

and the title to this colonial estate, as well as the inestimable to enjoy it, will be conveyed in those benign and gracious terms "Come, ye blessed of my father inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

THE WESLEYAN.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 7, 1842.

THE ESSENTIAL UNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The divided state of the Christian Church—productive, as it not infrequently is, of a spirit of mutual bitterness and proscription—presents a spectacle, from the contemplation of which a mind deeply imbued with the charity of the Gospel instinctively recoils. Such a state of things—if a spark of religious sensibility yet remain unextinguished within us—must be felt to be painfully dissonant to the spirit and design of that memorable petition of our Lord—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, 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 that thou hast sent me."

It is true, indeed, that there exists a plurality of causes to which, without difficulty, may be traced various differences of sentiment and practice among those who are equally sincere in the pursuit of truth, and equally emulous to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world. Among these may be reckoned the power of educational prejudice—the influence, not seldom, of adventitious associations in life—the susceptibility of error incident to minds of the highest order—and last, though not least, the infirmity and deceptiveness of the human heart. Nor ought we—as has been remarked with equal candor and propriety—in tracing the causes of those differences, by any means to forget, that on many points of a secondary nature,—those particularly which relate to modes of worship and of church government—there is to be found in the divinely-authorized records of the Christian revelation, very little of precise direction; and thus is there obviously left, in reference to such points, a considerable scope for the formation of different views.

But, surely, surely, amidst all such diversities, there is ground of sufficient breadth, and pre-eminently holy, still left, on which all who maintain the fundamental principles of the Gospel may stand side by side, and agree to "keep" what is of infinitely greater moment than agreement in regard to points of doctrine not essential to be believed in order to salvation, to the ceremonial of Christianity, or to ecclesiastical polity—we mean, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

And what does the maintenance of "the unity of the Spirit" involve? What but the culture and reciprocal manifestation, among Christians, of that charity which is "the bond of perfectness," and the Saviour's most conspicuous and hallowed impress on the character of his "disciples indeed." And, be it remembered, no differences not affecting the substance of faith and hope and duty, as they can neither extinguish nor relax the obligation of this paramount law of charity, ought to be permitted to interfere with its observance. Who does not know that under the type of the Apostles themselves, a diversity of sentiment and of practice, such as the rigour of modern sectarianism would inevitably lead into an insupportable

ecclesiastical recognition, sprung up in certain sections of the Church? And when these differences were not of a nature to pervert the essence of religion, how did the Apostles seek to compose them? Not by aiming at the production of perfect concordance of opinion among those who happened to disagree, but by the induction of a spirit of mutual forbearance, and fraternal affection. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth, or falleth. Yes he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand."

The unity of the Church of God is represented by the same authority as consisting in the maintenance of those great principles of faith and of the possession and exemplification of those attributes of a spiritual character which are inseparably connected with the assured hope of immortality. "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." These are the principles of the Church's essential, primitive, and continuous unity, and they are obviously identified with the elements of that holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord." To every nation, who exist among them, we spontaneously, as in duty bound, accord the claim of true discipleship, and stretch out the hand of fellowship. In proportion as this spirit of fraternal charity gains ascendancy among the various denominations of Christians, "pure religion and undefiled" will advance towards its destined expansion and triumph, the power of godliness will take that place now assigned by too many to its lifeless form, and the world at length believe the mission of our Lord. To impress us more deeply with its importance and imperativeness, let us look for a moment at the unhappy influence which the opposite spirit is adapted to exercise on individuals, with regard to their religious intellect—to their practical judgment and to the direction of their zeal. It is sketched to our hand, under these aspects, by the powerful and eloquent pen of the late Dr. Mason, in his "Plea for Catholic communion:"—

"Upon the religious intellect sectarian feelings produce an effect analogous to that of the division of labour upon mechanical ingenuity. By concentrating its operations in a few points, or perhaps in a single one, they render it peculiarly acute and discriminating within those limits, at the expense of conceiving or destroying its general power. Conversations are cherished, books read, time expended, faculties employed, not for the purpose of acquiring larger views of the Redeemer's truth, grace, kingdom, and glory, but for the purpose of training more accurate disputants upon the heads of sectarian collision. Here men distinguish themselves; here they shine; here they gratify their vanity, which they often mistake for their conscience. With one, the watchword is "our excellent, our apostolic church"—with another, "the doctrine of baptism"—with a third, "the solemn league and covenant"—with a fourth, "the Burgess oath"—with a fifth, "psalmody." Upon these subjects, and such as these, their respective partisans collect their information and their strength—they whet each other till they become "sharp as a needle." A stranger hearing them talk on their favourite topics, would be astonished at their understanding and ardour. Not load them away from their peculiarities to those things which concern the kingdom of God—which are common to the household of Faith—which require a general Christian spirit—and here meet

ble, for the most part, in the falling off! "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." And here is the explanation of that ordinary phenomenon, that the rise of party-sense is the fall of sacred knowledge. Sectarian light puts out the Christian fire.

Nor does the practical judgment suffer less. This is clearly seen in the estimate which admitted so various forms of character. The good qualities of their own adherent they readily perceive, admire, and extol. His failings they endure with patience, and his faults, which they dare not justify, they can overlook and extenuate. But should he quit their communion, the first are discouraged, the second are no longer tolerable, and the third swell into crimes. On the other hand, Virtues and graces in a different party they are apt to admit with reluctance; and rarely without qualification. It shall go hard if some "dead fly" do not taint the "good ointment"—and some "scrupulous" bit, "some" "fear," some "wish," do not insinuate a doubt where there is no room for doubt, and relieve them from the pain, by throwing a cloud over the lustre, of excellencies not their own. But let all be altered! The light which only dazzled, grows suddenly mild and cheering! Our breasts fill with the "milk of human kindness;" and we welcome to our hearts the very man whom a week before we eyed askant, and should have thought to be a "spot in our feast of charity." Nay, we often are summarily convinced that a person of dubious character has been injured and persecuted. Our inquiries are conducted with the nicest delicacy. So gentle our temper; so charitable our constructions; so large our allowances for infirmity; so deep our sympathy! Whence the miracle? Has a seraph, with fire from the altar of God, touched these robes of unclean lily, and taken away the stain which stained our purity? Oh no! they are precisely what they were. Wherefore, then, this change in eye-sight, in feelings, in behaviour? Simple inquirer, thou knowest nothing of party-magick.—They have come, or are coming, or are expected to come, over to US.

With such a perversion of the judgment it is impossible that zeal should be well directed either in the choice of its objects, or in the mode of attaining them. The memory of an observer who only glances over the scenes which pass before him can furnish many examples of passions excited, principles sacrificed, and efforts wasted, for the sake of party-daubies; while interests of primary importance to the glory of earth and heaven are neglected or thrust aside. It is inconsistent with the nature of our faculties and affections to pursue great and little things with equal ardour. He who is occupied with the little, cannot rise to the great. He who rises to the great, cannot sink down to the little. A candidate for empire will not fight for toys. He who can fight for toys is unfit for empire. The man of "broad phylacteries" will give himself no trouble about the "robe of righteousness." The self-applauding "tither of mol and anise and cummin," has not room in his soul for "judgment and mercy and faith." Therefore it happens, that in proportion as the spirit of sect gets into a church the spirit of the gospel goes out. Anxiety about her peculiarities becomes a substitute for the power of personal religion. The noisy champion of her pre-eminence, the proud observer of her ritual, will be a singular exception to a general rule, if he do not contribute little to the prosperity, and less to the ornament, of the church of God. A sanctimonious child of tradition, who counts it a mortal sin to eat flesh on Friday, and dispenses with any precept of the decalogue that stands in the way of his gratification, is not an absolute rarity. The furious advocate, and a furious enemy, of a liturgy, are in danger of being alike estranged from the worship of God "in spirit and in truth."

The signal and monitory defeat of the Rev. T. S. Escott's attempt to vindicate his course in denying the rites of sepulture to one of that class of human beings of whom He who "has the keys of Hades and of death"—has said—"of such is the kingdom of God," must be truly gratifying to all who do not regard the

disclaims all alliance. The Rev. gentleman, not satisfied with the grave, well-considered and irrefragable declaration of Sir JOHN NICHOLLS, which so far as the duty of the Clergy of the Anglican Establishment is concerned, ought for ever to have set the matter at rest—not satisfied with the decision of Sir HANBERT JENNER PEET—is now beyond measure exasperated at the confirmatory decision of the Privy Council. "Line upon line, and precept upon precept," are lost upon Mr. Escott. The following is his appeal from the decision of the Privy Council, to the clergy:—

TO THE CLERGY. Godfrey, July 20, 1842.

Rev. Brethren,—The Privy Council has given a decision, by which a clergyman is to be suspended for three months, for doing his duty—for refusing to use the burial service at the interment of one who had died "unbaptized;" and, in order to put a face upon that decision, the Council has asserted that every human being, whether schismatic or otherwise, may validly perform the highest office of the priesthood of God. Thus the Council entirely denies the utility of a priesthood, and thus the Bishop's office, in the eye of the law, is ended; for a lawyer assumes the Prelacy, and confers his ordination upon all mankind; and each member of the Council having taken an oath to support the Church, this is their regard for that oath, and this is the support which they afford. And will you, rev. brethren, sit down quietly under such mockery as this! No, surely you will not! but you will unite in petitioning your respective dioceses to oppose, in the proper place, the wicked insult which the Privy Council has thrown upon the Word of God and his Church, and to memorialize the Queen of the realm, respecting the religion, which the Queen, as well as the Council, is sworn to defend.

I remain, Rev. Brethren, yours sincerely, T. S. ESCOTT, Vicar of Godney.

We should be sorry to consider this document a faithful mirror of Mr. Escott's mind and heart, when not in a state of unhappy agitation.

The most singular thing, however, connected with this painful affair, is the clumsy and unsuccessful attempt to elicit from the Judgment in question, the elucidation of a contested point in theology, which with some seems to be the alpha and omega of religion, and to press the highest authority of British law into the service of stripping the Wesleyan clergy of their ministerial character. It is, indeed, perfectly natural that those who repose their confidence for salvation on the inverted pyramid which they designate the Apostolical Succession, should put every prop they can seize in requisition to prevent the crash of its fall. But, in the present instance, they convulsively grasp a shadow. Those from whom the judgment, by which Mr. Escott and his friends are so much annoyed, emanated, understood their duty better than to "travel out of the record," to settle a question of a purely biblical character. For "what" inquires the London Watchman—"what does the judgment imply? That the Wesleyan Ministers are mere laymen? No, indeed. It does not meddle with the question. It only declares that, even if they were, persons baptized by them with water in the name of the Trinity, were not to be taken as unbaptized in the sense to be given to the rubric. The Judgment settles the question at issue, namely, the sense in which, according to the ancient law of the Church, a certain term is to be taken in a certain rubric. We say, according to the ancient law of the Church,—for it must not be forgotten, that the court was that of the Queens as the Head of the Church; and that the Judges decided, not according to the secular laws of the State, but according to the ecclesiastical laws of the Church. The law of the Church is liberty to the clergy of the Church of England and of the other Churches of Christendom, and their administra-