

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

After the efforts of three quarters of a century to make known to all men the labors and aims of the people known as "*Disciples of Christ*" or "*Christians*," the question: *What is their peculiar faith and practice* seems as new to-day as in the past.

That the question is still now is rather a cause of gratitude than regret, because there is now a greater desire to prove all things than in the past, and so a better opportunity to hold fast that which is good. To all candid readers who desire to understand this people the following is submitted with meekness and fear.

What the Disciples preach and teach:

1st. They preach Christ; and 2nd, Christ crucified. The first the *truth* of the gospel, the second the *facts* of the gospel. *Truth* is something *spoken*, *Fact* is something *done*.

The *truth* of the gospel was not first spoken by an inspired man or by an angel, but by God Himself, who declared at the Jordan of Jesus: "*Thou art my beloved Son*," etc., etc. They declare this as the great foundation truth, the rock truth on which Jesus builds His Church, the belief of which saves men who when they intelligently and affectionately receive it receive the record which God gave of His Son, and set to their seal that God is true. They also declare to sinners that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. They tell the people that this gospel was sent to every creature, to all the world, and they affectionately urge sinners to believe in Jesus as the Son of the living God with all their heart, and repent of all their sins and turn to the Lord, who is waiting to pardon them by virtue of His own death on the cross for them.

When men believe the gospel of Christ and want to know how they can be saved, they are pointed to the last commission of Jesus in which He promised to save, and there they can read the Saviour's words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." When they are fully satisfied with this promise of the Son of the living God they come out and with their mouth confess "*the great truth*," and on that confession they are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The divinity of Jesus the Christ they make prominent in everything. The Father announced it, the Son laid down His life confessing it, and the Holy Spirit confirmed it in the resurrection of Christ. This is the truth that saves the sinner and holds up the entire Church of God.

The Disciples have been and are severely censured for not telling sinners that they must be saved before they are baptized. But as salvation is all from first to last in the hands of Christ, and He has said in His last commission, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," they cannot reverse it and teach that "he that believeth shall be saved and then be baptized." They see the apostles with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven working under that commission, and in every case adhering to its arrangements, and feel that they must abide by them at any cost. For so doing they are accused of placing salvation in water, which they most positively deny, and declare that salvation is in Christ alone, who has an absolute right to offer it to men on His own terms. This He does for all time in the commission (Mark xvi.16).

While others hold that their preachers are ambassadors of Christ, the Disciples teach that only

the twelve apostles of Christ are his ambassadors for the following reasons: He in person sent them out in His name. This is not true of others. He sent them out with a new message, which is only true of them. He promised to bind and loose in heaven what they would bind and loose on earth. This was not true of others. He gave them miraculous powers as their *credentials*, but did not give them to others. Faithful preachers now have no new message, but declare the apostles' message to the people which God has already proved true by them who have heard the Lord Jesus, "bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will." (Heb. ii:4) The Disciples point all men to Christ for instruction, and to those men whom He miraculously qualified to guide them after He went to heaven.

They teach that Peter was a leader among the apostles. Not that he had any authority over the rest, for he had not, and they never did anything in the name of Peter. But that Jesus made him a leader, gave to him and to no one else the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, so that he might tell both Jews and Gentiles to enter the Kingdom, which he did to the Jews on the day of Pentecost and to the Gentiles at the House of Cornelius (Acts ii:10 chap). They thus regard Peter as the model preacher under Christ, and his sermon on the day of Pentecost the model sermon for all coming time. They preach the same Jesus whom he preached. When men believe with the heart, as they did, and ask, What shall we do? they give them the same direction which he did, and make the same promise to the obedient which he did to the obedient, because Peter said: The promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts ii:39).

When sinners hear the gospel and are convinced of their sins, so that they love the Saviour, and with all their heart ask, What shall we do? the Disciples do not tell these enquirers to seek the prayers of the church nor offer their service to pray for them, because Jesus did not tell his apostles to do so, and the apostles did not offer to pray for such. They believe that Jesus loves sinners more than any Christian can, and is anxiously waiting to save every sinner who will submit to His plain terms, and they dare not make deeper the false impression on the sinner's mind that Jesus is keeping back from him his salvation, and that He will only be prevailed upon to give it at the earnest pleadings of the sinner and of those who are in sympathy with him. No, they want the sinner to understand that Christ is not keeping back his salvation, that He is willing and ready that the change will not be in Christ but in him, and that he must submit to Christ and not Christ to him; and so they declare Christ's own message to enquirers.

Again, the Disciples observe a clear distinction between a *change of heart* and the *assurance of pardon*, which two are often confounded, and leads to confusion. Because they declare that Jesus has not promised in the commission that the sinner will be saved or pardoned until he believes and is baptized, and that Peter did not promise his hearers the gift of the Holy Spirit until they repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus, the Disciples are charged with teaching that there is no change of heart until the sinner is baptized. Now, a change of heart is one thing and the assurance of pardon is another. When Peter's hearers heard of their crimes and of Jesus' love they had a change of heart. They were pricked in their heart with deepest anguish when they asked, What shall we do? but they had no *assurance of pardon*, but they were told to repent and be baptized, etc., etc. Their heart was changed before they asked what

to do. But they had the gift of the Holy Spirit after they repented and were baptized and not before. The Spirit of God bore witness with their spirit that they were children of God, filling them with joy and peace. So the Disciples teach that men's hearts must be so changed by the Spirit of God as to love Jesus and hate their sins before they are fit to be baptized, but that the assurance of pardon and the gift of the Holy Spirit are promised to the obedient. There must be a death to sin before there is a burial and resurrection with Christ in baptism.

(To be continued in our next.)

Original Contributions.

DEATH.

BY MISS LILA JACKSON.

Of all the conquerors the world has ever known — and it has known many — death is the greatest, the most *powerful*, and is the most *dreaded* by mankind. It has been said that *death conquers all*; and it sometimes seems as if there were no way of conquering this "king of terrors" and terror of kings. But has not death been conquered? Yes. Christ conquered death and brought life and immortality to light.

There are two kinds of death, physical and spiritual. The *physical* death destroys our frail bodies and separates the soul from them. This physical death we must *all* pass through: for Paul in his letter to the Hebrews says: "It is appointed unto men *once* to die." The *spiritual* death separates and drives away the soul from God after the *physical* death has separated that soul from the body. This death, then, need no one die. *It*, unlike the other, can be escaped; and as the cause of spiritual death is sin, to escape it is to *repent* of our sins and turn to Christ and live, for he is just and faithful to forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Death is something that is dreaded by mankind. True, there have been some who longed for it to relieve them of their sufferings, but when we are in the midst of health and pleasure we shudder at the thought of having to die. And *why do we fear death*? Is it not when we know that if we were to die we would not be accepted? Our *dread* of death is in proportion to the *preparation* we make for it in *this* life. For we read in Psalms: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Also in Galatians: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

Again, why should we fear death? For what would have been the *value* of our life here had it not been for the death of our Saviour? And we read in Romans that, "we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son." "Thus, through *death* we are brought into *life*; for Christ tasted death for every man." In view of death the *Christian* has *great responsibility*. He has his own salvation to work out. In John we read that: "If a man keep my sayings he shall never see death." His *next* duty is to his fellow man. This is a *sacred* duty. For we read: "He that saveth a soul from death covereth a multitude of sins." And are we as Christians doing this? Are we using our influence (and we all have an influence for good or evil) to save those out of Christ who have no hope of life hereafter? This is the Christian's work. It is one in which the *true* Christian delights, for the religion of Jesus Christ is not for *one* but for *all*. For Christ said: "Come unto me *all* ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let us then work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.