

## The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B.,

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## EDITORIAL.

## WILL THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST DIVIDE INTO DENOMINATIONS?

A great plea with the Disciples of Christ is the *union* of God's people. They believe sectarianism to be opposed to the Lord's prayer recorded in the 17th of John and subservive of the world's salvation. Those who are unfavorable to their work predict for them in due time the same divisions that obtain among others. They say other religious bodies have divided, and what is there to prevent them from doing the same?

We feel convinced that the Disciples will never so divide. Not because they are so much better than others, more pious, more self-sacrificing or anxious to glorify God, but because the Christian system is so far above, and so much better than any sectarian system can be. We don't deny that from among the Disciples men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them; but no men find it so hard to form a new denomination as the Disciples, even when they are anxious for it. It has been tried over and over again by men, learned, talented and influential, but every time to realize a failure. Moses E. Lard wrote in his Quarterly, over 30 years ago, as follows: "Very early in our effort at reformation Dr. Thomas of Virginia made a vigorous attempt to become the head of a party or sect formed of material collected from our ranks, and holding as its characteristic tenet the doctrine of materialism. He long and obstinately persisted in his effort, and would occasionally find a person weak enough to accept his nonsense as part and essence of revelation. Soon, however, he began to wane, and soon his adherents began in shame to hide their heads. Now we hear his dishonored name mentioned not once in half a score of years. This attempt, too, was made at a time when we were comparatively weak, at a time when we had not, as we have now, a thousand noble sentinels on the walls of Zion, imbued with an intense love of the truth, and in a never-lessening zeal for its purity; sentinels, who with sleepless eye watch even the most distant approach of error. Yet if the attempt then failed, what, we may confidently ask, would be the end of a similar attempt now?"

Bro. Lard says, "Next to Dr. Thomas, J. B. Ferguson tried his hand at effecting a rent in our ranks." Ferguson was a man of extraordinary powers to draw and charm an audience, and at the head of a large church in a fashionable city, admired as leader, his influence was uncommon. He charmed the multitude who flocked to hear him by every attraction he could gather, first from a post-mortem gospel, then from universalism, then from spiritualism, till at last he was found a vagrant lecturer against the Bible, and his followers buried in apostasy.

After this Walter Scott Russell tried the same work as Ferguson, and with similar results. He and his deluded followers, after an inglorious notoriety, sank into a deserved oblivion, after a death-struggle to wreck a church. These awful monuments of God's displeasure at those who attempt to divide and ruin His people, loudly warn others against such an attempt, and confirm the impression that the Disciples will not divide.

The impression is deepened and strengthened by the ordeals of the past 50 years. Who can describe, or even imagine, the angry strife and divisions the question of slavery has produced in the United States. The South determined to uphold the institution at the cost even of their lives; and the North just as determined to crush it to death. Churches North and South had to face the storms, and although others divided, the Disciples did not; and when the question culminated in the war of the secession, and fathers, husbands and sons, rushed to arms, the South to kill and conquer the North, and the North to kill and conquer the South, and each party blamed the other for the slaughter of dearest friends, and the trouble bore heavily upon the churches, they did not divide. Godly men on either side reasoned with such as had intervals of reason, and plead for their brethren across the line; showing that the war was no fault of theirs, and that their union with Christ and with one another was stronger and more enduring than life. The war continued. The floods came, and the wind blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not.

Now the war is over, slavery is dead forever, and the Disciples North and South are one body. For this we heartily thank God for the past and take courage for the future. By God's great power and love the Disciples will be one body till Jesus comes.

We cannot conclude without showing some of the reasons why it is so difficult for two disciples to divide. First. While many are in favor of different parties (not so many now as formerly), the Disciples believe in *one body* just as in *one spirit* and cannot consent to splitting that body or forming another. Second. Every body must have a name to distinguish it. Those who are willing to bear the name of a man or of some thing in the Bible can consent if need be to change their name. But Disciples have no name but the name of Christ. He is their husband, they were baptized in his name and cannot be known by another. On this point they have borne the test of seventy years. Men learned and illiterate have tried to fasten on them the name Campbellite, but it never sticks, always and in every place it is rejected. Hence they could not get a name if they tried to split the body.

Again, the Disciples are taught the difference between *faith* and opinion, and the Holy Spirit says that there is one faith but does not say there is one opinion. The one faith has never made a split, it never will. Now Disciples may differ on opinions as they

did in the apostles' days, but hold the one faith. If a man ask a Disciple what he is to do to be saved he will repeat to him the answer Jesus and the apostles gave to such. All the Disciples will do this because they hold the one faith. It would be very hard for a Disciple to split away from this and give an answer different from Christ's. Let all Disciples be much in company with Jesus, hear what he says to disciples and observe what Jesus does and they will have no desire for a split. This comes from pleasing self and Christ pleased not himself. "I am among you as one that serveth." The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, etc., the greatest in the kingdom is he who does most service for others.

But we will hear the New York *Independent* on the Disciples:

The Disciples of Christ numbered at the close of last year, 1,003,672 communicants. This is a record of numerical progress certainly unparalleled in the history of any other religious movement of modern times. The Episcopalian and Congregational churches, which each numbers less than 650,000 members are left far behind. Moreover, the rate of increase continues to be much greater than that of any of the denominations mentioned. Thus while the Methodists last year had increased 168,776, or less than three per cent, the Disciples had an increase of 80,009, or nearly nine per cent. The Baptists progressed about two per cent, the Lutherans nearly three per cent, and the Episcopalians and Congregationalists slightly over three per cent each. It is worthy of note, too, that while the five and a half millions of Methodists are split up into seventeen sects, the four million of Baptists into thirteen, the million and a half of Presbyterians into twelve, and the million and a half of Lutherans into nineteen, the Disciples, true to their plea for the union of Christians, remain united as one body. Perhaps to this, in some degree, is owing their amazing progress. The Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans and Presbyterians really form sixty-one denominations in the States, instead of four. It is not correct to say, with our contemporary, that Methodism was "last in the field, and has gone ahead of all other Christian denominations." The Disciples came much later, and have increased more rapidly.—*N. Y. Independent*.

## Original Contributions.

CONTENDING FOR TRUTH  
AGAINST ERROR.

H. WALLACE.

"Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the Saints."—Jude 3.

"The faith," doubtless, was that which Jesus procured for the world, gave to His apostles, and commanded them to preach to all nations. Jude exhorts the disciples, to whom he wrote, to contend for this earnestly. To contend for the faith is to defend and maintain it by voice, pen, money and Christian life, against all persons and doctrines which