

Original Contributions.

THE UNION QUESTION.

BY E. O. FORD.

The brotherhood to which we belong, known as Disciples, or Christians, originated in the desire of spiritually minded men to restore the lost harmony of the church; hence, in all their writings and preaching, this question of the union of Christians has ever been prominent. That this labor, that has now covered considerably over fifty years, has produced a salutary effect on the religious bodies around us is evident. Strong men in these bodies are coming to the front and speaking grand words on behalf of Christian union. The power of the creeds to bind the faith and consciences of men has been so weakened, that thousands now neither understand nor respect the creeds of the churches to which they belong. Besides this, there is a growing desire on the part of the more intelligent in all the religious bodies for the consummation of this grand work.

But, notwithstanding all that has been done, and all that is being done to perfect this work, the union does not come. The religious world is yet divided, and the prayer of our Lord is yet unanswered. This state of things, for which we are not responsible, compels us to ask ourselves, almost daily, what is our duty toward our religious neighbors? I confess I cannot always answer this question to my own satisfaction. I see earnest, faithful men laboring to turn men to God. True, they do not labor as I think they should, with an open Bible before them. Still they preach Christ to the people, and lead them to see, and feel their need of Him. Why, in order to promote Christian union, cannot I go in and assist my neighbor in this work? Just here is my trouble. To admit for one moment that the heart of this great brotherhood is not in the *spirit* of Christian union would be surrendering the grand object of our existence as a separate religious body.

If, then, we have the mind of Christ and His prayer is our prayer, that all His "may be one," why are we, seemingly, more separate than they all? It is a fact, that notwithstanding our plea for the union of Christians, put so prominently before the people, we are seldom found uniting with our religious neighbors in holding meetings or other church work. True, there are a few exceptions to this, but I am speaking of the rule. This position, so manifest, often causes our sectarian brethren to judge that we are the most sectarian of all. Now, unless we are able to show the world that we are consistent in the stand we take, we are placed at a disadvantage. Just here, as it appears to me, is where we need to be very careful. A great charge is committed to us, and we should make it our chief aim to be true to it and to our God.

If ever the religious world become united, it is very evident the union must be upon the word of God. Anything less or more than this never will be accepted as a basis of union. This position, taken by the Disciples in the early days of this effort to restore the lost harmony of the church, is the lever which is moving the whole religious world. Now the work to which we are called requires men of faith and wisdom. The religious bodies around us must be made to understand that while we are set for the union of God's people, we dare not, we cannot, compromise the word of God. It is when we are faithful to this trust, and decline to assist in the doing of that which we believe not to be in harmony with the teaching of Christ, that we are unfavorably judged. But if we are still true to the gospel, and insist on preaching it just as it has come to us, our influence will continue to tell for the good of all. But if we are faint hearted, and wink at the errors that are taught, and by our seemin-

acquiescence, leave the impression that we think this all right, we but weaken our cause. But we must be very careful lest while we are building up on the one hand, we are not pulling down with the other; while we are earnestly contending for "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," we do not lose the *spirit* of the gospel, and hence fail at an important point.

We conclude, then, that in order to promote Christian union, we should, in every possible way, consistent with the word of God, show our religious neighbors that we have the *spirit* of union, and are ever ready to co-operate with them in every good word and work, when we are not compelled by our actions or silence, to endorse that for which we have no "thus saith the Lord." In leading men to Christ we must be allowed to give the scriptural answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved." So long as we are compelled to endorse that for which we have no "thus saith the Lord," and are not allowed to give the gospel just as it is written, I do not see how we can consistently work with our neighbors in their efforts to build up what we believe to be unscriptural. In all our efforts to unite God's people, let it be understood that we have no authority to legislate for Christ. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II. Tim. iii. 16, 17.

Port Williams, April 26th, 1888.

MISSIONARY TOPICS.

No. II.

FOREIGN MISSIONS AMONG THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

Twelve years ago, last October, there was organized in Louisville, Ky., an association known as the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. It was the first attempt made by the Disciples, as a people, to take their share of the work of the conversion of the heathen world to Christ. The growth of the work under the auspices of this society has been full of encouragement. There are now missions in Scandinavia, Turkey, England, India, Japan and China. Schools have been opened in India, Turkey, Japan and China, for the education of children in secular and religious knowledge. Several chapels have been built for mission work, and several homes have been erected for the missionaries. Since the beginning of the work, 3,518 persons have been added to the churches. It is the purpose of this article to treat of the missions on distinctively heathen soil.

1. THE JAPANESE MISSION. In the fall of 1883, George T. Smith, wife and daughter, and Charles E. Garst and wife, were sent to Japan as our pioneer missionaries to that heathen nation. They located a mission at Akita, a town of 30,000 inhabitants, in the northwestern part of the country, in the midst of a territory containing 1,200,000 inhabitants, and in which there is no other missionary. The history of this mission has been an interesting one. In less than a year after their arrival on heathen soil, the missionaries had the supreme joy of baptizing their first convert; and so successful has been their work that the native church of the Disciples in Japan now numbers nearly one hundred souls. Sister Josephine Smith was summoned from missionary toils to heavenly triumphs early in the history of the mission, and a chapel has been built to her memory in Japan by the sisters in America. Two young ladies, Mrs. Calla R. Harrison and Kate V. Turner, have been added to the working force, and several of the Japanese converts are employed in the mission work. George T. Smith has recently taken another wife as a helper, who, with Eugene Snodgrass and wife, recently appointed, will soon give additional strength to the mission.

2. THE INDIAN MISSION. We have in India as missionaries, G. L. Wharton and wife, M. D. Adams and wife, G. W. Jackson and wife, and Miss Helen Levermore, in the employ of the foreign society, besides several lady missionaries who are supported by the Christian Woman's Board of Missions. Then there are two native helpers with their wives who labor regularly in the mission. This mission was established in 1832. Its growth has not been as great as that of the Japanese mission, but encouraging progress has been made. Much faithful work has been done by the missionaries, the fruits of which do not yet appear, but will, undoubtedly, in the future. Great numbers of the gospels and religious tracts have been sold to the natives, and much preaching has been done on every available occasion. A school of 250 boys is carried on continuously, and another of 25 girls; and the results of the teaching and influence of the missionaries over those young lives cannot be estimated. The prospects of this mission are very encouraging. India is opening up to the better influences of civilization with great rapidity, and the prejudices of ages are fast giving way before more enlightened ideas.

3. THE TURKISH MISSION. The work of this mission is carried on by three ordained missionaries and nine helpers, all of them natives of Turkey or of America. One of the missions is at Constantinople, and another at Smyra, the seat of one of the churches addressed by John in the book of Revelation. The work of this mission is carried on under great difficulties, on account of the poverty of the members of the mission churches, and the determined opposition from Mohammedans and others. Yet the outlook is promising, and the work has the hearty sympathy of the brotherhood in America.

4. THE CHINESE MISSION. There are at present several persons engaged in this mission. Dr. W. E. Wacklin, who went out as a medical missionary, has been there several years. E. P. Hearndon and A. F. H. Shaw have gone there more recently; and E. T. Williams and wife, and F. E. Meigs and wife, went out late in 1887. This mission is yet too young to report results; but the missionaries are full of confidence and hope for the work, and earnestly call for more laborers for that field. E. T. Williams writes that ten young men are needed at once, and urges the Board of the Foreign Society to send that number.

These are the distinctively heathen missions, under the control of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. The men and women employed in those missions are persons of superior abilities. Any one of them could command the choicest place, and fill with honor the most coveted position at home. Some of them have left honored positions and the most flattering prospects, to spend their days among the benighted heathen. E. T. Williams went from the pastorate of the central Christian church of Cincinnati, one of the choicest places in the gift of the brotherhood, and from the pleasant environments of a good home and hosts of life-long friends. F. E. Meigs vacated the office of State Sunday-school Evangelist in Missouri, an honorable place of great responsibility, to become an exile from his home and his country for Christ and China. G. L. Wharton resigned the pastorate of the church in Buffalo, N. Y., one of the best churches in the country, to brave the dangers of fever, wild beasts, and pagans in India. They are all men and women of strong convictions, liberal spirit, comprehensive understanding of the truth, noble purpose; they are brave, consecrated, Christ-like. And they will stamp the work under their care with the excellencies of their own lives.

These are our representatives to the heathen world. They have given themselves to the work which God has committed to them, and to us alike. They have shown more courage, more self-sacrifice, more heroism than we. They have gone out depending