

EXTRACTS FROM VAN DYCK'S "CHRISTIAN UNION."

CHAP. II.—THE EVILS OF SECT.

*Continued.*3. *It fills the Church with unworthy members.*

Such is the eagerness of contending sects to secure additions to their numbers, that a man can scarcely exhibit a sober countenance before he is noticed and marked out as a subject of speedy enlistment into the ranks of the opposing armies. He is invited and caressed from various quarters in such a manner as to afford grounds of fear to a more experienced observer, that the parties are quite as anxious to bring the awakened sinner into *their* Church, as to lead him to the Saviour. His doubts whether he be as yet a Christian, are soon removed by the attentions he receives, and by the officious and hasty advice which is given him. The zealous of each sect beset him with their arguments and persuasions, and he is soon made acquainted with the errors of every sect, while probably he hears little of the truths of any. He believes he ought to make a public profession of his faith; and at the commencement of his course, he is compelled by the urgency of his assailants to enter upon a task to which he is wholly incompetent—namely, to decide upon the comparative merits of the various denominations whose claims may have been presented to him. He is constrained to decide in a short time upon questions of great depth, and intricacy, which require the labour of years, and maturity of Christian experience to comprehend and determine. And after he has, in his own apprehension, solved every difficulty, while he may have become very learned in questions of rituals, church government, and the doctrines which are controverted among Christians, perhaps he knows very little of the Bible as a whole, or of those great and essential truths in which the great body of believers are agreed. He may, by this process, become very expert in the peculiarities of his own sect, while he has made little or no progress in the knowledge of Christ, the cultivation of a proper temper, or the formation of a Christian character.

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By all these different means unworthy professors of religion are greatly multiplied, causing such an amalgamation of the Church with the world, as to render it impossible to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff. The Church is groaning, being sorely burdened under the oppressive load.

4. *It disqualifies men for the proper reading of the Scriptures.*

The injuries suffered by individual church members, from the causes mentioned under the last head, might be alleviated and in time removed, had they been taught and influenced to search the