

OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

The present state of the world, with respect to civil and religious liberty, must convey to the benevolent and pious mind sentiments of sincere delight, and must call forth expressions of gratitude and love to Him who has been pleased thus to order it. The Church of Christ is, at the present period, especially blessed in that an entrance is abundantly administered to those who would avail themselves of it, unaccompanied with the dread of bonds and imprisonment, which persecuted her devoted followers in the earlier ages of Christianity. It may truly be affirmed that she now has rest. She is presented to us, arrayed in all her beauty, and offering for our acceptance a participation of her highest privileges, with no other conditions than a compliance, on our own parts, with those very institutions which have served to raise her to that height of beauty and grandeur which excite, even in the breasts of her opponents, sentiments of reverence and admiration.

It might naturally be supposed that this happy disposition of things would lead every considerate man to embrace so favourable an opportunity to examine her excellencies, and when the mind should have been convinced, to unite himself to an establishment so eminently blessed. But as the richest blessings of our heavenly parent are neglected when freely and liberally supplied, and only *then* coveted when withheld from us, so it is the fate of the Church of Christ to be unheeded and despised, at the time she presents the strongest motives to union with her. The liberty her members enjoy has been used as a cloak of licentiousness; and instead of drawing more closely round their hearts the silken chain of union, it has led them to desert her, and join themselves either to one sect or another, as has best suited the impulse of the moment. The great and operating cause of all this mischief evidently arises from a mistaken notion [that the Church of Christ is not so exactly defined, but that any profession of Christianity will constitute us members of Christ's Church, however opposite the tenets themselves of the various professions may be. Were this indeed the case, there would then certainly exist no such thing as Christian unity, whereas it is a doctrine plainly set forth in the Scriptures, and the necessity of attending to it is frequently and strongly enjoined upon us by our blessed Saviour and his holy Apostles.

The force of prejudice imbibed in early years, and strengthened and matured by future growth, generally gains such an ascendancy over men as to keep them in bondage the rest of their lives. They take things for granted, from deference to the opinions and sentiments of those to whom they have been accustomed to look up for instruction, without taking the pains themselves to enquire whether things are so? This observation comes with two-fold force when applied to the concerns of religion, it being most unfortunately the case that this important subject is more carelessly considered than any other.—