

trifling and accidental compared with the everlasting union of those who are one in Christ. His children are eternally separate from the children of Adam, and have no part with them.

Undoubtedly the outward church should represent the inward; and towards this blessed consummation the individual members of it should labour and strive. There is something exceedingly sinful in the satisfaction and composure with which so many look upon the outward divided state of the church. There should be no contentment with the present state. It cannot be the proper the ultimate state. This will not be reached until the fellow-members of Christ are all separated from their associations with sinners and joined together in one fold. No one can read the scriptures with attention without seeing that it is their end and object to conform the outward with the inward.

How earnestly in his last intercessory prayer, did Christ implore the Father that his followers might all be one, even as he and the father were one. And doubtless this was with reference to their being of one mind and forming one company in the world, for in an infer sense they would of necessity always be one. We see the same thing in the Apostolic writings. The apostles laboured and prayed that there might be no schism in the body. They spake of division as the rending of Christ's body—and it must be a fearful sin, since it is thus represented. When some of the earlier converts manifested a tendency to split up and range themselves under different leaders, taking their names, as has been the custom in subsequent times, St. Paul exclaims "Is Christ divided. Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?" They strove that as there was but one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, so also there might be but one outward communion—as there was but one shepherd so there might be but one sheep fold. Were Paul to come down from heaven, he would cry out in our ears as he did to the Corinthians, "Is Christ divided?" He would weep bitter tears as he often wept before, over the present divided state of the Christian Church; he would labour again, night and day, to separate the living from the dead, and to make the outward coextensive with and corresponding to the inner church. No age ever degenerated so far from the scriptural idea on this subject as our own. We hear of churches now, but in the Bible, save when the epithet is applied to individual congregations, or to national branches, we hear only of the Church, that vine which was brought from Egypt and planted in Canaan; and of which the natural branches, the Jews, being unfaithful, were lopped off; into which the Gentiles were grafted, and with which the root and the stem being always one and the same, the ancient children of God shall once more be joined and bring forth high clusters of fruit. The Romish idea of catholicity has much in it that is scriptural and true; and as every one knows this one idea is their chief strength.

This it is that retains so many intelligent men within her pale. You may destroy error after error, and they may be convinced by your exposure, but the one great idea which retains them is this one of Catholicity, but after all it is only a false semblance of the true scriptural idea. They reverse the proper order. Their attempt is to subordinate the inner to the outer—to forestall the future, and to found on a false basis the basis of grievous antichristian errors, what is destined to be hereafter realised on the basis of scripture truth. It is just one of the false attempts to anticipate and realise the future—so many of which the history of the world presents.

The Reformers in separating from Popery by no means gave up the idea of unity. They justified their separation not on the ground of a few errors which otherwise they would have laboured to correct, but on the ground of Popery being thoroughly antichristian, diseased to the heart's core. They therefore held that their separation was one of the living from the dead; and that they took the Church with them.

And when separate they laboured on the ancient and scriptural basis, to realise an outward unity. They were not contented with their differences. They held synods and conventions in order to realise the unity of the faith; and though the separate national churches reformed out of Popery in different ways, they agreed not to unchurch each other, but to regard each other as sisters, to sympathize with and pray for each other, and seek as far as possible a complete conformity. And they agreed also on another subject. Holding themselves to be true and scriptural, though, doubtless, imperfect branches of Christ's Church, they condemned the sectaries who separated from them as not being justified by sufficient grounds and therefore as guilty of grievous sin. But in later times, instead of further Reformation, some of the churches have fallen back, and partly because the idea of unity was lost; divisions have been vastly multiplied, till now there are those to be found, professing christians, who actually advocate division as a thing desirable and useful. Now undoubtedly there is scarcely a single evil with which it cannot be shown that some accidental good is connected. There are certain advantages connected with slavery, with despotism; and good often comes out of quarrelling and war. But it would just be as proper for a christian to advocate the general propriety of these, or to advocate robbery and murder, as to advocate and defend the divided state of the christian church. There are others who advocate christian union on the ground of expediency; and no doubt their arguments are good, so far as they go. But this is, after all, a poor superficial foundation on which to rest the question. It rests on a fundamental essential principle of christianity, that the outward should correspond to the inward. The church is imperfect, it is existing in sin so long as it is cut up into separate sections; so long as

the living members of Christ's body¹ are allied with the dead members of Adam's body, and arrayed against other like combinations. And it exists in still deeper sin when it loses the idea and ceases to feel the want of unity.

The history of the divisions of the last centuries is, for the most part, as follows. In the churches of the Reformation some error or abuse has arisen—or as seems incidental to all earthly institutions, a period of laxness and indifference has come over them. Parties dissatisfied have withdrawn and built up separate organizations. The outward disunity, as is always the case, has been followed by inward disunion, by alienation and uncharitableness; and they have disliked each other generally, as has been said, in proportion to the strength of the ties that have been rent asunder. The breach has been widened by time. Other similar separations have taken place among those who separated, till now we have the present divided state of the church—the idea of unity almost lost; and a fatal facility for still further separation allowed by general christian opinion. Little astonishment and little grief is felt now at the news of a new sect. This course has not tended certainly to realize Christ's prayer with regard to his body, to make the outward correspond with the inward. The other course open to the dissatisfied was this, to have had regard to the future as well as the present; to have remained with the ancient communion—to have testified against what they thought its errors, and to have laboured and prayed for their rectification.

This was the apostolic plan with regard to the churches that fell into sin—even into the most grievous sins.

And this would doubtless have been the proper course in the case of many, if not of most of the divisions of these last centuries. It would have been more in accordance with Christ's last prayer and apostolic example than the actual course that has been followed. The great question with regard to any division is this, what according to New Testament principles justifies a division. Wherever the essential doctrines of the gospel are at stake, as at the Reformation, it is plainly imperative, and the going out party take the Church with them. But unless there be something essential at stake, if the dissatisfaction relate only to some outward matter far away from the essentials of christianity, the apostolic course is the proper one; and separation, if resorted to, is unjustifiable and unauthorised.

It is therefore a subject well worthy of grave consideration whether in any case a church and the body that separates from it can both be justified in their existence.

Home Missions.

It is to be hoped that no time will be lost in providing the different vacant congregations within our bounds, with acceptable