

THE UNION OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

NO. I.

With the statement of our Saviour before us as found in Luke xi. 17-18: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" And our Lord's prayer as recorded in John xvii. 20-21: "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;" and many other statements in the Word of God of like import, it would hardly be thought possible that it should ever be necessary for men to write on this subject. But when we look around us and see the divided condition of the professed followers of our blessed Saviour, and see how tenaciously each holds to his party; when we see how much more people are willing to do to keep up their party than to advance the truth of God, pure and simple; when we see that the work of division began in the days of the Apostles, and was rebuked by them; when we see how much more it costs to maintain so many sects than it would the one church, and how much less is accomplished by them, the subject appears to be one of great importance. The position which we as a people occupy on this subject is what makes "our hand against every man and every man's hand against us," and when we cease to work for this there is no reason that I, at least, can see why we should maintain a separate existence. What are we doing to break down the walls that separate those who love the same Lord?

The first thing to be decided in the examination of this question is: *Is it a state of things to be desired?* I can remember the time when it was argued by very many that it was the will of God that there should be a great many different churches teaching as many different doctrines, so that every man and woman could find a congenial place—a place where his views would correspond with those with whom he should be associated. This plea is not now so generally put forth. Indeed we find very many now who seem to think it a great sin to be divided, but who do not appear to have any definite plan upon which they are working to bring about the unity spoken of by our Lord. They sometimes make speeches favoring union; but are they willing to give up anything to bring themselves nearer to Christ, and thereby nearer to each other? There is, however, in all this, evidence of a desire for union, and that desire is evidently on the increase. Certainly, whatever God has taught us in His Word is right, and therefore desirable. What then do we find on this subject in the Word of God? Paul says, "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. . . . Now this I say that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ: is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? . . . And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. . . . For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" (1 Cor. 1-3.) Again Paul says to his brethren at Rome, "Be of the same mind one toward another." (Rom. xii. 16.) Many other passages might be brought to show that it is desirable, but we will close this part of the investigation by citing you to the prayer of our Lord as recorded in John xvii. I do not think there can be a doubt but what the desire of our

Saviour, as expressed in this prayer, is something that all Christians should desire. What did He pray for? "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me, that they may be one as we are." This was the prayer of Jesus for His apostles. For those whom the Father had given Him. Those who were not of the world, as He was not of the world. He prays that they may be one as He and His Father are one. This is a very close union, even closer than the union between a man and his wife. But these are not all whom he prays for. In the 20th verse he says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who 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."

For what did Jesus pray? First, that His apostles might be one, and then that all who believe on Him through their word might be one as He and His Father were one. And why does He desire this close union? Listen to our Lord's own answer: "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Would we like for the world to believe this glorious truth? I know we would. Then certainly it is desirable. Surely, then, we are bound to pray for it, and work for it, too. If, then, there is anything we believe, anything we teach, anything we do, that stands in the way of such a union, let us give up that belief, let us drop that teaching, let us put away that doing, however dear it may be to us.

But now having settled the question of the desirability of such a union among those who love God, another question comes up. Is it attainable? Looking at the religious world with its many different sects all wearing different names, having different creeds, teaching different doctrines, and even opposite doctrines; organized with different officers; some practising adult baptism, some infant sprinkling; some contending for sprinkling, some pouring; some immersion for baptism; some holding that baptism is essential even to the salvation of an infant, others saying they believe you can go to heaven just as well without it as with it, and if we judge from their action in the matter they think you can go better without it; and many other differences that might be pointed out,—it would seem as though we might answer this question in the negative. But when we turn to the Word of God, the teaching of the Divine Spirit, it appears in a very different light. When our Lord and Saviour had purchased our redemption and had become the propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world, He sent His chosen ones—His apostles—out to establish His kingdom; He gave Peter the keys of the kingdom, with power to bind and loose; He said in sending them out, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned," or as expressed in His teaching to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now we have an account of the way these Apostles, guided by the Spirit, worked under these instructions of the Saviour from the first Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension till the year A. D. 90, and in all those years the union pleaded for was maintained, and we find simply the church, the church of God, or the churches of Christ. The only law of the church in all those years was the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus as taught by the Spirit in the apostles. We have not an account of a church with a different name, or a different law, or creed, or different officers or a different baptism. What has been attained may be attained again. I think we may now answer this question in the affirmative.

J. A. GATES.

LaTete, March 22nd, 1886.

"FOR THOU ART WITH ME."

Do you know the sweetness, the security, the strength of "Thou art with me," when anticipating the solemn hour of death, when the soul is ready to halt and ask, "How shall it be?" Can you turn in soul-affection to your God and say, "There is nothing in death to harm me while thy love is left to me?" Can you say, "O death, where is thy sting?" It is said when a bee has left its sting in any one, it has no more power to harm. Death has left its sting in the humanity of Christ, and has no more power to harm His child. Christ's victory over the grave is His people's victory. "At that moment I am with you," whispers Christ. "The same arm you have proved strong and faithful all the way up through the wilderness, has never failed, though you have often been forced to lean on it all your weakness." "On this arm," answers the believer, "I feel at rest; with soul-confidence I repose on my beloved; for He has supported me through many trials, from the contemplation of which I shuddered. He has carried me over so many depths that I know His arm to be the arm of love." How can that be dark in which God's child is to have the accomplishment of the longing desire of his life? How can it be dark to come in contact with the light of life? It is "His rod," "His staff," therefore they "comfort me." Prove Him—prove Him now, believer. It is your privilege to do so. It will be precious to Him to support your weakness; prove that when weak, then are you strong; that you may be secure. His strength shall be perfected in your perfect weakness. Omnipotent love must fail before one of His sheep can perish. "For," says Christ, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." "I and My Father are one," therefore, we may boldly say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." L. M. N.

Deer Island, N. B., March 21st, 1886.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LADIES' AID SOCIETY OF COBURG STREET CHURCH.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Sisters and friends—A year has rolled away since we met you here on a like occasion, and as we glance from face to face we cannot read your thoughts to know whether you feel like saying, "Go forward!" but we can raise our hearts to our heavenly Father, who knows all about our work; if we have done our best; if we have been faithful to our promises of one year ago; if we have made as many sacrifices to be always present at the meetings, to have something to say to interest others, and keep our own hearts warm, and, above all, whether we have kept burning upon the altar our prayers. Our Saviour left us the watchword for all times and seasons, "Watch and pray."

To-night do we come together to renew our covenant with God and with each other? Is there one of our number wishing to draw back? Methinks I hear the emphatic No! No! from every sister; instead we pledge ourselves anew to the work.

We glance along the roll call and find two have gone home. The aged mother with her feet touching the river repeats the hymn,

"The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home."

The younger mother death frees from suffering and pain, still her heart yearns for those left behind. But, mourning ones, Heaven will keep your treasure safely. Some of our number have been called to mourn. To you Christ says, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted."

About 20 years have passed since the movement of woman's work for woman was originated in