

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

CHRISTIAN UNION.

The plea for Christian union is heard both in church and state, and politicians as well as Christians are fast falling into the line of its advocates. Even heathens urge upon missionaries the necessity of being united themselves in order to gain them to Christ. Japan opens its gates to the gospel and protects its preachers and converts, but advocates one church and one book to guide it. Dr. Schurman is quite anxious for missionaries to go to the Philippines, and hopes they will accomplish much good, but declares it extremely unpolitic to send missionaries of different denominations to confuse the minds of the people. He urges them to decide upon some form of Christianity, and unite on some platform, before going to preach to others. The wisdom of this course must be obvious to all.

Leading men, eminent for learning and piety in different communions, are pleading earnestly for the *oneness* Jesus prayed for when going to the Father. Wise men see its utility and good men earnestly desire it, but the hope of its accomplishment rests on the prayer of the Son of God, which proves it right and possible.

Let us consider the *cause* and *cure* of

SECTARIANISM.

Many think that men's inability to understand the scriptures alike is the principal and primary cause of sectarianism.

Some three or four years after Paul had preached Christ as the only foundation of the church in Corinth, it was divided into at least three parties, which would soon develop into denominations, or "branches of the church." But they divided on men—yes, on good men, and not on doctrines, for these men taught but one doctrine. God gives different preachers power to reach the different tastes and conditions of men with the gospel so that all may be saved. It was so at Corinth. Paul reached some men with the truth; others were more affected with Peter's preaching; still others with that of Apollos. Each contended for their preacher until the *crucified one* was forgotten. Although they had been baptized in his name, and he was their Saviour and husband, yet they disowned him to put a servant in his place. Had these ministers been selfish they could advance their *opinions* for their respective followers to hold fast, and so keep them apart. But they were true men of God, and they showed them the evils of such divisions.

Paul and Apollos were but servants by whom they believed on the Christ. He was everything to them, and when they understood the matter and became loyal to Christ, it cured them of sectarianism. They loved

one another as one family united by one spirit to Christ.

Paul thus pleads for the union of the Philippian church, "Fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He then tells what Christ has done and how highly God has exalted him. (Phil. ii.). We thus learn what divided the church at Corinth and also what would unite the church at Philippi, showing very clearly the cause and the cure of sectarianism. The first course will now *divide* if persisted in, and the second course, if faithfully followed, will *unite* Christians.

These cases prove that a different opinion on certain scriptures is *not* the primary *cause* of sectarianism nor an agreement of opinion its *cure*. This mistake has made creeds to unite men but they have rather fed and fostered than cured sectarianism. It is a disease more of the heart than of the head, and the man who labors to restore Christian union should continually bear in mind the words of the Apostle: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." I. Cor. xiii, 1. How could a man without a large measure of divine love "let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." He is a soldier fighting against defeat. He thirsts for a success that will make him a victor, and yet all must be done without strife or vainglory. He knows more about this union than the man he endeavors to win, and even knowledge puffeth up. The love of God enables him to conquer self with all its temptations and the very knowledge that puffeth up is moderated and utilized by the charity that edifieth or buildeth up. Though in some points he differs from his brother he can see in him the image of Christ, and thus esteem him better than himself. He looks not merely at his own things but also on the things of others. He wants his brother's interest advanced as well as his own. He thus opens his heart and lets the mind of Christ in to rule and reign there. Christ is so anxious to dwell in us and has made every arrangement for such union that he asks us to let his mind enter and remain in us.

If Christ is not divided how is it possible for those who refuse to be united to his people to dwell in Christ? This is a serious matter and shows the utter sinfulness of sectarianism. It has been often noticed and remarked that Christians who refused to own or fellowship other good men because they followed not them have near their death desired to meet these very men to talk and pray together. It seems as though a merci-

ful Father does convince his erring children of their great mistake before they pass to the judgment seat.

The first step which men take in their reconciliation to God is a whole-hearted acceptance of Christ as the Son of the living God whose death removes their sin and whose love unites them to him by his Spirit to himself, to his Father and to one another. In proportion as that love lives and reigns in them will they experience the blessed fruits of the Holy Spirit in union one with another, and the better fitted will they be to bring the lost to Jesus.

But what we have to say on this subject seems too much for one article, and we may treat it again. In the meantime to show how near it lay to the Redeemer's heart and why it did so, we look at his last conversation with his disciples and to his last prayer for them. He prayed for their union THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BELIEVE. To them he said, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another. BY THIS SHALL ALL MEN KNOW THAT YE ARE MY DISCIPLES IF YE HAVE LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER." After all that had been said on love, Jesus gave this as his own new commandment and repeats it over and over and tells what it would do for all men. John xiii:34, 35; xv:12; xvii.

The Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions opened in N. Y. city, Saturday, April 21st. Nearly 2,000 delegates from all countries were in attendance. President McKinley, ex-President Benjamin Harrison and Gov. Roosevelt, of New York, were among those who occupied the platform at the opening. President McKinley, in his speech, among other things, said: "The noble, self-effacing, willing ministers of peace and good will should be classed with the world's heroes. Wielding the sword of the spirit, they have conquered ignorance and prejudice. They have been the pioneers of civilization. They have illumined the darkness of idolatry and superstition with the light of intelligence and truth. They have been messengers of righteousness and love. They have braved disease and danger and death, and in their exile have suffered unspeakable hardships, but their noble spirits have never wavered. They count their labor no sacrifice." Ex-President Benjamin Harrison said: "The men who, like Paul, have gone to heathen lands with the message, 'We seek not yours but you,' have been hindered by those who coming after have reversed the message. Rum and other corrupting agencies come in with our boasted civilization, and the feeble races wither before the hot breath of the white man's vices. The great nations have combined to suppress the slave trade. Is it too much to ask that they shall combine to prevent the sale of spirits to men who less than our children, have acquired the habits of self-restraint? If we must have 'consumers' let us give them an innocent diet."

It must have been a spectacle almost sublime when that great audience gathered at the Missionary Conference in New York, an audience representing many countries, many races, stood up and sung the creed of the future, "All hail the power of Jesus name." This great council is held for the purpose of considering missions, the carrying of the gospel of peace into all lands. At the same time the two most missionary peoples are at war. These things are sometimes hard to understand.