

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

LOVING JESUS.

So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? John xxi. 15.

In the New Testament such a question as this is seldom asked of anyone. Very few speak of their love to Jesus, while very many speak of Jesus love to them. The contrast between the love of the Saviour and the love of the saved is so great that the latter is rather reluctant to speak of his love to Jesus at all, and his sentiments are well expressed by the Indian woman: Me love Jesus Christ a little, and me want to love Him more." Jesus has given the sure marks of those that love Him, and by these marks they are to be known rather than by their own testimony. "If ye love Me keep My commandments," etc. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father." "Jesus answered, and said unto him: If a man love Me he will keep My words. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words," etc. (John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24). These, then, are the signs of those who love Jesus and those who love Him not. The one will keep His words, the other will not. If we love Him His commandments will be our law, and His promises our great consolation. He judges and decides men's love by their actions, because actions speak louder than words.

But this was a very special occasion on which Jesus asks Peter, "Lovest thou Me?" Peter was always ready to come to the front. As soon as he heard it was the Lord who stood on the shore he would not wait to come in the boat with the rest, but put on his fisher's coat and sprang into the water to go to Jesus, and after Jesus had dined with the disciples He asked Peter the question. It was certainly a proof of Peter's love to cast himself into the sea to come quickly to Jesus. Still He asked him if he loved Him. He had for His stability formerly called him Peter, or Rock. But now He ignored this name and calls him by his old timed name—Simon, son of Jonas. Not only so He asked him if he loved Him more than these. Some understand by "these" the boat and fishing utensil: and that He asked Peter if he loved Him and His service more than he loved the boat, nets and the fishing employment. Had this been His meaning how readily would the impulsive Peter have returned an affirmative reply. But this part of the question he did not answer at all. We have no doubt that Jesus meant by *these* the rest of the disciples present. A short time before Peter had intimated quite clearly that he loved his Master more than did the rest, yea, more than any other man. (Mark xiv. 29). But when the trial came he failed. Now Jesus asked him if he loved Him more than these, according to his former testimony of himself. Peter answered firmly, but only for himself. He had learned a lesson of humility, not to undervalue his brethren's faithfulness and extol his own. And Jesus told him to feed His lambs. Let the weakest of the flock know and feel the tenderness of the chief shepherd.

Jesus repeats the question, but as Peter had not answered the last part of it, He lets it drop, and told him to feed His sheep. When, however, the Lord asked him the same question the third time Peter was grieved. Perhaps he thought Jesus would not take his word any more, after he had so shamefully broken his former promise of going to prison and death with Him, and not denying Him, and then upon every charge denying that he knew the Man. He had three times denied that he knew

Him, and the third time confirmed the denial with such horrid oaths as to make it unnecessary to accuse him further. Jesus asked the question just as many times as Peter had denied Him, and the third asking was fitted to bring fresh to his mind his oaths, and the loving look of his Lord which opened up all the fountains of his heart, and sent him out of the high priest's palace weeping over his ingratitude and crimes.

But grieved though he were, he had no other answer to return to Jesus' question. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things." Thou knowest my former vanity in making rash promises of what I would do instead of asking Thy aid. Thou knowest my cowardice and crime, my inward guilt and condemnation. Thou knowest how Thy loving smile encouraged me, and thy pardoning love kindled mine. Notwithstanding all I have done against Thee, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Had Peter so injured a stranger it might be difficult, if not impossible, to prove his love to him, but Jesus knew his heart and this encouraged him to attest his affection. Jesus' love conquers the hardest enemy and turns him into a loving friend, and it can forgive an erring disciple and bind him still closer to His heart.

The Lord had a great work for Peter to accomplish, but he needed severe training for it. Though he was a rock he was a very moveable one until hewn and prepared for the Master's use. On the coast of Cesarea, Philippi, just after Jesus had called him blessed for the confession he had made, and promised to give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he boldly rebuked his Master, because He foretold of His betrayal and shameful death. Jesus called him Satan, and commanded him to get behind Him as an offence to Him, relishing the things of men and not the things of God. When the time drew near Jesus showed that all of the disciples would be offended because of Him. Peter again contradicted Him, and vainly promised that he would go to death itself with Him and not be offended. Jesus told him of his fall and left him to himself. This gave him a proper view of his own weakness and his need of divine power. Being humbled over his own weakness he could feel for the flock of Christ, and patiently fed even the weakest whom Jesus calls "My lambs."

Jesus now admits that Peter loved Him, that he had turned, and charges him to strengthen his brethren. He even shows that what Peter had promised in his own strength he would yet perform in God's strength. He would go to prison and to death for Jesus and would not deny Him. Of this he spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. How weak men are in their own strength, how mighty in the strength of God.

How proper for Jesus to put that question not only to Simon but to every one of us, 'Lovest thou Me?' Nothing can be more reasonable than to love Jesus. The law of God requires us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It shows no mercy to transgressors. We have all broken it and are condemned by it. By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified. Jesus pitied us and came from heaven and fulfilled the law which we have broken. He then suffered the death of the cross for our sins, died the just for the unjust that we might be brought to God. It is most reasonable to love Him who first loved us. It is also easy to love Jesus. He is altogether loveable. What more could He do than He has done to gain our affection?

Reader, do you love Jesus? Many expect to love Him in the future. This is not the question, but "Lovest thou Me" now?

THE ORIGINAL contribution have crowded Church News on pages 2 and 3.

Original Contributions.

UNION OF BAPTISTS AND DISCIPLES
IN CHRISTIAN WORK.

BY B. B. TYLER.

In the November issue of THE CHRISTIAN a contributor asks, "Why cannot the Disciples and Baptists unite their efforts for the advancement of the cause of Christ?" Upon which the co-editor remarks:

To the question suggested by one of our correspondents, Why can't the Baptist and our people unite? we answer, Whatever difficulties are in the way they have been put there, not by God, but by man. We need no basis of union beyond what is already furnished in God's Book. Any other basis of union has necessarily in it the seeds of its own dissolution. If we are wrong let us give up the wrong. If we have erected a line fence let us tear it down. And if our neighbors are in error let us insist that they should do the same. But neither of us should compromise what we understand to be the truth for the sake of mere organization. We should be willing, however, to talk kindly and lovingly upon points of agreement as well as disagreement, and like the Bereans of old receive the word with readiness of mind, and search the scriptures daily whether those things are so.

This is well said. In another part of the same paper is the following exhibition of a most admirable spirit:

If asked, Are you not as liable as others to have wrong views of scriptural subjects? we answer, We certainly are! Not only so, we regard as our best friends those who will give us more light, or will, in a Christian spirit, show us and our readers the points in which we may be wrong, or even the points in which we differ. Our desire is that both writers and readers should "prove all things and hold fast that which is good."

Disciples are not infallible. Baptists are not infallible. Disciples have not completed the curriculum in the school of Christ. Baptists have not learned all that may be learned concerning our Lord Jesus Christ and His religion. Even editors are not wholly free from the infirmities which belong to mortals generally. The Bible is, of all the books in the world, alone infallible. It is safe to believe its doctrine—it is right to obey its commands. The law of the Lord is perfect. In obedience to the commands of the Divine law there is, even here and now, an exceeding great reward. Those alone are truly blessed who walk in the law of the Lord. We are commanded to keep the precepts of the Lord diligently. The way of moral cleansing for any man is by taking heed thereto according to the good word of our God. The presence of the Gospel in human hearts gives strength to resist the sinful suggestions of Satan. Of all the sons of men Jesus of Nazareth "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." He alone is perfect. All Protestant Christians agree in this and in a belief as to the supreme excellency of the Living Oracles. But it is a marked peculiarity of Baptists and Disciples to make, in practice, the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments the law of life. The New Hampshire Baptist Confession, widely accepted by Baptists, especially in the Northern and Western States, contains the following: "We believe that the Holy Bible was written by man divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true centre of Christian union; and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried. President Wayland in "Notes on the Principles and Practices of the Baptists" says that in answer to the questions, "What is the Baptist Creed? it is usual to reply, 'The New Testament.'" Dr. Armitage in his admirable