

have no existence. In Christ the covenant of peculiarity, raising a barrier of separation between Jew and Gentile, has been done away: national and other adventitious distinctions, to which so much importance is often attached by mankind, are of no account. By His Cross he has opened up a way of free access to heaven for the inhabitants of all lands—for men of every class and condition; and he makes the attraction of his Cross effectively felt by all to draw them thither; and the various origin of the general assembly of the redeemed will eventually bear signal testimony to the unlimited character of his ability and his willingness to save.

So great in number—and so various in origin—the next point we have to notice in regard to the celestial company is *its unity*. In all its vastness and diversity it is nevertheless one; subsisting in a unity such as may be affirmed of members of the same family, who, long and far dissevered, have at last been all collected in their father's house, their common home. Contemplated under this aspect, how striking is the contrast between the redeemed in heaven and the redeemed on the earth! Here the people of God—so far from exhibiting a visible unity expressive of those hidden spiritual relations in virtue of which, howsoever outwardly divided, they are in reality one—are broken up into innumerable distinct societies. There is but one great Shepherd of the sheep, but there are many flocks. Whether it will ever be wholly otherwise below, we may not venture to predict. But, if never on earth, at least in heaven, the prayer of Christ for the members of His church, "that they all may be one, even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," will be fully answered; and as there is but one Shepherd, so there will be but one sheepfold.

From the unity of the celestial company

we naturally pass to notice that inward pervading *harmony* which the description before us may be held to import, and of which unity is the appropriate exponent. The divisions which to so great an extent exist among the people of God on the earth, are referrible to conflicting views and sentiments, the malignant working of prejudice and passion, and the insufficient influence of Christian love. But among the people of God above, ignorance or error will not cloud the understanding; no evil affection will hold possession of the heart; but love will have the undivided and uncontrolled supremacy. Then they shall see eye to eye, and every bosom will beat in unison—the unison of holy love.

The celestial company, in its final completion, will be the result of a gradual process, which is now as it has for ages, even from the beginning, been going on; and which will be continued till time shall be no more. It is constantly enlarging, that bright company, by ever new additions. Every redeemed soul which passes away from the earth contributes to swell its vastness. And thus friends who once walked with us in this vale of weeping, and who in dying fell asleep in Jesus, went in death, to them truly great gain, to that sainted society. Not even for a moment is the believer in dying separated from the fellowship of God's people: death but transfers him from the divine family on earth to the divine family in heaven. And the period is drawing nigh when that divine family above shall have received its last destined accession; and then the mystery of God will be finished, and the present order of things having fully answered its intended purpose, will be brought to a close.

Meanwhile, as the people of God through faith in his Son, and destined to be yet included in that celestial company of which we have been speaking, let us habitually