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THOUGHTS

ON

T H E U N I O N

OF

T H E C H U R C H.

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BY GILBERT M'MASTER.

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—Τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἓν μέλος, ἀλλὰ πολλά. "ἵνα μὴ ᾖ σχίσμα ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεμνηῖται τὰ μέλη.—I Cor. xii. 14, 25.

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NOTICE.

The contents of the following pages were prepared in pursuance of an Ecclesiastical appointment, made some years since. After a report, in part, had been made upon the subject, circumstances occurred which induced the writer to request a release of the committee from the farther prosecution of the work. The request was kindly granted. Many of his friends, however, whose wishes the author did not feel at liberty to disregard, repeatedly and earnestly requested the publication of the paper, alleging that it might contribute something toward engaging the attention of the Christian mind to the important subject of which it treats; and likewise do something for that cautious consideration which they believed to be necessary to the laying of a firm foundation for the permanent and happy union of the divided Church, which they so greatly desire. To those friends, and others, in its present form, the paper is now forwarded.

It was intended to have made it an article in the proposed Periodical—"THE SPIRIT OF THE REFORMATION;"—but as the author's present state of health for a time,—it is hoped no very long time,—requires that the appearance of that publication be postponed, the article is sent out separately. To those numerous and respectable friends who have honoured the Prospectus with their subscriptions, this statement, it is hoped, will be a sufficient explanation of the delay of the Periodical.

May, 1846.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

UNION OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is the dwelling place of God, the central point of his empire ; where righteousness is made known to be the habitation of his throne, and whence, to guilty man, is proclaimed the riches of his grace. In the Church of God Christian character is formed, and in her fellowship it has its activity and enjoyment. There, in applying to ransomed sinners the benefits of redemption, is found the saving work of the Spirit of God, in remarkable and delightful correspondence with its delineations in the inspired pages of revealed truth. In all ordinary cases, it is through the subordinate agency of Zion's administrations that this happy correspondence is actually established. By this God is glorified and man is saved.

In these facts is found the reason which justifies the intensity and tenderness of that affection cherished, by the child of God, toward every department of the household of faith. This is the family of the Father of mercies, in which he loves to dwell, and where to the objects of his regard—his adopted children—he dispenses the blessings of salvation. In the characteristics of catholicity which belong to this spiritual association, the child of God rejoices, and with satisfaction of heart recognizes as belonging to this visible, universal church, all those, together with their children, who make a credible profession of their faith in Christ and obedience to him ; whilst he is neither forgetful of the yet higher truth, nor unaffected by it, that there is an invisible, saving relation, of all true believers of every land, of every age, rank, and name, to Christ, and, in him, to one another, as heirs of the grace of life. That the Redeemer is to the family of God both the presiding Head and unfailing

source of vital influence is, at once, a matter of unfeigned gladness and a ground of confiding trust.

However proper to advert to it, upon this occasion it is not necessary to enter into a detailed discussion of the characteristics of this divine corporation, by which it is distinguished from every other of the family of man. As the pillar and ground of truth for the illumination of a world sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, as well as for the education of her own children, the Church has, as a treasure in trust, committed to her the lively oracles of God,—the faith once delivered to the saints ; her's, too, are the converting ordinances of religion, as well as the solemn seals of God's covenant—the hallowed badges that designate her children—the consecrated mediums of the communion of saints—the sacred avenues of a blessed intercourse between heaven and earth. Under a divine sanction Zion holds her principles and forms of evangelical order ; and a ministry, rich in gifts and graces, she claims, as bestowed upon her by her exalted Lord. That ministry is secured to her by promise : “ *I will give you pastors according to my heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding ;*” and though by no means ambitious of tracing the line of descent through the polluted channel of the Roman Hierarchy, yet the Reformation Church is decided in her claim for a ministry of Apostolic origin, and of divinely authorized succession.

This visible Church Catholic, by divine institution, is *ONE*. The sacred bonds of her fellowship are confessed to be the *one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all ;** as made known in the Scriptures of truth. By these unities, as connecting ties, a oneness of peculiar character is given to the mystical Body of Christ. The contemplation of the great and leading characteristics of the true Church which are delineated in the word of God, and actually found in the Church of the Reformation, affords to her children unspeakable pleasure ; and to trace the existence of the bonds of union in the several portions of this Church, evinced in the language of

*Eph. iv. 4—6.

truth which they speak, in the sacred observances upon which their members devoutly attend, and in the tempers which are formed and the character which is developed, under their administrations, greatly augments the delight of the Christian. In these things, the children of the Reformation who rightly understand both the subject and themselves, have with each other an extended and happy communion of mind and heart ; whilst a fellowship of higher character with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, furnishes the living principle that gives value to the visible communion of saints.

This visible communion of saints, extended and happy as it is, compared with what it ought to be and might be, is, nevertheless, but imperfect. Upon the visible unity, of what is confessedly the true Church of God, deplorable breaches have been made. The disruption of her bonds of union, as might be supposed, has been followed by the inroads of schism upon her communion. This rending of the visible Body of Christ, and its lamentable results, give occasion to this address. These evils ought to be deeply felt by all ; and are really and deeply felt in proportion as the mind is directed to a thorough consideration of their bearing and extent.

Of these evils, a particular narration by us is uncalled for. These breaches upon the walls of the Reformation Zion, neither you, beloved brethren, nor we did make. Yet, though the guilt of the making of them lies not upon our heads, the crime of a needless perpetuation of them may be placed to our account ; and will actually be imputed to us, should we be found ministering to their uncalled for continuance, or be found indifferent to the means of their repair. It may be dutiful in us to deal gently with the memory and reputation of those of past times. Their difficulties were peculiar to their respective periods of action. Their trials, in their extent and intensity, we can never know. In casting the mantle of charity over the imperfections of men greater and better than ourselves, it perhaps may be well from them to turn away the eye, and fix it rather upon their points of excellence ; which were, indeed, very great and many. To you and to us, however, must be obvious the infelicities of those divisions in the household of

faith, which had their origin in geographical lines ; an immediate different ancestry among the children of God's adoption ; diversity in the new forms in which they may have expressed the principles of their common faith ; from misconceptions of each other's minds in their expositions of the articles of their common creed ; or, in the cloudy and dark day, from misapprehensions of each other's character. Instances, too, may be found of European conflicts, arising from the profane hand of secular power desecrating the sacred things of the sanctuary, being transferred to our own land. The cause, as a practical thing, may be no more, but the effects remain. As to us, the fountain may be dried up, yet the old waters of bitterness continue to flow, or at least to be found in the stagnant basins of the channel which they may have made. But whatever may have been the first causes of the disruption of the bonds of Zion's unity, is it not, brethren, desirable and dutiful, truly to know the existing causes of separation—the amount of their weight ; and to ascertain, as far as possibly we may, how the evil may be removed ? It is to the subject, under these aspects, that we, at this time, earnestly and most respectfully venture to solicit your attention ; and, it is trusted, it will not be deemed presumptuous in an individual of a Branch, which though among the least, yet is among the most ancient of the great Presbyterian family, thus to invite your regard to a subject very dear to the hearts of the people of God. The great object sought is the union of the visible Church of our common Lord ; a union not only implicitly admitted in the understood fact of a substantial embracing of the same doctrines of evangelical truth, which, to a great extent, already exists ; but an *organical* unity in that system, which will secure the rights of the fellowship of saints to every orderly member of the Church where known ; and that will secure the right of review and control over every member, according to the settled principles of Ecclesiastical law. The union sought is that which will frown upon all pretended rights of organized schism. Visible, organical union, in one body, is that which is proposed to be obtained. That this may be attained, the immediate engagement of enlightened Christian attention, seriously and practically, to the subject, is

indispensable. If any thing be done to advantage, the several portions of the divided Church must see and feel, as they ought to be seen and felt, the many evils of every form of schism ; the blessedness of a well founded union ; and the difficulties and dangers attendant upon the attempt to heal the divisions of Zion. The principles of the basis of such a union must be sound, comprehensive, well considered, well understood ; and not *reluctantly*, but *cordially* embraced, with the purpose of a faithful application of them. The subject addresses itself to the heart of every Christian of every name. And who should be better prepared to feel, or abler to judge and act in the case, than those of the extended Presbyterian family ? The Branches of this family, in the United States, who have their origin from France, Holland, Germany, and the Isles of Britain, are, by the occasion, called upon to say whether they will not, at once, give to one another a solemn pledge of their honest purpose and fidelity, in pursuit of an object so lovely and an end so holy, as the organized harmony of the Church of God.

SECTION I.

REASONS URGING TO A CONSIDERATION OF THE SUBJECT.

1. *That the testimony of God's people, in behalf of Christ and his cause, may be full, harmonious, and efficient, it is requisite that the Church should be ONE.*

To the Church is committed a great and solemn trust. In her hand are placed the lively oracles of Heaven. In accordance with the revelation of these oracles in behalf of the claims of God the Saviour upon the sons of men, as well as to make known the riches of his grace toward our ruined family, she is the divinely summoned witness ; and to her and her children it is said—*Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD.* In the economy of the mercy of God, a living faith occupies a most important place : *Without faith it is impossible to please him.* Of faith, testimony or evidence is the foundation or warrant ; and of the divine, unfeigned faith of which we now speak, its resting place is found in the record of the inspired word ; but,

in order to the production of the appropriate end of this record—a living faith—the ordinary authorized agent of putting it forth is the Church of Christ. This she accomplishes by her own ministry, and through the associated, intelligent, and practical profession of her children. Upon the fulness and harmony of this testimony, thus exhibited, the issue at the bar of public opinion very greatly depends. By circumstantial details, incidental and irrelevant, the evidence, which, in itself, is full, satisfactory and irresistible, may be much embarrassed, and, for a time, be misunderstood. Till freed from such incidental entanglements, and brought forward in its plain, harmonious, and powerful bearings, in favour of Messiah's claims, against the immoral and impious pretensions of Infidelity, Paganism, and the Man of sin, the testimony of Jesus, as given by his witnesses, will not effect its high and holy ends. From the beginning, by the omniscient eye of the Saviour, this was foreseen; hence, whilst he was yet upon earth, that impressive portion of his intercessory prayer; *That they all may be one.* For what purpose? *That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* Unity of heart, in the exercise of affection, that the truth may be held and spoken in love, is, indeed, as we shall afterwards show, of ineffable value; but that, in this place, is not exclusively, not chiefly intended. The unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, is rather the principal idea. This qualifies to speak with one voice. The object sought is the belief of the world in the divinity of the person, character, mission, and work of Jesus Christ. Testimony is the warrant of faith; and in commanding the belief of the world, unity in the testimony of the witnesses is what is required, and what, in this prayer, is principally asked. No affection of heart can supply the place of the truth, consistency, and unity of the required evidence.

In the adducing of this testimony, and in the effecting of this end, so far as subordinate agency is concerned, the entire Church of God is laid under an awful responsibility. Of this responsibility the several departments of the Presbyterian family have their share; and as one great family, with peculiar weight, it rests upon them in common. Viewed as one, in

their avowed distinctive system, they possess a larger part of the appropriate testimony than any other portion of the Christian commonwealth. Their form of order is better adapted than any other, in every land, authoritatively, fully, and unitedly, to carry forward and give efficiency to the testimony which they bear. By this family, in the cause of bearing witness for Christ, his grace and claims, more has been suffered, in past ages, than by any other portion of the Reformation Church. The martyr blood of France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, and the British Isles, shed by the minions of antichristian violence, was chiefly Presbyterian blood. In a full and unshrinking testimony for truth, our fathers have set us a noble example. In the following of that example, in the day of trial, it is trusted the sons will not prove themselves unworthy of such an ancestry. But this family is, to appearance, wofully divided. Whence these divisions of Reuben? For them are the searchings of heart as great and as deep as the case requires? Is the fact generally known, and duly considered, that, in the United States, not fewer than twelve distinct parties claim the Presbyterian forms and name? And of these, under the ensign of the Formularies of Westminster, the greater number professedly display their respective banners. It may be, indeed, that several of these live in great, or at least in comparative peace with one another; each pursuing its appropriate object within its own circle. Without venturing an animadversion upon any of those sections of this great family, we may be permitted to say, that their separate existence, as organized bodies, is inauspicious to the efficiency of their action in pursuit of a great, and, substantially, a common cause. The continued struggle for denominational existence, and the extension of sectional influence, will interfere with efficient action for higher objects. Sectional zeal, jealousies, and, when they cross each other's path, party heart-burnings, must produce their appropriate fruits. This is human nature; and he must indeed be a prodigy among men, who, in the conflicts of party zeal, has at all times felt himself superior to such emotions. But upon the ungracious subject we shall not dwell, farther than to say, in passing, that such emotions of heart, for what is merely

denominational, are not generally favorable to the interests of the city of our God.

The enfeebling of the Church's testimony in behalf of the great cause now at issue before the world, is an obvious result of the state of things upon which we, at present, remark. From the ultimate bearings of this testimony in favour of the Redeemer's cause, the Christian mind itself is often diverted to that which is of little account either to the cause of God or man. Thus, comparatively undisturbed, a wide spread unbelief is left in the active production of countless evils; the energies of true religion, sound morals, and good order, are cramped; and the proof of their claims, in the conflicting and indistinct voice of the witnesses, is passed by unheeded. The common ground itself, on which those brethren stand, not unfrequently, is left to the prevalence of briers and thorns, annoying to themselves and unprofitable to others. Till the witnesses upon the stand harmonize in their testimony, the proper verdict will not be rendered. To unanimity in counsel and efficient concurrent action, this harmony is indispensable. When they do harmonize, soon will the world believe in the person, mission, and work of the Son of God; and the voice from heaven will be heard proclaiming—*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*. The fulness and harmony of the testimony will furnish an appropriate medium by which the Holy Ghost may go forth to effect his great work—the conversion of the world. He works by means; and usually by means proportioned to the end. In this case the means is a full, distinct, and harmonious evidence.

2. *Great and unhappy as these schisms undeniably are, the hope is cherished that they are not incurable.* In casting the eye over the Presbyterian family, it is pleasant to find that the territory possessed by them in common, and without dispute, is longer and broader far, than the distinctive sectional plot of either. The party plot is not only within limits unspeakably narrower than the extended field which they hold in common, but compared with the richness, and depth, and fertility of its soil, the plot is poor and barren. It is upon the common plain, possessed by all, that the suns of heaven shine, and the dews

descend ; and there is the verdure of the fertile vale, while the party plot is often arid and fruitless as the mountains of Gilboa. Can these subjects of consideration be seen and felt, and no attempt be made to surmount the evil ? We think not.

The auspiciousness of the circumstances of the Church, in the United States, above those in most, if not all other countries, for this work, should not be passed unnoticed. In other lands, more or less, there is between Church and State some unhallowed bond of opposing influence, by which Zion is trammelled in her movements, or some corrupting influence put forth by which her administrations are perverted. With us, while the Church is, to a great extent, protected in the possession and exercise of her spiritual rights, there is no profane alliance of the chair of State with the altar of God. Here no frown of royal power deters from the doing of what is right, and no corrupting bribe from the political treasury, seduces to the doing of what is wrong. The Church is free, called upon to confess no Head but the Redeemer, Christ.

Hope upon this subject finds encouragement in the undefined dissatisfaction of very many with the state of things as they are. Whilst about the unity of the Church there is no small amount of talk, we do not think that the thought of that unity *upon a proper basis*, is very general, or that the desire for it is very earnest ; yet the reports brought to our ears by almost every passing breeze, expressing, if not dissatisfaction with, at least indifference to, former land marks, and indicating a transition state of parties and party opinions, seem to justify the anticipation of finding, though not at once, yet at no very great distance of time, a safe resting place for the whole. The agitations at present in progress, unpleasant as they are, and the unsettled state of the public mind—not generally as to what is fundamental or radical, but as to what is incidental and sectional—are, in this matter, preferable to the lifeless contentment and dead calm of fifty years ago. The movements of our day, ill regulated as they are, and ill defined as they may be, in reference to their object, are not destitute of promise for future good. They call upon the thoughtful,

in order to a happy issue, not to be regardless of their bearing.

Upon the natural and artificial facilities for intercommunication, it is not necessary to dilate. In subordination to this, *nature*, and *science*, and *art*, unite their powers. Our mighty rivers, for thousands of miles penetrating the continent, and our various inland seas, unite with the barge and the car, to bring into proximity very distant localities, and into near communion the minds of those localities. Mental products thus easily become the common property of regions distant from each other. Whilst moral considerations of greater importance are duly weighed, these facilities, for Zion's behoof, the sons of Zion should not neglect.

Thus a serious consideration of the subject before us, and an earnest and candid endeavour to effect the organized oneness of the Church, are urged upon us by the authority of her divine institution, as *ONE*; by the inconsistency of her actual condition with the principles of her constitution, as laid down in sacred Scripture; by the unsightly aspect of her children, in a state of schismatical faction; by the desirableness of being *ONE*, in order to the attainment of the high and blessed end of her calling; by the impossibility of ever bringing the world to believe, while she is in a schismatical state; and by a view of the facilities, physical, intellectual and moral, now offered for the effecting of this glorious object. The farther it is extended, if upon proper principles, the more efficient it will be. And to its universality upon earth, if the minds and hearts of Zion's children be right, we see no insuperable objection.

3. *To the seeking of this unity, with an authority which admits of no evasion, we are urged by the direct lessons of the word of God.*

Among these lessons, are the threatened danger of consumption, by a *biting and devouring of one another*. The Church, visible as well as invisible, is the Kingdom of our Lord; but a *kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*. It is the house of God—the household of faith; but, a *house divided against itself cannot stand*. It ought to appear a building fitly framed. And again, it is the mystical body of

Christ; but to be what the body of Christ ought to be, and to do what it ought to do, *there should be no schism in the body. 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.**

These representations imperatively forbid contentment with the existence of organized factions, in the city of our God. But in attempting their removal, care must be taken to make no provision either for the fermentations of internal strife, or the concealments of a *prudent* hypocrisy. In order to this unity, God will remove obstacles out of the way; in our place, let us act in concurrence with him. The principles of truth, order, and love, are of God, and they are in unison. Divide them not.

SECTION II.

OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF THE UNION OF THE CHURCH.

1. *No union formed in disregard of truth can either be universal, advantageous, or permanent. To a happy union latitudinarianism will be a fatal obstacle.*

The friends of truth, by keeping aloof from such an union, will prevent its universality, and its internal defects will unfit it to be advantageous, while its radical weakness and want of support will insure its final failure. To the maintainance of every revealed truth of God the obligation is indispensable. *Buy the truth and sell it not*, is an injunction which must never be set at nought. Of moral and evangelical truth, the Bible furnishes the material of a perfect system. It exhibits a scheme which proposes the accomplishment of a high and worthy end, and directs to means adequate to the attainment of that end. In this scheme are found doctrines, some of which are fundamental, others are not such. In their respective places each and all of these are important; and in defect of any of these, the system cannot be complete. While we endeavour to estimate the value of that which is fundamental,

* Gal. 5: 15. Mat. 12: 25. Cor. 12: 25. Eph. 4: 16.

there is hazard of neglecting what is not so, however important it may be to the completion of the system; and in fixing a steadfast eye upon that which goes to perfect and to beautify, what is fundamental may be passed over in forgetfulness. Against these hazards the friends of truth, with scrupulous care, must guard. Bad as divisions are, the abandonment of truth is worse. In laying the basis of union among the friends of God, no compromitment of principle must be allowed. Every revealed truth of the Bible has the sanction of divine authority and its own practical bearing, and no caprice of man may set any of them aside. Upon my fellow man I ought not to impose, as a condition of our walking together, that he should intelligently profess every completing article of faith that may appear clear to my own mind; but under no consideration should I yield that truth, so as to cease to profess and act upon it myself. Union at such a price would be too dearly bought.

2. The confounding of fundamental truths with those that are not fundamental, would be a serious obstacle in the way of a happy union.

The line of demarcation between these two classes of truth may not always be of easy apprehension. For the distinction, nevertheless, there is, in the nature of the case, a sufficient ground. First principles, and the details of first principles, however nearly related, are not precisely the same. An ultimate truth may be very obvious to every one, whilst some of its minute developments may not be of easy comprehension to any. It may be difficult exactly to tell when the night terminates, and the day begins; and to draw actually the line that separates the kingdom of vegetation from the empire of animality, may perplex the naturalist. It is pleasant to know that, however mere speculators on these subjects may be perplexed, for the general purposes of life, the practical man finds little difficulty. Thus it is in the case before us. He who practically knows and feels the worth of truth, in building the evangelical edifice, will not mistake the foundation for the headstone. It is the novice or the mere theorist, that, whilst professing an ardent zeal for every article, is in danger of put-

ting the pinning, pointing, and paint, where the material of the foundation only should have a place.

The distinction of fundamental and non-fundamental, among the truths which God has revealed, will never be made by the enlightened Christian, for the purpose of apologizing for the disbelief of the latter class of truths. God has revealed them; it is man's duty to believe and apply them. But under the plea, that no truth may be unprovided for, or be left unrecognized, to crowd every important thought into the actual conditions of fellowship in the house of God, will be a mistaken measure. That communion, as organized by the Head of the house, contemplates the visible, orderly Christian, humble as his attainments often are, as entitled to its advantages. The babes in Christ, though feeble, and the young men, though not seniors in experience, as well as the fathers, must be admitted to its enjoyments. The imposing pretext of high terms of communion, and high acquisitions of religious character—higher, as conditions of communion, than God has required, may deceive the unwary into a criminal course of schism. If the intelligent adoption and profession of truth, and details of its application, attained only by a few, and beyond the reach of the great Christian body, be urged as indispensable to a place in this communion, a door will be opened for schismatical or factious associations without end.

If a thousand men of superior attainments be justifiable in fixing their high acquisitions as the standard, it will be equally allowable for a tything of that thousand, who may very far excel the other nine hundred, to constitute a separate community; and again, of this hundred another tything may be found in advance of their companions, and as justly claim the right of forming a purer and higher Church. Assuming such a principle, we again say, schismatical formations must be interminable. Equally dangerous would be the engrafting upon the stock of the general creed of the universal Church in every land, as conditions of fellowship, the details of the application of a general principle adapted to a particular locality. Thus it imperatively behooves the friends of the spiritual Jerusalem, to guard with scrupulous care against a latitudinarian regard-

lessness of truth, in doctrine, worship, and order; and to exercise, with equal care, an active vigilance against those measures that go to cut up the Church of God, which, by his appointment, is one, into an endless variety of schismatical associations; rearing up altar against altar, and where, in the zeal for the guards around the sectional inclosure, the God of the altar, and his worship, are in danger of being forgotten. To this part of the subject we shall return on a subsequent page.

To detain the reader with criticisms on the etymology or the import of the term *σχίσμα*, *schism*, is not requisite. The general idea of *division* is sufficiently plain; and organized division, under opposite principles or observances, is not less a *rupture* than alienation of affection. Indeed, it will usually be found that the two go together; the external, hostile organization being the expression of the internal alienation. What some designate as the *Ecclesiastical* use of the term, is fully sustained by what they admit to be the *scriptural* use. To designate *separate organized parties* in the Church, not under a common supervision, nor amenable to a common acknowledged superior authority of a synod, assembly, or council, is our intention in the employment of the term. And however badly we may think of the thing itself, the word by which it is indicated, as to existing parties, is not in our pages invidiously used. It is by us intended merely to express a lamentable fact. What party is unblamable in the matter? Disorganizing schism has been, by unhappy measures, often provoked, and then has organized its parties for evil deeds.

3. *A very powerful obstacle to the desirable and advantageous union of the Church, is found in the bad state of feeling, the result of party organization exerting a party influence, and in various forms threatening to carry that influence into any union that may be proposed or formed.*

The experience of the past has amply illustrated and confirmed the truth of this remark. We feel not that it is necessary to give examples. From the influence of this party feeling, of the mere party spirit, none is sure of exemption. In its operation this spirit is both insidious and powerful; and acting as it does, on all sides and in so many forms, there is danger of

its influence in seeking, for party ends, the amalgamation of opposing parties; and then instead of union we must have the ferment of hostile sentiments, habits, and feelings. Persuaded of this, it will be found requisite to spread light upon the perplexed mind, that this subject may, in its importance and relations, be understood, and that feelings and habits may be prepared for a happy coalescence of those who, perhaps, never should have been separated. For such an issue, time, and calmness of thought, and a proper use of preparatory means, are indispensably requisite. To a statement of such means we shall again recur.

In the apostolic age party spirit had not arrayed itself in the armour of *organized* schism. Thus clad, however, it now appears in various forms. It is under this organization that it lives and puts forth its strength for evil. While under the same constitutional arrangement forbearance is more easy, and the correction of mistakes more probable, than when the schismatical spirit, under legal forms, has assumed to itself all the powers of the Church of God. This form of party spirit was unknown in the days of Paul. With faction in this form the apostles had not to contend. The dealing with party spirit was less difficult then than now.

4. *In the present state of the public mind, the danger of giving a sanction to schism connects itself with every partial form of union.* The proper aim of union must be to do away with schism. Whatever would go, directly or indirectly, to countenance organized faction must be unsound, and in its results unpropitious to the interests of true religion. The admission of those of separate organizations, *as such*, and formally recognized as such, to the mutual enjoyments of the peculiar privileges of the house of God, could not fail to be practically understood as giving such a sanction. To guard against this, and, at the same time, to act with Christian courtesy, imperatively demands a delicate and enlightened caution. The substitution of a partial for a complete basis of union, would issue in disastrous results and mortifying disappointments.

5. *The defect of enlightened judgment and deep feeling upon the subject of a divided Church, stands in the way of a happy union.*

Mere outward inconveniences are, perhaps, and should be, sensibly felt. The sufferings of the ministry, the pressures upon the people, the privations of all, are often spoken of. These, however, are not the greatest evils of a divided Church. The rending of the Body of Christ, the alienation of heart among the members of that Body, the breach upon their hallowed counsels, the absence of concurrent action with each other, the support given to error and delusion by factious organizations expressly for their support, and the advantage, by all these, that is given to the enemy to triumph in the continued ruin of our unreclaimed race, to the dishonour of God, and reproach of his cause. These, and kindred evils of the schisms of Zion, are not generally felt. Insensibility to them is one of the alarming obstacles in the way of healing the maladies of the Church of Christ. Numbers, indeed, are just beginning to awake from their slumber; but yet many, perhaps all, are still strangers to that *deep feeling* of the evil, for which the call is so loudly made.

We must not pursue the subject of these obstacles in the way. Yet it may not be out of place merely to suggest two more, leaving to your own reflections to decide upon their value. The *first* of these is the placing of those who never made divisions in the Church,—those who, though separate from their brethren, never organized for the maintenance of error or disorder,—upon the same ground with those who have done these evil deeds, and more. These parties, surely, occupy positions of a character very different from each other. Acting upon this mistaken ground—treating them as alike—may retard the good work of which we speak. The *second* of these obstacles, more difficult to remove than all the others, we fear, is the defect in spirituality of mind, that so distinctly marks our boastful age. More of a spiritual tendency of mind toward the things of God, more faith in God, more activity of soul in what pertains to the Kingdom of Christ, and more satisfaction of heart in those actings and the objects about which they are conversant, when they become general, will do more to unite the Church of God, than has yet been effected. Let us feel these truths and act upon them.

SECTION III.

THE REMEDY.

Why is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

A moment may be long enough for the infliction of a wound which months or years may not be sufficient to heal. The wounds of Zion cannot be speedily healed unless the healing be slight; and with that we should not be satisfied. It is not, it cannot be, the work of a day. The supposition that it is of easy accomplishment has given occasion to ill advised attempts at union, which have been followed by bitter disappointments. Those wounds are numerous, and by the irritability of the system their pain is greatly aggravated beyond what it otherwise would be. The emolient application, in general, is more needed than the caustic. We respectfully submit, for consideration, the following remarks.

1. *The Christian mind should be decidedly settled as to the nature of the union sought.*

In the invisible Church there can be no schism. Its bonds are inviolable. The Spirit will never abandon the soul of the child of God's adoption, and the faith of that child shall never fail. Happy assurance! The evils of schism belong to the visible Church, and in the warnings against it, and commands of unity, binding to a maintenance of the *oneness* of the Body of Christ, respect is had to the visible organization of that corporation. If the only union of the Church, for which we are to care, consists in the relation in which her members stand to one another in Christ, their living Head, it will be difficult to understand the language of the sacred word, in reference to the schism of the Body. 1 Cor. 1: 10, 11, 12; and 11: 18; and 12: 25. It is in the Church, as a visible society, that there is danger of this rending; and it is there it is found; and it is there, in order to its being healed, that the balm must be applied. That the invisible union of true believers in Christ, is more permanent and of higher value than their visible connexion with one another in profession and concurrent action, is true;

but it is a truth that will be greatly misapplied, if adduced to turn away the mind from a feeling of the crime of faction or of schism, in the visible kingdom of the Lord. The visible unity, animated by the spiritual influences of the invisible relation of the Church, to her glorious Head, and guided by the light of the Bible, is that for which we plead.

To speculate or talk of ardent affection, and efficient concurrent action, in favour of the whole Church, in her divided state, is vain. No man, whatever his piety and liberality may be, feels for the divided Church as he would were she, with all her immortal interests, one organical Body. The intensity of the heart's emotion, and the energy of mental action for the interests of the whole Church, either in the individual, or the association under party arrangement, can never equal what they would be were she *one*, under a righteous constitution, and an enlightened and faithful administration. A cold professed liberality toward all, and a sickly sentimentalism toward an abstract invisibility, are poor substitutes for the concentration of mental and affectionate power put forth in favour of a distinct, visible, undivided, and living object. Speculative apologies for the combinations of schismatical materials, for schismatical purposes, may, for an idle hour, amuse or do injury, but will effect no good.

It is not that mere abstract, inorganical harmony, in general ideal truths, which is consistent with established and perpetuated schism that is sought. That form of union, to a good degree, already exists and has long existed. Nor is that for which we plead, a mere nominal union, without principle, and a stranger to the best emotions of the heart. It is equally remote from the politic combination, whose only aim is the attainment of the objects of ambition. Such union, so far from being desirable, should be deprecated by every friend of the interests, intellectual, moral and civil, of the social state. That for which we plead is, on the contrary, an organized unity, upon the hallowed ground of evangelical principle, expressive of the harmony of enlightened and sanctified minds, commanding a fullness and intensity of hallowed affection not at present actually found in any locality of party; and putting in requisition

all that moral and spiritual instrumentality by which the Spirit of God may go forth in an extensive influence, to accomplish his saving work ; and without which, there is no sufficient reason to hope that he will ever put forth his Almighty energies for the deliverance of a world lying in wickedness. His is the work. In it to concur with him in heart, in counsel, and in action, is the part of his Church ; and till such harmonious concurrence takes place, vain will the expectations of his people be for great results. He works by means ; by means of divine institution ; in the full use of these let his people be organically one. Half-way means will be followed by half-way results. Hence the disappointments of hope.

2. Of denominational positions, principles, and usages, none should be needlessly regardless.

Sectional habits, to a great extent, may be harmless, and when so, upon them no hand should be rudely laid. It is only when they work mischief that they should be touched, and then with discretion. The basis of this union must not only be morally sound and evangelically true, but likewise of a length, and breadth, and depth, sufficient to sustain, in every land, the entire fabric of the One Church of the living God. Whilst nothing must be urged, as a condition of the fellowship of Zion's children, but what has had its proper place in her formularies in bygone times ; nothing must be abandoned for which she has faithfully put in her plea ; whilst provision should be made for the security of her forward movements in the application of the principles of the cause committed to her trust. There must be no burial of any known principle of truth, moral or evangelical, which bears the seal of divine authority. *The church is the pillar and ground of the truth.* As the light bearer to a world sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, she must appear in the entirety of her form, and be fully seen of all. No truth revealed by the Spirit of God, with which any man has become acquainted, may he deny, or be required to conceal. Much less, in such basis of union as is now referred to, is a place to be allowed to any false principle in religion or morals ; nor in it may any position be assumed that would lay restraints upon the pro-

gress of legitimate inquiry, in matters of truth and piety ; or that would seal the lips in silence by a prohibition of their avowal.

3. *In the proposal of a scriptural union of the various departments of the now divided Church, the idea must have no place, that, as a condition of enjoying the visible fellowship of saints, every aspect or detail of revealed truth must be intelligently professed.* In the organized empire of Immanuel, there are great fundamental principles, distinctly marked, upon which the citizens of that empire are intelligently and cordially required to unite ; these, in number and comprehension, are adequate to sustain the communion of saints, and, in things of the divine life, to conduct them forward to higher attainments. In her constitutional law, these principles the Church must distinctly avow ; and, to her distinguishing privileges, none who place themselves in the attitude of hostility against those fundamental provisions, can be entitled. Beyond these, however, there is an extensive range of details, that, in the actual symbols of the Church as settled by her authority, have never had a place. In the great family of grace, indeed, some favoured individuals may be far in advance of others, and some peculiarly circumstanced sections may have done more than others ; that which has been acquired may not be abandoned, and that which they have truly done, they must not be required to undo. No step of their advance must they be required to retrace. But neither the individual nor any associated portion of individuals, not regularly authorized and assembled for that purpose, had, or has a right to settle for the *whole corporation* of Zion, as a condition of ecclesiastical fellowship, that in which, from peculiarity of circumstances, they may have made beyond others some advance. With us, you will concede, that none, whether many or few, may lawfully close their eyes against the light that Heaven, in the course of Providence, has shed upon their path ; nor may any class in Zion, *being a minority of the true Spiritual Church of God*, found, through peculiar circumstances, in possession of certain forms and bearings of divine truth, not generally seen or admitted, legitimately attempt to urge upon oth-

ers, not circumstanced like themselves, as a condition of communion, the actual acquisition of their measure of light ; neither may they, in pressing its adoption, disturb the peace of the general body, or break in upon the harmony of the fellowship of the whole. It is for them enough that they are authorized to abide in the attainments they have made. Let them lead, but not impose; improve their light, but not break up the fellowship of saints.

The attention of a portion of the beloved brethren whom we presume to address, is solicited to the bearing upon this subject of an admitted principle: the vanity of an assumption of perfect coincidence of thought among the people of God, upon every aspect or application of acknowledged truth, as a term of church communion. The acquisitions of the cultivated intellect, through a long course of mental training, and exercises of deep research, are far beyond the line that bounds the attainments of the tyro—the novice—that has just a sufficiency of light by which the Spirit of God may go forth savingly to touch the heart, and lead him intelligently to the blood of the cross. The one as well as the other, of these, is entitled to the seals of redemption; but how cruel and unreasonable to demand of the latter, as a term of admission to those seals, a detailed view of all the implications of the first principles of the oracles of God, which the former could at once, as by an intuitive glance, perceive! In this, all the departments of the Church, in their home administrations, to a great extent, practically agree. Why not, then, carry out the principle practically admitted at home, in the avowals made to those beyond their own pale?—and thus, so far, break down, or take away the party partition. Is this thought of? Facts will answer this query.

Upon this subject there is neither entire freedom from embarrassment nor exemption from at least apparent inconsistency. Against those whose visible evidence of being the children of God you do not dispute, you close your door of sacramental and ministerial communion. In the articles of Christian faith and practice, organical ecclesiastical relationships excepted, you and they are one. You recognize their ministry and the valid-

ity of their administrations; you pray for the divine blessing to descend upon and to abide with them; and, with thanksgiving to God, you rejoice in their success; you would greatly blame them did they cease to dispense the word of life and the seals of the covenant; yet, though you confess those ministers to be the ambassadors of Christ, and those people to be of the household of God, you will neither receive the seal of salvation from the hand of the one, nor unite, ecclesiastically, in the communion of saints, with the other. In all this, somewhere, is there not something wrong? Is not the present organical state of the Church a very unnatural one? So we think.

On both sides of this question—the *more restricted* and the *more extended*—it is alleged, and very truly, that the sacramental table is not ours, but the Lord's; and, of course, that *He*, not *we*, must settle the terms of admission to it. This, indeed, expresses the truth, which all admit. But in its application, neither of the sides is out of danger of mistaking the path of duty. To save from an oppressive or capricious administration, in this matter, it would seem that the divinely authorized principles and provisions of the Church's constitution, settle the affair; and that the recognition of this constitution, other points of character being as they ought, is a certificate of a title to the peculiar privileges under it. To free the people of God from many perplexities, the enlightened and candid formation and adoption of this constitution, is greatly needed. The Bible, though it is not itself, formally, this constitution, yet furnishes ample material for its composition. This, with a right temper of heart, would make the Church, in her communion, consistently one. *Let all her sections begin, in earnest, to aim at this, and to act for its attainment*—the attainment of a communion of *light*, of *life*, and of *consistent action*; the partaking of the *one sacramental bread*, being expressive of the *visible*, as well as invisible union and communion of the *one organical body*. 1 Cor. 10: 17, 18.

In this connexion, in addition to the remarks already made, upon this subject, notice the schismatical principle, too generally avowed and recognized: that is, the supposed right of any class of men, to organize separate communions in the Church

of God; settling the terms of their association higher or lower, as may, to themselves, seem best. This is to legitimize faction under the Christian name. As long as no sinful terms of communion are imposed upon any, nor restrictions in a sound profession are laid, no separation from orderly brethren is allowed by the Church's Head. Separation from the Church of God, under the arrogant assumption of superiority, because in her are found some men of supposed humbler stature or feeble mould, is justly offensive in the sight of God and good men. It is known who said—*Stand by, for I am holier than thou. I am not as other men are.*

It is not forgotten, that if such men disturb not the external order of society, no human power ought, by violence, to interfere for the prevention of those anti-evangelical combinations of schism; and if this be all that is intended by the assumed and conceded right, we have no objection to the assertion; though the assertion, and the reasons assigned for it, often appear to embrace much more. Those who thus act, in the sight of God and his Son, assume an awful responsibility. They seem to be unmindful of the solemn fact, that the Church is more than a mere voluntary association; and that to settle terms for the fellowship of saints, other than the Church's Head has ordained, is to invade a right which pertains to the sovereignty of Messiah's crown. That the children of Zion are to advance toward Ecclesiastical as well as personal perfection, is an admitted fact; but this advance must not be attempted by a capricious few, rearing walls of separation, to the exclusion of the many from their sympathy, and themselves from the advantage arising from the lending of a helping hand to the feeble of the company, who, with them, desire, as fellow travellers, to make their way to the better country; and whose aid, feeble as they may be deemed, in their journey the stronger greatly need.

The right of private judgment is an invaluable gift of God. It is recognized by the supreme law of the Redeemer's house. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*, is the language of inspiration. This, however, like all the other rights of man, must, in its exercise, be regulated by the moral

law of the Creator. When this is neglected manifold disorders will ensue. The full persuasion of every man's mind, of which the Apostle speaks, ought always to be formed in the light of those discoveries which God has given to regulate the relations, the thoughts, the judgments and the actions of men. Whenever that precious right is separated from its proper regulating standard, it becomes lawless—anomalous, in its exercise, and, of course, mischievous. The assumption of the right of private judgment, without its law, has been productive of personal errors and of social disorders, the existence of which every good man deplors. The legitimate exercise of this right has yet to be learned by many. The denial of it by Rome is inexpressibly bad, the abuse of it by nominal Protestantism, is not good.

To men of high moral principle, an imposing argument, in favour of a separate communion, is its supposed influence in the restraint of error and disorder. Is this argument, in general, well founded? It is, indeed, readily conceded, that when either error or disorder is forced upon individuals by a community, as a condition of its fellowship; or when they become so incorporated with the body that a continuance in it would imply an approbation of those evils; or when the evils professed or tolerated, are so fundamental as to be subversive of the faith of God's elect, there is no safe alternative except in obedience to the divine injunction—*Come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing.* But where no such impositions are attempted, and when no such state of things exist, the course of duty is plain: *Plead with your mother, plead.* This will not encourage error, nor will it enfeeble the testimony in favour of truth. Under the condition of things just stated, when or where did schismatical divisions ever retard the progress of error? It is another thing where reform is rendered hopeless. But as long as reformation may be hoped for,—and so long as sound doctrine is untrammelled, there is ground of such hope,—will not such divisions remove obstacles out of error's way, and open for it an unobstructed course, in which to advance? Whilst the proximity of truth and mistaken principle, not constitution-

al, in the same communion, gives truth an immediate advantage which, beyond the wall of separation, it could never have. From distinct organization, does not error gather strength? In this continuance of communion, however, the conditions above specified must be observed.

4. *In the terms of ecclesiastical fellowship, the prescriptions or acts of corrective discipline, must not be raised to the same rank with doctrine.* Of the great importance of a firm and temperate discipline, we are well aware. Without it, high character cannot be formed, nor can it be preserved in distinguished eminence. Yet in its administration, we know, there is great imperfection: defect in knowledge, want of discretion, and the presence of undue feelings, often mingle in the administration of discipline, and detract much from its authority. Not so with doctrine. God has himself settled the principles of religion, and given to us the written record. Leave principle in its soundness, and, under divine direction, it will work its own way; and, amidst a thousand defects in practice, ultimately produce its appropriate effects. Of this, while discipline was not neglected, the Reformers, especially Calvin, was fully aware; and upon it they acted. So should we. Violent discipline, in matters of doubt, has effected much of mischief—of good it never was the cause.

5. *The implied idea of "a double doctrine" in the Church, in all its forms of manifestation, must be rejected.* To a great extent, the explicit admission of this was productive, at an early day, of great mischief; and the implied idea, if admitted, can never be without harm. The system of doctrine, worship, and order, in the Church, for her ministry and other members, must be one. Fundamental law must be the same for all. The system is the text-book of the school. The ministry are the authorized expounders of the text; the other members, in their several classes, and upon their respective forms, are the scholars in this school of Christ. The several articles of the system may be examined, and upon them inquiries may be instituted; but so long as the constitutional system is recognized as the fundamental law, in those who enjoy the peculiar privileges of the corporation, no declaration of avowed

hostility to it must be tolerated. In point of acquisition, between the teachers and the taught, there ought to be, and generally will be, great diversity; and so it will be among the well-instructed members themselves; but the standard of instruction to all must be the same; each, according to the form which he occupies, in his place going on toward perfection. The truth, authority, and importance of doctrine are not less than of precepts.

That the creed of the Church is that of her officers *only*, but not of the people, is an unhappy idea. The people, and not the official dignitaries, constitute the great body of the Church. But if the creed be not the faith of that great body, how can the Church be *the pillar and ground of the truth*? The authorized confession is expressive of the Church's faith, which those invested with the ministry are "bound to proclaim, *not as the articles believed by themselves only, but as the creed of the body—the belief of the whole.*" The belief of all, as far as they are competent to know and believe. This, if it do not suppose a full and intelligent belief of every article, at least excludes the thought of hostility to the truth, under a professed belief of an opposing error.

6. *Having once established the great constitutional principles of the Church's union and communion, thus giving form to her organization, in opposition to her constitutional standing, there must, by her, be no homologation of organized schism.* Let Zion's constitution be what it ought to be, neither more nor less, and then, at every hazard, in opposition to faction, temperately but firmly carry it out. The Church must not, by pusillanimity in administration, betray the avowed high principles of her constitutional law. Diversity of mind, in things not yet settled by constitutional authority, is a very different affair. The Apostolic and Reformation Churches exemplify the communion of such; and it is in accordance with the principles of common Christian sense; while the treating of organized faction, against evangelical principles and order, as orderly, is at variance with all the consistent dictates of propriety. Let not, then, the ministry, even apparently, falsify the principles of the Church's creed, or bring their

soundness into suspicion, by proclaiming to every pander of faction—of organized schism—that Zion's altar, and its sacred things, are as free to him as to her own orderly and obedient children;—that the hallowed seals of God's covenant shall be the portion of the opposer of the law, as well as of the well-conducted citizen;—that the seal of the covenant shall be applied to him who disavows all faith in the existence of the covenant of redemption, as well as to him who reckons it all his salvation !

Upon serious reflection, will it not be found by all, that the sacramental intercommunion of organized hostile factions is, at least apparently, a libel upon the sincerity of their avowals, as expressed in the several constitutions of the respective parties? Avowedly, and not unfrequently, bitterly hostile until the moment of taking the sacramental symbols into the hand ; and as soon as risen from the communion seat, returning to the opposing ranks, and there taking their stand under the hostile banner, in all its length and breadth, unfurled and displayed! Encompassed by such circumstances, in what have they had communion? Often the parties differ radically in their faith respecting the vitals of redemption; respecting salvation by grace; respecting the work of the Spirit of God, in applying the benefits of redemption; respecting the ground of justification before God; respecting the evidences of a gracious state; and a thousand other articles of deep interest to the souls of men and standing of the Church of God. In what, then, have they had communion? Has it been founded upon, and regulated by principle? Does it advance the love of truth and order, or contribute to the enlightened love of the household of faith? Or is it a forgetting of all that is really peculiar and blessed in sacramental communion? Or is the whole the effect of a mere transient emotion? Or is it the fruit of a sickly affectation of liberality? At any rate, is not this a proper subject of inquiry? Is the practice now adverted to, a proper expression of the unity of that Church which is divinely reared as "the pillar and ground of the truth?" It is attempted to be justified, we know, by the apology:—None are authorized to approach the communion-table except those who give evidence

of being the children of God. And, in most cases, what is that evidence? Is it not the *presumption*, or at most, the *implied* avowal of the parties privileged, that they are in regular standing with their respective connexions? And does not a portion of that *regularity* of standing, upon which such privilege is granted, consist of a factious adherence to an organized schism, against what you profess to be God's truth and the order of God's house? Regular organized opposition to the principles and order of God's family, a certificate of right to the distinguishing privileges of that family! This is not the only inconsistency of the measure: it implies a confused mingling of the terms of the communion of the visible and invisible Church. The defect in *visible* evidence of a right to communion found in the schismatical relationships to organized faction, is compensated by the allegation, that the person is a child of God; a point the evidence of which is very imperfect, and, of the fact, man a very incompetent judge. Is it not, in the family of God, desirable that a ground be occupied which will free good and intelligent men from these entanglements? Let the Church's constitution be what it ought to be, neither more nor less; and then make the acceptance of that fundamental law the term of the enjoyment of her *peculiar* privileges. Full submission to the constitution of the empire, is the condition of full communion in its rights.

We are not unapprized of the plausible assumption which affirms, that "Every one whom God admits to the invisible fellowship of his family, his visible Church ought to receive into her full communion." Of course, to sacramental communion as well as to the other privileges of the house. The principle assumed is, that the terms of *invisible* and *visible* communion are identical. As long, then, as the invisible condition and relation continue, the visible relation should not be disturbed. Union with Christ, by faith, is the condition of invisible fellowship; it, too, according to this assumption, is the term of visible communion; and until the Church has evidence that the member admitted upon this ground is destitute of this condition—that is, that he is graceless, having no interest in Christ, he must remain in the full communion of the Church.

What comes, then, of the discipline of the house of God? Must there be no withholding of sacramental communion or other privileges of the house of God, until the disorderly brother gives, at least very probable proof, that he is utterly without Christ? What shall we then do with the Apostolic injunction of withdrawing from every disorderly walker; yet not to account such to be an enemy, but to entreat him as a *brother*? The assumption, however, though very popular and very plausible, that invisible communion with God entitles to visible communion in the Church, is unhappy, for it is not true. The Church will exclude from her communion table the fallen brother who, under strong temptation, has become disorderly, and as long as he is so, whilst the hope is cherished that he is still in a vital relation to his Redeemer.

In the attempt to sustain the above mistake, respectable men have committed a remarkable oversight in their use of Rom. 14: 3. *For God hath received him.* Since God has received him, so should we receive him, is the argument; and as long as God does not cast him off, so long we should retain him. Until full proof shall be had that he is without God, and Christ, and hope in the world, however disorderly he may be, he must be allowed his place in the Lord's house, and at his table; for "God has received him," and we have not proof that God has cast him off; we therefore must not presume to make the terms of visible communion higher than those of the invisible. However untenable, this is the legitimate issue of the argument; and that no well-ordered Church will dare to act it out, is evidence of its unsoundness.

This misapplication of the Apostle's declaration,—*God hath received him*,—arises from not adverting to the subject of which he treats, and the connexion in which it stands. Taken out of its proper connexion, it is made to cover more ground than the sacred writer intended. The Apostle is treating of an *indifferent* matter, about which the imperfectly enlightened Christians of that day were divided in opinion. To the distinction of meats, and to the eating or not eating of them, they attached an undue importance. For however, under the Levitical law, to regard these things was matter of duty, it is so no more. He that eateth is not, morally or religiously, the better for it; nor

is he that eateth not the worse. His duty, either to God or man, is not affected by eating or not eating these things. It is a matter, *in itself*, of perfect indifference, not touching his acceptance with God or his duty to Christ. 1 Cor. 8: 8. *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* But can this be affirmed of those errors and immoralities which, in the exercise of an enlarged charity, we may hope are not altogether inconsistent with the existence of grace, in him who is chargeable with them? Is it a matter of perfect indifference, whether the first day of the week be observed as the Christian Sabbath?—Whether the *Pauline* or the *Neonomian* ground of justification be or be not believed and professed?—Whether the semi-Pelagian or Augustinian—the scriptural—view of the doctrines of grace, be received or not received?—Whether—But we forbear. Paul himself settles this: circumcision, simply *per se*, like the use or non-use of meats, was to him a matter of perfect indifference. Not so, however, when attempted to be connected with Christ's righteousness, as the ground of justification. In that case he would say, and did say, Gal. 5: 12, *I would they were cut off who trouble you.* That which is indifferent, and what is important, can never be made parallel. The fallacy—*non causa pro causa*—has led otherwise worthy expositors of the Apostle into the mistake upon which we animadvert. The cases compared are not parallel—*a non tali pro tali*.

But let us not be misunderstood. To sacramental inter-communion, in every form of it, we are not opposed. There are instances in which connexion with an ecclesiastical organization, distinct from my own, ought not to be allowed to exclude the otherwise orderly believer, from the table of the Lord, where I commune. But such cases belong not to the anomalies to which reference has been made. This we purpose to illustrate in another place.

The sum of the thoughts now suggested is, that the visible unity of the Church of God is an object of great interest, and should be sought by the Lord's people, in the full use of every mean which divine Providence has put in their power, and at the expense of every sacrifice of all that is selfish. That in doing this, security must be had for the unfolding of the *whole*

scheme of revealed truth; that into the constitutional terms of the Church's fellowship, whilst no false principle must there have a place, it would be absurd to press every shade of revealed truth, and every form of sound application of abstract truth, to be understood and professed by all; to say that any class of men, because of alleged imperfections of fellow-members, may dutifully separate from the communion of saints, as long as the way is left open for themselves to go forward in the profession of truth and order, without giving their sanction to defection in either, is wrong; that such needless separation, if made, is not calculated to remedy the supposed evil; that a double doctrine, declared or implied, for the members of the Church, is of dangerous tendency; that organized factions, formed upon schismatical principles, ought never to be recognized in the rightly-constituted Church of the Redeemer, by the admission of such to her sealing institutions, so long as they occupy the place of hostile schismatics; and that against assumptions either in doctrine or in practice, leading to self-contradictions, the Church ought to guard with scrupulous care. The creed of the Church, by divine authority, is one. Its articles are found in the common groundwork of the whole; local developments belong to their own localities, until in the unfolding of their general principle they be generally, and upon examination, formally recognized; and till then, in no case, may they legitimately have a place in the public constitutional creed, or be urged as a condition of communion in the One Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All this seems to be indispensable for the maintenance of the cause of evangelical and moral truth; the harmonizing of the divided Church; the security of her peace; the efficiency of her action; and the consistency of her profession. We take for granted that those whom we address belong not to that class of apparent matter of fact men, who sneer at the idea of system or consistency in the things of God. The day of those sneers is, it is hoped, near its conclusion. In the DIVINITY himself, all is consistent; his attributes are in harmony among themselves; so are the several parts of his eternal plan of providence; so are the laws of his creation. The intellectual and moral systems which he has given to men, in their several parts, are in har-

mony among themselves ; and in her sphere, to understand and act in accordance with this, should be the aim of the Church of God.

7. Christian forbearance, a virtue to which we as yet have scarcely adverted, must be put in requisition.

No son or daughter of the Lord Almighty, upon earth, but toward him or herself, needs the exercise of this lovely temper of mind ; and no existing department of the family of God, however small, however pure, however high in personal character, and in discipline however exact, but hears the call ; and, toward its actual members, is compelled to regard the duty of *forbearance*. The extension of this forbearance, which toward individuals, for sectional purposes, is yielded at home, if exercised in a proper spirit toward denominations without, for the general ends of Christianity, would go far in effecting the harmony of the Church at large ; and with as much safety to the cause of truth and righteousness upon the larger, as upon the smaller scale. For in ceasing to press, as conditions of communion, the remote deductions from a general principle, there is no abandonment of those deductions, nor is there implied any embracing of the conclusions that stand in opposition to them. While refusing to urge upon me the formal recognition of what I do not understand, you neither deny an article of your own faith, nor approve of my defect of apprehension. Let, then, our fellowship be sustained by the acknowledged articles found in our common creed—the creed of the Church. Those articles—those especially of the Presbyterian faith—are of sufficient comprehension for the proposed end ; and the details, in application, may be safely left to the administrations of the Church in her respective localities ; due care being taken as to the education, attainments, and character of her ministry.

This forbearance—not of error, but of the man—will be exercised toward the babes in Christ, whilst those who have reached the stature of perfect men will be left not only unrestrained, but shall find themselves sustained in putting forth all their powers in the ascending way. *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded : and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* Great, comprehensive, fundamental principles must be cordially embraced and

intelligently professed; points of importance, that have not been generally discussed nor incorporated among the articles of the public creed of the Church at large, are, in the meantime, to be treated as unsettled by her decrees. Such points, however, are very few; and in reference to them, forbearance is to be indulged so long as they are not determined by the general consent of the family of God, as, by his authority, settled among the terms of their communion; cherishing the hope, and using the appointed means, of realizing, in due time, the hope of a harmony of views upon every subject of present doubt. *God shall reveal even this unto you.* In the mean time, all may be assured that this harmony cannot be furthered, either by the formation of new factious communions, or by partial combinations of factions upon schismatical principles, but by going forward upon the common ground, found in the acknowledged creed of the Reformation Church.

This creed is already substantially one. Go forward, and make it formally one; but, *Festina lente*, gently hasten. There are *habits*—habits of feeling, of expression and of action, that must be consulted. This consultation must, by each of the now divided parties, be had at home. Each must settle the matter for itself—for which, a frequent and generous intercourse, and an exchange of thought by individuals of the respective sections, will do much to prepare the way. The party argument—the conventional dispute or compromise—will do little for the general object; and as little is to be expected from the mere courtesies of diplomatic negotiation, and still less when either or all of the parties mount the popular hobby of an unprincipled liberality—which may be moved with enough of violent agitation, but it advances not. We then add:

8. *With an intelligent, faithful, generous, and forbearing spirit, seek this material of a Basis of union in the Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation Churches. Examine them as they came from the hands of the Reformers.*

During nearly two hundred years, the Reformation cause has made no advance. Let, then, the several departments of the true Reformation Church, forgetting incidental appendages which have become attached to their profession, as conditions of Christian fellowship, in its whole extent, fall back upon their

original ground, as stated in their respective creeds in their earlier and better day. This falling back will not be a retrograde movement from higher attainments to a position morally more low. The harmony of the several confessions of the Reformation is a delightful object of contemplation. In the noon-day, as well as in the early dawn of the Reformation, a happy sympathy united together in holy bonds of great power, the friends of the common cause, in every land. Though neither blind nor indifferent to each other's defects, yet their recognition of each other as brethren, engaged in a great and common cause, was cordially and distinctly declared. We need not, in this, go to a period more remote than the first half of the seventeenth century. How far the descendants of those so happily in friendship, at that earlier day, have deviated from the spirit and path of their fathers, a comparison of the history of that and succeeding times will tell. To ascertain the facts of the case, by each part of the divided family, may be found a proper subject of inquiry for itself; and to all, the result of the investigation may be profitable. Should an Ecclesiastical deterioration or advance, in any of the parties, appear to have taken place, the path of duty will be plain; if still found to be what their fathers were, why not stand together as they stood? Casual circumstances, not affecting the foundation, will not come into the account. In the United States, the local distance of the children is not so great as was that of their fathers; the political distance is infinitely less; and if the moral and religious be no more, why dwell in separate tents?

Experience proves that obstacles are in the way of this great *desideratum*. Yet in the Presbyterian family, for a basis of union, broad and firm, there is enough of sound evangelical truth; and to perceive, use, and defend it, if brought to the work, there is an abundance of talent. Has the attention not been sufficiently turned to the subject, or is the defect in the temper of the heart? Really to know the cause and true character of the evil, is something towards its removal. The standing aloof from it, or the looking askance at each other, or the employment of mutual recriminations by those whom it affects, will never help the matter. Long familiarity with the sin of schism, we fear, has too far been productive of obtuseness of feel-

ing as to its sin; and in the success of their operations, with little compunction of heart, the crime of factions is suffered to pass unnoticed. Here, great and small factions are to be blamed. Numbers indicate success. There is danger of taking success—short-lived success, perhaps, as the test of right; and numbers and success are likely to generate insolence, which, in its objects, is usually followed by the reprisals of resentment. An evil state of things, and an unseemly work for the acknowledged friends of the Saviour of men! Why not ascend to higher and holier ground, where Reformers and martyrs stood, and sweetly communed? Let us try the effect of the principles of doctrine, worship, and order, in which they were one, in soothing our spirits and leading us forward, in due time, to a full, harmonious, and efficient communion. Bring to the work not only an enlightened mind, but likewise a right temper of heart.

These public documents, to which reference is made, in their great and commending principles, are the same. Those principles are very fully and distinctly expressed respecting the Triune God; the fallen state of man; electing love, and efficient grace; the covenant of redemption; the Mediatorial character of the Saviour; his satisfaction for sin; the dispensation of the Spirit; the justification of the sinner through the righteousness of Christ, received by faith; the necessity of holiness; the Church; the principles and forms of Ecclesiastical order; the principles of social order, in the instituted relationships of life, death, the resurrection, final judgment, and the endless state of righteous and wicked men. These, and their associated doctrines in the system of truth, have their prominent places in the several creeds of these portions of the Reformation Church.

Particular applications, arising out of the localities of some or all of these departments of sound Presbyterianism, should not be allowed to perpetuate parties, or to stand for ever in the way of union. Some things there are, which ought not to be denied, yet may not rightly claim the place of terms of fellowship. Such, however, may have been raised to that position. Or others, from local circumstances, may have properly enough been made conditions of communion, which should not be carried beyond their own localities. Principles may often require time for their development. Let them have it; and let the confession of them

in their truth satisfy, for the time, until their developments be made and their details of application be fully seen. Through the grace of the Spirit there is a power in divine truth to produce, in the course of its administrations, great results. God has promised that it shall be made effectual in bringing about those results. Take cordially by the hand the child of grace who admits the sound principle, though he may yet be incapable of following it out in many of its details. In various religious connexions, to a great extent among God's people, this unity of principle actually exists. They are really one; but of the fact they are not apprized. In our country, too, there are ecclesiastical communities which were never in organical hostility against each other. With such, *diversity*, but not *hostility*, exists. The state of things thus existing opens a door for a well-regulated correspondence. In that correspondence, principles will have their developments; Christian men will better understand one another; right tempers will be cultivated; and, insensibly, they will become in form, what in reality they were before, *one*. Enlightened and sanctified men of each denomination will feel that they are really struggling in the same great cause; endeavouring to be, themselves, better, and to make others better than they are. They will both see and feel that they are one in principle, one in aim, and one in intelligent and ardent exertion, for the attainment of that aim. Mere sectional organization, with such, will not long continue to exclude them from the same pulpit, the same council room, or the same communion table. Denominational organization will not be allowed to do it. In this state of things the union of the Church will be found at hand; a union not of compromise; not of concealment of principle; not of heartless calculation; not of unthinking impulse; but one of head, and heart, and hand, guided by light, actuated by love, and strong in the energies of God's Almighty Spirit.

In the Symbols of Orthodox Presbyterianism, compiled at DORDRECHT and WESTMINSTER, there is sound principle enough to harmonize and sustain the whole Church of God. To do its work, that principle of those symbols needs to be brought out in its full bearing. Circumstances have been, and are still hostile to this development. Those hostile circumstances must

yield to the principle which they embarrass. Time, thought, mutual intercourse well conducted, through the grace of God, will remove them. The pressure of the united forces of the coming enemy will have its use in urging the soldiers of the Cross to rally, as one, under the banner of the Captain of their salvation, upon the holy principles of his cause, and not upon the little circumstances of their own devising.

9. *That a Basis of union, at once sound, full, and satisfactory, may finally be obtained, let all who appreciate its value unite under a solemn covenant pledge, intelligently, faithfully and perseveringly to seek it.*

This engagement may be entered into either by Churches, or individuals of particular Churches.

The subject is worthy of a trial. In the organical Oneness of the Church of Jesus there is a moral grandeur, unequalled by any other object in our world. In pursuance of it, let its friends be intelligent and sincere. To put sincerity out of doubt, to establish mutual confidence amongst those who truly desire and hold conference upon the subject, and to impress the public mind with a sense of the magnitude of the work, let a solemn subscription be given to a covenant engagement, pledging all who unite in it to fidelity, in an earnest pursuit of the proposed object, according to righteousness, order, true religion, and the principles of rational liberty. This, it is confessed, is not an every day measure; nor is that to which it would engage an every day work. The harmonizing of the conflicting parties in the family of God, or that portion of them even, distinguished by the forms of sound Presbyterial doctrine and order, being no common attempt, present an extraordinary occasion which would justify an unusual, if a lawful and well advised measure. Such an attempt, indeed, is not likely to be completed till the effusion of the Spirit of God upon us shall incline us to compose our family broils. And who knows but this attempt may furnish the occasion for such a perfecting effusion of grace? Then it would not be considered as a matter unprovided for in the arrangements of God, nor deemed unsuitable, that while one party says—*I am the Lord's, another shall call itself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with the hand unto the Lord, and surname itself by the name of Israel.**

This proposal, whilst not an every day work, is nevertheless not a novel project. It is a measure neither unauthorized nor unexampled. It has been a distinguished measure of every period of great reformation. Passing over the transactions of Israel at Horeb, on the plains of Moab, at Shechem, and at Jerusalem, down to the last subscription of Judah, and sealing of a sure covenant in the days of Nehemiah, as illustrative of the institution and practice; in a form peculiarly expressive, we have the example of the best of the Apostolic Churches—the Macedonian,—giving their own selves unto the Lord, and to one another. And not dwelling on such instances as are referred to by Pliny, of the Christian's oath, engaging to avoid sin and perform duty at a later day, we all know the course pursued, in the days of the Reformation, by the Churches of Continental and Insular Europe. And ere the Reformation had dawned, it is said, the Church in the valleys of Piedmont engaged in this solemn transaction. For this solemn work the early period of the sixteenth century furnished various occasions to this interesting people. We are certified by a competent authority, "That their federal transactions were solemnly sworn, universally subscribed, and frequently renewed." The League of Smalcald, in 1630, is familiar to all. Commencing at Geneva, in 1537, the solemn work of covenanting, publicly and socially, was extended to Switzerland, in several Cantons of which the Church united in the bond of that of Geneva. To similar transactions, somewhat modified in form, the Church of Holland was not a stranger; and with that work the National Synods in France,—Ecclesiastical Bodies, in light, purity, and sanctified zeal, inferior to none of the Reformation,—especially from 1596 till 1623, were well acquainted. And who, without emotion, ever read the record of the solemn deed of the Pilgrim emigrants of the May-flower, before they touched the rock of Plymouth? The renovation of that solemn deed, in a more extended form, in 1629, by the Massachusetts settlers, and by the New England Churches, upon a larger scale, in 1676, is a portion of the interesting history of that remarkable people.

The federal deeds of the purest departments of the Church, in the seventeenth century, in the Isles of Britain, are known and appreciated by every enlightened patriot of our country,

and are too prominent to be passed by unnoticed by any of the Presbyterian family, or to be forgotten or disregarded by the friends of religion and liberty in the United States. The solemn transactions of Scotland, in 1638, and the no less solemn, while more extended, deeds of the people of God, in 1643, in the three kingdoms of the British empire, afford, in this matter, to succeeding times an instructive lesson. The immortal productions of the Westminster Assembly are but a small part of the memorable results of those sound measures.

It is for the Church of the Reformation, at this day,—and especially the Orthodox Presbyterian sections of that Church,—to say whether the proposal of their organization into **ONE BODY**, under Christ the **HEAD**, and animated by his **SPIRIT**, offers an occasion that would justify the measure suggested. The Presbyterian family in the United States of America, embrace many of the offspring of the most enlightened of the nations. Here are found the representatives of the Reformed Presbyterians of Germany, of France, of Holland, and the British Isles. Speaking the same language, and living under the same form of social order, their Faith and Ecclesiastical observances, while marked by some shades of difference, have against one another no decided or immovable element of hostility. Materials more discrepant, we are assured, shall be harmonized.

The day is on the advance when unto the mountain of the Lord's house all nations shall flow; they shall be joined unto the Lord; they shall be associated with the children of Israel and the children of Judah, when they shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying,—*Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.* In Egypt, the most hopeless of lands, the language of Canaan shall be spoken; and those cities which speak it shall swear unto the Lord. Time was—alas! still is—when Israel, Assyria, and Egypt, had little friendly union, and as little of a happy communion. Yet we are certified that:—*In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria: and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and*

with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. The spirit of these promises, divested of their prophetic costume, is of easy apprehension, and universally applicable.

From a full view of what has now passed before us, for the attainment of the end proposed, it will follow, that intelligence, a right temper of heart, and a well directed action, are indispensably requisite. We have, indeed, little doubt that, could the great Body of God's people, untrammelled by incidental circumstances, be brought together, and, upon the principles which they hold in common, be allowed to act, the Church would soon be One. With this remark we connect what follows: It would seem, in order to success, that there must be,

I. A full persuasion of the desirableness, necessity, duty, and certainty of the visible organical unity of the Church of Christ. This persuasion among good men, we fear, is neither as thorough nor as general as it ought to be.

II. An assurance, *from the actual state of the Church*, however certain the ultimate event may be, that this unity upon safe ground cannot *immediately* be had. Mixtures there may be, but not combination,—mixtures that may ferment and explode, but not unite. Indefinite views upon the subject, and partial measures urged by the insidious influence of party spirit will, for a time, oppose a full and happy union of the Church of God.

III. To do away, as soon as may be, these opposing evils, and, as far as possible, to relieve from the unhappy effects of this unnatural state of things while it remains; upon the very extensive ground which they hold in common, there should be, forthwith, a more extended and cordial intercourse of orthodox Christians. In this intercourse, irrespective of any recognition of denominational organization, they should put in requisition the resources of their wealth, the capabilities of the press, and a well directed co-operation, presenting a front against the common enemy, whether that enemy be found in the ranks of the man of sin, of infidelity, or of the various forms of immorality.

IV. A covenant deed, solemnly pledging the parties,—individuals or communities,—in dependence upon God and in the use of every legitimate means, honestly to seek this great object, would inspire an enlightened zeal and lay a foundation of mutual confidence.

V. Each department of the divided Church, upon an examination of the principles, institutions, and established usages of the whole, *for itself*, should endeavour, in fidelity and candour, to settle the basis upon which it would be satisfied to incorporate with the others. These, expunging what never should have encumbered the terms of Zion's communion, and supplying what was defective in their own, would, very probably to the satisfaction of all concerned, reduce the causes of serious difference to a very narrow point.

VI. This course would bring Christian into more intimate communion with Christian; would give enlargement to the understanding, and produce more kindness of heart; each of which leads towards that unity of brethren, so good and so pleasant, of which the Psalmist of Israel, Psalm 133, so sweetly sings.

Disregard of some such course as that now suggested, may be followed by years of continued and increased disruption. The Church may be broken into yet smaller fragments, and these fragments be ground to powder, before the completion of her organic unity; but united she shall be. God has promised it. He has ordained the means of its accomplishment; appointed the agency that He will employ; and with Him is the residue of the Spirit. His name shall be great from the rising to the setting of the sun. *The Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day shall there be one Lord and his name one.* Zech. 14: 9.

The attentive reader will have perceived that we urge no mere party measure; that we aim at no mere party denominational elevation. We have referred to the creeds of the Reformation Churches, as presenting material amply sufficient for the rearing of a platform on which the Church—the whole Church—of God, as one, may safely stand. We have adverted to the facts, that the Church is in an *unnatural* state, her children divided, and their exertions paralyzed, their spiritual

influence diminished, and their sacred enjoyments abridged, whilst all are subjected to great inconsistencies. In order to the removal of these evils, and the bettering of Zion's condition, our aim is respectfully and earnestly, to invite such as may favour our pages with a perusal, to an intelligent, serious, affectionate, and practical consideration of the whole subject; taking as their guide, in coming to a proper conclusion, the revealed principles of the Church's constitution and administration in the Apostolic age, in connection with the prophetic delineation of them, in their application in the approaching millennial day, when great shall be the peace of the children of Zion. Our desire is, to see the Church upon a platform where she shall be consistent with herself. Where there is marked inconsistency, *there* there is something wrong.

From such an ultimate organical union of the true Reformation Church, under one supreme judicatory, intelligently and evangelically constituted, we are authorized to expect the happiest results. Nothing less than such an organization should be the aim of the friends of sound Presbyterian doctrine and order. It may be more distant than many could wish. On that account it is not the less certain: God has promised it; and his promise he will fulfil, through the enlightened agency of the friends of truth. Every plea put in for it is a step toward its attainment. The more perfectly the subject is understood, and the more fully the mind is imbued with its principle, the sooner and more completely shall be witnessed the banishment from the tabernacles of Israel of a mere party spirit, together with all its narrow hearted tendencies, and blighting influences upon whatever, in the intercourse of saints, is holy and good; the abandonment of the ungainly sight of schisms, in the mystical body of Christ, and the consequent unity of those in one spiritual and visible association who, in mind and heart, are already one; and the silencing of the demand under which the spirit of infidelity and indifference often seek an apology, and, for the moment, find a shield:—"Let Christians agree among themselves upon what we are to believe and do, in order to a participation in all their privileges; and then call upon us to espouse their cause." Other blessed results of such an union will follow; such as the harmonizing of the counsels, and the giving of a concen-

tration to their efforts, in promoting the Redeemer's cause. These have been often urged, and must still be urged upon the Christian mind.

Relief, too, from at least apparent, if not real inconsistencies, always unseemly and enfeebling, would be another desirable result. To this, reference has already been made; and after all that may be offered in apology for the practice,—the admission of those to the deepest and most sacred mysteries of your Ecclesiastical communion, who are arrayed in organized hostility against your constitution,—must be felt as an unpleasant anomaly; and, on the other hand, certainly not pleasant, the exclusion of those from the table of the Lord, in your apartment of the house, whom you admit to be approved servants of Christ, whom you love, and in whose spiritual progress you rejoice. As matters now are, and long have been, in the divided Church, wherever the sons of God may take their places, they are pressed, more or less, with inconsistencies, perplexed with difficulties, or retarded in their course. The actual state of Zion is unnatural. From this condition of things cannot she escape?

In these remarks, the object directly contemplated is, for the attainment of high spiritual ends, the harmonizing of the views and hallowed aims of the Church. But along with that, and in subordination to the full acquisition of its ends, upon the regards of good men there are other objects of high social and moral interest, that prefer their claims. Among these, both in its diffusive and more concentrated forms of exhibition, is the advancement of sound knowledge—the illumination of all the people of all lands; and, in order to this, the establishment, in every corner, of the primary school, and the endowment of the lodgements of a higher literature and science; those lodgements being well tenanted with the votaries of solid education. Without true religion that solid education cannot be had. In different regions of our own country the fact is manifest, that a defective education is a consequence of the divided state of the Church. The Church of God is the parent of every school, lower and higher, where an education, formative of character of high moral worth, is obtained. This character will be elevated in proportion as the religion that presides over the forms and class-books of the seminary, is pure. At this day, the social

state of the world addresses itself to the Christian philanthropist. The indications of divine Providence, in conjunction with the voice uttered from the pages of prophecy, announce the approach of a coming storm—a storm that threatens to sweep, with a disastrous rush, over the fairest fields of the moral world. Every where the condition of society is not without symptoms of a relaxation of its bonds, unfitting it to sustain the violence of the tempest.

We have no disposition to take our stand by the side of the alarmist. Amidst the fears entertained by many good and observing men, in other lands as well as in our own country, we are inclined to believe that there is an under-current of happy influence running in the right direction,—a conservative moral power,—which, when put in requisition, will, in the day of trials, be adequate to the preservation, strengthening, and perfecting of our own social fabric, as well as to the reformation of others. The means and immediate subordinate agency by which this influence must be put forth, God has chiefly lodged in Zion. To give that influence the proper direction, and to insure its appropriate effect, the Church must, both in fact and in form, be **ONE**. Of this the great Adversary is well apprized, and to it the friends of social order, of sound learning, of rational liberty, and of true religion, should not be inattentive.

Upon man, in the entire circle of his relations, condition, and business of life, the religion of Messiah has indisputable claims. For time and eternity, that religion embraces the whole of man. Jesus is *Head over all things to the Church*. That the claims of this Headship may be asserted, its rights not invaded, and the truth respecting it neither corrupted nor perverted, its bearing upon all these things, the Christian ought to know. Two classes of rights—the religious and civil rights of man—distinct, yet in close alliance with one another, in a well ordered society, will be guarded with a jealous care. The guardianship of these, by the Christian patriot, will not be confided either to the avowed infidel, or to the superstitious votary of Rome. The history of ages warns against the latter; the Gallic reign of terror admonishes of the danger of trusting the former. On this subject the principles of the Bible are those of the enlightened statesman. Those principles will not sanction the invasion of

any natural right of man. Guided by them, the patriot, in his measures, will keep aloof from all that is violent, cruel or unjust. And, whilst decided, he will be Christian. What the Reformation so auspiciously commenced, but did not complete, must yet be accomplished. The public mind, emancipated from a ghostly thralldom, must not be left to float in the disturbed and misty atmosphere of indistinct notions respecting rational freedom and political rights. The law of our nature speaks as clearly of the rights of the outer as of the inner man. The latter cannot be fully enjoyed where the principles of the former are either unknown, denied, or imperfectly understood. But upon this aspect of the subject, we may not stay longer than to suggest, that the public mind must be taught to seek, in social life, permanent rest, order, and happiness, under the established regulations of the well-defined, and well-understood principles of Bible law. Upon this subject, the Christian Church has a work to accomplish, of which she has not yet sufficiently thought. Upon it the light of inspiration must be spread. The Church, the Church in unity, only, can accomplish the task. Till she becomes ONE, the work will remain undone.

SECTION IV.

SUMMARY.

By divine ordination the Church of God is One. In fundamental characteristics and essential invisible privileges, every where she is actually One. In visible organization, profession, and administration she ought to be One. This divine corporation, nevertheless, is, if not criminally, at least unhappily, divided into parties,—parties greater and smaller, sometimes hostile, often unkind, and, except when they cross each other's path, toward one another in general very indifferent.

In its evil work, to the distracting of the counsels, breaking of the judgment, and the enfeebling of the power of these divided parts, schism has long been active. The nature of the subject, the dangers that threaten Zion, the advancement of her spiritual interests, and her efficient action in the fulfilment of the duties of her high vocation, demand, loudly demand, the organical unity of that Body. The bringing in to the fellowship

of saints the wanderers in the wastes of unrenovated nature; the conducting of Zion's children to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; the advancement of the mystical Body of Christ to its destined fulness of stature; and the bringing over the nations of earth the benign, moral, and evangelical influence of the true religion, and thus connecting all the relations of man, visibly and really, with the throne of Heaven, are some of the aims of the Church's vocation, and for the attainment of which, her organic harmony appears to be indispensable. In the publicly authorized Confessions of the Reformation Church, the material, we again affirm, is ample for a platform on which, as one, the whole may firmly stand.

Those Confessions framed in different lands, and under great variety of circumstances, are remarkable for their harmony of thought in all that is holy and of eternal interest to man. In the all-wise and almighty Providence of God, under the overshadowing wings of the American Eagle, many of the descendants and successors of those who formed and embraced these symbols of the Reformation, possess a remarkable unity of circumstances, affording an opportunity of distinguished character for intercommunion of mind and heart, in the conducting of the cause of their God and the cities of their God; in a happy exemption from all profane interference of secular power; an exemption which their Fathers did not enjoy. The results of this happy intercourse of mind with mind, if true to themselves and their great cause, may be effected in perfect consistency with the maintenance and advancement of every article of truth, and principle of moral and evangelical order. As the most effectual means of obtaining the ultimate end, these must be distinctly affirmed. The opposing of error is much, but the rearing of the fabric of truth is more. The subversion of the former is easier than the establishment of the latter.

In the nature of things there have been, are, and must be, among the people of God, diversities of gifts and attainments in religion, both as a matter of outward profession and of inward experience. They are made up of babes, young men, and fathers. This fact admonishes the Church that, in the statement and administration of the conditions of her communion, whilst securing the interests of truth and order by guarding, in principle and in practice, with care, against Latitudina-

rianism, she must stand aloof from the evils of a *Procrustesian* policy ; being satisfied with the admeasurements of the Temple, the Altar, and the worshipers, there, according to the standard given by the Angel of the covenant, the Head of Zion, himself; willing to admit to the fellowship of saints all whom God would admit,—admit them upon God's own terms—the law of the house. In acting thus there will be no declension, while every one may advance; no coming down, while all are urged to pursue the upward way.

To carry into effect the spirit of these proposals, those who engage in the attempt must put in requisition, time, thought, candour, good temper, self-denial, going forward with enlarged hearts and enlightened heads, together with much spirituality of mind. Are these in our possession? Or in these are the Churches defective? To success in the great work, much seeking of and reliance upon light and sacred influences from above are indispensably requisite. With an eye to an end so blessed, shall we be thus engaged? Thus employed, each department of Zion within itself, *by its own solemn deliberations*, and well advised decisions as to what is needed, what can be done, and what will be satisfactory, will prepare the way for mutual consultation, and with others concurrent action. The sacred league referred to, if adopted, will declare the earnestness of the parties, and, at once, establish a mutual confidence in the fidelity of all. This course will save from the dangers of premature, partial, and ill-advised measures; whilst the parties engaged will be found giving, upon an extended scale, a practical and happy bearing to the hallowed principles of their fathers. This will be to act in the spirit of the greatest of the Reformers,—Calvin; and in accordance with the law of the Master's house, it will be an endeavour to maintain *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, and to act in the spirit of the Master's prayer, still offered before the throne, *that they all may be one*. It will be an attempt to do something toward the binding up the breach of God's people, and the healing of the stroke of their wound; and at the same time, an humble and hallowed concurrence with Him who, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, is gathering together in one, all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth.—*Eph. 1: 10*.

THE END.