

trials, they slowly and painfully gained the higher ground; clear of the low lying marshes, clear of the mists, and once more found themselves in the King's highway; and now with firmer foothold, with clear vision, with renewed strength and hopes, standing in the bracing air and bright sunshine, what is their duty? Can there be a doubt in any mind? Is it not to stretch out willing hands to those who are yet wandering? Is it not clearly our duty to help these fellow travellers of ours back to the road we have found and into the safety and assurance we enjoy?

This, I take it then, is the duty of disciples of Jesus to-day, to help the perplexed and wandering church of Christ back to the place we ourselves occupy. Not because we occupy it, but because it is the only platform broad enough and strong enough for the redeemed hosts of the Lord. By God's grace we are to-day occupying the only true and possible ground of perfect union; of this we feel confident. "For we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ the chief corner stone." Without enlarging on the matter to this assembly, it is enough to say that as division came by departures from the Word of God, so union must come by a hearty return to that Word, for it is not God's word that divides God's people, but the words of men; not the simplicity of the truth, but the explanations and elaborations men have made about that truth.

But let me, here say that we must distinguish clearly between a return to the Scriptures in their simplicity, and a coming to us as a people; because our best efforts will be rendered futile if our work is to be done on denominational lines. It is not to us, not to our word or teachings; be it never so perfect, but to Christ's Word that His church needs to return. Not to us, but where we are; to Him around whom we gather. But these are general remarks, and like all general statements are somewhat indefinite.

To speak more definitely as to our duty in this matter:

1st. I say it is our duty to cultivate right conceptions of the magnitude of this movement of its importance and its difficulties.

What place does this question of the union of all God's people take in your thoughts and prayers? Do you pray about it? Do you talk about it? Do you study God's Word in reference to it? Do you long for it? Are you really in earnest about it? As a preacher, for instance, do you give it a just place in your public utterances? Is it fairly balanced in your mind with the other truths of God's Word? Do you desire it most heartily in spite of the difficulties that surround it; in spite of the mistakes that will be made in striving for it; in spite of the weary waiting that must come before that union is complete, and in spite of the steps often painful and disheartening you may be called on to take in connection with it; do you still ardently long for it? Is Christ's prayers sacred in your sight; and do you love Him and all for whom He has died well enough to aid with all your powers this most important step in the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom? If not, your first duty is the cultivation of a true conception of its importance both to God and men.

2. The second great duty of the Disciples of Christ to this movement is, an increased loyalty to the Word of God in their teaching both public and private.

I have read with interest the somewhat large and varied correspondence in our papers, both religious and secular, during the past few months, and

regretted that no Disciples took part in the correspondence, and did not feel quite equal to it myself. Then I heard that our Bro. Munro had contributed to the matter at least one letter. I was not fortunate enough to see that letter, but took a long breath of satisfaction when I heard it, for I knew the matter was in good hands. But I noted this, that while all kinds of methods were proposed, and all kinds of difficulties raised, and all kinds of remedies prescribed, from apostolic succession on the one hand, to every man bringing into the union his own peculiarities and following his own practices on the other, few—very few were asking, "What does the word of God say?" And to me it is the one disheartening feature of the movement, and the one thing which puts the consummation of our hopes far off, that in a question of such vital importance, so few were disposed to begin, where all must sooner or later come "to the Word of God," to the only place where the union problem can be solved. Now, as Disciples of Christ, this is in a particular sense our work, our duty, our privilege. I say it with a growing conviction of its truth, that no other class of persons are in the position to do this as we can by God's grace do it. The responsibility of this matter rests very largely on us, and the ability is ours to a degree which no other people possess. It is the distinctive feature of our work, and the greatest reason for our existence as a people. So I say, let us manifest an increased loyalty to the Word of God in our teaching, both in public and in our private intercourse with our fellows. Let the truth of the New Testament, concerning the Church of Jesus Christ, its foundation, its law of admission, its ordinances, its hopes, its duties, be proclaimed with increasing earnestness and clearness, and let our teaching of the aim of division be clear, making no apology for it, but sorrowing over it, and this more boldly and more lovingly than we have ever done.

These are not the times for giving up the truth of God, but the times for holding with a firmer hand than ever all that is of God. Study the Word, review the ground of your standing. Have you a doubtful practice, give it up; a doubtful doctrine, part with it at once; but hold as never before in life, and heart, and tongue, the truth as it is in Jesus.

"We cannot give up the truth for the sake of union," is a statement often made in connection with this question; but I look upon it as a proof that the person who makes it must have far from clear views of what true union must be. Giving up the truth is the seed germ of all division, so rest assured of this, you cannot help on union by giving it up. The short and speedy and certain way to union is by accepting truth and obeying it. So speedy, so thorough, so certain is this remedy for division, that 1893 would see the union of all God's people, if men would only accept the truth of God.

So tell it out always, everywhere, that a restoration of the faith and practice and spirit of the New Testament teaching will solve the union problem, and that nothing else will.

Old bitter party lines are to some extent breaking down, thank God. But there is much to be done. There is a disposition to hear and ponder as never before. Men will listen to us now; let us speak, and that wisely and clearly; but let us be careful how we hold up these tried and tested truths. Let it be distinctly known as the Word of God, the mind of the spirit—not as our plea, our position. Let us not unnecessarily emphasize that we believe so and so, our people teach so and so. Such statements, however true, add

nothing to the force of the truth of God, and are not unfrequently a sore hindrance to it. Put God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the forefront, and the we, us, and our, may safely be left to take care of themselves. Then I suggest that the production and use of a Christian Union Literature setting forth the true ground of union would be an addition to our preaching worthy of our consideration.

3. Our third duty is the manifestation of a fraternal and helpful spirit towards our religious neighbors. I have purposely placed the two words fraternal and helpful side by side, because I think but little of the first without the last. It is not enough to say, we wish you well and hope you will succeed, but we do not desire any closer acquaintance. The need of the hour is sterling helpfulness, not pleasant sentiment only, and the manifestation of a fraternal spirit means in this paper, an intercourse close enough to be truly helpful to all who are seeking to know God better and to serve him more perfectly. I deem it an exceedingly unfortunate thing that we ever imbibed the idea that there could not be fraternal relations between ourselves and others without a compromise of the truth, for it is my profound conviction that there can be, and ought to be, and must be. And this is especially the duty of our preachers. To my brother preachers I say: there is a noble army of preachers in our land, who in spite of denominational restraint, are doing a grand work for God and humanity. Now these men need the truths I hold and teach along the line of this union question; they need it for their own spiritual enlargement; they need it to give them a better equipment for their important service, and it is my bounden duty to help all men, especially preachers. And it is equally true that there are truths which they may have seen more clearly than I have, and I will do well sometimes to sit at their feet and learn of them.

Dr. Burns' statement in one of his letters, "When the preachers are ready for union, they will have it," is sufficiently true to make it worth our while to note it. As preachers, we are leaders; we are teachers; we have our influence for good or ill larger than other men. Let us use it aright. So I say, make one in the ministerial association whenever it is possible. There is no place where your courteous and honest utterances will tell for as much. Preach in your neighbor's pulpit when the opportunity offers. Mingle in an honorable manner with his congregation, and frankly and courteously and persistently do your duty. The work in London for which we are so thankful to-day was made possible by the frank and courteous and honest intercourse of Bro. Leonard with all classes of religious people. Did he compromise the truth? Was there any reason at all why he should? None.

(a) Then closer fraternal relations will be secured by each Disciple taking pains to deal justly and honorably with all points of agreement between themselves and others. There are many, I don't say enlarge them, but I do say, form the habit of recognizing those things about which we agree. We have said much about the points of difference; not too much, but too little, about the points of agreement. Let us rejoice that we do see some things eye to eye, and these agreements will be found to be many and important.

(b) Deal justly, too, with the "differences." They are neither few nor small, and they may well call for both prayer and patience. Let us hold such truths clearly and firmly, and all the more lovingly because they are unpopular, and in some cases offensive.

Under this head of "fraternal relations" I would say, it may be a duty to avoid some things, such as invidious comparisons between ourselves and others; such as railing at the real or supposed errors of others; such as publishing to the world just where the converts in our last meeting came from. These things add nothing to the dignity of the truth we preach, and do not in any sense make for peace.

(c) Let us also guard against the mistake of holding back our hand from helping others, because they cannot, at one step, see as we see, and take the position we now hold. If they could, they would not need our help. Our present duty is to help on this movement, from just where it is now, taking hold of men just where we find them. It is now they need help. Don't stand on the higher ground and complacently look on, ready to simply welcome them when they come up to you. God has not put you there simply to shout victory when the battle is won. He wants you to help now, and bear the toil of the campaign now. The Church of Christ can do its own shouting when it is "out of the wood." It will not need your welcome then as much as it needs your help and sympathy now. Steps toward union will be like steps toward any other great reform—slow and feeble, much stumbling, many mistakes. We shall be doing our duty if we are brave and patient and hopeful. So reach out your hand, and don't be fearful of compromising yourself or the truth. Keep close to Christ yourself, and He will save you from any serious error and take care of both you and His truth.

Then lastly, our duty towards Christian union is to demonstrate the possibility of a New Testament church in this nineteenth century.

Many of the leaders of religious thought of to-day are asking: Is it possible that the church of Jesus Christ can be maintained with no creed but the Scriptures; no laws but the law of the New Testament? I have a somewhat large acquaintance with denominational ministers, and almost all of them have grave doubts on this matter. What say they? Have you no creed? No form of church government? No authoritative laws for your guidance, except the Scriptures? And to my assurance that "these things are so," they shake their heads and say, we don't understand it. You must be in a "chaotic" state, says one. How do you try preachers for heresy? says another. And without a backbone, says a third. To all of which I can only respond, that we find the Bible work well, and are content, and have had no Briggs' trial yet, and could not have managed it worse than they did with all their human arrangements if we had. In fact, that human legislation for a divine institution is to us a folly and a disastrous mistake. But that divine legislation for a divine institution is what God has given and what we have received. Now these men do not love the creed. They allow that it is imperfect and clumsy, but have grown up from their youth looking on it as a necessity.

So I say, it is our duty to make the church of Jesus Christ thoroughly scriptural, that men shall admire the divine wisdom by which it is carried on; our public worship the most spiritual and devout; our preaching, in matter and spirit, true to the word of God; our attendance upon the ordinances, the most careful; our methods of work, the best; our missionary operations, the wisest. In short, our whole church life a demonstration of the possibility of a restoration of the New Testament church in its faith, its practice and its spirit. I think, too, that there is a way of using our history as a

people to forward this movement, and as such it seems to me a duty.

Our schools and colleges; our religious papers; our phenomenal growth; the harmony existing amongst this great body of Christians, who are simply united on the Bible, and the Bible alone, are all proofs of the possibility of this union. But let us use this history aright; for God, for Christ, for humanity; not boastfully, for the spirit of boasting is not the spirit of Christ; but humbly and thankfully. May God hasten the day when we all shall be one, and may He graciously use us in this service. I do not claim that the lines marked out in this paper are the wisest and best that could be followed, for there are others who can, I doubt not, see more clearly than I can. But I do believe such a course would be helpful, and that it is practicable. And I am also certain that every devout follower of Jesus who will humbly and earnestly strive to aid in the unity of the redeemed hosts will not fail to bless men and to glorify God. And again I say, may we be willing to be used in this work, and may God in His great mercy use us.

Fourth Annual Report of Children's Mission Bands in Ontario.

DEAR SISTERS:—It is with somewhat mingled feelings that I present this report; gratitude that I have been spared through another year, and permitted to meet so many of you again; pleasure at the amount of work done and the success which has attended it; and regret that some of our bands have done nothing this year, and that failure has overtaken us to some extent. Still, on the whole, we have much to be thankful for and much to encourage us for the future.

Let me refresh your memories as to our financial position a year ago, and what was done with the money. The sum in the Treasurer's hands at that time was \$369.55. Of this, \$300 was placed at the disposal of the O. C. W. B. M., to aid in sending out our missionary; \$30 was spent in a supply of books, pictures, etc., for Miss Rioch's work in Japan; \$20 was sent to Dr. Macklin for the support of our boy in China, and \$6.05 was sent to Mr. Munro on his pledge towards the Nankin Hospital fund, leaving a balance of \$23.50 in hand from last year.

BLENHIM.—The Blenheim "Little Gleaners" report about the same membership as last year. They have held their meetings regularly and have been busy all the year. The proceeds of entertainments, mite boxes and fees, amounted to \$8.67, \$7.00 of which was sent to the Treasurer; \$1.00 was spent on portrait of Miss Rioch, and frame for it, and the picture of Little Wang; the balance on incidental expenses. The making of a quilt added work and interest to the band. The quilt is still unsold; if they find a purchaser, the proceeds, which they think should be \$3.00, will be used in our work; if not, it will be held in reserve towards the outfit of our next missionary.

GUELPH.—Instead of a report from Guelph, I received a letter from the former leader, telling me that the "Buds of Promise" Mission Band had developed into a Junior Christian Endeavour Society, and expressing a wish that all the other bands might follow their example. They pledged themselves to raise as much money for our work as they did last year, which amounted to \$2.10. As to the advisability of this step, more may be said at another time. Their roll shows an active membership of 23, and five trial members.