

THE SPOUSE OF CHRIST IN SEARCH OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

SONG OF SOLOMON, III. 3, 4.

It would now seem as if the Bride were for ever cut off from all salvation, and yet she had never been so near her deliverance as at this very moment.

"And she passed but a little."—Well, what happened? There, methinks, she first paused; and whither did she turn? First into herself, communing with her own poor sick heart, and felt, for the first time in her life, with full clearness and understanding, how that man is altogether nothing, and that sin has reduced him to a state of the most utter helplessness, nay, that so deplorable is his condition, that he is inwardly so dead, as to be unable to feel any love towards the greatest of his benefactors, the most faithful of all friends; that he cannot even open his mouth in praise and thankfulness to Him who, above all in heaven and in earth, is so worthy to receive glory, thanksgiving, and praise; that of himself he is unable to rejoice in the greatest blessings, to lift his heart in prayer to God, to have delight in the Lord, the most suitable means being found much too weak to melt his heart of stone into devotion and love.

The Berean.

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, DEC. 11, 1845.

At the risk of grieving one or two of our Correspondents whose anticipations of great results to the cause of Christian Union are at this time lively, we venture to bring the subject to a point of practical inquiry.

This may seem a very needless inquiry to men whose heads warm with their hearts—but we shall probably succeed in showing that it is one of great practical importance. We will throw it into a still more definite shape. Suppose a community of some ten thousand Protestants in a distant land, who are already divided into three different denominations, each numbering more congregations than one, under different ministers: let them be of the Church of England—Presbyterian—and Methodist. We will suppose a few members of the Congregational persuasion to form part of this body of Protestants—too few to sustain a minister of their own communion. They apply to the missionary body of their denomination in the mother-country, for aid towards the formation of a Church of which they will be the nucleus.

We have not the remotest intention to intimate that those Christians should be required to relinquish their peculiarities for the sake of union with our own Church. Such a requirement on her part would be thought to proceed from the love of predominance. But there are the Presbyterian and Methodist congregations: why not be content to unite with either of them, considering that the differences which obtain are so entirely unessential, while in essentials there exists such professed unity—whereas the evils of separation are on all hands acknowledged to be so great? It is hardly possible to magnify them unduly. Just carry out our supposition to a successful result of the application before alluded to: some active missionary of popular talent is sent out under a guarantee of support

for three or four years, with the solemn charge to use his endeavours towards the formation of a permanent Church of his persuasion (as the fourth denomination of Protestants) in that community; no one with the most common knowledge of men and things will suppose that such a proceeding will not materially interfere with Christian union in that Protestant community. The Church of England will make no profession of being one with the Congregational Minister—however he may be esteemed and, as he ought to be, respectfully treated—therefore she will have no professions to make. But when the newly forming congregation draws members from the other Protestant folds—there may be profession of unity, but there will not be the reality of it. We should pity the Pastor who would not feel deeply aggrieved and wounded as often as any one of those over whom he has watched as members of his flock leaves that, to transfer himself to the newly forming fold, on the ground of minor differences. Unity has been violated, and further violations of the same precious gift from heaven are invited. For we need only cast our eye forward to the quiet settling down of things in the existence of four Protestant denominations, than we find the renewal of precisely the same train of events in the longing entertained by members of some fifth religious persuasion or other, and the Congregational fold exposed to the same disturbing inroads which, on the former occasion, visited the older established congregations.

As long as no remedy is applied to these tendencies towards subdivision, verily we do not see but that the minor differences, which in profession are trampled under foot, are in practice exalted above the unanimously recognised importance of Christian union. For let it be clearly understood that the unavoidable consequence of this separation in Church organization is separation of evangelizing efforts, and consequently the weakening of the body of Protestant Christians which in union ought to seek its strength.

It may be asked, has unity of outward organization given real unity to the Church of England? We do not say that it has; nay, the true Anglican is far more separate from the Tractarian Churchman than he is from the great body of dissenting believers. But the cause of Christ has been vastly promoted by the adherence of true Anglicans to their organization, notwithstanding that many of them see the various evils in it which they deplore, and which they pray may speedily meet with their remedy. They have not seen perfect purity any where, and they believe the most hopeful labour for them to be in the removal of evils from the Church to which they belong; they will not risk the opportunities she provides for their own edification, nor jeopard the liberty of usefulness to others which she does not forbid, for the uncertain gain which has to be sought through the undeniable evil of separation.

The following is cut from a letter addressed by the Rev. C. J. Yorke, Rector of Shenfield, Essex, to the London Record. It joins on so well to our preceding remarks, that we append it. To the remaining part of the same letter, we hope to recur in our next number.

"It has long appeared to me that 'Christian Union' is the grand theological subject of the day.

"If asked why I hold this opinion, I should give in answer several reasons. First, the non-union of Protestant communities has long been the most plausible, seductive, and influential argument of Romanists. They represent us as forming factions no less hostile to one another than to them. They represent themselves as forming a consistent whole, with one face, mind, and energy. Secondly, the idea of unity has been the most potent spell by which the more imaginative Tractarians have been 'deceiving and deceived.' And it has still great power amongst such theorists; although, practically, the debates raised upon it have cut the Church of England into an almost indefinite number of schools and parties, and abstractedly (notwithstanding Mr. Gladstone's visions), few systems can be more destitute of formal unity than that of a number of co-ordinate Episcopates, having neither Pope, Council, nor Convocation, for the keystone of the arch. Thirdly, if the economic divisions of Christians, as maintained at present, are not directly sinful in themselves, they certainly lead to sin, because they lead to suspicions and to rivalry; and must be thus moving, like thunder-clouds, in a direction contrary to that which is indicated by the Divine prayer of our Lord, recorded by St. John. Fourthly, a just and practical conception of Christian union would, I have no doubt, tend indirectly to produce a great increase of Christian devotion and exertion. It has usually been the case, that the discovery or the development of some grand truth has taken place simultaneously with an outburst of working zeal, and has indeed been to it as fuel is to the flame. In the times of the Reformers, that truth was justification through faith only; in the times of Wesley and Whitefield, it was essential, spiritual regeneration. When these two truths were successively set in a strong light, the Church of Christ was animated with fresh life; and that, although some of the Reformers spoke erroneously of the Mosaic law, and although many of the Methodists confounded the action of natural passion with that of gracious influence. And thus, if the grand truth of Christian union were now to be honestly and heartily adopted, it would greatly correct that feebleness of mind and spirit which (in spite of our improved knowledge of the Scriptures,

and our complicated plans) characterizes our present Christianity.

"These then, are some of the reasons why the question before us is to my mind so important."

ADDENDA from our absent Friend, to the selection from Bickersteth, on the first page.—Oh that it were more generally understood—more practically acknowledged by Christ's believing people every where, that Unity is not necessarily connected with Uniformity, but that the former may (not to say must) be the more conspicuously and the more impressively manifested in the absence of the latter. For Episcopals, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Baptists, Independents, the Foreign Protestants &c., to love one another cordially in Christ, in spite of every prejudice, every prepossession, every hindrance. — from love triumphing over all these — this is surely a far more wonderful, far more convincing proof to the world of the cementing power of the Gospel of Christ than for the members of any one particular body of His people to love their Church alone?—or than if the unbelieving world saw but one Church confederated together by an artificial and despotic uniformity? Can any one of the forced and (in regard to Scripture) unenlightened combinations of uniformity and unity (whether real or as is, we believe, far oftener the case, merely external or conventional, from habit, or from passive, uninquiring acquiescence, or from the fear of man, or from motives of earthly interest, &c.) such, for instance, as the confederacies of the Papists—or the Mahomedans—or the Hindus—or any other of the unscriptural, exclusive, and intolerant systems of "manacles and mufflers for the human mind"—oh can any one of those false unities be for one instant compared with the wonderful union of heart and agreement in essentials unto salvation, displayed by the Redeemer's believing people amidst all their external variations and differences? In which is the "finger of God" most gloriously apparent? In which is the "mighty power" of the Holy Spirit most conspicuously honoured?

Deplored as we do the "Variations of Protestants," and feeling that we ought one and all to pray "without ceasing," and affectionately to labour for their speedy removal—we yet believe that our great and good God and Saviour may one day be known to have had wide and holy ends in permitting, and in overruling, the differences of the scattered and divided flocks of His Church on earth. In addition to the glorious exhibition of His power over our spirits—as above suggested; may it not be that the Holy Scriptures have thereby been more widely circulated; and in greater purity and simplicity?—that slumbering and diseased Churches have been the more effectually quickened—(Rom. x. 19, &c.)—that others (after falling into the ancient pernicious errors of God's favoured Jewish people and church; when they said "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these," Jer. vii. 4.; and again—"Stand by thyself, come not near me; for I am holier than thou"—Isa. lv. 5.) have been humbled, and corrected, and instructed; such correction was needful even in the case of the Apostles, who, against their Lord and Master's will and wish, ignorantly—perhaps self-righteously—presumptuously "forbade" one who was labouring "for" Christ and his cause, because, whilst, also performing miracles as they did, he "followed not with them," Mark viii. 33, 34; and who, on another occasion, were rebuked by Him for their un-Christian spirit and ignorant zeal in wishing to burn up the bigoted Samaritans. Luke ix. 54, 55. Have not other cases of pride, or carnal mindedness, or idolatry of the creature; or of means; or ignorance of the Scripture and of God's purposes, &c. &c., been corrected by the evident bestowal by Him of equal fruits on others considered by bodies in the outward Christian Church as being "no people?"—Rom. x. 19.—or perhaps as belonging to the "foolish things," or "the weak things, or the base things of the world"—(1 Cor. i. 19 to the end)—or by His teaching again and again, that "what God hath cleansed," that is "not" to be "called common"—that they who evidence that they have "received the Holy Ghost" "as well as we"—Acts x. 47.—are not to be forbidden Christian privileges and fellowship? But, not to extend these suggestions, let it be observed that with respect to the broad question of the Protestant Churches, we would say with the loving, judicious, and practical Bickersteth—"uniformity of worship, and discipline, and external order, also we would never undervalue. They have a real importance and ought not to be lightly broken in upon." But, on the other hand, "we are not in the meanwhile likely to arrive at union now by urging outward uniformity: let us rather dwell on the great things in which we are united, and walk according to them. This is the Scriptural method to bring us to unite in those things in which we differ.—Phil. iii. 15-17.

ALEPH.

MR. OAKLEY'S CALL UPON TRACTARIANS TO BE CONSISTENT.

"That there is at this time a plain call upon members of the Anglican Church, as individuals, to review the grounds of their confidence in her, is, I suppose, more extensively felt than it is freely acknowledged; at any rate, I do not see how it can be doubted. Now, I would not go so far as to say, (as at present minded,) that this inquiry should, still less that it will, in all cases, issue in the conclusion at which I myself, for instance, have arrived. But that it ought to issue in one of two conclusions is a point which I feel more and more. If we do not throw ourselves into the Catholic system, surely we ought to throw ourselves into the Anglican. Now, let this be well considered. We are actually in the Church, or we are out of it; and, if out of it, we ought at once to enter it. And the Church is not an idea or abstraction, but a certain living, breathing, energetic institution. The Anglican Church is, at least, an organised and acting body; it may be a false system, or a hollow system, or a worldly system, or an uncomfortable system, or an anomalous system; still a system it is, and a definite and distinct system too.

world by his own external identification with it, while considering that his chief duty lies in endeavouring to supersede it?

"I state this question with the more vividness, perhaps, certainly with the more anxiety, because I think that I have been myself, in times past, too little alive to its magnitude. What I conclude then is this:—If we be not prepared to throw ourselves heart and soul into the Church of England system, to submit uncomplainingly to her decisions, to love and reverence her living authorities, to sympathize with her general tone and spirit; if we sit so loose to her, as to contemplate the possibility of ever leaving her; and even to define, in thought at least, if not in words, the contingencies which might entail on us that necessity (so unimaginable to a Catholic Christian); let us, then, seriously examine ourselves whether we indeed receive this Communion as our Church. If not, is it not time to arouse ourselves and bethink where we are, and what we are doing; and what sense we attach to that axiom even of our own more immediate forefathers, 'Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus?'—From Mr. O's recent Letter on submitting to the Catholic Church."

JURILESS OF THE OPENING OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.—A letter from Bonn, of October 26th says: "All the Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Germany have just received an invitation from Rome, to have celebrated with pomp the approaching Threemadredth Anniversary of the opening of the council of Trent. These prelates have addressed to the curies circulars on this point, and to each circular there have been joined for distribution a great number of copies of a catechism printed at Rome, at the end of which is found the text of the Bull, anathematizing Luther and his followers. These are significant acts, at a moment when religious questions assume each day greater gravity throughout the whole of Germany."

GERMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, CINCINNATI.—The German Quickstep, published at New York (in German) contains an advertisement for "an educated and moral Priest, resolved upon founding an independent Catholic congregation. He may reckon upon ample support. Upon an offer to engage for a year, a list of subscriptions can be furnished at once. Secrecy is promised to those who may enter into correspondence on the subject." The advertisement does not say whether the Priest is to be pious.

CONVERTS FROM ROME.—Last Sunday week (November 2nd) nine Roman Catholics read their recantation from Popery in the parish church of St. Andrew's, Dublin, and were received into the Church of England by the Rev. T. Scott, a most zealous and excellent clergyman, who preached on the occasion to a very full congregation. The Dublin Evening Packet states that more than thirty respectable inhabitants of Dingle, in the county of Kerry, have lately renounced Popery and become Protestants.—Morning Herald.

THE DEANERY OF WESTMINSTER.—The Rev. William Buckland, D. D., Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, is preferred to this dignity on the promotion of Dr. Wilberforce to the See of Oxford. Dr. Buckland is an eminent geologist, but his views have given rise to much controversy in defence of the Mosaic account of the creation.

TRUTH AND ITS IMPORTANCE.

By TRUTH we mean not the veracity of man, nor his faithfulness in his transactions with his fellow-creatures, but DIVINE REVELATION on all subjects. The opinions of men are frequently purely speculative inferences drawn from premises insufficiently examined to be understood, or lying beyond the comprehension of human intellect. Hence philosophy, unaided by divine revelation, has as often put forth error as it has truth, and plunged more of its self-complacent disciples into ruin and misery, than it has rewarded with advantage or honourable gain. Such being the fact, it follows that man's opinion on any subject may as often prove unsound as true, ruinous as safe, and ought therefore never to be implicitly trusted until brought to the test of some infallible standard. i. e. a standard which never varies. Such a standard can only be supplied by ONE whose knowledge is infinite, and whose thoughts are always the same. We believe God to be infinitely wise, and to possess all knowledge of things as they have been—things as they are—and things as they will be. And so far as He has been pleased to reveal his mind to us, He has furnished us with an infallible test by which every human opinion may be safely tried, and truth invariably discovered and distinguished from error.

TRUTH, viewed under whatever aspect, is neither more nor less than a simple statement of facts, or a faithful representation of the actual state of things at any given time. Thus historical truth is a statement of facts that have already transpired—prophetic truth of facts, that will and must occur at some future period—and all truths, of the precise relation in which persons and affairs stand to each other in time and in eternity. For entertaining these views of what truth really is, and for testing all things by the infallible word of God, the BEREANS of old were considered "honourable" by the Holy Spirit; and surely it is equally the duty, as it is the privilege of the BEREANS of the present day to endeavour by like conduct to strive for the same honourable appellation.

Having ascertained what TRUTH really is, it is natural to enquire what can error be? What else can it be but a false representation of the state of things? It may consist either in a persuasion of the existence of things which do not exist, or a denial of the existence of things which do: either in a belief that certain principles, practices and consequences, have a mutual dependence on each other, which have none at all, or in a denial of such dependence where it really exists. In the strong but characteristic language of Scripture error is a "lie," because it does not represent things as they really are. To ascertain the truth, and to avoid error, in worldly matters, is of vast importance. For instance, the fortune of the merchant depends on his knowing with some degree

of accuracy what results have arisen, and may again arise, from the application of certain principles in commerce; but to pursue a mistaken course, through ignorance or deception, may cost him his all, and entail ruin on his family.

Let the readers of the Berean then transfer this idea from worldly matters to the subject of religion; and the importance of ascertaining the truth, and pursuing it, becomes at once overwhelming.

If there be an Almighty God, who will judge the world in righteousness at the last day, a denial of his existence will entail eternal misery on the atheist!

If that Almighty God takes cognizance of human actions, and has given us a revelation of his will in the sacred writings, a denial of the inspiration of those writings, for the purpose of getting rid of human responsibility, will entail eternal punishment on the infidel and the sceptic!

If the Redeemer of the world, Jesus the Son of God, be necessarily a Divine person, and his death for sin possess an atoning efficacy, on the ground of which alone the transgressor can be restored to the favour of his Maker, a denial of the divinity of Christ, and of the propitiatory nature of his death, must leave the Unitarians of our day without any hope of deliverance from the wrath to come!

If God alone is to be worshipped, and the bowing down to an idol or an image be an offence to him—if Jesus be the only Mediator between God and man, and the appointment of other intercessors be a virtual rejection of him—and if the sanctification of the Holy Spirit be essential to salvation, and the anointing of the body just before death, called "extreme unction," be a wicked attempt to "establish a substitute, the Papists, who continually "bow down" to images, who pay divine veneration to relics, and worship the consecrated wafer called the host—who address their solemn prayers to the Virgin Mary, to the Apostles, and to canonized saints, requesting them to make intercession with God and with Christ—and who believe that extreme unction will complete their fitness for heaven; these have set the true Christian religion aside—they have overlaid God's way of salvation with inventions of their own, and are in a state of awful error.

Would that our catalogue might end here, but truth, whose cause we advocate, forbids—we cannot pass over the Tractarian heresy, which is spreading its blighting influence over the fairest portion of the Lord's vineyard. Let any one be at the pains to bring the religious sentiments of these Tractarians (or Puseyites, as they are sometimes called) to the test of divine revelation, and he will find them so glaringly false as to show the impress of a deep laid and diabolical conspiracy to rob God of his glory, to deprive Christ of his mediatorial functions, and to make merchandise of men's souls at the expense of their eternal happiness.

To protest, then, against the errors of the Harlot Popery and her handmaid Puseyism, and to warn all persons against the fatal consequences of giving them the slightest countenance must be an imperative duty on all true Christians. DIVINE TRUTH should be, in the estimation of every Berean, a treasure so invaluable as to deserve every effort to retain it for ourselves, and to make it known to others. Indeed the writer has long come to this conclusion—that truth alone has a legitimate claim to all rights and privileges; but that error has none. Truth, like the son of the free woman, is the lawful heir, entitled to the enjoyment of present advantages and future glory; whilst error, like the son of the bond woman, may at any time be justly treated like a bastard and sent its way. Truth is the offspring of God, and has brought down its credentials from heaven, having received from Him "whose is the earth and the fulness thereof," an undeniable right to every earthly privilege; but error, deriving its origin from below, is an audacious usurper, without a lawful claim to any right or privilege, not even to an existence. It exists, not of right, but by toleration.

That they, who embrace the truth, and make one cause with it, become thereby not only entitled but also qualified to exercise all civil and religious privileges; whilst the adherents of error, by their union with that rebellious intruder, the devil, become disqualified for both, may easily be proved, and should God permit, may form the subject of another paper. We conclude at present with this advice to the readers of the Berean: "Buy the truth and sell it not. The truth shall make you free; and thus made free, you shall be free indeed."

[We think, our friend does not express what experience warrants, when he says "let any one be at the pains to bring the religious sentiments," &c. Instead of any one, though in the habit of bringing matters to the test of divine revelation, being able to discover the falsity of Tractarian sentiments, it has required some of the clearest heads and ripest theologians to see through them so distinctly as to expose them; whereas some, not despicable for ability, and not to be denied the credit of honest intentions, have been ensnared by them. The great danger of those sentiments is just this, that they are not glaringly false, but on the contrary deceitfully insinuating, even to many a mind habituated to the devout use of the Scriptures. If the writer used less vehement terms in the remainder of the paragraph to which we refer, he would carry more conviction to the minds of his readers. We frail beings do better to pity men as misguided than to judge them as parties to a "conspiracy" of the awful character described by him.]

If E. means to treat of disqualification from the exercise of "civil" privileges on account of adhering to error, is he prepared to suggest in what human breasts authority is to be lodged for deciding what is error? or what amount of error shall disqualify? The other investigation, without this preliminary, can hardly be of practical application.—EDITOR.]

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Received M. W.'s Paper from W. W. W.—C. Y. with slips the papers will be sent to Gibraltar direct—the German paper, with thanks to the unknown sender.—The Pulpit: we have all along abstained from making use of that publication, thinking that the preacher disavow