

THE GOSPEL TRIBUNE,

FOR ALLIANCE AND INTERCOMMUNION

THROUGHOUT

Evangelical Christendom.

VOLUME I.

OCTOBER, 1854.

NUMBER 6.

"One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

The Topic for the Month,

In fortifying the main positions of the *Tribune* much pleasure is experienced, in now presenting this valuable paper; so as to secure its being read by thousands, who otherwise might long have been deprived of the benefits, of having its heavenly influences brought into contact with their Christian sympathies.

MOTIVES AND ARGUMENTS TO UNION.

BY THE REV. JOHN HARRIS.

In proceeding to the enforcement of some of the most cogent reasons for Christian union, it might be proper to anticipate two inquiries, which might otherwise impair the desired impression. "Is the present a suitable season for bringing the question of union before the Church? And, have we any rational hope of promoting such union?"

1. In brief reply to the first inquiry, we remark, that as the obligation to Christian union is perpetual, the obligation of enforcing it is perpetual also; so that from the first moment of division in the Church to the final sounding of the trump of God, the inculcation of the duty can never be absolutely out of place—that if the present be a season of peculiar distraction in the Church, so much the more reason for labouring to restore it to its right mind—that as the darkest hour is commonly that which precedes the dawn, so it is historically true, that the gloomiest season of the Church has been generally that selected by God for saying to it, "Arise, and shine, for thy light has come"—that we really know of no time having elapsed in the past, more suitable than the present, for the inculcation of union; since the subject, whenever raised, could scarcely have failed to awaken discussion on the party questions now in debate—that as to waiting for some more suitable period in the future,—as we have no right to expect that such time will ever arrive unless we employ the appropriate means, we are solemnly bound to do all we can to hasten it on—and, finally, that it is our sober and cheering conviction that, inflamed as is the state of party feeling in the Church at present, there is (and partly on that very account) as deep a conviction of the necessity of union, and as earnest and powerful a desire after it, in many a Christian bosom, as at any preceding period; that the number of such is increasing; and that a scriptural appeal on the subject is much more likely

to affect the heart of the Christian now, with the torn and mangled state of the Church before his eyes, than as if we were deluding each other with the cry of "peace, peace, when there is no peace."

2. Admitting, however, that the present is as suitable as any other season, and in some respects even more so, for the introduction of our subject, "have we," it might be asked, "any rational hope of promoting the union of the Church?" To which we reply, that when we recall to mind the long-established reign of those prejudices by which Christians are divided—the almost uniform and total failure of the numerous, various, and strenuous endeavours which have been made to heal them—the still prevailing disinclination to second such attempts—and the formidable obstacles which must be removed before a general union of Christians can be effected—we freely confess that were we to be sanguine of any thing like *speedy and general success* one moment, our fears, whether justifiable or not, would arise and rebuke us the next. On the other hand, we are not without grounds for expecting that a considerable *approximation* to Christian union is at hand. Such an approximation would be only in harmony with the spirit of the age, and with those various movements in society, which seem destined to be the means of temporally enlightening and improving the human race; and though the Church may only be indirectly affected by such influence, still influenced it necessarily must be by the tendencies of that society in which it exists. The sword of persecution, too, sleeps in its scabbard; and the spirit of intolerance rarely ventures forth in the light of day. Our hopes, however, rest, under God, chiefly on influences of a purely religious nature. The growing diffusion of scriptural knowledge in the present day, cannot fail gradually to bring into question the existence of whatever is antisciptural and antisocial in the Church. Those great benevolent and missionary enterprises, in which the best of every denomination are embarked in obedience to the will of their common Lord, make them feel increasingly the need of practical union and general co-operation; in order, both to make the most of these resources at home, and to avoid the fatal result of visible disunion and eventual collision before the eyes of the heathen abroad. And, more and mightier than all, the prayer presented by the great Intercessor; and repeated by his followers in every subsequent age, "that they all might be one." As certainly as that prayer was offered, it will be answered; so that at this moment its accomplishment is nearer than at any preceding moment, and the next mo-