

# THE AGE-QUESTION:

OR

## A PLEA

FOR

# CHRISTIAN UNION.

---

ALFRED NEVIN, D.D.

---

"That they all may be one."—*Jesus Christ.*

"Is Christ divided?"—*St. Paul.*

"He has not the love of God who does not seek the unity of the Church."—*Augustine.*

"In things necessary, let there be unity; in things not necessary, liberty; in all things, charity."—*Witsius.*

"I can as willingly be a martyr for Love, as for any article of the Creed."—*Baxter.*

"The union of all true Christians! That is the Reformation of the Nineteenth Century."—*J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, D.D.*

---

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM FLINT, 26 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET.

1868.

---

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand eight  
hundred and sixty-eight, by

ALFRED NEVIN, D.D.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court, in and for the Eastern District of  
Pennsylvania.

---

---

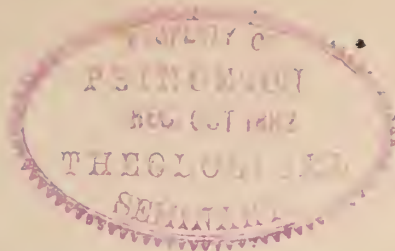
KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS,  
607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.

---

FRATERNALLY DEDICATED

TO

GEORGE W. MUSGRAVE, D.D., LL.D.



## CONTENTS.

---

PREFACE.....	7
THE APOSTLES' CREED.....	9
THE LORD'S PRAYER.....	9
INTRODUCTION.....	13
THE UNION CONTEMPLATED.....	20
TESTIMONY OF EMINENT MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.....	45
REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN UNION.....	68
OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIAN UNION CONSIDERED.....	135
MEANS FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNION.....	157
CULTIVATION OF THE SPIRIT OF UNITY URGED.....	189

## PREFACE.

---

THIS little volume has but a feeble claim to originality. It mainly presents relevant passages of Scripture ; and the opinions of men (very much in their own words) whose piety, learning, prominence and usefulness, challenge for any thing from them on such a theme as Christian Union, the profoundest respect and strongest confidence. The arguments and appeals are given in as condensed and intelligible a form as possible, that the "Plea," intended chiefly for the popular mind, may, if God will, secure general perusal and receive solemn attention, by reason of its plainness, directness and brevity. Whatever may be the result, the Author will have the comfort of knowing that all such efforts, as this unpretending one, are in a line with the normal state of the Church and the Saviour's prayer for His people's unity. May the spirit of that prayer pervade the reader's heart as he advances from page to page, gathering, as we humbly trust he may, some hints which he can himself more fully expand and apply. And thus may it not only be believed, but more widely and profoundly felt, as a living, majestic, and momentous truth, that "charity is the bond of perfect-

(7)

ness." All that the Author asks is, that what he has said, may not be interpreted by what he has *not* said, and thus be represented or regarded as expressive of even the slightest indifference to the precious "truth as it is in Jesus." He yields to no one in the conviction, that an union, except on the basis of essential truth, would be not only dangerous, but disastrous, and bitterly to be deplored. He is persuaded, however, at the same time, that it is one thing to require assent that every thing in God's Word is *true*, and quite another thing to insist upon the belief that *all things therein are so importantly true*, that difference of opinion in relation to *some* of them, is to be regarded as justifying schism in the mystical body of Christ.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
 Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the  
 Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was  
 crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell;  
 The third day he rose from the dead; He ascended  
 into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God  
 the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to  
 judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The Holy Catholic  
 Church, The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness  
 of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the  
 Life everlasting. Amen.

---

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy  
 Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on  
 earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily  
 bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive  
 those who trespass against us. And lead us not  
 into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For thine  
 is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for  
 ever and ever. Amen.

## EVANGELICAL UNITY.

## I.

“God, of one blood, o’er all the earth,  
All nations of mankind hath made,  
Nor age, nor clime, nor hue of birth,  
Can this blood brotherhood evade :  
But tainted in their Father Head,  
The sons of Adam fail and die ;  
The common tomb where all are laid  
Records a ghastly unity !

## II.

“The theme is dark, and sad the song ;  
Is there not kinsmanship beside ?  
Yes ! sound the exulting chords along,  
And sing—O Death, thy soul hath died ;  
O Grave, thy vanquished portals hide,  
Their broken strength returneth never ;  
For *Christ the Brother* spoils thy pride,  
His brotherhood abides for ever.

## III.

“Brethren of Jesus, sons of love !  
How lovelike, Godlike, these should be ;  
In earth beneath, and heaven above,  
One undivided family ;



Bending at one blest throne the knee,  
Hymning one Saviour's sacred blood;  
By one sweet Spirit's energy  
Knit each to each, and all to God.

## IV.

"Ineffable accord! O thou  
From whom the Bridegroom is not far,—  
Who wearest on thy mystic brow  
The coronetting Morning Star  
In whom deep springs of music are,—  
Love-ransomed thou, forbear to move  
One chord of heart, whose pulse may mar  
The harmony of holy love.

## V.

"Yes, rather, on the Patmos wing  
Of Evangelic eagle flee,  
Where thousand times ten thousand sing,  
O'er that Apocalyptic sea  
Of ruby glass, love's melody,  
All golden-harped—and waft the story  
Down, till this groaning earth shall be  
Baptized into celestial glory."

## INTRODUCTION.

---

THE voice of one, eighteen centuries ago, cried to Israel, waiting in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." The voice of Providence cries in our day, Prepare ye the way of the Holy Ghost. "Reeve ye one another, as Christ also received you." "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 grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice."

The union of Evangelical Christians—in other words, of all who hold and advocate the doctrines of salvation by grace, through faith in the merits of the righteousness and blood of a Divine Saviour—a faith which 'worketh by love' under the renew-

ing influence of the Holy Spirit—is, beyond question, the great problem presented to the Christian world of the nineteenth century.

The divisions of the Church of Christ, which, ever since Paul had occasion to complain of the factions springing up in the Church of Corinth, have been felt to be an element of weakness in the Christian cause; a scandal; or stumbling-block in the way of the Lord's progress; are now having the attention of men anxiously turned to them, and an intense desire cherished for their removal. Many hearts are relenting from the rigor of party organization and sectarian asperity. The love of Christ, that sacred flame which warms them and bids them strive together for the conversion of a world, also melts down the walls of partition, which might well enough keep Jews asunder from Gentiles, but was never permitted to sever one Jew from another, and much less ought now to separate a Christian from his brother. Many are pondering these things in their hearts, and asking, Ought brethren to be thus estranged? Ought Ephraim thus to envy Judah, and Judah to vex Ephraim?

It is true, there are some who look upon Christian Union as an Utopian scheme. There are

multitudes, however, by whom it is not so regarded, and their number is steadily and rapidly increasing. Many of the ablest heads and noblest hearts in Christendom feel called to review the ground which the Protestant churches now occupy, because they know that much of this ground was assumed, partly by inconsideration, partly by the pressure of controversy, and partly by the coercion of circumstances. Never, indeed, has such a yearning for unity been experienced, at least in the same degree. A growing impatience prevails of those divisions and separations, in which many were accustomed to acquiesce, as inevitable incidents in the free march of mind, if not even valuable and desirable, as proofs of that very freedom. Everywhere there is a disposition to ask if this checkered aspect, this parti-colored blazonry, this crossing and re-crossing of conflicting lines and clashing ranks, be indeed the spectacle which the Captain of Salvation designed his field of battle to exhibit.

It will not do, therefore, to pass this question by with cold praise, as a very good thing in itself; but impracticable, and the men, be they ministers or laymen, who can regard it with indifference, or dismiss it with a sneer, certainly do not occupy

an enviable position. How can any one, whose mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and whose heart is renewed by His grace, be without desire to see the people of God united? How can any one, who surveys the distractions of the Christian Church, who sees the parties into which it is split, the virulence by which they are actuated, the angry controversies they maintain, the discredit they bring upon Christianity, the force they give to infidel objections, the gratification they afford to demons, the obstructions they throw in the way of the world's conversion, *not* desire the union of the Church? Had we seen even the seamless garment, which once covered the sacred person of the Saviour, rent and torn by violence, we could not have looked upon the mutilated robe without emotion; how, then, can we see His spiritual body torn by faction, and disfigured by bigotry, and yet be indifferent to the melancholy spectacle?

Is it reasonably probable that the time for Christian Union is not distant? We believe it is. The very longing for it, already referred to, is to be hailed as a token for good. It is the instinct of brotherly love, implanted and revived in Christian breasts by the Lord himself—the Spirit;

and the very awakening of it, at any time, to unwonted energy and intensity, is an indication that its gratification may be expected to be within reach. For God does not whet any spiritual appetite merely that it may suffer the disappointment of a tantalizing delay: His having whetted it is, of itself, an evidence that He has its appropriate aliment at hand. Thus, in the sixteenth century, a general sense of the necessity of a reformation, accompanied by the desire of it, and a conviction that, in some way or other, it would come, preceded and paved the way for, Luther's republication of the Word of God, and the Gospel of His grace, and, if the necessity of the case now, in the nineteenth century, demands an Apostolic mission on behalf of John's chosen theme—Love, and the divine fellowship of love—similar to that which Luther, following in the steps of Paul, accomplished on behalf of faith, and the free justification which faith appropriates—the feeling of that necessity, in so far as it is of God, is the sure presage of its being speedily and adequately met. No surer sign need be asked of a revolution or reformation being nigh, even at the gate, than the feeling of a void, and the prevalence of a desire in regard to it. And, considering all the circum-

stances, we are inclined to regard the present feeling of the Church on the subject of Union, an auspicious sign of the times, a promising indication, a happy prognostication; being like a streak of red, however faint, breaking the evening and western clouds, and giving some promise of "fair weather" on the morrow.

But, whether Christian Union is, or is not, *soon* to be accomplished, it is certain that it will in God's set time be realized. Nothing can hinder it. Sectarianism and party spirit, no less than formalism and superstition, must give way before it. The day will dawn when the Church shall be

"Not by a party's narrow banks confined—  
Not by a sameness of opinion joined;  
But cemented by the Redeemer's blood,  
And bound together in the heart of God."

The many difficulties—prejudices, and sectional interests in the way of this grand result, which meet our eye as we look abroad upon the Christian world as actually constituted, might tempt us to consider it a vain and fruitless attempt to endeavor to harmonize such discordant materials. And, indeed, it would be a hopeless task, had we not the promise of God, and the assurance of the Saviour that His people shall yet be One. With such a

guaranty, however, we have no reason for fear or doubt as to the issue. What are difficulties to the omnipotent God? "Who art thou, O great mountain?" says Jehovah, "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it. For who hath despised the day of small things?"

But, whilst we firmly believe that God will bring about His own purpose to make His people One, this ought not to make us indifferent to our duty in this direction. It ought rather to kindle our zeal, and excite our desire; to be found coöperating with Him in the path of cheerful obedience. What has God wrought for His Church, in which He did not employ human instrumentality, while taking care so to order things that the glory should be His? The conviction, therefore, that Christian Union is God's cause, and that He will carry it on and carry it out, is the very thing to call forth our zeal and nerve our exertions. And, instead of sitting down in indolent activity, as, alas! so many do, hoping that the good work may be accomplished, it is the part of a sincere Christian, after casting off any unjust prejudices of education and long-established habits, to lead others to do



so, as far as he may be able ; and to urge them to offer their prayers, blend their efforts, and consecrate their influence, with his own, to the attainment of the consummation so devoutly to be wished.



## THE UNION CONTEMPLATED.

It may be asked, Whether, in order to actualize the idea of Christian Union, it would be requisite for the various sections into which the Church is divided, to resolve themselves into their integral elements, and to attempt the formation of one vast community, comprehending the good of every name and every sect ?

To this question it may be answered, that such an issue, for the present, at least, is not contemplated. However desirable it may be to obtain unity of religious sentiment, even in those minor matters on which Christians are not now agreed, and however certain it may be that yet "there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd," it can scarcely be expected now, that there will be unity and concord based on absolute uniformity of opinion and practice. In the Apostolic age there

existed differences of opinion and practice between Jewish and Gentile converts, far greater than those which divide some of the religious denominations of our land, yet they did not divide the Church under the guidance of the Apostles. On the contrary, the Apostles enjoined mutual forbearance. The Church, in its early history, was one, as the human race is one. There was unity, and yet considerable variety, in the outward forms and observances connected with the institutions and worship of each congregation. This diversity, in lesser matters, arose from the different habits, manners, and ceremonies which characterized the different nations that embraced the doctrines of the Cross. A Christian of Asia, though Asiatic in his manners and observances, was at once received into communion with the Churches in Europe, without being required to renounce his peculiarities. Irenæus says that, while each retained his own customs, "they held communion with each other." The Bishop of Cæsarea, in a letter to Cyprian, in the year 256, says that the Church of Rome "has many particulars of divine worship which are not precisely the same observances which prevail in Jerusalem." "So, likewise," he adds, "in a very great number of other

provinces, many things vary according to the diversity of place and people, but, nevertheless, these variations have at no time infringed the peace and unity of the catholic (or universal) Church." The Reformers held that uniformity was not necessary to unity—that the Church admitted of variety in lesser matters, and that all were to be received as brethren whom God vouchsafed to take for sons. Said the Churches of France and Belgia, when addressing the other reformed Churches on the subjects of union and harmony—"There hath scarce been any age which hath, in such sort, seen all Churches following altogether one thing in all points, so as there hath not always been some difference, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, or in manners; and yet Christian Churches through the world were not, therefore, cut asunder, unless peradventure then, when the Bishop of Rome broke off all agreement, and tyrannically enjoined to other Churches, not what ought to be done, but what himself would have observed. But the Apostles did not so. Barnabas, indeed, departed from Paul, and Paul withstood Peter, and surely for no trifle, and yet the one became not thereby more enemy or stranger to the other but the self-same spirit

which had coupled them from the beginning, never suffered them to be disjoined from themselves. It is the fashion of Romanists to command, to enforce, to press, to throw out cursings, and thunder excommunications upon the heads of those that whisper never so little against them; but let us, according to the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, suffer and gently admonish each other; that is, keeping the ground-work of faith, let us build love upon it, and let us jointly repair the walls of Zion, lying in their very ruins.”\*

But, whilst absolute uniformity may not be expected among Christians, it is certain that union is much to be desired. What we want is a *formal, visible* union of parties—an approximation to each other, of which not only our own hearts shall be conscious, by a perceptible decay of our prejudices and a growth of love, but which shall be apparent to others, by some means of which they are able to take cognizance. It is not enough merely that, as ministers and Christians, we should cultivate more assiduously the obligations of brotherly love, but that, by some kind of agreement, organization, or means of public intercourse, we should give

---

\* Preface to the Harmony of Confessions, 1851.

*visibility* to this state of our hearts towards each other. Without this, we fail to let our light so shine before men as we should do. The diffused rays of love that are scattered abroad in the civilities and courtesies of life, are too faint to be seen, or, at any rate, to be seen in that intensity and force which they would gain when collected into the focal-point of a public organization. If we do not meet in public in some way, either because we will not, or cannot, the world will be slow to credit our professions of secret, though it may be sincere, love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." This language of our Divine Lord seems to require a *visible* union, and, in the present state of Christendom, we cannot have visibility without organization or public intercourse of some kind.

An essential feature of such an arrangement as the right idea of Christian Union demands, is, *That every church shall admit to its communion all who give credible evidence that they are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.* And why should not this be done? "Saints by profession," says the Westminster Confession of Faith, "are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other

•

spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also, in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." The same Confession expressly declares that "All Synods or Councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore, they are not to be made the rule of faith and practice, but to be used as an *help* in both,"—thus showing that its compilers never dreamt of breaking up fellowship with other foreign churches of the Reformation that had Confessions of their own, differing in some points from theirs. Calvin, when addressing the Lutheran churches, said, "Keep your smaller differences, let us have no discord on that account; but let us march in one solid column, under the banners of the Captain of our Salvation, and, with undivided counsels, form the legions of the Cross upon the territories of darkness and of death." "I should not hesitate to cross ten seas, if, by this means, holy communion might prevail among the members of Christ." "I would ask," says the great John Howe, in speaking of the Sacrament

of the Supper, "whose is this table? Is it the table of this or that man, or party of men? or is it the Lord's table? Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them, and who should dare to invite others, or forbid these?" Robert Hall and Dr. Wardlaw maintained that, wherever there is *union* to Christ, there ought to be *communion*, and that no man, or set of men, is entitled to prescribe, as an indispensable condition of communion, what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation.

What satisfactory reason can be assigned why Christians should not show their love for one another in partaking together of the Lord's supper? In what capacity is it that we take our places there? Is it as fellow-Presbyterians, or fellow-Congregationalists, or fellow-Episcopalians, or fellow-Baptists? Is it not rather as *fellow-believers*, *fellow-disciples*, *fellow-Christians*? If a Presbyterian and a Congregationalist, or a Baptist and a Pædo-baptist object to sitting down with each other at the table of the Lord, one of two inferences must follow: Either they must, on account of their difference of sentiment as to the government or rites of the Church, question each

other's Christianity,—or it must be, not as believers, disciples, Christians, but as Presbyterians or Congregationalists, Baptists, or Pædo-baptists, that they, respectively, consider themselves entitled to a seat at the feast! But who, bearing the name of Jesus, will defend so anti-scriptural and narrow-minded a position? It should be remembered that no particular denomination of Christians is able to say of the Sacrament of the Supper, "This is *our* table." It is *the Lord's* table. How, then, can any one branch of the Church consider itself entitled to shut the door of admission to that table against any whom, there is every reason to believe, the Divine Master would Himself receive? Is there no presumption in this? It is not, we repeat, a *Presbyterian* table, or a *Lutheran* table, or an *Episcopal* table—it is a *Christian* table. How, then, can it be for a moment doubted, that all who are "of one heart and one soul" in regard to the essential articles of evangelical truth, and who give evidence of their attachment to those blessed truths by "a conversation as it becometh the Gospel of Christ,"—should welcome one another to a joint participation of the symbols of the same broken body and the same shed blood, which are the objects of their common faith, the ground of their



common hope, the charter of their common freedom, and the spring of their common holiness and their common joy?

Look at the catholic spirit which was breathed by the large-hearted Apostle of the Gentiles, when, in writing to "the saints who were at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus"—expanding his affections, and teaching them to expand theirs, beyond the little circle of their own immediate fellowship, to the whole "household of faith"—he prayed, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" How would Paul have delighted in personal fellowship with each, and in collective fellowship with all, whom he thus designates! Nothing, surely, would have charmed him more (had such a thing been possible) than a convention of Jewish and Gentile believers, from all the countries into which the Gospel had penetrated—constituting at the time "the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven"—around the table of their common Lord, partaking together 'at the feast of Christian love, the symbols of His body and blood—His body broken, His blood shed for them all, thus pledging their union on earth, and anticipating its perfection in heaven.

Let it be remembered, also, that "all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," are objects of the love of that Lord himself. They have a place in His heart, as the children of "his Father and their Father"—the people of "his God and their God." He "calls them brethren." He intercedes for them, "that they may be with him where he is, to behold his glory." He "rests in his love" toward them. And He will welcome them, as the "blessed of his Father," to the inheritance of "the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world." How, then, should the people of Christ, whose duty it is to be like Him, shrink, with a trembling sensitiveness, from the idea of any one being owned by Him, that is not owned by them; of any one having the place of a disciple in His heart, that has not the place of a fellow-disciple in theirs; of any one having a part in His intercession for God's people, whom they, in their intercessions, class with the world; of any being welcomed by Him at last into the heavenly kingdom, whom they, in censorious uncharitableness, are excluding from it!

We cannot but think that the communion of Christians, one with another, is a duty plainly deducible from the unity of the Church. That all

true Christians are members of the catholic Church, or the mystical body of Christ, will not be denied. Nor will it be disputed that all its members are entitled to its communion, and to all its privileges which they are capable of enjoying, and more especially that the injunction, "Do this in remembrance of me," imposes on all the disciples of Christ the obligation, and imparts to them the right, to come to the Sacramental Table. But if these things are admitted, and if it be admitted farther, that unity is prescribed as an essential feature of the Church, it will follow, that the gate of admittance into any particular Christian society ought to be exactly of the same dimensions as that of admittance into the Church at large; that, since all genuine saints have a right to the communion and the privileges of the Church, nothing ought to be demanded as a condition of their admission to any section of it, but satisfactory evidence that they are saints; that, consequently, where this evidence is furnished, they ought to be received to that communion and these privileges, and that forbearance ought to be extended to their mistakes and deficiencies, however great and manifold. And, with regard in particular to the Sacrament of the Supper, it will follow, that to debar

others from our fellowship, for any reason which does not cancel completely their title to the ordinance, and render it unwarrantable for them to celebrate it by themselves, is to withhold a privilege, the right to which is conferred on them by their Saviour—to violate unnecessarily the unity of His body, and to inflict a punishment most cruel and unjust. Certain it is that a very different course from this was pursued in the Apostolic age. Then, as soon as men embraced the Gospel, and were regarded as genuine saints, they were forthwith admitted to the communion of the Church. Of this fact we have a signal illustration in the case of the first converts from among the Gentiles. When “the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out” on Cornelius and his friends, “Peter answered, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”\* On his return to Jerusalem, “they of the circumcision contended with him,” and in strong terms disapproved of his conduct. “But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it

---

\* Acts x. 47, 48.

by order unto them," and what was the consequence? "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."\* The prejudices entertained by Peter, and by his brethren of the circumcision, against the admission of the Gentiles to intimate intercourse in private, and to the fellowship of the Church, were exceedingly strong, and, considering the partition-walls which for ages had separated the Jews from other nations, it would have been strange indeed had it been otherwise. It may well be supposed, too, that these new converts were not all at once freed from their former errors, that their views of the Gospel were comparatively crude and confused. But no sooner did Peter and his believing brethren of the circumcision perceive that God had "granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life," than their Jewish prejudices gave way, and they hastened to imitate the Divine example, by recognizing as brethren those whom God had recognized as His children. In view of this example of Peter and his countrymen, how can those who have no such prejudices to struggle

---

\* Acts, xi. 18.

with as *they* had, refuse to imitate their conduct, by declining to admit to communion in the Church persons whom yet they acknowledge to have "received the Holy Ghost," and "repentance unto life," as well as themselves?

The whole tenor of the New Testament, indeed, indicates that, in the Apostolic age, notwithstanding there were churches which were distracted by controversies and divisions, those Christians who resided in the same town, or in the same district, being incorporated into one holy association, regarded each other as brethren in the Lord, and observed in conjunction every Christian ordinance. Considering themselves as a component part of "the holy catholic Church," they welcomed to their communion the members of every other church, when accredited by "letters of commendation," and were admitted in their turn to similar privileges by every Christian society. "I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preëminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out

of the Church.”\* Here is an instance of a man who, under the influence of an arrogant and domineering temper, refused to receive the acknowledged servants of the Saviour, and who expelled from the Church those that did receive them. But how strong and emphatic the terms in which the beloved Apostle reprobates his conduct! Are there not some in our own days, who would feel indignant to be ranked with Diotrephes, but who imitate his conduct in its spirit and almost in the letter, by refusing to receive those who are ministers of Christ, and by excluding from the Church persons who give satisfactory evidence of saintship and who must, of course, hold every essential truth, but who differ from them on points of subordinate importance or of dubious evidence?

What the different branches of the Church now greatly need is, the spirit which would lead to “forbearing one another in love.” We mean forbearance not only in reference to things on all sides allowed to be indifferent, (for this scarcely deserves the name of forbearance,) but in reference to opinions deemed to be unscriptural, and to practices considered to be wrong—provided

---

\* 3 John 9, 10.

these opinions and practices are not incompatible with a state of grace and salvation. Not but that we are to use assiduously all legitimate means to reclaim our Christian brethren from their errors, and to induce them to relinquish practices which seem to us to be sinful, but that we ought not to exclude them from the Church, or to debar them from our private intercourse or our fraternal love. If they "hold the Head," they cannot be chargeable with vital or essential error, and, though the points in which they agree with us may be few in number, they must be greater far in magnitude and importance than the particulars, however numerous, in which they differ from us. If, then, we separate from them, or compel them to separate from us, by making our *differences* terms of communion, we are guilty of schism—of a causeless and unwarrantable rupture in the Saviour's mystical body. "When the lovers of Christ," says an eminent divine, "cannot sit down at the same holy table, the blame of schism must rest with those whose sentiments or behavior is the cause why they cannot do it."

We are well aware that it is alleged as an objection to the principle of union now advocated, that it requires the sanction of error and sin. This



objection, however, is far more specious than sound. "Communion with a church or her members," says Dr. Mason, "does not imply our approbation of all things belonging to her actual condition as an organized body, but only approval so far as this act expresses—a unity of faith or practice, and no farther." So far is the forbearance which Christians exercise in communing with their fellow-believers whom they regard as holding certain notions, and following certain practices, which are unscriptural and pernicious, from implying approbation of these notions and practices, that it implies the reverse. It implies that the opinions or practices in reference to which it is exercised, are regarded as less or more criminal, but that they do not involve such an amount of criminality as to render the individuals holding or following them deserving of exclusion from a Christian society. And in such a world as this, where perfection is not the attainment of humanity, how is it possible to resist the demand which is made upon us for forbearance? Choose whatever church we may, we will not find in it a single member who is not chargeable with some misconceptions and errors, and with sinful infirmities of temper and conduct. Even we ourselves are

not exceptions to this remark. Forbearance, then, we must exercise, as well as expect, if we are to be connected with a Christian Church at all, and we may be sure it is not extended beyond proper limits, if it reaches just as far as Jesus Christ extends His. We are always safe in adhering to the Apostolic order of the graces, faith, hope, and charity, and in believing that "the greatest of these is charity." "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."\*

*Another essential feature of Christian Union is ministerial fellowship. And why should not this exist? As the conduct of Christ constitutes our model in reference to the ordinary members of the Church, so should it constitute our model in relation to the office-bearers of the Church. If, then, there be persons whom we are persuaded He*

---

\* Rom. xiv. 1, 3; and xv., 1 7.

recognizes as His ambassadors and servants, it is our duty to recognize them in that capacity, recollecting that he who receiveth the messenger receives Him that sent him, and that he that despiseth the servant virtually despiseth the Master. And in spite of the multitudinous and vexatious controversies which have been agitated respecting "the proper channels for conveying, and the legitimate mode of vesting," the office of the Christian minister, we cannot but think the subject would not occasion much perplexity in practice, if there was a controlling desire to follow the example, and to comply with the injunctions, of Jesus. It is the direction of Paul to his son Timothy—"The things thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." In this passage there are two qualifications specified as indispensable to a Christian minister—piety and ability. He must be a "faithful man;" he must be a believer, and he must have correct and enlarged views of "the truth as it is in Jesus," together with a capacity and a disposition to communicate instruction, so as to be "able to teach others also." In judging of the reality and the degree of these indispensable requisites, there is

room, of course, for a considerable diversity of opinion. If, however, it is ascertained by us, either from personal knowledge, or competent testimony, that any minister belonging to another department of the Christian Church, possesses undoubtedly these qualifications, we cannot greatly err in acknowledging him, but we may greatly err in refusing to acknowledge him as "a servant of Christ," even though he should dissent from us on many points of ecclesiastical polity, and even on the minor details of Christian doctrine. If, as we have seen, to exclude from the Supper of the Lord, those whom the Lord Himself invites, seems manifestly repugnant, not only to the enactments of Scripture, but to the natural perceptions and the instinctive feelings of the new creature, surely there is something unnatural in refusing to acknowledge, as servants of Christ, and ministers of His word, persons who are evidently accredited by Christ himself.

"There is surely something unnatural," says an eminent Scotch divine, in an Essay published some years ago, "in refusing to acknowledge as servants of Christ, and ministers of His word, persons who are evidently accredited by Christ himself. And yet, how extensively has this incon-

gruity been exemplified in our own country! Few evangelical ministers of any denomination, (and it is only of them that we now speak,) but are glad to consult the excellent Commentary of Matthew Henry, when preparing for their weekly expositions of Scripture, and few of them but would recommend in the highest terms Dr Doddridge's invaluable treatise on 'The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.' But, suppose that Henry or Doddridge had appeared in Scotland a few years ago, how would they have been treated? Five years ago, Henry would with difficulty have been allowed to deliver one of his inimitable expositions, or Doddridge one of his beautiful and tender sermons, in a pulpit belonging to the Established Church, many as were the excellent ministers it then contained. And fifty years ago, each of these admirable individuals would probably have experienced similar treatment in both branches of the United Secession. Is there not something not only sinful and absurd, but monstrous and shocking in such exclusiveness and intolerance?"

It is, indeed, utterly incomprehensible to us, how the ministerial standing of those evangelical ministers can be denied, who have been regularly set apart by their respective Churches to the work of

preaching the Gospel, and upon whose ministry God sets the seal of His approbation. Are not sinners converted by the Divine blessing, under their ministrations, and prepared for heaven? Who will, or does, venture to deny this? What, then, do they lack to make their ministerial standing complete? What more can those do who fail to recognize them, than serve also as instruments in God's hands for fulfilling His gracious purpose of salvation?

*A third essential feature of Christian Union is a representative assembly, Clerical and Lay, to meet at stated periods for consultation, supervision, and direction in regard to the interests of religion in the various denominations represented.* In regard to this representative and delegated body, we presume not to enter into any details as to its constitution and its powers. It is not necessary that we should do so. It is enough for us to suggest the idea, and to intimate that it does not propose interference with any form of government or worship, but to leave each denomination, as now, at liberty to determine those matters for itself. Well assured we are, that with such an arrangement, the divisions of the Church would be almost entirely healed, and her unity re-established. There would still be denominations, but whatever is most

malignant and hurtful in such divisions would be exterminated. It could not perhaps be said that "there was no longer Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free," but it might be said that "they were all one in Christ Jesus," and that "Christ was all, and in all." There would still be the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, the Lutheran, the Congregationalist, the Baptist, and the Methodist, but they would be perceived to belong to one heavenly community, and would be separated by a distinct line of demarcation from "the world of the ungodly." Amid complexional differences, which would impart to them variety and beauty rather than deformity, they would exhibit conspicuously a family likeness, and the influence of their common Christianity, though slightly modified by their individual peculiarities, would be unequivocally stamped on them all—

"Varied in all, and yet in all the same."

What has been said in reference to the worshippers in the celestial sanctuary, and will be fully realized only in them, would thus be in no small degree exemplified also in the worshippers on earth:

"Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,  
But all their hearts are one."

Would it be impossible to find a suitable basis for such a convention as has been proposed? We think not. Look at the main points on which all Evangelical denominations agree. They all hold:

1. The Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.

2. The right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

3. The Unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of Persons therein.

4. The utter depravity of human nature, in consequence of the fall.

5. The incarnation of the Son of God, His work of atonement for sinners of mankind, and His Mediatorial intercession and reign.

6. The justification of the sinner by faith alone.

7. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner.

8. The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of



the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

9. The Divine institution of the Christian Ministry, and the obligation and perpetuity of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Would not these tenets, with the distinct understanding that the selection of them, and the omission of others, is not to be held as implying that the former constitute the whole body of important truth, or that the latter are unimportant, be a broad enough basis on which to establish such a Convention, or Assembly, or Synod, as we suggest?

## TESTIMONY OF EMINENT MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

One of the sad effects which have been produced by divisions in the Church is the insensibility to their criminal character and their ruinous consequences evinced by many who have witnessed them, as well as by many who have contributed largely to their production. Like the apathy with regard to the spiritual miseries of the heathen world, and the disregard of the departing Saviour's last injunction, manifested for centuries after the Reformation, the insensibility to schism and its necessary concomitants presents a phenomenon somewhat hard to be explained. As the man who is accustomed to breathe a tainted atmosphere becomes insensible to its nauseousness and its noxiousness, and as the most revolting scenes of pollution and blood cease to shock those who are every day doomed to witness them, so something analogous occurs with respect to moral and spiritual objects. The statement of the poet, when he tells us that

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated, needs but to be seen,”

must be understood with some limitations, but experience amply corroborates his assertion when he adds :

“Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

Thus, certainly, it has happened with regard to the evils resulting from divisions in the Church. We are so familiar with the hideous spectacle of animosities and separations, that it fails to excite those emotions of amazement, and grief, and horror, with which it would undoubtedly be contemplated, if our ideas of the Church were copied correctly from the pattern shown in the Mount.

It is, indeed, to be acknowledged, and acknowledged with devout gratitude, that in consequence chiefly of the Missionary, Tract, Sunday-school, and other similar enterprises, undertaken within the present century, the asperities of party have been considerably abated—that more liberal views and kindly feelings have begun to be cherished, and that among the truly good of almost every sect, there has been manifested a tendency towards a mutual approximation. Still it is true, that even in our own highly-favored and much-loved land unseemly dissensions exist, and

the garden of the Lord yet presents, to a lamentable extent, an inversion of the beautiful description of the Prophet, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Many there are also, whose piety it would be unreasonable to question, to whom these animosities and separations appear to be matters of indifference.

It may help to break up this apathy, to learn what distinguished ministers and members of various denominations, have said upon the subject.

#### AUGUSTINE.

He has not the love of God, who does not seek the unity of the Church.

#### CHILLINGWORTH.

If the ruptures of the Church might be composed, I do heartily wish that the cement were made of my dearest blood.

To the Romanists, Chillingworth also said: "To you and to your Church we leave it, to separate Christians from the Church and to proscribe them from heaven upon trivial causes. As for ourselves,

we conceive a charitable judgment of our brethren and their errors, though untrue, much more pleasing to God than a true judgment, if it be uncharitable. And therefore, we shall always choose, if we do err, to err on the milder and more merciful part, and rather retain those in our communion who deserve to be ejected, than to eject those that deserve to be retained."

#### OWEN.

I confess I would rather, much rather, spend all my time and days in making up and healing the breaches and schisms that are amongst Christians, than one hour in justifying our divisions even therein, wherein on the one side they are capable of a just defence.

#### HOOVER.

Far more comfort were it for us to labor under the same yoke as men who look for the same eternal reward of their labors, to be enjoined with you in bonds of indissoluble love and unity, to live as if, our persons being many, our souls were but one, rather than in such dismembered sort to spend our few and wretched days in a tedious

prosecuting of wearisome contentions, the end whereof, if they have not some speedy end, will be heavy on both sides.

### BISHOP HALL.

We are one body, let us also be of one mind. By that tremendous name of the Almighty God—by your own souls—by the most holy compassions of Jesus Christ our Saviour, aim at peace, brethren, enter into peace, that, laying aside all prejudice, party spirit, and evil affections, we may all come to a happy agreement in the same truth.—*Sermon before the Synod of Dort.*

### HON. ROBERT BOYLE.

It has long been my grief, as well as my wonder, to see such comparatively petty differences in judgment make such wide breaches and vast divisions in affection.

### BISHOP RIDLEY,

In writing to Bishop Hooper, when both were prisoners for Christ, laments their “little jarring in times past, about the by-matters and circumstances of religion,” but assures him that, “with

his whole heart in the bowels of Christ, he loves him for the truth's sake, which abideth in us."

### BISHOP KEN.

*I believe, O King of Saints, that among the Saints on earth, whether real, or in outward profession only, there ought to be a mutual catholic participation of all good things, (1 John i. 7,) which is the immediate effect of catholic love: Thou, O God of Love, restore it to Thy Church.*

*I believe, O Thou God of Love, that all the saints upon earth by profession ought to communicate one with another, in evangelical worship, and the same holy sacrament, in the same Divine and Apostolical faith, (Acts xi. 42-46,) in all offices of corporal (Gal. vi. 10) and spiritual charity, (Rom. xii. 9, &c. ; 1 Thess. v. 14 ; Heb. x. 25,) in reciprocal delight in each other's salvation, and in tender sympathy, as members of one and the same body, (1 Cor. xii. 13-26.) O God of Peace, restore, in Thy good time, this catholic communion, that, with one heart and one mouth, we may all praise and love Thee.*

*O my God, amidst the deplorable divisions of Thy Church, O let me never widen its breaches,*

but give me catholic charity to all that are baptized in Thy name, and catholic communion with all Christians in desire. Oh, deliver me from the sins and errors, from the schisms and heresies of the age. Oh, give me grace to pray daily for the peace of Thy Church, (Ps. cxxxii. 6,) and earnestly to seek it, and to excite all I can to praise and to love Thee.

I believe, O most holy Jesus, that thy saints here below have communion with thy saints above, (Heb. xii. 22,) while we celebrate their memories, congratulate their bliss, give Thee thanks for their labors of love, and imitate their example; for which all love, all glory be to Thee.

I believe, O gracious Redeemer, that Thy saints here on earth have communion with the holy angels above; that they are ministering spirits, (Heb. i. 14,) sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, and watch over us, (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) and we give thanks to Thee for their protection, and emulate their incessant praises and ready obedience; for which all love, all glory be to Thee.

I believe, O my Lord and my God, that the saints in this life have communion with the Three Persons of the most adorable Trinity, (John i. 3;



Phil. ii. 1,) in the same most benign influences of love in which all Three conspire; for which all love, all glory be to Thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end.

Glory be to Thee, O Goodness infinitely diffusive, for all the graces and blessings in which the saints communicate, for breathing Thy love into Thy mystical body, as the very soul that informs it, that all that believe in Thee may love one another, and all join in loving Thee.

#### REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

Thousands have been drawn to Popery, and confirmed in it, by the divisions of Protestants. We take the position, and we believe it tenable, that the Gospel cannot accomplish its great triumph, and collect the redeemed from every land, until the law of Christ be fulfilled by these Protestant sects. Jesus Christ will not sustain us—the Holy Spirit will not overshadow us with His presenee—we shall waste those very energies and instrumentalities which are required for the work, we shall not possess the character requisite for the work, we shall be impeded in our movements among the heathen, and prove their scorn

and derision ; like the Israelites of old, we shall die in the wilderness, in view of the promised land, and leave the glory and the blessedness of crossing the Jordan to a generation who understand our Christianity better, and imbibe its pure spirit, without these gross and bitter mixtures. I can as willingly be a martyr for LOVE, as for any article of the Creed.

REV JOHN NEWTON,

In a letter to a clerical friend, says : I know not how it is ; I think my sentiments and experience are as orthodox and Calvinistical as need be ; and yet I am a sort of speckled bird among my Calvinist brethren. I am a mighty good Churchman, but pass amongst such as a Dissenter in prunello. On the other hand, the Dissenters (many of them, I mean) think me defective, either in understanding or in conscience, for staying where I am. Well, there is a middle party, called Methodists, but neither do my dimensions exactly fit with them. I am somehow disqualified for claiming a full brotherhood with any party. But there are a few among all parties who bear with me and love me, and with this I must be content

at present. But so far as they love the Lord Jesus, I desire, and by His grace I determine, (with or without their leave,) to love them all. Party walls, though stronger than the walls of Babylon, must come down in the general ruin, when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up, if not sooner.

### REV. GEORGE WHITFIELD.

“O, how do I long to see bigotry and party zeal taken away, and all the Lord’s servants more knit together! Would that all the names among the Saints of God were swallowed up in that one of Christian.”

Circumstances, of which it is unnecessary here to speak, led Whitfield and Wesley into a controversy which was in many respects unhappy, although it arose from a conscientious regard for what each deemed the important interests of Truth. But, in their severest strictures upon the opinions of each other, they cherished toward each other the “love of the brethren.” Whitfield entertained a filial feeling in relation to Wesley. He not only *loved* him—he *revered* him. In a letter which he addressed to him from Philadelphia, September 11, 1747, he said: “I hope ere long to be delivered

from my outward embarrassments: I long to owe no man any thing but love. This is a debt, reverend sir, I shall never be able to discharge to you or your brother: Jesus will pay you all. For His sake I love and honor you very much, and rejoice as much in your success as in my own. I cannot agree with you in some principles, but that need not hinder love, since I trust we hold the foundation, even Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The Lord bless what is right, and rectify what is wrong, in us all! Even so, Lord Jesus, Amen. O, for heaven! where we shall mistake, and judge, and grieve one another no more!"

### REV. JOHN WESLEY.

Mr. Wesley preached Whitfield's funeral sermon, and, in his fraternal testimony, took occasion to exhibit and inculcate Christian Union.

"Is there any other fruit of the grace of God with which he was eminently endowed, and the want of which among the children of God, he frequently and passionately lamented? There is one, that is catholic love, that sincere and tender affection which is due to all those who, we have reason to believe, are children of God by faith; in other words, all those, in every persuasion, who 'fear

God and work righteousness.' He longed to see all who had 'tasted of the good word,' of a true catholic spirit, a word little understood and still less experienced by many who have it frequently in their mouth. Who is he that answers this character? Who is a man of a catholic spirit? One who loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as joint partakers of the present kingdom of heaven, and fellow-heirs of His eternal kingdom—all, of whatever opinion, mode of worship or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus, who love God and man, who, rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is a man of a truly catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart; who, having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and an earnest desire of their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men; who speaks comfortably to them, and labors by all his words to strengthen their hands in God. He assists men to the uttermost of his power in all things spiritual and temporal, he is ready to 'spend and be spent for them, yea, to lay down his life for his brethren.'

"How amiable a character is this! How de-

sirable to every child of God ! But why is it then so rarely found ? How is it that there are so few instances of it ? Indeed, supposing we have tasted of the love of God, how can any of us rest till it is our own ? Why, there is a delicate device whereby Satan persuades thousands that they may stop short of it, and yet be guiltless. It is well if many here present are not in this 'snare of the devil,' taken captive at his will ! 'O yes,' says one, 'I have all this love for those I believe to be children of God, but I will never believe he is a child of God, who belongs to that vile congregation ; can he, do you think, be a child of God who holds such detestable opinions ? or he that joins in such senseless and superstitious, if not idolatrous worship ?' So we may justify ourselves in one sin by adding a second to it ! We excuse the want of love in ourselves by laying the blame on others ! To color our own devilish temper, we pronounce our brethren children of the devil. Oh, beware of this, and if you are already taken in the snare, escape out of it as soon as possible. Go and learn that truly catholic love which 'is not rash' or hasty in judging, that love which 'thinketh no evil,' which believeth and hopeth all things, which makes all the allowance for others that we desire others

should make for us ! Then we shall take knowledge of the grace of God which is in every man, whatever be his opinions or mode of worship, then will all that fear God be near and dear unto us 'in the bowels of Jesus Christ.' Was not this the spirit of our dear friend ? and why should it not be ours ? Oh, thou God of love ! how long shall thy people be a by-word among the heathen ? How long shall they laugh us to scorn, and say, See how *these* Christians *hate* one another ? When wilt thou roll away our reproach ? 'Shall the sword devour for ever ?' How long will it be ere thou bid thy people return 'from following each other ?' Now at least, 'let all the people stand still and pursue after their brethren no more !' But, whatever others do, let all of us, my brethren, hear the voice of him that being dead yet speaketh. Suppose ye hear him say 'Now, at least, be ye followers of me as I was of Christ ! Let brother no more lift up sword against brother, neither know ye war any more. Rather put ye on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, brotherly kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Let the time past suffice for strife, envy, contention, for biting and devouring one another.' "

## REV. MR. FLETCHER

Says: "Let us be afraid of a sectarian spirit. We may, indeed, and we ought to be more familiar with the professors with whom we are more particularly connected, as soldiers of the same regiment are more familiar with one another, than with those who belong to other regiments. But the moment this particular attachment grows to such a degree as to make a party in the army of King Jesus, or of King George, it hurts the harmony which ought to subsist between all the parts, and hinders the general service which is expected from the whole body. In what a deplorable condition would be the king's affairs, if each colonel in his army refused to do duty with another colonel, and, if, instead of mutually supporting one another in a day of battle, each said to the rest: 'I will have nothing to do with you and your corps: you may fight yonder, if you please: I, and my men, will keep here by ourselves, doing what seems good in our own eyes. As we expect no assistance from you, so we promise you that you shall have none from us. And you may think yourselves well off if we do not join the common enemy, and fire at you, for your regimentals are different from



ours, and therefore you are no part of our army.' If so absurd a behavior were excusable, it would be among the wild, eruel men, who eompose an army of Tartars or savages, but it admits of no excuse from men who call themselves Believers, which is another name for the followers of Him who laid down His life for his enemies, and perpetually exhorts His soldiers to 'love one another, as brethren,' yea, 'as He loved us.'"

REV. J. M. MASON, D. D.,

Of New York, when he was in Europe, addressed a parting letter, as he was about to return to the United States, to a highly valued friend, who was a member of the Baptist Church, from which the following is an extract :

"I trust I shall not forget how much I owe to that Christian charity, which makes love to our Lord and Redeemer a sure passport to the heart—may it increase more and more. It is unseemly, most unseemly, to be searching for moles and pock-pits in a face beaming with the image of the first-born. Believers are often tied with pack-threads by their little fingers, into small unions, but the great Unity which binds their hearts together and will last when the pack-threads shall

be destroyed by a touch of the fire, is their unity in the Son of God. Comparatively speaking, I see no other sectarianism worth fighting for, and they who fight well for that, enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, have but little leisure or inclination for the small and unpurposed business of subaltern skirmishes and squabbles."

#### REV. DR. WARDLAW.

Doubtless we all expect that, when we get to heaven, all who differed from us here will be satisfied that *we* had the right of it. But of one thing we are sure, that *there*, even should we find out that we had been in the wrong, there will be no such difficulty as we have here in admitting the *error*—no jealousy, no envy—no mortification on the one side, and no pride of exulting satisfaction on the other. *Here*—poor foolish creatures that we are—so strong are these and kindred feelings, that we would almost rather *keep* our errors than *confess* them. *There*, the love of truth will be paramount, and adoring admiration of the God of truth will swallow up every feeling that has aught of self in it. But still, it will be *the truth* that is felt as the uniting bond, even when on other points, as well as on it, we shall be all one. O, for more

of the binding—widely and warmly binding—energy of this truth on earth, in anticipation of the love and concord of heaven!

J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNE, D. D.

If I ask myself, what it is that essentially opposes the union of Christians, not only in respect to others, but to myself also, I find no answer but one—sin! \* \* *That which gives life to churches is not their diversities of government, or worship, or of discipline, but that "most holy faith" which is common to them all.* Their life and their vigor are not in their garb, whether black or white, but in the heart that lies beneath it. The vitality of a church comes not from below, but from above, from heaven, and from the throne on which the Saviour reigns. If there are many members in a Church who esteem the things beneath, in respect to which Christians differ, more than the things above, in which they agree, this disregard of heavenly things cannot but be avenged; the spirit of life in Christ Jesus will be dissipated, it will vanish, and leave but the lifeless body,—the form alone will remain. To contribute to such a state of things is a transgression against the Church. Doubtless, there exist in the Church certain divergent ten-

dencies, which are salutary, and it is even desirable, that these divergent influences should have a certain development within it. But the time approaches when these contrary tendencies should cease. To a divergent march a convergent march should succeed. If the host deploys beyond what is necessary, weakness must be the consequence. It may be right that the ships of a fleet, in the day of battle, should remove a little from each other, and take open order, that they may have sea-room for their movements, and occupy their proper appointed positions, but they ought not to move off without limitation, and scatter themselves north and south, at random. They should concentrate at last for the crisis of the fight, and direct all their fire in combination on the common enemy. The union of all true Christians!—that is the Reformation of the nineteenth century.

REV. ROBERT HALL.

We cannot but look back with regret to the period when the followers of Christ were known only as Christians. Happy period, when instead of being rent into a thousand parts, and split into innumerable divisions, the Church of Christ was “one fold under one Shepherd.” The seamless coat

of the Redeemer was of one entire picee from the top to the bottom. The world was divided into two grand parties—Christians and Pagans. This happy state, we have no doubt, will occur again. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. In consequence of a more copious communication of the Spirit, some of our differences of opinion will be removed, and "the shepherds will see eye to eye," and others of these differences will be lost in the indulgence of Christian charity, in the noble oblivion of love. In the meantime, if party names must subsist, let us carefully watch against a party spirit. Let us direct our chief attention to what constitutes a Christian, and learn to prize most highly those great truths in which all good men are agreed; *in a settled persuasion that whatever is disputed or obscure in the system of Christianity is in that proportion of little importance, compared to those fundamental truths which are inscribed on the page of Revelation as with a sunbeam; whenever we see a Christian,*

*let us esteem, let us love him, and, though he be weak in faith, receive him "not to doubtful disputation."*

### REV. DR. CHALMERS.

The Bible Society, several Missionary Societies, and other enterprises of religious benevolence, have been tried, and with some service, we doubt not, to the cause of Christian charity. Yet all have fallen short of the aim, immeasurably short of the fulfilment, of our Saviour's prayer, (John, xvii. 21,) *which was for the establishment, not only of such a zeal, but of such an ostensible unity among Christians as could be seen by the world, and as might lead the world to believe in the mission of our Saviour.* We as yet see no perceptible advances towards such a consummation. The sects and subdivisions of Christendom continue as numerous as before, nor are we sure that there is less of jealousy and alienation, and heart-burning, among the different branches of this great, but withal disunited, family. \* It were well if Christians could be made more alive to the serious evil, either of multiplying differences, or of magnifying these differences beyond the real dimensions of the worth and importance which belong to them. By so doing, they put themselves into conflict

with the object of our Saviour's prayer, *which implies that the world's regeneration hinges on the palpable unanimity of His disciples*. It is true that we are bidden to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and that whatever is not of faith is sin. Such is the deference to the right of private judgment, that each man should be left to believe in the light of his own understanding, and, if he act not according to his belief, he acts sinfully. It is very possible, however, that there might be a particular matter of faith in his mind, which forms no part of the faith once delivered to the saints—neither opposed to it, nor yet belonging to it, just because the Bible, or record of this faith, says nothing distinct or authoritative on the subject. The Apostle Paul enjoined the very opposite of this earnest contending in the question of meats and days, for his was an earnest persuasion to mutual forbearance, and this, that the men who differed in these matters might continue members of the same Church, and recognize each other as disciples of one and the same faith.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

- “One sole baptismal sign,  
One Lord, below, above—  
Zion, one faith is thine,  
One only watchword—Love.  
From different temples though it rise,  
One song ascendeth to the skies.
- “Our sacrifice is one ;  
One priest before the throne—  
The slain, the risen Son,  
Redeemer, Lord alone !  
And sighs from contrite hearts that spring,  
Our chief, our choicest offering.
- “Oh, why should they who love  
One Gospel to unfold,  
Who seek one home above,  
On earth be strange and cold ?  
Why, subjects of the Prince of Peace,  
In strife abide, and bitterness ?
- “Oh, may that holy prayer,  
His tenderest and His last,  
His constant, latest care,  
Ere to His throne He passed,—  
No longer unfulfilled remain,  
The world’s offence, His people’s stain.



“Head of the Church beneath,  
The catholic—the true—  
On all her members breathe—  
Her broken frame renew !  
Then shall Thy perfect will be done,  
When Christians love and live as one.”

---

## REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN UNION.

The people of God were originally one. “The multitude of *them that believed* were of one heart and of one soul.” (Acts iv. 32.) Their bond of union was the “one faith.” They were united by the belief, appreciation, and avowal of common principles, by a common sense of sin and guilt, of unworthiness and obligation to mercy; by their concentration of their affections on a common object of attachment, whose “name was,” to each and to all of them, “as ointment poured forth;” by subjection to one Master; by similarity of character, the same faith inspiring the same dispositions; by common objects of desire and pursuit, such as all might obtain and enjoy, not only

without interference and without jealousy, but with reciprocal augmentation of each other's acquisitions; by a common feeling of dependence and of obligation, and the united expression of it at the throne of a common Father; and by common dangers, common privileges, common sufferings, common honors, and common hopes. "For some ages," says Robert Hall, "the object of the Saviour's prayer (John xvii. 20, 21,) was realized, in the harmony which prevailed among Christians, whose religion was a bond of Union more strict and tender than the ties of consanguinity; and with the appellation of brethren, they associated all the sentiments of endearment that relation implied."

Let us prayerfully ponder the reasons why Union should be restored.

# I. *The Church owes its existence entirely to Infinite Love.*

If, like many an earthly kingdom and institution, the Church had originated in strife, in strife it might have been maintained; but it is the pure creation of love. If it be true that in God we live, and move, and have our being, if *as men*, we inhabit His infinite essence, it is true that, *as*

*Christians*, we inhabit His very heart, dwell in His love. It is to this fact the Apostle alludes when he would have us to comprehend with all saints the fourfold dimensions of the love of God. Material substances have only three dimensions, but the Church, having for its temple the heart of God, is to search for the circumference in all directions round, and be lost in the love which "passeth knowledge." The Church is the institution of love; should it be made the scene of hatred? It stands in the heart of God; should it be filled with malevolence? What should we have thought of the disciples, had they audibly quarrelled on Calvary, and in the hearing of their dying Lord? And yet all our contentions are conducted in the presence of the love which led Him there! Is not this crucifying Him afresh?

II. *In the best and purest Age, the Church was One.*

It was "one fold under one Shepherd." Let us look at this point a little more particularly. It is true that, at the beginning, there were a great number of Churches, but each was distinguished by a name descriptive of its *locality*. There was a

Church of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Ephesus, of Smyrna, of Corinth, and of Rome, besides many others. There was *not* a Church consisting of the followers and defenders in doctrine of Paul, and another of those of John, and another of those of Peter. There were then no such sects as Lutherans, Calvinists, and Wesleyans, nor such names as Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, or Baptist. Agreement in *fundamentals* was the only doctrinal unity then demanded, and the united band of Christ's disciples, assembled around the same table, declared by their actions, "we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." *Christians* was their grand distinctive name. Among themselves, indeed, they were called "brethren," (Acts xxviii. 13, 14,) and "believers," (Acts v. 14.) They were also denominated "disciples," (Acts xxi. 16.) And by their enemies, by way of contempt, they were styled "Nazarenes," (Acts xxiv. 5,) and "men of this way," (Acts xxii. 4.) But *Christians*, the name given to them first at Antioch, (Acts ix. 26,) was their usual denomination, and the original word by which they are said to have been "*called*" Christians, implies that this name, whether assumed by

themselves, or applied by their friends or their enemies, was still *given by Divine appointment*.

It is scarcely necessary to say that no one of the Apostles, or their fellow-laborers, established any sects in the Christian Church. The bare supposition of the contrary is absurd and revolting to every mind acquainted with the inspired record. Yet, what ample ground was there for such a course, if it had been regarded lawful? There was, as already remarked, difference of opinion among the Apostles, and difference among the first Christians; but neither was regarded as a cause for schism or division in the Church. Paul differed from Peter, and disapproved of his conduct so much that, he says, "at Antioch I withstood him to the face, for he was to be blamed," (Gal. ii. 11-14,) yet neither of them dreamed of forming a sect for the defence and propagation of his distinctive views. Paul and Barnabas differed about their arrangements for missionary operations, and, when the contentions grew sharp, each took as fellow-laborers those whom he preferred, and thus prosecuted the work; but it never entered into their minds to form different sects in the Church.

So far, indeed, were the Apostles from forming

sects, that they firmly resisted the introduction of different denominations. Take, as an example, the Church in the wealthy and corrupt city of Corinth, which had been planted by Paul, watered by the eloquent Apollos, and blessed by Him from whom alone can come any genuine increase. In this Church, it seems, there appeared symptoms of the spirit of sectarianism. The Corinthian brethren had long been familiar with the several sects of heathen philosophers and religionists, and, by a natural transition, were led to array themselves into parties according to some religious differences which arose among them. Some said, "I am of Paul," probably because he first laid the foundation of the Corinthian Church, (1 Cor. i. 10;) others said, "I am of Apollos," perhaps on account of his superior eloquence; and others said, "I am of Cephas," either because, like Peter, they cherished Jewish predilections, or were converted by him elsewhere. Here, then, was an attempt to introduce different sects or religious denominations into the Church of Christ, ranged under different leaders, such as Paul, Apollos, Peter, Luther, Calvin, Zuingli, or Wesley; and does the Apostle approve of such a course? Let us hear his own words: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (by the hope you cherish through Him, by His sufferings, by His blood,) I beseech you, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions" or sects "among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you: now this I say, that every one of you saith, 'I am of Paul,' (he is my leader,) 'and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' Is Christ" (*i. e.*, the body of Christ) "divided? Was Paul" (or either of those whose names ye assume, and whom ye wish to place at the side of Christ as leaders or heads of the Church) "crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul," or of Apollos, or of Peter, so that ye were received into *their* church, and not into the Church of *Christ*? "I thank God" (since ye thus abuse the privilege of being baptized) "that I baptized none of you but Crispus" (the ruler of the synagogue) "and Gaius, (whose hospitality I enjoyed whilst at Corinth;) so that ye cannot, with any semblance of truth, allege that I baptized you in my own

name, and thus formed a peculiar sect of Christians." Now, in this powerful and decided testimony of Paul against the spirit of seetarianism, it will be observed that he does not even introduce into his argument the points of diversity among the people, on account of which they were arraying themselves into different parties. The simple facts that they were baptized into Christ, and into Christ alone, *i. e.*, were members of the Church in good standing, and that Christ must not be divided, are the only arguments which he deems requisite to prove the impropriety of their divisions and of their assumption of different names. He would have them Christians, and nothing but Christians, not Pauline Christians, nor Apolline, nor Cepherine, nor Lutheran, nor Calvinistic, nor Wesleyan Christians, not because he had any antipathy to Apollos or Peter, but because any such divisions, based on difference of opinions or personal attachments, naturally tended to rend asunder the body of Christ.

Let it not be forgotten, then, that *unity is an important characteristic of the Church*. God, her God, is one, Christ, her Redeemer, is one, the Holy Spirit, her Sanctifier, is one, the Holy Scriptures, the rule of her faith, and worship, and obedience,



are one, the faith of her true members is one precious faith, and their privileges, interests, objects, and destination, are one. The Scriptural representations of the Church confirm this view of the Church's unity. The Church is one "vineyard," one "flock," one "body," one "spouse," one "family." When spoken of as the object of the Saviour's love, as the subject of redemption, as the recipient of gifts and offices, she is spoken of as "the Church." (Eph. v. 25.) Almost all the comparisons just mentioned, suggest the idea of oneness, or of unity in contradistinction to plurality. There is and can be but one Church, even as there is but one Head of the Church. The Lord Jesus Christ came "to gather together in one all things in Himself, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in Him." He is the one Head of which all believers are the members, the one Vine of which they are the branches, and thus all are members one of another. And not only is unity represented as an essential attribute of the Church, but any schism or division in it is spoken of as a thing not less unnatural and unsightly than would be the spectacle presented by the human body, if its organs were in a state of discord, if the eye were to say to the hand, "I have

no need of thee;" or the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." "There is," says the Apostle, "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

III. *There is much in the origin and history of our religious systems, to warrant a strong presumption that they are all more or less defective and faulty.*

It is, beyond question, right for every one to consider his own Church the best, whether for doctrine, polity, or efficiency. Where there is difference, there must be preference. It is, however, a very different thing for any to pretend that their section of the Church includes all truth, and nothing but truth, while all others are entirely wrong. Nor can such a position be maintained. What authority can the Presbyterian Church, or Lutheran, or Episcopal, or Congregationalist, or Baptist, or Methodist, show to support a claim to the exclusive possession of the truth? All intelligent persons know that in ecclesiastical history heresy has never ceased to exert a mighty influence on the spirit and complexion of orthodoxy. The

condition of the Church has never been a condition favorable to a calm and equal development of truth. Her position has always been that of a Church militant. Her course has resulted less from choice than from necessity. The present foe has dictated the present policy. Hence her creed, her worship, her discipline—all have been powerfully affected by the errors and evils against which she has been summoned to contend. Her great labor through a long series of ages was, to demolish real or supposed error, rather than to diffuse truth; to humble some rival pretension, rather than to assign just limits to her own. On all her dogmas and institutes we trace the effects of the hot wars through which she has passed. Gnostics, Manicheans, Pelagians, Arians, Donatists, and multitudes beside, all pressed their disturbing forces on her path, and either effected an infusion of their errors into her creed, or taught her to push the truth opposed to such errors so far as to cause even truth to become error. That such was the history of the Church prior to the age of Luther, it would be easy to demonstrate. It was a dark and troubled sea over which she had then passed. Her system, her very soul, had been wrought up by the antagonism of ages!

Surely, then, it is not in an adjustment of things so derived that we can expect to find unmixed truth, nor can we expect to see the truth thus really transmitted to us in any thing like its natural development and symmetry.

Neither has the complexion of affairs, since the age of Luther, been such as to justify unhesitating confidence in every part of the ecclesiastical systems which have since become prevalent. Look, says an English writer, at the Church of England, for example—she owes her first severance from Rome to one of the most wicked of England's kings, and the good, proceeding from such a source, could hardly have been immaculate. Her course during a long interval was greatly disturbed and modified by the action of her adversaries—Romanism on the one hand, and Puritanism on the other. At the Restoration, the memory of her recent sufferings disqualified her for making that final adjustment of her affairs a wise adjustment. In her present state, we see the result, not so much of a calm wisdom and piety within, as of the alternate triumphs and defeats of the antagonism with which she has ever been beset from without. Contention, so long and so bitter with parties, could not have been favorable to impar-

tiality. This strong solicitude, now to be unlike Romanism, and now to be unlike Puritanism, was hardly compatible with an unbiassed wish to be like the truth. We do not say that truth may not come forth from such struggles, but we say that the probability is that it will not come alone, and that even truth, so transmitted, will be imperfect, disproportioned, distorted.

Then look at Non-conformity, as an example on the other side. It was cradled in persecution, it grew up as in defiance of power. On the religious system which that persecuting power was disposed to patronize and enrich, Non-conformists could not fail to look with disaffection. Hence the danger on this side was the same in its nature as upon the other, consisting in a tendency to regard the unlikeness to the things belonging to the Church of England as being very much the same thing with likeness to what a true Church should be. The vocation of the Non-conformist has been, not to rule, but to witness, to protest; and the thing to be feared in respect to him has been, lest, in protesting against the alleged errors of the system to which he has been opposed, he should protest away a large portion of his own truth. That such has been the case, can scarcely be

doubted. Methodism rose as a great reaction against Formalism, and the character of the times in which it originated is clearly discernible in its spirit, polity and history.

The presumption established by the examples given, and others which might be adduced, is confirmed by the experience and testimony of men of sense and candor. Such men, though having their connection with one communion of Christians, and not with others, from conscientious preference, yet are not of that particular communion as exhibiting the one perfect system, all the rest being imperfect, but simply on the ground of its being, in their view, upon the whole, the most Christian. A system may be admitted to be not a little faulty, while the good in it may be regarded as greatly preponderating over the evil, and as being much greater than would be found in any other, and a man may deem this reason sufficient to justify him in choosing such a connection, or in retaining it when chosen. We suppose that something like this is the position of most, if not all, thinking and honest men. Of course we do not say that men are at liberty to conform to any thing immoral, or to consent to the placing of any *essential* truth of the Gospel in abeyance, as a prelimi-

nary step to Christian communion. That would be to do evil that good may come. All we mean to say is, that men of thought see our best systems as imperfect and faulty, and this fact, in our judgment, should tell most favorably on the question of Christian Union.

*IV. Want of Union is a departure from the original spirit of the Reformers.*

At the date of the Reformation, when the Papal system itself appeared, for a time, in danger of dissolution, from the very rust and canker of its inherent rottenness and corruption, a reviving impulse from above gave occasion to a counter-reaction from beneath, and the heavenly union, which followed the memorable day of Pentecost, but was so soon, alas ! marred by party spirit and sectarianism, manifested itself anew, in the fresh bursting forth of the pure and free Gospel among the nations. At the beginning the Reformers were all of one mind, and a blessed harmony reigned throughout all the company of the faithful. Everywhere, and by all, the same truth was proclaimed—the truth which Luther caught or inherited, through Augustine, from Paul ; and the fires of

persecution in Germany and Britain, as well as in Italy, France, and Spain, were all kindled at the same anti-Christian shrine, against which, with one voice, they cried; even as it was the same live coal from off the altar, which purged alike the lips of all the holy martyrs. It was surely a union and unity from God. And because it was so, it was not long unbroken in the hands of men. Errors, heresies, strifes, divisions, jealousies unnumbered, and misunderstandings manifold, speedily interfered to blast the fair promise of that happy springtime, and the captives emancipated from Roman tyranny, whom the common rapture and surprise of their first deliverance had kept together—singing the same new song—struck, ere long, discordant notes, and parted into the many bands in which they now are found. Shall these discordant notes and sad divisions be perpetuated?

V. *In many of the lines of demarcation which separate into different folds the one flock of Jesus Christ, there is really nothing to prevent Union.*

From the very beginning almost, the Church has been divided by philosophical speculations



about Christian doctrine, when it has been united as to the doctrine itself. Her divisions, moreover, have been perpetuated by the stress which has been laid on confessedly secondary points, and the prominence given to them over those which are primary. Her differences have too often related, not to any of the essentials of faith and practice, but to some minor and comparatively unimportant points, which seem to have very little to do with the vitality and efficiency of the truth. If we look narrowly at existing diversities, we shall discover that they do not relate to the great essential facts or doctrines of Christianity, but rather to the philosophy of those facts, or the metaphysics of those doctrines, or perhaps to certain forms and modes, which are never supposed by those who insist upon or oppose them, to be parts of vital religion, however much on the one hand they may be valued as important, or on the other condemned as useless or hurtful in their tendency. There is a vast difference between Christianity and the philosophy of Christianity; between the facts and doctrines of religion, and the philosophy of those facts and doctrines. It is not a man's theory of cause and effect which produces an explosion, when he applies a lighted match to a cask of gun-

powder, and it is not a man's philosophy of religion which produces the effect of the Gospel, when he applies the truths of Christianity to the conscience and the heart.

Just here the truth deserves attention, that *the power of the Gospel to accomplish its purposes, lies in those principles and facts, in reference to which all evangelical Christians are agreed, and not in those upon which they differ.* The proof of this is found in the fact that Christian experience and dialect are everywhere the same. The spiritual disciples of the Son of God, whether found amid the wilds of Africa, or the jungles of Asia, amid the scenes and associations of European or American refinement, amid all the varieties of physical frame, complexion and temperament, however diverse may have been their outward circumstances, and their early training, however opposed to each other may be their mental habits, yet in the controlling moral attributes of character they are alike—subjects of the same experience, produced by a reception of the same cardinal truths, living under the same spiritual influences, governed by the same laws, and cherishing the same immortal hopes—they are all “one in Christ Jesus.”

Well would it be for Christians to endeavor fre

quently to place a due estimate on the incomparable superiority of those points of doctrine in which they are agreed over those on which they differ, connecting with this a disposition to make the former, rather than the latter, the topics of their habitual and delighted reflection. We hold in common, truths of such surpassing magnitude, that our distinctive peculiarities dwindle down before them to almost invisible points. When gazing upon the Cross of Christ, the amplitude of the covenants of grace, the method of justification, the work of the Spirit, the common adoption here, and the common glorification hereafter, we should feel, in regard to our distinctions, pretty much as the co-heirs of an immense estate which was bounded by the Alps, and was situated on their lovely slopes, would of the different heights and accommodations of their respective dwellings, or as travellers who were looking at the pyramids would of the different heights of the little eminences from which they viewed those stupendous masses. Give to Church government all the importance that can be desired for it, and to the different opinions entertained of the subjects and mode of baptism all the value that belongs to them—and it may be admitted that this is not small—still, what are

they as compared with the method of our justification and the means of our sanctification? If it be necessary to multiply comparisons, and it be lawful to compare the doctrines and discipline of Christianity to Nebuchadnezzar's image in his dream, would not the former appear as the head of gold and the breast of silver, while the latter would seem but as the legs and feet of iron and clay? This leads us to remark more definitely and specifically, that

VI. *Union is Practicable without the sacrifice of any essential Truth.*

This is evident from the experience of foreign missionaries, who have very generally found, that, while engaged in the work of Christianizing the heathen, their denominational differences were forgotten. It has been the testimony, we believe, of the most devoted among these laborers, that throughout the whole process of conducting an idolater or a savage from his state of incipient rudeness to the eve of his baptism, these differences never once came into view, or at least were never practically called for as being of any use or necessity in the operation. This we hold to be a most

instructive finding. If, in the work of Christianizing men, there are certain denominational differences which might all the while be set aside as of no practical importance, can these differences belong to the essence of Christianity?

The truth is, that all God's people agree in every thing that is essential to genuine, saving Christianity. They all believe in the unity of the Godhead, and in the divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They believe that God, who is possessed of every perfection, was the Almighty Maker of heaven and of earth; that man was created holy; that he sinned against God, the moral Governor of the world, and fell from his primitive condition; that the whole human race was involved in this apostasy; that they are now weak, polluted, and guilty, and liable to death; that an atonement was necessary to vindicate the moral government of God before sin could be pardoned; that salvation is of grace, and that Jesus was both God and man, voluntarily became incarnate, and made the necessary atonement by His humiliation, sufferings, and death; that He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sits enthroned to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins; that He sent the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to

operate upon the soul by the Word read and preached; that He enables men to repent and believe the Gospel; that whosoever believes in Christ for salvation is pardoned, and justified, not for his work's sake, but for Christ's sake, and yet not by that faith in Christ which is *alone without works*, for faith works by love, and purifies the heart; that he is renewed as to his motives and principles by the Spirit of God; that he acts thenceforth under the light of revelation, making progress in holiness by the assistance of Divine grace. Besides, all are firmly persuaded of the happy death of the believer, the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, the universal judgment, when Christ shall judge the quick and the dead, a state of eternal happiness for the saved, and of misery for the lost, after the fixing of which Christ shall deliver up His kingdom as Mediator into the hand of God.

As to the external constitution and internal arrangements of the Church of Christ, there are also many points, and these by far the most important, in which they are agreed. All of them hold that Christ is the Supreme Head of His Church, and that every doctrine, law, and institution must have His sanction before it can be binding

upon the conscience; that He has appointed the ordinance of the Lord's Day, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, praise, prayer, and preaching the word; that he has instituted office-bearers in His house, for dispensing religious ordinances, exercising discipline, and attending to the poor; that the members of the Church of Christ are visible saints, who ought to love each other, and do good, and that, if any openly throw off their Christian profession and return to the world, they ought to be excluded from the communion of the faithful.

In these essential matters all evangelical Christians are agreed, and their peculiarities are of such a secondary nature that they very seldom appear in the discourses of their ministers. A reader of a volume of their sermons requires to turn to the title page to learn whether the writer is an Episcopalian, a Congregationalist, a Lutheran, Seceder, or Presbyterian. The same Gospel, in its great general outlines, is taught by all. It is a common acknowledgment, indeed, among all evangelical Churches, that the secondary matters on which they differ do not touch the great principles of Christianity, and that a person may conscientiously belong to any one of the evangelical denominations and still be a Christian. They labor together at times as professed Christians in Bible,

Missionary, and Tract societies, and, while standing on the same platform, they call each other brethren. Just in proportion as preachers merge their peculiarities, are they esteemed Scriptural and useful. An evangelical Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Baptist, who appears in the pulpit, bristling all over with his own peculiarities, is, amongst all spiritually-minded Christians, considered a bigot, who preaches for sectarian purposes, not to win souls. It is the pastor who studies the Bible, and takes his simple theological sentiments, without philosophy, from the Word of God—who plies the understanding and conscience with every Scriptural motive that has a tendency to lead to faith and repentance, and who encourages the weak by the exhibition of promised aid, and consoles the sorrowful with the great and precious promises of the Gospel—that is considered “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of life.” Every minister who wishes to be popular, in the best sense of the term, puts on a catholic spirit, and at least pretends not to preach his party, but Christ and the common salvation. Homage is thus paid to the broad lineaments of Scripture, and the wire-drawn speculations of schismatics are cast into the shade.



VII. *Sectarian Divisions tend to destroy community of interest and sympathy of feeling among Christians.*

How fervently does our blessed Lord supplicate for the unity of all his followers! "Neither pray I for these (the Apostles) alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee,"—that there may be among them that unity of counsel, of feeling, of purpose, of action, that very oneness which exists between the Father and the Son. And Paul informs us that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the *same care one for another*; and if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Cor. xii. 25.) But is not directly the reverse of this but too frequently witnessed? Does not the great mass of the several religious denominations of our land exhibit any thing else than the "same care" for the other members of Christ's body? If one denomination suffers, fails of success, or meets with disgrace in some unworthy members, do not surrounding denominations rather, at least tacitly

and cheerfully, acquiesce, if not rejoice, hoping that thus more room will be made, and facility offered for their own enlargement? Not thus is it in the family: if one member is visited by any calamity, the others do not rejoice in it. Nor thus would it be among those who profess the name of Christ, if the community of interest in the Saviour's family had not been impaired by sectarian divisions, which place several distinct religious families on the same ground, with separate pecuniary interests, with conflicting prejudices, with rival sectarian aims! In the Apostolic age, and for centuries after it, only one Christian Church occupied the same field, and *thus three-fourths of the causes which originate contentions among modern Christians were avoided.* These separate interests will always create contention, rivalry, and jealousies among fallible men, sanctified but in part, as long as they are not removed, or their influence in some way counteracted.

#### VIII. *Christian Union would produce a full development of Christian Character.*

This character being essentially one of love, and generous and affectionate, is marred and injured by every feeling of narrowness or bigotry. These are

directly opposite to its native largeness and openness. Moreover, since one of the chief means of spiritual improvement is brotherly intercourse, we do certainly deprive ourselves of this advantage, so far as we alienate ourselves from fellow-Christians. And especially we encourage pride and injure the grace of humility, if we do this upon grounds which imply the thought of their inferiority to ourselves, while we still dare not deny their Christian character. The subject, in this view, deserves far more consideration than, it is to be feared, it receives. Open immoralities will startle the conscience of one who scarce takes thought of his unchristian tempers. He would esteem his piety to suffer much by absence from the place where he is accustomed to meet with brethren of the same name, and yet pays no regard to the evil his mind and heart sustain by a narrow separation from Christians of another name. Yet the sectarian "stand by thyself" may be a gangrene upon his soul, and a grief to the Holy Spirit of God.

Certainly a necessary requisite to each Christian's growth in grace is, that he cherish a right spirit towards other members of the body. A branch of the true vine cannot grow while in irritating collision with adjacent branches. One mem-

ber of the body is not strengthened by a wounding of the others ; the hand weakens itself if it inflict pain upon the foot. If we do an unchristian act, or cherish bitter feelings towards a fellow-Christian, we not only violate that common sympathy of the members of Christ's body by which they participate in a common life and strength, but we turn from us the heart and approbation of Christ, from whom we receive our life. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.

And as individual piety cannot grow where the members of Christ's body wound each other, so neither can the aggregate piety of a church. Where mutual love is wanting, there cannot be the desired flow of spiritual life in the use of the means of grace. Coldness and mutual alienation among assembled worshippers repel the action of that Spirit whose very breath is love.

The Rev. Dr. Wardlaw says : " I pity the bigot ; I detest his bigotry ; I pity himself. He denies himself enjoyment, but it is not the denial which his Lord enjoins ; it is denying himself what the whole character and genius of the Gospel far more than warrant ; that of which the free indulgence is not appropriate to it merely, but by its principles imperative, and indispensable to the heart's being

in true harmony with its own nature, and with the example of its Divine Author. O let Christians confine their self-denial to 'the lusts of the flesh and of the mind,' and let them enjoy in unstinted measure, as their Lord intends they should, the delight imparted by the wide and unrestrained flow of their spiritual affections! I would not, for the world, be the man who thus locks up his heart in an ice-house; who puts the short chain and the galling collar of bigotry on the neck of his Christian charity; who can look round, with a narrow sectarian satisfaction on the members of his own little sect, and with cold indifference, or something worse, towards all beyond the pale; can count, one by one, the number of those whom alone he owns as his brethren; who estimates the Christianity of his party, and the evidence of its being the true flock of Christ, by its diminutiveness, finding in this his solace for what others can trace to far different causes—to the wildness of its dogmas and the uncharitable censoriousness of its members; who is a very miser of his love—if, indeed, he can be called a miser who has no stock in possession beyond what he gives away."

IX. *Christian Union is enforced by the consideration that the wisest and best men of each denomination have most earnestly desired it, and that now they are perfectly One in the Church Above.*

Many of them (men of whom the world was not worthy) have left their desire on record, as we have elsewhere noted—a fact which will be adduced in evidence against the troublers of the Church in the day of final account. Some of them died with the desire on their lips; they could not bequeath a legacy of peace to the Church, as their dying Lord did, but they approached His example as nearly as they were able, by earnestly *desiring* it for those they left behind. Some of them who had contended too eagerly concerning minor points, saw and acknowledged their error, even on this side death. And can we suppose that they who were the mediators and healing spirits of their day have now any thing to regret, except that they were not *more* in earnest? O, could we take our differences into their presence, could we convok<sup>e</sup> and consult a synod of the blessed, how certainly should we behold those whose disciples and descendants have ever been

at variance here, sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! how earnestly would they unite in admonishing those followers, if they honor their memory, and would enhance their happiness, to blot from their writings the controversial and contentious page, in which once they gloried—to merge *their* names at once and for ever in the great Christian name, and to emulate the *union* of heaven, if they would obtain an antepast of its joys!

X. *The Union of Christians would tend to harmonize their views on those points which are now the Sources of Division.*

This is the gracious way in which God seeks to terminate our guilty quarrel with Himself. Instead of moving off from us to the greatest possible distance, He has come nearer to us than ever, dwelt among us, established a *ministry of reconciliation*, and invited us to “come and reason” with Him at a throne of grace. And by pursuing this gracious course, is He not intentionally showing us the right way of becoming reconciled to each other? and would He not honor and bless the imitation of His own methods? Refer-

ring to the advantage that would accrue to Christians from their being engaged in some common enterprise of well-doing, the Rev. Dr. Chalmers says: "The habit of acting aright is one of the most powerful auxiliaries to the faculty of thinking aright. Speaking of this matter subjectively, such is the alliance between the moral and intellectual parts of our nature, or speaking of it objectively, such is the alliance between righteousness and truth. The one expedites the other. To be one in practice, is the likeliest way of becoming one in faith; and if a right practice, it will, with the help and under the guidance of that Spirit who is given to those who obey Him, become a right faith. Such is the affinity between the good and the true. A common desire and common effort for the one, are most fitted, of all other things, to clear up the intellectual vision, and to lead onward to a common perception of the other. And when men come to see things in their real dimensions, it will save the Church from a twofold mischief—not only the mischief of extenuating that which is great, but the mischief of exaggerating and distending that which is little. In earnest dealing with human souls on the question of their salvation, they will feel themselves to be



in busy occupation with the weightier matters of our faith, and be unwilling to relinquish this for those smaller matters which belong not to the essence of faith, however magnified they may have been in the mists and din of controversy."

XI. *To oppose the Union of Christians is a Sin.*

There are sins which pertain exclusively to unconverted men, and cannot be committed by Christians. There are sins which may be committed, though in a different manner and degree, both by the men of the world, and the disciples of our Lord. And there are sins, also, which, by their very nature, cannot be committed but by the children of God—sins which Christians commit, and worldly men do not—iniquities found in the heart of those whom Jesus has purified, and that can have no existence in those over whom the Prince of darkness reigns. It is a sin of *this* class a Christian commits in opposing Christian Union. The inward experience of salvation and regeneration opens our eyes, and causes us to perceive what things are essential to salvation, and what are not. It causes us to realize, almost as if we grasped it with the hand, both the faith that saves,

and *that which* it believes, confesses, teaches. It reveals to us a mystery of God—a new creation, wrought both in us and in others. It says to us: “In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal. vi. 15.) We are culpable, therefore, if we do not act according to the light thus given to us. Wherever we find this new creature, we are bound to love and to cherish it, though united to forms which are mainly opposed to our own.

Christians are those who have been made partakers of Christ. (Heb. iii. 14.) Now, if it is Christ whereof they are all thus possessed, they are bound to be more alive to that in which they all participate, than to that in which they differ. They ought to say with the Apostle, “I count *all things* but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” When they condemn their brethren, who stand in different ecclesiastical circumstances from their own, they often condemn that which they do not actually know or understand, and this is sinful.

We are aware that many persons regard the want of Christian Union as *altogether* and only an *error*. Doubtless it is an error of understanding and of Christian judgment to attach more import-

ance to that which, in matters of secondary consideration, separates us, than to that which unites us in things essential. But there is here *more* than an error; a want of Christian Union cannot exist without, in some measure, a want of Christian love, and this is *a sin* against the new commandment: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."

Let a Christian appear to deny before the world that inter-communion which he has with all the Brotherhood, and by this denial he will not only cause the world and the Prince of the world to rejoice, but offend his Lord,—*sin*! Such an one is at variance with those who own the same God and look to the same heaven with himself; while he maintains intimate relations with many others who have the same dress and the same denomination with him,—but as to the rest, nothing! *That which is everything before God, he counts for nothing. That which is nothing with God, he accounts every thing.* He strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. The sin, moreover, which he commits, is a sin against the Church itself. We do not say only against the Church universal, but also against the particular church to which the man belongs. If a narrow and sectarian spirit is encouraged or

allowed in the Churches, they soon become mere sects, impoverished, dwindling, and dry, and cease to be living Churches of Jesus Christ.

In relation to the point now before us, Christians have erred in various ways, it would seem, at different periods of the Church's history. One error has been to magnify the outward form and organization, so that it prevailed over both truth and love. No matter what a man believed, or what spirit he manifested, provided he was on the right side, he belonged to the true Church. Another, though more intellectual error, has been to exalt the speculative dogma, because a truth, entirely above the spirit of love, to the separation of Christians on most trivial grounds, frequently, and to the destruction of almost all union and brotherly concord. And this has been much the mistake of our Protestantism. It has led to the multiplication of creeds and their minuteness. The true position, if it may possibly be attained, would seem to be this: "To hold the truth in love," and let the love be so strong as to prevail over many errors, both of form and of philosophy, if only "the mind that was in Christ Jesus" be displayed in the life.

It is absolutely unscriptural, unchristian, and unapostolic, only to consider the members of our

own denomination as fellow-members in the body of Christ, and only to care and to pray for that denomination, and to refuse sympathy in the weal or woe of the rest. Naturally, each professor of religion must remain true to his own denomination, otherwise speaking, to his own acknowledgment and conviction, yea, even unto death. Where an essential doctrine is concerned, which he has recognized as a portion of divine truth, against the doctrine of a different denomination which he has recognized as displacing the divine truth, he must defend it, and defend it earnestly. But it is one thing to contend against particular errors of a given denomination, and quite another thing to contend against this denomination as such, and against the members belonging to it. As we ourselves are first members of Christ by faith, and then members of some denomination according to our dogmatic conviction, so should we see in another, first of all a member of Christ, and then a member of a differing denomination. The member must first present itself to our eye, and then its disease. It is thus a clearly sacred duty to acknowledge the common band which unites all evangelical denominations, the recognizing of the "mighty acts" of God.

XII. *Christian Union would facilitate the Progress, and hasten the Universal Triumphs of Christianity in the World.*

Union is certainly one of the chief constituents of power, both in the physical and moral world, in the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace. If it be indeed true, that where only "two or three are agreed as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them," what would be the mighty results, were all Christians thus agreed? The great preparatory step to that wonderful revival on the day of Pentecost was *union*, for we read that "the disciples were all of one accord in one place." The same union, to a greater or less degree, has distinguished modern revivals. And if such have been the glorious consequences of union in a few isolated cases, on a small scale, what would be the stupendous moral results of one universal, holy alliance of the churches of Jesus Christ upon the basis of the New Commandment? What would be its reflex influence upon the piety of the Church, and its aggressive effects upon the kingdom of Satan?

If the Church is as a city set on a hill, she is

also an aggressive army, not only designed to retain territory already acquired, but to perpetuate the conflict until every knee shall bow to Jesus. But how are such movements to be made? Take any district, and let an evangelical congregation be commenced, and although there may not be more than an hundred families there, and hundreds of millions elsewhere hear not the gospel at all, you will soon find at least a Baptist, a Methodist, and a Presbyterian church, if not two of this last denomination, of different "schools," and perhaps an Episcopal church, also, and none of their ministers receiving half a support. And, as if the whole affair were a piece of political intrigue, *our church* becomes the watchword. All lawful, and some doubtful means must be employed, and saints and sinners must be drawn in. Men of all creeds and men of no creed, men of all characters and men of no character, must be brought, and *our church* must be filled. But we have forgotten that *our church* and the *Church of God* may be very different things. If one denomination obtains a prominent position, another will secure a superior. If one has a splendid church, another must excel it, even though it should run in debt, or beg for money by fairs and festivals. And if one has a

popular preacher, another must have one too, though the operation should require them to treat their old minister like their old furniture,—place him in a corner, or send him to the sales-room of vacant congregations, and let the highest bidder be the buyer. Commanding positions, splendid houses and popular preachers must be so moved on the chess-board, that our church will win the game. And if this is done, we take our success as the evidence of the Divine blessing, and come to the conclusion that we are a holy people. And all this, perhaps, in the midst of thousands whom our neglect has caused to exclaim, in all the bitterness of sin unpardoned, and of moral desolation, “No man cares for my *soul*.” Is this the Church for which Jesus bled and died? Is this part of the promised conversion of the world? Is this worldly policy, and are these burning jealousies to be regarded as evidence of pure and undefiled religion, and as the result of a Saviour’s prayers, and tears, and bloody agony? Is the world ever thus to be converted?

“Thousands,” said *Barter*, “have been drawn to Popery, and confirmed in it, by the divisions of Protestants.” What was true *then*, has been at least equally so ever since. A want of union has



ever given Popery high vantage ground against Protestantism, paralyzed the nerves of the Church, and been sucking up her very life-blood. Yet how many bigots there are who consider their own as the only true Church, and denounce all others; who will do nothing for enlightening the world, unless the candle can be carried on their own candlestick, nor labor side by side with any but those who do homage to the particular *shibboleth* of their party, or, if they so labor, do it only *on*, and *when on*, some anniversary platform?

To the union of Christians our Lord himself most significantly refers in the words which cannot be too often quoted: "Neither pray I, for these alone," His first disciples and ministers, "but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word, 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.*" "I in them," He likewise prays, "and Thou in me,—that they may be made perfect in one,—and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me." This combination of all God's people into one harmonious whole, as preparing the way for the general

spread of Divine truth, is disclosed in the visions which prophesy supplies of the latter-day glory. "The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, yet will I gather others to Him, beside those that are gathered unto Him;" to which our Lord's language forcibly corresponds: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold," or, as the word more strictly means, "one flock, and one Shepherd." O, glorious day! when the different bands of the Lord's volunteers, "the people made willing in the day of His power," shall no longer take up their several positions for a cross-fire on one another's ranks, but fall into compact order and array for encountering the common enemy, when all the wandering sheep of the flock of God shall be placed under the great Shepherd's care, shall be "saved" by his mercy, and shall, under His watchful eye, "go in and out, and find pasture!"

### XIII. *The Church in its Millennial and Glorified State will be One.*

When the Millennium dawns, the din of controversy shall cease with the din of arms—the peace

that shall prevail in the world shall be but an emblem of the tranquillity which pervades the Church—and the pen of the polemic shall be laid up in the museum of the antiquarian, with the sword of war. The spirit of division will be healed, not by legal restraints of angry controversy, nor will an angel descend to give a sanatory virtue to the troubled waters of strife, but this disease will be cured by a copious effusion of the Spirit of God upon the hostile parties—by the diffusion of a larger degree of vital religion—by drawing men from human systems to the fountain of Scripture, there to purify their much-abused vision from the scales of error and prejudice—by causing them not only to profess, but to feel, that love is the essence of Christianity, and all beside but the “earthly attire” which she will throw off as she steps across the threshold of eternity, to enter the temple of God. Sectarianism in heaven! Why the very announcement of such a principle among those who are to inhabit the same city with its pearly gates, and to surround the same throne of God and the Lamb, would carry discord into their harmonious ranks, and mar their glad hallelujahs, and grate upon the ears of angels and the Lamb. And who can doubt that the nearer we can bring

the Church on earth to the character of the Church millennial or triumphant, the more pleasing will she be to Him that purchased her with His blood?

XIV. *Christian Union would be supremely agreeable to the Blessed Trinity.*

It would be agreeable to the FATHER. He is "the very God of Peace." He is the fountain whence all the streams of peace which are at this moment circulating through the universe, immediately flow. And His Church was intended, under Christ, to be the channel of peace to this troubled world. How agreeable, then, would it be to His exalted nature, to see His Church answering its high design, no longer reflecting from its bosom the tempestuous and angry sky of earthly strife, but the calm of a higher region—giving back to heaven its own image, and presenting to earth the means of becoming like it!

It would be agreeable to the SON. Not only is one of His most appropriate titles "*the Prince of Peace*," but He chose that the "peace-makers" should be called more emphatically than others, "the children of God,"—leaving us to infer that they more nearly resemble their Heavenly Father.

He bequeathed to His Church a legacy of peace, He prayed in death that His followers might be one, and He will still be invoked by them as "the Lord of Peace himself." As "the Head of His body, the Church," He feels the shock and suffering of all that is inflicted on the members, and not the less that the hand which inflicts it is its own. How congenial would it be to His gracious nature to see that His people were no longer crucifying Him afresh, and putting Him to an open shame,—that they were no longer losing sight of His cross in a fierce contention about His seamless robe!

It would be agreeable to the HOLY SPIRIT. How can that Spirit but be grieved? How should any of us like it, to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part? Though with Him passion and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive. But in the same sense and degree in which the dissevered and distracted state of the Church now grieves Him, the restoration of its unity and peace would yield Him ineffable delight. The very *desire* of such restoration, sincerely and generally expressed, would open the windows of heaven and cause Him to return. If even a good man is conscious of

pure satisfaction in only *attempting* a family reconciliation, how inconceivably great would be the satisfaction of the Divine Spirit, in restoring and ratifying the peace of the great family of God !

Oh, how supremely agreeable would it be to the blessed Trinity, looking down from the throne of their infinite glory, to behold the image of their ineffable Union reflected in the intimate and indissoluble oneness of the Church, and the Church contending only which part of it shall be most instrumental in going into all the world, and preaching the Gospel to every creature, and baptizing them into the threefold name of God !

#### XV. *Christians have a Common Salvation.*

It is true that, as the result of that great Protestant doctrine, "the right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures," Christians differ in the views they take on many points of doctrine and practice, and hence have arisen the different denominations into which the One Church of Christ is divided. But it is still One Church, and that, amongst other reasons, for this, that it has essentially but one faith. All believers, no matter by what name

they are called, or in what communion you find them—all true believers are by “one Spirit baptized into one body, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, whether they be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” And since they are all thus taught by the Holy Ghost, they do not disagree on the substantial and necessary truths of the Gospel. In fundamentals, as previously stated, there is a perfect unity, while in circumstances there may be diversity. All agree in their teaching as to the way of a sinner’s salvation. All exhibit the righteousness of Christ as the alone ground of justification, and the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. All point to Calvary and cry, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !” A happy day will it be, and blessed, both for the Church and for the world, when this common testimony to “the common salvation” shall be borne, not as now, by separated denominations, under diverse and discordant names, but by one undivided community—the whole community of the faithful.

XVI. *The Church is Weakened by Division.*

That "union is strength," is a maxim universally admitted. With it, however, "the children of this world" are more familiar—or at least they act on it more faithfully—"in their generation, than the children of light." The god of this world claims the principle as his own, and in his policy, this feature of the wisdom of the serpent is peculiarly conspicuous, presenting too generally, in this respect, a melancholy contrast to the disorder reigning in the opposite ranks. Our Lord gives the great enemy full credit for this wisdom, when he speaks of Satan as too sagacious not to know "that a house divided against itself falleth," and that internal division must be fatal to his kingdom. The maxim of the Church's enemy hitherto has been, "Divide and weaken," and the policy has been oft, alas ! but too successful. The story of Bessarion exhorting the Christian princes to join against the Turks, which Melanethon borrows in one of his epistles, and applies to the schismatics of his day, is still as appropriate as ever: "'There was a war between the wolves and the dogs. Tidings were brought to the wolves that there was a huge army of dogs coming against



them to tear them in pieces. The wolves sent out an old and cunning wolf to survey them, and act the part of a scout. On his return, he told them that there was indeed a great company of dogs coming. They were far more numerous than themselves, but they need not fear, for he perceived they were of different colors. On hearing this, the wolves did not regard them, accounting it an easy matter to deal with those who were so dissimilar among themselves.' In the same manner," says Melancthon, "do the popish party triumph in respect of us." A divided Church is a weak Church, and this is a point well worth considering, as we see the papists putting forth prodigious efforts, and their schools and colleges, their chapels and cathedrals, their monasteries and convents, everywhere increasing. The reunion of Protestants would fill them with dismay, and be a death-blow to their policy.

Looking at the division of the Church in its connection with the subject of missions, the Rev. J. Angell James said, about twenty years ago: "I cannot help thinking there is something that hinders the communication of the Divine Spirit—some stone at the well's mouth, which needs to be rolled away before the refreshing stream can flow

forth. I am not blind to the success which in many parts of the world has followed our missionary operations. I am not forgetful of the glorious aggregate of usefulness which, when all the items are carried into the account, and the total is summed up, appears to our delighted mind. I do not need to be reminded that, when first difficulties are removed, our progress may be expected to be more rapid. But, with all this, I am still led to the conclusion, that after millions of property have been expended, thousands of lives have been sacrificed, and half a century consumed, much more might have been expected, and would have been accomplished, had the temper and spirit of the Church of Christ been what it ought to have been. A dispensation has come upon us, and we have not made ourselves ready. God has called us to a high and holy enterprise against heathenism, and we have forgotten that 'this kind goeth not forth but by fasting and prayer.' The Church must have more of the spirit of faith, and prayer, and holiness, and especially of love. Without this, it has not the mind of Christ. Abstract truth, without love, identify it as we may with our several opinions, proves in operation but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It cannot meet

the hearts of sinners, because it has not first clothed itself in the garb of love, and has not essayed its high behest in the all-moving, all-comprehending spirit of Him who is love. A divided, alienated Church cannot convert the world to Christ. God will not employ her; she must come to a better mind before she is an instrument which He delighteth to honor. It is Satan's object to keep us separated at home, that he may reign unmolested abroad. His strongholds there are not in danger, as long as we are not united here."

XVII. *The Union of the Church would exert a beneficial influence upon the Country.*

It would bring about more political approximation of parties, and make our country greater and mightier in its moral influence than it is already. It would, at any rate, have a tendency, and perhaps an influence, in checking the repellent action, the centrifugal force of political animosities. It is the intention of God that His Church should exert a beneficial influence, apart from what is directly religious, upon the nations in which it is placed, and be upon them as a dew, and among them as salt. In a free country like ours, where

differences of opinion on all points of politics must exist, party spirit of the most bitter and virulent kind is continually generated and sustained. And cannot the politician plead in his defence, the rancor of the professing Christian and the polemical divine? Is contention less fierce in the arena of religion than in that of politics? Are the wranglers in one much less pugnacious than the wranglers in the other? Christian Union, did it extensively prevail, would not only set a high and beautiful example to the men of the world, of differences in lesser matters and agreement in greater ones, but inasmuch as religious bodies are characterized somewhat by prevailing political opinions, religion would soften the asperity of discordant sentiments in secular matters, and prepare men to make concessions of their prejudices in one thing, even as they had made them in another. The man with whom I am in the habit of meeting and praying in the convocation of saints, though in some things of religion I differ from him, I shall be likely to meet also as a citizen without a particle of venom, though here also I am at issue with him on some question of public interest. How momentous it is that the Church should hold out the law and the example of union,

.

to the world, and by helping to soothe, and quiet, and tame the furious spirit of political partisanship, should thus consolidate the strength of the country, and make this great nation still mightier than she is already !

XVIII. *The Bible exhibits Christian Union as a Duty.*

The passages of Scripture that plainly and explicitly insist on mutual love and harmony among all Christ's members, occupy a larger space, probably, than those relating to any single topic of our holy religion besides. They are such as the following :

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ;

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ;

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

That we *henceforth* be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.—Ephesians iv. 1-16.

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.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you.

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?—1 Corinthians i. 10-13.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body:

for we are all partakers of that one bread.—1 Corinthians x. 16-17.

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another, *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.



For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body : so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we* be Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And if they were all one member where *were* the body?

But now are they many members, yet but one body.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary :

And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

For our comely *parts* have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked;

That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.—1 Corinthians xii. 3-27.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the*

*poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil,

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail, whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease, whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away,

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these

three; but the greatest of these is charity.—  
1 Corinthians xiii.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching:

Or he that exhorteth on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.—  
Romans xii. 3-9.

Him that is weak in faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.—Romans xiv. 1.

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let every one of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good to edification.

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.—Romans xv. 1-7.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good

words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad, therefore, on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.—Romans xvi. 17–20.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother, abideth in death.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.—1 John iii. 10-24.

And other sheep I have which are not of this

fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold *and* one shepherd.—John x. 16.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.—Matthew xviii. 5, 6.

And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not, for he that is not against us is for us.—Luke ix. 49, 50.

See also the Gospel of John, from the thirteenth chapter to the seventeenth, inclusive.

The prayer of Jesus, John xvii. 21 : "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," has been thus interpreted : "This prayer was made for the establishment, not only of such a real, but of such an ostensible unity, among Christians, as could be seen by the world, and as might lead the



world to believe in the mission of our Saviour.”—  
Rev. Dr. Chalmers.

“It would appear that the unity, or union, so earnestly commended, and made the subject of such pathetic supplication in the intercessory prayer of our Saviour, is far less dependent than is sometimes thought on external organization, and is, in fact, much more simple and divine. It is true, it must be a visible union—apparent as well as real—patent and palpable to spectators, and such as the world may know and recognize; otherwise it could never lead to a knowledge of the Father. At the same time, in whatever measure, and in whatever manner it is thus open to observation, it must be as a union, not of man’s contrivance, but of God’s inspiration.”—Rev. Robert S. Candlish, D. D.

“The special mercy and particular blessing which Christ prays for on behalf of believers is a close and intimate union betwixt the Father, himself, and them, and also betwixt one another; such an union as doth in some sort resemble that union which is betwixt God and Christ—not an unity of essence and nature, but of wills and affections. Here Christ intimates one special advantage that would redound to the world by this desirable union

betwixt the ministers and members of Christ; it will, if not convert, yet at least convince the world that I and my doctrine came from God." Burkitt.

"It is certain that the oneness prayed for respects all believers. It is the prayer of Christ for all that are His. It includes three things: 1. That they might all be incorporated in one body. 2. That they are all *animated by one spirit*; plainly implied in *that they may be one in us*. 3. That they *all may be one*: 1, in judgment and sentiment; 2, in disposition and inclination; 3, in designs and aims; 4, in desires and prayers; 5, in love."—Matthew Henry.

---

## CHRISTIANS IN EARTH AND HEAVEN ARE ONE.

*By one Spirit are we all baptized in one body—(1 Cor. xii. 13.)*

Let saints below in concert sing,  
 With those to glory gone;  
 For all the servants of our King  
 In earth and heaven are one.

One family, we dwell in Him ;  
One Church, above, beneath ;  
Though now divided by the stream—  
The narrow stream—of death.

One army of the living God,  
To His command we bow ;  
Part of the host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now.

Some to their everlasting home  
This solemn moment fly,  
And we are to the margin come,  
And soon expect to die.

Oh that we now might see our Guide !  
Oh that the word was given !  
Come, blessed Lord, the waves divide,  
And land us all in heaven.

## OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIAN UNION.

---

*"Divisions were Predicted."*

There are those who, if they do not feel quite ready to justify the divisions and animosities in the Church, on the ground that they were predicted, yet, for this reason, seldom make them the subjects of painful reflection, regarding them as evils which it would be chimerical to attempt to remedy. Now it is true that it was announced by the Author of Christianity, and the great Head of the Christian Church, that "offences must needs be," and "that He had come to give not peace on earth, but rather division," and that one of His Apostles declares that "there must be heresies," or sects, "that they which are approved may be made manifest." Nor, keeping in view such declarations, can it be doubted that if these evils had not occurred, we should have good ground to question the truth of the religion of Christ, and the Divinity of His mission. Manifestly, however, to take occasion to vindicate or extenuate these evils, from the circumstance that they were

predicted, would be as unjustifiable as to attempt to exculpate the murder of the Prince of Life—the most shocking crime ever perpetrated on earth—because it too was explicitly predicted.

*“Divisions do Good.”*

It is alleged by some that the divisions in the Church exert a favorable influence on the cause of Christianity. This, however, is not true. These divisions have no doubt been overruled so as to produce some good, but in themselves, and in their genuine tendency and their natural results, they are an evil of colossal dimensions and deadly malignity. They have confirmed the prejudices of unbelievers, hardened them in impenitence and infidelity, and caused “the way of God to be evil spoken of,” and “the name of God to be blasphemed.” They weaken our efforts, as elsewhere observed, in restoring a revolted world to God. It requires no great skill to prove, nor sagacity to perceive, how they must have this effect. They tend to keep alive the spirit of party, and to corrupt our zeal, to make us more concerned to advance our own cause than that of the Redeemer, more anxious to diffuse our peculiarities than

the common salvation. Our views are contracted, our spirit is restrained, our aim is lowered. We are in danger of losing the nobleness and amplitude of the true missionary spirit, and of sinking down into the littleness of party. The lofty inspiration of the hope of converting the world to Christ gives way to the lower impulse of differences about peculiar forms of ecclesiastical polity, or of sacramental administration. The truth is, that long ere now the nations of the world might have been irradiated with the light of Revelation, and subjugated to the peaceful sceptre of the Saviour, if those energies and resources which His professed followers have wasted in intestine warfare had been employed in promoting the prosperity, and enlarging the boundaries of His kingdom. Besides, these divisions have exerted a most malignant and most potent influence in corrupting the purity of the Church—a quality intimately connected with her unity, and scarcely less important; for by engendering and nursing a spirit of unholy rivalry, they have proved a perpetual incentive to her different sections to swell their ranks by the admission of the unworthy, that they might thus outnumber their neighbors. Moreover, as they almost always originate in alienation

of affection, and consummate and perpetuate this alienation, they are little less than a repeal of that "love" which "is the fulfilling" or completion "of the law," in so far as concerns the majority of its objects, for they not only tempt but almost constrain us to regard with jealousy and dislike those who are entitled to our cordial esteem and our fraternal affection. For "the fruits of the Spirit, love, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness," they substitute "the works of the flesh, hatred, variance, emulations, and wrath."

"As well maintain," says one, "that frost will produce blossoms, or that thorns will yield clustering grapes, as that the Church, which should be one in faith and love, can be really benefited by a seetarian spirit. Seetarianism, being introduced into a district, soon begins to spread. When one party angrily attacks the peculiarities of another, it speedily repels the aggression and criminales the assailants in return. The collision elicits sparks of fire. New points of discrepaney are found out and magnified. The passions of the contending parties are blown into a flame. They range themselves into opposing factions. Tempers are heated. Fresh parties arise. The merest trifles become matters of the highest moment. More than

one-half of the clergymen that are employed could be dispensed with, and yet the work of the district be performed equally well. They are continually crossing each other's path of usefulness. Much of their time is wasted in counteracting each other's movements. A clap-trap mode of preaching is cultivated. Vulgar prejudices are flattered. Rich men are fawned upon. Attempts are made to swell the little rival communities, by gathering in persons of very questionable character. Ministers are pinched and narrowed in their family comforts, not for the sake of the Gospel, but for the sake of things of doubtful disputation. Active and benevolent men feel they have a burden too great to bear in supporting a pastor who has a mere handful of members. Small churches have no moral weight. Besides they dare not associate for any benevolent end, lest they learn, like drops of quicksilver, to glide into each other, and hence they can carry on no great united enterprise either in charity or religion. "The frost of sectarian selfishness arrests the full flow of love in promoting the highest interests of man."



*"It is Wrong to Sacrifice Essential Truth."*

It is asked, "Would not Christian Union require the unwarrantable sacrifice of truth?" To this inquiry a negative answer must be given, for the Union contemplated is on the basis of substantial Christianity. By substantial Christianity is meant that sum of revealed truth which is essential to individual salvation, or, in other words, the reception of which is practically essential to the progress and universal triumph of the kingdom of God in the earth. There are certain truths in Scripture which are essential, and others which are not essential. We know this principle is denied by some, but how can it be? Such denial leads to consequences the most appalling, and of which, obvious though they be, the persons making the denial, are little aware. If there be no essential truths in Christianity—none, the belief of which is necessary to salvation—it will follow, contrary to the express declarations of Scripture, that men may be saved without faith. On the other hand, if all truths are thus essential, it will follow, that no man has yet been saved, and that no man is ever likely to be saved, for it hardly admits of dis-

pute, that no man has ever yet known and believed, and that no man, at least on earth, is likely to know and believe, all the facts and principles of Christianity without a single exception.

Thus evident is it that there are in religion certain things which are essential to salvation, and others which are not thus essential, though, in their proper place, they too may be of great value and importance.

Can the distinction now referred to be ascertained with sufficient accuracy for all practical purposes? We believe that it can. Let us not be misunderstood. When we assert that some things in religion are fundamental, vital, and essential, and that others are not—that some are of primary, and others only of secondary or subordinate importance, we, of course, by no means intend to represent the latter as being of no importance whatever. We hold that no Christian doctrine, or institute, or precept, is absolutely unimportant, or even of little importance. The idea we wish to convey is, that, while there are some facts and truths in Christianity which, in ordinary cases, must be known and believed in order to salvation, there are others which, though conducive to edification and comfort, are not thus

essential, ignorance of them, or the misapprehension of them, is not incompatible with a state of grace. It is true, indeed, that Divine Wisdom has not provided us with a catalogue of necessary or essential truths. Such descriptions, however, are given of them, and such signatures of their grandeur and importance are visibly impressed on them, that we may easily make a sufficiently near approximation to them.

As Christianity is the revelation of a remedy for the spiritual maladies of mankind, it follows that its vital doctrines must all be intimately connected with the remedy. In order, then, to determine whether an individual possesses that knowledge which is indispensable to salvation, the great question evidently is, Has he correct and affecting views of his personal guilt and depravity, of the character and work of the Saviour, and of the nature of the Christian salvation, as a scheme not only of forgiveness but of moral renovation? Do his views impel him to disclaim all self-dependence—to rely humbly on the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God for pardon—to look to Him for deliverance from the pollution as well as the punishment of sin—to love Him, and to live to Him? If so, we are warranted to regard him as a true be-

liever, and bound to receive him in that capacity. It is, indeed, on this principle the very persons act who reject and condemn the distinction between those things in religion which are essential, and those which are not. In admitting to the communion of the Church, these persons, by demanding, as they do, as a necessary qualification, what they are accustomed to designate "a competent measure of Christian knowledge," *assume* that there are things in Christianity necessary to be known, and things not thus necessary. Now, by what criterion do they ascertain that exact amount of knowledge which constitutes a competent measure? If an applicant, whose attainments were exceedingly slender, gave satisfying proof that he possessed the faith and love of Christ, would they reject him? And if not, on what ground do they receive him? Thus does it appear that all who bear office in the Church are compelled in their ecclesiastical managements to act upon the distinction between those things in religion which are essential, and those which are not. Nor is there any inconsistency between the course which they have to pursue, and the acknowledgment that there may be truths, or views of truths, which are essential to one man, and not to another,

in consequence of the diversity of their means and privileges, and that it is essential to the character of a Christian to receive with docility every doctrine distinctly discerned by him to be a doctrine of Christ, and to aim at a cordial compliance with every requirement clearly perceived to be a commandment of Christ. In writing of the importance of the coöperation of ministers for bringing sinners to Jesus, Dr. Chalmers says: "In earnest dealing with human souls on the question of their salvation, why should they relinquish this for the smaller matters which belong not to the essence of faith, however magnified they may have been in the mists and din of controversy? If tempted by eager partizans to make such a descent, they might well say, in the language of Nehemiah, 'We are doing a great work, and why should we come down unto you?'" Thus this great and good man recognizes and approves the distinction which we maintain.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the union of Christians that we desire, is such as is founded on those doctrines which *make them Christians*, the faith in which salvation lies, and which has been considered as the orthodoxy of all Protestant churches—we confidently affirm that no church, or individual Christian, is making an unjustifiable sacri-

flee of truth in consenting to receive to its communion those whom God has made His children by disposing and enabling them to believe, and experience the power of, the great fundamental religious truths—the justification of the sinner by faith, and the regeneration of his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. A far less justifiable sacrifice of truth, we cannot but think, would be made by a refusal to receive into the “household of faith” those who are “babes in Christ,” and as such, at least, “desire the sincere milk of the word,” looking forward with faith and hope to the time when, as full-grown “men,” they shall be prepared for the “strong meat” of the Word.

“Suppose it admitted,” says one, “that there can be no such thing as *perfectly innocent error*. Is it safe—nay, is it consistent with the self-diffidence and humility of the Christian character—to assume our own infallibility—not our own exclusive conscientiousness merely—but the absolute impossibility of the error lying with us, as if we, of all Christians on earth, were altogether beyond the reach of any perverting or biasing influence? Do not becoming distrust for ourselves, and becoming charity for others, unite in recommending a different principle on which to regulate our feel-

ings and our conduct towards our fellow-Christians? Is there no allowance to be made for the varieties, great as they are, even in mental perspicacity and vigor, and none for the power of early habits and associations—where the sincerity of the desire to know and to follow Christ may be equal? Is forbearance to be utterly forsworn, and ranked among sins against Christ? Are we to confine to the one special ease to which it was applied, the Apostle's indignant and testing question—'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?' If we are—then, indeed, there is no help for us. Division, and subdivision, and sub-subdivision must go on, *ad infinitum*, and at every step in the spirit of 'all uncharitableness.' If you say: 'That is no fault of ours, every man must think and act for himself'—I grant you your position. All I want is, that you do not insist on thinking and acting for others as well as yourselves—that you do not look upon others as owing a kind of debt of submission to your superior judgment. This is the evil:—Your forgetting that you hold no position towards others which they have not the same title to assume towards you."

The same author says: "If I see a fellow-believer who happens to be a Presbyterian, manifest-

ing in his life a larger amount of the exalted moral excellences and the lovely beauties of the Christian character, than another fellow-believer who is an Independent, I must, if my sentiments and feelings are in any thing like harmony with the dictates of the Word of God, experience a correspondingly large amount of the love of complacency towards the one than towards the other. How, then, am I to characterize the principle, according to which I am to be precluded from giving a place beside me at the Christian feast to the *more* worthy, while I am bound to give it to the *less* worthy, of my brotherly affection?—bound to receive him who is *a less Christian*, because he is an Independent, and bound to exclude him who is *more a Christian* because he is a Presbyterian! Is there any thing like this in all the Bible? ‘I trow not.’”

*“The purity of the Church would be vitiated.”*

It has frequently been urged against what is called “free,” or “open communion,” that it would relax the discipline of the Church, and thus aggravate one of the most fearful calamities that has ever befallen her—impurity of communion. If the gates of a church are to be opened for the



admission of strangers, would it not, it is asked, inevitably happen that many doubtful and many unworthy characters would be received? Would not the partition wall which ought ever to separate the Church from the world be thus undermined, and the former, instead of being composed of the sheep and lambs of "the good Shepherd," become a multitude, like the flocks of the patriarch—"ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted?" This objection, however, is, in our judgment, manifestly without any real force. Who does not know, that no man is entitled even to occasional communion in any Church, who does not, to a certain extent, submit to its control? To that privilege he is admitted only in consequence of his personal piety being known to those who administer its affairs, or in consequence of being satisfactorily attested to them by others in whose faithfulness and discernment confidence can safely be reposed. And if, by any misconduct, he bring his piety into just suspicion, or in any way act unsuitably to his Christian profession, he forfeits the privilege to which he had been admitted, and can re-establish his claim to it only by decisive evidence of repentance and reformation. How, then, could the scheme proposed possibly relax the discipline of

the Church, or vitiate the purity of her communion?

*"It would embarrass, if not destroy, the discipline of the Church."*

Communion between the different branches of the Church of Christ, it is alleged, would convert the Church into a scene of perpetual strife and confusion. There might thus be introduced into them severally individuals who differed from the office-bearers, and from the majority of the members, on many topics which agitate and divide the religious world—such as Baptism, and Church government, not to speak of doctrinal topics perhaps still more important, and thus there would be "a Babel of religions," and confusion of discipline.

In replying to this objection, we stop not to inquire into the validity of the right which many Churches exercise, in elevating a number of rites and observances in their forms of worship into essentials, which in primitive times would have been accounted secondary, and left to every man's conscience to practise or not, as his judgment determined, and then holding those to be walking disorderly who will not observe them. It must be

evident that, as we do not advocate a complete amalgamation of denominations, every Christian would naturally connect himself with that particular denomination with whose sentiments on the points mentioned his own coincided. Even granting, however, that, from the infirmity of human nature, there may be some danger of these minor differences producing strife and confusion, these unhappy consequences will not follow, provided the members of the Church attend to the inspired injunctions and expostulations, delivered for the very purpose of regulating their conduct in reference to such differences. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. And thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? and thou, why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" Let these Apostolic directions and cautions be attended to, and not only will the evil apprehended from diversities of opinion be averted, but these diversities, though painful, and, in some respects, prejudicial, will produce good as well as evil. They will promote the humility, the faith, and the love of those among whom they are tolerated, for they will check that propensity to dictation and tyranny in religion which seems natural to man, they will turn the attention of the

Church from things comparatively insignificant to those vital truths which form "the core of the Gospel," and to the truths immediately contiguous to these, and thus they will augment knowledge, invigorate faith, and produce holiness. In regard to discipline of occasional communicants, see the preceding clause of this Chapter.

We notice no more objections. It is not necessary to do so. They all strike us as futile and inapt. They cannot stand for a moment under the Saviour's

"Holy prayer,  
His tenderest and His last"—

"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." It is high time for God's dear people, instead of searching for reasons to justify them in keeping apart, to awake to the folly, mingled with guilt, of magnifying the separating bars between them, while they are minifying the bands which should make them cohere. It is high time for them to yield more, in a spiritual sense, to the centripetal, and less to the centrifugal, force which is bearing upon them, and thus approximating their common centre, they would come nearer to one

another. It is a remark of Leibnitz, with which some philosophers have been much delighted, that "Truth is more generally diffused in the world than is commonly imagined, but it is too often disguised, and even corrupted, by an alloy of error, which conceals it from notice, or impairs its utility." How far this remark will apply to subjects of secular science may admit of dispute, but there can be no doubt that it is peculiarly applicable to the sentiments entertained among genuine Christians respecting the vital doctrines of religion. What the Church now mainly needs, is more of its proper life and essence—love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Let charity prevail in the degree which the Scriptures require, and the right forms will grow out of that, beneath the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the clear, constant light of truth Divine, just as the graceful forms of the trees spring freely from the up-circulating sap, the indestructible spirit of life, beneath the pervading warmth and light of the orb of day.

"Were love, in these the world's last dotting years,  
As frequent as the want of it appears,  
The Churches warmed, they would no longer hold  
Such frozen figures, stiff as they are cold,

Relenting forms would lose their power, or cease,  
And e'en the dipped and sprinkled live in peace,  
Each heart would quit its prison in the breast,  
And flow in free communion with the rest."

In an address before the Evangelical Society of Geneva, the Rev. J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, D. D., whose praise is in all the Churches, said: "If the countenance made the man, I could understand why I should turn my back upon an ill-favored visage, but if the man is essentially the spirit which animates it, we should not fear to welcome the coarsest features, if behind them there is a living being by whom they are animated and ennobled. We must be so taken with the mystical body of Christ as willingly, in some degree, to overlook its imperfections." He also added: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in us, let there be no controversy with the brethren! Let Christian Union be realized, and let us all stretch forth our hands one to another. Is not this the language which is addressed to us by a host of astonishing events, amidst which God has placed us? What will become of the Church, surrounded by nations in a state of restless agitation—by society, a prey to the most violent convulsions? What will become of it, if not sincerely united, according to

the will of its Divine Head? Have we not one Spirit, one Lord, one Father? Are we not one mystical body in Jesus Christ?" Who can refuse to respond to these sentiments? And who can hesitate or fail to unite in the fervent prayer with which this eminent servant of God concluded his Address?

"Head and Saviour of the Church, which is Thy body! Thou, who alone canst diffuse amongst us cordial affection! Ah! Lord, the Church has indeed need of a renewal of Thy presence! It is needful that Thou shouldst now come to dwell in the midst of her with greater power, for what will become of this bark, exposed to the fury of the winds and waves, if Thou art absent? Alpha and Omega, Root and Offspring of David, Bright and Morning Star, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

"Of all religious services," says another eminent theologian, "there is none better adapted to nourish and express the fraternal affection of Christians than the Lord's Supper—an ordinance in which they are required to profess their attachment to all their fellow-disciples, as well as their gratitude to their common Redeemer and Lord.

Contemplating the ordinance in itself, we might naturally expect that it would be the first in which Christians would unite and the last in which they would separate, for it relates exclusively to those grand and central facts and truths which they hold in common, and partakes in no degree of a sectarian character. How singular, and how melancholy, that by so many religious denominations this order of procedure has been completely reversed, and that the Lord's Supper, instead of being made a bond of union, and a medium of holy fellowship among all the followers of the Lamb, has been converted into a badge of party—a centre, not of attraction and cohesion, but of division and repulsion! *How singular, and how melancholy, that nowhere are the members of the same family so reluctant to meet together, as at the table of their common Father; that the privilege in which they are mos' averse to unite, is the participation of the memorials of His boundless love !"*



GRACE BE TO ALL WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS  
CHRIST IN SINCERITY.

“Do you love Christ? I ask not if you feel  
The warm excitement of that party zeal,  
Which follows on, while others lead the way,  
And make His cause the fashion of the day ;  
But do you love Him when His garb is mean,  
Nor shrink to let your fellowship be seen?  
Do you love Jesus, blind, and halt, and maimed?  
In prison succor Him, nor feel ashamed  
To own Him, though His injured name may be  
A mark for some dark slanderer’s obloquy?  
Do you love Jesus in the orphan’s claim,  
And bid the widow welcome in His name?  
Say not, “When saw we Him?” each member dear,  
Poor and afflicted, wears His image here ;  
And if unvalued, or unmourned by thee,  
Where can thy union with the body be?  
And if thou thus art to the body dead,  
Where is thy life in Christ, the living head?  
And if dis severed from the living Vine,  
How canst thou dream that thou hast life divine?  
Sweet is the union true believers feel ;  
Into one Spirit they have drunk, the seal  
Of God is on their hearts, and thus they see  
In each the features of one family !  
If one is suffering, all the rest are sad,  
If but the least is honored, all are glad.

The grace of Jesus, which they all partake,  
 Flows out in mutual kindness for His sake;  
 Here He has left them for a while to wait,  
 And represent Him, in their suffering state;  
 While He, though glorified, as yet alone,  
 Bears the whole Church before the Father's throne."

---

## MEANS FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNION.

Opposition to any well-concocted scheme of Christian Union involves in it great responsibility. It must be left, of course, to every one's judgment to determine, whether any scheme which may be presented for public approbation and support, answers to this character or not, and no man can be blamed for withholding his countenance from a plan, or even for opposing it, which appears to him to compromise any of the essential principles of Divine Truth, or to be nothing more than a visionary and impracticable speculation. "The Church," as Dr. D'Aubigne well says, "ought to have a holy jealousy for the eternal truth of God, for latitudinarianism is its death." *That hostility,*

however, is to be condemned, which shows itself in a disposition to rest satisfied with things as they are, a mind contented with the present relations and feelings of parties, a reluctance to do any thing to bring them nearer together, coupled with such an aversion from the very attempt, as leads to a fastidious and somewhat contemptuous rejection of *every* plan that may be proposed for that object. From what action, or from what expression of their Lord, is it, that the opponents of union feel authorized to treat it with hostility? Is it from His Sermon on the Mount, when He poured his benedictions upon the peace-makers, and called them the children of God? Is it from His frequent rebukes to His too litigious followers? Is it from His conversation with the woman of Samaria, and His labors on that occasion among a people hated and shunned by His own kindred? Is it from His inimitable parable of the Good Samaritan? Is it from His reproof of the distempered zeal of His disciples, who would have stopped the man that cast out demons, because he followed not them? Is it from His forbearance with His Apostles under their cloudy apprehensions of His doctrine and His will, their impure motives, and their defective sanctity? Is it from that touching

intercessional petition, when the agony of His laboring heart found relief in a burst of importunate supplication for the unity of His Church? Will men take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus in these scenes of His ministry, and have listened to those gracious words that have flowed from His lips, till we have caught His own spirit and have been moulded into His image, if we are not only indifferent but opposed to visible union? Will such hostility identify us most closely and most obviously with Him who came to make us all one in Himself?

Let us see, then, how we may best promote this union.

### I. *We should beware of Self-love.*

This is too often the real source of our divisions, when love to truth is their pretended cause. If St. Paul could say of fellow-believers in his time, "They all seek their own," how much more may this be said of degenerate believers in our days? Who can tell all the mischief done by this ungenerous and base transfer? Who can declare all the mysteries of error and iniquity, which stand upon the despicable foundation of the little words, *I, me,*

and *mine*? Could we see the secret inscriptions which the Searcher of hearts can read upon the first stones of our little Babels—*my* chapel, *my* party, *my* congregation, *my* connections, *my* popularity, *my* hope of being esteemed by *my* partisans, *my* fear of being suspected by them, *my* jealousy of those who belong to the opposite party, *my* system, *my* favorite opinions, *my* influence, &c., &c., how should we be disgusted with the sight! To all those egotisms let us constantly oppose those awful words of our Lord: "Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple." Till we cordially oppose our inordinate attachment to our own interest, we "sacrifice to our own net, in our public duties, and even when we 'preach Christ,' it is to be feared that we do it more 'out of contention,' than out of a real concern for His interest."

II. *We should remember that Christian Union must be based on large mutual concessions.*

There are some good men who are content to remain apart from their fellow-Christians because every thing is not perfect among them. They say we must be first *pure*, then *peaceable*. But

what is the purity here meant? If we are to wait until the process of purification shall become something like a perfect work before we think of peace, then we may rest assured that peace will never come. Men thus express themselves as the consequence of magnifying some immediate matters of debate, and from not being able to see the questions beyond these immediate questions which will naturally arise, and become equally great in their turn. Every age will have its great questions. To wait until these are done with would be, from all appearance, to wait until the world is done with. We admit that where there is to be peace there must be purity; but the conclusion is not admissible in the extent supposed in this objection. What is needed—needed as the great deed befitting the manhood of the Church—is, that we should resolve on union, notwithstanding differences; that we should know how to debate these differences freely and earnestly, and how at the same time to be one, on the ground on which we are really united. In fact, it is only by unity on the basis of the things upon which we are agreed, that we can hope to reduce the things on which we differ, to a smaller compass. The man who sees upon the largest scale how much of the not-Christian

may be allied with the really Christian, and who can give the full homage of his heart to that real Christianity notwithstanding, that is the man who has made the nearest approach towards the state of intellect and feeling which would seem to be the highest attainment possible to the Church of Christ in this imperfect world. This is the comparatively untrodden path, still open to all Christians. But to be trodden successfully it must be trodden with a firm step, with a clear and honest meaning, with a meaning which shall be felt, not only on platforms, or in great meetings, but in all the nearer relations of our neighborhoods and homes.

III. *Christians of different denominations should cultivate acquaintance with one another.*

Before Joseph was made known to his brethren, they suspected and dreaded him; when he was made known, they embraced each other and wept. There are many now standing apart, perhaps under the power of prejudice, who, were they known to each other as the Lord knows them, and in their true character, would make the joyful discovery that they are Christian brethren, embrace one another, be surprised and delighted to find how much

they resemble each other, and with tears wash away the remembrance of their bitter jealousies. Like David, we should say: "*I am a companion of ALL them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*"

IV. *Social intercourse among all classes of true Christians should be promoted.*

Each class has hitherto too much had its brazen wall around it. But our Lord broke down the wall between Jews and Gentiles, a wall of prejudices infrangible to any inferior power. Each Christian now should make haste to break down his wall, and come forth to meet his brother. Every wall should be broken down which does not form a necessary fortification of an essential truth. Christianity has a magnetic influence. Let two men meet, most unlike in every respect except faith in Christ and love to God and men, and they will be drawn to each other as brethren of one heart and one mind. Their hearts will vibrate together at the touch of the same chord. Social intercourse among Christians who differ, besides removing prejudices, and leading to the mutual discovery of an identical Christianity on both sides,



would also afford an opportunity for charitable discussion on their points of difference, by which, it may not be doubted, many of these would be removed,—at least such as spring from a misconception of each other's sentiments, and a mutual misunderstanding. It might be found that in many things they *differ*, but are *not opposed*. In many things, also, they only *seem* to differ. In some cases those who differ may each be for the truth, but for a different portion of the truth. One, perhaps, thinks himself an Arminian, because he stoutly insists on the duties of man in reference to salvation, as in seeking it and using the appointed means; another, perhaps, thinks himself a Calvinist, because he as stoutly insists that the power of God is necessary in order to begin and consummate the work of salvation in the soul. Each is right as far as he goes, but it would require the views of both to be united to constitute orthodoxy.

#### V. *Christians should pray for Union.*

We need the voice of Him who can say to human passion and religious prejudice, "Peace, be still!" In vain do we make an appeal to the religious

bodies themselves to come to a better state of feeling, if we stop there. The storms that are still raging round the barque of the tempest-tossed Church will no more yield to the voice of argument or persuasion from men, than would the winds and the waves of the sea of Galilee have submitted to the command of the affrighted disciples. What saved *them*? That which saved us, if we are saved at all. They awoke the sleeping Saviour by the prayer of faith, and in answer to their importunate supplication the calm supervened. He is still on board His weather-beaten vessel, and though not asleep, is waiting to be asked to put forth His tranquillizing power. Let the whole Church, having first deeply humbled itself for its sins of alienation, division, uncharitableness, and unbrotherly feeling, go to Him in the earnestness and in the prayer of faith for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit of light, love, holiness, and peace. He only waits to be asked, so to replenish us with His benediction as to make Zion a quiet and peaceable habitation. It was when the harmonies of voices and of hearts ascended to heaven at the dedication of the Temple, that the cloud of the Divine glory came and filled the house. It was when the disciples were met together in one place and with one accord, to

make their common supplications known, that the Spirit of God came down in coronets of fire on their heads, and filled the place where they were sitting. The breath of prayer is the atmosphere in which the Spirit comes to hover over His Church, and shed healing from His wings. That Divine agent can set all things right. He can cause us to see and to feel alike; He can expel from our minds all error, from our hearts all pride, prejudice, and passion, and so fill us with meekness, love, and tender forbearance, that we shall be irresistibly drawn towards each other, and be enabled to bring about far more than the visible, formal Union we now seek. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.

VI. *Christians should beware of every thing in disposition and conduct fitted to prove an impediment to Christian Union.*

They ought to guard against misconceiving or misstating each other's opinions, impeaching each other's motives, or proselyting in relation to the members of each other's churches. They should beware of every thing calculated to grieve the Holy Spirit. "Let us forbear one another in love." "Be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as Christ has forgiven you."

VII. *Christians should remember that most of the points of difference between the various Evangelical Denominations are comparatively unimportant.*

This point, though referred to before, may be noticed again. A dispute is said to have once arisen on the question whether when, in the institution of the Lord's Supper, our Saviour said, "This is my body," He lifted the bread from the table or simply laid His hand upon it, and which mode was binding, indispensably, in our observance of that ordinance. The contest waxed fiercer, the parties finally split into two sects, bearing severally the titles of "lifters" and "anti-lifters;" each hurling perdition at the opposite heresy! Any moderately well-arranged compend of religious opinions will supply not a few instances equally ridiculous, equally mournful.

On any point in which it was designed that all Christians should be, everywhere, and at all times, bound as strictly as the Jews were to the Levitical law, it may be fairly concluded they would have received directions no less precise, and descriptions no less minute, than had been afforded to the Jews. But there are no directions or descriptions in the

New Testament relating to matters of form, like those given to the Jews in Leviticus. It does not supply us with a liturgy for ordinary public worship, or with forms for administering the sacrament, or conferring holy orders, nor does it give any precise *directions* as to these and other ecclesiastical matters. From this circumstance may be plainly inferred the design of the Holy Spirit that those details concerning which no precise directions, accompanied with strict injunctions, are given in Scripture, were meant to be left to the regulation of each church in each age and country.

The causes which separate Christians are : difference in forms, difference in government, and difference in doctrinal views. The question of forms, as we have just seen, is not of vital importance. Is not this true also of government ? The several forms of Church polity—the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational—have been, as is well known, repeatedly and thoroughly discussed by men of the first abilities, diligence, and research, and yet each of these forms still prevails. Is it not evident from this fact that there is room for an honest difference of opinion on this subject ? And if this be so, can that be of vital moment which has been so dimly revealed

as to justify such difference? Yet it is mainly this very point—difference as to form of Church organization—that is keeping evangelical Christians apart in our day. This is evident from the fact that neither a Presbyterian, nor a Congregationalist, nor an Episcopal, nor a Methodist, nor a Baptist, body, would hesitate to receive a Lutheran into its fellowship, or even a minister into its ministry, on *doctrinal* grounds. If, indeed, the Episcopalian should reordain, or even rebaptize him, or the Baptist immerse him, before receiving him into communion, this would have nothing to do with *doctrine*. The questions of *baptism* and *ordination* present the most formidable barriers to Christian Union. But why should they? Is this right? Is it warranted by the Word of God? Let us suppose a case: Here is an individual whom we would receive as a brother, nay, admit into the ranks of the ministry, if he had only been baptized and ordained after our manner. This is the only deficiency in his Christian character. Now, suppose he sees objections to our form, or, at least, considers the form by which he was admitted into his previous communion to be equally good and valid, and therefore refuses to be rebaptized or reordained. Will this make any differ-

ence in his character in the sight of God? Will it, in the eyes of any candid, reasonable man? By what authority, then, may his scruples respecting the exclusive propriety of our forms, be declared by us to be of such a nature as to unfit him for our communion, nay, to *unchristianize* him? Would not such a declaration by us make ordination or baptism by Episcopal hands, or immersion by Baptist hands, the most essential and fundamental point of Christianity? And is this in conformity with the spirit and letter of the New Testament? The right course in this matter undoubtedly is, to make nothing an essential of the Gospel scheme of faith and practice, which Jesus, the Founder and Builder of the Church, has not made so. How can any one denomination really pretend that *it* is right in all things, and all others in error so far as they diverge from it? Such a pretension is manifestly forbidden by Christian humility, by a knowledge of human nature, and by the amount of talent, learning, and piety in all the Churches. Some error, in all probability, is an attribute of each denomination; and if this be so, how can any one make admission to its ministry or membership to depend upon the reception of every one of its peculiarities? “When James,

Cephas, and John perceived *the grace that was given to me*," says Paul to the Galatians, "they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship." (Gal. ii. 9.) Let Christians cast their eyes about them, make themselves acquainted with the actual state of things in other evangelical denominations, and then put the questions to themselves in serious earnest: "Are all these men, whether self-denying missionaries, or zealous and successful preachers, or exemplary, liberal and devoted members, under a fatal delusion? Are they not Christians, in the best and highest sense of the word? Do they not love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ? Are they not successful in building up Christ's kingdom? And has not the Saviour acknowledged them as His followers by the seal of His grace and Spirit?" And if the answers which such questions *must* receive do not fill such Christians with the spirit of fellowship and union, how else can they regard themselves than as being more particular as to the evidence and recognition of Christian character *than Jesus Christ himself is?*

When conversing on the subject of an attempt to unite God's ministers and people of various names, John Foster once said: "This cannot be



done while there is so little of the vital element of religion in the world, because *that* is so shallow, these inconsiderable points stand so prominent above the surface, and occasion obstruction and mischief; when the powerful spring-tide of piety and mind shall rise, these points will be swallowed up and disappear." It is well known that while Rome yet warred upon the Reformed Churches, and they felt the presence of a common enemy, the common danger kept them united, although they differed much among themselves. But no sooner had that fear subsided, than each began selfishly to build up a party or national interest. Then Ephraim began to envy Judah, and Judah to vex Ephraim; then the common cause was forgotten in the private peculiarities. All have observed how something like this effect is produced by *death*. Let a member of any one of the evangelical denominations, whose life has exhibited the fruits of the Spirit, die, and neither the ministers or members of the other denominations, who were witnesses of his walk and conversation as becoming godliness, hesitate to admit that he has entered into the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Why is this? Why is it that, much as men may differ about the essentials of religion, when

in health, or when their neighbors are in health, they so modify their views when death is seen approaching *them*, or is known to have terminated the earthly career of *others*? Why is it that points of difference between Christians—so much fomented, magnified, and insisted on with exclusive pertinacity, in the pulpit, the religious newspaper, and the monthly or quarterly—are not heard in the counsels and prayers of the sick room, or in the burial-service at the grave-side? The reason is obvious: death produces an atmosphere in which nothing but the essentials of true piety strike the eye as having any importance deserving to be recognized in view of such an event, bringing, as it does, the awful verities of eternity so near as to cover with their shadow the needless differences of time. We have never known a minister of the Gospel to introduce the peculiarities of his denomination in conversing with a man dying, or in interring him when dead. But why should *not* a minister do this, if such peculiarities are *essentials*? And, if they are *not* essential, why should they be introduced *anywhere*, or at any time—especially, why should they be permitted to divide the body of Christ?

The venerable Archibald Alexander, D. D., of the

Princeton Theological Seminary, when dying, said: "My theology is comprised in this, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Oh, how many, as they have neared the Jordan, and heard the roar of its waters, have felt themselves more than ready to drop every thing but what is necessary to save the soul! Lord Bacon, in an essay on Unity in Religion, says: "Both those extremes (the extremes of party zeal and lukewarmness) are to be avoided, which will be done if the league of Christians, penned by our Saviour himself, were, in the two cross clauses thereof, soundly and plainly expounded. 'He that is not with us, is against us;' and, again, 'He that is not against us, is with us;' that is, if the points fundamental, and of substance in religion, were truly discerned and distinguished from points not merely of faith, but of opinion, order, or good intention. Men ought to take heed of rending God's Church by two kinds of controversies. The one is, when the matter of the point controverted is too small and light, nor worth the heat and strife about it, kindled only by contradiction, for, as it is noted by one of the fathers, Christ's coat indeed had no seam, but the Church's vesture was of divers colors, whereupon he saith, '*in veste*

*varietas sit, scissura non sit,* they be two things—unity and conformity. The other is, when the matter of the point is great; but it is driven to an over-great subtilty and obscurity, so that it becometh a thing rather ingenious than substantial.” “Let us all consider,” says the Rev. J. Angell James, “what it is that justifies, sanctifies, comforts, and, in fact, saves us; what it is that is the satisfactory evidence of our salvation; what it is that unites us to Christ, and binds us to the heart of God; what it is that enables us to overcome the world, and to set our affections on things above: and we shall find it is not Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Independency, or Baptism. How little do these things avail us when guilt presses upon the conscience, or care corrodes the heart, or sorrow drives sleep from the eyes, or death deprives us of our friends, or the last enemy lays his cold hand upon our frame. Do we, in such scenes and seasons, betake ourselves to these lessèr matters for comfort, or to the essential and glorious truths of our common salvation? It is because we are believers in Christ Jesus that we feel ourselves safe for eternity; and this safety we cannot but concede to our brethren of all orthodox sects, as truly and as confidently as we

feel it for ourselves. Let us, then, keep within sight of the cross by dwelling more upon the essential doctrines of the Gospel, and look upon our brethren of other denominations as assembled with us round that common centre of attraction, and partaking with us in all the gracious efforts and eternally glorious results of that great sacrifice which is there presented to our view. There should be in us such an ineffable delight in all the fundamental truths of Christianity, such an exaltation of their glory and importance, as shall make us determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

VIII. *Christians should remember the intimacy of the relation they sustain towards one another.*

Paul gives a reason, such as mere ethieal philosophy never dreamed of, why Christians should not speak or act to the injury of their fellow-Christians, and that is, "We are members one of another;" that is, we are parts of the same body. Now, if this oneness were a mere figure of speech, it would have no force as a reason to enforce such a duty. It has, then, a substantial basis. Christ's body—the Church—is bound together with some-

thing more than rhetorical, imaginary ligaments. Its oneness is a oneness of life. As the vital juice of the vine is one for the stock and all its branches, so all Christians, as members of Christ's body, have one common life with Christ, and of course with all other Christians. So that whatever we do to the injury of the spiritual life of other Christians, we do to the injury of our own. If we chafe and mar one branch of a tree, we make outlets and wastes of the vital juice of the whole. If we spread a canker or a blight upon one branch, we pollute the fountain of life for the whole. So of the branches of which Christ is the stock—if we bruise, break, or hew them, we occasion a waste of sap and life to contiguous branches.

This fact gives high enforcement to all acts of mutual charity and tenderness among Christians. It binds us to regard Christian character and feeling as some sacred thing, to be touched with tenderness, because we are members one of another—because a wound upon a fellow-Christian is violence done to our own spiritual life. This is the stock and centre of all the reasons why we should study the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.

IX. *As closely connected with what immediately precedes, we remark that it is exceedingly desirable that each Christian should cultivate the habit of regarding himself as one of the family.*

The brothers and sisters of a well-ordered family understand this feeling very well—it is habitual with them. They have one common interest, and are bound together by their affection for their parents. No one thinks of appropriating to himself any more than his own share of the home comforts. No one wants to be commended at the expense of the rest. They are accustomed to being treated alike, and never wish to have it otherwise. If one has any particular joy or sorrow, the rest share with him. They make allowance for each other's defects, and "forgive and forget." Each one, perhaps, has his particular tastes and occupations, but they are never suffered to interfere with the general comfort and convenience. Their principal happiness grows out of their love to their parents and each other. Let us, then, look on the members of "the household of faith" in this light. Let us mix ourselves up with them till that rich word "*we*" shall come more

naturally to our lips than "*I*." Let us completely identify ourselves with them, and strive to have no separate interest. The Bible says: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Perhaps each member of the household is as dear to our Father as we are, therefore let us take the same interest in their salvation that we do in our own. It will be equally glorious to God—equally gratifying to "that mighty heart of love."

#### X. *Every Christian should work for Union.*

The subject must be taken up, not only by all parties, but by all *persons*. It must come upon the individual conscience of every Christian as *his duty*, according to his station and measure of influence to promote it. We ought not to sink ourselves and our personal obligations in the mass. It is every one's concern. All the great interests which are hindered by our divisions, or aided by our agreements, belong to each of us—the edification of the Church, the credit of religion, and the moral improvement of the world. We must not stand gazing at this work, saying, "Who shall do it?" but must say, "Here is something for *me* to



do." It is, indeed, the becoming duty of Christian ministers to promote union ; their responsibility in this, as well as in every other subject connected with true religion, is truly tremendous, and God will require this matter at their hands. It is they who kindle or quench the flames of contention, that strengthen or relax the bonds of union, that alienate or conciliate the affections of the brethren. The power of the pulpit and the influence of ministerial example are prodigious. If the pastors could be brought to associate, the flocks would instantly follow ; and it is a solemn and a serious consideration for those to whom the Saviour has granted an office of such influence, whether they can best discharge its duties by perpetuating or healing the wounds of the Universal Church. If the chord of charity were struck by a firm and skilful hand in the pulpit from time to time, it would produce an instant vibration through the whole congregation, and the words of peace going from thence would be returned in ready and joyful echoes by the listening hearers. The minister of religion cannot be fully acting out his duty as a servant of Christ, unless he is a promoter of peace, and doing all he can to harmonize the discordant elements of the Christian Church. His ministry

is emphatically one of reconciliation, and he has mistaken his commission if he be employing himself in any way that is opposed to this, or even if he be neglecting it. But Christian Union belongs not to ministers only; it should press upon the conscience of every one of their hearers. No man is doing his whole duty as a Christian who is doing nothing to repair the breaches in the walls of Zion. On the return of the Jews from captivity, it was thus the desolation of Jerusalem was removed. Nehemiah appointed officers and master builders, but, in addition to this, "the *people* had a mind to work," and "we returned all of us to the wall," said the historian, "every one of us to his work." Let us, then, not wait for others, nor suspend our efforts till we can get them to co-operate with us, but let each denomination, each minister, each individual Christian, commence the work of pacification, and the attempt to unite the people of God. "Let us each do our part, so as we may be able to say, *Per me non stetit*, it was not my fault, but Christians had been more combined and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly Christian, and more entirely united with God in Christ, that Christianity had not been a more powerful, lively, amiable and

awful thing. If the Christian community moulder and decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, and ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under my hand.”\*

XI. *In order to a closer Union there should be the cultivation of more eminent Piety.*

It has been well said that a cold and uninfluential orthodoxy, which leaves us still worldly and undevout, however it may give us an intellectual sympathy with each other, and lay the basis of a courteous and general esteem, will do but little in the way of drawing our hearts together. All who have written upon the subject of Christian Union agree in the opinion, that it is an increasing spirit of sincere and fervent piety that will alone be found equal to the work of subduing our prejudices, and reconciling our affections. The Apostle's question, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?” shows the cause of divisions, and suggests the nature of the remedy. The contentions in the Church flow from the same source as those of the world.

---

\* Howe on Union among Protestants.

In our nature there are yet remains of corruption, mixed up with Divine sentiments and holy affections, and thus, in every heart, there are principles of affinity and repulsion. Grace attracts grace, and corruption repels it; in proportion as grace prevails over corruption, it will be drawn towards its corresponding principle in other hearts, while on the contrary, as corruption prevails over grace, it will make the less sanctified heart repellant and dissocial. Thus, as piety becomes more purified and strengthened, it will draw, and must of necessity draw, all classes of Christians nearer to each other, until an external and visible unity, as well as an internal one, shall be formed, and all its expected results shall be accomplished. This attractive power of true piety is a law, the force of which has been already in some measure developed under various forms, and is a law which, when complete in its operation, will as surely bring around it all Christian bodies, and help them in harmonious movements, as the solar gravitation will carry round in their full cycle the whole system of the planets. The piety that draws us nearer to Christ must draw us nearer to each other, as bodies that press closer to a common centre press closer at the same time to one another.

XII. *Giving their due prominence to the vital parts of religion will promote Christian Union.*

This will make us love with an unquenehable and truly fraternal affection all who partake with us in the same views. We shall feel towards each other much as loyal regiments of soldiers do when gathering round the national banner, who then forget the distinctive emblems of their own ensigns, and regard each other for their attachment to that one common emblem of their country's cause. Or, to borrow a more sacred allusion, we, like the different tribes of Israel, arranged and marching through the wilderness under their respective banners, yet all collected round the Ark of the Covenant, shall appear lovely and venerable in each other's estimation, on account of our proximity and attachment to that system of Divine truth of which the Jewish propitiatory, with its Sheelinah and Cherubims of glory, was but a type.

XIII. *The cessation of Theological Controversy, as as at present carried on, would greatly tend to promote Union.*

It is of the very nature of controversy to find and aggravate disputes. Controversialists seek for points of disagreement, and not of uniformity. Whereas a cessation from controversy, and a walking together so far as agreed, bring hearts to find out each other's virtues, and to feel that they are agreed on almost every point which is worth contending for. Love will lead to soft words and kind actions. The angry foam, which forms on the crest of the raging billow, when it comes to the quiet creek where no wind blows, sinks down and dissolves into the placid flood. Disputes change their aspect and gradually vanish, under the peaceful exercise of Christian charity. Had Luther but loved the brethren as he loved the truth, many a tongue would have been silenced against the doctrines of the Reformation. When he called Ecolompadius the "black devil," what could ungodly men think of his religious principles, breathing out now and then in such hot and irascible language? Some of his fiery expressions

the Romanists adroitly snatched up, and hurled back flaming against his noble cause. Selfishness and pride often animate religious disputations among the friends of the Redeemer. There is a loud call for the abandonment of harsh and contemptuous language. Truth is dishonored by railing instead of argument and love. Let us all fear. "Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a *railing* accusation."\* Intemperate and reviling language is forbidden by the spirit of the Gospel, and by Him who, when he was "reviled, reviled not again." It must not be indulged even in disputation with the great enemy of God and man. It is the duty of all to respect tenderly the conscientious convictions of others, and regard with charity Christian character, abstaining on their own part and exempted on the part of others, from epithets of contumely and disdain, the "grievous words which stir up anger."

---

\* Jude 9.

## RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

---

*"Tautæne animis cœlestibus iræ."*

When the full-throated people of the air,  
Harmonious preachers of the sweets of love,  
That midway range, as half at home with heaven,  
Are quiring, with a heartiness of joy,  
That the high-tide of song o'erbrims the grove,  
And far adown the meadow runs to waste ;  
How would the soul, there floating, loath to mark  
Sudden contention, sharp, discordant screams,  
From throats whose duty is a song !

Not with less sure revolting—ah ! far more !—  
Curdles the blood when Christian brothers strive,  
And prostitute to wordy war the lips  
Commissioned to dispense "good will to man,"  
And soothe the world with spoken kindness, soft,  
And full of melody as song of birds.  
O, sad betrayal of the highest trust !  
Heralds of peace—to blow the trump of strife ;  
Envoys of charity—to sow the tares  
Of hatred in a soil prepared for love.

Is this a time for soldiers of the cross  
To point their weapons each at other's breast,  
When the great enemy, the common foe,



Though baffled, unsubdued, lays e'er in wait  
For some unguarded pass, to cheat the walls  
Not all his dread artillery could breach ?  
How is each lunge and ward of tart reproof  
And bitter repartee—painful to friends—  
By the Adversary hailed with general yell  
Of triumph, or derision ! O, my friends !  
Believe me, lines of loving charity  
Dishearten enemies, encourage friends,  
And woo enlistments to your ranks more sure  
Than the best weapon of the readiest wit,  
Whose point is venomed with the gall of scorn.

How wiser, then, forbearing bitterness  
At points of polity, or shades of faith,  
That different show to different-seeing eyes,  
To shun perplexing doctrines, which the All-wise  
Has willed obscure, and imitate His life ;  
His, the meek Founder of our faith, who sowed  
His earthly way with blessings as with seed ;  
Bearing, forbearing, ever rendering good ;  
The Counsellor, the Comforter, the Friend.  
How ope soe'er His word to various sense,  
His *life* is plain, and all that life was love :  
Be this our guide, we cannot widely stray.

## CULTIVATION OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN UNITY URGED.

As we look around us, what changes are seen to be now taking place in various parts of the globe?

Even while we survey the face of things, the scene is rapidly shifting before the observing eye. The political world is in commotion, the civil affairs of men are assuming new shapes and phases, the literary and scientific world is also in active movement; all minds are astir, all interests are excited, nothing is to be taken for granted; old foundations are shaken, and opinions venerable by time and general acquiescence are revived, and modified or rejected. Our age is one of action, experiment and change; and, to give the greatest effect to these causes, facilities for the intercommunication of information and ideas by the press and steam are multiplied beyond the dreams of former times. Europe is in agitation; her old principles and habits are being shaken, and her communities are seeking to be cast into new forms. And this unsettled state of things, together with love of change, and the desire to ameliorate their condition,

and the ease of transition from place to place, is causing vast multitudes from foreign shores to overspread our country, who, with our own people, are extending the empire of civilization beyond the Rocky Mountains to the western wave, and are destined to throw back upon our country and the world the effects of that civilization, of whatever kind it may be. Then, again, Romanism, boasting of her so-called unity, is organized for victory, and is exerting her utmost strength to augment the number of her votaries, and subjugate the world to her faith. Infidelity, too, in many specious forms, is assailing our holy religion.

And is this a time for the followers of Jesus to be divided, and yielding themselves to contentions and alienations in their own ranks? Is this a time to give additional point to the sneer of Hume, that between Christian sects bitterness has in general been exasperated in proportion as they approach nearest to each other? Is this a time for evangelical denominations to hug their differences *as if these differences were their religion*? Oh, what blessed effects would result, if no sectarian spirit any longer disturbed the exertions or hindered the prayers of the Church, and if, as in the early days of Apostolic zeal and brotherly love, in

the fervor of her espousals, her children were again "of one heart and one soul!" Then would the world's infidelity be undermined, as they said, and was said of old, "See how these Christians love one another!" And then would the Church be seen coming forth from the wilderness where it has been so long concealed, "terrible" to its enemies, "as an army with banners;" the Lord would rise upon it, and the Gentiles would come to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising. "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dews that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Let, then, the people of God aim at Union. Why should they not? Mortifying as it may be, it is nevertheless true, that *it is our own will and pleasure to wrangle and divide*. We have one God, one Redeemer, one Spirit, one Bible, one hope, one heaven; the alienation and strife are all our own. As children, we quarrel in the absence of our Father, whose injunctions we have disre-

garded and forgotten. Jesus asked his disciples, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" But they held their peace. For by the way they disputed among themselves, *who should be greatest?* Have not these disciples long since blushed—even in heaven blushed—that they were on earth so engaged in perverse disputings? Oh, then, let us follow after charity and things wherewith one may edify another. Charity is the brightest of the golden chain of Christian graces, and strengthens all the rest.

It is time that the character of the controversies among evangelical Christians should be essentially reformed; too generally they are fraught with evil to the cause of our holy Christianity. In their severity and acrimony they savor too little of the things which are of God, and too much of the passion, prejudice, and ambition of our poor fallen, self-seeking nature. Let us chain the war-horses—or, rather, bind them together with the bands of love, and harness them to the chariot of salvation. Let the sturdy spirits of our great champions come into friendly contact, be mingled in prayer, and warmed by the flame of devotion, and then will a mighty and glorious change come over the spirit and prospect of the Churches. Instead of squan-

dering their strength in mutual hostilities, let our strong men march, shoulder to shoulder, into the field of strife against the embattled hosts of hell; let them rally their legions under the common flag of Christianity, and shout for the battle. How long would it be before the power of Satan would be broken, "and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven," would be "given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominions" would "serve and obey him?"

The great and grand union organizations which exist for the establishment of Sabbath-schools, the distribution of tracts, and the sending of Missionaries with the bread of life to the destitute and dying—what are these but indubitable exponents of the conviction that burns in the Christian heart, that the Church *ought* to be one, and expressions of the ardent desire that glows in that heart, that the Church *may* be one? If the unity of the Church is not to be desired, such organizations, ignoring, as they do, sectarian peculiarities, ought not to be patronized. But who would dare allege this? Let it not be supposed, however, that the platform and anniversary interviews which

such institutions secure between the people and the ministers of God of various denominations, however pleasant and profitable these interviews may be, are to be regarded as substitutes for the Christian Union which they foster and foreshadow. These institutions are but the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight." Neither should the interviews referred to be allowed to satisfy the consciences of Christians, as an occasional recognition sometimes satisfies persons at variance. There is something *beyond* these frequent and friendly occasions, which the people of God must desire and seek after, and of which they are but the first-fruits and forerunners. We say "seek after," and we do so with design, for there are many sincere followers of Jesus, doubtless, who wish vaguely for the union of Christians, and would be pleased to see it effected, but do not feel sufficient interest in the matter to make any exertions to secure the result. How would such a spirit be regarded if existing in relation to the conversion of the world? Not a whit more excusable is it, touching the interest now before us. In neither case will God accomplish the promised result without the intervention of appropriate means. The

holding of union prayer-meetings; the preaching of union sermons, in which schism is held forth as not only a calamity, but a *sin*; the distribution of union tracts and journals, occasional exchange of pulpits by evangelical ministers, occasional intercommunion by the people of God, frequent and fervent prayer for the healing of the divisions of God's heritage; the manifestation of an interest by one denomination in the welfare of others; a determination by preachers and people not to magnify any point of difference that is not essential to salvation, and that they could not feel themselves bound to press upon the reception of a dying man, or to commend him for receiving when dead; as well as a disposition to allow to others the liberty in regard to such things which God himself allows—these are measures, influences, and agencies which the great Head of the Church might well be expected to bless, for the accomplishment of a purpose lying so near His heart.

Brother! in what direction shall your prayers be offered, and your efforts be put forth in relation to this great question? Remember that you cannot be neutral. You will be counted either with those who say, "Let the strife go on, and the divisions be perpetuated," or with those who



long and labor that the prayer of Jesus may be fulfilled—"that they all may be one." Why should you hesitate? What though the Church has been living in a disunited state for hundreds of years, has disunion become a duty, and ceased to be a sin? Does time change the nature of right and wrong? Are divisions now to be borne with, which once wrung the heart of an Apostle? Did the Saviour pray for a union which is undesirable? Is the time never to come when there shall be one Shepherd and one sheepfold, when nothing but distance shall prevent the various denominations from being united into one visible Body, even though they may retain their peculiar form of government and worship, and when the same certificate of Christian and ministerial character shall carry a Christian brother and one of Christ's ministering servants through all the Churches on the face of the earth? It has, thus far, been the error of every denomination that it has arrogantly thought itself without spot, wrinkle, or defect. Each, therefore, is lifting itself with the vain thought, that when truth prevails all over the earth, *it* shall be found the pure, perfect thing. It is the first crystal which has formed in the midst of the solution, and the whole process of

crystalization is to go on upon it, and to be like it in shape, purity, and color.

It is time for this vain opinion to explode, and we hope in God it will soon do so. We believe there is abundant reason for such a hope. The unity of the Church in the bonds of truth and peace is no more impossible to faith and to prayer, as it is the command of God, than it was impossible for Israel to drive out the Canaanites from those cities which were walled up to heaven, and afterwards to settle peacefully as one great community in the promised land. Who will say that it is too sanguine a hope to entertain, too flattering a conception to be realized, that there might be gathered such a visible association of Christians as shall convince the world that, amidst circumstantial difference, there is substantial agreement, and that beneath the troubled and billowy surface of the ocean of religious opinion, there is still commingling an immeasurable depth of quiet water, which no storm can reach or disturb? Is this the speculation of a fervid, though charitable imagination, or a mere bubble, which, though inflated with the breath of love, and reflecting the beautiful colors of the bow of peace, is still nothing *but* a bubble that must, of necessity, burst when touched by the finger of ex-

periment? Can we allow ourselves to think that these various communities of professing Christians, though all professing to be gathered round the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be feeling the centripetal force of that all-attractive centre, have yet so much of mutual repulsion, that they cannot in any form, and to any extent, cohere? Shall it be told to this world, perhaps to others too, that there is more in matters of Church government and religious ceremony, or outward symbols, to keep us apart, than in the adorable Trinity, the Divine character of God, the covenant of grace, the scheme of our Saviour's mediation, the justification of the sinner by faith, the regeneration of the heart by the operation and baptism of the Spirit, the adoption of believers into the family of God, and the prospect of one heaven of holiness, happiness, and love, in all of which we are agreed, to cement us at any time, or for any purpose, into one body? Shall this be believed, especially when it is remembered that we *profess* to be one in Christ, and *profess* to acknowledge each other, and even to love each other *secretly*? Shall we forever continue to be ashamed of our common relationship? Let those believe this who can; we cannot. We have more

faith in humanity, imperfectly sanctified as it is, and we have more faith in God, "from whom all holy desires, just counsels, and good works do proceed."

"Is any thing too hard for thee,  
Almighty Lord of all,  
Whose threatening looks dry up the sea,  
And make the mountains fall?"

Oh, then, let the Sacramental host awake and arise! Great God! "plead thine own cause!" Let the Church, ashamed of her past schisms, rush to the remedy. Then, though now poor, she shall soon be rich in faith. Then will the love of all toward each other abound. A new era will begin. The words—"that the world may know that Thou has sent me"—will have a new mission and a new meaning. A voice will be heard saying, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

In the exercise of that faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, let us ascend to the Jerusalem above, and participate with its citizens in their

services and bliss. If we are the people of God, how soon, how very soon, shall this supposition be reality! The partitions we erect and uphold may long define and fence up our denomination; but they shall very shortly be of no effect to ourselves individually. The highest of them do not reach to those third heavens, where, far above their altitude, we shall meet and rejoice with Christians from whom they dis severed us. Can we realize this early this elevated superiority to all these shibboleths, and yet hold them in idolatrous respect? If we are Christians, our treasure is already in heaven, and our hearts are there also. Can it be, then, that this hour we hold anticipating fellowship with a Church formed out of all Churches that held "the truth as it is in Jesus," and derive exquisite delight from its comprehensiveness of membership, and next hour deify the distinctions which we had just forgotten, and, in the absence of which, we saw a presage of glory? The planets, as seen from our remoteness, are so many brilliant orbs, and the disruptive irregularities of their surfaces are all lost in lustre. Our own earth, as contemplated from those distant heavens, would present the same appearance. So let its schismatic demarcations vanish, as viewed

by us from heavenly places, and, as we look upon it in verifying forethought from our seats of glory, where

“Each finds in each a glowing friend,  
And all the God of all adore,”

let all differences among its Christian inhabitants appear to be absorbed in one flame of Christian charity.



## PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNION.

Shepherd of Israel, teach thy people how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. May they mourn over the unkindness and strife that so often prevail among those who bear the same party name. May they lament over the sectional feelings which alienate the members of different communions, and forbid the universal fellowship of saints. God of Peace, let not Ephraim envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim.

O Lord, why should there be any other test of brotherhood than that of *union to Christ*? Why should the children of adoption treat each other as strangers and foreigners? Why should those who expect to be joint-heirs of the inheritance of heaven, refuse fellowship with each other on earth? O God of Love, rebuke every spirit of dissension. Bring together all the scattered fragments of thy Church, and bind them by that charity which is the bond of perfectness. As there is but one Shepherd, so let there be but one fold. As there is but one King, so let there be but one dominion. Let the heritage of God be a household of faith, that shall stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Lord, cause the unity of the Spirit to bring together all thy followers in the bond of peace, that they may be one, even as the Father and Son are One! Amen.

## THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

*"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."*

"As thou hast loved us, Saviour ! must we love  
Each other, and Thy new command obey ?  
Then for Thy love within us would we pray,  
That it may all our cold affections move.  
Thy love, how vast ! since each returning day  
Fresh mercies come, the purchase of thy death.  
Our sins do not Thy loving-kindness stay ;  
'Tis full and free, as is the air we breathe :  
We cannot love as Thou dost, teach us how  
To banish anger, enmity and strife :  
Here at Thy footstool do we humbly bow.  
O, Thou who didst for sinners give Thy life,  
For those who hated Thee ! make us to know  
The greatness of Thy love, then shall we love as Thou."



## DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY.

*“How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”—Ps. exxxiii. 1.*

Let party names no more  
The Christian world o’erspread,  
Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,  
Are one in Christ their Head.

Among the saints on earth  
Let mutual love be found,  
Heirs of the same inheritance,  
With mutual blessings crowned.

Thus will the Church below  
Resemble that above,  
Where streams of pleasure ever flow,  
And every heart is love.