

To come up to the perfect standard, however, of the true spirit and character of a Christian Church, none of us are sufficient; at the same time, we should beware of putting up a false standard or criterion, for this would be a source of positive error. He, therefore, according to these views, is the sectarian—he is the bigot—he is the schismatic and the heretic, who wounds the spirit of charity—fosters spiritual pride and arrogance—begets jealousy and contention—destroys unity and brotherly love in the Christian world, by laying undue stress on external forms of Religion,—like the Jews of old, who were scrupulous in paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and all manner of herbs, but omitted the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and the love of God. Those Christians commit a similar error, who look chiefly at things external and adventitious, or at things which are not, certainly, essential and vital in Religion, as the test of its character. We would, therefore, conclude with this earnest advice to all, and especially to those who are under our pastoral charge, that they be mainly careful to preserve and to cherish the beautiful, the divine spirit of charity—that spirit which unites Christians as the members of one body, and notwithstanding little differences and external distinctions, establishes among them a perfect sympathy, so that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or, if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it, so that there may be no schism in the body, but the members may have the same care one for another. The liberty which we claim, brethren, to ourselves, let us never envy to others. The rights and privileges which we feel it our duty, at the present crisis, to assert with temperate firmness and meekness, but with resolution, let us never even wish to infringe, under any circumstances, in the case of others—but contrarywise, in the spirit of that Religion, which teacheth us to seek not our own, but every one also another's good, let us ever be ready to assert and enforce, so far as we properly may, the rights of our fellow Christians, and even, if need be, of our adversaries. It is now full time for Christians to forget differences, and still more, ancient animosities,—(alas! that such a word should be applicable!)—and strive, henceforth, to “maintain the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace;”—let us have only one rivalry and contention—who shall excel most in the spirit of charity and humility—who shall most promote, by preaching and by example, the pure spirit and benign influence of the Religion which we profess—of our common Christianity.

We have, it is true, brethren, like our forefathers, been compelled with painful reluctance, to struggle against opposition to our Church, and to what we deem her undoubted rights; but blessed be God, very different is the character of the contest, and very different, we trust, will be the spirit in which it shall be conducted on both sides. The same happy issue, we anticipate with confidence—knowing that we have an enlightened and paternal government to protect our rights; that we have the spirit of an enlightened age to support and