

by which deliverance had been wrought, and the people might well feel that, should similar circumstances occur, it would be equally honoured again; yet when Hezekiah saw that the people worshipped it, what did he do? He said it was only a bit of brass, and ground it to powder. Again, when the Lord Jesus established sacramental signs and seals of the great blessings He gives to us, He, as if aware of the tendency in our nature to which I have referred, took those elements which were least susceptible of being abused. He takes a portion of the water that we use for every-day purposes, and He takes the elements of the ordinary meal of a peasant in Palestine. Yet what has the great majority of the Church done with those signs and seals? It has not looked through them to the Saviour but has turned them into idols; so that what were intended to point to Jesus, and to be bonds of love and union between Christians, have been worshipped as idols, and turned into the watch-words of schism and sect. Again, the history of the Bible itself in connection with the history of the Church, shows us that a symbol is not indispensable to spiritual life, because the Church has done without such aid in the past. What is the grandest period in the history of the Old Testament Church? Surely that from Abraham to Solomon, that period of which Jeremiah pathetically says, "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." Yet how much of the Bible had the Church then? And what did men when they had the Old Testament canon complete, the men who valued it, who prided themselves on its possession, do? They crucified Him to whom it pointed. Again, what was the grandest period of the New Testament Church? Surely the first century. How much of the New Testament had the Church then? The first parts of the New Testament were not written till after a generation had passed away. The Church then had apostolic men, and God could give us successors to these. In one word, when we rest in the symbol instead of being led by it to the thing signified, we are guilty of idolatry, and the truly spiritual man hates and despises idolatry, no matter what form it assumes, and he hates and despises most that which the people of his own country and age are prone to. You see a Hindoo worshipping an idol that represents the Trimurti; the idol is very expressive, for it represents the great truth that there is a trinity in unity in the Divine nature, but you do not hesitate to warn him against the sin and degrading influence of idolatry. You read to him the graphic picture drawn by Isaiah, chap. xlv., verses 14-18. You do well; but now suppose that Hindoo came here and heard our reverence expressed for the Bible, and saw our ignorance of its truths; our reverence for its letter, and our disregard of its precepts in the daily life of individual Christians, and of the nation; could he not turn round and say, "Is not the idolatry of a book as degrading as the worship of an idol like Brahma, Vishnu or Siva?"

We value the Bible, then, not because it is a book, but because it reveals the living God to us, God the Father, God in Christ—human and divine, God the Holy Ghost, who unites Christ to our spirits. Can anything warn us more expressively of the inadequacy of any symbol in itself, than that Jesus did not abide in the flesh, but said, "it is expedient that I go away." It was necessary that He should go away in the flesh, that He might dwell with us in the spirit. It is on this spiritual truth of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that the unity of Christendom is based.

The external basis of that unity is the Bible. All Christians admit that the Bible is the authorized record of His revelations of Himself, and all believe that the humble, devout, seeking soul will find treasures here THAT CANNOT BE FOUND ANYWHERE ELSE, AND THAT ARE INTENDED TO BE A POSSESSION FOR EVER unto humanity. It is, therefore, the standard of faith to which all appeal. Every Church has its own dogmas on which it differs from others, but all Churches