

cannot turn away from each other, without turning away from their dying Lord: without rudely violating the only new command which his lips of love ever uttered; without sullenly disregarding a request which came forth with his blood, with what mutual concessions would they approach each other and embrace. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

VIII. And how powerfully should the love of the brotherhood be enforced by the consideration that their union is indissoluble. Those who are constituted brethren by virtue of their relation to Christ, will, and must, be brethren forever. Cold and formal towards each other they may be, suspicious and distant they may be, but, in spite of all, the principle of brotherhood continues, and will continue, for ever. Nothing which they can themselves do to effect a separation—no process which can be adopted by their enemies—can ever annihilate their fraternity to others, or the fraternity of others to them. The vital ligature which unites them to God, is that which also unites them to each other; and as there is "nothing which shall be able to separate us from" the one, our connexion with the other is indissoluble. What true sublimity does this fact of essential perpetuity impart to the relationship of the Christian family! How lamentably are their existing divisions at variance with it! How impossible would it be for them to become duly alive to it without consenting to merge those differences—without approximating to the spirit of that blessed region where love is a divine reality, and the brotherhood is complete!

IX. The fellowship of Christian denominations should be cultivated from the consideration that, the wisest and the best of each have most earnestly desired it, and that now they are perfectly one in the church above. Many of them (men, of whom the world was not worthy) have left their desire on record—a fact which will be adduced in evidence against the troublers of the church in the day of final account. Some of them died with the desire on their lips; they could not bequeath a legacy of peace to the church as their dying Lord did, but they approached his example as nearly as they were able, by earnestly desiring it for those they left behind. Some of them who had contended too eagerly concerning minor points, saw and acknowledged their error even on this side death. How admirable the letter in which Ridley, writing to Hooper—when both of them were prisoners for Christ—laments their "little jarring in time past about the by-matters and circumstances of religion," but assures him that, "with his whole heart in the bowels of Christ he loves him for the truth's sake, which abideth in us." And can we suppose that in heaven they are conscious of any regret on the subject of their agreement, except that it was not made earlier? "If the ruptures of the church might be composed," says Chillingworth, "I do heartily wish that the cement were made of my dearest blood."

"I confess," writes Owen, "I would rather, much rather, spend all my time and days in making up and healing the breaches and schisms that are amongst Christians, than one hour in justifying our divisions, even therein, wherein on the one side they are capable of a just defence." "Far more comfort were it for us" writes Hooker, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," "to labor under the same yoke as men who look for the eternal reward of their labours; to be enjoined with you in bonds of indissoluble love and unity; to live as if, our persons being many, our souls were but one, rather than in such dismembered sort to spend our few and wretched days in a tedious prosecuting of wearisome contentions, the end whereof, if they have not some speedy end, will be heavy on both sides." How solemn the adjuration of Bishop Hall, when preaching before the Synod of Dordt—"We are one body, let

as also be of one mind. By that tremendous name of the Almighty God..... by your own souls—by the most holy compassions of Jesus Christ our Saviour, aim at peace, brethren; enter into peace; that laying aside all prejudice, party spirit, and evil affections, we may all come to a happy agreement in the same truth." "It has long been my grief, as well as my wonder," writes Boyle, "to see such comparatively petty differences in judgment make such wide breaches and vast divisions in affection." "I," exclaimed Baxter, in the golden sentence we have already quoted, "I can as willingly be a martyr for Love as for any article of creed." And such is the spirit breathed in the writings of a Wesley,\* a Whitefield,† and indeed of all the most distinguished "fathers of the modern churches."

And can we suppose that they who were the mediators and healing spirit of their day, have any thing to regret, except that they were not more in earnest? Oh, could we take our differences into their presence—could we covoke and consult a synod of the blessed—how certainly should we behold those whose disciples and descendants have been ever at variance here, sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; how earnestly would they unite in admonishing those followers, if they honour their memory, and would enhance their happiness, to blot from their writings the controversial and contentious page in which once they gloried—to merge their names at once and for ever in the great Christian name—and to emulate the union of heaven, if they would obtain an antepast of its joys! "Let us but imagine what their blessed spirits now feel at the retrospect of their earthly frailties, and can we do other than strive to feel, as they now feel not as they once felt? So will it be with the disputes between good men of the present day! and if you have no other reason to doubt your opponent's goodness than the little point in dispute, think of Baxter and Hammond, of Milton and Taylor, and let it be no reason at all."‡

X. But if the union of the Church militant would be thus agreeable to the Church triumphant, how much more agreeable would it be to the nature of Him who is the Author of both—the blessed God! He is "the very God of peace." Whatever the glorified above, or the redeemed on earth, may know of peace, they know only as recipients and instruments; but He is its very God. He is the fountain whence all the streams of peace which are at this moment circulating through the universe, immediately flow. And his Church was intended, under Christ, to be the channel of peace to this troubled world. How agreeable, then, would it be to his exalted nature to see his Church answering its high design; no longer reflecting from its bosom the tempestuous and angry sky of earthly strife, but the calm of a higher region—giving back to heaven its own image, and presenting to earth the means of becoming like it.

XI. How agreeable would it be to him who has selected as one of his most appropriate titles, "the Prince of peace!" who chose that the peacemakers should be called, more emphatically than others, the children of God—leaving us to infer that they more nearly resemble their Heavenly Father; who bequeathed to his Church a legacy of peace; who prayed in death that his followers might be one; and who would still be invoked by them "as the Lord of peace himself." As "the head of his body the Church," he feels the shock and suffering of all that is inflicted on the members; and not the less that the hand which inflicts it is its own. How congenial would it be to his gracious nature to see that his people were no longer crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame—that

\* See his Sermon on a Catholic Spirit.

† See his Letter to the Religious Societies.

‡ Coleridge.