

Foundation of Christian Union.

“Neither truth alone, nor union alone, is sufficient to subdue the unbelieving nations; but truth and union combined, are omnipotent. They are omnipotent, for God is in them and with them, and has consecrated and blessed them for this very purpose.”

I pray-----for those who shall believe on me through their teaching, *that all may be one*; that as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, *they also may be in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and that thou gavest me the glory, which I have given them, that they may be one*, as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, *that their union may be perfected*: and that *the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou lovest them as thou lovest me.*' Thus Messiah prayed; and well might he pray thus, seeing he was wise enough to teach that, 'If a kingdom be torn by factions, that kingdom cannot subsist. And if a family be torn by factions, that family cannot subsist. By civil dissensions, any kingdom can be desolated; and no city or family, where such dissensions are, can subsist.'

If this be true--and true it is; if Jesus be the Messiah--in what moral desolation is the kingdom of Jesus Christ!--Was there at any time, or is there now, in all the earth, a kingdom more convulsed by internal broils and dissensions, than what is commonly called the church of Jesus Christ! Should any one think it lawful to paganize both the Greek and Latin churches--to eject one hundred millions of members of the Greek and Roman communions, from the visible and invisible precincts of the Christian family or kingdom of Jesus Christ; and regard the Protestant faith and people as the only true faith and the only true citizens of the kingdom of Jesus;--what then shall we say of them, contemplated as the visible kingdom, over which Jesus presides as Prophet, Priest, and King! Of forty millions of Protestants, shall we constitute the visible kingdom of the Prince of Peace? Be it so, for the sake of argument; and what then? The Christian army is forty millions strong. But how do they muster? Under forty ensigns?--Under forty antagonist leaders? Would to God there were but forty! In the Geneva detachment alone, there is almost the numbers of petty chiefs. My soul sickens at the details!

Take the English branch of the Protestant faith,--I mean England and the United States and all the islands where the English Bible is read; and how many broils, dissensions, and anathemas, may we compute? I will not attempt to name the antagonizing creeds, feuds, and parties, that are in eternal war, under the banners of the Prince of Peace. And yet they talk of love and charity, and of the conversion of the Jews, the Turks, and Pagans!!!

Shall we turn from the picture, lay down our pen, and languish in despair? No! For Jesus has said, 'Happy *the peace-makers*, for they shall be called *Sons of God.*' But who can make peace,

when all the elements are at war? Who so enthusiastic, as to fancy that he can stem the torrent of strife, or quench the violence of sectarian fire! But the page of universal history whispers in our ears, If you tarry till all the belligerent armies lay down their arms, and make one spontaneous and simultaneous effort to unite; you will be as very a simpleton, as he that sat by the Euphrates, waiting till all its waters run into the sea.

We are so sanguine--perhaps many will say, so visionary, as to imagine that a *nucleus* has been formed, or may be formed; around which may one day congregate all the children of God. No one, at all events, can say that it is either impious or immoral,--that it is inhuman or unchristian, to think about the present state of Christ's kingdom; or to meditate upon the possibility or practicability of any scheme of gathering together the children of God, under the ensign of the Cross alone. No one can say that such an enterprise is absolutely chimerical, unless he affirms the negative of the Messiah's proposition, and declares that the present wars and strifes must extend and multiply through all time, and that God will convert the whole world, *without answering the prayer of his Son*; or rather, on a plan adverse to that promulgated by him, and in despite of all the moral desolations which have ensued upon all the broils and battles of five hundred sects, and fifteen hundred years!

Dare any one say, or even think in unphilanthropic or malevolent, to make an effort to rally the broken phalanxes of Zion's King, and to attempt to induce them to turn their arms from one another, against the common foe? With such a one, it were worse than hopeless to reason, or to exchange a single argument. Shall we not rather esteem it to be the most honorable, acceptable, and praiseworthy enterprise, that can be dared or undertaken by mortal man on this earthly stage of action? And as God has ever effected the most splendid revolutions by the most humble agents, and by means the most unlikely in the wisdom of all human schools; we think it not amiss or incongruous to make an effort, and to put out hands to the work of peace and love.

From Messiah's intercession above quoted, it is incontrovertible that union is strength, and disunion, weakness; that there is a plan founded in infinite wisdom and love, by which, and which alone, the world may both *believe* and *know*, that God has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. And like all the schemes of Heaven, it is simple to admiration. No mortal need fancy that he shall have the honor of devising either the plan of uniting Christians in one holy band of zealous co-operation, or of converting Jews and Gentiles to the faith that Jesus is that *seed*, in whom all the families of the earth are yet to be blessed. The plan is divine. It is ordained by God; and, better still, it is already revealed. Is any one impatient to hear it? Let him again read the intercessions of the Lord Messiah, which we have chosen for our motto. Let him then examine the two following propositions, and say whether these do not express Heaven's own scheme of augmenting and conversating the body of Christ.

First. Nothing is essential to the conversion of the world, but the union and co-operation of Christians.

Second. Nothing is essential to the union of Christians, but the Apostles' teaching or testimony.

Or does he choose to express the plan of the Self-Existent in other words? Then he may change the order, and say,

First. The testimony of the Apostles, is the only and all-sufficient means of uniting all Christians.

Second. The union of Christians with the Apostles' testimony, is all-sufficient, and alone sufficient, to the conversion of the world.

Neither truth alone, nor union alone, is sufficient to subdue the unbelieving nations; but truth and union combined, are omnipotent. They are *omnipotent*, for God is in them and with them, and has consecrated and blessed them for this very purpose.

These two propositions have been stated, illustrated, developed,--and shall I say proved, in the *Christian Baptist*, and *Millennial Harbinger*, to the conviction of thousands. Indeed, one of them is as universally conceded, as it has been proposed, viz: *That the union of Christians is essential to the conversion of the world*; and though, perhaps, some might be found who would question, whether, if all Christians were united, the whole world could be converted to God; there is no person, of whom we have heard, who admits a general or universal prevalence of the gospel--in what is usually called the millennial age of the world--and who admits that moral means will have any thing to do with its introduction, who does not also admit that the union of Christians is essential to that state of things. Indeed, to suppose that all Christians will form one communion in that happy age of the world, and not before it, is to suppose a moral effect without a cause.

The second proposition, viz.--*That the word or testimony of the Apostles is itself all-sufficient, and alone sufficient, to the union of all Christians*, cannot be rationally doubted by any person acquainted with that testimony, or who admits the competency of their inspiration to make them infallible teachers of the Christian institution. And, indeed, all who contend for those human institutions called creeds, contend for them as necessary only to the existence of a party, or while the present schisms, contentions, and dissensions exist. Therefore, all the defenses of creeds, ancient and modern, while they assert that the Bible alone is the only perfect and infallible rule of faith and morals; not only concede that these symbols called creeds, are imperfect and fallible,--but, also, that these creeds never can achieve what the Bible, without them, can accomplish.

But how to do without them, appears to be an insuperable difficulty to many well disposed Christians. To labor this point would be foreign to our present purpose; especially as it has already been fully discussed in the present controversy.

It is, perhaps, altogether sufficient at present to propose the question, How has, what is called the church, done with them? Have they not been the fruitful cause or occasion of all the discords, schisms, and parties, now existing in Christendom? And will not a very superficial observation, and a little experience, convince every man that the rivers tend not more certainly to the sea, than creeds and human devices in religion, tend to discords and divisions. Take, for example, two of the most popular creeds of the present day--the Westminster, and that of the Methodist--with

whose history American society is better acquainted than with that of any other, and test the tree of its fruits,--judge their tendency by their practical effects upon society. To say nothing of the lesser schisms in the party, that once formed one communion on the platform of the Westminster creed, we can now enumerate no less than nine separate communions--all professing the Westminster articles, in substance or in form. These are the General Assembly in Scotland and the United States, the Cameronians or Solemn League and Covenant Presbyterians, the Burghers or Unionists, the Anti-Burghers or Seceders, the Relief Presbyterians, the Cumberland Presbyterians, and the New School, now upon the eve of being born. To these might be added those called English Presbyterians, who are now more generally known by the name of Independents and Congregationalists; and, indeed, the Glassites or Sandemanians, who came out of the synod of Angus and Mearns in the year 1728. Thus in one hundred and ninety years, have nine or ten distinct communions originated out of the Westminster creed. Some of them, too, as discordant and aloof from each other, as were the Jews and Samaritans.

Nor have the Methodists in England, Canada, and the United States done much better for their age. They now form five or six separate communions, under different names. To say nothing of the Whitefieldite Methodists, those of John Wesley, are, the Wesleyan Methodists, the New Connexion of Methodists, the Methodist Episcopal church, the O'Kelly Methodists, the Radicals, &c.

And what shall I say of the twelve or fourteen sects of Baptists--many of whom have as much affection for the Greek and Roman church, as for one another! It were useless to furnish other evidence in proof that human opinions, inferential reasonings, and deductions from the Bible, exhibited in the form of creeds, can never unite Christians; as all their fruits are alienation, repulsion, bickering, and schism. *No human creed in Protestant Christendom can be found, that has not made a division for every generation of its existence.* And I may add--the more thinking, inquisitive, and intelligent the community which owns a creed, the more frequent their debates and schisms.

But the Bible will do not better, if men approach it with a set of opinions, or a human symbol in their minds. For then it is not the Bible, but the opinions in the mind, that form the bond of union. Men, indeed, had better have a *written* than an *unwritten* standard of orthodoxy, if they will not abandon speculation and abstract notions, as any part of Christian faith or duty.

But all these modes of faith and worship are based upon a mistake of the true character of Revelation, which it has long been our effort to correct. With us, Revelation has nothing to do with opinions, or abstract reasonings; for it is founded wholly and entirely upon *facts*. There is not one abstract opinion, not one speculative view, asserted or communicated in Old Testament or New. Moses begins with asserting facts that had transpired in creation and providence; and John ends with asserting prophetic or prospective facts, in the future displays of providence and redemption. Facts, then, are the *alpha* and the *omega* of both Jewish and Christian revelations.

But that the reader may have before his mind in one summary view, the whole scheme of union and co-operation, which the Living Oracles and the present state of the Christian religion in the world demand; which has been, at different times and in various manners, illustrated and sustained in the present controversy, against divisions,--we shall here submit it in one period.

Let THE BIBLE be substituted for all human creeds; FACTS, for definitions, THINGS, for words; FAITH, for speculation; UNITY OF FAITH, for unity of opinion; THE POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, for human legislation and tradition; PIETY, for ceremony; MORALITY, for partisan zeal; THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION, for the mere profession of it;--and the work is done.

The Christian System.