

with unity. There could, indeed, be no beauty in nature without these endless diversities; and nature, in this respect, is but a type of human society, whether political or religious. Both have proceeded from God, and both possess the same characteristics. As well might we desire to have but a single note in music, as one opinion in religion. As well might we desire to see the whole earth, and the heavens clothed in drab, as to have every one to conform to the sentiments of any single party in Christendom. Where would be, then, the free comparison of sentiment, and the delightful interchange of thought? Where the charm of new discovery, and the progressive enlargement of mind? Where the doubt, that, betraying the weakness of human judgment, represses intellectual pride; and where the mutual forbearance which strengthens mutual love? He who has ordained that no two human faces shall be perfectly alike, and that their features shall yet agree in general character, has also instituted that diversity of mind which admits, in the same manner, of an essential unity. These differences must in both cases be permitted; for we might as well try to make all faces alike, as all minds alike. They are also, in both cases, equally desirable, as the source of pleasing contrasts and varied harmonies, and as both the means and the occasion of the development of human nature in all its varied relations.

But while we thus dwell upon the importance of the great truth that there must be allowed in religion a just liberty of opinion, let no one suppose that we use the word opinion in the confused and improper sense in which it is so often employed in religious discussions; or that we would, in any respect, compromise or undervalue the true faith of the gospel. It is just as necessary that we should have an immovable basis of thought, as that we should have liberty to think. It is essential to unity that there should be a universal faith, as it is to diversity that there should be an individual opinion. The other great truth is, therefore, that the Christian community should be united together by common belief, which shall fully embrace the gospel, and secure a just conformity to the divine will.

To adopt this truth alone, and prescribe a formula of faith to men, while interdicting at the same time all liberty of thought, would be regarded as arbitrary dictation. To admit, on the other hand, an unlimited freedom in matters of religion, would be latitudinarianism. It is a nice matter to adjust the relation of these two opposite principles, so that liberty shall be consistent with law, and a just latitude of opinion compatible with an unwavering faith. Yet it is by this means alone we