

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DISCIPLES  
OF CHRIST ANSWERED.

QUESTION.—Who are the Disciples?

ANSWER.—They are a religious people who took their rise about the beginning of the present century, in the United States, and have grown to be nearly a million strong. They have flourishing colleges and universities; an influential press; missionary societies for both home and foreign work; mission stations in Africa, India, Japan, China, Turkey, Denmark, Jamaica; while their work in America is growing with a rapidity hitherto unparalleled.

Q.—What do the Disciples teach?

A.—They teach the infinite power, wisdom, goodness, love, mercy, and justice of God; the Christhood and divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth, and His all-sufficiency and alone sufficiency as a Saviour for men; the personality and divine mission of the Holy Spirit as the administrative agent in the conversion, sanctification, and complete salvation of men; the instrumentality of the gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes; the universality of the offer of pardon and eternal life to men in Christ; the necessity of faith and repentance on the part of the sinner; baptism as an ordinance of God and a condition of pardon to the penitent believer; the necessity of holiness and perseverance in truth on the part of the Christian; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian as a Helper and Sanctifier; the certainty of the resurrection and the judgment, and of reward to the righteous and retribution to the finally impenitent.

Q.—What is the "peculiar plea" of the Disciples?

A.—The plea for the abandonment by Christians of everything which separates them from each other, and a union of all God's children on the basis of God's Word.

Q.—What is the basis of that plea?

A.—The purpose of God expressed (Eph. i : 10) to SUM UP ALL things in Christ; the earnest desire of Christ for the union of his followers as expressed in his intercessory prayer (John xvii : 20, 21); and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that there should be no divisions among Christians; that they should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1-10). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit unite in proclaiming the unity of Christians to be right and necessary.

Q.—What position do the Disciples occupy consistent with this plea?

A.—They occupy a catholic position. They accept the Bible and reject creeds; they wear Scriptural names, not denominational names; they preach and require faith in Christ, not faith in doctrine or dogmas; they practice immersion for baptism, not affusion; they baptize believers, not infants. The things they hold and practice are not in dispute. They stand on common ground.

Q.—What is the attitude of the Disciples toward other religious people?

A.—They do not exalt themselves above their fellows; they claim no superior sanctity. While they deplore the divisions that exist and steadfastly proclaim that division is sinful and ought to be abandoned, they are willing to enter with other Christians into any efforts which look to the uplifting and redemption of men.

Q.—What prospect is there that their desire for the union of Christians will be realized?

A.—The signs of promise for such an event are thick and bright upon the horizon. It may not be realized in the way they expect; but it is patent to every observer that the barriers between Christians are crumbling, and that the spirit of union is abroad in irresistible power. The present century has seen a marvellous advance in the direction of Christian union, and the twentieth century will undoubtedly see a reunited Church. However this

may be effected, the Disciples will rejoice in the result, and that they have been in any measure humble instruments in bringing it about.—*Atlantic Missionary.*

THE MORAL CHARACTER OF  
MISTAKES.

"Only a mistake—not a fault," is a common saying. Indeed, most people seem to have a complacent feeling that no moral responsibility attaches to mistakes. If they deliberately go wrong, that is a sin, and they expect to be punished for it, somehow and somewhere. But if they fall into the wrong course, as it were by chance, or if they unwittingly misuse opportunities, and so fail to accomplish what they otherwise might, they have made a mistake, forsooth, and are blameless.

Now this is pernicious reasoning—or rather lack of reasoning. It assumes that a mistake is a kind of negative virtue; not, indeed, a virtue which a man should cultivate, but nevertheless one which falls rather upon the credit than the debit side, in the balance of character. "I know that I have made a great many mistakes," says some worthy Christian, as he sums up his life in retrospect; "but then, that is not my fault. I could not help it. God knows I have done the best I could. I have lived up to my light." And so this aged servant of the Lord, looking back down the pathway of life, and seeing where he has turned astray hither and thither, like a child chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, is almost minded to take a little extra credit to himself because he has reached the shore of peace, over against the gates of gold, in spite of so many wanderings! And it is indeed well for him that he stands opposite the beautiful city—not by reason of, nor in spite of, his mistakes, but by the wonderful, the unspeakable grace of God!

Mistakes have a moral value. All must admit this much. Their value is not a plus value on the side of right. This is equally clear. Then mistakes must have a plus value on the opposite side—the side of wrong. Therefore mistakes are sins.

1. Mistakes create the environment of life. A man is what his previous experiences have made him. This is no fatalistic doctrine, for every man by his own volition determines the current of his experience. To change the figure: Mistakes create a moral atmosphere, and that atmosphere is miasmatic. Miasm-breathing character is sickly and feeble. A young man makes a mistake, he will say with respect to his calling in life. After spending the allotted years in preparation, he enters upon his work whatever it is, and finds at once that he is a round man in a square hole. What is the effect of such a mistake as this? Bad, every time. Life immediately resolves itself into discouraging and temptation—the discouraging of being out of place, the temptation to break away and be a meteor-man instead of a starman—a man without a law and without an orbit. Few men in such circumstances, have the courage to go back and begin over again. They have made a mistake, and they abide by it. Their life work is either erratic or half-hearted, and character loses its fibre.

Is there no moral character, then, in the mistake which creates a false environment for a man's whole life? What of the energy of thought, what of the prayerful uplook, what of the keen, persistent study of adaptabilities, what of the humble seeking of wise advice, what of the preliminary study and observation that should have preceded that vital choice? Have they preceded it? In nine wasted lives out of ten—no! The choice has been hasty, born of visions. The environment has been woven out of dream-stuff. The man is morally responsible for his failure.

2. Mistakes affect the lives of others. In this world no man standeth or falleth unto himself.

Character and influence are moral contagions. The man who makes mistakes helps others to make mistakes also. There never was so shadowy or contemptible a figure that somebody was not treading in its footsteps. And when a man does a foolish and unwise thing, there is not only the fact to be considered that his individual and personal example is infectious, but also the fact that he has opened a way out of right into wrong, which will always remain as a pernicious suggestion to scores who may not be under his immediate influence. Mistake-makers are pioneers into pestilential swamps; and the more unique and peculiar the wrong environment which a man creates for himself by his mistakes, the more likely are others to stumble into the same failures. It is a sophism to say that men learn wisdom from the mistakes of others. Far likelier are they to gravitate toward the same pitfalls. There is a strange fatality about moral, as well as physical, danger. If a man knows where it is, he is very likely to plunge into it.

Our mistakes lead others astray; therefore they are sins.

A brief and practical word on how to avoid mistakes: Do nothing hastily. Nine-tenths of the things which men live to repent have been done at the beck of impulse. There are two golden mottoes for impulsive people. The first and best is, "Stop and think." The second, "Don't." In the majority of cases the first motto simply endorses the second, but not always. It is always better to stop and think about a proposed action than to reject it without thought; but if you cannot spare the time, or haven't the brains or energy to think, then refrain from taking every doubtful step. It is better to stand still than to go over a precipice.

Secondly, do not believe a thing simply because somebody says it. Nothing under heaven is easier than to postulate, yet with some men it counts as the law and the prophets. How many of us can date our saddest mistakes from reposing a blind confidence in something that we have heard—some fallacy, perhaps some designed deception. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.

Finally, avoid mistakes by correcting them. This may sound paradoxical, but a good many logical paradoxes work like a charm in practice. A large share of our mistakes may be nullified by correcting them as soon as we discover that they are mistakes. It is lingering in the wrong that is fatal. That strange inertia of the soul—what a devil spell it is! Throw it off—redeem yourself while you can!

Christians, remember that you are just as liable to make mistakes as anybody else, and your mistakes are more harmful because you are Christians. Very likely God will not hold us as strictly to account for our mistakes as for our deliberate sins, but He will never remit their moral value, and certainly He will never credit them to us as negative virtues.—*Herald.*

DO YOU SING AT HOME?

There is perhaps no pleasanter occupation in the family circle than sacred song. Many a home where there is little of beauty, or ease, or luxury, is made pleasant by "thanksgiving and the voice of melody." If there be joy in the heart and music on the tongue, many rough places in life are smoothed and plain, many dark spots are brightened and made cheerful. Those families who know nothing of sacred song miss some of the purest pleasures that fall to the lot of mortals. Family prayer is a duty and a privilege, but family praise is none the less so, and there is nothing that binds hearts more closely to the home than those "songs which mother sang;" and old tunes in which the voices of parents and brothers and sisters join from a bond of union which unites hearts when mountains rise and