

## The Christian.

## EDITORIAL.

Also what shall they do which are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the dead?—1 Cor. xv. 29.

In reasoning with persons in the Corinthian church who denied a future resurrection of the dead, the apostle showed that the resurrection of Christ was a part of the gospel which he had received and had preached unto them—which they had believed and by which they were saved unless they had believed in vain.

These persons admitted that Christ had risen, but denied that others would rise. Paul argued that whatever was true of Christ the Head would be also true of His people who were His body. If there was no resurrection then Christ was not risen. But as they had admitted His resurrection then was death's domain invaded and at least one victim delivered, which was the grand demonstration of the resurrection.

We propose to consider the two questions at the head of this article, and ascertain if possible what is meant by being baptized for the dead. Perhaps no question in the Bible has caused more discussion than this, nor any elicited more numerous and conflicting answers. We will only mention a few of the many.

1st. It is thought by many, especially the Mormons, that the apostles taught Christians to be baptized, in place of dead friends who had not the opportunity of obeying the Lord in that ordinance themselves, which Paul now contends would be of no avail to them or their friends if the dead rise not. But as this is so contrary to the spirit and teaching of the New Testament and without the least authority there it is too absurd to be admitted. Every one must bear his own burden and give an account of himself to God, and be judged for his own and not another's actions.

2nd. Another teaches that believers were baptized to show the death and burial of Jesus Christ, and were thus baptized for a dead Christ. But Jesus was not dead but alive before He gave the commandment to be baptized, and can never again be called the dead. Besides this, the dead here is plural and cannot refer to Christ.

3rd. Another view is this—those who were baptized in times of persecution had death staring them in the face when they confessed the Lord Jesus and were hence baptized in view of death. But this would be baptized for death or dying instead of for the dead.

4th. But a far more popular view than any of the foregoing is the following. Persons were baptized to fill the ranks of fallen martyrs as new recruits take the place of soldiers who die on the battle field to keep up the number of the army. And Paul asks, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead martyrs if the dead rise not.

If Paul were asking what will become of those who were baptized to fill the place of dead martyrs if the dead rise not, it would make him a fimsy reasoner. Or if he asks why they did it, an opponent could easily reply to the first, Why, those who were baptized for the martyrs will be just as well off as others even if the dead rise not. And he could reply to the second question, It was right to keep up the ranks whether the dead rise or not. Be it remembered that the apostle never reasoned in an inconclusive manner. Besides his talents, natural and acquired, which were of the highest order, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God which is "living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword," &c., &c. He did not ask what will become of those who are baptized for the dead, "but what thing will

they do!" We have no reason to conclude that there were any martyrs in Corinth at the time this letter was written, how then could persons be baptized to fill their places. "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts xviii 8.) They were baptized because they believed the gospel of their salvation which had nothing in it about the death of martyrs, and if asked for what they were baptized it would be the farthest from their minds to reply, We were baptized to fill the places of the martyrs. This view of the passage then seems utterly inadmissible.

In our endeavors to find out what Paul means by baptized for the dead we notice an ellipsis between the words *for* and *the dead*. All interpreters acknowledge that some words are *understood* more than are expressed which are necessary to give the sense and meaning of the passage. If, therefore, we fall on the right word or words, that is, on words which fully accord with the apostle's teaching and that do not oppose any Bible truth, we cannot be far from the true meaning. We have tried different words to fill the ellipsis in the foregoing views and found them all to fail, that is, to be inconclusive, if not absurd, in our humble judgment at least.

Let us now try the passage as follows, "What shall they do which are baptized for (the resurrection of) the dead, if the dead rise not? Why, then, are they baptized for (the resurrection of) the dead?" In considering this view, which supplies the ellipsis with the three words, "the resurrection of," we propose the following questions:

1. Were the disciples really and truly baptized for the resurrection of the dead? They certainly were. This is the ultimate point they aimed at when they entered the Christian race. The glorious end of the Christian course is the resurrection of the saints.

2. Did Paul reason conclusively when he asked the second question, "Why were they then baptized for the resurrection of the dead, if the dead rise not?" Nothing could be more plain and pointed than this question, which is simply this, "Why were they baptized for what had no existence? Why baptized in the hope of grasping a phantom?"

3. Is Paul's first question pertinent? "What shall they do which are baptized for the resurrection of the dead if the dead rise not?" Nothing can be more so. Baptism symbolizes the Christian system. It was founded on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and all its glory will appear at the resurrection of the redeemed. Paul's opponents proposed a system without a resurrection in it and called it Christ's system. There was nothing in baptism to symbolize such a system, and those who were baptized to symbolize that gloomy system made a mistake and did the wrong thing. Paul now asks, What shall they do to be right or symbolize the right system? What other action shall they perform? As these opponents had no system and could get none without death, burial, and resurrection in it, it was a direct way to stop their mouths by asking what other symbol they could get than that of Christ's own appointment, which so clearly pointed the believer to Jesus' finished work and was the beginning of that course which led away from the love and practice and condemnation of sin on till the dead in Christ shall rise first, and His living saints shall be changed and caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and to be forever with the Lord.

The things which were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, and the journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan most beautifully typifies and illustrates our present subject. Suppose an intelligent and pious son of

Abraham was interviewed in the wilderness as follows:

"This, I presume, is not your home, as you seem on the march?"

"No," he replies. "We left Egypt and were baptized for another home."

"When were you baptized?"

"Soon after we started on our journey."

"Where was it done?"

"In the cloud and in the sea."

"How was it done?"

"We were under the cloud and passed through the sea."

"Into whom were you baptized?"

"Into Moses. He went before us; we followed him. We had such clear demonstrations that God sent him to be a leader and a deliverer that it would be the most criminal unbelief in us to refuse to hear and obey him as God's prophet. By that action we were initiated into Moses."

"For what were you baptized?"

"For a deliverance from Egypt and Pharaoh and his hosts, who were all destroyed in the sea."

"Were you baptized for anything else?"

"Yes. That we might worship God in the wilderness."

"For anything else?"

"Yes. That we might possess the land of Canaan."

"For anything else?"

"No. This is the consumation of the promise of God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the rest that remains for Israel."

Ask an intelligent Christian in this world, "When were you baptized?"

He will answer you, "Soon after I began to learn of Christ."

"Where were you baptized?"

"In a sufficient quantity of water to be over and around me, like the cloud and the sea covered the Israelites."

"Into whom were you baptized?"

"Into Christ, who led the way in the river of Jordan and commanded me through His apostles to be baptized. I had such glorious proofs of His divine power and Godhead that it would be criminal unbelief in me to doubt or disobey Him."

"For what were you baptized?"

"For the remission of sins."

"For anything else?"

"Yes. For the gift of the Holy Spirit."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. For the purpose of walking in newness of life."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. For dying a triumphant death—to die in the Lord."

"For anything else?"

"Yes. For the resurrection of the dead."

"Anything else?"

"No. This will be the fulness of joy and life for evermore."

D. C.

(To be concluded in next issue.)

## News of the Churches.

## NEW BRUNSWICK.

## BACK BAY.

Meetings well attended, interest good. Three happy converts have confessed their love to Christ, and have, consequently, been buried with their Lord and Master in baptism. We are hoping and expecting more to "turn to the Lord." To God be all the praise.

P. D. NOWLAN.

21st March, '87.