

We have ideas that are peculiar to ourselves and are not universally accepted—views that we believe are scriptural; but we do not make them essential to man's salvation, neither tests of Christian fellowship, nor bonds of Christian union. To bring others to a belief of our ideas about which we differ, is not our plea; but to unite upon the essential elements of salvation that we already believe, is the plea we present to the world, and that will eventually unite the religious world. To get all the children of God to agree in their differences is not possible, but to unite in their agreements is both possible and desirable. We all agree, as shown above, on the essential conditions of salvation, and these only that are necessary to our salvation should be made essential to our union—our union on earth on the same ground of our union in heaven.

Here is the difference between the Christian Church and the denominations. We will not make authoritative or tests of fellowship any doctrine that we do not hold absolutely essential to our salvation. With us, whatever makes us a Christian makes us one in the great family of God—one common brotherhood by one common, universal accepted faith. To become united to Christ, the great head of the church, is all we require to constitute us one with the members of His church. Just here is seen the fearful inconsistency not to say destructiveness of divisions of the religious world. To take the figments of speculative theology, that have no salvation in them, or essential conditions of salvation, and exalt them to standards of faith and tests and bonds of union, and thereby divide the children of God and destroy the unity of His people, that which is the all-supreme, important condition of our salvation, and the salvation of the world, is the sin of the age and the block to the progress of Christ's Kingdom. It is just as reasonable, possible and essential that the children of God should be united to-day as in the days of the apostles. The differences now that are dividing God's children are no greater than in the early age of Christianity; but then their union to their Lord and Master was so strong and real that no other consideration was able to separate them from His love and the fellowship of His brethren. When we use our methods of thinking and our peculiar doctrinal views as "middle walls of partition," then we abuse them, and by them establish denominationalism, the very thing that Christ, by the cross, came to abolish (Eph. 2:13-14), and what the noted Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst of New York says, in his recently published article, "is false to Christianity."

Let us understand the difference between our distinctive views and our plea. We may differ with others in regard to how we obtain faith, or in the way in which the Spirit operates, or in the design of baptism. In none of these do we demand unanimity. If one believes in Christ, the Son of God, and obey His commands, he is our brother, whether he agrees with us on the relation of baptism to the pardon of sins. Our plea, as we have said, is the unity of all God's children on the conditions of salvation about which there is no dispute—upon the one faith, the only universal, admitted doctrine of salvation.

To withdraw our sympathies, or separate ourselves from the worship and fellowship of others whom we admit are Christians, and thus sow the seeds of division, on a pretence of different ideas of right or truth, is a sad departure from the plea of the church of Christ and from the faith of the gospel.

DESPONDENCY.

T. H. BLEWIS.

Many of the psalms of David present a phase of human life and mental and moral experience, which it is worth our while to study. As if alarmed at the weakness of his faith, and fearing, lest his soul should turn traitor to him in whom he trusted, and as if, recognizing the impropriety and unjustness of mourning over discouragements with which he had already long struggled and finally conquered, and over calamities which were still threatening him, he seems at times to rebuke his soul for its doubts and skepticism in the power of God; and in an apostrophe encourages it not to relinquish its trust and confidence. David exclaims: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God." Ps. xiii. 5. *First*, the Psalmist recognizes that God being righteous would be his judge. *Second*, that being merciful, God would plead his cause. *Third*, that being Almighty, God would deliver him.

David is not the only man who has often felt to succumb to the influence of opposition, not the only man whose soul has been daunted by discouragements; not the only man whose faith has been weakened by shadow and darkness, and by the test of adverse circumstances; not the only man whose heart has been burdened with anguish and whose soul has been borne down by the infirmities of his nature. We see the indomitable heart of Paul bowed down, and hear him longing "to depart and be with Christ." We hear the Oriental Monarch, amidst all the emoluments and luxuries and acquirements of the world sigh, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." We hear the gospel prophet Isaiah say, "I did mourn as a dove," and then sigh, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." We hear the Son of God, himself, in the midst of the physical pain and agony of the expiring hour, sigh a sigh that made the earth and the heavens tremble. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And from the millions of God's children throughout the world arises the sigh, freighted with all the melancholy of certain anguish, "Is life worth living?"

By a close and critical examination we find that this moral and spiritual despondency, which has entered so largely into the Christian experience of all ages, and no less into the religious trials and conflicts of the present, has its basis in the influence of external circumstances on the internal moral sense. These present themselves in innumerable forms, countless as the sands of the sea-shore, and in degrees of potency proportionate to their number. The Christian's character is thus laid open at every point to the possibilities of an immediate attack from the internal moral sense being affected by the force of external circumstances; and therefore there is great need of fortifying our characters against the assaults of our own natures. Eternal vigilance is not the price of liberty only, but the price of Christian safety as well. The more we investigate the motives which incite men to Christian activity, that prompt them to labor, the more we are convinced that these motives

are too frequently imbedded in selfish desires and an unchristian ambition. The closer we analyze the secret impulse of action, the more certainly do we discover marks of selfishness and insincerity. And when we place the actions of men, as well as the desire that prompts to the action, into the crucible of true spiritual inspection, we are frequently startled by the revelation that selfishness, egotism and depraved aspiration form the substratum upon which are often erected the most conspicuous temple of good deeds. Borne along on the full tide of prosperity, with surrounding circumstances propitious, playing the virtuous part in the public theatre amid the throngs of the multitude, we are apt to incline toward the vice of the accused Pharisee, and to lose sight of the great end for which we should labor, by drifting away in obedience to the promptings of a corrupt ambition. And then by and by, when we are brought to perform the virtuous drama in the shade, we become dejected. A wonderful re-action sets in. It is comparatively easy to exhibit moral heroism when everybody's hat is in mid-air at the deed; but to retire from public gaze and with devoted earnestness and manly intrepidity exhibit the same ardor with no encouragement but the secret consciousness of having done right,— "aye, there's the rub."

The well-tempered child of God must cultivate patience and resignation, exhibit that sure comfort and help and peace that God bequeathed to his children, and perfect the Christian graces in the heart, even if through affliction, for little do we know the good we are accomplishing even in the valley and the shadow. God only knows, and eternal ages will tell. A work, perhaps, which even a human eye may read a thousand ages hence. "Hope thou in God." Yes, for he gave us just these circumstances, and just this location, and these opportunities, and he only requires us to do what we may be able to do under these circumstances.

THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

GEO. MANIFOLD.

In studying early church history, we are struck with the fact of the marvellous spread of the gospel, though in face of the most intense opposition and relentless persecution waged against its advocates. The wonderful triumphs of the first few centuries, when it overcame all forms of idolatry, and brought the evil, cruel designs of wicked men to nought, are in striking contrast to the slow progress it has made in recent years.

That the power of working miracles was a great factor in the spread of the gospel no one can deny. Some have ventured to assert that God made a mistake when He caused the power of working miracles to cease on the death of the apostles and their immediate successors. But miracles, wonders and signs were not intended to be permanent. What, then, was to take their place? Or, rather, what did God intend should be even greater than miracles and abide for all time?

A careful perusal of the New Testament will reveal a purity of life, a burning earnestness, a Divine passion for souls which no bribery could touch, or persecution could quench. Towering even above miracles in its influence on the hearts of men was the power of the Holy Spirit as seen in its fruit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering," etc. This was something which could not be gained or denied, and was "mighty through