

Unity We Should Seek.

The late Rev. David Sutherland.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace."—Ephesians 4: 3.

The distinct conscious longing of our age is for unity. Some seek it through ecclesiastical uniformity, putting their trust in the links that would bind worshippers together if they would only agree to observe similarity of service, rite, and dress. Others seek it through oneness of language, speculating on the possibility and indulging the hope that some day one language may be spoken by all nations on the face of the globe, and believing that by speaking one language the nations would understand one another and be at one. Christianity *casta lingua* speaks and speculations aside as insufficient. The conception of unity it holds up and advocates is only thoroughly adequate and complete.

The true character of Christian unity is indicated in the intercessory prayer offered by Christ on the last night of His life. That prayer makes it evident how very near the unity of Christendom was and is to the heart of the High Priest of humanity. Four times does He pray that His people may be one. The petition, which is also an interpretation of Christ's conception of unity, should be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by the many writers and speakers who discuss what is a burning topic in ecclesiastical circles in our day: "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 has sent Me."

This is the final conception of Christian unity for all who accept the mild of Christ. Analysis of it reveals three points of paramount interest and importance:—

The nature of Christian unity—"That they all may be one."

The model of Christian unity—"As Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us."

The purpose of Christian unity—"That the world may believe that Thou has sent Me."

1. The nature of Christian unity is oneness, not sameness; unity, not uniformity. The unity Christ prayed for is oneness, not sameness. The latter is neither desirable nor practical. It is contrary to the principles that govern the operations of God in nature and in grace. No two blades of grass in the field, no two leaves on a tree, no two sheep on a hill, no two faces in a crowd, are identically alike. There is variety in the unity. Why, then, expect that all men's minds should run in the same groove, or dare to impose an iron rule or a rigid creed in the attempt to produce uniformity on non-essential religious questions? The expectations and the attempt are alike folly. Wherever the experiment has been made it has proved a failure. The Emperor Charles V. sought by violent measures to make twenty millions of his subjects agree in their religious opinions. He was vividly and forcibly taught his folly when, after he had retired to a monastery for peace and meditation, he amused himself by constructing clocks, and found that with all his skill he could not make two clocks go exactly alike for any length of time.

Rev. F. B. Meyer calls attention to the fact that the Church of Rome sought to prove herself the true Church by achieving a oneness of her own. It was an outward and visible oneness in which all worshippers must use the same formularies, worship in the same postures, and belong to the same ecclesiastical system. Uniformity was pressed by sword and fire and torture. Just before the dawn of the Reformation it seemed to have succeeded. Europe reposed in the monotony of uniformity to the rules of the Papacy. What was the result? Moral decay, ecclesiastical stagnation, and spiritual death. Herein lies an unanswerable condemnation of the Roman Catholic conception of the unity of the Church.

Any adequate conception of unity involves variety. Out on yonder field is a heap of bricks. You say it is a unity, but in that you are mistaken. There is a uniformity of shape and size

among the bricks, but they do not become a unity until they are combined to form one structure and to carry out one idea. A house is a unity, but a heap of bricks is not a unity. In the sixty-six books of the Bible there is a unity which no binding together into one volume could give. All kinds of writers—king, prophet, priest, herdsman, fisherman, scholar, sage, and saint—were at work in its production. Yet it is dominated in all its parts by one purpose and animated by the same life-giving Spirit. Like unto that is the nature of true Christian unity. There may be and must be varieties of thought and work in the church but underlying and penetrating all the varieties is the essential oneness of a common life and purpose. Many men mean many minds. Differences of mental constitution, ecclesiastical affinity and spiritual sympathy lead some Christians to prefer the Episcopal form of worship, others the Methodist, others the Presbyterian, and others the Baptist. "Many regiments, but one army; many folds, but one flock"—is the motto which denotes the nature of the unity of the followers of Jesus Christ. All other conceptions are futile, because unscriptural, unpractical, and undesirable.

2. The model of Christian unity is as exalted as it is possible for man to conceive: "As Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." The unity of the God-head is the first article of belief with the Jew as well as with the Christian. The Lord our God is one God in essence, purpose and action; the Son does nothing of Himself, nor does the Father act apart from the Son. In the work of redemption the ever-blessed and adorable Persons of the Trinity are one, and yet there is variety in their operations. The Father plans, the Son executes, and the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of redemption. This unity in variety of operation is the model the Church of Christ is called upon to imitate.

The unity between the Father and the Son is the unity of life. They are one in essence. The unity of believers with one another and with Christ is a unity of spiritual life—I in Thee, Thou in Me, and they in us. True Christian unity springs out of a birth from above, which makes a man a partaker of the life of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as F. B. Meyer puts it in one of his helpful addresses, is in the believer as the sap is in the branch, as the blood is in the heart, as the life is in the body; and His life permeating us all alike makes us not only one with God, but one with all who believe, as the blood makes all the members one and the sap the branches.

Yet again, the unity between the Father and the Son is the unity of belief. Father and Son have lived together from eternity, but they have never differed in opinion, and never will. "That they also may be one, even as we are one." Large latitude must be given to difference of opinion among Christians on minor questions, but they must be united in clinging with dogged tenacity to the fundamentals of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. "In things essential, unity; in things non-essential, liberty; and in all things, charity." Whatever variations there may be in creed and forms of worship, there must be unity in unwavering adhesion to the central truths of the Gospel. It is always hazardous to venture the formulation of a comprehensive creed, but we believe that the essential doctrinal unity of the Christian Church would at least go so far as to demand acceptance of this creed: "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of man." That Christ is the Son of God, and that there is a vital connection between His death and the salvation of humanity, and the articles of a standing or a falling church, and must, therefore, be indispensable to the credal confession of united Christendom.

In view of the attainment of the high ideal of unity taught by Christ and the urgent need for concerted action on the part of Christians in our day, we ought to bury the hatchet of theological controversy, silence the war-drum of sectarian strife, unfurl the blood-stained banner of the Cross, and cordially welcome as brethren and fellow-soldiers all who believe in the divinity of Christ and His sole atoning sacrifice.

3. The purpose of the unity which is the goal of the church is, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." The great stumbling-block to the progress of Christianity at home and abroad is the quarrels and divisions of Christians. It is a heart-saddening spectacle to be obliged to witness friend fighting polished missile against friend, and to see regiments of one army wasting time, strength and money in fighting against each other instead of against the common foe. A united church would be the efficiency of God unto salvation. The unity which prevailed among the early churches did almost as much as the sermons and miracles of the Apostles to convert the world. Many people judge religion not by reading the Bible, but by reading the churches and when they see strife and division written in large and lurid letters on the ecclesiastical epistles, they may be pardoned for shrugging their shoulders in contempt and refusing to listen to the evangel of peace as proclaimed by such churches. But when the sects bury their battle-axes and silence their war-drums in fulfillment of the petition of the High Priest of humanity, then the world will acknowledge the power of the religion that can produce such unity and concord, and will go with the church because it is evident that the Lord of love is with her.

We would respectfully and earnestly submit this consideration of Christ's conception of unity to all who love and serve the ever-blessed Redeemer, and call upon them to do all that in their power lies to hasten the coming of the day when they shall 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 sent Me."

Charlottetown, P. E. I.

What Will It Matter?

What will it matter in a little while
That for a day

We met and gave a word, a touch, a smile,
Upon the way?

What will it matter whether hearts were brave
And lives were true,

That you gave me the sympathy I crave,
As I gave you?

These trifles! Can it be they make or mar
A human life!

Are souls as lightly waved as rushes are
By love or strife?

Yes! yes! a look the fainting heart may break
Or make it whole;

And just one word, if said for love's sweet sake
May save a soul

Ian MacLaren's Drum-tchty.

An account of a visit to the village which figures as "Drum-tchty" in the stories of Ian MacLaren is given in *The Puritan*. "In the tiny vestry which all readers of Ian MacLaren may easily picture for themselves from minute description," says the writer, "were two objects of interest of recent importation; one, a copy of the 'Bonnie Brier Bush,' bearing the inscription, 'For the little vestry of the Free Church, Drum-tchty, from the author, who knew it well'; the other, a visitors' book, started three years ago, and containing the names of visitors from all parts of England, Scotland and Wales, and even some from America. The village, known locally as 'The Feus,' consists mainly of a single row of low-built houses, situated on the high road, with gay little gardens in front. Large drooping sunflowers covered the weather-beaten walls, and were only prevented in some instances from straggling on to the road by the low stone wall which serves as a halting-place for neighboring gossips. Of these houses the chief in importance is the postoffice, where in former times Mrs. Robb was supposed to reign supreme, and with keen penetration learn the contents of all letters passing through her hands, almost before they were opened by their intended recipients."