

The Christian Helper.

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* Not for that we have doubtless over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." II. Cor. 1: 3.

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THE BAPTIST SOCIAL UNION.

According to the common saying: "union is strength." The first record of this truth is to be found in Genesis. When our whole earth was of one language and of one speech, the nations banded together to build a city and a tower of refuge therein. "And the Lord said, behold the people is one and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." But this earliest attempt at a merely human union, not founded on any recognition of God as the friend of man, and of men as brethren, ended in a demonstration of the folly of any such schemes of selfish aggrandizement. The Lord sent upon them confusion of speech, and the presumptuous builders were scattered far and wide.

By way of contrast to this confusion of tongues on the plain of Shinar was the miraculous gift of tongues at the day of Pentecost. Then the foundations of the Christian church were being laid,—a society that still exists, the oldest known to man, and which is yet destined to fill the earth. The Holy Spirit then indicated the real basis of enduring union as being not merely that of man with man, but of man with, and in harmony with, God.

While every church is a Christian society, the characteristic of social union should especially distinguish Baptist churches, as it did the churches of apostolic times. Baptist churches are independent and voluntary communities. They do not form part of an ecclesiastical system or of some larger organization; but having to rely upon themselves it is their duty to utilize all possible agencies for good within their reach. Their vitality depends on their union with Christ; their strength and usefulness in great part depend on the union of the members with each other. Social union is manifested in the comfortable companionable inter-

course, communion and sympathy of Christian with his fellow Christian, as being all the parts or members of one living body. By means of such a figure the apostle Paul pictures the perfection of social union in a church: "the members should have the same care one for another: and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (I. Cor. xii. 25, 26.)

But as Christians our sympathies and co-operation are not to be limited to the particular society or church of which we are members. We are to do good and to render service to all men, specially to all Christian men, and in particular, we think, to those who are of that denominational family to which we ourselves belong. As Baptists, the times demand that we should help each other, not merely "in corruptible things, such as silver and gold," but in matters of counsel and advice, in schemes of well-doing, in extensions of Church and Christian enterprise.

The lay-element in Christianity is that which must revolutionize the church and evangelize the world. The importance and significance given to the ministration of members of the churches of late years is one of the tokens that the vicarious system so long adopted, of trusting everything to the hands of the ministers, has been found insufficient to bear the burden put upon it. We therefore commend to our readers the movement at the last Convention which met at Toronto with the aim of establishing a society to be called the *Ontario Baptist Social Union*. This is to be managed by lay-members of our churches, and its object is (as stated in the constitution) "the encouragement of more intimate association among the Baptists of this city and Province, and the consequent promotion of the cause of Christ."

There is much that may be accomplished by such a society as this. There are many subjects of vast interest to us and our denomination upon which Scripture is silent, and which it is left to us, as it is to every church, to work out for ourselves. The duties and responsibilities of members, the best means of conducting weekly-meetings; how to reach effectively the masses in cities and towns, how to quicken spiritual interests in the rural dis-

tricts, how best to distribute our resources in home and foreign mission work, how and in what direction to influence the governing bodies so as to secure the enactment of laws and by-laws in the interests of morality and for purposes of social amelioration—these and many other topics of moment may be profitably discussed, so that a sound and intelligent denominational opinion thereupon may be formed, and when formed made effective.

IS CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE?

Is the religion of Christ a failure? is a question which seems to be constantly cropping up, even in quarters where we would least expect it.

In a rather remarkable sermon recently preached near Bolton, England, by the Bishop of Manchester, he said

"No one would say to-day that Christianity had done in the world what it might reasonably have been expected to have done. He could not account for the failure. It was easy to say if it were God's work it surely must have prospered more than it had done. That was not his way of arguing. He could see, from its own inherent excellence, its own admirable structure, its own entire harmony with, and adaptation to, every want of nature, that Christianity must be Divine. But if they ask him why it has failed—why there were perhaps 50,000 out of the 50,000 people in Bolton and the neighbourhood living as if there were no such thing as Christianity—he could not explain it; he could only say it illustrated that important truth of the power which man had in his freedom of will to resist and to quench the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost."

And a religious contemporary of this province, in a recent issue, makes the following moan: "In religion has evil set in."

"The ingathering into our membership of people who have reached middle or advanced age seems to be becoming both less frequent and more difficult than it once was. The engrossing claims of business, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, render it almost impossible to secure a devout and earnest attention to the gospel message, from men who have grown gray and seared amid earthly strife."

Now it seems to us that such doubts as these, whether written or spoken, are evidences of weakness and want of faith on the part of their authors, and that they are calculated to do very material harm to the cause of Christ. The world is shrewd enough to know that if ministers of the gospel themselves doubt the power of the message they preach, its importance to others cannot be very great: hence it comes that those hesitating soldiers of the