

"THERE IS NO EXCELLENCE
WITHOUT LABOR."

CANADA

"HAPPY IS THE NATION
WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD."

CHRISTIAN WORKER

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"WORK WHILE IT IS CALLED TO DAY."

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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

SINCERITY SEEKING THE WAY TO
HEAVEN.

CHAPTER V.

Our young friend was, passing up Clinton street, Cincinnati, between Western Row and John streets, and he saw a Methodist minister, accompanied by some ten or a dozen persons, entering the basement of the chapel belonging to the "Christians," or "Disciples of Christ," as they call themselves, their regular preacher being present. Here a new subject presented itself to the consideration of young Sincerity. The little company approached the Baptistry, the lids of which were folded back out of the way, and all eyes were directed down into an emblematical tomb, some ten feet in length, and four feet wide. The water was some two and a half or three feet in depth. All stood in profound silence, with their eyes fixed upon this solemn-looking place. Presently the Methodist minister, and two respectable ladies, all dressed in black, with countenances solemn as the grave, made their appearance near this lowly tomb, where the minister made the following address:

"Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin (and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God; but live in sin, committing many actual transgressions) and that our Saviour, Christ, saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerated, and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost and received into Christ's holy church, and be made lively members of the same."—Dis. p. 107.

The minister then made the following prayer:

"Almighty and immortal God, the aid of all that need, the helper of all that flee to thee for succor, the life of them that believe, and the resurrection of the dead, we call upon thee for these persons, that they, coming to thy holy baptism, may receive remission of their sins, by spiritual regeneration. Receive them, O Lord, as thou hast promised by thy well-beloved Son, saying, Ask, and you shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; so give now unto us that ask, let us that seek find, open the gates unto us that knock; that these persons may enjoy the everlasting benediction of thy heavenly washing and may come to the eternal kingdom, which thou hast promised by Christ our Lord. Amen."—Dis. p. 107.

He then descended, with one of the ladies, into the baptismal water, and lifting his eyes and hands toward heaven, uttered in a strong, clear, and solemn voice, the following, most fearful and awful of all, the formulas ever uttered by human lips: "I baptize you into the name of the Father, and

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." As he uttered this profoundly awful sentence, with the little company standing round, and breathing almost suspended, he lowered the candidate gently down, till the waters closed above, thus separating her from the visible world. In the next moment, she appeared again, as the waters parted from above her, in the form of a resurrection from the dead, and an actual resurrection to a new life and she was joyfully received by those standing by. The other lady passed through the same sacred ceremony. The minister then ascended the steps, or as the Scripture expresses it, "came up out of the water," and lifting his hands and eyes toward heaven, said, "May grace, mercy, and peace, from God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be with us all—now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen."

The minister walked away, apparently as if conscious of having done his duty. Sincerity stood by trembling, and the tears imperceptibly trickled down his manly cheeks. As he walked away, he said to himself, "I thought Methodists did not believe in immersion! But this man seemed sincere in what he did—how is this? Beside, I have never witnessed any religious ceremonies that produced such an effect upon my own sensibilities as this. Possibly it is my duty to be baptized! I certainly should delight to do so, if I understood the matter, and thought myself prepared. I will see my friend, Mr. H., once more, and have a conversation with him on baptism."

In a few minutes he was in the studio of Mr. H., when the following conversation took place:

H. Well, Mr. S., have you become any better reconciled in your mind?

S. No, sir; I am as much perplexed and confused as I have been at any former period. I have had several conversations, and heard some preaching, since I saw you, but all without affording me the least relief. Did you know of the baptizing by the Methodist preacher in charge on — street, in the baptistry of the Campbellite church, on Clinton street, this morning?

H. Yes, sir; I know all about it. Were you present?

S. Yes, sir; it was a solemn and interesting scene.

H. The facts in the case are these: There were quite a number who joined our church, as you are aware, and, as our Discipline requires all to be baptized before they are received into full fellowship, it devolved upon myself to preach a sermon on baptism. This I did, and satisfied all, except the two that you saw dipped this morning, that sprinkling would do and administered the ordinance to them in that way. But nothing would do these two, but they must be dipped; and, as my health is delicate, I cannot endure the least

exposure to wet without imminent danger of violent cold, probably terminating in consumption, I would not consent to go into the water, at such a time as this, to gratify the weakness of anybody. The truth is, baptism is not a saving ordinance any how.

S. I am surprised to hear you say that, for your preaching brother told us this morning that our Saviour says that "None can enter into the kingdom of God except he be regenerated, and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost," and exhorted those present to call upon God to "Grant the persons to be baptized that which by nature they cannot have." He also prayed that they might receive remission of their sins, and that the Lord would receive them, from which, I thought, he regarded it as a saving ordinance.

H. You must have misunderstood him—he did not mean that.

S. But he had your book of Discipline in his hand, and I understood him to be uttering the precise words of the Discipline.

H. You do not understand this matter. We do not believe that baptism is essential.

S. Is it true, as your preaching brother said this morning, that our Saviour says that "None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born of water and the Holy Ghost?"

H. Certainly it is; it is so stated in our Discipline.

S. How can any be saved without it, then?

H. None can enter the kingdom of God without being "born of water and the Holy Ghost," and being born of water is baptism, as you admit your Discipline implies, how can any be saved without it? Can they be saved, without entering into the kingdom of God?

H. None can enter—none can enter—the kingdom of God there means—the fact is, the mode is not revealed.

S. Am I to understand you, that the manner in which baptism is to be administered is not revealed?

H. Yes, sir; no man can show from the Bible that any mode is revealed.

S. If it is not revealed how a thing is to be done, how is a person to know how to do it? or how can any man living know, whether it is done at all or not?

H. I regard it as valid when performed either way, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

S. But, my dear sir, if the manner of obeying the command to be baptized is not revealed, it is wholly in the dark, and there is no evidence that either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion is baptism.

H. I can prove sprinkling from Scripture. It says, "I will sprinkle many nations."

S. I thought you said the mode is not revealed! If it is not revealed, how can you prove it to be sprinkling?

H. I am, sir, afraid your condition is lamentable. I fear you will turn into skepticism. You produce

nothing but difficulties. The mode of baptism is plainly taught in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Lord said, "I will pour out my spirit." This proves that pouring is the mode.

S. Mr. H., I hope I shall not become a skeptic; but if I cannot find something more consistent, and that I can understand better than what you have taught, I do not know where I shall land. You first told me, of baptism, that no mode is revealed; then, in the next moment, you are trying to prove that sprinkling is baptism. Then, again, you are trying to prove pouring. In the place of no mode being revealed, you would have me believe that two or three modes are revealed!

As our young friend walked away, he said to himself: "Is this the way ministers are enlightening the world? Is there nothing in religion that I can understand? If there is no clearer light than this, I am a miserable man!"

CHAPTER VI.

Our young friend, Sincerity, shortly after his late conversation with Mr. H., was at a funeral, and being detained by the failure of the undertaker to arrive in-time, his attention was attracted by the conversation of a very grave, dignified, and thoughtful lady, in appearance, who sat near him, and directed her discourse to some ladies at her side. He soon found that her remarks were of a religious character, and of course was deeply interested in them. But he could not discover what religious party this venerable lady was of; yet, he was struck with the sense and propriety of what she said. For the present, we shall call this distinguished and interesting lady Priscilla. When the conversation had terminated between her and those to whom she directed her remarks, our young friend approached her as follows:

Sincerity. May I ask you, inadmitt, to what denomination you belong?

Priscilla. The Church of Christ, sir.

S. I supposed you belonged to the Church of Christ; but what branch?

P. I do not belong to a branch, my good sir, but am a branch myself. The Saviour said to his disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." I trust, sir, that I am one of these branches, or a member of Christ's body—the church.

S. Well, what do you and your brethren call yourselves?

P. Christians, sir; Disciples of Christ.

S. Nothing else?

P. Sometimes we call the members of the church "brethren," "friends," "children of God," "saints," etc., as they did in ancient times. We apply to ourselves none but Scripture designations.

S. Why, I am astonished! How do you distinguish yourselves from others?

P. We do not wish to distinguish ourselves from others who are satisfied with the simple designations by which the people of God are called in the Scriptures. But those who are not satisfied with Scripture designations for the children of God, by calling themselves by other nam-

es, distinguish themselves from us. There is, therefore, a distinction kept up where there is a difference, and that is as far as there should be any distinction.

S. Well, this is a new idea to me. You say that you simply apply to yourselves Scripture names, as you find them in the Bible?

P. No, sir; not exactly, as we find them in the Bible, as we find them in the New Testament. We are not Jews, but Christians; not under Moses, but Jesus; not under the law, but the gospel; not under the letter, but the spirit.

S. If I understand, then, you call yourselves Christians, Disciples, etc., as the followers of Christ did in New Testament times, and nothing else, Am I right?

P. Yes, sir. Is not that sufficient? If you were about to die, and knew yourself to be a Christian, a Disciple of Christ, etc., would you not be satisfied?

S. I must confess that I would. That is precisely what I have been desiring to know and inquiring into for weeks. What doctrine do you hold, madam?

P. The doctrine of Christ, or Christianity.

S. Nothing else?

P. No, sir, nothing else. The Lord has given nothing else. We need nothing else. Not only so, but the Lord has pronounced a curse upon man or angel who shall preach anything else; or even pervert the gospel of Christ. Are you not satisfied to receive Christianity, as the Lord gave it, and nothing else?

S. Yes, if I know how to receive Christianity, as God gave it, and nothing else, and how to become a Christian, or a disciple of Christ, as you seem to think one may, it would be relief to me worth more than worlds. But this is where my trouble lies. I have had several conversations with Mr. H., but find it utterly impossible for me to understand him. He thinks I am blinded by unbelief. I confess I am blinded by some means; I do not understand.

P. My dear sir, I have not an unkind feeling toward Mr. H., or a hard word to say of him. He is evidently a kind-hearted man, and is just about sufficiently enlightened to conduct a mourner's bench excitement without Scripture and understanding, but he is as ignorant as a new-born infant of the Bible plan of salvation, and what is worse in his case than that of an infant, he is so blinded by bigotry, sectarian partisan zeal and self-conceit, that there is even less hope of his ever being enlightened than an infant. The real on you could not understand him was that he presented nothing tangible that your minds could take hold of.

S. That is what my friend, the lawyer, told me in a conversation the other day, but he said the fault was in religion—that there is no understanding it.

P. I am acquainted with your friend, the gentleman of the legal profession, and consider him an honorable man of the world, but he has been confused with sectarian difficulties and absurdities, and is now a skeptic. But this want of intelligibility is not in religion itself, but in the confused minds of men, who have never learned to take hold of re-

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