

are far from God," "they are brought nigh by the blood of Christ;"—if these are "condemned," they are "justified,"—if these "walk after the flesh," they "walk after the Spirit;"—if these have "their portion in this life," "their treasure is in Heaven;"—if these, by their practical rebellion, habitually ask "who is the Lord, that he should reign over us?" their predominant and prayerful enquiry is "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" As light can have no fellowship with darkness, nor righteousness with unrighteousness, nor Christ with Belial—so these two classes, characteristically and irreconcilably distinct, can have no communion with each other. No man who is not renewed in the spirit of his mind, and is not known, by the fruits of holy obedience to be partaken of "like precious faith," can be admitted into a Christian Church, without polluting and perverting it from the proper purpose of its constitution; and should the majority of its members, and much more the whole consist of such—then it loses the essential nature of a Christian community—it is essentially *un-Christian*—it has a "name to live, whilst it is dead"—it is the sepulchre of souls; "*whitewashed*" it may be, and garnished" so as to hide its pollutions—but still a sepulchre, filled with loathsome putrefaction.

The mutual association and combination of Christians, under the general designation of "a Christian Church," arises at once from what may be called the *instincts* of the renewed mind—the exigencies of the Christian life, and the relative practical purposes of that high and holy vocation whereby they are called. Men are social beings—nor do they cease to be so, when they become "the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." They cannot now indeed hold "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"—they cannot "walk as other Gentiles walk"—they are "as men wondered at" for the bond of sympathy betwixt them and other men is broken. But there are some like minded with themselves, and what more natural, more suitable, more congruous with their mental and moral constitution, thus renewed and sanctified, than that they should be brought together, and kept together by the strong affinities of mutual resemblance and relationship? It is well worthy of remark, that very little is said in the New Testament, as to the duty of Church Membership; and if the reason of this be asked, we have it in the fact that *specific directions on this subject are superseded by the social tendencies of regenerated nature*. No human legislator ever dreamt of enforcing, by special statute, the mutual association of mankind. It is not law that brings men together, and originates those natural alliances which form the basis of society. It is instinct—individual helplessness—the irrepressible desire of mutual communication. Man needs no law to prevent his preference of a life of solitude and estrangement from his fellows; nor does the Christian need it. He longs for companionship, sympathy, communion, and he finds these in association with those who, like himself have "passed from death unto life," and are "seeking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

It is thus that Christian Churches are originated and augmented. The communion of two or three in the exercises, enjoyments, and practical influence of true religion, forms a *nucleus* around which others are drawn, by the strong attraction of spiritual affinities, until, in the language of inspired prophecy, the "little one becomes a thousand, and the small one a great nation." Christians are drawn together, not by the force of law, but by the superior power of a renewed and spiritual affection,

—in one word, by *Love*; and if love was perfect—if each member of each Church was wholly sanctified—if all were as the Angels, or as the redeemed in Heaven, this law of love would stand instead of every other, and secure all the purposes of their sacred fellowship. But such is not the case. None of them has yet attained, either is already perfect; all are, in comparison of what they shall be, in a state of pupillage, of discipline, of moral preparation for the heavenly world.

(To be continued.)

THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE.

NO. IV.—BISHOP HOBART.

The following remarks, by an American high-churchman, deserve attention for their own sake, as well as from the quarter from which they come:—

"With the union of church and state commenced corruptions of Christianity. And so firmly persuaded am I of the deleterious effects of this union, that if I must choose the one or the other, I would take the persecution of the state rather than its favour, the frowns rather than the smiles, she repulses rather than the embraces. It is the eminent privilege of our church, that, evangelical in her doctrines and her worship, and apostolic in her ministry, she stands as the primitive church did before the first Christian emperor loaded her with the honours that proved more injurious to her than the relentless persecutions of his imperial predecessors. In this enviable land of religious freedom, our church, in common with every other religious denomination, asks nothing from the state, but that which she does not fear will ever be denied her—protection—equal and impartial protection."—*The United States of America compared with some European Countries, particularly England*. By the Right Rev. JOHN HENRY HOBART, D. D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York. Pp. 36, 37. London, 1826.

NO. V.—CHARLES HODGE, D.D.

"The great question," says Professor Hodge, of Princeton, well known in this country by his excellent Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, "whether the church can sustain itself without the aid of the state, has never, perhaps, been subjected to so fair and extended a trial since the fourth century, as at present in our own country. As far as the experiment has hitherto been made, the result is as favourable as the friends of religious liberty could reasonably expect. Two centuries have elapsed since the first persecuted settlers of New England set their feet on these shores, to rear a church in all the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The population of that section of the country has increased from a few individuals to eighteen hundred thousand; and there is one minister to every thousand souls—a proportion greater than in some of the oldest countries of Europe; and there is, doubtless, no equal population upon earth to which the Gospel is administered with greater