

The Church.

"HER FOUNDATIONS ARE UPON THE HOLY HILLS."

THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER 1, 12.

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Original Poetry.

For the Church.

THERE IS A SPIRIT IN THE WOODS.—Wordsworth.

Nature's fair temple, when the still leaves lie,
At summer's eve, upon the silent bough,
And the first star is faintly seen on high,
Piercing the rays the sun had shed but now;
When deep'ning shadows fall on field and tree,
I leave the world to muse awhile with thee.

There is a sadness in thy dim arcades,
So fraught with awe, yet so divinely sweet,
That earthly thought before its magic fades,
And the full heart scarce feels its pulses beat,
Chained by a spell that breathes the scene around,
And seems to murmur, this is holy ground.

There is a spirit in thee, a low tone
Is floating even o'er thy choral streams,
Which the winds speak not, though thy breath has flown
O'er lands of flowers, music and sweet dreams,—
Stealing rich odours from some far off shore,
Whose perfumed fields their flight shall sweep no more.

A tone of love, as by an angel sent
To whisper to the soul, giving the woods
A voice of melody, serenely blest
As with the murmurs of deep water floods,
Sounding in distance as they fall and swell,
Like the low echo of the heart's farewell.

Alone from God—does man his altars raise
To kneel and worship? are the sculptured fane,
The lofty dome, the aisle of ancient days,
The gothic window with its imaged stain,
The creature's homage, and shall nature have
No fane for Him who died a world to save?

A lowly altar on the time pressed sod,
And pillared aisles amid the bending trees,
Bearing the impress of the hand of God,
And the low sighings of the evening breeze,
A vesper hymn, and the soft fading light
Trembling amid the shadows of the night;—

These form thy temple, shedding o'er the heart
A calm so deep, so full of joy and love,
That the soul's worship seems to be a part
Of its existence, and the skies above
But the frail barriers to a world of bliss
Where man may all be he has hoped in this.

J. C.

"PEACE! BE STILL."

MARK, IV. 35.

The bark was frail, the shore was far,
The tempest roused the angry deep,
And 'mid the elemental war
The Saviour slept, or seemed to sleep.
"Lord, save!" they cry—the swelling sea,
And wind which raged so loud and shrill,
At once their Master's voice obey,
When Jesus whispered, "Peace! Be still!"

Yes, "peace, be still,"—on mortal ear
Fell never yet such sounds of bliss;
Never on earth can sinner hear
A sentence half so blest as this.
Words may in after life have power
With calmer joy the heart to fill,
But memory most will prize the hour,
When God first whispered, "Peace! Be still!"

A longer walk with God may shed
A steadier sunshine on the soul,
And brighter glory crown the head
As saints draw nearer to the goal;
But most they love that first faint light
Which pierced the clouds of guilt and ill,
And deem life's closing joy less bright
Than that which came with, "Peace! Be still!"

For, oh! the soul was passion tost
When God first spoke, and caused a calm;
The heart was sick, and hope was lost,
When Jesus' words dropped health-like balm;
That calm seems most in mercy given
Which first controlled the raging will,
That health seems most the gift of Heaven
Which came when God said, "Peace! Be still!"

"Tis ne'er forgot," a poet sings
The fairy form love first has traced;
The word which Mercy's message brings
From memory's book is ne'er effaced;
The Christian thus will long retain,
Through life's exchange of good and ill,
Through after years of joy or pain,
The word which first said, "Peace! Be still!"

The Spare Minutes of a Minister.

ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

A SERMON, CONCLUDED FROM OUR LAST.

I can advert but briefly to the other points in which the professing Church is called upon to manifest its unity.—I mean as regards its worship and its sacraments. In these respects also, the Jewish Church was free from differences or division. One mode of worship was common to all its members, and they all partook of the same sacraments, in communion with the same ministry, so that they might well adopt the language of David, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And so we find it to have been in the primitive church of Christ;—all its members, we are told, "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." And when schisms appeared in the Church of Corinth, St. Paul told those who were guilty of them, that they were "carnal, and walked as men." We find that he also warned the Hebrews against those who "forsook the assembling of themselves together;" and St. Jude still more plainly denounced separatists, in the following strong language,— "These be they that separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

I must here notice a specious sophism, sometimes employed in order to deceive the unwary, with regard to the extent to which unity ought to prevail in the church of Christ. It is this— "There may be uniformity without

unity, and there may be unity without uniformity." That is, (as I understand it,) persons may agree in outward forms without being united in regard to the doctrines which they receive,—and they may agree in the fundamentals of religion without concurring in the externals of church-government and worship. And from these premises it is plainly intended that the following conclusion should be drawn,—that outward unity is of little importance, of so little indeed, that Christians should agree to differ, because, no matter to what extent outward differences and divisions may prevail in the professing church, its real unity may still be apparent to the world at large.

Now, Brethren, I deny that there can be any perfect exhibition to the world of the unity of the church, except she manifest herself to be one, not only in doctrine, but in her outward constitution and worship. In the fundamentals of the Gospel, it is I admit possible for christians to be one, although they may not be agreed in other respects, and I rejoice to think that the time is coming, when those who now differ, on other points, will lay aside their differences for ever, and unite in that song of praise, in which no note of discord shall be heard, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." But although Christians may agree in those great truths which are essential to salvation, is that enough to exhibit the Church's unity to the world? Let us suppose the case of the professing church, or body of christians, in any particular place, this very town for instance. Suppose an infidel to arrive here, and seeing the inhabitants congregating on the Sabbath in their respective places of worship, should ask the object of their assembling together. He is informed, it is for the worship of God. He inquires the religion which they profess. He is told, it is the christian faith. He next desires to know, why they have so many different places of worship, and inquires it must be on account of their numbers. Oh, no, replies his informant, it is because they differ amongst themselves on some minor matters, although they agree in fundamental points. How is this? Are not their ministers authorized and appointed in the same way? No. Do they not worship God in the same manner? No. At least then they associate with each other in the reception of the same sacraments? I grieve to say they do not. And yet you tell me that these christians belong to a church whose founder said that all his followers should be "one," so visibly, that "the world might know" that God had sent him! For my part I see nothing amongst them but division, and until I can find some stronger argument to commend the gospel to my attention, I shall persist in my infidelity.

Thus, Brethren, I think it is plain that in the eye of "the world" there can be no perfect or visible unity without uniformity.

But admitting for the sake of argument, that men of the world will trouble themselves in the examination of doctrines, in order to find out that unity which is not otherwise discoverable, will this justify the conclusion intended to be drawn from the maxim I have quoted? And is religious uniformity so utterly unworthy the regard of christians, that they are "to agree to differ," and consequently not even to attempt the termination of their divisions? Yet such is the principle openly inculcated at the present day, in direct opposition to that word which enjoins "that there be no divisions among you" and which calls upon christians, in the words of my text, to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

From what has now been said, I think it is manifest, that as the Church is one with Jesus Christ, and its members one with each other, so that unity ought to be visible to the world in its agreement in doctrine, in its outward constitution, and in its worship and sacraments.

Let us now advert to some of the evils of disunion in the church. And in order that we may perceive their magnitude, it will be necessary that we should bear in mind some of the ends which the preservation of a visible church on earth was intended to serve.

And those ends seem to be, chiefly, two:—

1. To shew forth the power of the grace of God in the lives and conversations of its members;—now that grace can allay disension, subdue evil passions, make men of one mind in an house, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. In this respect the church is called on to let its light so shine before men, that they may see its good works, and glorify its Father which is in heaven, and thus to demonstrate practically the holy and transforming influence of that grace, which can lead depraved sinners to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world.

2. The Church was intended to be the grand medium of disseminating the knowledge of true religion throughout the world. It is emphatically called "the light of the world," not that it possesses any inherent principle of illumination in itself, but that its glorious property is to reflect far and wide that light which is shed upon it, by the Sun of Righteousness, and thus to become the honored instrument of enlightening those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Thus, too, the church is called "the salt of the earth" in illustration of the preserving and purifying qualities of the doctrine which it proclaims; and it is also denominated "the pillar and ground of truth," because it is that by which alone the cause of truth is supported in the world.

Now let us ask how these ends are answered, when the church presents itself to the world in a state of discord and disunion. I shall say but little as to the first. Where religious differences prevail, they insensibly operate as drawbacks on brotherly love. The Christian will struggle to resist this unhappy influence, but yet they will unconsciously often engender sectional feelings in his mind, and thus prevent the fruits of the Spirit from ripening with full maturity. And I need not fear to hazard the assertion, that were the whole Christian Church perfectly united in the bonds of brotherly love, the effect would be immediately manifest, not only in the termination of all its differences, but in its increased devotedness to God, and in the larger mea-

sures of practical holiness to which it would quickly attain.

But it is as opposing a most serious obstacle in the way of the spread of true religion, that the divisions amongst christians are most to be lamented. Oh, Brethren, see what triumph they afford the infidel! Behold how he laughs at all our arguments in proof of Christianity, while he tells us, that if we cannot agree amongst ourselves, it is unreasonable to call upon him to assent to our opinions. Nor let it be said in reply, that it will be enough to tell him, that we agree in fundamentals;—I have already admitted, and I rejoice to admit, that many who differ on other points, agree in this respect. Could you induce the infidel to seek for the truth in the love of it, it might suffice to shew him your agreement in fundamentals. But when, generally speaking, he will look only at the outside of a Christian Church, and be but too happy if he can find any pretext there, to excuse him from further examination, I say our divisions too surely furnish him with that pretext, that thus we become accessaries to his soul's destruction, while we give him ground for an unholy triumph against that cause we love, and for his daring blasphemies against that Name which we adore.

Look too at the weak, but earnest inquirer, hitherto unconnected with any denomination;—his resolutions of seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness are but newly formed, and have not as yet acquired much stability; he desires to know the way in which he should go; he longs to be united with the Church of God, that he may there learn the way of God more perfectly. He turns to the professing Church, and is at once bewildered with the number of conflicting opinions which present themselves to his notice; and instead of receiving that assistance which he so much required, in clearing up his difficulties, he only finds those difficulties increased, and that he is left more than ever dependent upon that wisdom that cometh from above, to relieve him from his perplexities.

Once more, Brethren,—passing over the cases of individuals,—what impediments does the disunion of christians oppose to the general propagation of true religion? Let me instance the Province in which we live. Were professing christians within it of one heart and one soul, how soon should a great machinery be put into action for the evangelization, and permanent religious instruction of its people? How soon should every town and township possess its resident ministers, and its commodious churches, in which the way of life should be faithfully taught, and christian duty enforced on christian principles? How soon should we behold schools every where established, affording to our youth a solid education founded upon the only sure foundation of religious truth? And what withholdeth from us these all-important advantages? what but the divisions of those who profess and call themselves christians? What else prevents the moral wilderness in which we live from quickly becoming "the garden of the Lord," with "joy and gladness found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody"?

Such being some of the evils attendant upon the outward division which prevails amongst professing christians, is it not the duty of the ministers of Christ to bear their testimony against it, as a sin against God? Inasmuch as it is in positive disobedience to His word, affords a triumph to the infidel, is a stumbling-block in the way of the weak inquirer, and an impediment to the diffusion of the Gospel of the grace of God. I would therefore call upon all who name the name of Christ, to depart from this iniquity,—to terminate this fatal state of disunion, and to "hold the faith in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life." Hearken not to those who would deceive you, and be persuaded that while you can profess the pure gospel within the apostolic Church of Christ, the separating from her communion is the sin of schism, for which those who thus rend the body of Christ shall give an account at the day of his appearing.

But, Brethren, while it is my duty as a minister of Christ to bear my testimony against disunion or division amongst professing christians in general, I am in a more especial manner bound to watch against the appearance of a spirit so fatal, amongst the members of that venerable Church to which I have the privilege to belong. And yet, as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse, such a spirit manifests itself even there. Indifference as to her doctrines, her apostolic constitution, and her worship, prevails amongst some who indeed call themselves her members, but who will tell you that it is of little importance to what communion we belong, provided we are good subjects, good neighbours, and attentive to the discharge of our duties in general.—There is but one short step, my Brethren, between indifference and infidelity. And the practical effect of the loose and noxious opinion to which I have just adverted, is every where found in the numbers of persons who, when asked to what communion they belong, will tell you that they do not belong to any.

Again, others are found who attach such little importance to the Unity of the Church, that they will make no scruple of forsaking her communion on the most trivial grounds. Some trifling matter of form, which they do not quite approve,—some calumny against the Church which they swallow without taking the trouble to investigate,—some whim or caprice of the moment,—or some imaginary slight or neglect of their minister,—will lead professing christians in these days to trample upon that order and unity which it ought to be one of their highest objects to preserve, and unhesitatingly to become schismatics.

Brethren, we do not make these observations in reference to you; "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Still, yourselves will feel the necessity, in these days of disorder, that the Church of God should be reminded of the evils of division, and called upon to present herself to the world even "as a city that is compact together," lest perchance, carried away by the fashion of the times, or beguiled by the specious sophisms that are continually put forth, she should give way to a miscalled liberality, and having lost that order

for which she has so long been distinguished, should be at last involved in the common confusion.

Suffer, then, Brethren, the word of exhortation. "Stand fast," I beseech you, "in one spirit, and with one mind," in "the simplicity that is in Christ,"—and let all those who "confess God's holy name agree in the truth of his holy word," looking for salvation, in life, in death, and in judgment, only to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

I would further call upon you to rejoice that you are members of a Church, whose ministry derives its authority from Divine appointment. Recollect that that ministry is constituted of Bishops, of Priests, and of Deacons. Make yourselves familiar with the proofs of this threefold character of the christian ministry; and having satisfied yourselves that they are abundantly afforded in the Word of God, and in the history of the church in its purest and earliest days, then adhere to that ministry. And, while you maintain a spirit of christian charity, and unfeigned good-will towards all who differ from you, take heed that you encourage not divisions in the Church, by your attendance upon any other teaching, than that which God hath appointed for your instruction.

Preserve, I entreat you, an inviolable attachment to that form of sound words, the incomparable Liturgy of your Church. Be diligent in your attendance upon the worship of God. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. Do not separate yourselves. Continue steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

Lastly, be not satisfied with possessing those benefits yourselves, but endeavour to communicate them to others. "Strive together for the faith of the Gospel." Apply your united energies to the dissemination of the truth as it is in Jesus, and to the enlargement of the boundaries of the Redeemer's Church. A spiritual waste surrounds you,—give your prayers and your exertions that it may be brought into cultivation. Strengthen the hands of your minister in his plans for your own good, and the good of others,—and connected with your christian profession, your faith, your unity, and your zeal, let there ever be found the commentary of a blameless life. "And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

No. II.

EPHESUS.

Rev. II. 1.—7.—"Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hast the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

The Gospel was first preached at Ephesus by St. Paul; when, on his voyage from Corinth to Judea, he touched at that city (Acts, xviii. 19, 21), and entering into the synagogue, proclaimed the great truths of the Christian religion. His visit was then short; but he returned again (Acts, xix. 1), and preached boldly in the synagogue for the space of three months. The Jews, who on his former visit had willingly listened to his discourse, now violently opposed him. On this account he separated himself from them, and entered into the school of one Tyrannus; and this he did for the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Ephesus was at this period a wealthy city. Its inhabitants were idolaters, worshipping the goddess Diana, to whose honour there was a magnificent temple erected, and whose worship was celebrated at an enormous expense.—Their character was dissolute in the extreme. They are spoken of by the apostle, in language, alas! generally applicable, as "dead in trespasses and in sins," as walking "according to the course of this world," and their addiction to magic and witchcraft is perhaps alluded to by him, when he speaks of their "walking according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

In process of time the preaching of the apostle was attended with remarkable success. In spite of opposition the most virulent, and persecution the most appalling, the word so mightily grew and prevailed, that a large Christian Church was collected together, the members of which shewed their sincerity by willingly relinquishing their idolatrous practices, and destroying their books of enchantments, and other means of unlawfully gaining their subsistence. St. Paul could confidently appeal to them as to his own zeal and devotedness for their spiritual improvement, and that he had made known to them the whole counsel of God; and in his epistle he congratulates them on the advancement they had made in the knowledge of divine things. Still, the apostle was afraid lest, at his departure, matters should not continue in this flourishing condition. He foresaw that "grievous wolves," as he termed them, would enter in, not sparing the flock, who should speak "perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." The 2d Epistle to Timothy, who was resident at Ephesus, and which was written a few years after that to the Ephesians, testifies that the apostle's warning was needful; for he declares that "they in Asia had turned away from him." And in the Apocalyptic vision we find the solemn charge brought against this