

perience, ascribing to them exactly the same feelings as we have, is a great mistake. In so far as they pleased God it was undoubtedly by faith; but whilst the principle of faith or trust in God remains unchanged, the knowledge of the Being trusted may be very different; and therefore the effects of faith, in so far as they depend upon such knowledge, may be very different. To us God is much more perfectly revealed than He was to Abraham, and, therefore, though our faith be the same as Abraham's, its effects, in so far as they depend on knowledge, ought to be much higher and purer. What he probably regarded as no offence at all—I mean the deceit he practised about Sarah, and of which he is never said to have repented,—would to a Christian who is better taught, and knows more clearly the nature and the necessity of truth, be a most grievous sin. So again, what to Jael seemed lawful, and to Deborah actually laudable, the treacherous murder of an enemy, is utterly forbidden by the Gospel, and can never rightly be imitated. We approve of the strength of the faith which animated Deborah, and perhaps Jael, of their attachment to the people and the cause of God; but we are not allowed to imitate the bloody deed which their imperfect knowledge permitted Jael to perpetuate, and Deborah, to praise. The ignorance of His ancient people and ministers God doubtless overlooked, even as St. Paul tells us He overlooks the ignorance of all those heathen who have never had the means of knowing God, for unto whom little is given, of him will little be required; but such ignorance we could not plead. And he that reads the Old Testament without remembering the great principle that it is the history of the education of a certain race, chosen to preserve and develop the knowledge of God and the consciousness of sin, till the fulness of the time should come when both the knowledge of God and the consciousness of sin should be completed in the Person of the Saviour; he that reads it as the history of something perfect instead of what it really is, the history of something progressive and incomplete, will read it not to edification, but to mischief, and will probably derive from its pages, not the consolation it was intended to afford from watching the gradual ripening of the designs of God, and marking how they were carried out in spite of their being apparently defeated for a time; but an austere and cruel superstition, which would apply to Christians, all the commands issued for temporary purposes to the Jews, and would thus retrograde from the full noon-tide of the Gospel to the dim twilight of the law, seeking its chief incentive from the temporal chastisements, and its chief rules of life from the imperfect and partly ceremonial code given to a people whose highest prophet, according to Christ, was lower than the lowest Christian in knowledge, in privileges, and therefore in responsibility.—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.*

UNITY OF CHRISTIANS.

Among those subjects which are attracting the especial attention of all "who profess and call themselves Christians," that of Christian unity challenges for itself, and is entitled to, the first place. To those who ever stop to consider what issues for the human race our Lord's own words declare to be connected with it, it cannot but be invested with an almost awful interest. "That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me;" so prayed the Son of God and the Son of Man, in that prayer in which He consecrated Himself as the One Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, before He went forth to the garden of His agony.

Some years ago, many persons seemed to think that these words had little, if any, mean-

ing; and, at all events, that what was prayed for could have no actual bearing on the conversion of the world to "the Faith in Christ." We used to hear a great deal said about the advantages of and desirableness of the divisions of Christendom, as stimulating a "wholesome competition" and provoking "unto love and to good works." We hear next to nothing of all this now. Bitter experience has proved that the stimulus is to unwholesome rivalry instead of wholesome competition; and that the provocation is far more to "wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking" than to "love and good works."

It is something—it is, indeed, much—to have got beyond such denial and neglect of our Lord's own words and such unreasoned and unreasonable theories, or whatever they are to be called. There is, and we cannot be too thankful for it, a wide-spread feeling that unity among those who name "the Name which is above every name" is not only a necessity for the full life of the Church itself, but a requisite, also, for the conversion of the world. Surely this is an immense advance in the right direction, and full of hope for the future. The convictions of which I have spoken are working throughout Christendom in all its scattered portions, and I believe they are deepening and strengthening with every passing year. If any exception to their universality is to be found, it must be sought where the intellects and souls of men are held in the grasp of the false and misnamed unity of Ultramontanism; that unity which has been aptly compared to the unity of a corpse, rigid and moveless in the sleep of death; or the unity of the natural world when it is bound in fetters of ice and buried under heaps of snow. Who can doubt that this stirring of hearts, recalling what Ezekiel saw in his vision of the valley of the dry bones, is the breath of God the Holy Ghost? Who can repress the hope and prayer that, one day, it may be said of the fragments thus breathed upon, that "the breath came into them, and they lived and stood up upon their feet, a mighty army, an exceeding great army"? When this comes to pass it will come at a time not expected by men, and by methods and agencies not of their devising. The "Finger of God's hand," and nothing else,

Will knit the bonds of peace and love
Throughout all Christian lands.

Just in proportion to the depth and earnestness of these convictions and hopes must, and will be the danger of impatience, the danger of being unwilling to wait for the Lord's leading, of putting into operation individual plans and fancies of our own, of fearing that if our eyes do not behold the eagerly desired result, it will never be seen at all. For, in truth, impatience and an over-estimation of individual plans and methods of action are among the besetting evils of the period in which we live. Whenever that organic unity which the Church lost because of sin shall be restored, it will, as was just said, be at a time unexpected by men, and by methods other than those which men have contrived. As "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," so will it be then: it will be, in very deed, "the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes."

Do I mean in saying this to say, also, that we are to do nothing, that no duty devolves on us, that we are to remain absolutely passive and inert? Far from it. Without saying anything of what has been done synodically, by the Episcopal Declaration and the appointment by our late General Convention of a joint commission on Christian unity which is to report next year, there is much—nothing perhaps very striking, showy or sensational, but effective for all that—which can be done by individuals, indeed by every one of us.

First of all, we can avoid for ourselves and

discourage in others that hard, narrow, and really Donatistic temper, which is sometimes mistaken for Churchmanship. We can recognize truth and goodness wherever they are, and in devout thankfulness to God, recognize them as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is, as St. Augustine says, "the soul of the Church." And we can do this without running into that loose latitudinarianism which (forgetting that Christianity came into, and was propagated in, the world not as an abstract idea but a concrete and visible institution), will hear nothing and know nothing of an organic unity of the body of Christ. It was well said by one who will not be suspected of undervaluing this organic unity, "Holy Scripture sets forth, what Christians, as individuals or collectively as the living body of Christ, ought to be; but it does not say what degree of short coming shall forfeit the blessings of the gospel;" and again "It is safer for us to widen the pale of God's kingdom than deny the fruits of the Spirit."*

In the next place, there are many occasions, opportunities and undertakings in which the members of different Christian bodies can meet and work together, and in this intercourse and interchange learn to know each other better, and to get rid of a thousands prejudices and false judgments. Who can undertake to say how much these stand in the way of the unity of Christendom?

Above all, my brethren, there is that mightiest weapon which all of us can wield, instant, honest, earnest prayer. Had there been less planning and more praying, we should, I fully believe, be in far better case than we are now. Suppose, now for instance, that on every Thursday, the day on which the great sacrament of unity was instituted, that beautiful and comprehensive collect for unity which will, I trust, soon be found in our own Prayer Book, had been used in private devotions, at family worship and in public services, who can estimate the results that might have followed? We should have had, no doubt, fewer elaborate essays, fewer proposed panaceas, but we should assuredly have had in their place something vastly better and more effective.

What I would specially deprecate just now, as tending not to assist, but to embarrass future action, is the adoption of and acting on individual plans for promoting the end desired. Such plans are always likely to have an importance ascribed to them by those who originate and dwell on them, greater than they are entitled to. And since it was in just such ways, and by just such acts, that the divisions of Christendom began, it is hardly likely that they will be of much use in restoring that the loss of which so largely originated with them.

Especially in cases where, in regard to any plans that commend themselves to us, there may be reasonable doubt whether they do not conflict with canonical provisions which we are bound to obey, the doubt, I must think, should be given not on the side of our own wishes, but on the side of strict interpretation of the law. We cannot safely adopt any line of action that may land us before we know it in some form of the theory of Probabilism. Nor can it ever be well, in anxiety for unity among all, to be wanting in consideration for those who are of our own household of Faith, and so to give occasion to strife and division among them. They are, surely, entitled to as much consideration as any others can be.—*From the Convention Address made by the Bishop of Connecticut, June 12, 1888.*

* Bishop Forbes, of Brechin.

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