

ernment. It will be just in proportion as Christians view the spiritual tie as the bond of unity that they will make the visible union the plainer and the more effective before the world. As long as they fail to see that the spiritual tie is the bond of unity, so long they will emphasize their outward forms, seeking a unity in that wrong direction, and marring their spiritual power.

We put our principal thoughts in two propositions:

1. Any company of true believers meeting to worship in an orderly manner is a Church of Christ.

2. Any company of unbelievers, no matter what their historic connections may be, is no church at all.

## II.—AN OLD ENGLISH RELIGIOUS SATIRIST.

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We refer to William Langlande (Langley), in many respects, one of the most notable characters of the era before us. Born in 1332, and dying in 1400, the same year with Chaucer, he may be regarded as Chaucer's contemporary, as he stands with this first national English poet on the very border-line between the old and the new in our history. Born at Cleobury Mortimer, in Shropshire; a lowly clerk or student; dressed in the "long clothes" of his clerical habit; living, as he tells us, "not only in but *upon* London," in his simple, unaffected way, he lived his life and did his work and thereby placed all later England under bonds to his fidelity.

His great allegorical and satirical poem, "The Vision of Piers Plowman," is not only the greatest religious poem of the time, but in its thought and spirit, suffers nothing by comparison with any subsequent vernacular poem of a similar order. Strictly a vision, as it purports to be, and presented in the dress of allegory, it is so full of practical suggestion; of dry humor and kindly pleasantry; of scathing invective and lofty ethical maxim; that the English critic is often at a loss just where to place it in the list of native literary product. It is safe to say, however, that, more than all else, it is a satirical poem of a specifically moral cast, and might be called our first example in English of a high type of religious satire in the form of verse.

We find, it is true, a large satirical element in the oldest English homilies, proverbs and moral odes, and in such later examples as "Handlyng Synne" and "The Pricke of Conscience." Still later in our history, satire abounds in the writings of Lydgate, Skelton, Tyndale, More, Wyatt, Latimer, Ascham, Gascoigne and Lyly, but nowhere do we find so extended and unique satire in verse, definite in its aim and Christianly devout in its spirit. "Piers the Ploughman's Crede," an anonymous poem of a later date, and a severe attack upon the Friars, had it been longer and of a more catholic spirit would naturally have been its nearest and closest rival. The poem before