

other, in "biting and devouring one another." All this is, of course, the very opposite of Christian unity, and must disappear in order that Christian unity may establish and display itself. Wherever there is a real growth of religious life, there a sense of the sinfulness of such a state of things, and the evil which it causes, must spring up, and the desire for brotherly communion and co-operation must be experienced. The spirit of love and peace, of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of man, working from within, cannot fail gradually to effect many an ecclesiastical alliance and union; and in all such cases there will be a clear gain to Christianity. There may be unions, however, which have no root in Christian unity, which are prompted by worldly motives, and effected from without. These merit no admiration, and are not likely to promote the progress of the Kingdom of Christ. A true union between Churches must be rather grown into than directly striven for. Just as he who would be happy must not aim straight at happiness, but must cultivate piety and virtue, so Churches which seek such a union as God will bless, will only reach their goal by increasing in love to God and to all mankind.

I do not know that we are warranted to affirm with confidence much beyond this as to ecclesiastical union. There are not a few who hold that the Church, as the body of Christ, must become externally, visibly, organically one. This is the sort of unity which the Church of Rome has ever maintained to be an essential characteristic of the true Church. Thus to be one is the ideal which she has so steadily striven to realise; and the ambition of attaining that ideal has been the inspiring cause of most of her crimes. It is a unity, I am persuaded, which would be pernicious if it could be attained, but which fortunately cannot be attained; an ideal which is a dream—a grandiose dream—and also a diseased dream; an ambition which is foolish, if not guilty. The notion of a universal Church in this sense is precisely

the same delusion in religion as the notion of a universal monarchy or a universal republic in politics. Human hands are utterly incompetent to hold and guide aright the reins of universal sway, either in religious or in civil matters. A universal Church would be as surely a misgoverned Church, as a universal empire would be a misgoverned empire.

Before we can even affirm with rational confidence that all Churches will come to have the same kind of government, not to speak of the same government, we must have convinced ourselves that there is one kind of Church Government which is alone of Divine origin and authority. This is not now the prevalent view, perhaps, in Protestant Churches. Most Presbyterians probably, while claiming for Presbytery that it is "founded on the Word of God and agreeable thereto," will not deny that the same may be said of other forms of Church Government, in so far as they contribute to the diffusion and application of the pure and saving truths of the Gospel, and to the gathering and perfecting of the saints. The unity of the Church, the unity of believers, cannot, it seems to me, be bound up with any one kind of government. It is a unity not to be sought for elsewhere than in the love of God the Father, in the faith of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit and in the hearts of believers.

There are many truths in my text still unnoticed, but I will only mention the one which is most prominent—and I will do no more than mention it. The oneness of Christians is not simply described as a blessing to themselves, but as what would be a blessing also to the world. If Christians sincerely and fervently loved one another, and loved the Father and the Son, and showed by their whole conduct how precious, how joyous, how divine a thing Christian love was, the world could not but be influenced by the sight; the love of Christ's disciples towards one another would guide it to the love of Christ Himself: and the love of Christ, to the love of the Father; and so the world would be-