

It needs very little "machinery" for a few dozens or a few hundreds of Christians to carry on a church of Christ so as to make it a "light in a dark place." *But it wants much of grace!* and this being present, all will be well.

Had I lived two hundred years ago, I should have run much risk of being considered a "root and branch man"; and might have had to brave the pillory, if not the fire, by running my head against prelatist tyranny on the one hand, or organized Parish-Puritanism on the other. But, nevertheless, I see no way of *getting* right, but by going away back, and *beginning* right! What would become of all our denominational missionary societies and denominational colleges, I don't know, except as they are turned into undenominational ones—a feat much easier to be done than many people think.

And now, recurring to a favourite maxim of mine—"Never object to anything, unless you have something better to propose"—I would suggest what must, I think, be the beginning of this great reform—a reform, which, when accomplished, will shake Satan's kingdom to its centre—and that is a scheme whereby a minister may be freely invited to supply a pulpit, or "exchange" pulpits, or become a pastor, from one present denomination to another, or a professor from one denominational college to another. People will never come together till they get somewhat acquainted with one another; and I know of no other possible "first step" so feasible as this for a first step—a step so invitingly within reach! I have a very moderate opinion of either the wisdom or the sincerity of the deliverances of the Church of England, as announced within the last twelve months, respecting "church union," while their pulpits are still obstinately closed to all other ministers than their own; and where, in undenominational ministerial associations an Episcopalian clergyman is seldom or never seen.

Our difficulties are neither unique nor unprecedented. In the Apostles' days the Jewish Christians clung to circumcision quite as strongly as the Baptists now do to immersion. Some of them disputed Paul's call to Apostleship quite as vigorously as any "Churchman" disputes the ordination of "Dissenters." Many Judean Christians were just as eager to have the church modelled after the hierarchy of the temple as any prelatist of the present day; while many Greeks, or Grecian Jews,

were as enthusiastic to have the church formed on the model of their popular civic assemblies, or on the democratic model of the independent synagogue, as any "Latter Day Man" of Cromwell's time, or any modern "Puritan" among ourselves.

Let me recount the probable *steps* in the preliminary processes of this great reform:—

1. A conviction of its being a right thing.
2. A friendly discussion of it in all its bearings.
3. An oft sitting by each other's ecclesiastical "firesides"; in other words, often and friendly inter-communication, in pew and pulpit—what the German Lutherans have a name for, but only a name—"Kanzel-gemeinschaft."

4. A gradual un-sectarianizing of our missionary societies—a readiness to send out the right man, even if he has been brought up on the other side of some ecclesiastical "fence" from ourselves. It would not have hurt the Methodists to have sent out William Carey, nor the Church of England to have sent out Robert Moffatt.

5. A disestablishing of State churches.
6. A necessary and gradual dwindling away, not necessarily of the *existence*, but of the *authority* of "councils" of whatever name—congress, convocation, conference, assembly, synod, union—as the rights and powers of the local church begin to be asserted and used. I call attention to the word "used," for it is not so much, in any case, that the local church is tyrannized over, as that the local church has leaned on outside authority to guide it in its own proper affairs, and do for it its own proper work.

7. This union will probably assume shape as a "confederation" of the various denominations. The first united work done will be, naturally, in the Foreign Mission field, then in the Home Mission field; and by that time the influence of the "denomination" will be getting small and obsolete, and the idea of the one glorious, universal church of Christ will have taken such possession of men's minds that all remaining obstacles will be quietly yet firmly set aside, and the discipleship of earth begin to fully comprehend the Lord's saying, no less prophetic than weighty: "One is your Master, even Christ, and ALL YE ARE BRETHREN!"

A London lady died lately, leaving £10,000 to the Dogs' Home at Battersea, while to her executor, a poor parson, with a large family, was left £100 as a legacy.