

Contributions.

Our Attitude Towards the Denominations.

T. L. FOWLER.

There are three words involved in this subject upon which the disposition of the question depends. They are, "We, You and Attitude," but the last in the series is the first in importance. This then may truly be said to be a question of "Attitude." Much in the affairs of life depends upon what is involved in this word. Attitude is for the purpose of producing effect. Miss the attitude and you lose the effect.

There are various attitudes which may be predicated of the body producing certain effects. As, for instance, a graceful attitude producing admiration, a firm attitude producing caution and a threatening attitude producing fear. There are other kinds which we might specify in further illustration, as a striking attitude, for instance.

This is the kind, in the estimation of some, best adapted to the body religious, for at least two reasons: First, it implies not mere posture but sentiment and action, especially action; sentiment in action—vigorous action—is the idea. Secondly, it implies proximity, that is, a coming within striking distance. This enables the combatant, according to Paul, to beat something more substantial than the air.

It is not only a question of attitude, but of "our attitude"—the attitude of the "Disciples of Christ"—towards other religious bodies variously denominated.

Who are the Disciples? If they are not the true followers of Christ, it is not because they do not aim to be such. If their churches are not true churches of Christ, it is not because they have not chosen the proper standard.

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of a structure, it is a temple—our building, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord."

Denominationalism is division. This, of course, no one can deny. Its attitude to the world is not that of one body, but of many bodies presumably recognizing but one head. This is monstrous!

God is represented in his Word as a God of order. Nature demonstrates him to be such, but among those claiming to be his reconciled and redeemed children—members of his family, over which he presides, and in which Christ is eldest Brother—we see confusion and strife. For symmetry we have deformity, for beauty, shame, and for order, confusion.

Denominationalism is wrong. It cannot be defended. Its spirit is wholly evil. It is productive of bigotry, envy, jealousy, hatred, and the meanest and most inveterate kind of persecution. All are more or less acquainted with the persecuting spirit of the Church of Rome. That the Protestant churches under similar circumstances would be much different, no one acquainted with their history would affirm. A reliable historian has said: "All parties of Christians when in power have been guilty of persecution."

A radical difference between Christianity and denominationalism is this: The former implies a recognition of the authority of Christ in everything; the latter does not. The one implies full allegiance to Christ, the other full allegiance to party. This is the kernel of the whole matter. From this the mischief springs. To the Christian, Christ and his Word are of first importance; with the sectarian it is his party and his creed. One builds upon Christ and delights in his Word; the other stands upon doctrines, the commandments of men, and glories in his church. One is a lover and advocate of Christianity; the other of churchianity.

If we would know our attitude towards the denominations we must remember that our plea is a solemn, living and persistent protest against denominationalism. We must remember that we are set for the downfall of partyism in religion by every legitimate means and for the restoration of the church in its primitive simplicity and unity. On this account our plan has been and will be unpopular with every lover of party. For that reason we have been hated and misrepresented and persecuted.

Ours is the single ship navigating the stream against the current of sectarianism. This brings us face to face with every denominational craft, and subjects us to their reproach. Head our ship with the current and our reproach will cease. Do this, and we ignore our plea, stultify our profession and descend to the low plain of sectarianism.

The apostles of our Lord furnish us an example for action. Our position in the religious world is similar to theirs in this respect. There were then the popular religious bodies and an unpopular one—the despised sect. The apostles were members of the latter. From the former they suffered reproach and persecution. The reproach could have been avoided. The way was open. Paul saw it, but could not enter, for it was the way of compromise. A modified Gospel was the demand—a clinging to Christ with one hand and to Moses and the law with the other. "If I preach circumcision," says the apostle, "then is the offence of the cross ceased;" but "God forbid

that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our arraignment of denominationalism and our evidently scriptural contention for Christian union have occasioned the disfavor of other religious bodies, have brought upon our head a copious shower of unlovely epithets.

There is a way out of this, however. A modified Gospel as usual is the popular demand. Let us, while holding on to Christ with one hand, reach out and lay hold of the skirts of denominationalism with the other and the offence of our plea will cease. This is the sure and certain way to denominational recognition. True disciples, however, do not chafe under this reproach, but rather mourn that they are not counted worthy to suffer more for the name of Christ.

In our attitude towards the denominations it is becoming of us to be firm in the maintenance of principles and in our advocacy of the whole truth of the Gospel.

Let us be faithful at all times and in all places and under all circumstances to Christ and his Word and we need give ourselves little concern about attitude. But lest we should become unduly lifted up on account of the consistency, grandeur and dignity of our position compared with that of others, let us remember that the majority of the members of denominational churches are much superior to their systems, while but few of us live up, as we should, to the high standard of the Gospel.

It would be uncharitable in us to close our eyes to all the good that has been done in the world and is being done by denominational churches. Vice has been suppressed, temperance promoted and the Scriptures scattered broadcast over the earth like autumn leaves before the wind. This, however, has not been done by denominationalism, but in spite of it.

The majority of Christians in the past have been superior to the parties to which they belonged; and that this number is increasing is evident from the reconstruction of party creeds and the new and loose construction of party dogmas. All this should be highly appreciated and with every other good feature heartily commended. We should hail with delight every new evidence of reform as a harbinger of that better day when the Gospel shall prevail, the division walls broken down and the peace of God established.

To this end let us assume not a cold, haughty and censorious attitude towards the denominations, but one that is loving, courteous and conciliatory. Let us mingle with them freely and co-operate with them in every good work. Stand by them when they preach Christ, and fearlessly yet kindly reprove them when they are unfaithful to Bible truth. Let it be well understood at the outset that the whole area of Bible truth is the common ground upon which we can labor with them in the Gospel.

That God may enable us to lovingly and wisely and efficiently contend for the faith, and that his purposes may be accomplished in us, is my earnest prayer.

We cannot all be First, but T. A. SLOCUM of 186 West Adelaide St., Toronto, Ont., must feel more than ordinary pride in the success of his valuable preparation for the cure of lung diseases, viz.: SLOCUM'S OXYGENIZED EMULSION OF PURE COD LIVER OIL. No preparation of the kind has ever met with the same success in the same time, and the testimonials in its favor are all from the most authentic sources. Every druggist sells it. 35 cents per bottle.

The Commission vs. Denominationalism.—III.

T. B. KNOWLES.

The importance of "Rightly dividing the word of truth" will appear the more clearly when viewed in the light of scriptural statements touching their own divine mission to our lost race. Mark the following: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."* The grand purpose of the Scriptures as here stated, being the revelation of the Christ to man, in order that man may be brought to the Christ; it follows, without need of further argument, that that part of the Word of God giving the strongest testimony in proof of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth and the clearest revelation of the plan of salvation through his name, is the most important and of the highest value to our race to-day. Now, let it be noted that while the Scriptures clearly affirm their own inspiration, and that they are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work," they nowhere affirm that they are in all parts alike clear in their testimony and proof concerning the divine claim of Jesus of Nazareth, or in giving a revelation of the plan of salvation.

Of course it will not be questioned by any one that there is the widest contrast between the Old and New Testaments in this respect. The full, clear revelation of the Gospel in the New is not to be found in the Old, from Genesis to Malachi. The first ray of light thrown out upon the darkness of a world's destiny is the obscure utterance, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thee on the head, and thou shalt bruise him on the heel." (Conant's translation.) Scarcely another word is spoken that would throw light upon the theme of man's redemption for the next two thousand years. Then we have brought to view the brightest star that appears in the prophetic heavens during that long starlight-age of over two thousand years in the promise to Abraham: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." In this promise, which the apostle, writing to the Galatians, calls "The Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham," is to be found the fullest revelation of the redemptive scheme that was given from Adam to Moses. But who, I ask, could possibly gain therefrom anything like a correct knowledge of the person, mission and kingdom of the Messiah? Or who, though he were to accept with all the heart what is therein revealed, could, upon this knowledge alone, enter into the kingdom of Jesus Christ to-day? No one! For the Gospel which the apostles were commanded to preach "To all nations for the obedience of faith" was not brought to light in that promise to Abraham. Not a single person therefore during the whole patriarchal age ever heard or believed the Gospel with all its sublime facts, precepts and promises, as now given for our faith and obedience. And the same was true of the Jewish age, from the giving of the Law to the preaching of John, even under the increased light of prophecy and the splendid typical service of the tabernacle. Nay, the pro-

phets themselves comprehended not the grand things they uttered with respect to the Gospel age when they "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." It is safe to say that the guileless enquiry of the Ethiopian eunuch, "I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other?" truly voiced the unenlightened condition of all Israel with regard to their promised Messiah. And such must ever be the obscured vision of every one who attempts to grope his way amid types and prophecies with only the dim light of the Old Testament for his guide. Let us press this enquiry still closer and suppose that our environments to day were the same as those amid which the apostles lived during the public ministry of Jesus. Would our knowledge and faith respecting the Christ and his kingdom be any more full or correct than were theirs? I think not. It is not reasonable to suppose that we, with their environments, would think and act differently from what it is recorded they did. What then would be our condition? Let us learn from theirs. Not one of them understood that "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day;" nor "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Nay, when their Master announced to them that he would be put to death, and rise again the third day, they resented it with, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." Again, it is recorded, "They kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." And on the morning of the resurrection, when Peter and John came to the sepulchre and found it empty, "As yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." "And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen by her (Mary), believed not," etc. They rejected the crowning proof of Christ's divinity; for he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). They did not, therefore, believe in him, the Son of God and Redeemer of man, as the Gospel now teaches and requires. And such evidently would be the condition of the religious world to-day with their surroundings.

We are safe in concluding, then, that neither do the Old Testament Scriptures, nor would the four Gospels, were their testimony respecting Jesus Christ to close with his death and burial, nor would their united testimony furnish the proof of his divinity most needed by man, nor give a sufficiently clear revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven and the law of induction into it, to enable sinners to enter therein. But it was promised the apostles that they should be guided into all truth, "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come," and that they should "receive power" to make the truth known to others. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." A marvellous change, surely, in these apostles! Disbelievers in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, to become the advocates of his resurrection and deity, in order to faith in him, among all nations! It will require stronger divine influences and higher degrees of knowledge than they have received up to the time of the death of Christ, to change and fit them for such a responsible work. It is well known that the apostles uttered not a word in public along this line before the first Pentecost after the resurrection, and that on that day "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak . . . as the Spirit gave them utterance," for the first time, the grand

* John v. 39; 2 Tim. iii. 15; John xx. 31.