

our hearts; while, at the same time, there is a cruel readiness to pass the most severe censures upon the conduct of those who are not of our society. This evil, alas! is not to be denied, but you know no Christian community is perfect.

Mr. Secker—That is true. But is not this a fundamental error? Does it not, of necessity, prevent everything like real progress in the religion of Christ? And, remember, it is not one of those evils which necessarily pertain to the Church on earth, but the natural offspring of that very self-righteousness, which, crying "Stand by, I am holier than thou," causes separation in the first instance.

But another, and yet more serious evil than any to which I have yet alluded is, that the Methodists, and, in like manner, all other separatists, are, I fear, in a state of *schismatical separation* from the visible Church, and thereby are guilty of the sin of rending the body of Christ.—(See Eph. iv. 1—16.) That Christ designed his Church to be one is very evident. How did he pay to his Father, that his disciples "*might be one, as he and the Father were one*"—(John xvii. 20—1.) So also, in the days of the Apostles, to cut a person off from the communion of the visible church was considered as the heaviest punishment which could be inflicted upon any offender.—(Matt. xviii. 17; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20.) The great Apostle particularly warns us against this sin, in the language of earnest entreaty, where he says, "*Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions, and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.*"—(Rom. xvi. 17.) Indeed, if there be one truth plainer than another in the Bible, it is, that God always designed his church to be one and undivided.

Mr. Brown—True, true, Mr. Secker; but then this is a spiritual union, and all Christ's real children, whether Churchmen, Methodists, or other Dissenters, are one in Christ: we all eat of the same spiritual food, and drink of the water from the same spiritual rock; and wherever one true Christian meets another, by whatever name he may be called, he hails him as a brother in Christ.

Mr. Secker—Such I know is the way in which those who have separated from the communion of the ancient, primitive and visible Church of Christ, usually endeavour to shake off the charge of the fearful sin of schism; such of course were the arguments which satisfied myself; but indeed, Mr. Brown, when they are examined a little more closely, they are found to be miserably shallow.

But as the hour is growing late, I will, please, wave, at present, this important part of the question, with the understanding that, if agreeable to you, we resume it at the very first opportunity; and will now only offer an observation or two on the strong argument which

afforded against the lawfulness of religious separation, from its necessary effect in weakening the hands of the Church in its restraining of sin, and in its efforts to bring the sinner to repentance. I allude to the fact, that, owing to sectarianism, *Excommunication* from the church has become a nullity, and even her authoritative censures are no more heard.

Mr. Brown—Why, my dear sir, you surely do not wish to subject us again to the terrible thunders of the Pope, or to make our people again tremble before the cruel mummery of the curse by bell, book and candle. This is truly Puseyism, or even Popery itself, with a witness.

Mr. Secker—Nay, my respected friend, do not be alarmed; I neither wish to introduce Popery nor Puseyism; though this last is a word I do not like to use; it appears to me an unkind, and therefore unchristian, abuse of the name of one who is, I doubt not, a good, though, it is possible, in some things, a mistaken man. But, with respect to the censures of the Church, or even its extreme penalty of excommunication, I do not understand how it is that you start at these; for who so ready as the Methodists to charge the Church with the want of effective discipline? And is it not your boast that you are much more particular in expelling your unworthy members than we are? But though I think that you frequently attempt more in this respect than would be warrantable in our scripturally constituted Church, yet, that the principle of ecclesiastical censure, even to the extreme of excommunication, is right, depends on no human opinion, but upon the Word of God. We find it in that authority which Christ so distinctively gave to his Apostles and successors, saying, "*Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*"—(John xx. 23; see also Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18). In the instructions of St. Paul, concerning the manner in which this power should be exerted, to St. Titus he writes thus, "*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.*"—(Titus iii. 10; see also Romans xvi. 17, 1 Cor. v. 5, 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15); and in his own examples, as in the case of Hymeneus and Alexander.—(1 Tim. i. 20.)

The necessity for such a discipline must exist, or Christ would not have left it in his church; but its great usefulness is also obvious, for how, so effectively, shall sin be checked, or the church purified?

What then is it that has caused the loss of this power to cease in the church?