

Romanism; hence we read of the Churches in districts, as the Churches of Achaia, of Macedonia, of Galatia, of Judea, of Asia, of Bethynia, &c. This was a safe sort of union, because it secured the co-operation of the Churches without endangering their liberties by the centralization of spiritual power in any individual. It was conservative both of the liberty and the strength of the Churches. It was God's plan of union. And the demonstrations of history confirm and vindicate its excellence. In fact it resembled our own republican plan of union, in which the interaction of right, liberty, and authority are admirably harmonized. Christ and the holy apostles, by the Holy Scriptures, constituted the general government, and each particular church, bound in all duty by the force of its own doctrine and God's authority, to co-operate with others and to admit nothing exclusive into its constitution, nothing that would dis sever it from the communion of all saints. The primitive Christians were so jealous of their rights and liberties, and of this plan of union, that they did not allow two meeting-houses to exist in the same city for the first three hundred years of Christian history. Now, touching the position of my brethren, they are standing with the living oracles open before them; and this scheme of union is looking them full in the face. They are its advocates.

In the prosecution of this advocacy, we are subject to error. We may be imperfectly informed in regard to the points to plead from. We may confound things that are different, or make distinctions where there is no difference, or run into extremes; there is a wisdom necessary to the elimination of truth; there is a wisdom of ways and means; a wisdom of practice to join extremes, and make truth a reality. The Scriptures discriminate, I believe, between the following matters:

1. The basis of union.
2. The bond of peace; and
3. The bond of perfection.

1st. The first of these is the Messiahship; the second is the solemn considerations that there is but one Christian body or Church—one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father to all the brethren. The third is love. Love is the bond of perfection; our moral nature is perfected by love. It is the central virtue, and sheds its radiance over all our religious instincts, feelings, and passions; it is the sapphire of the soul; the virtue of the virtues. It is one thing, therefore, to sit down as a Church on the Messiahship; it is a second to