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TORONTO, JUNE 1st, 1891.

What Is a Church of Christ?

The question here propounded may seem to many to be one which is so easy to answer that it is scarcely worth putting. Any intelligent child reared in this so-called Christian land, it may be said, can tell what a church of Christ is. So it should be, if so it be not; and so it is not. We doubt if one professing Christian in five hundred can give such a description of a church of Christ as will distinguish it from every other kind of a society. And to give grounds for our doubt we cite some of the common notions of a church of Christ. One of these is, that a church of Christ is a congregation of Christians, and we presume that would pass muster with a great many people. But a little reflection will show that that does not distinguish a church of Christ from, for example, an agricultural society all of whose members are Christians, or from an insurance society all of whose members are Christians. Such agricultural society might be described as a congregation of Christians. We do not say that it is, or that if it were it would be thereby differentiated, but it clearly might truthfully be so designated. Some one may feel like interposing here and saying that a church of Christ is a congregation of Christians associated together for Christian work and worship. We think many not altogether uncritical people would accept this. And yet it is not a definition of a church of Christ. It does not distinguish a church of Christ from, for instance, a Sunday school, which, in a case where all the scholars are Christians, may be described as a congregation of Christians associated together for Christian work and worship. A third person may now be ready to say that a church of Christ is a congregation of Christians associated together for Christian work and worship and observing the ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). That seems better, but would it differentiate a church of Christ from every other association? Is there any other society that could be so described? We think there is. For instance, societies called churches of Christ which observe the ordinances, but do not observe them in a Scriptural way. There are churches which require more as prerequisites to Baptism and the Lord's Supper than the Lord Himself requires. Such churches are not churches of Christ. Then, again, there are churches which accept less as prerequisites to Baptism and the Lord's Supper than the Lord requires. Such churches are not churches of Christ. They may be composed of well-meaning and pious people, but they are not churches of Christ.

What, then, is a church of Christ? First, it is a church of CHRIST. What do we mean by emphasizing "of Christ"? We mean to point out that a church of Christ is a divine, not a human, institution; that the conditions of membership in it are laid down by the Lord

Jesus Christ, and that when any condition is added to or taken from those prescribed by the Lord, the society or church ceases to be, if it ever were, a divine institution, and becomes a human one. So, a church of Christ may be defined as a society, membership in which is secured AND MAINTAINED by complying with the conditions imposed by the Lord Jesus Christ. A church of Christ is Christ's church. He said: "I will build my church." Any person, or any society, that imposes conditions of membership not sanctioned by the Lord is usurping the Lord's place, the place He reserved for Himself when He said: "I will build my church." We ask our younger readers especially to note this; we want them to understand this matter, so that they may never be parties to such usurpation, and may never submit to anything of the kind.

It being granted, as we think it must be granted, that we have given a correct definition of a church of Christ, a question now naturally arises as to what conditions the Lord has seen fit to impose and demand compliance with in order to secure and maintain membership in a church of His. Does any one think that is a hard question to answer? So difficult that no man can venture to answer it positively? We believe that such is the feeling of many, even pious people. It would be very singular were it so. It is singular that people who believe in Jesus Christ should think so unworthily of Him as to suppose that He would leave so important a matter in such a state that an honest man could not tell whether he was in the church of Christ or not. The Lord has not laid so heavy a burden upon us. He says: "My burden is light."

Where shall we go, then, to learn the Lord's conditions of membership? To the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England? No. To the Westminster Confession of Faith? No. To the New Hampshire Confession of Faith? No. To any other creed or confession of man's construction? No. Why? Because they are of man's construction. Where then? To the Word of the Lord. But, some one says, the Lord said many things, and they are scattered over the Four Gospels; can you not give us something more definite? Certainly, we can. Open your New Testament at Matthew xviii. 18-20, and read carefully. If you have the Revised Version it will be all the better. There we find the directions given by the Lord to His apostles, after His resurrection, as to what they were to do when He should be taken up and they would be endowed with power from on high. He prefaces His directions with the appropriate declaration, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth," and then says, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Jesus desired to have disciples made; these disciples would, unquestionably, be members of Christ's church. So if we can learn how they were made, disciples, we shall know the conditions the Lord requires compliance with in order to membership in His church. The Lord's words are: "Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Those, therefore, who are baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are made disciples of Christ, and, consequently, we can answer that the condition of entrance into the church of Christ is to be baptized into the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Does some one say: Is baptism the only condition? We reply, it may be so designated, that is, baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Are we asked: Is not faith in Christ a condition? Yes, a condition of baptism. Is not repentance a condition? Yes, a condition of baptism. And is not confession of Jesus as Lord a condition? Yes, a condition of baptism; a person cannot be baptized according to the will of Christ who has not faith, who has not repented, and who has not confessed Jesus as Lord; or to put it in another way, the person who is baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, thereby manifests his faith in Jesus Christ, declares his repentance towards God, and acknowledges Jesus as his Lord. And as thus explained, baptism may be considered as the condition of entrance into the church of Christ; and we may scripturally say that a member of the church of Christ is a baptized person. Let no one account this heresy without first candidly studying the words of our Saviour. We close for the present with this remark, that the person who is a member of the church of Christ is entitled to membership in a church of Christ, and any society professing to be a church of Christ which will not receive such a person is not a church of Christ.

Progress.

Anyone who has perused the columns of THE EVANGELIST during the last twelve months will know that the people known as Disciples of Christ are making progress in this country. This progress is indicated in several ways. New meeting houses have been erected, new churches have been started; churches whose work was suspended, or which were in a languishing condition, have been revived; considerable sums of money have been contributed for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad; the number of preachers whose time is wholly devoted to the work of the ministry has increased, and the number of additions to the churches has been larger, we think, than in any recent year. We are making no such progress as the Disciples are making in many parts of the United States, but we think considering our circumstances we have abundant reason for gratitude and encouragement. Those who have studied the situation know that Ontario is a difficult field in which to do the work we have set our hands to. The different leading religious denominations are strongly entrenched in their positions. The country is dotted, thickly dotted, with churches, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, etc., etc. Whatever their differences may be, they unite in resisting anything new, or that which is accounted new. When one of our preachers erects the banner of Apostolic Christianity in a place and invites the people to come to hear him and asks them to search the Scriptures whether these things are so, he knows that the denominational ministry will assiduously instruct their people to beware of the stranger and his strange doctrine and persistently insist that these things are not so, and to a very large extent the people will heed the voice of their spiritual advisers. The state of mind of the professedly religious in this country at present is not that of a people who are eager to know for themselves whether their doctrine and their practice are in accordance with the New Testament. We believe the vast majority of the ministers of religion in Ontario are diligently instilling into the minds of their adherents the lesson of following

the faith of their fathers, and the lesson seems to be very generally accepted and acted upon. How often we hear: "My father was a good man; he was a member of such and such a church; what was good enough for my father is good enough for me." To many that is an end of all investigation, and sad to say those who occupy the place of teachers encourage it. In the midst of such teaching, the reasonable appeal made by the Disciples of Christ to all who believe in Jesus the Christ to examine the Scriptures to see whether or not they are on New Testament ground, receives a cold reception. A great deal of time and labor is expended in removing misconception and prejudice, and oftentimes it is a matter of years establishing a strong and aggressive church. And so we repeat that considering our circumstances we have abundant reason for gratitude and encouragement. If we could not report any progress, we would still be under obligation to contend for what we believe to be the truth. Let us be thankful that our efforts are crowned with so large a measure of success.

It is very creditable to the moral and spiritual earnestness of our brethren and to their loyalty to the Master and His Word, that usually they are very slow to give up the hope of planting the pure Gospel in their communities. There is something inspiring in the way in which they will for years hold out and refuse to unite with organizations which teach for doctrines the commandments of men. And the manner in which small bands of Disciples are undertaking at the present time in Ontario the responsibilities of church work is something to rejoice in, to admire and to commend.

Should this reach the eye of our brethren and sisters, who shall be at the Annual Meeting, let us say to them that we greet them in the name of the Lord; we congratulate them on the success that has hitherto attended their united efforts to advance the cause, and we pray that the rich blessing of the Lord may rest upon their meeting and deliberations, and enable them to devise largely and liberally, that the many doors opening in our land may be cheerfully and confidently entered.

If you had any difficulty in understanding the answer to the second query in the Critic's Corner of last issue, put a semi-colon between "apostle" and "Paul" and the meaning will be clear.

On page two will be found an editorial from the *Christian Oracle* of Chicago, on "How to induce more young men to preach the Gospel." Are Christian parents, as the *Oracle* thinks, to blame for the scarcity of able preachers?

The article "Is it Obligatory?" on second page, which we clip from the *Christian Evangelist*, will be found "interesting and profitable," as the expression goes. Let careful attention be given to the last two paragraphs. They put the question of the day well.

Among our selected articles in this issue is one with the title "Does a College Education tend to lessen Christian Enthusiasm?" We judge that it "hits the nail on the head." It is one of those articles which we feel some one should have written before. The Christian enthusiasm that cannot survive a college education is, like that which cannot endure contact with the world in other ways, not genuine.

Bro. Geo. T. Smith, one of our missionaries in Japan, says that the Disciples there made overtures of union to the Baptists. "They (the

Baptists) kindly replied that if we could see our way to adopt the New Hampshire Confession and Close Communion, the name and weekly Communion would be no obstacle." So it appears that, like their brethren in Canada, the Baptists in Japan still cling to the New Hampshire Confession.

We have known it for some time, but yet whenever we see the statement that there are Baptist churches in England which receive unimmersed people into their membership, we experience a feeling of surprise. Col. Griffin, the new President of the English Baptist Union, in his inaugural address, said: "Many of their churches could not, unhappily, describe themselves as Baptist churches. A policy of compromise was one of weakness. If they were Baptists, let them boldly declare it. Churches whose trust deeds exclude the baptism, and open churches that say, in effect, 'Behold what a weariness it is,' could have no place among them." We have not heard of such Baptist churches in the United States or Canada. If there be none such, what is the reason?

A good many people do not know that an editor's selections from his contemporaries are quite often the best test of his editorial ability, and that the function of the scissors is not merely to fill up vacant spaces, but to reproduce the brightest and best thoughts, and the most attractive news from all sources at the editor's command. After all, the true test of a newspaper's real value is not the amount of original matter it contains, but the average quality of all the matter appearing in its columns, whether original or selected.—N. Y. Journalist.

The above paragraph may surprise some readers, but it sets forth the true method of judging a paper. And while we are on the subject of selections, we take the opportunity of asking our friends to note the valuable assortment we give them in this number.

Church News.

QUELPH.—One returned to us yesterday and was received at the morning meeting, upon acknowledgment, into the fellowship of the church. We had good audiences at both meetings. May 25, 1891. J. K. HESTER.

MICHIGAN.—We commenced our labor with the church of Christ at Fremont, Newaygo Co., Mich., on Lord's day, April 26, and have had fourteen additions up to date, ten by obedience and four from other churches, and the good work is going on. We have a church of one hundred and eighty-five members and one hundred and thirty scholars enrolled in Sunday school—all lively workers.

S. B. CULP.
Fremont, May 25, 1891.

MUSKOGA.—Three baptisms—one at Menominee on Saturday, 9th May, and two in Ridout on Monday following. We had good meetings at all my appointments last Lord's day, but the largest audience at Huntville. Next Lord's day Bro. Seely is to take the meeting at Menominee, Bro. Palmer at Ridout, and the writer those at Emerson, Brunel Hall and at Sister Hillier's. Affairs are looking up still, and still hope for the blessings of the Lord and the sympathy of the brotherhood in our labors. W. M. C.
Huntville, May 19, 1891.

MUSKOGA.—On the morning of the 10th inst. Tozo Ohno preached for us. He told us of the difficulties which so sorely beset him in studying the Bible in Japan. All felt that we, who are cast in a land of Bibles with no one to