

lilated; the one is pure spiritual monarchy, the other is unlimited spiritual democracy; in the former the order of the church is subjected to the will of an individual from whose decision there is no appeal; in the latter it is subjected to the will of the people on whose unreasonable caprice there is no restraint. Strange if such extremes should ever meet! Incredible that such contrary systems should ever be blended into one! Yet strange and incredible as it may seem there are signs of such an approximation. In the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States, there is a periodical convention of Bishops, ministers and lay-men, which differs in little but the name, from a Presbyterian synod. In the Episcopal church of England attempts are at this moment being made by its most enlightened friends to have its convocations restored; this will soon doubtless be obtained, and then its resemblance to the Presbyterian model of ministerial order will not be so very distant. On the other hand, among the congregational churches in England, Wales, Scotland and the United States, unions and consociations have been for some years formed, in which ministers and delegates assemble annually to deliberate on subjects of common interest and the best means of extending their cause—and although they have not assumed any judicial authority, their decisions are nearly equivalent. Is not such a union, then virtually tantamount to a Presbytery or Synod by whatever name it may be designated? Thus we think we are able to see the two extremes converging; while they still retain their distinctive appellations there is a growing correspondence in their views and practices; and we cannot refrain from indulging the hope, that, when party and educational prejudices are more subdued by

the spirit of Christian charity, there may come a time when the points of disagreement, as to ecclesiastical order, between these three grand branches of the Protestant reformed church, shall dwindle to so trivial a magnitude, as shall be no bar to their cordial fellowship, and when it may be said of them, they are perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same practical judgment.

We shall advert only to one other cause of division in the Christian church—the spirit of faction. Something like it appeared among the Corinthians; the tendency to it is strong in human nature, and until the gospel exerts its fuller influence, it will occasionally manifest itself. It is this spirit which leads a man to fret and murmur if affairs are not managed exactly to his mind. He gathers around him the disaffected for any cause and from every quarter. They magnify the alleged corruptions, find in them a pretext for separation, and go forth to sow in other soils the seeds of discord. For this evil we cannot see any complete prevention in this world. The church on earth, even in its purest state, is but a community of imperfect beings; and it should not surprise us that we often find within it, some whose jarring and discontented spirits refuse to be regulated by its principles, and soothed by its hopes. We are told by one who knew the heart of man and the prospects of his church, that “offences must come.” Let them come then. It is ours to seek grace from heaven that we may be prepared to meet them. When thus prepared we shall not be greatly moved by those instances of weakness and perversity which no man can live long without witnessing in the circle of his fellowship. The church is as the ocean. Its surface is ruffled