

in apostolic times, and in the generations more immediately following the lives of the apostles. They were *one*—in faith on the Son of God! They were *one* in receiving and walking according to the holy Scriptures. But they were probably not “one” in many details of church-life or belief. They had learned to bear and forbear, and to rejoice when souls were converted—even if they did not adhere to the particular set of opinions on non-essential matters, which they themselves held.

It needs very little “machinery” for a few dozens, or a few hundreds of Christians, to carry on a “Church of Christ,” so as to make it “a light in a dark place.” But it needs much of Grace! and this being present, all will be well!

I see no way of getting right, but by going back and *beginning* right. What would become of our denominational missionary societies and denominational colleges, I don’t know, except as they are turned into undenominational ones—a feat much easier done than many people imagine! I see, this year, that the London Missionary Society, which though considered Congregational, has always had an unsectarian constitution—is emphasizing that feature of its corporate life.

I would suggest what *must*, I think, be the beginning of this great reform—a reform, which, when accomplished, will shake Satan’s kingdom to its centre! and that is, a scheme whereby a minister may be freely invited to supply a pulpit, or “exchange” pulpits, or become a pastor, from one present denomination to another; or a professor from one denominational college to another. People will never come together, till they get somewhat *acquainted* with one another; and I know of no other possible “first step,” so feasible as this for a first step—and a step so invitingly within reach. I have a very low opinion of either the wisdom or the sincerity of the deliverance of the Lambeth Conference of the Church of England, respecting Church Union, while their pulpits—(as with the Episcopal Church in America), are still obstinately closed to all other ministers than their own; and where in undenominational conferences of ministers for fellowship and devotion, their clergymen are seldom or never seen.

Our difficulties are neither unique nor unprecedented. In the apostles’ days the Jewish Church

clung to circumcision, quite as strongly as the Baptists now do to immersion. Some of them disputed Paul’s call to apostleship, quite as vigorously as a “Churchman” disputes the ordination of “Dissenters.” Many Judean Christians were just as eager to have the Church modelled after the hierarchy of the temple, as any prelatic of the present day. While many Greeks and Grecian Jews, were as enthusiastic to have the Church formed on the model of their popular civic assemblies, or on the democratic model of the independent synagogues, as any “Latter Day” man of Cromwell’s time, or any modern Puritan among ourselves!

Let me recount the probable steps in the preliminary processes of this great reform: (1) A conviction of its being a right thing. (2) A friendly discussion of it, in all its bearings. (3) An oft sitting by each other’s ecclesiastical “firesides”—in other words, often and friendly intercommunion, in pew, and in pulpit—what the German Lutherans have a name for: “*kanzelgemeinschaft*.” (4) A gradual un-sectarianizing of our missionary societies; a readiness to send out the right man, even if he has been brought up on the other side of some ecclesiastical *fence*. It would not have hurt the Methodists to have sent out William Carey, nor the Church of England to have sent out Robert Moffat! (5) A dis-establishment of State Churches. (6) A necessary and gradual dwindling away of the authority of Councils, of whatever name—Congress, Convocation, Conference, Assembly, Convention, Association—as the rights and powers of the local Church begin to be asserted and *used*. I call attention to the word “used”; for it is not so much, in any case, that the local church is tyrannized over, as that the local church has leaned on outside authority, to guide it in its own proper affairs, and to do for it its own proper work!

W. W. SMITH.

FROM THE AFRICAN MISSION.

The following are extracts from a letter to Toronto, dated Cisamba, West Africa, Oct. 19th, 1893, from Rev. W. T. Currie:

We have almost finished another and a very pleasant month at our station. Words would