

UNITY.

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[Continued]

I am quite aware that there are difficulties attending this doctrine, as there are concerning all others. These difficulties are probably present in your mind now. Let me save you the pain and trouble of saying them.

1. First you say to yourself: 'How can you look at the

STATE OF CHRISTENDOM

and call the Church one? The West is divided from the East. The West is divided in herself. The English Church is alienated from the ancient Church of the West, the greatest of all Churches. 'You propose to me a visible Church and one only Church. How can you venture to demand submission to such a body, when the unity of your supposed one visible Church is invisible?'

Such is the difficulty. I admit that it is a very serious one; but suffer me to remind you of the objections which met us whilst we considered together why we were Christians; and when the failure of Christianity itself, its apparently unfulfilled prophecies, its slow progress, its many and great scandals, were all held up before us in reproach. In spite of all this, we replied then, with tears in our eyes, with heads bowed down in humiliation, but with hearts uplifted in faith and in hope: 'For all this, and in spite of all other objections, the Gospel is true. We confess our shortcomings, but the Gospel is true.'

It is thus that I now feel and speak in the face of your arguments. It is in this spirit that I ask you to listen to me.

But let me remind you that although many precepts exist, requiring not only *internal* but *external* unity, there is no prophecy or promise that the Church shall never be divided externally, that its various portions shall always be in charity with each other. Just as individual members of the Church may still be her members and yet at feud one with another, so may it also be with national Churches, or portions of the whole Church. It ought not to be so, indeed, but it may be so. It may be, it has been, and it is.

Yet, if the Church be a spectacle of division at this time, she is also a

SPECTACLE OF UNITY.

For East and West acknowledge one rule of faith which is called the Nicene Creed, excepting only the one clause before mentioned. East and West acknowledge the early Councils and their canons, and claim the primitive saints and divines as their Fathers. East and West, although with varied Liturgies, acknowledge not only the principles of those Liturgies but the common apostolical ordinal of a 1; the same Eucharistic sacrifice, celebrate the holy seasons of the Church. East and West look back to the happy days when there was no interruption of communion, and long for the time when this interruption shall cease and all Churches be one again as if old.

Come, and join us in our prayers and efforts for this blessed reunion, this happy consummation. You cannot attain it by standing apart from your own Church. To do this will only add to the evil. Come, strengthen her, and help her to throw off the defects which mar her perfection and work with her for the reunion of Christendom. You will then be doing your part, and on your head will descend the blessing which the Lord of love has promised to peacemakers.

2. But perhaps it is in your heart to say next: 'If all this were true, how can there be any good thing found

IN DISSENT?

I have known and still know men full of faith

and good works in its ranks, and in some places all the religion and morality which exist are due to their efforts. Surely there may be more ways to heaven than one. When the poor and simple say to you, 'We go where we get good,' how can you answer them? The grace which they have is surely an evidence of God's blessing upon them. You yourself formerly argued that the good which Christianity has done is proof of its truth. See how these simple ones, without knowing it, turn your weapons against you. What can you say to them?'

I would say this, in reply:

'You do not know where you get good. The truth which you learned of the Church was the seed which your present warmth of devotion has caused to germinate; or your baptism, which is not that of a sect—for there is but one baptism, wheresoever it is duly administered—is now bearing its fruits. True, you may have been aroused by the preaching of a Dissenter; and so you might have been by that of a heretic, or of an immoral man, to whom you would not attach yourself; but this does not prove that dissent does you good. I could mention points of character, if I choose, in which I am sure that it does not benefit, but the reverse. As to their being many ways to heaven, surely this is not a question which we ought to discuss. If we were on the point of taking a journey we should ask for the best way; and the road to heaven is scarcely so easy to us poor sinners that we should care to try any other than that which is assured to us as at any rate the best of all known roads; and I must add it is not very often that there are two roads to the same place equally short, or two ways of doing a thing equally servicable.'

But, my friend, I am in duty bound to protest against your inquiring where you get most good, and acting only upon the answer which you make to your question.

Our inquiry should be one, and one only.

WHAT IS GOD'S WILL?

What would God have us to do? Do we not owe thus much to our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier? And if God is the source of all good and the giver of grace, can it be safe to seek good and grace without trying to please Him? Shall we obtain it apart from Him? Surely there is no faith and no love in acting on so selfish a plan. Does not God know best how you can get good, and will He let you lose aught by your endeavor to obey and to serve Him? Be sure you do right. This is all you need concern yourself with. Be sure you do good, and you may be perfectly certain that you will get good.

Such is the answer I am accustomed to make; and if any inquire how I account for the good which I thankfully discern to be in Dissenters, and the good which I as thankfully confess to be done by them, I reply thus:

1. The good is in Dissenters, and *not* in dissent. Dissent, as I have shown, deprives men of many securities for their faith, and cuts them off from many channels of grace. It divide parishes, renders it impossible for pastors to keep an eye on their flocks, and to know whether they attend any place of worship at all. I can hardly mention a greater proof of the mischief which it does than the state of the education question in England at this present time. So far as dissent can prevail, it is making our National education non-Christian, and, however unintentionally, plays into the hands of the deist and atheist.

2. When you ask me to account for the good which is in Dissenters, and for the benefits which the Wesleys once conferred upon England; for the holiness of Doddridge, and Watts, and Hall, and so many others whose memories I honor with you; I answer in words far better than my own: 'God blesseth through truth. If a Wesleyan minister preaches his naked Gospel, that 'we are all sinners,' 'that Christ died to save sinners,' 'that He bids all sinners

to come to Him,' and saith, 'Whoso cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out,' that is of course fundamental Gospel truth, and, when God blesses through it those who know no more, He blesseth them through faithful reception of the truth.'

Again, as to Presbyterian communions: 'He whom they seek, is found by them for that which they seek.' 'Presbyterians have what they believe; we, what we believe.'

That is to say, God gives more than 'either we desire or deserve,' and blesses truth and faith according to His wisdom and mercy.

And, indeed, this is only what we Churchmen should wish and hope, when we consider what coldness and deadness, how many abuses and corruptions in the Church have tempted men to break away from her; when we reflect how few of those outside the Church have any means of knowing Her claims, or the defects in principle of their own sect; and still more when we remember how greatly all stand in need of God's long-suffering mercy, both Churches and Churchmen; and that great is His mercy over all His works, high as heaven is above earth, and wide as the outstretching embrace of the cross.

But still the Church is

ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC,

and it is God's will that we should be members of her and receive grace upon grace in Her and by Her. She is Christ's body, His bride. Still, as a bridge, she spans the ages of the Gospel, uniting us to the past, to Fathers and saints; to martyrs and Apostles; to the Church of the Acts and of the Gospels; and crossing the flood conducts to the heavenly Jerusalem and to the Lord in His glory.

Believing these facts, I cannot forsake my own peace; nor can I cease to entreat you to return to the Church of your forefathers, and through communion with her to be united to the One Catholic Church militant now, triumphant hereafter. Then, whatever may be coming upon the earth, of worship, of confusion, of sin, and of sorrow, we shall have a refuge together; and by God's grace fight the good fight, keep the faith, win the crown, which may He of His mercy grant us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*The Church Critic.*

HOME REUNION NOTES.

A CREEDLESS CHRISTIANITY A DELUSION AND A SNARE.

A bitter experience to which I can make no more direct allusion has convinced me of the necessity of enforcing the above truth for the sake of all true Christian unity.

We pray, I hope, daily and earnestly that all those that 'call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life.' But if we make, the mere profession of Christianity the basis of our united Christian action, 'the faith' that we as true Christians are bound to hold at once disappears; for in meeting on such a loose basis the lowest form of belief, or if you will the highest form of unbelief, becomes the level above which you cannot go.

A quarterly publication has been placed in my hands issued by the Christian Kingdom Society, a Society formed with the best possible desire to encourage unity; but what is their one rule or bond of unity?—'That members shall endeavor in all things to render faithful and loyal obedience to the Spirit of Christ.' It is certainly a very simple rule, but what on earth does it mean? Jews, Mahomedans, and every distinctive body or individual that calls itself Christian are all Unitarians. And the precepts and practice of Christ as revealed to us in the Gospel story may be accepted by all