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EDITORIAL.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

(Continued.)

As the Disciples regard baptism as a burial with Christ and also a resurrection to walk with Him in newness of life, they do not intend to bury any one in water until he has died to sin by his faith in the death of Christ. If this is done it is a mistake and such a one is not buried with Christ. In this, as in all other cases, death precedes burial and burial the resurrection. So the Scriptures plainly teach baptism is a *positive* rather than a *moral* institution of Christ and derives all its virtues from the will of Him who has appointed it and not from the elements used in its observance. The virtue which healed the bitten Jews was not in the brazen serpent but in Him who commanded Moses to raise it and commanded them to look on it. The virtue which healed the Syrian leper was not in the Jordan, but in Him whose prophet told him to bathe himself seven times in the river. So with every positive institution of God. It is right, because He has commanded it. And it is the channel through which His promised mercy and power will most certainly flow to the obedient believer. Baptism is not an exception.

The Disciples teach those who are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus that they are not their own, but are bought with a price and are to glorify God in their bodies and spirits which are God's. To this end they are referred to the Lord's personal instructions in the sermon on the mount and other places and to the letter which the Apostles wrote to the saved. They are exhorted to continue in the Apostles' teaching, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. They are taught that by watchfulness and prayer and by the study of God's word they will be so strengthened as to overcome the world and gain others to Christ. They are warned against neglecting the great salvation and departing from the holy commandment delivered to them.

The Disciples believe firmly that the Old and New Testaments contain God's only revelation to men respecting human duty and destiny. While they believe the Old Testament to be God's word as well as the New they recognize this difference between them. God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. (Heb. i. 1-2). They do not believe that He has spoken to the Jewish fathers by His Son, but by the prophets, nor that He has spoken to us by the prophet, but by His Son. We have the great benefit of hearing what He said to the fathers by the prophets. Some of these instructions are suitable to us and some are not. But all was suitable to the fathers. He has spoken to us by His Son who is the very brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power. The prophets and pious fathers desired to see one so bright and glorious, but died without the sight and God has spoken to us by Him. The New Testament is the Disciples' perfect guide and the Son of the living God their perfect teacher as well as their complete Saviour.

The Disciples now, as of old, come together on the first day of the week to break bread. (Acts xx. 7). They regard the Lord's day and the Lord's supper as the two commemorative institutions of the New Testament, one pointing to the Lord's death and the other to His resurrection, and they meet every Lord's day to remember both and to

worship the Father through Him that liveth and was dead. They invite all to partake of the Lord's supper whom the Lord declares in His last commission shall be saved. If the proper officers are present they preside at the Lord's table, but if accidentally absent the church decides who shall lead as in other orderly worship. The absence of a man does not prevent them from remembering their Lord's death.

One peculiarity of the Disciples is their belief that all the children of God should be united in one body in Christ. They believe sectarianism to be sinful—that Jesus prayed for the oneness of His people because it was not only desirable but possible. They believe that there are Catholic or common grounds on which all who love our Lord Jesus Christ can unite without the sacrifice of one truth or one principle of Christianity, and they are not without hope that very large multitudes of God's people will yet see and embrace common ground and abandon that which is sectarian and be united in one body in Christ. Believing that such union is desirable and possible it is their desire to hold and advocate Catholic or common ground and they ask all candid Christians to examine their principles.

I. The NAME on which all true Christians can unite is not a sectarian, but a Catholic name. A Methodist could not reasonably ask a Presbyterian to give up the latter and take the Methodist name. "It may suit you" he would justly reply, "but I always liked my own name better and why should I give it up?" Neither could a Baptist reasonably ask one or both of these to give up their names and be called Baptists. The same is true of Episcopalians and of all such names. Their own people love them, but others do not. But suppose the name of Christ is mentioned, or the name Christian. There is nothing offensive in that name. The Methodist says: O, I profess to be a Christian and I can see nothing wrong in being called a Christian. Ask him, Do you give up any truth of the Bible by being called by that name? Does it destroy your spirituality? or interfere with your drawing near to God through Christ? And to every such question he must answer no. So of every other intelligent man that loves the Saviour. He will answer, "It can't be wrong. If we are true Christians that is the main thing, and no name is better." Well, the Disciples hold that name and wish to have no other but Christians or Disciples of Christ. They were first called Christians in Antioch, when national and all other distinctions were ignored and Jews and Gentiles were gathered into the fold of Jesus. "But," says one, "Is it not selfish and arrogant in you to take that name? and do you not thereby condemn others who are known by other names although they are as pious and true as yourselves?" We answer our motives are not selfish or to condemn others, but to be right ourselves. It is right to be called Christians, for you claim to be one. Is it wrong for us to be Christians? Certainly not. If all are not satisfied to be called Christians and *nothing else*, can that be a reason why we should not? If I happen to live among neighbors who do not practice family worship and I still read the Scriptures and pray daily in my house, would any one impeach my motives and blame me for doing it to condemn my neighbors? I would do it to be right myself and would be glad for my neighbors to do the same. So in the case in hand. We accept the name Christian because it is right and not to condemn others, but rather to encourage them to be right also, because it is the name and the only name on which the people of God can unite.

II. All Christians can't unite on a sectarian creed. It would be unreasonable for one man to ask another to take a human creed and give up his own. But it would be quite reasonable to ask others to give up every creed but the Bible. All that love the Lord have a high respect for the book of God and are ready to say, I believe the Bible and hold

it as the true creed. Well, the Disciples hold the Bible, and no other book, as a binding creed, and they ask others to accept the Bible and no other creed. This is common ground, but any other creed is sectarian and can never unite God's children.

But, says one, all do not interpret the Bible alike and there must be some standard of interpretation in shape of a creed. Well, the same is true of human creeds. All do not interpret them alike and they need a standard of interpretation also, and these standards would need other standards, etc., etc.

The Bible is a plain book which God has given to man to guide him and by which He will judge man at last. All may not interpret every part of the Bible the same, but all can understand his duty by studying it and all the intelligent and good will agree to make the Bible their creed. It is common ground.

III. Baptism has common and sectarian grounds. All who believe in baptism at all agree that the immersion of a proper person is Christian baptism. The leading men of all communions acknowledge this. No man or body of men worthy of notice deny this. It is common ground. The Disciples hold this firmly. Some say that sprinkling is also baptism; others, that it will do instead of baptism. Others deny it altogether. Sprinkling has been always in dispute since its introduction. This is sectarian ground.

Again. None denies that a true believer is a proper subject of baptism. This is *common ground* and was never in dispute. Some say that infants are proper subjects, some say *all* infants; others deny this and say only infants of *believers*, while others deny that any infants are proper subjects. Ever since its introduction infant baptism has been in dispute and will ever be until it is abandoned. Men will not agree to be bound by that which is not once named in the Bible. In all this the Disciples hold the common ground and reject the sectarian.

They claim to hold the grounds upon which all that love the Lord can unite. But if they are wrong in anything they hold, and any one can from the word of God show that wrong, their principles bind them to abandon it. They have no other standard but the New Testament to guide them and they will regard any person who shows them by that wherein they are wrong as their best friend and the discovery of their mistake as a most happy circumstance in their history. Such are the sentiments of the writer and it is believed to be the sentiments of the Disciples generally.

We have noticed that when good people are near their end how close they wish to get to each other. How little they think of human creeds then and how dear the name of Jesus seems to them and His word and those who love the Lord, and how often have we wished that this had begun much earlier in life.

The real union of God's children has more to do with the heart than even with the head. The Scriptures plainly show this. The closer men are drawn to Jesus the easier it will be for them to unite.

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