

The Christian.

ST. JOHN. N. B., - - - SEPTEMBER, 1894.

EDITORIAL.

These signs shall follow them that believe.—Mark xvi.

As the editor is constantly asked by letter and otherwise what is the meaning of Mark xvi. 17, 18, it is deemed best to reproduce the following editorial which appeared in THE CHRISTIAN over ten years ago:

The impression largely prevails that Jesus has in the commission promised miraculous powers to him that believeth and is baptized, and from this impression arise the following conclusions:

1. The infidel says, "Although Jesus has promised salvation on prescribed terms, he has promised a power to work miracles as well. I see no one that has this power, and I let the whole thing go by default, as both promises stand or fall together."

2. Others say, "He that believeth and is baptized with the Holy Ghost shall be saved, and these signs shall follow him. I have received that baptism, and I, too, have that power. My conversion was a miracle, and I speak with a new tongue."

3. Mormons and the like fanatics say, "We believe that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and also that he shall work miracles. We have been saved and can also lay hands on the sick and heal them. We believe all that Jesus promised here and have received all, and are therefore the only true church of God."

When coming to church one Lord's day morning, we met a stranger at the door in earnest conversation with some of the members. "You are right," said he, "as far as you go, but you only believe part of the Saviour's promise. We believe he has promised these signs and we have received them." The man wanted the house when not occupied by us. We told him that there was a number of sick persons around and if he would go in and lay his hands on them and heal them he would get the house and also an immense audience to hear him. After giving a solid round of abuse he left.

4. Another class contends that Jesus promised him that believes and is baptized a miraculous power, and so did Peter to those who asked, "What shall we do" (to be saved). Acts ii. 37, 38. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This gift of the Holy Ghost, say they, is the miraculous power instead of the Spirit of adoption, and the first converts were promised that power, although Peter adds, "the promise is unto you and to your children and to them that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," and there is no proof that one of the three thousand or any one else wrought a miracle on the simple condition of obeying the gospel. We are told of the great joy those converts had, but when signs and wonders are mentioned, these were done by the hands of the apostles. Verse 43. Still it is argued that Jesus promised the converts this, and that they had it till the apostles' death.

5. Others contend that Jesus promised these signs to obedient believers, and that some of the converts had them but not all, and that they all ceased at the apostles' death. But as Jesus did not restrict it to some, or say anything about it ending at the apostles' death, Mormons and infidels claim a victory in the argument.

This passage is clear enough, but there is a grand mistake in its application leading to the foregoing errors and confusion as well as to other absurd theories. Jesus promised that he that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and sacred history records the faithful fulfilment of that promise. He did not promise that he that believeth and is baptized shall work miracles or that these signs shall follow him. Neither does inspired history give such a record. There are three distinct classes mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of Mark, which must be kept distinct to prevent confusion and error. The first class is composed of the apostles, here always mentioned in the plural. Jesus speaks to them in the second person, and of them using the third personal pronoun. He upbraided them for not believing them who had seen him after he was risen. He sent them into all the world with the gospel to every creature. They had a work peculiar to themselves which no one else could do, and Jesus made them promises which he made to no other person or persons.

He that believeth and is baptized is of the second class, here mentioned in the singular number because he is a representative person and stands for all his class. What is true of him is true of all the millions who do as he does or who belongs to his class.

He that believeth not is of the third class, here also in the singular for the same reason. What is true of him is true of all the millions who believe not or belong to his class.

We may see why Jesus puts the first class in the plural and the second and third in the singular. The first class was then made up except one or two soon to be added. They did their own work and were not representatives of others. He promised them the power necessary for that work, requiring them always to believe. He does not say of the second class, They that believe and are baptized shall be saved, but "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," because he represents others. Nor does he say of the third class, They that believe not shall be damned, but "He that believeth not," etc., because he, too, represents others. But he uses the plural when speaking of the eleven.

We now ask which of the three classes does he say these signs shall follow? Does he say they shall follow the third or him that believeth not? No! Does he say they shall follow the second or him that believeth and is baptized? No! Does he say they shall follow the first or them that believe? Yes! Did they follow that class? Certainly they did. What, then, did Jesus say would follow the second class? He shall be saved. What did he say would follow the third class? He shall be condemned. He faithfully told what would follow each class. Miracles shall follow the first, salvation the second, and condemnation the third.

After Jesus had told what would follow each class, we read, "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God; and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." The particle "so" is very suggestive, connecting the promise and its fulfilment. If, however, the promise had been made to one party and a different party had received it, the historian would have given us a "but" instead of a "so then," to record a failure instead of a fulfilment, as the promise and its fulfilment are homogenous. The candid reader who carefully examines this chapter from the fourteenth verse till its close will, we think, be convinced that these signs were promised to the apostles and not to their converts. In their very nature miraculous signs were to follow God's messengers rather than those who received their message; thus Moses did signs and wonders and not the Israelites to whom he was sent. Jesus did many mighty works, not those who believed him; and by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought, but those who received their message rejoiced greatly in the salvation of the Lord. See Acts ii. 37,

40, 43-46. The salvation first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will. Heb. iii. 4.

Notwithstanding the foregoing is so plain, the mind may be beset with difficulties like the following: The converts in many cases wrought miracles in the apostles' days. This is true. Some converts had power to work some miracles. But all of these with but one exception, that is when the Gentiles first entered the kingdom (Acts x), received this power through the laying on of the apostles' hands and not direct from heaven as the apostles did. These signs always followed the apostles, and on some occasions they were permitted to give them to others for special purposes. But when we read of apostles and their converts, the former and not the latter had these signs. There is no natural affinity between enjoying salvation and having miraculous powers. Bad men had this power, such as Balaam, Saul, Caiaphas and Judas; while many men of God never had it. In logical parlance—with other Christians it was an accident, but with the apostles a necessity.

This also may be an objection: If Jesus promised the apostles, whom he addressed at the time, these signs, he would use the second and not the third personal pronoun, and say, these signs shall follow you, and not them. Jesus and inspired speakers often changed the pronoun from second to third, when speaking of the future.—Mark xiii. 14; Luke i. 44, 45.

THE ANNUAL MEETING.

AT MILTON, N. S., AUG. 30TH—SEPT. 2ND.

Where could you find a better place for an annual meeting than at Milton? The scenery is charming, the people are cultured and open hearted, and the church is alive. It is no wonder people like to go there, and like to stay when they arrive. No one would object if the place was more easily accessible, and all hope that, by the time the next meeting will be held with that church, they may be able to reach the place by rail. But there will be this danger then: the brethren and sisters will want to go too often.

The meeting began this year on Thursday evening. On Wednesday night many delegates had arrived, and more came the following day, and they kept coming till there were nearly, if not quite, one hundred in attendance. Many who wanted to be there—they had been there before—could not be present. The early part of Thursday was spent in sight seeing, and in preparations for the meeting. At 8 o'clock, a most enjoyable social meeting was held, over which Bro. H. Murray, pastor of the church, presided. The opening hymn was, "Blest be the tie that binds," etc. Many took part in the meeting.

On Friday morning at 9 o'clock, another social meeting was held. This was led by Bro. E. H. Andrews of Everett, Mass. He is a young man of great promise. For two months he has been working very successfully with the church in Kempt, and the church is loud in his praise. His engagement, however, was only temporary, and he is going back to the States with the view of pursuing his studies in Hiram College. We know that his brethren in these parts wish him great success.

At 10 o'clock, Bro. E. C. Ford, Chairman of the convention, took the chair, and the business session of the meeting began. He called upon Bro. H. Murray to invoke the divine blessing; and the prayer was heard, for throughout the convention there was no jarring and no wrangling; a spirit of