

# The Christian.

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## EDITORIAL.

It is both pleasant and profitable at the beginning of another year which brings us so much nearer the day in which the Judge shall decide our eternal destiny to examine our actions and our true standing in His sight.

Where do we stand? If we are members of the Church of Christ can we belong to a better society on earth? Is it necessary for us to belong to another church or to be anything else than true Christians? Men may think it is and feel so confident that we should be something besides Christians and have another name and church besides the name and Church of Christ as to impose a name upon us if we refuse to take one ourselves. But does our Saviour require us to bear another name and to belong to another Church than His? To ask such questions is to answer them. Most assuredly He does not. If we are not really in His Church or if we are false members, we are condemned. Or if we assume the Christian merely to condemn those who hold other names, we are evidently wrong. But if we claim to be Christians and members of the Church of Christ because He has redeemed us by His blood and we love and obey Him and are perfectly satisfied with His Church, His name, His salvation, His Spirit and His Word, who can condemn us for refusing other names and other creeds? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

When the various lines which divide men were abolished by the cross and Jews and Gentiles, high and low, rich and poor, were gathered into "one body" they were called Christians first at Antioch. That name they never afterwards renounced but confessed it even in the flames of martyrdom.

Some allege that it was the enemies of Christ who called the disciples Christians first at Antioch. If so, His enemies for once in the world's history did a just, and wise, and good thing, for no better name could be given to the disciples than that of their Master. But did the enemies give them that name? No conclusion could be more absurd. The enemies of Jesus most bitterly denied that He was Christ; how then could they call His disciples Christians?

Others say that they gave themselves this name. If so, they did what was wise and approved of God.

But others contend that inspired men called them by that name (of which we have no doubt) In doing so they called the bride by the name of the bridegroom and all who hold fast His faith and confess His name before men He will confess before His Father and the holy angels. Where Christ's religion alone is held His authority is everything and His plain word answers every question. When awakened sinners now ask, "What shall we do to be saved?" different answers

are given by men of different sects. One says, "Come to the anxious seat and pray and be prayed for that the Lord will come and give you peace." Another will say, "Stand up to show that you desire the prayers of the church." Another, "You can do nothing." And still another, "You need do nothing, Jesus has done it all; only believe." Now each of these answers has "a show of wisdom" and may appear to each party as the very thing the Lord has commanded. But where did He tell His apostles to give such answers? Where did He tell anxious enquirers to do such things? and echo answers, Where? Men differ on nothing so widely as on telling sinners how to come to Christ. And still there is nothing which Christ and His apostles have made more plain and positive. His great heart seemed to yearn to make known to the lost His dying love and hasten to save them before they perish.

In His final commission (Matt. xxviii. 19-20. Mark xvi. 15-16), He charged His apostles to teach the saved all things which He had commanded them. Without there specifying what the "all things" were, but when He spoke of saving men He tells plainly and positively what they were to do to be saved as if to preclude the possibility of a mistake in either preacher or hearer. And to still increase the certainty the apostles were to wait till they received the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth. Thus qualified the apostles preached to sinners Christ's gospel and when their hearts were pierced and they enquired, "What shall we do?" they told them in the very words of Christ. When they believed His Word and did the things Jesus had commanded, they were saved and filled with joy and peace in the Holy Spirit whether the number was one or thousands.

The Disciples of Christ now preach to sinners the same gospel and tell enquirers the same things the apostles did. And all who now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart and truly repent and are baptized are saved now as they were then and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit now as they did then, for the promise is to as many as the Lord our God shall call. Those who faithfully observe all things which Jesus commanded the apostles to teach the saved will meet Him in glory. Hence the unspeakable blessings of Jesus' own system. Those who take His yoke and learn of Him will find rest to their souls. "Their faith does not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2-5.) "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 36.)

We are reminded at this season of the empty deception of sectarianism and the strong desire for the union of the people of God. Very many agree to ignore their divisions for one week and meet as Christians to seek in prayer God's forgiveness and grace. "The Week of Prayer" unmistakably testifies:

1st. That sectarianism is not necessary to obtain the blessing of God, but rather obstructs the communications of His grace. Hence it is laid aside.

2nd. That there is a desire for the union of all God's people.

3rd. That such must be Christian union. An attempt to unite all God's people on a sectarian basis would be like that of making a rope of sand.

4th. That it is a spiritual benefit to ignore sectarianism, even for a week.

In all of these the Disciples fully concur, and they speak volumes in favor of an unmixed Christianity, which we feel confident that if rightly understood would meet the approval of all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

We would heartily join in the week of prayer, but for serious reasons; among them the following: They only profess to lay aside sectarianism for one week out of the fifty-two. We are bound to give it up all the time. They also bind their members

to suppress such truth as will offend sectarian feelings. For example,—Should a sinner be so convinced of his lost and ruined state as to ask, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" and a teacher rise and read in Acts ii. 38, the very answer which the apostle was inspired to give to that question, he would be considered as a grievous offender, though it was the answer Jesus directed the apostle to give and the Holy Spirit inspired him to give. And they who gladly received it and obeyed were saved, and to hold good to all whom the Lord our God shall call. Yet it is strictly forbidden lest it should offend sectarianism which is not dead but sleepeth.

The Disciples of Christ hold the only ground on which God's people can unite without the violation of any command in the Bible or the surrender of any blessing in the Gospel. Things outside of the Bible divide Christians, not things in the Bible. There is *common* ground and *disputed* ground held among men. On the first, Christians can all unite; on the second they cannot. All who love the Lord can agree to hold the Bible as the true guide and creed. This is *common* ground, and it is no offence to propose it to such. But some propose so hold along with the Bible a human creed. One proposes a certain creed, another the creed of a different party. This is *disputed* ground and it is an offence to offer the creed of one party to another. The Disciples hold the Divine Creed.

Again, those who love the Lord take no offence at being called Christians, because it is *common* ground on which all can unite and lose no heavenly benefit by it. But some propose along with it a party name. This is *disputed* ground. It is an offence to ask one party to take the name of another. The Disciples ask all to take the name of Christ.

Baptism has also a *common* and a *sectarian* or *disputed* ground. The Disciples hold that immersion is proper baptism. This has been believed from the beginning by leading men of all denominations. It has never been a matter of dispute by any man or body of men worthy of notice. No church will require a man to be sprinkled who has been immersed because they consider immersion wrong. This is *common* ground.

Some hold sprinkling to be baptism, but it is not a general belief. It is in dispute, and always has been since its introduction, and will be until it is abandoned. Some say it is baptism, others it will do instead of immersion, others deny it altogether. It is *disputed* ground. We ask all to accept the ground which all hold to be right.

The same is true of the *subjects* of baptism. We believe that a true penitent believer is a proper subject of baptism. No one denies this who believes in baptism at all. It was never in dispute, but held by all denominations. It is *common* ground.

Some hold that infants are proper subjects of baptism, others deny it. It is now and always has been in dispute since its introduction. Some hold that all infants are fit subjects, others deny this, and claim that infants of believing parents only are fit. Others reject it altogether. It is *disputed* ground. Thinking men cannot be bound by that which is not once mentioned in the Bible.

The same is true of the Lord's Supper. Many things are held by some that are rejected by others, while there are many things which all acknowledge to be right. We plead for the common ground as regards this institution. So with many other things in the Christian system. There are grounds on which all who love the Lord and His truth can unite, if all endeavored to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.

Let us glance at our obligations as Christians. Christ has released us from the commandments and doctrines of men that He might have our whole affections and our undivided energies in spreading His