

It requires not the wisdom of Solomon to determine that he, who will be satisfied with the truth divided and mutilated, is not nearly related to, nor rejoiceth in the truth.

Nor must we ask Christian people, who have no very fixed and definite convictions of truth, to define for us the metes and bounds of Christian charity. With many of them—and alas! we have them in our midst, and of our communion—the great living glorious truths of revelation have less attraction and power than the most trifling objects of human pursuit.

There are reasons deep laid in the constitution of man's nature, and far reaching in their consequences, which never appear to careless and superficial observers. They cannot be our judges in this matter. A greater than all has taught us, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints;" and to "speak the truth in love;" thus in a loving earnestness to realize the idea of "charity rejoicing in the truth."

And were such a spirit shed abroad through Christendom, a spirit which drew all Christian hearts together in sympathy, then would be begun a movement which would not end, until the declaration of our Blessed Lord had its complete fulfilment, and "there should be one fold and one shepherd." If people love, they will love to be together; after awhile they will yearn to "dwell together," and will then be willing to sacrifice everything, *but truth*, that they might "dwell together in unity."

Let it be understood that there is such a thing as truth, definite, established catholic truth—then all must seek out this truth and rejoice in it, and unite upon it, and sacrifice something for it, and then the problem of a vexed and distracted Christendom approaches its solution.

Pilate's ignorance of what truth was, led him to commit the foulest wrong ever committed against "the truth," consigned him to a hopeless infamy, and pilloried him forever in the Creed. It was his business to know the truth, and to know that he could not learn it by asking of the people. Alas! the multitudes who are seduced from the truth by following the popular cry. Not indifference cannot solve any problem. It is disintegrating in its tendency, with neither basis nor bend in it. Something positive, not negative, must bind men together.

*Temporary unions* for prayers and exhortation cannot solve the problem. I fear they rather hinder and postpone it. It is a confession of something wrong, and yet not a full and frank confession. It presents a palliative, where a cure is needed. It satisfies the mind with something so infinitely short of Christian duty and privilege. It patches up a serious breach with a hollow truce. What is needed, and demanded, is a lasting peace and unity.

And yet there is something very captivating in the thought of such a truce to hostilities, however short-lived and delusive. The earnest Christian heart is not content to live in a state of isolation from Christian brethren. It is indeed the way whereby "we know we have passed from death to life," that we love the brethren. And I doubt not the love of Christian brethren, and the yearning after a lost unity, is oft-times expressed in the modern efforts to bring about these occasional unions and alliances.

Alas! that they should ever satisfy any Christian heart; and alas! that multitudes are sitting down contented with this *delusive peace*; finding beauty and almost merit, in kaleidoscopic Christianity rejoicing in the refractory and decomposed rays which they respectively represent, and only blending themselves together, for a moment, to exhibit the pure original beams of truth.

In view of all this, it may be worth while to subject to a little closer inspection and analysis this newly proposed remedy for healing the divisions of Christendom and binding up its

shattered fragments. In order to do this, we must apply the great test—the law of charity! For it is alleged that Christian charity demands such unions and compromises, and that they who fall not in with the proposed method are sadly lacking in that exalted virtue.

Let us see. If it be "uncharitable" to decline a *temporary* union with the Christian people, and for the reason that "they are substantially agreed on all important points"—and that is the popular phrase—then how *uncharitable* must have been the *original separation* between these people, and how uncharitable it must be to *perpetuate* such separation!

If it be urged, "that for a little while, and in order to effect a specific good, Christian people ought to drop their peculiarities, and come together in worship and fellowship;" if this be true, then ought they not for a stronger reason to do this, in order to promote a *general and permanent* good? This must be so, unless a particular and transient good is more desirable than an enduring and general good; or unless it can be shown that the good sought is to be found in only *occasionally* letting down the denominational fences and feeding in a common pasture.

And if, for the sake of a *temporary* good, there be any peculiarity which one can properly lay aside for an hour, a day, a week, what hinders but that for the sake of a *continued* and greater good, he may not lay it aside for a month, a year, *forever*!

And is there not, in this willingness to drop the denominational peculiarities, a practical and substantial admission, that at least there is nothing of *great importance in them*—that, consequently, there is no sufficient ground for the continued separation of these people, if any good can be shown to proceed from their union and, therefore, a virtual condemnation of the fact and spirit of sectism?

It is admitted on all hands, that the denominational divisions in the missionary field are the occasion, if not the cause, of much perplexity and bewilderment to the heathen mind, even to those who are on the whole favorably disposed towards Christianity. We can well imagine how distracting must be the denominational view to a heathen inquirer. It tends to bewilder even the ordinary Christian mind.

A very important and pertinent question arises in view of this condition of things. If now, in order to bring the whole force of Christian sentiment and devotion to bear upon any particular Christian community at any given time, there is an imperative call upon all Christian people to suppress their individual and denominational views, and if it is very "uncharitable" in them not to do so, when summoned by the voice of a majority of resident ministers, or the presence of a revival preacher; what shall we say of the urgency of the call to unite all the forces of Christianity upon the vast heathen world, at the word of Christ, and in fulfillment of His prayer: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe Thou hast sent Me." Ah! what deep significance in the words—"That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me!" How can a community of sects impress the world, and especially the heathen world, with the *divine original* of Christianity?

But if it be alleged, as it is, "that it is not a mere *peculiarity* that is laid aside, but a *principle*, which can not be given up, but only held in abeyance, for a little while, in order to impress a community, and to prevail with God by united prayer," what then? Is not this indeed a spectacle? A multitude of ministers of God—witnesses for truth and principle—coming together and combining to suppress, each for himself, a part of God's truth, and for God's sake as is alleged, and that on the ground that God has revealed unimportant truth! What a *spectacle in the sight of heaven*! It may pos-

sibly for awhile impose upon the multitude, for they are easily deceived by any superficial and sensational movement that is popularized to the public ear. But how can it be justified in the sight of God—this holding fast and loose by certain truths? It is these very truths and principles, so called—which they are willing to ignore at times—that constitute the basis severally of the denominational bodies. The unity of the Church of God was broken that that these bases of organizations might be maintained, and, yet, for any particular purpose they may be suppressed. Is this indeed of the nature of charity, whose essence is supreme love to God and veneration of His truth?

And can such a hollow and superficial union, by suppression of truth, impose long upon the world? Will they not see in it a mere suspension of antagonism? And when it is disclosed in all its *unrealness*, will it not tend to increase the general *infidelity* toward all truth?

And if it be alleged, as it is, that our branch of The Church allows of differences of conviction in matters not of the "faith," and that such allowance is of the nature of holding said tolerated opinion in abeyance, or under suppression; I answer that it is true there is a certain latitude allowed, but there is no suppression of convictions expected or demanded. And it is this condition of things which vindicates the Catholic attitude of this Church, and as time rolls on, will more and more commend her position as occupying the only substantial and practicable ground for the union of Christendom; the primitive Faith and Apostolic Order.

Besides, let us follow out for a little the ultimate tendency of this newly proposed solution of the denominational imbroglio—this union by the suppression of truth—now under view. Who shall assign its limits? Shall it embrace all phases of faith? It must do so, it must include all sincere people, if sincerity be accepted as the test and touchstone. Then it must not stop with Christian people; it must include the sincere Jew, Mussulman and Pagan. Indeed do we not see indications in high quarters that the world demands the application of this so called charity to the most unlimited extent? The principle under view, of making *sincerity* the test, if carried to its utmost verge, must lay aside, and drop out of view, the very name of Christian, lest the sensibilities of a brother religionist, a Jew, or Hindoo, might be wounded. That constituted the great difficulty in Pagan Rome, and lighted the flames of persecution, and loosed the jaws of lions—that the early martyrs were not content to be one of many religions, but were uncharitable enough to proselyte their neighbors to their way of thinking.

Then, if sincerity be not the test, what shall it be? Orthodoxy? Then, who shall determine the standard of orthodoxy? Shall it be a fixed, or a varying standard? If varying, shall it depend upon locality, numbers or social influence; so that, for example, in those sections where Unitarianism has taken hold of the social life and seats of learning, the doctrine of Christ's divinity must not be obtruded upon the union meeting lest the feelings of sincere Christian people be wounded. What becomes of truth, and reverence for truth amid all this confusion and uncertainty?

And, if not a varying but a fixed standard, then how shall it be fixed? By calling together all good Christian people and determining the whole question of doctrine afresh, in the light of modern science, and by the aid of modern developments, or by having recourse to the *ancient and established faith* of the universal Creeds, as setting forth *authoritatively* the teaching of God's most holy word? Every inquiry brings us back to the standpoint of our branch of the Church of Christ—the hope of Christendom, because holding the key of the position, the centre of unity in the faith.

Ah! if we might hope that the great popular religious movement of this, our day, conducted