

The Christian.

JOHN, N. B., . . . JANUARY, 1889.

EDITORIAL.

Being permitted in the good providence of God to address the readers of THE CHRISTIAN in the beginning of A. D. 1889, we most cordially wish one and all A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

We hope by the same supporting Hand to continue our labors as in the past, only with increasing earnestness to serve our generation according to the will of God, seeing we are a year nearer the judgment and have a year less in which to labor for eternity than in the dawn of 1888.

We feel thankful to our patrons for their continued sympathy and support. Nearly all who subscribed for THE CHRISTIAN five years ago continue their support. We wish that they all, as well as those who contribute to its columns, may know that we appreciate their kindness. We presume that many of its readers understand and approve of the motives that started the paper and that still uphold it, for the aim of any undertaking or work, is an important matter of consideration. Men may err in judgment and fail in intention with impunity, but a wrong desire or ill purpose has no excuse. A corrupt tree cannot yield good fruit, and a low or selfish intention will corrupt the whole stream of action. Both Judas and Saul grievously sinned against the Son of God, the one in persecuting Him in the person of His disciples, the other in betraying Him to His enemies. Saul's aim was to please God, and he obtained mercy because he sinned ignorantly; Judas' aim was to make money by deception; he had no cloak for his sin and obtained no mercy. Whatever may be the success or failure of our paper, we strive to maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men in its circulation.

Claiming only to be disciples of Christ and anxious that the truth as it is in Jesus may have free course, it is most encouraging to know that the principles we advocate are becoming better known and continually gaining favor with the people. This is not because of our faithfulness, but because of the abounding mercy of God.

To say nothing of the many thousands that are annually joining the Disciples, but to compare the present with the past, we can see how astonishingly the leaven spread by them is permeating religious society in general. To ignore a change so manifest and important would be unjust to the Captain of our salvation.

When Thomas and Alexander Campbell and their associates saw and felt so keenly the difference between Christianity and sectarianism, that after much prayer and reading of the Scripture and conversation together, they resolved in the strength of the Lord to attempt a restoration of the ancient order of things. They invited a full and free examination of their faith and practice, and gave every evidence of a determination to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. But the general voices were against them, and about every peculiarity they had was condemned as dangerous error.

In order to promote Biblical knowledge, Alexander Campbell published a translation of the New Testament made by Pedo-Baptists, eminent for their learning and piety, with notes and emendations. For so doing he was charged with making a new Bible to suit his own erroneous teaching. The Book was represented as offensive to God and ruinous to men. One minister told that, after praying over it for two days, he committed it to the flames. It was considered high treason against heaven to make any translation of the Scriptures but that made by the translators of King James.

What has since happened? Besides many translations of the New Testament made now and then by men of learning, men from eleven different denominations have agreed to make a revision of the Old and New Testaments, and after much time and labor, and the expenditure of many thousands of dollars, the revision of the Bible Union is before the public; and last but not least, the Westminster version of the whole Bible is now in the hands of the public, read and admired by all nations speaking the English language. So much for the alleged crime of the Disciples making and reading a new Bible. What a change in this respect!

Again, the Disciples are in the constant habit of meeting on the Lord's day, where a sufficient number can meet, to worship God according to His Word. If they have with them a minister of the gospel, they esteem it a favor; if they have not, they attend to their worship, led by their chosen officers. This practice has been denounced in unmeasured terms, and but for the law of toleration would have been forcibly stopped by those claiming to be the favorites of heaven. How is it now? In almost every place popular religious meetings are led by laymen wholly irrespective of the presence or absence of clergymen.

The Disciples meet on every Lord's day to break bread in memory of their Lord's death, and after primitive example. This practice was also condemned as sinful; not that it was wrong to take the Lord's supper, or to do it on the Lord's day, but that it was wrong to do it every Lord's day, although no man could ever show that one Lord's day should be kept differently from another, or which were the Lord's days on which it should not be done. Yet it was opposed with arguments as unrelenting as they were unreasonable. How is it now? Very little is heard condemning weekly communions, and not a few of our opponents tell their people that the Disciples are right in this practice. Churches around are communicating oftener than they did, especially in times of revival.

The Disciples have always pled for the union of God's people, showing that there is nothing in the Scriptures to necessitate or justify sectarianism, and that divisions are treated as the works of the flesh, and severely condemned in the Bible. This, too, has been publicly opposed. It was argued that divisions were right, and as all could not interpret the Scriptures alike, sects were a gracious provision of God to accommodate all; and, besides, they were beneficial, as it increased their zeal and accomplished more good. Against the aphorism "Union is strength," they put "Opposition is the life of trade."

How is it now? With the exception of a few unthinking persons who advocate division, the cry from every quarter is for Christian union, condemning the old idea of division as "ready to vanish away." Even the heathen will not tolerate the absurdity, and while they are calling for the gospel they refuse sectarianism and require Christians to be united. This cry comes from all parts of the religious world. Different bodies are uniting, and there is no question so much agitating the Christian community today as "How can Christians unite?"

These and many other signs of the times, which space forbids to mention, furnish unmistakable evidence of God's blessing on the labors of His people, which should increase their confidence in Him and stimulate their zeal in His cause. He accomplishes in his own ways His purposes, whether by instruments strong or weak, and whether or not these instruments are known or acknowledged. When we see the things for which we labored and prayed coming gradually to pass, surely we have reason to thank God and take courage. When we witness the great change that has already occurred as to the desire for and efforts to attain to Christian

union, it is our duty to carefully and prayerfully consider our future course in regard to it. It has been our plea as a people, and we think we hold common ground—the only ground on which it can rest. In Ephes. iv. 4, 5 and 6, Paul shows that one baptism is one of the pillars of the unity of the spirit, and this must be held in order to secure such unity. Many sprinkle a little water on the face and say that they have obeyed the command of Jesus. Now, if it is shown that this is what Jesus in the commission in Matt. xxviii. 19, commanded the apostles to do into the name of the God-head, and that it is what the apostles did do in obedience to Christ, then by all means we are bound to do it and nothing else when we attempt to baptize. There is one baptism, and baptism is a positive institution or law, and must be performed according to law. To do anything else than what is commanded in positive law is not obedience, but the reverse. Therefore, if it is proved that sprinkling water on the face is what Jesus commanded in baptism, we are bound to hold it fast and abandon everything else. Nothing can be more absurd than the thought that in the positive command to baptize Jesus meant *use water in whatever way you or the candidate may see fit*. No unity can rest on such a foundation. Is there any prospect that the religious world will agree that Jesus meant such sprinkling by the command to baptize? The meaning of the word forbids it. Every allusion to baptism in the Scriptures denies it. The leaders of the various denominations, both Catholic and Protestant, affirm that Jesus meant immersion, and that the apostles practiced it. The millions of the Greek church who worship in the very language in which Jesus gave the command, could never be induced to stultify themselves by sprinkling while they used the word that meant the very opposite. We ask, is there any prospect that the religious world will ever agree that Jesus meant to sprinkle by the word baptize? To seriously ask the question, is to answer it with all the candid and intelligent.

We sincerely hope these matters will be kindly and faithfully examined. It is noticeable that people can talk of these things at present in the best of Christian feeling, which is another gratifying sign of the times, for all of which we have abundant reason to praise our Heavenly Father, and hope and pray for more of His holy spirit to enable us to do His will and to be united in advancing His blessed cause.

If the Lord will, we have more to say in a future number.

MISSION WORK.

"What Scriptural authority have we for mission work?" Suppose we should admit that there was no authority—viz., no "express precept or approved precedent" for such work—would that prove it was not right? We think not. Such an admission would impeach our common sense. There are many things that are right and good and necessary for which we have no Scriptural directions, but, as expedients, are left to our best judgment, such as building meeting-houses and using singing books (*genus omne*). But we are convinced that the weight of authority is on the side of mission work. What we mean to say is, that whatever authority we have for supporting the cause of Christ, it is all in favor of helping those who are beyond the limits of our own home. We all believe that we have authority for the weekly contribution or collection. But what does the Bible teach us concerning the use of monies thus collected? Our desire to be apostolic should induce us to be as sound in the proper use of the moneys collected as in the way it is collected. Surely the former is as important as the latter.