

Disciples of Christ

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BY R. RICHARDSON,
OF VIRGINIA.

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THEIR RISE, PROGRESS, FAITH, AND PRACTICE.

THE religious society, whose members prefer to be known by the primitive and unsectarian appellation of “Disciples of Christ,” or by that of “Christians,” the title first given to the followers of our Lord at Antioch, A. D. 41, but who are variously designated in different sections, as “Baptists,” “Reformed Baptists,” “Reformers,” or “Campbellites,” had its origin in an effort made, a few years since, to effect a union of the pious of all parties, by the ties of a common Christianity.

Thomas Campbell, who had been long a minister of high standing in the “secession” branch of the Presbyterian Church, in the north of Ireland, his native country, and who had been at all times characterized by his love for the Bible, and for godly men of all parties, without respect to sectarian differences, having visited the United States, as well for the recovery of his health, which had become much impaired, as with a view to a permanent location, was, after a lapse of nearly three years, followed by his family, under the charge of his eldest son Alexander, then a young man, and took up his abode in Washington county, Pennsylvania, where his time had been chiefly spent, since the period of his arrival, in sup-
plying with ministerial labor the destitute congregations of the seceder connection.

Continually deploring, however, the divided and distracted condition of the religious community at large, and deeply convinced that its divisions were unnecessary, unscriptural, and most injurious to the interests of religion and of society: he at length formed the resolution to make a public effort for the restoration of the original unity of the church. Being joined in this resolution by his son Alexander, whose views of religion had been much liberalized and extended by an intimacy with Greville Ewing and the Independents of Glasgow, in Scotland, during his studies, which he had just completed at the university in that city; and whose talents, learning, and energy have, since this period, so widely disseminated the principles of union then adopted: an attempt was made, in the first instance, to obtain the cooperation of the people and ministers with whom he stood associated.

The great fundamental point urged at this juncture was, that in order to Christian union, and the full influence of the gospel, it was

absolutely necessary that the Bible alone should be taken as the authorized bond of union, and the infallible rule of faith and practice; in other words, that the revelations of God should be made to displace from their position all human creeds, confessions of faith, and formularies of doctrine and church government, as being not only unnecessary, but really a means of perpetuating division. Containing, indeed, much truth, and embracing, for the most part, the great leading facts and doctrines of Christianity, each one, it was argued, superadded unfortunately its own peculiar theory of religion, and blended with the Christianity common to all, speculative opinions respecting matters not revealed, which, nevertheless, were, in these theological systems, exalted to an equal authority with the undoubted facts of the gospel. These conflicting opinions, uncertain for want of clear scriptural evidence, were, whether true or false, unimportant in themselves, as contrasted with the great and plainly revealed truths of Holy Writ; and, as derived from human reason, and being the offspring of human weakness, were regarded as constituting essentially human religions, and as being therefore wholly devoid of any regenerating or saving efficacy. It was conceived to have been a small matter that the Lutheran Reformation should have freed the church from the religion of the priest, if she persisted in substituting for it the religion of men, rather than the religion of God, as God himself had given it. For, while it was admitted that the various formularies of religion contained the great and leading points of Christianity, and the pleasing reflection could be indulged that almost all parties were agreed in those, as, for instance, briefly summed up in the Nicene, or Apostles' Creed: it was urged, that the various systems of human opinions, commingled with these truths, had so diluted, weakened, and even perverted them, as to have deprived them in a great measure of their power in the salvation of the world; so that the gospel, in the hands of Protestantism, had become a vague, contradictory, incomprehensible religion, quite unable to effect the conversion of the world, or accomplish the grand, extensive, and blessed results, for the attainment of which, the religion of Christ, in its concentrated purity, was so admirably fitted. It was therefore proposed, that all human creeds, as being incomplete if they contained anything less than the Bible—unworthy of credit, if they contained anything more upon the subject of religion, and in either case, as highly injurious for the reasons above given, should

be indiscriminately repudiated by the churches, and that the Bible itself, and more especially the New Testament, as containing the clear development of the religion of Christ, should be, as was undeniably the case in primitive ages, the creed, the confession, and the guide of all.

The plea that human creeds and discipline were necessary to preserve purity of doctrine and government in the church, was totally rejected, as disproved by the well-known fact that they had failed to do this, and also as an imputation upon the divine goodness and wisdom, implying that God was unwilling to give a sufficient revelation, and left something for men to supply; or that men could express the truths revealed, in better words, and in expressions less liable to misconstruction, than those selected by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, it was insisted, that the Scriptures, interpreted in conformity with the fixed laws of language, could convey but the same ideas to all unbiased minds respecting everything necessary to salvation; and that if, perchance, difference of sentiment should arise, respecting minor and incidental matters, these inferences or opinions were to be distinguished from faith, and were neither to be made a term of communion, nor imposed by one Christian upon another. Or, to express the whole in the language employed by Thos. Campbell, "Nothing was to be received as a matter of faith or duty, for which there could not be produced a *Thus saith the Lord*, either in express terms, or by approved scripture precedent."

This overture for a religious reformation being rejected by the seceders as a body, but embraced by some members: an application was made to the pious of all the parties in the vicinity, and a declaration and address" drawn up and printed, in which all were invited to form a union upon the principles above stated. A considerable number of individuals responded to this appeal, and a congregation was immediately organized upon Brush Run, in Washington county, on the 7th of September, 1810 (see Supplement to this article), where a house of worship was erected, and where ministerial duties were performed conjointly by T. Campbell and his son Alexander, who had been duly ordained pastors of the church.

It is proper to remark here, that the members of this congregation were not associated together in a loose and informal manner, at its formation. On the contrary, it was deemed absolutely necessary that everyone, in being admitted, should give some proof that he

understood the nature of the relation he assumed, and the true scriptural ground of salvation. Each applicant, therefore, was required to give a satisfactory answer to the question: "What is the meritorious cause of the sinner's acceptance with God?" Upon expressing an entire reliance upon the merits of Christ alone for justification, and evincing a conduct becoming the Christian profession, he was received into fellowship. (For want of these proofs, two persons were rejected at the first meeting.) Such was the humble origin of a reformation, now widely extended, which did not, as is often the case, proceed from the fire of enthusiasm, but was the offspring of calm and long continued deliberation, frequent consultation, and patient, laborious, and prayerful investigation of the Holy Scriptures; and which had never for its object to add a new sect to those already existing, but was designed, from its very inception, to put an end to all partisan controversies, and, far from narrowing the basis of Christian fellowship, to furnish abundant room for all believers upon the broad ground of the Bible, and a common reliance upon the merits of Christ.

Much devotion and interest was manifested by the church of Brush Run, and the utmost peace and harmony prevailed amongst its members for a number of months. Most of them being poor, they were unable to finish the interior of the frame meeting house which they had erected, and were accordingly wont to assemble in it, without fire, during the inclemency even of winter. They were also in the habit of visiting often at each other's houses, and spending whole nights in social prayer; searching the scriptures, asking and answering questions, and singing hymns. Their affections seemed to be elevated above the love of party, by the love of Christ; and the deeply implanted prejudice of a sectarian education and training appeared to have died away beneath the overshadowing influence of divine truth.

A circumstance occurred, however, after some time, which showed that these prejudices had power to revive; and that, like noxious weeds, they were more hardy and enduring than the things that are salutary to men. This circumstance was the presentation, by a member, of the subject of infant baptism, which at once necessarily brought up the question so often debated between Baptists and Pedobaptists: whether or not this ordinance could be scripturally administered to infants? Mr. Campbell, Sen., entered upon the

discussion of the subject, with his impressions in favor of the affirmative; but he examined the question with so much impartiality in a series of discourses, that a number of his hearers became convinced thereby, on the contrary, that the practice of infant baptism could not be sustained by adequate scripture evidence; and the mind of his son Alexander especially, was, after a full examination of the subject, led to the conclusion, not only that the baptism of infants was without scriptural authority, but that immersion in water, upon a true profession of faith in Christ, alone constituted Christian baptism. Upon stating to his oldest sister, his conclusions, and his intention to comply with what he conceived to be the requisitions of the gospel, she informed him that her convictions and intentions had for some time been the same; and, upon stating the matter to their father, he proposed that they should send for a Baptist preacher, and attend upon the ministration of the ordinance in the immediate region of their labors. Before the appointed time, Thomas Campbell himself, together with several other members of the Brush Run congregation, became so forcibly impressed with the same convictions, that they were prepared to accompany them, and all were immersed, upon the simple profession of faith made by the Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts 8:37,) by Elder Luse of the Baptist community, on the 12th June, 1812.

This was an important occurrence in the history of this little band of reformers; for it not only revived the educational prejudices of all those who were unfavorable to immersion, or attached to infant baptism, and induced them immediately to withdraw themselves from the church; but it was the means of bringing the remainder, who now constituted a congregation of immersed believers, into immediate connection with the Baptists. For, although disinclined to a combination with any religious party, known as such, they deemed the principles of the Baptists favorable to reformation and religious freedom, *and believed that as they had it in their power to preserve their own independence as a church, and the integrity of the principles of their first organization, a connection with the Baptists would afford them a more extended field of usefulness. Accordingly, in the fall of 1813, they were received into the Redstone Baptist Association, carefully and expressly stipulating at the same time, in writing, that “No terms of union or communion other than the holy scriptures should be required.”

The novelty of those simple views of Christianity which Alexander Campbell, as messenger of the church of Brush Run, urged with much ability upon the association, began immediately to excite considerable stir in that body, with whom an opposition to human creeds and to claims of jurisdiction over the churches, found but little favor. With the more liberal-minded Baptists, however, Mr. Campbell's views gradually prevailed; and so high became the confidence of the Baptist community, in general, in his talents and knowledge of the scriptures, that he was selected, after some time, to debate the question of Christian baptism with Mr. J. Walker, a minister of the secession church. This debate, held at Mount Pleasant, Ohio, in June, 1820, being afterwards published, greatly contributed to extend Mr. Campbell's celebrity, as well as to diffuse abroad among the Baptists his views of the Christian institution. The same result followed a second debate upon the same subject, which grew out of the first one, and which he held, in 1823, at Washington, in the State of Kentucky, with Mr. McCalla of the Presbyterian Church, so that the views of Mr. Campbell became generally diffused among the Baptist churches of the western country. Meanwhile, a jealousy on the part of some leading members of the Redstone Association, of his increasing popularity and commanding talents, led them to inveigh against his principles as innovating and disorganizing; and finally created so much dissension in that body, and so much animosity towards the church of Brush Run, that the latter, in order to avoid its effects, dismissed about thirty members, including Alexander Campbell, to Wellsburg, Virginia, where they were constituted as a new church, and, upon application, were admitted into the Mahoning Association of Ohio, with some of whose members they had already formed a favorable intimacy. This body proved much more liberal in its views; and after the bickerings and dissensions of nearly ten years at Redstone, the reformers were pleased to find in it not only liberality of feeling, but a disposition to follow implicitly the dictates of the scriptures. Various meetings of preachers were held to consider and investigate the ancient and apostolic order of things; and at length nearly the whole association came by degrees into the views presented; so that, in the year 1828, it rejected finally all human formularies of religion, and relinquished all claim to jurisdiction over the churches; resolving itself into a simple annual meeting for the purpose of receiving reports of

the progress of the churches; for worship, and mutual cooperation in the spread of the gospel

The influence of so large a number of churches, embracing a considerable portion of the Western Reserve, with several able preachers, necessarily gave great extension to the principles advocated by Mr. Campbell. It was but a short time, however, until the abandonment of usages long cherished by the Baptists, and the introduction of views and practices not commonly received by them, gave rise to so much umbrage and opposition on the part of the adjoining churches, composing the Beaver Association: that this body were induced, being not a little influenced also by the persevering hostility of that of Redstone, to denounce as heretical, and exclude from their fellowship, all those churches which favored the views of the reformers. The schism, thus produced, was soon extended to Kentucky, to eastern Virginia, and in short to all those Baptist churches and associations into which the views of Mr. Campbell had been introduced by his debates and writings; the Baptists, in all cases, separating from their communion all who favored the sentiments of the Disciples, being unwilling to concede even permission to believe the plain dictates of the scriptures to those who freely granted to them, without a breach of fellowship, unrestricted liberty of opinion.

The Disciples, thus suddenly cut off from their connection with the Baptists, formed themselves everywhere into distinct churches, independent of each other's control, but holding the same sentiments, having the same fellowship, and continuing to carry out the great principles originally professed, exhorting all men to return to the Bible alone, as the only rule of faith, and, in the language of Thomas Campbell, to co-operate together for "the restoration of pure primitive apostolic Christianity, in letter and spirit; in principle and practice."

The proscriptive measures of the Baptist clergy, and the persecuting spirit by which they had been often guided, proved, as has ever been the case, favorable to the cause they labored to overthrow. No sooner had a separation been effected, than prejudices began to subside, and misapprehensions to be corrected, as the excited feelings which produced them gradually died away. Many intelligent Baptists came over, from time to time, to the ranks of the Disciples, and many others were admitted to fellowship with the latter, without

being excluded from communion with their Baptist brethren. Indeed, many of the Baptist clergy, as the objects of the Disciples became better understood, came to approve them; and even to a certain extent to adopt their sentiments. So great has been the approximation, that the most friendly feelings now almost everywhere exist between the Disciples and the Baptists; and those very points, as, for instance, the rejection of creeds, and baptism for remission of sins, which were at first regarded as most objectionable, are at length adopted and publicly maintained by certain of the most talented Baptist ministers and editors in the Union.

Meanwhile the Disciples have rapidly increased in number, not by these accessions from the Baptists so much as by a general diffusion of their principles amongst all parties, and especially by an almost unprecedented success in the conversion of those who had not as yet embraced any of the religious systems of the day. Many have come over from the Presbyterians; some from the Episcopalians and from the Lutherans; among the latter, two well-educated ministers; but more, both of preachers and people, from the Methodists. A few Universalists have united with them, renouncing their own distinguishing tenets; some Roman Catholics also; some Tunkers; English and Scotch Baptists, and Independents. Indeed, some from almost every party have renounced their conflicting opinions, and adopted the faith and doctrine of the primitive church. It is also to be noted, that a great many sceptics and infidels have been converted through the labors of Mr. A. Campbell, and especially by his able defense of Christianity against Mr. Owen, in a public debate held in the city of Cincinnati, in the year 1829, which was published and extensively circulated in this country, and republished in England. Many of the writings of Mr. Campbell and his fellow-laborers have been republished in England, where the Disciples are becoming numerous. Their churches are found also in Wales and in Ireland. In the United States they are most numerous in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Virginia. There are a few churches in the British provinces. The whole number of communicants in the United States, so far as has been ascertained, is believed to fall but little short of 200,000.

It will not be necessary to say much of the faith or practice of this society, after the above history of its origin and progress. From this it will appear evident that it is founded upon the two great dis-

tinguishing principles of the Lutheran Reformation, to wit: “the taking of the Bible alone as the rule of faith, to the entire exclusion of tradition; and the relying only upon that justification that is obtained through faith in Jesus Christ.” Through all the various phases imposed upon this new effort at reformation, by its relative position to different points of Christian doctrine, or to sectarian parties, its real position has never changed: it has preserved its identity, and reflected more or less upon the whole community the light of divine truth. The controversies which have attended its progress, have been neither few nor unimportant; but their object has ever been the exhibition and defense of truth; and, though it were too much to say that imperfect views, and inconsiderate expressions have not, at times, proceeded from even the most prudent of its advocates, giving rise to various misconceptions and misrepresentations on the part of its opposers: it may safely be asserted, that there has been, from the beginning, an unwavering devotion to the cause of primitive Christianity, of Christian union, and of an entire conformity of the church to the requirements of the sacred volume.

One circumstance peculiar to the society deserves notice here. It is this: that its knowledge of the Christian institution, and its conformity to its requirements have been progressive. Unlike the various sects which are founded upon human creeds and confessions, and which are, by virtue of their very constitution, forbidden ever to get beyond the imperfect knowledge, or to differ from the ignorance of the men who composed their formularies: this society cast itself, without fear, upon the broad and free expanse of divine revelation itself; unrestricted by the narrow boundaries of parties or sects, and undaunted by human animadversion, to seek the pearls and treasures of divine truth. Thrown thus upon the scriptures alone for religious instruction, by the fundamental principle of their association, it would say but little, indeed, for the perspicuity, depth, and perfection of the Bible, if, during the protracted investigations and discussions, carried on by members of acknowledged learning and talent, there had been nothing more learned of the Christian institution, than was known and realized at first. The truth is, that the different characteristic points of primitive Christianity were developed in succession. The object, however, has been one from the beginning—to disinter the edifice of ancient Christianity from the rubbish which so many ages had accumulated upon it; and the

beauty of those portions which were first exposed, only induced greater exertion to bring others into view. It was the *unity* of the church which first struck the attention: the subsequent submission to immersion is only one example, among others, of that progression which consistency with their own principles required. Thus, it was not until about ten years after this, that the *definite object of immersion* was fully understood, when it was recognised as the *re-mitting ordinance* of the gospel, or the appointed means through which the penitent sinner obtained an assurance of that pardon, or remission of sins, procured for him by the sufferings and death of Christ. Nor was it until a still later period, that this doctrine was *practically applied*, in calling upon believing penitents to be baptized for the purpose specified. This view of baptism gave great importance to the institution, and has become one of the prominent features of this reformation.

The practice of *weekly communion* is another characteristic. This was adopted at the very beginning, as the well-known and universally admitted custom of the apostolic age. Their views of the nature and design of this ordinance, differ not from those of Protestants in general. They are not in favor of "close communion," as it is termed, nor do they prohibit any pious persons who feel disposed to unite with them in the commemoration of the Lord's death. Their manner of dispensing the ordinance is simple and impressive, conformable to the example of Christ, and the injunctions of Paul. (1 Cor. 11.)

They are accustomed to set apart the first day of the week, not as a Jewish or a Christian *Sabbath*, but as commemorative of the resurrection of Christ, and to be devoted to scripture-reading, meditation, prayer, and the ordinances of public worship. These are prayer and praise; teaching and exhortation; the Lord's Supper, and the fellowship or contribution for the poor, in accordance with Acts 11:42.

As to *government*, each congregation is independent of every other, managing its own affairs, and electing its own officers. Of the latter, three classes are recognized: elders or bishops, deacons, and evangelists. The functions of elders and deacons are restricted to each individual church and its vicinity. The evangelists are usually itinerant, except in cities and towns, and are supported by the voluntary contributions of their brethren. A co-operation of the

churches, for the spread of the gospel, is regarded as scriptural, and is now urged as highly necessary to a more effective system of evangelical labor.

In the *proclamation of the gospel* to sinners, their practice is of course regulated by their views of the state of man, and the nature of the Christian institution. They regard the unconverted as in a state of separation and alienation from God, dead in trespasses and sins; and look upon the gospel as the power of God to the salvation of everyone who believes it. They conceive that this Word of God, is that incorruptible seed of which the children of God are born; God having, according to his own will, begotten them “by the word of truth, that they might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures!” They believe that the word is thus the means employed by the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of men; and that the divine testimony itself is the source of that faith by which the gospel is received to the saving of the soul, for, in the language of scripture, that “faith comes by hearing; and hearing, by the word of God.” They regard the kingdom of Christ as a spiritual one, first formally and publicly set up on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), upon the exaltation and coronation of Christ, as evinced, upon that occasion, by the descent of the Holy Spirit. They believe, that the apostle Peter, to whom Christ had committed the *keys* of the kingdom, did, on that day, give admission to the believing and penitent Jews, in exact conformity with the nature and requisitions of the gospel, and that *all* should be admitted *now*, upon the same principles, and in the same manner. That is to say, that upon a sincere belief of the testimony borne by prophets and apostles, respecting the birth, the life, the character, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, accompanied by a true repentance, the sinner is to be immersed for the remission of sins, and the reception of the Holy Spirit, and is then to be added to the church, to walk in the commandments of the Lord, and manifest the graces of Christian character. If then they have any theory of conversion, it is simply that of the natural order of cause and effect; the Holy Spirit, through the divine testimony, being conceived to produce the faith of the gospel; this faith leading to repentance, to reformation, and consequent obedience to the commands of the gospel; and this obedience securing the immediate enjoyment of its promised blessings, the pardon of sins, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The possession of the Holy Spirit is regarded as the

evidence of sonship to God, and as the earnest of the spiritual and glorious inheritance promised to the righteous.

As a means of sanctification and growth in knowledge, the diligent study of the holy scriptures is everywhere earnestly enjoined. It may be safely affirmed, that no denomination in our country is so familiar with the contents of the Bible, although there is yet, doubtless, great deficiency in this respect with many. But, it is believed, that in this there is a progressive improvement, and a more special attention paid to the instruction of the young in the sacred volume, in families and Sunday schools.

With regard to the Divine Being, and the manifestations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by which he is revealed, the Disciples hold no sentiments incongruous with those of the parties who call themselves "evangelical." It is true, that their peculiar position has subjected them to much misrepresentation upon this subject, as well as upon others. For, because they felt it their duty to confine themselves to the *very language of scripture*, in relation to every subject of which it treats, they have been unwilling to use those scholastic terms and phrases, which the wisdom of men has substituted in its room; and this, not only on account of the principle involved, but from a fear of introducing, along with unscriptural expressions, unscriptural ideas. Nevertheless, although they use not the words Trinity, Triune, etc., they receive everything which the scripture affirms of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, giving to every expression its full and obvious meaning. They hold that the Word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God, and by whom all things were made, became flesh and dwelt among men, manifesting his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. And with respect to the Holy Spirit, they believe that he is the "Spirit of God," the "Comforter," the "Spirit of Christ," who spoke by prophets and apostles, filling them with divine wisdom and power; and that he is "the gift of God," "to those who ask him," who are made "the habitation of God through the Spirit," by whose presence they are rendered "temples of the living God," and "sanctified," "renewed," and "saved."

As it respects practical Christianity, the Disciples enjoy an entire conformity to the divine will, in heart as well as life. The fruit of the Spirit they believe to consist "in all goodness, righteousness and

truth." They think that the standard of piety and morality cannot be elevated too highly, and that the personal holiness of the professed followers of Christ is the great object to be accomplished by the institutions of the gospel. They regard these as a means of salvation, *only* as they prove to be a means of renovation; knowing that "nothing avails in Christ Jesus but a new creature," and that "without holiness no one shall see the Lord." They are the more careful, therefore, to maintain the ancient simplicity and purity of these institutions, which are thus divinely adapted to the accomplishment of an object so greatly to be desired.

Nor do the Disciples neglect the claims of society at large, as it respects its general improvement, and the amelioration of its condition, by the benevolent associations through which the Bible has been circulated abroad, and temperance and morality promoted with a success so signal as clearly to display the finger of God. They strongly advocate the universal education of the people, as the best means of promoting human happiness, and of preparing the way for the universal spread of the gospel, and the introduction of that happy era, for which they, in common with other Christians, look, when the "tabernacle of God" shall be "with men;" when he "shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." They have already under their charge many seminaries of learning, and, among these, two colleges. One of these, Bacon College, at Harrodsburg, Kentucky, is respectably endowed, furnished with a handsome college edifice, and in a very flourishing condition. The other, Bethany College, Virginia, is near the residence of Alexander Campbell, who is president of the institution. Its plan and its buildings are extensive, being designed for the education of the whole man, physical, intellectual, and moral. Its success has been very great, and although it has only commenced its third session, it already ranks in number of students, and in character, with the oldest institutions in the country.

Such being the faith and practice of the Disciples of Christ, their rapid increase in number may be attributed to the fact, that they have kept steadily before the community the claims of that common Christianity in which most parties are agreed. This agreement includes every prominent feature of the Reformation, without an exception. However parties may differ about their creeds, all agree with the Disciples in receiving the Bible. However various the

views of different sects in scholastic theology, all pretty much agree with the Disciples in justification by faith, and in the necessity of repentance and reformation of life. However the former may contend with each other about sprinkling and pouring, as modes of baptism; all agree with the Disciples, and with each other, that immersion, at least, is undisputed baptism, and the only mode in which there is universal agreement. Nay, even in regard to the object of this institution, the different confessions of faith are almost entirely agreed, stating, in their respective articles upon baptism, that it is, to adopt the words of the Westminster Confession, "The sign and seal of regeneration; of remission of sins, and of giving up to God to walk in newness of life." The same sentimental agreement may be predicated of weekly communion; the observance of the Lord's day, &c., and most happily of the great design of the observance of religion, the promotion of holiness and righteousness of life. Thus, having for their object to unite all Christians together in the common faith, without regard to difference of opinion; and in the full enjoyment of the common salvation, without respect to sectarian distinctions: the Disciples labor in joyful hope to aid in bringing about that happy period when all shall be united "by the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace, in one body and one spirit; in one hope of their calling; one Lord; one faith; one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

SUPPLEMENT.

CHRISTIANITY is a system of religion and morality instituted by Jesus Christ, primarily taught by his apostles, and recorded in the New Testament. It has for its immediate object the amelioration of the character and condition of man, morally and religiously considered, as far as possible in this life, and ultimately his complete salvation from the guilt, the love, the practice, and punishment of sin. It consists in the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the testimony and law of Jesus Christ, as taught by his apostles, and recorded in the New Testament. It has many professional opposites, many rivals to contend with, all of which, however, may be reduced to three classes, viz: infidels, heretics, and schismatics. The first of these reject, the second subvert, and the third corrupt Christianity, and, of course, measurably destroy its benign and blissful effects.

In order to defend the Christian institution against the rival in-

fluence of these opponents, we must meet each of them respectively with the proper arguments. The infidels of every class, having no counter testimony to exhibit against the divine authority and authenticity of our sacred records, nor anything comparable as a substitute to present to our reception, stand convicted of the most unreasonable obstinacy in rejecting a revelation, not only confirmed by every kind of accompanying evidence which the nature of the thing could justly require, but which also goes to confer upon the believing and obedient the greatest possible happiness, intellectual and moral, of which they are capable in existing circumstances, and of which our nature can be made capable in a blissful immortality.

But as it is from the perversions and corruptions of Christianity, and not from professed infidelity, that the proposed reformation is intended, we would most respectfully submit the following queries to the consideration of all concerned, for the purpose of bringing the subject fairly before them.

Queries.— 1. Is not the Church of Christ upon earth essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those, in every place, that profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else, as none else can be truly and properly called Christians?

2. Should not all that are enabled through grace, to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, consider each other as the precious saints of God, love each other as brethren, children of the same family and father, temples of the same spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same divine love, bought with the same price, and joint heirs of the same inheritance? Whom, God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

3. Is not division among Christians a pernicious evil?—Anti-Christian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ, as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself?—anti-scriptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority—a direct violation of his express command?—anti-natural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them? In a word, is it not productive of confusion,

and of every evil work?

4. Is not the Christian community in a sectarian condition, existing in separate communities alienated from each other?

5. Is not such a condition the native and necessary result of corruption; that is, of the introduction of human opinions into the constitution, faith or worship of Christian societies?

6. Is it not the common duty and interest of all concerned, especially of the teachers, to put an end to this destructive anti-scriptural condition?

7. Can this be accomplished by continuing to proceed as hitherto; that is, by maintaining and defending each his favorite system of opinion and practice?

8. If not, how is it to be attempted and accomplished, but by returning to the original standard and platform of Christianity, expressly exhibited on the sacred page of the New Testament scripture?

9. Would not a strict and faithful adherence to this, by preaching and teaching precisely what the apostles taught and preached, for the faith and obedience of the primitive disciples, be absolutely, and to all intents and purposes, sufficient for producing all the benign and blissful intentions of the Christian institution?

10. Do not all these intentions terminate in producing the faith and obedience that justify and sanctify the believing and obedient subject?

11. Is not everything necessary for the justification and sanctification of the believing and obedient expressly taught and enjoined by the apostles in the execution of their commission for the conversion and salvation of the nations; and fully recorded in the New Testament?

12. If so, what more is necessary, but that we expressly teach, believe and obey, what we find expressly recorded for these purposes? And would not our so doing, happily terminate our unhappy, scandalous, and destructive divisions?

The two following queries are subjoined for the sake of a clear definition of the leading and comprehensive terms, viz., *faith* and *obedience*—which comprehend the whole of the Christian religion.

13. Are not law and obedience, testimony and faith, relative terms, so that neither of the latter can exist without the former? that is, where there is no law, there can be no obedience; where there is

no testimony, there can be no faith.

14. Again, is not testimony necessarily confined to facts, and law to authority, so that without the latter the former cannot be? that is, where there are no facts, there can be no testimony—where no authority, no law. Wherefore, in every case, faith must necessarily consist in belief of facts; and obedience, in a practical compliance with the expressed will or dictates of authority. By facts is here meant some things said or done.

Conclusion.—Upon the whole, these things being so, it necessarily follows, that Christianity, being a divine institution, there can be nothing human in it; consequently it has nothing to do with the doctrines and commandments of men; but simply and solely with the belief and obedience of the expressly recorded testimony and will of God, contained in the holy scriptures, and enjoined by the authority of the Savior and his holy apostles upon the Christian community.

Reflections.—The affirmative of each of the above propositions being, as we presume, evidently true, they most certainly demand the prompt and immediate attention of all the serious professors of Christianity, of every name. The awful denunciations and providential indications of the divine displeasure against the present anti-Christian state of Christendom, loudly call for reformation;—the personal and social happiness of all concerned, and the conversion of the unbelieving part of mankind equally demand it. Nevertheless, we are not authorized to expect that any party, as such, will be induced by the above considerations, or by any other that can possibly be suggested, spontaneously and heartily to engage in the work of self-reformation. The sincere and upright in heart, however, ought not to be discouraged at the inattention and obstinacy of their brethren; for had this been the case in times past, no reformation had ever been effected. It becomes therefore the immediate duty and privilege of all that perceive and feel the necessity of the proposed reformation, to exert themselves by every scriptural means to promote it. Seeing the pernicious nature and anti-scriptural effects of the present corruptions of Christianity, both upon professors, and non-professors, in producing alienations amongst the former, in direct opposition to the law of Christ, and in casting almost insuperable obstacles in the way of the conversion of the latter: the serious and upright of all parties must feel conscientiously bound to

endeavor, to the utmost of their power, to effect a genuine and radical reformation; which, we presume, can only be effected by a sincere conformity to the original exhibition of our holy religion, the divinely authorized rule and standard of faith and practice. To such, therefore, we appeal; and for the consideration of such alone, we have respectfully submitted the above queries.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (Paul, 1 Cor. 1:10.)

“Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, I pray for them who shall believe on me through the word of my apostles, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me: that the world may know that thou hast sent me; and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” (John 17)

“In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15.)

“From the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Mal. 3:7.)

“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Rev. 18:4.)

“He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

As a striking instance of the necessity and importance of the proposed reformation, we present the following extract from the Boston Anthology, which, with too many of the same kind that might be adduced, furnishes a mournful comment upon the text—we mean upon the sorrowful subject of our woeful divisions and corruptions. The following reply to the Rev. Mr. Cram, missionary from Massachusetts to the Senecas, was made by the principal chiefs and warriors of the Six Nations, in council assembled at Buffalo Creek, state of New York, in the presence of the agent of the

United States for Indian Affairs, in the summer of 1805: "I am come, brethren," said the missionary, "to enlighten your minds, and to instruct you how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his will, and to preach to you the gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ. There is but one way to serve God, and if you do not embrace the right way, you cannot be happy hereafter." To which they replied, "Brother, we understand your religion is written in a book. You say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there be but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree, as you can all read the book? Brother, we do not understand these things. We are told your religion was given to your forefathers. We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers. It teaches us to be *thankful* for all the favours we receive, to *love* one another, and to be *united*. We never quarrel about religion. We are told you have been preaching to the white people in this place. Those people are our neighbors: we are acquainted with them. We will wait a little, to see what effect your preaching has upon *them*. If we find it does them good, makes them *honest*, and *less* disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again what you have said." Thus closed the conference! Alas! poor people! how do our divisions and corruptions stand in your way? What a pity that you find us not upon original ground, such as the apostles left the primitive churches! Had we exhibited to you their unity and charity; their humble, honest, and affectionate deportment towards each other, and towards all men, you would not have had those evil and shameful things to object to our holy religion, and to prejudice your minds against it. But your conversion, it seems, awaits our reformation— awaits our return to primitive unity and love. To this may the God of mercy speedily restore us, both for your sakes and for our own; that *his* way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Amen and amen.

Upon the whole, we appeal to every candid mind, that has one serious thought upon the great subject of Christianity: is not the necessity of a religious reformation among professed Christians *most convincingly evident*, and *universally acknowledged*, by the serious of all denominations? We appeal, then, to all concerned, what should be its character? Should it be divine or human? Should it be the simple belief and obedience of the word and testimony of

God, or of the opinions and dictates of men? You will, no doubt, say, Of the former. So say we; and yet, strange to tell, all the sects are offended. And why? We shall leave it to them to say; for they have not yet, no, *not one of them*, presented any relevant reason, why we should desist from urging the indispensable duty, absolute necessity, and vast importance of the reformation for which we plead. They have not presented us with the detection of one single error in our premises. We shall conclude our humble appeal by respectfully assuring all concerned, that if they, or any of them, will convince us of any error, either of faith or practice, that we will candidly relinquish it, and thank God and man for the discovery. Also, that if they will show us how we may, without giving offence, plead the cause of a reformation, which involves the glory of God and the happiness of mankind, we shall thankfully adopt it.

For the assistance and satisfaction of our inquiring friends, who wish to avail themselves of the luminous fullness of the holy scriptures upon the great subject under consideration, we subjoin the following analysis of the sacred oracles, and the great salvation which they exhibit; by the due consideration of which the scriptural evidence and certainty of what is intended, will, we hope, be apparently obvious.

ANALYSIS OF THE SACRED ORACLES.

The Bible consists of two volumes—the Old Testament and the New. Each of these consists of histories, prophecies, moral dictates, divine institutions, and devotional exercises. The Old Testament contains three distinct dispensations of religion, and predicts a fourth, which is contained in the New:

1st The primitive or Edenic—delivered to our first parents immediately after their creation.

2nd. The Patriarchal—also delivered to our first parents immediately after their fall.

3rd. The Israelitish or Mosaic—delivered to the Israelites by Moses.

And the 4th, called the Christian,—exclusively contained in the New Testament Concerning these two volumes we observe, that although the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the divine will, for the edification and salvation of the

church; and, therefore, in that respect cannot be separated: yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament church, and the particular duties of its members.

Also, that in order to enjoy a clear and comprehensive knowledge of what we read upon every subject in the sacred volume, the following things should be duly considered: viz. Who speaks; to whom he speaks; what he says; why he says it; when; and where he said so.

ANALYSIS OF THE GRAND DOCTRINAL TOPICS CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE.

1. The knowledge of God.
2. Of man.
3. Of sin.
4. Of the Savior.
5. Of his salvation.
6. Of the principle and means of enjoying it.
7. Of its blissful effects and consequences.

These are the grand doctrinal topics which the scriptures were specially designed to teach, in the knowledge, belief, and practical influence of which, consists our present salvation.

ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT SALVATION.

I. Of its concurring causes

1. The prime moving or designing cause—the love of God.
2. The procuring cause—the blood of Christ.
3. The efficient cause—the Holy Spirit.
4. The instrumental cause—the gospel and law of Christ, or the word of truth.

II. Of the principle and means of enjoyment.

1. OF THE PRINCIPLE.
The sole principle of enjoyment is belief or faith.
2. OF THE MEANS.
 - a. The prime instituted means of enjoyment is baptism.
 - b. Prayer.

- c. Church fellowship in the social ordinances.
- d. The Lord's Day.
- e. The Lord's Supper.
- f. The prayers.
- g. The praises.
- h. The teaching of the word.
- i. The contribution for charitable purposes.
- j. Religious conversation.
- k. Studious perusal and meditation of the holy scriptures.
- l. All manner of good works—called works of faith and labors of love, &c., all of which are but means of *enjoyment*—not of *procurement*. “For eternal life is the *gift* of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

III. *Of the present and proper effects of this salvation.*

These are justification, adoption, sanctification, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance in it to the end of our race.

IV. *Of its ultimate effects.*

These are a glorious resurrection, and a blissful immortality.