

that the image of God is acquired, and the vividness of that likeness is just in proportion to the contemplation we give; or, to change the figure, he who does not feed on the great central truths of the Bible, but who occupies himself more with sectarian peculiarities or subordinate questions, is feeding not perhaps on ashes, but on husks, or on bread which like that of the Gibeonites is dry and mouldy. His faith cannot be strong; his hope must be feeble; the comforts of God will be small with him; and he cannot grow up to the measure of the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus.

The exhibition of unity among christians would have a most favourable bearing on mankind. The visible disunion of the christian church has been a stumbling block to the world, and has strengthened the hands of the infidel. From Lord Herbert, downwards, the deistical writers have availed themselves of the weapon furnished by the visible disunion of the church, and have agreed that a system which admitted of such conflicting opinions among its adherents could possess nothing like certainty, and that a church professedly one, and yet split into a number of isolated or opposing sects, must be a contradiction. In the disjointed and disordered state of the christian church, which is the aspect presented to the world, more especially since the Reformation, arising out of the abuse of the right of private judgment, then nobly vindicated, some are apt to suspect, and others ready to avow, that to a subject so fruitful in particular disputes must attach a general uncertainty, and that a religion founded on revelation could never have occasioned such discordancy of principle and practice among its disciples. There is abundance of evidence to prove that the divisions and conflicting opinions of the church have been a source of painful perplexity to the weak. How many, for example, in our day have sought relief in the infallibility and uniformity of Rome. And while many have been driven to Rome, others have been led in an opposite direction to infidelity, and still more have been made to sink in the slough of indifference to the truth. But opposite effects would result from the exhibition of unity. It would tell mightily, as a demonstration of the divinity of christianity. When the churches, though not renouncing their denominational distinctions, agree to give the prominence to the great truths on which they were all united, to which their intrinsic importance entitles them, and to manifest their agreement by combining for their defence and maintenance, and extension, unbelief will be driven from one of its refuges of lies. No set of men will be able to say, as now they do say. Agree among yourselves first, and then manifesting yourselves what you profess to be, the disciples of one Master, come and ask us to join you: or like Pilate, be tempted with a sneer, to ask, when truth was mentioned. What is truth? or to argue, "there is no such thing as truth in religion. If truth were there, there would be a general agreement on it. When truth is evident it is impossible to doubt, or for people to be divided into factions. Is there any sect in geometry or experimental philosophy?" And if this would be, the effect of mere unanimity of sentiment made visible, what would be its effect combined as must be the case, with oneness of heart, with purity, disinterestedness and benevolence? Such a unity it would be felt, no power short of omnipotence could produce. The exhibition would constrain