

Next there is the hindrance they interpose to re-union with our separated brethren, who may well say to us, "Physician, heal thyself," when we appeal to their conscience in behalf of the unity which is certainly after the mind of Christ.

Then, there is the injury done to the general cause of religion, which is discredited when religious men in the same Church are seen bitterly assailing one another's religious principles, one another's honesty and loyalty to the Church and the truth, and when a general spirit of distrust and suspicion prevails.

Still more deplorable is the alienation of the people from their pastors. Where the spirit of party prevails, any one, no matter how insignificant and unworthy, can arouse suspicion and distrust. It is enough to give the spiritual pastor an obnoxious name, and his influence is spoiled. What words can express the blessing which a true pastor is to his flock when his efforts to draw them daily closer to God in watchfulness and prayer are met by affectionate readiness on their part to avail themselves of his help and counsel in the difficulties of their religious life. But how grievously in hundreds of our parishes are all the pastor's labors marred by the invasion of party spirit! If proof be wanted, you have but to glance through the lives of the most saintly men whom God has given to our Church in this century and read how their loving labors were hindered and thwarted by the spirit of party.

Most of all do I deplore the injury done by party spirit to personal religion, not only in those who yield themselves to its influence, but in the Church in general. The prevalence of party spirit vulgarizes the religious temper, lowers its tone, retards its healthy growth. Personal religion runs low when party spirit prevails. How opposed in every feature are the two portraits drawn by our Lord in the

Beatitudes and by St. Paul in his More Excellent Way to the odious temper and character which party spirit tends to form, when the eye of the soul is turned from its inward watch over the heart, and loyalty to party takes the place of genuine devotion to God!

5. It is of such divisions as these that St. Paul is treating in the section of his Epistle from which my text is taken.

His words apply remarkably, I think, to the religious condition of the Anglican Church everywhere throughout the world and certainly to our own portion of it here in Canada. There were in the Roman Church, then, divisions upon questions of religious principle and duty as there are in the Anglican Church now. There were two parties as strictly defined as the parties which occupy so prominent a place in our Church to-day, parties evidently separated by very marked lines and alienated by very bitter feelings, each party finding it difficult even to acknowledge the other as fellow-Christians. The Apostle devotes a large section of his Epistle to reconciling these alienated brethren, and nothing could be more beautiful than the healing wisdom and tenderness with which he draws them together in mutual forbearance and love.

And how does he proceed? First, he does not deny the importance of the religious principle at issue, nor does he conceal his own view as to which was in the right, but he reminds them that there was something, which both had lost sight of, higher and more important than that question. First there was the great principle of Christian Liberty—liberty of thought and liberty of expressing that thought—liberty as one of our greatest divines has expressed it in a memorable treatise—Liberty of Prophesying. And, next, there was something higher and more sacred than even that—the sacredness of Conscience and the absolute obedience which it rightfully claims.