

Symposium.

WHAT MAY BE DONE FOR THE MUTUAL APPROACH OF CHRISTIANS OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS.

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The hindrances to the reunion of Protestant Christendom are manifold, but may for the most part be classified under a few heads:—

(1) National differences and State alliances dividing the churches of one land from those of another by legislation.

(2) Differences in types of piety which find it hard to understand each other and harder still to sympathize with each other.

(3) Differences in doctrine that seem antagonistic and mutually destructive.

(4) Differences in government and modes of administration which are apparently irreconcilable.

(5) Differences in worship and in the mode of administering the sacraments.

Of these the first two would probably present no very serious difficulty if they were the only ones. However formidable they may appear under present circumstances, they would melt away like barriers of snow in springtime if once a genuine union feeling were brought to bear upon them. Even if they refused to disappear altogether, they would remain only in such modified form as would offer no bar to virtual union. The real problem is to overcome the hindrances arising from differences in doctrine, government and

worship. Are those insuperable? If not, how can they be successfully dealt with?

In stating my views briefly on these points I propose to speak quite frankly. The time seems opportune for doing so. There are no delicate union negotiations on at the present time such as are likely to be hindered by free speech, nor any prospect of such in the immediate future; and in view of recent discussions in ecclesiastical synods and elsewhere, it is clear that the true cause of union will be best promoted by saying out plainly what is in our minds all around. If some illusions are dispelled we shall the more speedily discover what is really worth trying for.

In order to make my position clear, it may be as well to say at the very outset that there are some of these differences which I do not believe can ever be so composed as to secure any kind of harmony, and if by any skillfully contrived scheme of union they could be embraced within one organization, evil would be the result rather than good. Any bridge that might be thrown over the chasms would offer only a more convenient point of conflict. There would be no peace save by the extermination of one party or the other.