

What the Disciples in the States are Saying and Doing.

CULLINGS AND CLIPPINGS FROM EX-CHANGERS.

IS IT OBLIGATORY?

In answer to a question from one of its "Inquiring Friends," concerning the "original method" of baptism, the Christian Union says:—

"It is generally conceded by the best authorities that immersion was the primitive mode; but this does not make it the obligatory mode."

What the Christian Union here admits is admitted by all candid, unbiased scholars of the present. The old question—as to what baptism was as practised by the apostles and by the church of the first century, is a settled question among scholars. But it opens a much larger and more vital question. The Christian Union commits itself to the position that even if Christ commanded immersion and the apostles practised it, it is not, therefore, made obligatory on us. That is, the Christian church, or individual Christians, may, at their option, change the very form and meaning of an ordinance of Jesus Christ.

Baptism, as ordained by Christ and practised by His apostles, was vitally and symbolically associated with Christ's burial and resurrection. Dissociated from these facts it has no clearly defined or intelligent meaning. It is the believer's method, of confessing, in actual obedience, his faith in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. It is, therefore, one of the "three witnesses" that testify concerning Christ. As is said by the Episcopalian scholars, Conybeare and Howson, there are several passages of Scripture which cannot be understood without bearing in mind that immersion was the original baptism. Is it possible that an institution originating in divine authority may be so altered at human option as to change its very form and meaning? In other words, when Christ commands His disciples to teach and immerse the people, are they loyal to His authority when they substitute for immersion an entirely different act?

The things which enter into the New Testament baptism are (1) a proper subject, (2) the proper element, (3) the proper form, (4) the proper formula. Now, if the form practised by the apostles in obedience to Christ's command be not obligatory on us to-day, by what logic can it be made to appear that any other of the New Testament features of the ordinance are obligatory upon us? Why not change the subject (as indeed has been done), the formula and the element?

But the principle involved in this position of the Christian Union may be applied to a good many other things besides baptism. If we have the right to change the form and place of baptism, we can do the same with the Lord's Supper. We may change the elements, or withhold the one or the other from the people, as the Roman Catholics do. Indeed, the logical terminus of the Christian Union's position is that of the church which has its seat on the seven-hilled city. Hitherto Protestants, except the Anglican church, have shrunk from making any such claim for the church, as that it may change the ordinances delivered by Jesus Christ and His apostles. But if it may do this in the case of baptism, there is no apparent reason why it may not do so with the Lord's Supper and with the whole constitution and foundation of the church established by Christ and His apostles.

Dean Stanley pointed out that the change made by the church in substituting sprinkling or pouring for the

burial in water, practised by the Apostles and first Christians, was far more serious than that made in the Lord's Supper by the Catholics, in substituting the wafer for the loaf and in withholding the cup from the laity.

So, after all, when we get to the bottom of this matter, the question raised is a very grave one. Has Christ ordained anything that is obligatory on the church of to-day, aside from the moral and religious principles which He taught? Is the church a purely human institution, organized by good men and subject to any changes they may see proper to make, or is it a divine institution, whose foundation truth, constitution and law of institution and worship, being ordained by Christ, must be preserved and perpetuated through all time? This is the present phase of the baptismal controversy. The old question is obsolete. The lines must soon be drawn on this issue.

It is clear, on a moment's thought, that if the church be not a divine institution, but a human organism, as rationalism contends, or being a divine institution is yet subject to change in its constitutional features by the power vested in it, as the Roman Catholic church contends, then our plea for the restoration of the Apostolic church, and for the faith "once for all delivered to the saints," is based on a false conception of Christianity and must fail. Romanism, Rationalism and Restoration stand for the three great ideas now wrestling for supremacy in the religious world. The first two of these agree in one thing—that the church is subject to alteration in its ordinances and faith, though they would affect these changes on widely different principles. The last named—Restoration—represents the view that the church is a divine organism, having a divinely revealed basis of faith, divine ordinance, and a divine and infallible head; that to restore and hold these, unflinchingly, is the supreme and essential condition of all true religious progress.—Christian Evangelist.

HOW TO INDUCE MORE YOUNG MEN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

This was one of the subjects for discussion at the Preachers' Institute, held in Atlanta, Illinois, recently. The question was placed before said institute because there is a felt need for more preachers in our Illinois churches. This need is not only in Illinois, but everywhere. There are more churches than preachers, and the churches are multiplying more rapidly than the preachers. The discussion did not exhaust the subject by any means, for the time allotted to the discussion was short, too short to exhaust any theme of importance. It is our judgment that we would gain much more in our conventions if we would attempt the discussion of fewer subjects, make better preparation on those we do attempt, and thus do more thorough work than is possible for us to accomplish otherwise. Here is a great question concerning our progress and success as a religious people, which needs thoughtful, patient, prayerful, thorough investigation; but it is gone over with a rush and we gain nothing, or almost nothing, by such an investigation. Such imperfect work is of little real value to any one, but a positive loss to the most of those who give their time to such discussion. It is time we had put an end to such crudities. Time is too short and life is too precious for such things.

There is a cause for the lack of interest young men have in the ministry, though we may not be able to locate it accurately. It is not because it is an unpleasant thing to be a preacher of

the Gospel of the grace of God, or because preachers are not paid for their work, or because there is no need of men of intellect or room for intellectual growth in the ministry. When we find the real hindering cause it will be where many of us have not even suspected it to be. But it must be found and corrected or the same stagnation in the work of the ministry will continue.

Some of our readers have already located the cause in the uneventful life of an ordinary preacher, or the fact that a preacher has not the liberty to be free and do as other people do, or in the persecution of preachers on the part of those who love unrighteousness and walk in darkness, or in the fact that the ordinary preacher of the Gospel has no continuing home in this life. But not one of these things can be put down as the one prominent, hindering cause.

Let us look one moment at a kindred subject, and possibly that may aid us in the solution of the problem. It has been a most difficult matter to enlist suitable missionaries to enter the foreign field as workers. The first thought regarding the hindering cause here is the going out from home and the dangers of living and laboring in such a field. But this is not the difficulty at all. Those who have investigated the matter carefully have found the real cause still back of the perils and toils incident to the life of the missionary. There are only a few parents willing that their sons and daughters should become missionaries. In nine cases out of ten there is parental opposition to it, and in most cases it is so stern and unrelenting that it gains the day.

What father or mother wants the son of promise in the family to become a preacher of the Gospel? Some parents do, but where one is found who encourages the son to enter the ministry five are found who oppose it. These are facts, whether our readers have seen demonstrations of them or not, and here we find the great cause of the dearth in preachers. Our best young men are thus kept out of this blessed work. The most of our parents want their sons to become doctors, lawyers, scientists or professional men of some kind, but not preachers. They are encouraged to go into business and to become great in wealth or worldly honor, and discouraged if they ever harbor a thought of becoming a preacher. We do not dedicate our sons to the Lord, but to the world. Here is where the great trouble is, and here the difficulty must be met and overcome or our depleted ranks in the ministry will not be filled up.

How can this trouble be overcome, and who is able to overcome it? This is a serious question demanding wisdom, prudence and patient waiting. In this field of activity our preachers and editors ought to become leaders, for much depends on them for the change needed.

The dignity of the ministry needs touching up so that parents can see that the most honorable and noble calling in this life is the work of the Lord. The exaltation of the ministerial office is needed in direct teaching and in pure, blameless living on the part of those who are God's ministers. Let parents be educated from the pulpit and through the religious press, and then they will see that a manly, noble preacher is the best thing for the son to be if he have talent, and then we will have more young men entering this holy calling than now, and the work of the Lord will be pushed on with greater vigor and success. The Christian family is, in a large measure, the hope of the world.—Christian Oracle.

ORGANIC UNION—By A. I. HOBBS.

Spiritual or organic union—which is the burning question of much preaching and writing. Many excellent people, believing that organic union is impracticable, undesirable, and would be dangerous to civil and religious liberty, contend for spiritual union only. But what is meant? Evidently, such a rising tide of spiritual sympathy as would allay all strifes between differing and even antagonistic denominations and the members thereof. Thus far, however, this sort of unity seems impracticable, and the past does not augur well for the future.

Others, equally sincere, contend for organic union in order to the spiritual unity of all Christians. But is there not a hidden obstacle to the end in view in the very phrase "organic union?" What is this union? It must mean a union of organisms. These must be denominations, or local congregations. The term church, in the New Testament, as denoting a visible, objective organism, always denotes a single congregation of believers. It is also used to denote the whole body of believers throughout the world united to Christ, "the head over all things to the church, which is His body." The body is the church catholic, or what some call the invisible church. A very popular use of the term church now is to denote a denomination, or a solidarity of local churches under a central ecclesiastical control. That the word thus used is unscriptural needs only to be asserted. No one will seriously assert the contrary who studies the Bible.

Much of the contention for organic union is futile, because there is a strong conviction that a solidarity of all denominations, or local churches, would bring with it political revolutions in which civil and religious liberty would perish. They see not far away High Commission Courts and Spanish Inquisitions.

If by organic union a solidarity of all local churches, in any country, or throughout the world, is meant, and this solidarity to be controlled by agencies clothed with legislative powers to govern the churches, their fears are well grounded. That sort of union was fully tried in the Holy Roman Empire. We want no such union. But we do need, and must have, a cooperative union of homogeneous, self-governing churches in every country throughout the world, if the prayer of Jesus shall be speedily answered. By homogeneous churches we mean churches of the same constitution in name, faith, worship, ordinances and organization—the same in everything scripturally essential to their structure. But there must be the utmost freedom as to the mere circumstantialia of religion. For the purpose of cooperative union messengers from any given territory of churches should come together, whenever necessary, to confer about common work, whether it be missions or simple benevolent enterprises. But such assemblies or conferences should be clothed with no legislative powers to treat with kings, presidents or parliaments, or to make laws which, in any way, shall interfere with the autonomy of any local church. Their functions should be executive only.

Such a union could not be a menace to civil or religious liberty. Each church being homogeneous with every other, one might transfer his membership to what church he would without change of religious name, creed, worship, ordinances or organization. Thus it was in the apostolic time, and so it must be again some day.

It were better, we think, to drop that phrase "organic union" which awakens prejudice by its historic relations and usage.—Christian Standard.

Selections.

If.

If any little word of mine
May make a life the brighter,
If any little song of mine
May make a heart the lighter,
God help me speak the little word
And take my bit of singing,
And drop it in some lonely vale,
To eek the echoes ringing.

If any little love of mine
May make a life the sweeter,
If any little care of mine
May make a friend's the doctor—
If any lift of mine may ease
The burden of another,
God give me love, and care and strength
To help my toiling brother.
—Mrs. Crozier, in Morning Star.

Does a College Education Tend to Lessen Christian Enthusiasm.

BY CHARLES F. THWING, D.D., PRESIDENT OF ADOLPH COLLEGE AND OF WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY.

"I am pained to say I am losing my Christian enthusiasm," remarked a Senior in a college prayer-meeting. "I think I have been losing it," he continued, "ever since my Freshman year." Such a sentiment it is not unusual to hear college men express. I doubt not that most students believe

Enthusiasm is at once a mental and an emotional quality. Emotional enthusiasm is forth-putting, vociferous, noisy. It is self-assertive, lacks self-control, adopts the fantastic as easily as the fitting form of manifestation. It is not supported by the judgment. It is raw, sensitive, "soft," as horsemen say of a colt. Such enthusiasm the college curbs, trains, lessens. Such enthusiasm the college ought to curb, train, lessen.