

The Canadian Evangelist.

"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

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THE Canadian Evangelist

is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ; and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with his own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

The Two Positions.

In another column will be found a thoughtful article from the pen of Prof. John G. Fee, of Berea, Kentucky, in which he deals with the word baptize as related to Christian union. As Bro. Fee represents the position and practice of the people known as "Christians," and as a few of our own writers are more or less inclined to approve of the view which he advocates, it is thought well to find room for what he has to say, with the view of looking into the question with some care. That Jesus in the Commission commanded immersion, and not sprinkling, or pouring, Bro. Fee has not the slightest doubt. That the practice of sprinkling, or pouring, is an error he asserts confidently. But let us quote his words as to the best way of dealing with this error. He says:—

The reader will ask, how shall we correct the error, the false meaning? We answer, by correct teaching and by correct practice—each one be faithful in teaching and practice. But it will be said by some, if the church tolerates in its membership those who are simply sprinkled, will not the people infer that the church regards sprinkling as baptism, and thus the erroneous import of the word be perpetuated? We reply, the church has no right to decide what is baptism. That was Calvin's mistake when he said that "the church has retained to herself the right to change the form somewhat retaining the substance."

As we look at the matter, the church has a right to come to a fixed conclusion touching the divinely appointed conditions of church membership. If it is clearly seen that under the commission the apostles immersed believers and so added them to the church, and added them in no other way, and never intimated that the converts had the right to modify the appointed conditions, in any way, it would seem to be the duty of the church now to see that its ministers execute the great Commission in the same way. This Commission deals with the baptizer as well as with the baptized, and involves in responsibility the church whose servants preach the gospel and administer baptism. Certainly no church whose members understand the Commission as Bro. Fee and we understand it can authorize one of its ministers to administer sprinkling to penitent believers, and so add

them to the church. Such a church should not assume such a responsibility in the absence of divine authority. Is it clear that its responsibility is less when it receives into membership one who has not received Christian baptism? If entering the church is so entirely an individual matter that the converts shall enter by being sprinkled or immersed at their own pleasure, then the pious Friend who believes that neither immersion nor sprinkling is necessary, should be accepted on his spiritual baptism according to his individual "interpretation," without any use of water of any ordinance of baptism. Receive into the church those who are sprinkled simply—sprinkled in infancy—and also those who interpret baptism in water out of the Scriptures, as not now binding, and you will soon have in the church teachers of such views and practices. Then it will not be easy to correct the error "by correct teaching and correct practice," as Bro. Fee advises. Better correct the error by correct teaching and correct practice at the very threshold, not after it has received what seems to be an indorsement. So we believe and teach.

We cannot agree with Bro. Fee that "the church has no right to decide what is baptism." The meaning of the word baptism is clear. The scholarship of the religious world, as expressed in lexicons and church histories, has decided its meaning. It is certainly better that the church shall decide for itself what it shall regard as baptism, than that each candidate for membership shall decide not only for himself, but for the church also. It is surely enough that each candidate shall decide for himself and so seek out a church that agrees with him. This is clearly sufficient Christian liberty touching this matter. Each candidate's views cannot be allowed to become a law unto the church and to its ministers, who are supposed to have convictions of their own, and who should feel bound by the New Testament touching the execution of the law of admission into the church—a law that binds them as well as those who desire to be added to the church through complying with it. The claim spoken of by Calvin that "the church has retained to herself the right to change the form somewhat retaining the substance," is quite another matter, and does not illustrate the case in hand. While the church has no right to change the form, it has a right to recognize the divinely appointed form unchanged, and reject everything else as not meeting the requirement of the author of Christian baptism. Bro. Fee says:—

We know that as a matter of fact the policy of schism, of refusing fellowship to acknowledged children of God because of the error of sprinkling, has not corrected the error but has simply turned such believers away into other parties where the error is defended and advocated.

We think it will be found that the bodies which receive immersed believers only are correcting the views of hundreds on this subject, while those who receive others also are correcting the views of only tens. Observe the growth of the Baptists and the Disciples

in this country compared with that of the "Christian" body. And this growth is largely owing to definite teaching and uncompromising practice touching the ordinance of baptism and the reception of members. No doubt, as stated, some go away "into other parties where the error is defended and advocated." Better that than to come among us and advocate and practice the error in our midst, until we shall become like the "other parties" to whom reference is made. Certainly, looking at the matter from the standpoint of success, the lack of rapid growth on the part of the "Christians"—generally known as the Christian Connection—does not encourage us to adopt the practice advocated in the article we are considering.—*Christian Standard.*

The Influence of Our Movement On The Age.

A dozen years ago the *Independent* in a lengthy article upon the plea of the Campbells, father and son, and especially upon the life and labors of the latter, made the statement that even though they might not acknowledge, or even be aware of it, there was hardly a prominent Protestant religious body in the United States the preaching of which had not been more or less modified by the teaching of Alexander Campbell. This is a fact of the religious history of our century which is gradually receiving the recognition of well-informed men. The influence of our religious reformation cannot be estimated by the fact that in the sixty or seventy years since it was inaugurated a great body of nearly a million adherents has been gathered into the fold, but the effect upon the religious mind of the age must also be considered. Martin Luther not only was enabled to effect the Protestant Reformation, but the Roman Catholic church itself was compelled to abandon some of its worst practices, and reform its most corrupt abuses. In the same way the Campbells were instruments in the divine hand not only to call out a great body whose plea is the union of all God's people upon the one faith in Christ, but at the same time they have introduced a leaven into every religious body which has caused its teachings to be less divergent from those of the New Testament. As a result of the agitation concerning the divisive effect of creeds as tests of fellowship, these human standards have lost their authority over the public mind, in every denomination some of the more objectionable doctrines of the creed are ignored, and loud calls have been made for creed revision.

Passing by the agitation upon the subject, which is disturbing, more or less, every religious body which accepts any other standard than the word of God, we wish to cite a few facts which serve to show the change that is taking place in the public mind. When Alexander Campbell in 1810 preached the sermon on the law before the Redstone Association, it excited a profound sensation and an intense opposition, which finally drove him out of the Association. The doctrines of that sermon—in substance that the law

of Moses was abrogated in order to give place to the gospel of Christ, that we are under the New Covenant instead of the Old, and that the New Institution, the church of Christ, was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost—were then regarded startling, revolutionary, and heretical. So intense was the bitterness that if the secular arm could have been cast into prison, and perhaps burnt at the stake. Yet, after the lapse of seventy-five years, those doctrines have received the recognition of the leading minds in the American Protestant pulpit.

Some years since, when George R. Wondring in his splendid lecture on Christianity from a secular standpoint uttered his fine passage on the progress of the ages, and spoke of the founding of the church on the day of Pentecost, it was common to hear members of the church of Christ who listened to him say, "He must have learned that from our people." Within a month or two Prof. Charles A. Briggs, whose Inaugural Address has so profoundly stirred the Presbyterian world, in an article given to the public in the *North American Review*, speaks of the church as founded on the day of Pentecost, and some of our scribes have noted this as one of the remarkable signs of progress. Are they aware that Dr. Phillip Schaff, the greatest living church historian, and the most widely known theological writer on the American continent, in his "History of the Apostolic Church," made years ago the same affirmation in the most definite language? The first volume of his history of the Christian Church, revised in 1882, has for the heading of the Twenty-fourth Section, *The Miracle of Pentecost, and the Birthday of the Christian Church*. The chapter opens with the statement, "The ascension of Christ to heaven was followed ten days afterwards by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon earth, and the birth of the Christian church." This affirmation of the standard church history of American Protestantism has been received by the religious world without question.

Still more significant is a fact that we will now state. There is no body that comes more nearly representing American Christianity than the International Sunday School Lesson Committee. It contains a representative man from every leading Protestant denomination. The lessons of the last six months of 1892 are in the Acts of the Apostles. The third lesson of the third quarter, the lesson of July 17, 1892, is upon Acts ii. 37-41, the portion of the chapter which gives Peter's answer to the question of the three thousand convicted sinners, describes their obedience, and the church life which followed. This lesson has been named by this representative body of American Christendom, THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH. These facts, to which others might be added, are enough to show that a statement, which seventy-five years ago was deemed rank heresy, and had no little to do with the driving of Alexander Campbell out of his old church relations

and to make him for a time an Ishmael in Israel, is now accepted by the intelligent thought of the Christian world.

We might mention a recent occurrence which indicates the change that has taken place in the very body from which he was driven forth. A few weeks since, George C. Lorimer, the well-known Baptist orator of Chicago, just transferred to Boston, in a sermon on our Lord's declaration to the Samaritan woman that there were no holy places in the sense in which both Jew and Samaritan then regarded them, and that those who worship God "must worship in spirit and truth," declared that this demand for pure, spiritual worship made all times and places holy to the worshipper, and intimated that it was a death-blow to a Sabbath as a holy day if all other time was regarded secular. A semi-sceptical daily of Chicago seized upon the sermon as a proof that Dr. Lorimer was opposed to Sunday closing laws, whereupon he stated his position more clearly. He declares that the Sabbath was a Jewish institution, a part of the law, which was set aside when "the commandments written and engraven on stones were done away," and was no longer in existence. There was, however, in its stead, the Christian Lord's day, a day of glorious memories, a day of joy, and to be kept as a day of joy; not as a holiday, but as a day of thanksgiving, worship, and rejoicing. It will be seen that his position is virtually that of Alexander Campbell in 1810. We do not suppose that his opinions will cause a ripple in the Baptist church at this time, but had he lived in the first quarter of the century and made the same statements, his great fame and popularity would not have saved him from a storm of accusation and vituperation which would have driven him from his religious associations. Such facts as these we have noted demonstrate that the influence of our movement upon the age is far from being measured by our visible army of churches, members and resources.—*Christian Evangelist.*

Child-Killers of To-day.

Traps for the boys; that's just what they are. Five-cent novels; detective stories! Talk about saloons! They are not the first dangers that menace our boys. Fathers, mothers! do you know what your children are reading? Don't flatter yourselves because John and Clarence are fond of reading that they are safe. This very fondness may be the worst thing possible. Encourage a love for books, but see to it that the books are good ones. Bathing is an excellent practice, but it should be in clear, clean water, not in sewer products nor in ink. Some forms of reading may be viciousness itself. What shall we say to those who write and print this form of vice? The enemy of childhood to-day, the nineteenth century fiend, is no misshapen creature. His feet are not cloven; he wears a tall hat, dresses in the height of fashion, nay, lives in a brown-stone front; but he is a child-killer all the same.—*Light.*

Three hundred islands of the Pacific have been evangelized.