

CHRISTIAN HERALD.

EDITOR:

J. F. FLOYD.

FRIDAY, DEC. 22, 1882.

Our Position.

Seeing that we, as a religious body of people, accept the Bible *alone* as our rule of faith and practice, that our work is emphatically a work of *restoration*, and that our aim is to establish and build up churches all over the land after the pattern of the Apostolic churches, certain things necessarily and logically follow from this broad and primitive platform. Among these we briefly state the following:

1. In order that we may be like the primitive churches and thus worship God acceptably, we must be known by the same names. The body of Christ known as his church is not a nameless institution. It was named more than eighteen hundred years ago, and that too, by the sanction of divine authority. Seeing then that God has named his church from its very beginning, what right has man to make any changes in these divinely appointed names, or to presume to substitute others for them? When we come to look into the Scriptures we find none of the modern sectarian names which create confusion and strife and cause division among the people of God. Such names were unknown in the days of the Apostles. But when the church, as a whole, is spoken of in the Scriptures, it is called by such names as "Church of God," "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of heaven," and "the one body." And Christ said "upon this rock I will build *my* church," which evidently warrants us in calling it the "Church of Christ." When the inspired apostles wrote to the local congregations they addressed them by such names as "churches of Christ" and "churches of God." When the *members* of the churches of Christ were mentioned, they were called "Christians," "disciples of Christ," "brethren," "saints," and the "faithful in Christ Jesus," etc. Hence, we, as a body of worshipping people, feel justified in simply wearing these names to the *exclusion of all others*. To go farther than this and apply names of mere human invention to the people or churches of Christ, is extremely unsafe, to say the least of

it. As the maxim runs, "Where the Bible speaks we will speak, and when the Bible is silent, we will be silent."

2. It necessarily follows that we must hold the same creed as that held by the primitive churches. Every united body or kingdom must have a creed or constitution; and by their constitution they may be known. Great Britain is distinguished from the United States by her constitution, and France differs from England because her constitution is a different one; and just so throughout all the kingdoms of the earth. Now this is equally true of the churches. In order then to be like the *primitive* churches in this respect which were established under the preaching of divinely appointed men, we are forced to accept the Bible alone as our creed or unchangeable constitution. Those churches which go farther than this may be popular in the eyes of men. But this feature of their existence is without divine authority.

3. We must also refuse to receive any into the churches of Christ except baptized penitent believers. We could not be like the Apostolic churches and do otherwise. There is no evidence in the Book of God that infants were ever baptized and made members of the church in the days of the apostles. But Christ commanded his chosen messengers to go and make *disciples* of the people, and they were to baptize such, such only, as had been discipled. They were to be discipled by the preaching of the Gospel, or by being taught. Hence, when the apostles went out under the commission, the first thing was to teach the people. Through the teaching and the evidence submitted, they were convinced or made believers, and then they repented of their sins and were baptized. This is the kind of material of which the churches of Christ were composed. Hence, in order to restore Christianity we must leave far behind us infant baptism and infant membership as the tradition of the fathers, rather than a New Testament practice.

4. We must practice the same baptism they practiced. There can be no question as to what constitutes baptism. No sane man who has examined the question will think of denying that Christ commanded *immersion*. And few scholars, indeed, who are willing to risk their reputation upon their scholarship will contend that he

ever commanded *any thing else*. It is equally true that the primitive churches practiced immersion alone. Concerning these facts all history and the scholarship of the world are united. Then in the light of these facts, should we practice anything else, we would not be doing what Christ commanded, nor following the example of his churches. In order, therefore, to restore Christianity, and to be on the safe side, we must practice immersion alone as the New Testament baptism.

5. We must follow the churches of Christ in the appointment of officers. There are only three classes of permanent church officials known to the Scriptures. These are Elders, Deacons and Evangelists. Some of these are often designated by different names, but their office and work is the same. Should we go beyond this and ordain officers of which the Bible knows nothing we would not be following the divinely appointed precedent and hence would be left without an evidence that we were serving God according to his will. "Not every one who saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Christmas.

Christmas is said to be a celebration of the nativity of our Savior. It is not of divine appointment, neither did it originate with the churches of Christ. It is a purely human institution from top to bottom, and can, therefore, be wholly discarded by good people without the violation of any principle of Christianity. Properly observed, however, it is a kind of free will offering to the Lord. It is not claimed that the celebration is correct as to time. There is no evidence that Christ was born on the 25th of December; but all indications point to an earlier date in the season. But as it is not obligatory upon Christians to observe it, the matter of time becomes immaterial. The most objectionable feature about the whole thing is the lamentable fact that its original design has been almost wholly lost sight of, and hence, instead of being a joyful feast dedicated to the Lord, it is too often turned into a day of general revelry and vice of all kinds. This is to be very much regretted. We are not one of those who seem to think that all Christian people must go about with long faces as though they

were always in attendance upon a funeral; for God has given to all of us the happy faculty of laughter as well as that of shedding tears. To suppose that such a faculty has been given to us without the corresponding privilege of exercising it, would be, indeed, a high degree of folly. But even our happiest moods must be regulated by Scripture knowledge and tempered by the gentle and refining influences of pure Christianity. Christmas, under these circumstances, might be a blessing to humanity instead of a curse.

The custom of presenting presents on Christmas is evidently of heathen origin, but it is not to be despised on this account. Much depends on the nature of the gift and the motive that prompted it. If these be properly observed without running into extravagance, we see no reason why presents may not be given on the 25th of December as well as on any other day. The one point to be kept constantly before us is contained in the admonition of the great Apostle that whatsoever we do, in word or deed, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. But above all things we should remember the *gift of God*. This gift was the brightest boon from heaven. It was not only a gift in the highest conception of man and coming from the purest motive possible, but it was a gift that was designed to both benefit and save the human race. This is joy to the heart and food to the soul. If we could be sure that this presentation was made on the 25th of December we would have greater reasons for rejoicing and making merry on that day. And why not? for we are told that when this Boon made his appearance in the manger of Bethlehem, "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Let us then, like the wise men of old, while we are making merry and offering gifts, open our treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and make an offering to the Lord.