

nor acknowledging the Sovereign as their ecclesiastical head ; but if free public prayer for our Queen can express loyalty, and sound Biblical instruction promote it, the pastors of churches that do not conform are behind no ecclesiastical order in attachment to the British Constitution and to the British Crown ! Knowing that the sound cannot reach the royal ear, and bring upon us royal smiles, and secure royal favour, we can in all simplicity and godly sincerity, and true concord, stand in this assembly, God save our Queen.

Applying to our Nonconformist churches the canon of judgment given us by Christ—viz., “Ye shall know them by their fruits”—we are prepared to abide a righteous sentence. We are quite sure that no domestic virtue is degenerated, or social virtue blighted, or national virtue deteriorated—we are quite sure that no patriotic sentiment is crushed, or duty neglected, or responsibility shirked—we are quite sure that no article of faith is ignored, or religious duty avoided, as the direct and legitimate fruit of English Nonconformity ; but with gratitude we believe that, as part of God’s husbandry, as part of God’s building, as part of God’s vineyard, as part of God’s household, as part of the salt of the earth, and of the sunshine of the world—we are in a position to render higher and better service to our country because of our Nonconformity, and so far as the light which now shines guides us, we intend to be Nonconformists still. The events of 1662 seem to echo, “For your country’s sake, be Nonconformists still.”

In cherishing the convictions which we have spoken, and in acting harmoniously with such convictions, we must guard against two evils. 1. Insisting upon points as essential to the constitution of a church which are not essential ; and, 2nd, Expecting unity from any other source than that of the direct influence of Christ. Did not Baxter fail in the Savoy Conference, partly by demanding reforms in detail, instead of fundamental angles. “Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good.” But this is not the only reason for a proportionate development of the features of our church life. The promotion of unity demands it. We say unity, not uniformity. We do not look for uniformity—we do not desire it. We believe in unity without uniformity. Elsewhere we find oneness and diversity. The planets which revolve around our sun are not uniform in size, nor do they circle at equal distances, nor have they all attendant satellites, nor, like Saturn, are they all surrounded by two rings, yet they form one solar system. A prism, or a rainbow, or the spray of water, with the sun shining upon it, shows seven colours in each ray of light. More than fifty single bodies form the innumerable compound substances of our material world. There are eighty thousand different plants in the vegetable kingdom, and a far greater variety in the animal creation. Here, then, where unity without uniformity appears to be the law, we look for oneness with diversity. We would not even seem to imply that, because oneness with diversity exists in the material creation, that the same must obtain in the spiritual kingdom of God ; but, in addition to using natural facts as illustrations of moral and spiritual truths, we all feel that analogy is in such a case confirmatory. Permit me further to remark that our hope of unity between churches rests not on the rising up of some clever logician to settle our differences by argumentation, nor on some Biblical critic who shall render like service by more correct Scripture exercises, nor on some mighty leader who shall command the homage of all hearts, but it rests on Him who is our peace and who has already made both one. Seed of the Woman, Second Adam, Shiloh, Prophet, Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince of Peace, Son of Man, Son of God, Divine and All-sufficient Peace-maker, our hope of unity is born in Thee, grows in Thee, lives in Thee ! In the history of redemption Thou hast united Jew and Gentile in one church—Jews of all sects, and Gentiles of all nations. Of the vain and deceptive Pharisee—of the speculative and daring Sadducee—of the exclusive and ascetic Essenes—of the proud, independent, self-satisfied, pleasure-worshipping Epicurean—of the rational, moral, fatalistic Stoic—of the practical, wise, and spiritual Platonist, with his peculiar theory of ideas, and his dangerous theory of morals—of the Pantheist, with everything God—of the Atheist, with nothing God—of the Polytheist, with his many gods—of the Deist, with his eyeless, armless, heathen god—of the enervated, luxurious Asiatic—of