supreme need of the hour is the spirit, push and unity of "Gideon's Band." Each member must be in his place. There must not be any division, or laying down of arms or thoughts of flight. Let it be understood that he who is not in the work must not be in the army of the Lord.

It is not expected that one can do every thing, but it is expected that every one should do something, and what he can do he ought to do, and what he ought he must do or find himself miserably undone.