

in the ear." Now here is the ground upturned with sudden violence that the full-grown oak may be planted, or that it may receive into its bosom the spreading roots of grain ready for the sickle. "The Kingdom of God," says the great Teacher, "is as if a man should cast seed into the good ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how." It is the simple gospel which is sown in the heart, and not, as sectarians imagine, complete and elaborate systems of theology. It is with this proposition and its proofs, that God first meets the sinner and it is in its cordial reception that the latter finds the grace and mercy of God. Oh! that the sectarian world could thus contemplate this beautiful simplicity of the truth, as originally presented by Christ and his Apostles, and, adopting it as the true ground of Christian union, could be induced to forsake for it those confused and complicated systems which have no power either to save sinners or to unite saints.

The above observations are designed for those who may, at first view, suppose this basis of union too narrow, and to contain too little, while, in truth, it contains all, and is the very germ from which the whole Christian institution proceeds. But there are cavillers who may object, on the other hand, that it contains or rather implies too much; involving questions about which men will differ. They will say that there are not only in the above proposition itself, but in the preliminary knowledge which it supposes, many matters about which men may and do disagree; and that this formula, then, however simple and concise it may appear, may, nevertheless, give rise to debate and division. It is true, that men have started a great many questions respecting the nature and attributes of God; about the character and sonship of Christ; the method, object, and extent of the atonement, &c., &c., and that some of the warmest religious disputes are upon these very topics. But they are either untaught questions, with which we have nothing to do, (for we have no business with any questions which are not mooted in the Bible) or they are vain speculations upon matters utterly beyond the reach of the human intellect, or, lastly, they are sublime truths, which can be fully unfolded only in the chapters of Christian knowledge and experience and in regard to which we have no right to demand, in advance, even that amount of knowledge which the Scriptures themselves furnish when fully explored. All these disputes, in short, are about doctrines, intellectual conceptions abstract truths; but the Christian faith has respect to facts, by which we do not mean truths delivered, but things really and actually performed and attested by witnesses. There are indeed some general truths, which we must suppose the mind to have received before it could possibly apprehend the gospel facts. For instance, it must have admitted the being of God. But all such fundamental and elementary truth here required, is either self evident or of such a nature that it cannot be supposed absent from the mind. Hence the Bible nowhere attempts to prove the existence of God. It begins by declaring the facts, that "God created the heavens and the earth," but it takes for granted the elementary truth, that there is a God.

Now, the great proposition on which the Christian Institution rests,