THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

A Sermon by Rev. I. E. Bill, D. D., prepared with special reference to the obligations resting upon Baptists and Free Christian Baptists to Unite as One Denomination.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast send me." —John xvii. 21-22.

This is an impressive portion of the most remarkable prayer ever uttered in this world of ours. The prayers of Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Ezra, Elijah, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Habakkuk and Daniel, are mighty in their grasp of thought, in the sublimity of their imagery, in the fulness of their supplication, in their abiding confidence in the prowess of the divine arm, and in their full assurance of faith in the wisdom and stability of the divine administration. But here is a prayer that goes down into the very depths of the Godhead, that holds in its wonderous range of thought the plans, purposes and final issues of all that appertains to the Church of God in the eternity past, in the present time and in the mysteries and glories of the eternity future. Who can measure the heights or the depths of this God-honoring, church-saving, hell-demolishing prayer?

All along the ages the souls of God's ransomed people have found solid peace and joy as they have read and pondered the cheering utterances of this comprehensive prayer. It is said the secretary of Bishop Bonnet read this prayer of Jesus to his master sixty times while he suffered upon his bed of death. When the great Reformer Knox was dying he called for the reading of this prayer. The devout Spencer had it read to him three times as he passed the dark valley. In thousands, perhaps we may say, millions of instances it has shed light, comfort and joy into the soul of the dying believer as he has stood upon the threshold of eternity.

No marvel that it should be so, for it stretches out its arms of infinite love, and embraces as with the mighty bulwarks of eternal salvation every child of redeeming mercy.

The prayer of the text indicates this fact. Not for these (apostle alone) but for all them who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.

In the discussion of this important passage I propose to show how this unity of the Father and the Son illustrates and unfolds the entire and perfect unity of all the true disciples of the praying Redeemer.

1. The Father and the Son are one in essence.

In personality they are distinct, but, in essence, one. Both are infinite and eternal in their existence, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, holiness, goodness, justice and truth. The Father is God, the Son is God, and these two are one. Hence it is said of Jesus that the "fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in him." In this eternal unity the fatherhood of God and the sonship of Christ are distinctly recognized, in the teachings of inspiration. The mystery of this unity can never be fathomed by human lines, and can only be embraced by that faith, which is "the evidence of things not seen."

The point is this: As the Father and the Son are one in this divine essence, so are all ransomed souls one in the essence of a pure faith, hope and love. They cherish the same faith in the perfection of God, in the mystery of the incarnation, in the atonement on Calvary, in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, in his intercession at the right hand of the Father, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in the universal triumphs of the Gospel of the Son of God.

They are one in the hope which the Gospel gives, a hope of eternal life and happiness resting upon the rock of ages, and proving to be an anchor to the soul amid the storms of life, and in the turbulant waters of death. Blessed hope all radiant with anticipations of future glory.

They are one in Christian love. The same love to God and love to man dwells in all Christian hearts. This love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given to us is to the Christian character what the main spring is to the watch, it sets all the other parts in motion. Their, in fact, can be no saving Christianity without it.

"If love to God and love to man
Be absent, all my hopes are vain."

"Now there abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love." It is the unfailing spring. "The well of water springing up to everlasting life."

These three graces, faith, hope, charity or love, may be regarded as constituting the real essence of all true religion. All real Christians, therefore, are one in this respect, as the Father and Son are one.

2. The Father and the Son are one in purpose.

The purposes of Jehovah stretch far back of all the ages, and are co-existent with the very life of God. As the Father and the Son are co-eternal in their existence so are they therefore one in those immutable purposes, which have reference to creation, providence and grace. If the Father said, let the curtains of infinite space be spread out, and let that space be filled with unnumbered worlds, the Son said amen, let it be done. If the Father said who will be my agent in creating the ponderous universe, the Son replied I will execute the great plan. By the prowess of my arm suns and moons and stars by the million shall start off upon their appointed mission. Hence the language of the apostle when speaking of the Divinity of Christ, he says: "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him."

This unity of purpose so manifest in creation enters into all the mysteries of providential dispensation. It is said of the Father, "Thy throne is established of old." Of his Son he saith "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." The two are perfectly united in one divine administration that encircles alike all the worlds of the universe, and the sparrow and the worm of these lower grounds of earth. To the Father and to the Son in the final issue every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But this purpose of the Father and the Son is especially emphasized in the grand work of human redemption. By the omniscient eye a world was seen in direct rebellion to holiness and to heaven. Justice stood ready to vindicate the claims of holiness and truth by smiting the rebels down to death and endless despair. But mercy said, there no way of escape for these rebels doomed to die? Must they suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? When all was suspence, and silence reigned in heaven, the Son of God exclaimed: "Lo the wrong be on me." "Deliever them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." The eternal Trinity said amen, and the purpose of salvation was settled in the united councils of eternity.

But how does this unity in the great purposes of creation, providence and redemption illustrate the unity of God's people? It does so in as much as they are one in their faith in these eternal verities of God the Father and God the Son. So far as men are enlightened by the word and spirit of God they come to have a united faith in the purposes of him who worketh all things according to the council of his own will.

3. The Father and the Son are one in executing the plan of human redemption. This foundation truth was emphasized by Christ more than once while here upon earth. Even in the miracles which he wrought he recognized the presence of his Father's will. When the Jews found fault with him for curing the impotent man on the Sabbath day, Jesus answered them: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

In his terrible struggle in Gethsemane, when crushed under the tremendous weight of man's sin, he bowed in submission, saying to his Father, "Not my will but thine be done." Both at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration his Father's voice was heard coming from the excellent glory, saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" In this memorable prayer before us he says: "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In a word his whole ministry from first to last was perfect expression of his Father's will, so that he could say in reference to all his divine work, "I and my Father are one."

This oneness in redemption work on the part of the Father and the Son beautifully illustrates the unity of the church in the fulfilment of her sacred ministry. What is that ministry? It is the ministry of life eternal to a lost world. The desire of every child of God, of every class and sect, is one in regard to a world lying in the arms of moral death and exposed to eternal barnings. That desire finds expression in all the prayers offered, in all missionary and evangelical work having reference to the salvation of the lost. In fact we are Christian just in proportion as we are of one heart and one soul in giving the bread of heaven to a starving world, and in filling the whole earth with the knowledge and glory of God. The prayer of every child of God is one. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

We might go on to show the unity of the redeemed church with the Father and the Son in the universal triumphs of the Gospel over all the multifarious forms of superstition, and over all the combined forces of earth and hell; and in the final consummation of redemption work when the headstone of the temple of grace "shall be brought on with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it." Then amid the glories of the heavenly state when the whole ransomed family shall come with robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, shall the prayer of my text be fully realized. Then will the whole sacramental host of God's elect blend in beautiful harmony before the eternal throne and give united praise "to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever."

Having considered our text in its bearings upon the general unity of all true Christians, let me call your attention to the fact that denominationalism as at present existing in the world is antagonistic to the spirit and design of this prayer for union. What are the facts of the case?

1st. When this prayer was offered there was but the one class of believers, viz., the Disciples of our Lord. The new dispensation had commenced with the ministry of John the Baptist. Penitent believers in great numbers, and Christ himself, had been immersed by John in the Jordan; others had been baptized by the disciples of Christ. Jesus, we are told, baptized not, but his disciples did; but as yet there were no rival sects. All were of one heart and were associated with their great teacher as he went from place to place fulfilling the purposes of his grand mission. He taught them with marked emphases the lessons of brotherly love, and showed them by example how they were to cherish and preserve this heavenly grace. Having finished his work upon the cross and having triumphed over death and the grave, he made himself manifest to his apostles, declared to them his headship of the church and gave them their marching orders. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach or *disciple* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

What did these disciples do with this great commission? In accordance with the instructions of the Master they tarried at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, then having received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they commenced on the day of Pentecost their Heaven appointed mission. We know the result, thousands heard the Word from inspired lips, and inquired what they were to do? They received for answer: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Did they follow the advice given? "Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized, and the same day there was added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Here we have in a nutshell the first Gospel church, the model church, for all Gospel churches in all coming time. Then follows the preaching of the apostles to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles. The addition of Saul, of Tarsus, to the apostolic ministry, his wonderful success, the conversion of tens of thousands to the Christian faith, and the establishment of Gospel churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, and many other places, all taking the mother church at Jerusalem as the model for all others. We have only to study the history of these apostolic churches to be convinced of the fact that they were taught in the same school, all believed in the same doctrines, and obeyed the same precepts. In this respect they were *one* as the Father and the Son are one.

Now my point is this: that the division of the churches into numerous diversified and contentious denominations is the painful result of departure from the original model, and is therefore antagonistic to the prayer of my text. Who is accountable for this departure? Let us see. The entering wedge of division in the household of faith was the dogma of *baptismal regeneration*. The people were taught to regard the sacred rite of baptism as essential to salvation; that in the administration of the ordinance the candidate was regenerated and made a child of God. Those adopting this view naturally felt that an institute possessing such a charm should be administered to all classes, the unconscious infant as well as to those of adult years. This false idea opened the door for an unregenerate church membership, and a church made up of such a membership would readily adopt any theory of belief less suited to the taste of the carnal mind. This unscriptural view of baptism gradually paved the way for the Roman Catholic anti-christ as fully established in 606, when the Bishop of Rome assumed the title of *universal bishop* and begirt himself with supreme authority both in church and state. But for centuries before this period the church had become so corrupt and secularized that she was no longer worthy of bearing the name of Christ, and was regarded by the adherents of apostolic teaching as the WAR OF SIN—THE SON OF PERDITION—the REAL ANTICHRIST of the New Testament. This unscriptural dogma rent the church in twain and filled the world with superstitious and heresies unnumbered. This monstrous doctrine of baptismal regeneration constitutes the main pillar of popery to-day, and, unfortunately, has become the corner stone of all national churches. As for example the church of England teaches her children that they are all regenerated when baptized. In the church catechism the child is asked its name, and then who gave you this name? *My godfather's and godmother's in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.* No utterance could be plainer or more distinct. The Greek Church numbering many millions, hold the same view of the efficacy of water baptism. So with all the churches of Continental Europe. Protestant churches, not national, do not professedly attach so much importance to baptism, but unless it has some saving efficacy, why administer it to unconscious babes?

The late Dean Stanley, one of the most learned ministers of the Episcopal Church of England, tells us that "in the apostolic age and in the three centuries which followed, it is evident that, as a general rule, those who come to baptism came in full age of their own deliberate choice." The fact is that not only Dean Stanley but the most learned and intelligent divines of the world of the different denominations confess frankly that the baptism of unconscious babes is not supported in the New Testament either by precept or example.

As to the mode of baptism it is now very generally conceded that immersion only was the apostolic mode. On this subject Dean Stanley says baptism was not only a bath but a plunge, an entire submersion in the deep water, a leap as into the rolling sea or the rushing river, while for the moment the waves close over the bather's head, and he emerges again as from a momentary grave. . . . This, the Dean adds, was the part of the ceremony on which the apostles laid so much stress. It seemed to them like a burial of the old former self and the rising up again of the new self. We are "buried," says St. Paul, "with Christ by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised, thus we also should walk in the newness of life." These, he continues, are the outer forms of which in the western churches almost every particular is altered, even in the most material points. Immersion has become the exception and not the rule. Adult baptism as well as immersion exists only among the Baptists."

Now if it be true, as the Dean indicates, that the Baptists alone in the face of the wholesale departure of which we speak from apostolic precept and practice have stood firm by the word and testimony of God who are the dissenters from the apostolic churches? Surely not the Baptists. They are not the heretics but the custodians of God's ordinance in its subjects and in its mode. The first great departure has led to numerous divisions, but for none of them are the Baptists responsible. Their model church is the Jerusalem mother church, and to her we cling as out guiding star.

Now, so long as this departure from the plain testimony of Scripture is justified by the Church of Rome, and by those large Protestant Churches that retain the Roman Catholic dogma of infant sprinkling, as a substitute for apostolic baptism, just so long there must be perpetual warfare. The Word of God must be recognized as the only infallifable standard of church organization and life, or the denominational conflict will go on until the crash of doom. Let all human creeds perish, but let the Word of our God abide forever. In closing up the sacred Canon, the inspired John says: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life."

But in the presence of so much denominational division and turmoil, how is it with Baptists and Free Christian Baptists. Shall they continue denominationally divided? If their special mission in the world is to preserve the ordinances of the Gospel intact as they were delivered by Christ and his apostles; and as the opposition to this distinctive mission of ours is so formidable; and as the views of these two bodies so nearly harmonize with regard to the general teachings of Scripture, ought they not, in despite of minor differences, to combine all their intellectual and spiritual forces to hold in check the tides of error, and to promote the truth as it is in Jesus. The more I meditate upon this question the more deeply I feel that as ministers and as churches we should fall into line and realize in our own experience the blessedness of that perfect oneness for which our Saviour pleads so earnestly in the language of my text. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, and that the world may believe that thou has sent me.

This apostolic baptism, of which we have spoken, including both subject and mode, has come down to us from the Jerusalem Church, with the red blood stains of unnumbered millions slain in this mighty conflict, who for a thousand generations and more stood up in the presence of opposing kings and emperors, popes and bishops, councils, and their anathemies, and who in the face of fetters and dungeons, faggots and flames, banishment and death, in all cruel forms, boldly contend for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, regarding this vital question. These martyred saints have transmitted to the Baptists of the present generation this glorious inheritance with all its tremendous responsibilities. May the Lord unite us in one fold, and make us all faithful unto the death. Amen!

Christ The All in All.

Christ's work is not the only abiding influence of His earthly life and death. He is not a past force, but a present one. He is putting forth fresh powers to-day, working in and for and by all who love Him. We believe in a living Christ. Therefore, the final thought in all our grateful commemoration of dead helpers and guides should be of the undying Lord. He sent whatsoever power was in them. He is with His Church to-day, still giving to men the gifts needful for their times. Aaron may die on Hor, and Moses be laid in his unknown grave on Pisgah, but the Angel of the Covenant, who is the true leader, abides in the pillar of cloud and fire, Israel's guide in the march, and covering shelter in repose. That is our consolation in our personal losses when our dear ones are "not suffered to continue by reason of death." He who gave them all their sweetness is with us still, and has all the sweetness which He lent them for a time. So, if we have Christ with us, we cannot be desolate. Looking on all these men, who in their turn have helped forward His cause a little way, we should let their departure teach us His presence, their limitations His all-sufficiency, their death His life. Luther was once found, at a moment of peril and fear, when he had need to grasp unseen strength, sitting in an abstracted mood, tracing on the table with his finger the words "Vivit! vivit!"—"He lives! He lives!" It is our hope for ourselves, and for His truth, and for mankind. Men come and go; leaders, teachers, thinkers speak and work for a season and then fall silent and impotent. He abides. They die, but He lives. They are lights kindled, and therefore sooner or later quenched; but He is the true light from which they draw all their brightness, and He shines for evermore. Other men are left behind and, as the world glides forward, are wrapped in ever-thickening folds of oblivion, through which they shine feebly for a little while, like lamps in a fog, and then are muffled in invisibility. We honour other names, and the coming generations will forget them; but "His name shall endure forever, His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him Blessed."—*Dr. A Maclaren.*

Watch and the Minister.

A student from Dartmouth spent the long winter vacation in teaching on Cape Cod. The minister kindly furnished him with board; and as he had a charming wife and a cozy home, our school teacher declared that he had but one trial, and that was on the Sabbath.

The minister's pew was a large square one, very near the pulpit, and exposed to a raking fire of eyes.

Mr. Tyler, the minister, owned a large dog named Watch, and Watch was bent on going to church with Mrs. Tyler. She, in her turn, was much opposed to his going, fearing that he might excite the mirth of the children.

Every Sunday a series of maneuvers took place between the two, in which Watch often proved himself the keenest. Sometimes he slipped away very early, and Mrs. Tyler, after having searched for him to shut him up, would go to church and find Watch seated in the family pew, looking very grave and decorous, but evidently aware that it was too late to turn him out.

Sometimes he would hide himself until the family had all started for church, and would then follow the footsteps of some tardy worshiper who tiptoed in during prayers with creaking boots: and then didn't Watch know that Mrs. Tyler would open the pew door in haste, to prevent his whining for admission?

When Mr. Tyler became earnest in his appeals, he often repeated the same word with a ringing emphasis, and a blow on the desk cushion that startled the sleepers in the pews.

"One day he thus shouted out, quoting the well-known text, "Watch! Watch! Watch! I say!" When rustle, rustle pounce, came his big dog, almost into his very arms. You may be sure the boys all took occasion to relieve their pent-up restlessness by one uproarious laugh, before their astonished parents had time to frown them into silence.

Honest Watch had been sitting with his eyes fixed, as usual, on the minister. At the first mention of his name, up went his ears, and his eyes kindled; at the second, he was still more deeply moved; at the third he obeyed, and flew completely over pew-rail and pulpit door, with leaps that did equal honor to his muscular powers and his desire to obey. After such a strict interpetation of the letter rather than the spirit, Watch was effectually forbidden church-going.—*Youth's Companion.*

A Tradition of the Afghans.

The Afghans call themselves "Bin i Israel," or children of Israel, but consider the term "Yahodee," a Jew, to be one of reproach. They say Nebuchadnezzar, after the overthrow of the temple of Jerusalem, transplanted them to the town of Ghore, near Bameean; and that they were called Afghans from their chief Afghana, who was a son of the uncle of Asof—the vizier of Solomon. They say that they lived as Jews until the Caliph summoned them in the first century of Mohammedanism to assist in the wars with the infidels. For their services on that occasion Kyse, the leader, obtained the title of "Son of the Mighty." He was also told to consider himself the master of his tribe, on which its prosperity would hinge, and by which the vessel of this state was to be governed. After the campaign the Afghans returned to their native country and were governed by a king of the line of Cyrus till the eleventh century, when they were subdued by Mahood. A race of kings sprung up, subverted the reigning house and conquered India. As is well known, this dynasty was divided at the death of its founder into the divisions east and west of Indus, a state of things which lasted till the prosperity of Timourlane reduced both to a new yoke. I can see no good reason for discrediting the traditions and history of the Afghans, though the dates do not exactly correspond with those of the Old Testamene. The Afghans look like Jews; they say they are descended from Jews, and the younger brother marries the widow of the elder according to the law of Moses. The Afghans entertain strong prejudices against the Jewish nation, which would at least show that they had no desire to claim, without a just cause, a descent from them. Since some of the tribes of Israel came to the East, why should we not admit that the Afghans are their descendants converted to Mohammedanism?—BURNES' "*Travels into Bokhara.*"

Don't Like the Minister.

"I don't like the minister!" That settles the matter. If you don't like the minister, you have no duties to perform. Not liking the minister absolves you from all responsibility. The fact that you "don't like the minister" releases you from your vows. If you are a trustee or steward, you need not take any further interest in the financial affairs of the congregation. The fact that the people intrusted you with certain duties which you engaged to perform, is neither here nor there if you "don't like the minister." Of course you needn't pay anything if you "don't like the minister." Certainly not. The easiest of all ways to get rid of supporting the church and its ordinances is simply to say, "I don't like the minister." Of course you need not go to the prayer-meeting; why should a man pray if he "doesn't like the minister?" There are a number of reasons why some "don't like the minister." Some of these reasons are good, no doubt; but many are the reverse. Neither the good nor the bad absolve a hearer from his duty. Perhaps it would be presumption to ask why you "don't like the minister?"—*N. W. Christian Advocate.*

Genius no Excuse for Wrong-doing.

In *Good Words* for April, Mrs. Craik has a very courageous paper in which she denounces the immorality of excusing wrong-doing on account of genius. The wretchedness of the domestic life of Thomas Carlyle sprang, not from his genius, but from the qualities of "a self-absorbed, egotistical, bad-tempered man, who had ruined his constitution by his persistent breaking of every law of health." Goethe, stripped of the glamour which enthusiastic admirers of his great powers have thrown over him, is "a Sybarite, whose god was himself, and who did not hesitate to sacrifice, to his supposed artistic culture, manly honor and womanly happiness;" yet there are those who declare that he was but exercising the prerogative of all men of genius, "who learn in suffering" (generally the suffering of others) "what they teach in song."

For the genius Robert Burns and Richard Brinsley Sheridan the world excuses them everything, declaring that

"The light which led astray
Was light from heaven,"

an impudent and blasphemous falsehood; as if my light which led astray could come from heaven.

But it is a pitiful thing when a man of genius has to entrench himself behind his works, as being so much better than himself, in a women of genius it is even worse. "Can any writings of the two greatest female novelists of the age, French and English, and one the English-woman full of the most noble qualities, atone for the lack of that crown of stainless matronhood, which should have adorned either brow, making the life a consecration of the books, not the books an apology for the life? . . . We cannot exaggerate the danger it is to the young to teach them that genius is an excuse for error; that an author's books are the condonation of his life; that what is moral turpitude in a small man is in a great man only a venial error; nay, perhaps, that if he had been a better man, he would not have been so great a genius. Satan would probably be to such confounders of right and wrong, the most transcendent genius. But we, believing that genius comes direct from Him "with whom is no darkness at all," exact from it not a lower, but a higher standard than that of ordinary men."

These are wholesome words, which ought to be well heeded by all to whom is committed the training of our youth.—*The London Christian.*

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