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# THE WITNESS OF TRUTH.

Vol. V.

OSHAWA, JULY, 1850.

No. 7.

## OUR ZEAL AND THEIR ZEAL:

O R

### THE ZEAL OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS COMPARED.

It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.—*Gal. iv: 18.*

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.—*Heb. xii: 15.*

Steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.—*1 Cor. xv: 52.*

There was a leading, abounding, ever acting, untiring zeal at the commencement of New Testament times that seems at least intellectually admirable to the dullest and most careless professor at the distance of eighteen centuries. Christ then had friends—friends in earnest. He also had enemies, and they were in earnest. It did not require a microscope to draw the line between the two ranks, those who were with him and those who stood against him. Opposers were bitter, hateful, and persecuting, always abounding in their work of opposition. Friends were ardent, whole-hearted, full-souled, and uncompromisingly attached. They took hold of the gospel as Christ's best representative on earth, as if he was in it himself, spoke by it, loved by it, saved by it, judged of all men by it; and hence in thus taking the gospel into their embrace, they owned and embraced Christ to live in them, by them, over them, and through them. In throwing open their hands, their hearts, their affections to receive the Lord Jesus in his appointed salvation, they, in effect, said,—'Jesus, the great Deliverer, has ended our captivity and taken off our weary burdens; he has pardoned our sins and removed all the load of guilt that bowed down our souls; he has given us soundness for lameness, and strength for weakness, and has brought us out of darkness into light, and given us eyes to behold it; he has lifted us from the earth and set us at his right hand in heavenly places by his favour; he has turned our hopes, our pleasures, our pursuits from things perishing to things eternal;—we have been dead with him, buried with him, raised with him, and now our covenant is to walk with him in a life wholly new, go where he leads, do what he bids, speak as he directs, behave as he requires;—we love him, for he has saved us—we love him, and we will obey him;—henceforth if he tells us to go and plead with sinners like himself, we shall go, and if he asks us to minister to our brethren who are joint heirs with him, we are

ready to do it; if he points to his own liberality, and then points to the needy, and asks us to visit and relieve them, we cheerfully comply; if he speaks of the hatred of the sons of men, the tongue of slander, the finger of scorn, the opposition to himself and his cause, the self-denial, fortitude, and patience necessary to overcome in this warfare, we are resolved to stand fast with him, our blessed Master, whose we are in life, in death, and forever?

It was thus they waited the nod, the word, the example of their divine Lord. They had a single eye. They had a pure heart. They had unfeigned faith. They therefore walked heaven-ward with Jesus their Leader. Hence, counselling, not the flesh but the spirit, they were ready for every good work. Their hands were open; their hearts were warm; their feet were ready to move—at the bidding of the gospel and its author. Love ran through every vein, energized every muscle, quickened every motive, and fired every action. Jesus had something for them to do—for themselves—for their brethren—for the world—and O what zeal to fulfil all the pleasure of the Lord whose love had saved them, raised them from the dust, and given them the hope of life through grace!

Christianity then was worth something. *It had eyes, it had ears, it had a tongue, it had hands, it had feet, it had a full heart and a life that laboured; and hence it could see, hear, speak, work, walk, and intelligently and benevolently act for the benefit of man in his various conditions of weakness and want. Wherever sin was found, wherever suffering was developed, there it went and ministered, taking with it the healing oil and wine of the gospel—the medicine of heaven. The Christian religion was not then held in a corner of the fancy, nor in the north or south side of the heart, deposited for safe keeping in a convenient region of the head or breast, like the talent in a napkin; no; the religion of Christ made its subjects like Christ, full of all goodness and grace, developed in the active socials of society. There was 'diligence,' there was 'labour of love,' there was 'well doing,' there was the 'work of the Lord' in these days of primitive simplicity and power of the gospel, and those who were on the Lord's side were engaged in these activities, ministering with all earnestness to soul, body, and spirit for the welfare of others as they had need, or as the necessary assistance could be given. This was zeal—Christian zeal—the zeal of the friends of Jesus as they flocked to his standard when he commenced his reign.*

The enemies of the Lord stood up against these advocates and firm-

friends of truth, holiness, and good works. The heathen raged. Opposers waxed valiant. Their fires were kindled, their swords were un-sheathed, their prisons and dungeons were prepared, their wild beasts were let loose, their tortures were skilfully planned—for what?—for nothing more or less than the suppression of Christian zeal. Were opposers successful? Ask history, ask sacred or profane history. The zeal of primitive Christians staunch or vanquished?—! Never. It made everything bow before it. It was warmer than fire; it had an edge keener than the sword; it converted prisons into churches and filled dark dungeons with the light of heaven; it triumphed triumphantly over all obstacles, and came out of every contact brighter, stronger, nobler than before.

But the times are changed. Modern christianity passes current without zeal. To “do his will,” in these days of favour, is to think of it sometimes, and occasionally, at special seasons, pray that it may be done! Right views, correct principles, good motives, pious framers, devout feelings, orthodox sighs, and words of a certain mould are now the safeguards of the way to glory. To stand up with Jesus and bear his cross, to enter his vineyard and take our hands with us and work, to resist temptation and rebuke sin after the Master’s model, to follow him step by step and act by act so far as human ability reaches, are not now among the approved customs. There are old style fashions! The new style is cheaper, prettier, and more easily worn. The garments of these eighteen-century-ago christians were homely and uncouth; the spirit of the age demands something more tasty and neat! Anciently it was honorable to belong to a hard working class, who imitated with untiring ardour the example of him who became famous among men for “doing good;” but in these days of new discoveries and patent improvements it seems that a way has been found to *feel* good and *be* good without *doing* good. The times, then, religiously, are changed—the people—the manners—the habits are changed, and Christian zeal is missing.

Indifference is the sin of the age. Those who profess christianity walk as though, like Gallio, they cared for none of these things.” It would seem as though Christ and Belial have been so well mixed in the vision of the great mass, that they have Christian hearts and worldly hands, and minds that are little concerned either about what the heart feels or the hand does. There is however a class that arouse at certain seasons, and appear to possess and exercise the true zeal; but its short life soon proves it is not genuine. It flashes and sparkles and flames as though the

world was to be set in a blaze; when, lo, suddenly, its fire is quenched and all its glow like an extinguished taper. It resembles the meteor that darts through the sky, brilliant in its transitory swiftness, quickly seen, quickly gone, leaving no trace behind. This is not zeal, no more than a momentary flash at midnight makes the light of day. Zeal, properly so called while it is bright and glowing, full of ardour and executive force, is also steady and constant, and keeps in close company with patience. Indeed zeal may be said to consist of patience, energy, and perseverance properly blended and proportioned. Those, then, who flare up into a sparkling impulse for a day, a week, or any limited season, and again fall back into the easy quietude and careless inaction of a moral torpedo, are not to be reckoned among the zealous, but must receive some other and less honorable name.

There is another class, less impulsive and more consistent than these moment men, whose fancy is almost always at work, and who therefore suppose they have an abounding zeal because they imagine so extensively and perform so much in sentimentalism. They are however wholly deficient of the zeal of the gospel, for they "say" [or imagine] "and do not."

A class still more sober, and altogether steady, who have neither flights of fancy nor spasmodic spiritings, are yet far from being whole heartedly zealous, though deserving of some religious credit in this chapter of duty. They "take heed" to the "mind of the spirit,"—are not indifferent, nor unintelligent, nor undecided as to their duty, nor are they disposed to be backward but to be forward in good works,—yet their soberness, their willingness, their intelligence, their conscientiousness amounts to little in the Lord's kingdom, for the true ingredients of zeal are wanting. They lack motive power—life, activity, stir, electricity, spirit, something that will press forward, upward, and aroundward. And too, there is with these oftentimes a false modesty. They think much of their own unworthiness, and therefore instead of forgetting themselves and absorbing their souls in the love of Christ and his perfections, they timidly look at their own selves, and draw back from those undertakings requiring fortitude, long-suffering, and zeal.

But who that owns that he is ever in the presence of his Saviour, and reflects for a moment that when he comes again, accompanied with his celestial host, he shall "reward every man as his works shall be," can so far lose sight of duty as fail to "always abound in the work of the Lord"?

D. OLIPHANT.

*Syracuse, 21st June.*

## COMMUNION QUESTION

The subject to which I referred in the conclusion of my last, is, the subject of "communion." I am sorry to find that on this subject we have not learned the same things. To come at once to the point—one of the articles of my creed reads thus—"unless a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." I am aware this is hard doctrine—that it is unpopular, uncharitable, unchristian and several other things equally unpleasant and unamiable, still it is there and I am bound to receive it.

Again, "every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ—who has confessed him as the one Lord—and who had openly obeyed him in submitting to the one baptism, is divinely and not humanly introduced in a state to receive all the privileges of the Christian church." This I consider in strict accordance with the creed above quoted. Here then is "a mark deep and broad" which distinguishes those who have the "right divine" from all others. Now the question arises here—have any others a right? I understand you to say, *no*, "but we permit others on their own responsibility." Let us look candidly at this. In the first place—who has given "me" authority to grant or withheld such *permission*? The table is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and if the Lord himself presides, why not leave the whole matter in his hands, and not take upon yourself the peculiar duties of his office? Why, in his presence, and in his own house, say to one,—you have a right, you are invited—to another, you have no right but you are permitted? Who can without authority so act? The question then remains—whence is this authority, from heaven or from men? Certainly not from Heaven.

Again, what is meant by the person permitted "partaking on his own responsibility." Is it that he is in danger of being asked—"who has required this at your hands, to tread my courts?" and that you will leave himself to answer? The case seems like this—the door of the Lord's house stands open for the admission of his people. A feast of fat things has been provided; and the Lord himself presiding at the board cordially invites—graciously commands his people to come and freely partake. Accordingly they

"Crowd to their places at the feast

And bless the founder's name."

But one presents himself, who has not "the mark," and desires to enter. The servant in waiting says—the master has not expressed his will in reference to such a case, therefore I have not his authority. But I know he is very gracious and full of pity, and if you will take

upon yourself the responsibility of entering. I will bear the responsibility of permitting you. Thus I understand you teach and practice in Oshawa. And is this indeed the teaching and practice that will prove to all men that you are delivered from "the leanings and partialities of former systems,"—the "bias produced and nurtured in some unfriendly and uncongenial school?" If so, stand fast in this liberty wherewith *you have made yourselves free*, but meanwhile remember that "the grand contest at present is between those who say "Thus saith the Lord," and those who say "Thus saith the creed." For my part until I see something more authoritative on the subject than I have yet seen, I must remain satisfied with the "former system," unfriendly, uncongenial, and unpopular though it be.

I have read with attention all you have written on this subject for the "Witness," from first to last. From the manner in which you replied to Mr. Davidson's letter on this subject, I did expect you could show by reference to book, chapter, and verse, that the practice of the Oshawa church is correct. I had read and thought some on the subject and had concluded that such a practice was unscriptural. But when you spoke so confidently of using the "spirit's armor" in the case, I thought you had at length discovered something in God's word which had been hitherto hid from the wise and prudent, and hurried eagerly along from time to time expecting every moment to obtain a glimpse of the new light. I confess I was disappointed in finding that instead of a reference, or quotation or any thing of the kind, we were simply informed, that, "the Book, and the author of the Book, the letter of the Book and the spirit of the Book, we take our guidance at the communion table." But what portion of the book teaches or sanctions the practice referred to. I have not hitherto been able to discover, neither yet now am I able. You have indeed referred us to the church in Jerusalem. But how the example of that church countenances your practice I am at a loss to conceive. If you can show that that church "communed" with the unbaptized, the point will be settled. But this you know cannot be done. Why then wander out of the record and place yourself and the cause in a position which cannot be maintained but by "the zig-zag reasoning of the open communionist?" But here I am too fast. There is one course of reasoning in which there is no winding. It is that adopted by the great Robert Hall whose liberality you hold up for imitation. While he admits that "the apostles could not have extended their communion beyond the limits of that rite (baptism) without incorporating insincere professors," and that "the simple fact of rejecting a dull baptism would have

been sufficient to set aside a pretension to the christian character ;" he contends on the other hand "that a new order of things has arisen" (and assuredly he is correct here) and asks "where is the justice of inferring that because the apostles would have refused communion to an unbaptized person at a time when none but false professors could remain in that state—it is our duty to refuse it to some of the most excellent of the earth merely on account of the absence of that ceremony?" Now this "system" has several advantages. 1st. It is quite plain, straight forward, and short. Call baptism "that ceremony," say that although it was necessary to admission into the church in apostolic times, it is not essential in the new state of things—and the work is done.

2d It is very satisfactory, and acceptable in several respects. It saves the trouble of ascertaining the practice of the apostles, as they belonged to the old state of things. It grants so much liberty that we are in little danger of being entangled in any yoke of bondage. Being cut off from the apostles we have ample scope for our wisdom in legislating for the church of Christ, and can remodel the worn out laws and customs of ancient times and fashion them more in accordance with the world as it is—with the new state of things.

3d But perhaps the greatest advantage of this system is, that it sets us completely "free from the leanings and partialities of former systems" Nothing unfriendly nor uncongenial can have place in the new state of things, and it must be because an individual is possessed of a very ill-natured and selfish disposition indeed, if he is not, with all these advantages, as liberal and unbiassed as Mr. Hall or any other good man could desire.

It would seem necessary now to attempt to show that the scriptural plan is better than any improvement that can be devised, but having no doubt already exhausted your patience, I shall add no more except that if you write again on the subject of this communication, I should be pleased to know what you mean by "close communion."

June, 1850.

O.

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## FAITH.

### No. 1.

"Now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen!"  
 "Without faith it is impossible to please God! for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"—Paul.

Much has been said and written on the subject matter of the above passages for the last three or four centuries; and still there is no sub-



ject more imperfectly understood than the subject of faith. Lying as it does at the foundation of all that religious character which is acceptable to God, and it being utterly "impossible to please him" without it, I wonder not that all who feel interested in their future well being and felicity are exceedingly anxious to know in what it consists, how it is to be attained, and what its power is as connected with the final holiness and perpetual bliss of man. Having it, God is pleased with us; and in his benignant mercy and grace, most bountifully sheds upon us the plenitude of his spiritual riches and eternal mercies:—destitute of it we are alienated from his love, separated from his grace, and without God and without hope in the world. Having it, we have "passed from death unto life," we abide in him and he abides in us and the light of his divine countenance falls upon us full of "grace and truth":—destitute of it we sit in the "region and shadow of death," with clouds and darkness around us and through the deep gloom, beams no friendly ray of heavenly light or love. By it we are united to all time past, present, and to come; we hold communion with men—angels—God, and the whole heavenly host. How vast its power, how radiant its light, how exalted its hope!

Come then, kind reader, fellow pilgrim seeking for peace, happiness, life, and examine the teachings of Him in whom are treasured all the counsels of knowledge and wisdom, and in whose instructions we can safely rely, that we may learn from Him what constitutes this priceless gem, how it is to be obtained, and what its power to save.

What is faith? How various and how contradictory the answers given to this important question! When men—when "doctors disagree" to whom shall we go for an answer that shall be correct, and to whom shall be the last appeal? There is but one person to whom we can refer this great question, and in whose answer we can implicitly confide—God. He says through Paul "without *faith* it is impossible to please him," and then informs us that "he that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." In this we are taught that he that "*believes*" has that "*faith*" which pleases God, and by which we can come to him—that *faith is belief*, and belief faith. Most perfectly does this accord with his statement that "faith is the conviction of things not seen," and with the meaning, as every linguist knows, of the original term here employed. To *believe* all that God has said is to have *faith* in him if the doctrine of the above pages is true, notwithstanding all the ignorant sneers which have been cast upon the term *believe*. For this

reason Christ said "he that heareth my words, and *believeth* on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life;" "he that *believeth* on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" "whosoever liveth and *believeth* in me, shall never die;" "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall *believe* on me through their word;" "he that *believeth* on me, as the scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" "whosoever *believeth* on him, should not perish, but have eternal life;" and "he that *believeth* on him is not condemned; but he that *believeth not* is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Again he says "he that *believeth not* shall be damned." Paul informs us the "word faith" is, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall *believe* in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" and "whosoever *believeth* on him shall not be ashamed."

Now if faith is belief, and he that *believes not* "shall be damned," "is condemned already," and he that believes "shall be saved," "shall not be ashamed," "is not condemned," "may come to God," "shall not perish," "shall never die," "shall not come into condemnation," "shall live," "is passed from death unto life," "hath everlasting life," and shall "have eternal life," what *more* do we need so far as faith is involved in order to salvation and the enjoyment of eternal life? And I may ask what is lacking to constitute this belief what theological doctors commonly designate "saving faith?" The belief that *saves* a man, and bestows upon him eternal life, is certainly a "saving faith," and the very best "faith" there is to be obtained, and as such should be received by all. *Un-belief* is an entire want of faith—*benefit* is, therefore perfect faith.

Yours in search of Truth,

J. M. SHEPARD.

*Ira, N. Y., June, 1850.*

## THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND ITS ORGANIZATION.

HAS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A PERFECT ORGANIZATION?

That the organized body called the Christian church has various offices, officers, objects, and consequently various departments, is not only admissible, but susceptible of the clearest and most satisfactory evidence. The divine institution denominated the church, exists for two purposes,—for the sake of those within and of those without, or

the *in* Christ and the *out* of Christ. But in its organization for conferring benefit upon the whole human family, found in these two positions to God and heaven, we may reckon at least the following departments ; 1. preaching or proclaiming the gospel, 2. teaching, 3 exhortation, 4. discipline, 5. giving to the needy, 6. calling forth, directing, and preparing gifts for all these purposes. In other language, the church is to hold forth the word to the world ; it is to teach its own members ; it is to exhort, incite, and stir up as well as teach ; it is to govern, counsel, reprove, guard and protect its own subjects ; it is to be liberal, "ready to distribute ;" it is to call out, raise up, and qualify suitable persons to labour for the accomplishment of these ends. These, we understand, are the duties of the church *as an organized body*. Or rather we might say, these are the departments of duty. It is universally conceded that one of these is designed primarily for the world, while the others are primarily for the upbuilding and welfare of the church itself. True, in one sense, they are all for the world and all for the church ; for the proclamation of the gospel and the conversion of sinners edifies and encourages the church, and again, every department of the new institution is but a part of that light which makes the church like a city upon a high place, conspicuous to all around, enlightening, refining, and reforming the world. Thus are the offices and objects of the Lord's congregation harmonious, unique, and subservient to the best interests of the human race blessing and happyfying according to the enlarged benevolence of Him who is "Lord of all."

Just here, three things will be admitted. 1st. That all these departments are divine and not human. 2nd. That co operation and united energy are necessary for their efficiency and success. 3d. That the church cannot lawfully assume that one of these departments is more important than another, but is divinely called upon to discharge the duties of all. And may we not add a 4th general admission, viz., That the church is to fulfil all these obligations by its own organization, and not by helps, alliances, or auxiliary organizations ?

Christ, then, has a Society, an organized Society, so framed and fitted as to look upon man in his various conditions of destitution, and, finding him destitute, provides for his immediate aid. This is the genius of the gospel institution. Is man ignorant, sinful, and therefore unhappy ? Whether he is near or afar, Jesus, by his Society, sends the gospel to him, offering him light, righteousness, and bliss. Is he a convert, and still needs instruction ? The Christian organi-

zation provides for his further tuition in the revealed mysteries of heaven. Is he encompassed and beset with many temptations? Then the warm pulsations, the affectionate warnings, the brotherly remonstrances of exhortation fortify his heart and give him new courage and resolution to hold on his way to the end. Is he falling again into old vices, notwithstanding his holy vows and his former convictions? Jesus, then, by his pre-arranged means, tells him plainly that he is out of duty, and turns him again into the path of peace, or, if incorrigible, shuts the door against him as a warning to others, himself, and the world. Is he sick, poor, in bonds, in prison? He is relieved, and his heart gladdened, by Christ's institution. Is he a man of mind and capacious heart? The Lord has need of him, and asks him to fill a place, large or small according to the measure of his capacity, and the only place where he can fully enjoy himself and at the same time fulfil the Master's will in blessing the church and the world.

Where shall we find an auxiliary society to such a Society as this?—nay, rather, what need of it?

But we speak of the Society instituted by the Lord himself. It has various objects—it has as many obligations as objects—and it is organized to execute, not one or some of them, but all of them. Hence, upon the principle that a society is to be formed to facilitate and push forward the missionary duty of the church, will not the same logic, righteousness, and zeal commend the establishment of a society for the enlarged and more complete instruction of believers—believers teaching society? And if these shall prove successful and prosperous in the things whereunto they are appointed, what worthy objection shall be raised to a society, composed of the best and most zealous church members, for exhortation and spiritual stimulus—an exhortative and socially warming society? Would not a model disciplinary society not answer a good purpose, especially during these refractory and almost lawless times? And shall we not add, to make things go forward harmoniously and extensively, a society for the special promotion of benevolence, and another society in which to school and prepare “smart men” for the several offices of the church? For have we not assented to the simple proposition that every department of the Christian organization is divine, all equally important, and therefore equally to be practically regarded?

It may however be argued that “sounding out of the word of life” is a duty more extensive and more general in its nature than any other connected with the new institution, and hence belongs to all congre-

gations in all places and at all times, unlike the obligations of each individual church to teach, to discipline, and to contribute for the needy. Grant it. What follows? That Jesus calls upon his people to perform a duty too wide, too extensive, too mighty for the organization of his church? Heaven is not honored by such compliments. We admire them not. However, it is only for arguments' sake we can grant that other things beside the missionary movement require not general interest and co-operation. Of these matters, however, we need not now speak.

But are we not in favour of Home and Foreign Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, Tract Societies, and Benevolent Feed-the-Poor, Visit-the-Sick Societies? Yes—certainly—they are all to be approved; but we must approve more of the Christian Society than all of them. For Christ's Society will accomplish all the good of all of them, and as much more as it is superior to all of them. Still, there is an amount of good done by the human expedients that otherwise would remain undone; and in this we are bound to rejoice. But those sickly, worldly, rickety things now called churches require the helps and aids of a score of societies for active operation in well-doing, and then they will not be equal to the old measure of excellency embraced in the one organization submitted and exemplified by those rude men who were workmen for the Lord in by-gone days. Since the well laid foundation of the Christian superstructure is more or less forsaken, we are most thankful to meet with anything by way of conferring benefit upon society present or to come, and in the meantime, by these same means, making a suitable introduction, without knowing it, for something more perfect and divinely acceptable.

It is indeed true, in some cases at least, that the friends and advocates of these societies are not willing to call them or to regard them as auxiliaries to the Society of the Lord. This name, to them, has an "uncertain sound." They have reasons that satisfy their own mind and conscience that all these operations are in some form within the organization of the church. They should be credited with sincere convictions. The object being scriptural, and those who promote and prosecute it being all members of the church, are, in their view, good reasons why these societies should be acknowledged as religiously expedient and fairly within the boundaries of the Lord's body. Now, we have courage to risk this much,—that we can find and produce as many, as weighty, and as worthy reasons for that organization called a conference, a synod, or an ecclesiastical council, as may be produced

without extra research in favour of any Missionary, Bible, Tract, or Benevolent society, with its full suit of officers, president, vice-president, treasurer, secretaries, life directors, other directors, lecturers, agents, life members, honorary members, and other members and helpers, more or less official, too numerous either to remember or note down. We have, let it be understood, courage for this; but whether it would be prudent, wise, or in any respect profitable to allow courage thus to exercise itself, deponent saith not.

A Missionary Society among the "churches which were in Judea in Christ Jesus," would have been a novel affair. 'O,' says one, 'they were so zealous and so missionary in spirit, they stood in need of no other society than the church to sound the gospel abroad.' Exactly: the church then was like its author, who took upon him a mission from heaven to earth, and who, while here was a constant minister and an untiring missionary. And can any one suppose that a hundred thousand Bibles being at the command or in the possession of the Church at Jerusalem, the Church would have taken measures to get up a society for their distribution? It is presumable that no one will so affirm. Or if Paul, when he prepared his letter to the brethren at Rome, could have received the services of a printing-scribe instead of a pen-scribe, would he have proceeded to erect a Tract or Printed-Epistle Society for the purpose of circulating the valuable instruction he was enabled to communicate? Nay, is there any one who doubts the energy, zeal, and spiritual agility of the primitive Church to carry, circulate, and scatter such documents as far and as wide as the gospel found access to the family of man in those times?

But at present we argue not the case. To all the Lord's beloved, grace and peace.

D. OLIPHANT.

*Ira, July 3d, 1850.*

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## LETTERS ON CHRISTIAN UNION.

### No. I.

TO THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN THE SYRACUSE UNION CONVENTION IN GENERAL, AND TO MESSRS. SMITH, WHEATON, AND SNOW IN PARTICULAR:—

DEAR SIRS:—As you are friends of Christian union, and as your love of union has lately been manifested 'in the sight of all men' by actively engaging in devising ways and means to bring together into one those who are divided, sectionalized, and opposed, perhaps you will suffer a word or two on the subject from a friend of union who, although at a distance, is not afar off in matters of this character. What is said will doubtless carry its own apology, since it is not persons but

principles—not who speaks but what is spoken—that will command your attention. I therefore address you with affectionate confidence, as one who has at heart the oneness of all the Lord's elect.

It is a source of happy reflection, indeed, that the divine subject of Christian union, on the part of the more intelligent and pious, in the religious world, is receiving an enlarged degree of consideration. The subject is being discussed. It is bringing candid minds into contact. This is one of the best signs of the times. Investigation invariably precedes reformation. Could the catholic world be induced to canvass and discuss with protestants the subject of Rome's usurpation of what belongs to Jerusalem, there is reason to conclude that a very respectable number of the more enlightened and candid of those now enveloped in the mysteries of catholicism would see things in a different light and hence be led into liberty that is "free indeed." But without farther preliminary allow me to advance directly to the topic in view.

There are three schemes of Christian union more or less sanctioned by popular favor. The first contemplates a union of denominations, as such, still retaining all their diverse opinions, articles of faith, and religious observances, but meantime to be so far united as to co-operate and work together for certain objects of a general character. The second aims at something more, and urges a compromise of views and practice, asking every denomination to yield some point or points of a distinctive and divine nature, in order to a unity of what are called the "essentials," and a consequent forbearance upon the "non-essentials." The third scheme embraces, it is supposed, an idea still more sublime, which is simply this,—to effect the union of all denominations by infusing into them an all-pervading charity and cutting off the hard corners of antipathy one toward another, thereby making them one in spirit, although dissimilar in outward forms and denominations, —leaving these untouched and unrestricted after the manner of present orthodoxy. A brief survey of these several propositions may prove not unprofitable.

As it relates to the first scheme, the object of which is to erect a platform for general purposes on which all parties may stand occasionally, while they are still to have all their little platforms to occupy as before it must, I think, be admitted that this species of Christian union, if such it can be called, is at best only a partial union. This is its very best name; for, to carry out the above figure, they are only united while they remain upon the one platform, and they are separated, disconnected, and divided,—body, soul, and spirit—so soon as they leave

this one platform and again mount their distinct and diverse platforms. If, when together for certain objects, they are said to be united, the very same logic will prove that, when parted from one another for certain purposes, they must be disunited. In those principles and matters of action in which they all speak the same thing" and have "the same mind and same judgment;" they enjoy the body and spirit of oneness, for they *do the same things* but wherein they speak not the "same thing" and have not the "one mind," they enjoy something else than union, for they *fail to do the same things*. A union of such dimensions resembles a number of small armies belonging to as many nations, hostile to each other, which, in view of some special danger, join together for a defined period, and, when the period of their allowance is expired, separate and appear in rank and file under their different captains and leaders as before. Now, without further remark, may I not say that whoever approves and attempts to bring to pass this species of union, has some thing in his vision aside from the "unity of the faith" or the "doctrine of Christ" as revealed and recommended in the holy Book?

The next scheme, that of expediency, forbearance, and compromise, looks much more like real union, and would indeed be a union, properly so called, provided it were successfully carried into effect. Whether it would be Christian union is not in the meantime under inquiry. But the embarrassments to this unity are numerous, weighty, and, so far as yet ascertained, insurmountable. Hitherto there has no gauge been found of that perfect mould which is requisite to trim down the minor creeds of the various congregations, and hence from all these lesser creeds form one great creed for the adoption and regulation of all. This seems to have proved too much for the best theological mechanics in days past, and therefore we have no facts, no data, no premises to warrant the conviction that the scheme is in any wise feasible. The different builders of the different temples, each for himself, proclaim the value and indispensable worth of the materials with which they work, and even their 'non-essentials', are, in this one respect essential—they cannot as workmen proceed without them. When therefore the inquiry is made, 'Who shall yield, what shall be compromised?' each one replies 'My creed is right, I have nothing to surrender.' If a call shall be made for a committee to draw up a formula to supercede all others, there is not a man nor a number of men who can be trusted. Each party acknowledges that it is wrong to be divided, but each party also affirms that its creed contains neither too much nor too little, and hence it is not to be revised, altered, or



modified. It is scarcely necessary to add, that, until the creed-loving spirit has waned and a more yielding and pliant spirit has waxed, it will be fruitless to talk of a union of the various prevalent parties through the expediency of compromise, aside from all other objections against the project even could it be prosecuted with entire success on its own merits.

The third plan, which proposes a union of spirit among a thousand diverse bodies, is not so sober as the rest. To my mind it is a whim—a puff of wind—a religious fancy. It is a phantom made of nothing, hanging upon nothing, amounting to nothing. There is “one spirit” which dwells in “one body,” and this one spirit therefore possesses, rules, and animates this one body; and so soon as we find two bodies, we find more than one spirit, and hence one of them must be either something more or something less than the holy spirit. To think of finding one spirit in various bodies, agreeing by this same spirit to make it a virtue to keep aloof and remain separate, to reject each other’s members, in their separate organizations, to teach different things for the gospel, and to make provision for their several boundaries as societies to continue like the laws of the Medes and Persians, is an idea that may serve to enliven the imagination of religious poets, but it seems to have as little to do with the union of God’s people as an attempt to bring the southern and northern extremes of the earth to meet together at the earth’s centre, for oneness of spirit is the most perfect unity that the human mind is capable of apprehending, and implies unity of principle, unity of purpose, unity of interest, unity of duty, and every possible unity contemplated and embraced in the whole Christian organization.

But the half is not told. There are other reasons why these plans are severally defective and unacceptable. They are all predicated upon the capital assumption that the union of parties is Christian union—that the unity of the existing denominations which constitute christendom is the unity of the gospel. Waiving all other consideration permit me for a moment to concentrate attention to this single point. It will be admitted without argument, that a large party, fashioned after some other model than the apostle’s doctrine, is no better than a small party; and will it not be admitted as readily that the union of a number of small parties constitutes only a more formidable and enlarged party? Take for example the different divisions of Presbyterians, the elder and younger connexions, the old school and the new school and cement them together into one body; and are they not still Presbyterians? and would not this combination of Presbyterian societies

be justly called a Presbyterian union? Again, take various connexions of Baptists, and bring them into fellowship, upon one Baptist creed, and would they not remain Baptists distinct from all people beside, and hence would not this union be properly named Baptist union? And then if a union was effected between the Presbyterians and Baptists, making one creed from the distinctive creeds of each, would it not be a Baptist Presbyterian union? If the various bodies of Methodists were added, with their creed mingled into the great uniting creed, would it not then be a Baptist Presbyterian Methodist union? And, after the same example, was the English Church to be joined, should we not call it the Baptist Presbyterian Methodist English Church union? I use not these terms in an opprobrious sense, but merely for illustration. Now it is an undeviating law of nature that a stream never rises above its fountain, neither is the water of a stream ever purer than the fountain whence it flows; and hence it may be safely argued that parties, as such, can never rise superior to themselves—never be elevated above their own standard—never develop an element they do not contain. This is what I mean by saying that the union of all parties, even if accomplished, would still be a party union—an exchange of numerous minor creeds for one all comprehensive creed.

It is not always considered that the fact of division, while it is a grand root and great source of evil, is itself an effect. It seems to be taken for granted that the whole evil is found in the existence of division.—Few errors are more erroneous. For while the sin of division, in one sense, cannot, in its injurious tendency, be overrated, yet in another point of view it can be greatly over-estimated: for the cause that produces division—gives it existence, perpetuity, and power, must be a greater evil than division itself. The cause that produces, is, either for good or evil, always greater than the effect produced. Now division is but the open development of an evil that had its being before manifesting itself in this form. The disease rages in the body before it makes or leaves marks upon the body; and we should as correctly say that the outward marks on the physical body constitute the disease, as to affirm that division in the body ecclesiastic is any other than the external figure and substantive shape of a previously existing evil.—What then is it that produces division? and what is the remedy? I must reserve these questions for a second letter. Meantime, any forthcoming remarks upon any of these statements will be laid before the public as freely and cheerfully as the appearance of this letter on these pages.

Yours, in favor of divine union,

D. OLIPHANT.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF FEELING.

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” Prov. xvi, 32.

Nothing perhaps is oftener and more deservedly condemned by an enlightened community than uncontrolled feeling, whether exhibited in open acts of violence or in subtle revenge, and yet what has caused all the misery that has been or is now in the world but the uncontrolled operation of excited sensibility? Since the day that Cain was moved to stain his hand with the innocent blood of his brother Abel, the violence and bloodshed which have disgraced and desolated the face of our planet may be traced either directly or indirectly to the uncontrolled feelings of the human heart. Government and order have been cast down and anarchy and confusion introduced in their place, mighty and flourishing empires overthrown, peaceful and enlightened kingdoms destroyed, states dismembered, their laws overturned, and the rights of their citizens trampled under foot, beautiful, populous and prosperous cities demolished, their inhabitants slain, and all the works of wit within them destroyed, fertile plains drenched with human blood, and left an unproductive waste, verdant vallies echoing with the sound of joyful happiness, contentment, and prosperity hurried to a dreary abode of misery and woe, countries enveloped in general ruin and left without pity by their despoilers to mourn their state—all to gratify the intemperate feelings and vanity of some aspiring haughty tyrant. How often has an excitement of the feelings led men to persecute their fellow creatures because they differed with them in religious sentiment? What in former ages drove so many humble and pious persons from their happy homes and loved families to wander in the wildest deserts and suffer all the ills that human beings could endure, or when cast into the gloomy dungeon inflicted on them every torture that human depravity could suggest? What in the dark ages moved men professing to be Christians to build the pile and kindle the flame to burn the martyr? Has not uncontrolled passion led to all these and a thousand evils beside? These are but a few of the more prominent matters in which the rancorous feelings of the human family have been displayed.

It is not in such results as those mentioned only, that the necessity and importance of self-control is seen, but in the issue of every undertaking, pursuit, or calling in which man can be engaged, whether political, religious, scientific or agricultural. The impressions made by external objects on the mind through the senses are so numerous and

powerful, and at the same time so conflicting, that unless they are controlled by the judgment they will produce great diversity of feeling and irregularity of action. Now as the strongest impressions always determine the character of our actions, hence it is that when there is no restraint placed upon the feelings produced by these impressions, an individual will enter in the morning upon some enterprise with great energy, but the feeling which impelled him may subside by noon and the project be abandoned, and a new scheme in the evening be undertaken with renewed vigour, and both though unfinished abandoned with the morning light.

Extreme zeal, which is but the effect of excited feeling, even when exerted in a good cause, is often mere folly and injurious to the cause which it is intended to uphold, and extreme depression under affliction is equally unchristian. That "the hand of the diligent maketh rich" is a maxim not of modern date, and where there is diligence there must be a control exercised over the feelings, else the circumstances surrounding us will divert us from the undertaking before us. Now as there is not amongst all great undertakings in which human beings can be engaged, one of such transcendent importance as preparing for his exit from this present and transitory state, and his entrance into the as yet unseen and glorious abode of the happy throng above, with what untiring assiduity should we labour at all times and under all circumstances to restrain our feelings, lest we should be led to act some unworthy part which might lead us in the end to cast away our confidence and so lose our reward.

These general remarks are submitted, leaving those of a more particular character for the future.

J. B., Jr.

May 30th, 1850.

The above topic has in it the true unction of edification, and our brother Butchart, a worthy disciple of the Lord, speaks edifyingly and to the point. We are always pleased to hear from brother Butchart.

D. O.

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#### WESLEYAN MATTERS IN ENGLAND.

It is known to the readers of the *Guardian* that extraordinary efforts are being made by three expelled Ministers of the Wesleyan body in England to shake the confidence of the great mass of Wesleyans in the Conference. To suppose that they would not succeed in

alienating the affections of some and awakening the suspicions of others in so vast a body of people, would be evidence of great ignorance of human nature.

The *Provincialist*, with characteristic consistency in such matters, exhibits to its readers all kinds of statements drawn from the columns of the *Times*, the organ of the disaffected and disappointed ones. Among other things our cotemporary remarks,

“From all that we can learn, nothing so formidable has yet occurred in the Methodist Connexion in England, and all growing out of the “polity.” The fact that the principles contended for have been adopted in nearly 200 circuits, shows how matters stand. If we have time, we will in our next number state our views on the concessions demanded—referring them to the *standard*—the Bible”

The fair inference is, that 200 Circuits have decided in favour of the mal-contents and in opposition to the Conference. Individuals on one or two hundred Circuits have done so; but that anything like 200 Circuits having done so is utterly false, and this the *Provincialist* must or ought to know. But he does not state this. He does not say that all the Circuits in England, *without one exception*, that have spoken out upon the matter have spoken in opposition to the mal-contents and in favour of the Conference. And why does he not do so? Why will not truth and honesty serve his purpose rather than false statements and Jesuitical misrepresentations. Shame upon the man that resorts to such expedients. Shame upon the Christian that thus falsifies the truth. Shame, double, triple shame upon the Methodist that iniquitously lifts up his hand—puny though it be—against his church, and, like another Judas, seeks to betray it into the power of its enemies.—*Guardian*.

How very unlike the labours of Paul and Apollos are the above developments. D. O.

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#### ● BIBLE SOCIETY ANNIVERSARIES.

In No. 4 of the current volume of the “Witness,” we published an abstract of the proceedings of the Bible Society for the city of New York, and we proceed to furnish a bird’s eye view of the “American Bible Society” and the “American and Foreign Bible Society.” It must be recollected that the New York Society is intended for the city itself, exclusive of every other field, and that the two Societies noticed above are not local but general Institutions, having numerous depen-

dencies and auxiliaries. Their Anniversaries were held in New York,  
D. O.

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

The Thirty-fourth Anniversary of the American Bible Society was held at the Tabernacle. The exercises were opened by reading a portion of the Scriptures—the 9th Psalm, followed by an Address from the President, Hon. Theodore Frelinghuysen.

An abstract of the Treasurer's Report was then read by Joseph Hyde, Esq. Assistant Treasurer. The receipts of the year have been \$284,614 84, being an increase of \$34,741 68 over that of the previous year. A balance of \$137 49 remains in the treasury.

The leading features of the Managers' Report were presented by Rev. Drs. Holdich and Brigham, the Secretaries. We append an abstract:

Results of the Year.—In the course of the year one Vice-President, Charles Chauncey, Esq. of New-York, has deceased. The number of new Auxiliaries formed is 64; most of them in the Western States and Territories. The number of Bibles and Testaments issued during the year was 633,395. These books have been distributed in every State and Territory of the Union, in the West Indies, in Spanish and Portuguese America, in Canada and New-Brunswick, among seamen, boatmen, immigrants, hospitals, prisons, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Romanists, white men, red men, and colored men, the bond and the free; indeed, among all who were in need and could be reached. A New Testament, with Spanish and English in parallel columns, has been prepared; also, the book of Genesis in Grebo for West Africa, and the book of Acts for an Indian tribe in South America. The number of agents employed has been thirty, including two in Texas, one in California, and one in the West Indies. A large number of Bible distributors or colporteurs have also been in service, but procured, directed, and paid by the local auxiliaries, aided by the Parent Society only when necessary. Beside the grants of books from the Depository, moneys have been sent for making the same in France, Turkey, Syria, Persia; at Bombay, Madras, Ceylon, and Lodianna in India; also in China, in South Africa, and at the Sanwich Islands. The whole amount of these payments is \$17,900; and there is still voted, but not yet paid, nearly the same amount.

AMERICAN AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

The Thirteenth Anniversary of the American and Foreign Bible Society (morning session) was celebrated at the Norfolk-st. Baptist Church, May 22d. The spacious building was filled in every part, by

the friends and adherents of the Society, and those who were drawn thither by interest or curiosity. The general anticipation of a peculiarly interesting occasion was abundantly fulfilled, and the wrapt attention of the vast assemblage was sustained unwaveringly to the close.

Wm. Colgate, Esq. read an abstract of the Treasurer's Annual Report. We gather from it the subjoined interesting particulars:

## RECEIPTS.

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Balance in the Treasury, April 6, 1849,.....     | \$631 95  |
| Legacies, during the past year.....              | 1,162 25  |
| From churches, associations and individuals..... | 18,536 66 |
| Donations from Auxiliary Societies.....          | 10,833 80 |
| Sales of Bibles and Testaments.....              | 9,034 15  |
| Returns for books donated.....                   | 2,517 20  |

Making the whole receipts..... \$41,625 01

## EXPENDITURES.

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Baptist Miss. Union, for Scriptures in China,.....   | \$1,500 00 |
| “ “ “ “ “ in Siam,.....  | 1,500 00   |
| “ “ “ “ “ in Assam,.....   | 1,000 00   |
| “ “ “ “ “ for the Karens, -  | 3,000 00   |
| “ “ “ “ “ for the Telloogoos,  | 500 00     |
| “ “ “ “ “ in France,.....  | 500 00     |
| “ “ “ “ “ in Germany,.....   | 1,000 00   |
| English Bap. Miss. Union, India,.....  | 2,000 00   |
| Rev. J. J. Oneken, Germany,.....   | 5,000 43   |
| Paper for Scriptures, Reports, Periodicals, &c. Printing, Binding, and Depository expenses,..... | 13,967 82  |
| Salaries and Traveling Expenses,.....  | 10,379 06  |

Total Expenditures,..... \$41,235 33

Balance in Treasury, April 6, 1850,..... \$389 68

## SILENT INFLUENCINGS.

We do not always understand how powerful these are; if we did, we should be almost afraid to live. When some incident occurs to remind us of it, or some noticeable illustration of it, is given in our experience, we are startled for the moment into surprise and awe. Our ordinary life seems wonderful and fearful; it becomes invested upon the instant with an immeasurable responsibility.

A parent speaks before a thoughtful and sensitive child, which arrests his attention. It may have been merely the tone in which it was uttered, or the peculiar collocation of its words, or some equally insignificant circumstance connected with it which makes him notice it, and the parent has no idea that he has noticed it. He hardly thinks of it indeed again, but loses it in the instant rush and press of life.

But it sticks for some reason in the child's thoughts, and will not out; and years after, it is freshly remembered. A whole system of action and belief has sometimes been drawn out of such a remark, and the destiny has been shaped by it.

A man of cultivation and social attractiveness, especially if he hold some position of influence and distinction, as a journalist, a statesman, a professional man, is often little aware—because he has strangely forgotten the days of his boyhood—how wide and permanent are the influences he leaves upon the society he passes through. What he says, may not be remembered; but what he is, will be. Many think of him with pleasure, and with a secret wish to know him and be guided by him, of whom he does not think at the time.

#### STATE MEETING.

There will be a state meeting of the Disciples of Christ held at Pompey, Onondaga co., N. Y., commencing on Thursday the 19th of September next, and continuing over the fourth Lord's day. The various churches will please send delegates, bearing reports of the number of members they respectively contain, with the names of their Elders and Evangelists, and the number of additions during the year ending at that time.

The brethren generally of this and adjoining states are cordially invited to attend;—the public labourers are specially solicited to do so.

Our brethren in Canada will please gratify us with a visit at that time.

J. M. SHEPARD,  
H. A. CHASE,  
H. KNAPP,  
W. HAYDEN,  
and others, Committee.

July 5th, 1850.

#### A COMING REPLY.

The letter of brother "O." upon the question of communion will be considered in our next. Although in print, we have not yet read it, (!) having left directions to insert in our absence whatever might be communicated by our correspondent "O." We anticipate the time that "our position" shall at least be understood—which at present is not by some few whose conscientiousness ranks as high as any of their brethren. Meantime let all reflect on the essential distinction between *facts* and *arguments*. We were, at first, asked a question of fact. That



question was answered, not by arguments, but by facts—a reference to the practice of the disciples. Hence our reply to the original inquiry stands good, based upon fact and sustained by fact, although it may be shown by argument that our practice in certain cases is incorrect and indefensible. In other words, there is no dispute, and can be no dispute, about the truth of what we stated that the disciples generally are neither open nor close communion, while in some instances they are almost if not altogether close communion—even though it be proved by scriptural logic that this general practice has its foundation, not on the rock of truth, but upon the quicksands of humanism.—We shall yet “see what we can see.”

*Oshawa, July, 1850.*

D. O.

TYPES AND SUBSTANCES.—Without looking for them, we notice several curious mistakes, as eccentric as a Dublin play-actor, in the first pages of this number, which went to Press before our return. On the 153d page, the word “benefit” is inserted for *belief*; and although belief is always a benefit, at least when referring to the things of salvation, yet the term benefit here cannot be considered a benefit to the sense! Page 148th, fifteen lines from bottom, “amounts” should read *amount*. Ten lines from bottom, on page 160, for “consideration” read *considerations*. A host of minor inaccuracies in the department of punctuation will only be noticed by the critical reader—who, if he pleases, can turn his criticism to good account by speaking of the right and wrong to the less discerning!

D. O.

TO OUR FRIENDS WHO WRITE.—A number of brethren are deserving of brotherly remembrance on account of their communicativeness, among whom we may mention brother C. McMillen, Erin, H. Lambert, Athol, and B. Summy, Lancaster, N. Y. Let us say to correspondents that several letters are on hand which shall yet be allowed to speak to the public.

D. O.

*Smithville, Pa., May 13th, 1850.*

BROTHER OLIPHANT.—I would say, for the encouragement of the readers of the *Witness*, that there have been *twenty-three* added to this congregation, within the last two months.

Yours, truly,

E. E. ORVIS.

☞ We trust brother Jones, of Williamsville, N. Y., will resume his essays on the Christian Church.