

celestial register. You all meet at the same throne, and in the same presence; and, by assembling there, you meet with the spirits of all the perfected just: for the throne of the great *pater-familias*, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, is the rendezvous of all his spiritual offspring. One Mediator—better far than Moses—unites your interests, and represents them all in his own person; and presents your supplications in his own priestly censer. And one atonement—such as Abel never offered—lays the foundation of your common hope. And to all this *you have come*. As those who, being admitted freemen, were said to have come into the very constitution of the Roman polity—to have the *jus civitatis Romanae*, the right of citizenship—though living a thousand miles off, so you belong to the great commonwealth of the Christian Church.

In the local unity and representative oneness of the Jewish tribes, then, we behold a projected shadow of that spiritual entireness which was to be realised in the constitution of the Christian Church. The tribes collected at Sinai, or on Sion, were “an allegory,” of which the Church of Christ is the truth, liberated and embodied.

The unity of the Church was a doctrine not only prefigured, but predicted. One of the earliest characteristics of the Messiah was, that “to him should the gathering of the people be.” Under his reign, saith Isaiah, “Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.” While the union of the two is often predicted, in evident reference to the ultimate union of the Church under Christ; then “one king shall be king to them all,—neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all;” he will “turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent;” and he will give to them “one heart and one way.” They shall constitute a Church, in whose peaceful bosom but one heart shall exist, to sway their motions and direct their actions,—a heart which shall beat in harmony with heaven, and whose every pulse shall diffuse life and joy to the remotest members. And so far from slugging each other, and seeking separate paths, they shall have but “one way,” in which they shall advance together—a loving, happy pilgrim-band.

Accordingly, “when the fulness of time was come,” and Christ appeared on earth, he devoted himself to the great office of realizing those types and fulfilling those predictions; in other words, he sought to unite us to each other, by restoring us to God.

For this purpose, *he assumed an identity of nature*. “Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are *all of one*; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” By assuming our nature into a union with his own, he has demonstrated to our hopes that nothing great or illustrious is to be denied us; that all heaven is open before us: so that he would have our only object of contention to be, which shall approach the nearest to his own exalted state. By thus honouring and crowning our nature in the face of the universe, he would not merely shame us out of our mutual differences, but would present us to each other as new and magnificent objects of affection. By describing himself as standing “in the midst of the church,”—its central and solar glory—he would have us to feel our union to each other in our common dependence upon him. And by “calling us brethren,” he would remind his followers that they form a brotherhood; and that they are not to be ashamed of, nor in any way to disgrace, the sacred relationship. Whatever infirmities and defects they

may see in a fellow-Christian, they are to remember that he is treading the ascent of truth and goodness; that, at length, he will reach an elevation in that upward path, where he will be richly entitled to all their esteem; that the holiest of those who are now before the throne will finally hail him as a companion, and delight in his converse; and that whatever excellences he will then display, he now possesses in the principle or seed. They are to remember that all the followers of Christ are even now the objects of his ennobling love; that *he* is not ashamed to call them brethren, and is, at this moment, discharging for them all the kind and beneficent offices of brotherhood; and, remembering this, their affections should expand and embrace the whole as members of the family of Christ.

But not only did our Lord plainly imply that such was his object, he expressly declared it. “I am the good shepherd,” said he, “I know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” From which remarkable exposition of the Divine plans we learn, that the proper and natural aspect which the human family ought ever to have presented to the eyes of the universe is that of the oneness of a flock in close and constant nearness to its Divine Shepherd; that, under the disturbing influence of sin, “all we like sheep have gone astray,” wandering not only from God, but from each other also; “turning every one into his own way;” that the object of the advent of Christ is to reclaim us from our wanderings, and to restore us to the Divine embrace from which we have been lost; that so intently is the benevolence of God set on our recovery, that ineffably as he had loved the Saviour from eternity, he loves him still more for sustaining our liabilities, and thus setting his paternal compassion free to save us; and that, in reward for that mediation, all who are saved shall form one fold under him, “the great Shepherd of the sheep.” So that, in truth, the recovery and union of believers under Christ, is the ultimate design of God in the mediation of his Son.

And with this representation agrees also the tenour of our Lord’s practical teaching. His favourite topics, of this nature, were humility before God, and a spirit of forbearance and love towards men. And he it remembered that he insisted on the latter as tending to, and expressive of, the former. The same pride which proclaims its independence of God, essays also to insulate itself from man, and to subordinate every thing to its own interest. And the same humility which lies low at the footstool of God, declines to be called “master,” and is willing to become the “servant of all.”

So far from making his religion the occasion of new contentions, he would have his disciples to “forgive from the heart every one his brother their trespasses”—to proclaim a general amnesty, an act of oblivion of all injuries, a year of jubilee—and that jubilee he would have us to make perpetual. So far from allowing his disciples to draw off, on account of their religion, into separate factions, he would have that religion to bind them in a confederation for securing the peace of the world. And, instead of allowing us to go to the throne of grace with a feeling of estrangement from our brethren on account of our religious differences, he would have our religion to operate as the chief incitement to prayer in their behalf. He not only charges us to do for them all the good we can ourselves, but taking us into “our