

they were no longer losing sight of his cross in a fierce contention about his seamless robe—no longer forgetting his atoning blood in their thirst for the blood of each other—but that they were all looking upon him who had been thus wounded in the house of his friends, were mingling their tears and supplications together, and then, emulating the winged zeal of the angels at his advent, were going into all the world, preaching, “peace on earth, good-will towards men!”

XII. How agreeable would the restoration of unity be to that Divine Agent who is given to the Church as the spirit of love, joy, and peace! “There is but one body and one Spirit, a Spirit that spreads vital influence through the body. What can we think of that Spirit that feels everywhere? that is in the body a universal sentient? How can that Spirit but be grieved? How should any of us like it, to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part! Though with him passion and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive.” But in the same sense and degree in which the dis-severed and distracted state of the Church now grieves him the restoration of its unity and peace would yield him ineffable delight. The very desire of such restoration sincerely and generally expressed would open the windows of heaven, and cause him to return. If even a good man is conscious of pure satisfaction in only attempting a family reconciliation, how inconceivable would be the satisfaction of the Divine Spirit in restoring and ratifying the peace of the great family of God! What benevolent spirit in heaven would not find an additional heaven in being despatched even to assist in such an office! Who, then, shall attempt to describe the satisfaction of Him to whom the office belongs, and to whom it belongs, because it is congenial and proper to his nature? In restoring the torn members of the Church to each other, and healing its wounds, he would be only gratifying his own nature. And having prepared the body, he would be able to return to his appropriate office of being the life of that body, and through it, the glorifier of Jesus in the conversion of the world.

XIII. But if the unity of the Church would be thus agreeable to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, let us consider its eminent fitness and consequent agreeableness to the blessed Trinity in Unity. Of this we are reminded by our Lord himself in his intercessory prayer—“that they all might be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also might be one in us.” Of the divine subsistencies in the Trinity the Church knows nothing scripturally, but as they subsist in the unity of the Godhead, acting together in the economy of our salvation, the world ought to have known nothing practically, but as they were seen together in the unity of the Church, acting together for the conversion of the world. How suitable is it that those who have to ascribe their salvation to a plan in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have united their infinite perfections, and who have been all baptised into their one sacred name, should themselves unite in a community of love and duty in return—that the members of each Christian Church, feeling the penury of their utmost love, should call on the members of every other church to unite with them, and thus multiply their means of glorifying the Triune God! And how supremely agreeable to the Blessed Trinity, looking down from the throne of their infinite glory, to behold the image of their own ineffable union reflected in the intimate and indissoluble oneness of the Church; and the Church contending only which part of it shall be most instrumental in going into all the world, preaching the Gospel to

every creature, and baptising them into the threefold name of God!

XIV. A tender appeal for the unity of the Church is derivable from the fact that it owes its existence entirely to infinite love. If, like many an earthly kingdom and institution, it had originated in strife, in strife it might have been maintained; but it is the pure creation of Love. If it be true that in God we live, and move, and have our being—if, as men, we inhabit his infinite essence, it is true that, as Christians, we inhabit his very heart, dwell in his love. It is to this fact the apostle alludes when he would have us to comprehend with all saints the fourfold dimensions of the love of God. Material substances have only three dimensions; but the Church, having for its temple the heart of God, is to search for the circumference in all directions round, and be lost in the love which passeth knowledge. Christians, the Church is the institution of love; shall we make it the scene of hatred? It stands in the heart of God; shall we fill it with malevolence? What should we have thought of the disciples, had they audibly quarrelled on Calvary, and in the hearing of their dying Lord? And yet all our contentions are conducted in the presence of the love which led him there! Is not this crucifying him afresh?

XV. The union of Christians would be not only eminently agreeable to the Author of their salvation, and in accordance with what they owe to his love, it would be supremely advantageous to themselves. How necessarily would it tend to harmonise our views on those points which are now the sources of division! Is not this the gracious way in which God seeks to terminate our guilty quarrel with himself? Instead of moving off from us to the greatest possible distance, has he not come nearer to us than ever, dwelt amongst us, established a ministry of reconciliation, and invited us to “come and reason” with him at a throne of grace? And by pursuing this gracious course towards us, is he not intentionally showing us the right way of becoming reconciled to each other? and would he not honour and bless the imitation of his own methods?

The spirit of conciliation which would then prevail would of itself do more towards the adjustment of disputed points than all the treatises which they have ever called forth. Suspicion would be painful to us; and crimination laborious and hateful: we should refrain from it not only because required by God to do so, but also by a prohibition and law of our Christian nature. Mutual explanation alone, fraternally sought, and promptly, patiently, and kindly given, would obviate many a difficulty, and prove many an objection, now deemed insuperable, to have been quite unfounded. The simplest means of conciliation would then become means of grace, for God would bless them. In the presence of the great objects which would engage our attention, many of the points at issue now would at once be eclipsed and for ever lost sight of. While the Spirit of God, descending into the clear and serene atmosphere which would then fill the Church, would either, as the Spirit of Truth, lead us into all truth respecting the few points that remained, or else, as the Spirit of Love, would render such illumination unnecessary. This union would produce unanimity, and unanimity, by reaction, promote union.

XVI. It would greatly promote the piety of the Church. Hence the prayer of St. Paul for the Thessalonians—“The Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.” Having put away the childish things—the toys and trifles which now engage our attention, and occasion our disputes—we should feel with much greater influence than ever