

UNION WITH ROME.

That the Oxford school (says the *Catholic Herald*) is not averse to union with Rome, maybe gathered from the following description of the helplessness and misery attendant on separation. It is taken from a spiritual article on the "*New Oxford Theological Statutes*," which appears in the last number of the "*British Critic*."

"We must confess that we have no wish to see the Church of England in possession of a very strong organ for securing uniformity of opinion, even though we could expect that uniformity to be of a very high kind, and a decided improvement on the present day. Of course, in saying this, we know we are liable to misconstruction, but we are far too sure of our grounds to be silent on that account. In the first place, it is not the Church of England, but the State of England, which is very far from identical with the Church, that possesses the organ, whatever there is now, and whatever there is to be. Then, what right has the Church of England, or any other 'national church,' to such an organ? Where are her credentials? What text, what interpretation, what traditional belief or commission? There are actually in the Church of England all shades of opinion, all varieties of tone. Is it not the necessary condition, and even the fair penalty of her insulted state, that there should be such uncomfortable divisions within her pale? If that insulation be ever so unavoidable, and, on the whole, ever so justifiable, still it is a state of schism; it is a misfortune; it is a weakness, an infirmity of 'thirty and eight years,' and as such must be expected to tell in certain palpable fruits. We cannot be sick and strong at the same time. We cannot bargain for the name and semblance of a fever, yet to be as vigorous and comfortable as ever. Thus, as it appears to us, is it with our miserable insulation. We have not, and must not expect to have the authority over men's consciences which the undivided church had. We give up union—then we must give up strength. If it be as we say, the working of the new Anglican Sorbonne will shew it. It will be peremptory, and will perhaps secure the implicit confidence of those who are inclined to a 'National Faith;' but the more thoroughly it overawes the judgment of the numerous and respectable classes, in a mere statistical point of view not undeserving of consideration, viz. those who undervalue all church authority, and those who look to a higher one than ought to be assumed by a national establishment. The history of this country under the existing schism sufficiently shows that, however respectable and venerable our branch of the church is esteemed, and ought to be esteemed, still there is a certain point beyond which its authority will not bear straining. If, as of itself, as an integral, individual body, it once pretends to speak in the lofty language of Universality, and claims for itself alone the blessed promises of Christ's presence, through His Holy Spirit guiding the church to all truth, all men are immediately conscious of its utter insufficiency so to speak. They detect usurpation ;

and pleading our church's own fatal example of division, and apparent indifference to Catholic unity, they assume for themselves individually a similar license, and leave her bosom. This is a question of fact, not of duty. There should be little doubt in the mind of the humble and reverential Christian, as to what authority and what communion he ought to consider as having the primary place to his regards and affection in his kingdom. As long as his conscience allows him, his regard for the Church Catholic should lead him to continue in this branch of it. We are merely saying that as a matter of fact which none can help recognizing, however differently people may view it, the claim of our church as a branch of the Church Catholic, is asserted under grievous difficulty and disparagement: viz. the too flagrant fact that she is separated from the rest of the Church Catholic, and at utter hostility with it. Our church satisfactorily accounts for the fact; all, or nearly all, declare themselves fully satisfied with her account: but unfortunately the fact remains, and in a standing lesson, and a pregnant example. While the fact does so remain, be it only for a few more generations, or till the consummation of all things, the Church of England must assert its authority over opinion with a peculiar delicacy and reserve, and even then must expect only a very partial and precarious submission. It must remember that it has neither the same human aids, nor the same Divine promise towards truth, as those enjoyed by the Church Catholic. Being only local and so under local influences, it must *a priori* expect to fall so far short of the truth. And under this condition, natural modesty, as well as right reason, will suggest that she ought to entreat rather than command, and continue her old bearing, which has been rather that of a subordinate tribunal, than as a court of final appeal."

"Let them assail what they think Popery directly, if they please, but not by letting loose upon it rationalism. What could possibly play more into the hands of Rome than to rationalize the English church? In point of fact, no event ever did inspire such a jealousy, and indignation, and disgust, in a certain set of Romanist agitators as the Censure of 1836. The creeds are the great stop-gap of the English Church against undue and factious aggression on the part of Rome; we say undue and factious, for, of course, the ultimate tendency of all truth is a true and truthful union."

"An explanation of a passage in an Article on certain works of Bishop Jewel, published in the *British Critic* for July, 1841," has recently appeared from the London press, and is reviewed in the last number of this Periodical. The concluding paragraph is introduced by the reviewer with these words:

"We are only embodying the sentiments with which the writer before us, speaking on the subject of union with Rome, concludes his Letter:

"We have no inclination to recognize union with the rest of Christendom as a first object. An inestimable blessing, of

course all christians must esteem it, and accordingly, an object among others. But our first and immediate duties are nearer home. Let us seek then, to purify our own hearts, and act up to our professions, let us love and edify one another; let us make common cause with holiness wherever found in alliance with the truth, or with a truth-seeking temper. Let us throw ourselves with humility and confidence into the duties which Providence has placed in our way; so may we be assured that He who holds hearts in His hand will dispose our estranged brethren towards us, and us towards them, and cause His One Holy Catholic Church to be in the end the joy of the whole earth. Ours, it is true, may be the work, and our children's the glory; we may die, (as one has beautifully said) in sight, but not as yet in possession of the promised land; still, better far to live and die in banishment and isolation, than to anticipate God's time, and purchase his blessings at the expense even of one even among those meek and dutiful tempers, which are the indispensable conditions of their value."

A beautiful passage is extracted in the notices of books, from a work of Mr. H. W. Wilberforce, on "Church Unity."

"Christians were not always divided amongst themselves as we now see them. No; there was a time, before Satan had succeeded in setting the east from the west, in setting up the south against the north, & in dividing each against itself,—there was a time when they were, in reality, one body. The Church, which now lies shivered, and only here and there reflects from one or another of her fragments a spark of the Divine glory, was then one unbroken mirror, giving back, although from an earthly substance, the very image of her Father which is in heaven. Then there was no geographical religion, such as our eyes see; no English church, and French church and Roman church, and Greek church, except in as much as the different portions of the same society happened to dwell, strangers & foreigners, among the inhabitants of one or another nation. Then were all Christians one, wherever they dwelt; and wherever they journeyed they found brethren. Then was it not, as now, that a Christian bishop, or priest, or layman, by crossing a river or a mountain find himself among men of another communion, from whose altars and worship he is shut out, and by whom his place in the Church (whatever it may chance to be) is denied him; but, furnished with letters of peace from the church at home, he might travel from Britain to India or Ethiopia, and in every city, wherever he went, he was acknowledged, loved, and honored, according to his place and station in the church as a father or a son, or a brother, as the case might be, by every Christian throughout the world. He might wander, indeed, among men of other tongues, and a strange language, but in every place he found the words of the prophet fulfilled, that even in the land of Egypt there were cities speaking the language of Canaan; he found the church to be, indeed, a heaven upon earth."

"The doctrine of a visible church—the one Catholic and Apostolic Church—no seems to us to view through a very Anglican medium—in fact to make very little of it. He seems to imply the possibility of one part of the church being independent of, i. e. under no actual existing obligations to the rest. Throwing on Rome the whole blame of the schism, as if the English State had been perfectly innocent, and had merely acted on the defensive, he does not appear to admit, what the historian of such an event ought to have put prominently forward, that a schism from the rest of the Church Catholic, however caused, is a most miserable condition, and one to be avoided by the utmost stretch of all allowable means, one likely to be a most unspeakable hindrance to the prayers and other services of the separated church, and a tremendous impediment in the way of Christian perfection. This we say fearlessly—we would say it if all the works of the Fathers—and other records of the first four centuries, had perished—if we had nothing but the Bible to look to—if we had nothing but the 17th chapter of St. John from which to derive our notion and estimate of Christian unity."

The identity of Oxford sentiments with those of Roman divines, is no longer considered an unwarrantable imputation to be at once repelled. In a review of Goode's *Divine Rule of faith and practice*, it is thus noticed.

"The other topic to which we have alluded is the supposed identity of those doctrines with the received Roman theology. But this of course would only make their truth more probable, as manifesting so great an amount of consent for them in so many churches. The time, we trust, is past, when it shall be considered an argument against opinions, otherwise probable, that they are held by all other parts of Catholic Christendom. Still less, surely, will this arrogant claim to exclusive purity be allowed weight in the present case; for Mr. Goode's line of argument on the whole, be it observed, is not that the Oxford writers have changed their own opinions but that they have mistaken the sentiments of the Roman church. He maintains against them, *c. g.* not that they have ceased to condemn the enforcement of truths as essential without Scripture sanction, but that they were in error from the first in supposing that the Roman church does so enforce them; (vol. i. p. 61, also p. 553); not that they blame less than they formerly did, disregard of antiquity, but that it is really no Roman Catholic principle to neglect it (p. 82). Is theology then to be the only subject on which we shall make no amends to our brother, if we discover ourselves to have slandered him? That the growing feeling among us is very different, we have a cheering sign in the recent controversy between Mr. Dodsworth and Mr. Sibthorpe. The former respected and much esteemed divine having used rash language against the Roman doctrine of the Mass, and having been set right by his opponent as to its real nature, handsomely and generously acknowledged his mistake, professing that, as now put before him, he saw no difficulty in that doctrine. We think then that if the view