

are,—one with us; and all, one with Christ. It is an admitted and a high duty to convert to Christianity those who are strangers to it; who are groping in heathen darkness; and who do not know the way of reconciliation to God. And if so, it is a duty, as far as in us lies, to keep the Church one; to maintain its unity and integrity; to preserve it in its original identity and communion with its divine head. This we may and should do with the weapons of love, with the arguments of Christian persuasion,—without reviling, without unkind and uncharitable imputations.

This maintenance of unity in the Church we should feel to be a duty; though many will affirm it to be a matter of indifference, so long as truth of doctrine is preserved. But we are not authorised to draw any such distinction; we have no right to pronounce any thing unessential which our Lord has appointed or sanctioned. There are no “little things” connected with the organization of the Church of the living God. We should not dare to change the waters in Baptism, nor the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, for any other substance: these are in themselves small matters, but their appointment by Christ gives to their use a perpetual and unchangeable authority. Just so in regard to the continuity of the government of the Church, and its rules of order and worship,—we must adhere to what we find laid down in the Lord’s words, and established by the testimony of His immediate followers.

Religion itself is very much endangered by looseness and indifference upon this point,—if men have no allegiance, no tie to the Church of the living God beyond taste, or habit, or inclination; if they can be “blown about by every wind of doctrine;” if they can be driven hither and thither by the mere charm of oratory, or the force of declamation. Such laxity and indifference would be attended with fearful consequences, if admitted into the practice of ordinary life.