

The Christian.

ST JOHN N. B.

MARCH 1894

EDITORIAL.

REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

But sanctify the Lord's God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

Question.—As baptism is now so much in dispute, I would like to ask more about it. Will it do a man any good to be baptized without a previous change of heart?

Answer.—Certainly not. Unless the Holy Spirit so change the heart of a man that He hates his sin and resolves, with the Lord's help, to forsake them, baptism will do him no good, indeed it would be a mockery. It is a heartfelt belief in the death of Jesus for our sins that kills in us the love of sin and leads to repentance, and no one is commanded to be baptized until he sincerely believes and repents.

Q.—But is a man not saved by faith alone as soon as he believes and repents?

A.—A man is not saved by faith alone when he believes and repents, but he has repentance as well as faith.

Q.—That may be. But some teach that as soon as a man believes he is saved and should then be baptized because he is saved.

A.—This is not the teaching of Christ. In His last commission He has mentioned belief, baptism and salvation, and has left each in its proper place, not to be removed with impunity. All the reasoning of earth will not make the commission read, "He that believeth shall be saved, and then be fit for baptism." Christian baptism is a burial and resurrection. We bury dead persons. Sometimes, through sad mistake, a man in a fit is buried, but it is always understood that persons are dead before they are buried. We may, through mistake, bury a man in water before he dies to sin, but such a one is not buried with Christ, nor does he rise to walk in newness of life. Nor does the scripture speak of the burial of living Christians. Baptism is the burial of a man in whom belief in Christ has killed the love of sin and led to repentance. The grave always divides states. Saul was in a state of rebellion until Jesus met him in the way and killed him to sin. From that hour he was changed, so that he hated sin and loved the Saviour. He died to sin, and just as soon as Ananias told him what it was appointed for him to do, he was buried with Christ in baptism and rose to walk in newness of life. To show the uniformity of Christ's plan of salvation Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome, reminding them of their death to sin, burial with Christ in baptism and rising to walk in newness of life. (Rom. vi. 4, 5, etc.) He also calls the attention of the Colossians to the same fact. (Col. ii. 12).

Paul, and the saved in Rome, in Corinth, Colosse, and all New Testament saints, came to God by Christ in the way He announced in the commission. They knew that they were obeying their Saviour and walking in His footsteps. This Jesus calls the narrow way which leadeth unto life. How blessed to be permitted in our day to walk in His steps, to enjoy what He has promised, and to "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." It is only through Him we can overcome the world, the flesh and the devil and gain eternal life. But He is faithful who hath promised. The same One who has forgiven all past trespasses is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. In His strength and on His faithful promise our hope of eternal life rests. The joy we receive in obeying His commandments, called "the earnest of His Spirit in our

hearts," confirms His great and precious promises. Our daily infirmities and many short comings are known to our merciful High Priest, and through His merits and intercession we hope for a full and eternal salvation, and wish all to examine our reasons for it.

Q.—I would like to ask about the church of which you are a member. I understand you call it "the church of Christ," and its members Disciples of Christ, or Christians. Is this so?

A.—Jesus called the saved "My disciples," and the church "My church," and as He is Lord of all we cannot object to the name He gives both to the church and its members.

Q.—But as others claim to be Christians as well as you, and their churches to be churches of Christ, is it modest and Christlike in you to deny their claim and announce yourselves as the only Christians, and your church as the only church of Christ?

A. This is not a question between ourselves and others, but between Christ and us. Two questions come up which we must in any event answer in the affirmative: 1st, Did Christ give the saved a right and proper name? 2nd, Are we satisfied to be known by that name? We are satisfied with the name and wear it because it is right, and not to condemn others. We wish others to wear it, too. They claim to be disciples of Christ, and hence acknowledge the rectitude of the name. If they are not satisfied with it, and wish to have another name besides, that is no affair of ours, and our motives should not be condemned unless it can be proved wrong to hold the name Christ has given His followers. We see much in others to admire and imitate, and rejoice to think they are doing much good in the world, but holding unscriptural names we can neither admire nor imitate, but regard it as dishonoring Christ and dividing His people. Many are anxiously praying for the union of those who love the Lord; and as there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, many see that there is no other name on which the saved can agree to unite.

Q.—But the Saviour did not call His people disciples.

A.—As soon as it was understood that Christ, by His cross, had broken down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, destroying in His flesh the enmity to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, the gospel was preached among the Gentiles, and multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles were gathered into the church, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Q.—But many allege that this was a name given them by their enemies as a term of reproach.

A.—Christ (anointed) was not a name of reproach, but held in high respect by the Jews, who bitterly denied that Jesus was the Christ. How absurd to suppose that those who determinedly refused to call Jesus "the Christ" would call His disciples Christians. They called them *Nazarenes* in reproach, because they called their Lord a Nazarene. But it was those who believed that Jesus was the Christ that called His disciples Christians.

Acts xi. 26 tells us what Saul and Barnabas did in Antioch, but there is not a word in it or the context about any enemy. 1st, They assembled themselves with the church a whole year. 2nd, They taught much people. A third thing is mentioned and coupled with the other two—the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. The third thing is afterwards acknowledged to be right by the apostle and New Testament Christians, for they bore that name, suffered for it as the worthy name by which they were called, and yet men in the face of all will, without one particle of proof, assert that the calling of disciples Christians at Antioch was a wicked act by their enemies, the name given as a reproach on them and their Saviour. It is evident that no one who claims to be a

Christian believes it. Who would claim to be religiously called a Nazarene? All know that it is sinful and a term of reproach, but Christian is not sinful or reproachful, but the bride called by the husband's name. Many learned men contend that a critical rendering of Acts xi. 26 would tell us that Paul and Barnabas called the disciples Christians first in Antioch, and this seems to accord with New Testament teaching.

Thomas Scott, that eminent commentator, says of the passage: "It came to pass that they (Paul and Barnabas) called the disciples Christians. This is indisputably the natural construction of the verse; but the word implies that this was done by divine revelation, for it has generally this signification in the New Testament, and is rendered 'warned from God,' or 'warned of God,' even when there is no word for God in the Greek."

We wish humbly and earnestly and prayerfully to contend for Christ's salvation, His Spirit, His word, His church and His name, and to show by our deportment that He is everything to us.

We purpose to consider in our next the *creed* of the church of Christ.

Original Contributions.

"WASPS."

Bro. H. M., whose articles in THE CHRISTIAN are always suggestive or instructive, or both, gives us in the February number an item under the heading "Wasps," in which he tells us that having learned a valuable lesson in early youth from his experience with a nest of wasps, out of which he came neither comfortable nor victorious, having "got a fearful wasping," he came to a decision to "never trouble man, beast, bird, or insect, that had more sting than honey."

I thought the decision was a very wise one, and, as a matter of self-preservation, the only wise one; and those who have not learned by a like experience, will doubtless feel grateful to Bro. H. M. for giving them such a useful lesson without their having to pay as dearly for it as he had to pay.

There are few, I presume, who, having done battle with one nest of wasps, would have any desire to encounter another; few, who having warmed one serpent into life, would venture on warming another into life; or, having warmed a serpent into life, and seeing what is returned, where gratitude is due, would care to disturb the repose of that serpent again, did he find it in the same helpless condition. A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished. Prov. xxii. 3.

Some one has said: "Self-preservation is the first law of nature." This being true, then, it is a quality common to all and implanted by the hand of wisdom. The wise, therefore, in the hour of danger will hide or defend, and so preserve themselves.

Another thought, however, was floated to the surface by the above mentioned item. It is this: Suppose God, when He looked down from His high and holy habitation, and saw mankind in sin, rebellion and cruelty—very much "sting" and very little "honey"—had decided to leave the race severely alone until it would show more honey and less sting, what would be the condition of the inhabitants of Christendom to-day? The sting would have remained, the habitations of cruelty would yet be found among our now favored people, and quivering hearts of human sacrifices would be presented on heathen altars, where now songs of praise and thanksgiving are raised to Him who, by His holy angels and the Son of His love, has proclaimed: "Peace on earth and good-will to men."

When the Omniscient One looked down and saw the wickedness, rebellion and cruelty He could