

## PRINCIPLES OF ECCLESIASTICAL UNITY.

The following communication comes from a respected minister of the Episcopal Church, in the State of New-York. It is hardly necessary to say, that the conductors of the Review do not make themselves responsible at all for the writer's opinions. It is enough, that the subject is felt to be one of cardinal interest, and that it is treated in an earnest and honorably candid way.

APRIL 10th 1852.

Rev'd and dear Sir :

I forward, for your perusal and frank opinion, some reflections on the question of Ecclesiastical Unity, which have already had sufficient introduction in a former communication. The occasion of sending them reminds me to express, though I can do it but too briefly,—my sense of personal obligation to yourself and Dr. Schaff, for not a little impulsion to thought, ascribable to some of your writings, respectively.

I remain,

Rev'd and dear Sir,  
Very faithfully Your's.

The Rev'd Dr. NEVIN.

CAN the visible Church be a sectarian community? There may no doubt be a sectarian character imparted to it, through a contracted spirit of legislation in past times, even if no present member of it is sectarian in spirit. If, on the other hand, the Church is quite free from such legislation, and from the character thus derived, it may yet be composed of persons for the most part sectarian in their sentiments.

Whatever stand-point is taken,—whether that which is commonly designated as the High church view of faith in the Church, or whatever other position,—the perspective from it is not such as satisfies the present writer of the freedom of any ecclesiastical organization, or of any church-party within it (that he has any knowledge of) from sectarianism in its constitution. This very consideration, so far from tempting a spirit of censure, rather suggests how inapposite it would be; for however free from a sectarian spirit one may believe himself to be, a knowledge of the atmosphere that he breathes ought to warn him of his liability to implication in a sectarian policy. Such a policy may insensibly find place in relation to any ecclesiastical or religious matter. As associated with the Church-question, it appears to consist mainly, in a demand of more than is neces-

sary or expedient from the consent of others, as a condition of communion with them.

Let it be assumed that none of the Christian Confessions of Faith have been doctrinally in error; but, that the visible Church is comprised within the range of one, or a certain number, of ecclesiastical organizations. There are probably no persons who, whatever may be their idea of the Church, as associated with such and such communions, have any doubt that the grace of God—of that nature which morally qualifies the soul in this life for a state of blessedness hereafter—is possessed by very many who are not within the Church as the former may understand it. And this spiritual phenomenon is explained by them, not without charity (in the popular sense of the term,) in this manner,—that God has dispensed extraordinary means of saving, unaccountable for on the terms of his covenant as apparent to them. It is not necessary to enter into the question, whether those holding these views are consistent in satisfying themselves, and in conceding to others, that God gives his uncovenanted salvation to persons who not only refuse to come within the pale in question, but who make a use of the grace of God, to prove by it that God's covenant is not confined to that pale; and of whom, (in the case of not a few,) the very first act, consequent on their becoming subjects of the grace of God, has been to desert the fold in question, on the ground that the Spirit of God has guided them to more congenial, perhaps better, pastures. Assuming the extraordinary or uncovenanted character of the means of saving grace, thus recognized as Divinely extended to many, and so recognized even by those who condemn the use of them, this question is humbly proposed;—whether the Divine employment of such extraordinary means,—and this so constantly, as to render it apparently the Divine will that souls shall be saved as well without the Church (assumed to be such) as within it—does not witness against something abnormal in the state of the Church. This abnormal state appears in the too cramped character of ecclesiastical institutions, such that they are rendered by human policy too little adapted to be universal; though such was the designed character of the Church itself. To say that there is actual universality in the adaptedness of its discretionary institutions, is to maintain what is not borne out by the existing state of things. What many persons mean by such alleged adaptation to spiritual wants, is rather, that the spiritual wants of all men ought to take that form, which would best prove the universal adaptedness of the institutions approved by the majority. But if the various forms of spiritual want, such

as they are, or of that spiritual weakness which is a source of experienced want, are not provided for by the Church, she does not fulfil her mission. It is her duty to tend and nurture alike those who feel themselves to be helpless without ritual aid, and those who cannot endure exclusive ritual institutes.<sup>1</sup> What spiritual wants are there that have *not* grown out of infirmity? The weaker the brethren, the more claim they have on her for such an adaptation of her institutions as shall include provision for their case, if practicable. If the Church is an asylum for sick souls, it should not be made to appear, in the case of any who are seeking the Saviour, either that there is no room for them, or that they are not wanted, because the form and lineaments of their spiritual character do not follow suit. The Church was designed to comprise the development of the entire life of Christianity, in the variety of its conformations. If then her legislation tends to promote the separation, from her pale, of any who are "alive unto God," she cuts off *life*, and is accountable for such excision; she is then, in fact, *sectarian*. Ought she not, rather, to aim at being so comprehensive, that godliness could not easily be found out of her pale?—It might have been expected that those who hold the most exclusive views on the Church question, (in the usual forms of its presentation) would be the most anxious that the wings of the Church should be extended over those to whom uniformity is impracticable, or who are impracticable to uniformity. The sacrifice of unessentials (strictly such) by the former, must be a small matter in comparison with the vital interests involved in the question of incorporation with the Church. Still, a sense of the inestimable importance of such a question is far from having yet found expression, in a policy corresponsive to it.

The interposition of what has been termed *extraordinary* or *uncovenanted* grace, by Him, who is "the Head over all things to the Church," has the moral significance and effect of a strong protest against the unreasonable policy of the Church. He thus informs the Church, that *he* will not abide by her limitations; and suggests, visibly enough, that since she claims to be "his body," she should aspire likewise to a state in which she can shew that she is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

<sup>1</sup> The latter class of Christians appear to have given the most attention to one department of liturgical rites—the *hymnic*.

<sup>2</sup> The case of the Society of Friends, from the nature of it, could not be ecclesiastically provided for. But that which is evangelical in its life, would most probably merge in any truly catholic system.

This she is not, as *humanly modified*, for she virtually ignores a great portion of the life of Christianity; she does not comprise the fulness of Christ's life, as manifested in all who are alive unto God through him.

The question then arises, what appropriate limits might be proposed to the scope of ecclesiastical institutes for *universal* reception in the Christian communion.

It may be questioned whether a more ample confession of faith ought to be required, even as a test to such as aspire to minister in the church of Christ, than such as relates to the Holy Godhead, and to the Person, Character, and History of our Blessed Lord,—in substance, his Incarnation, Atoning Sacrifice, Resurrection and Ascension. These few articles of faith, with a retention of the two holy Sacraments, would surely be, so far as *general* institutes are concerned, adequately conservative of the Christian faith. As to the policy of excluding errors in doctrine, by force of canon, it is worthy of consideration whether the advantages contemplated in this course are not, in the long run, counterbalanced by the collateral tendency to a canonical retention, of errors. There can hardly be a better prospect for the prevalence of the truth, than when the word of God has free course; for then, "if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."—If moreover canonical discipline, respecting *worship*, was such as merely to exclude the offering of religious worship, in any sense or degree, to any created being, also the use of images or other personal representations in any form of religious worship or ceremony, there would probably be not as much scope given to abuse of liberty in worship, as there would be to edifying liberty in the same.—Under the head of *moral* tenets, there are perhaps but two forms of *religious immorality* needing to be specifically abjured by the Church: One is, the sale or grant of ecclesiastical indulgences for sin; the other is, the infliction of pains and penalties for religious faith or practice.

The evils of conflicting instruction could hardly prevail in a greater degree than at present, even within the pale of many of the Christian denominations. What more conflicting instruction can be found than in the Protestant Episcopal Church, on the question of the effects of Baptism? The difference between ultra Romanist and Zuinglian views of the *Eucharist* has not a moral importance as vital as that between the opposite views in the church above named, in relation to the question of *Regeneration*, if this importance is measured by the interests directly involved.—Again, as to the supposition that there would be

difficulties in the way of practical co-operation among those who differ widely on a variety of points, it should be remembered that there are various departments of practical co-operation, in some of which those who are not in the same communion join notwithstanding, while in others communion is no guarantee for co-operation. And, even as regards a contemplation of difficulty in the professional intercourse of differing clergy united in communion, two considerations present themselves. One is, that where there are opposed parties within the same denomination, the differing clergy are at no loss with regard to the ordinary exclusion of one another from their pulpits,—and this, inoffensively enough. The other is, that intercourse so based as outwardly to imply a recognition of various points of wide difference, is more easy and discretionary than when based on professed agreement on too many points, or on a reference in common to standards to which each party assigns a different and exclusive interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

On the feasibility of a restoration of unity in communion, hear Dr. Nevin, in the concluding passage of his treatise on *Sect and Schism*:—"Faith in the Church is not of itself all that the case requires; but it is the first and greatest thing, that must open the way for all ulterior counsel and action; and it is worse than idle to prate sentimentally of our good purposes in its absence. Half of our sects would be at once dissolved by it, like mists before the rising sun; while the field of division and debate, among the rest, would be narrowed to less than half its present dimensions; and, in the distance at least, would be seen rising to the fond vision of hope, the glorious one Catholic CHURCH OF THE FUTURE as the praise, and joy, and glory of the whole earth."

<sup>1</sup>The platform on which Protestant Episcopalians meet is an awkward one, off which differing parties desire to push one another. Although their standards of faith have been drawn up in a spirit of compromise, two parties respectively insist that their own construction of them is the only justifiable one, and that persons holding the opposite views ought not to be in the Protestant Episcopal Church. Each of these parties has more affinity with some denominations with which it has no communion, than with the opposite party within the same communion. The consequences are, perpetual heartburning, party captiousness, and exposure to occasional harassing from one another, since neither can well enter into the religious sensibilities of the other, and it is a rather curious phenomenon, that while, in nearly every diocese, the party which happens to be in a minority, complains of being excluded by the other from representation in the executive councils of the diocese,—the members of the same party, if ascendant in another diocese, incur the same complaint for similar exclusiveness.

The dissolution of denominational societies may be less desirable, for reasons that will by and by appear.

The learned author above named remarks (p. 69)—"Since the Reformation, in particular, the Church has fallen unavoidably into the form of more or less rupture with itself; so as to appear divided into different confessional organizations; without still losing, on this account, the internal oneness of its life as a whole." The necessity for rupture into confessional organizations, so separate as they have been, may be less apparent to one who is nevertheless convinced that "a denomination or confession forms a component part of the universal Church" (p. 69.) There can be no doubt, that several of the denominations are justly entitled to the character claimed for them, as "representing, for the time, a certain essential side of the common Christianity, which must otherwise have been undervalued and wronged; with the prospect and hope of a final re-integration of the interests, thus divided, into their proper Catholic unity." (ibid.) But there may be good reason for not conceding, that it is by any "inward necessity" that they are "separated from the general body," (ibid.) The fact seems to be, that the separation of these portions of the universal Church is attributable mainly to the circumstance, that *internal ties*, having a certain range not otherwise than consonant with Christian liberty, have been misused for the limitation of *external relations*. All these denominations could have existed, and flourished even in a greater measure, within a single comprehensive one. They might have cherished their peculiar characteristics, and maintained their denominational confraternities, all within one communion—that is, recognizing some constitutional centre—even as the Dominican and other Roman Catholic orders (or denominations) flourish in accommodating independence of one another, yet united in a common fold. Those who should object to this independent variety in social organization, within the comprehensive Church, would be doing the very work of the sects all along, from ignorance of the constitutional differences among minds: the kingdom of God within the soul of man being developed in a variety of phases, to which these constitutional diversities contribute. Without full scope for the various tendencies in question, there can be no prospect of a permanent coherence between reunited sections of the universal Church.

<sup>1</sup> With this view of the use of denominational institutions, it is manifestly impolitic for any denomination to aim at proselytism, with reference

A striking example here suggests itself of the diversity there is in the religious provisions desiderated by different minds, or by similar minds in a different state. Most evangelical Protestants in Italy, not having felt the need of a ritual for their own use, do not recognize any usefulness in rituals, and are rather inclined to reject them, on account of the abuse of them in which they had themselves participated, when in the Roman Obedience. On the other hand, very many Italians, who feel themselves to be in want of a religion, so to speak, adhere in form to the Roman confession and ritual—or rather to that ritual, and *with* it that confession—because they are unable to see and feel a church, except through the medium of a ritual. Consequently, how ill qualified is the one class of Italians alluded to, for judging of the spiritual wants of the other! Such is an illustration of the duty of the Church of Christ to aim at supplying the spiritual want of every cast of mental character, and that not on *conditions*, such as the acceptance of sectional or social shibboleths, that may do for circles or even tribes, but not for humanity at large. But again, an Italian Christian leaving the Church of Rome, and knowing little if anything of any other ecclesiastical organization than that which he abandons, sees suddenly before him a number of Protestant societies, recognizing no constitutional tie in common, and having little to do with one another. Having supposed that his reception of the gospel of Christ, in its purity, was to put an end to his ritual and confessional distractions, such a one can scarcely be blamed, if, sitting at the feet of his Lord, he is content with a state of ecclesiastical isolation,—or rather *individualism*, for no man is *isolated* who communes with his Redeemer,—and there declines to be “careful and troubled about” matters of ecclesiastical

to its own pale. And it is probably some sense of this, which is unconsciously at the bottom of such canonical provisions as, when rigorously put in force by some denominations, serve undesignedly to check uncongential accessions to their communion. I allude to the close (or exclusive) communion of some, who nevertheless aspire to the enrolment of numbers among their professing adherents.

Here also the question presents itself, as to how the benefits of a close communion could be conserved under such a system as would place all the faithful in one open communion. If there should be a disposition to reconcile the two, there need be no apprehension of a failure in effecting appropriate arrangements for example, those societies of which the members, as such, should desire to commune together exclusively, on certain occasions, might assign, to as many of their places of worship as they pleased, the character of *private chapels*, as discriminated from their *churches*, in which the communion should be open.

economy. If however but one pure Church is shewn him, then the variety of independent societies within it, instead of distracting him, would provide for the greater freedom of his mind, through the scope they would afford to his Christian liberty.

If a disposition were prevalent, towards such a re-union as Dr. Nevin well terms “a final re-integration of the interests thus divided, into their proper catholic unity,” there would be no difficulty as to the adoption of the external bond necessary for their cohesion. This bond must necessarily be a *constitutional element*, whatever might be the character of the corporations intended to be associated. And in the case of the Christian economy, what can that element be but the ministry? All the Christian bodies have indeed their ministry. What then is needed to identify, so far as communion can do it, the ministry of one denomination with those of the others? Simply an ecclesiastical channel in common for ministerial commission and recognition. As we are speaking of an external bond, and not of that spirit by which all true Christians are one in Christ, by reason of their collective union with the Head, it would be irrelevant for any one to offer the objecting plea that ministerial commission is derived only from *Christ*. This is taken for granted, and we may feel encouraged by this very consideration to hope for something more than one might otherwise do,—namely that ministers, having *such* a commission, will be the more prompt, from that circumstance, to make concessions (not otherwise than innocent) for the purpose of giving a universal character, a universally recognized and welcome capacity, to every denominational ministry, and of thus extending indefinitely the scope of their efficiency. If the clergy of entire denominations were to consent to a repetition of the professional ceremony for setting them apart for the ministry, they might call this ceremony what they would respectively,—whether *re-ordination* to the ministry, or *institution* to an enlarged field of ministration, or the *inauguration* of a re-union among the churches; and they might mean what they would by the designation. If this however should be attended, as in the case of not a few it probably would, with some compromise of their feelings, (sectarian pride?) yet how small a matter does this appear, in comparison with the grounds for exultation, at the great ends promising to be answered by such a movement! Of what account would be the contradicted feelings of whole congregations, (such as feelings of *this* kind ordinarily are,) against the golden auspices that would be reflected over the horizon of their prospects!

In solving the question of an ecclesiastical authority, of uni-

versal capacity, whatever might be the contemplated limitations and conditions of the practical relation of such to the universal Church, minds free from a sectarian spirit could not but desire to find a historical and world-wide principle ready at hand, as being the best adapted for selection. If such a policy should inspire the solution of the question, (and the question is here treated as one of policy,) to what conclusion is it likely to lead them, if not to the adoption of *Episcopacy*, so far as the end in question is to be answered? That this is the most prevalent system throughout Christendom, is a consideration of especial importance, with reference to those countries where corrupt forms of Christianity prevail, and that for obvious reasons; while, for reasons somewhat less obvious, the above mentioned circumstance merits great attention, with reference to regions where semi-infidelity severs the past from itself. These considerations do not, certainly, furnish complete proof of the world-wide adaptedness of *Episcopacy*. But all that is wanted to complete such proof, is the fact that, in most of the important denominations, that system is practically in use.<sup>1</sup> Such a retention of it by them, (under whatever denominational modifications,) as it were in spite of themselves, seems to indicate a radical moral necessity for it, of a kind and degree hardly susceptible of explanation. Such an impression of its essential conservatism does not, in itself, involve, as even necessary to consistency, a recognition of the ministerial succession from the apostles, as claimed for episcopally ordained clergymen. Yet one may feel surprised at a position sometimes taken by the opponents of *Episcopacy*, in effect, that the asserted succession is so extraordinary a claim, as to require not only extraordinary proof, but such proof as cannot be evaded: while, on the other hand, those who estimate, as of a remarkable kind, the evidences of that succession, regard it as the manifestation of a special Providence, in support of what appears to them to have been a promise. Yet, since its continuity has been so provided for by ecclesiastical practice,—three bishops having been almost universally in requisition to take part in a consecration,—it would seem to be a matter rather to have been wondered at, if the succession had failed, and that in every line. Its continuity would appear to be so obvious a result, that it might well weaken one's belief in any special in-

<sup>1</sup> This remark has reference to the prevalent division of ministerial offices among three classes (virtually three orders) and to the peculiar functions of presiding officers.

terposition of Providence to effect this phenomenon in history. —However, such as the succession is, and whatever it may be worth, it seems morally impracticable for Christians to be united in one communion, unless the ministers of the different denominations will place themselves in a common relation, by accepting such canonical orders as comprise all others,—consequently the orders of those who claim the succession alluded to. The superadded succession would be no burthen to such as do not claim it; while to others, deprivation of it would be excision—*sectarian excision*.—The more ample the communion comprising the united churches, the greater would be the number of bishops required for each diocese. The distribution of them would be required to have reference to societies as well as to localities. And should there be any difficulties in the way of an unconfused and unembarrassed fulfilment of their mission, such would be *prima facie* indications that they, or their people, or both, were still sectarian or schismatic, whatever they might be besides. A house or board of metropolitans, (so to call them,) with the aid of the best jurists, might be a court of appeal from every section of the Church,—the members being impartially selected. Nor should such a court fail to include some of the ablest Christian jurists.

Such a comprehensive Church would not need to lose time in a parley about her proper name. What other name should it be than "The Church of Christ?" She could well afford to concede such designations as "Catholic," and "Protestant," to whatever parties might want them. How great would be the capacity of such a consolidated body,—the more powerful by reason of the *distinct organization within it*,—for moral influence on the world! And how compact would it be for resistance to assault! Even the intolerance of certain governments would be materially checked by the public spirit that would be thus diffused.

Again, the intellectual life of the church would be greatly promoted by mingling, more than at present, the variously characteristic literature, theological and religious, emanating from the variously developed life within the church.<sup>1</sup> There would be

<sup>1</sup> There is, it is true, considerable interchange and mingling of the literature of different denominations. But the process is strongly marked with sectarian dishonesty. Imagine, for example, the Tract Society suppressing, in their edition of *The Dairyman's Daughter*, a few words in commendation of the Anglican funeral-service, as if apprehensive lest readers unacquainted with it might be introduced to it. Had such eulogy referred to an

more inquiry, impartial, interesting, edifying, into the radical character of denominational features,—not such inquiry as is now too common, merely with a view to expose them,—“the head and front of their offending” being, not unfrequently, that the history of their inward life transcends anything that the personal inward history of the observer himself has in common with it.—But if it is found to be eminently instructive to examine the deep principles of the characteristic life of a religious society,—for example, to evolve or to trace those idiosyncrasies, the synthesis of which constitutes Methodism,—edification of a more comprehensive kind, and on a grander scale, attends analogous philosophical inquiry into the moral wants of humanity at large, as expressing a necessity for divine institutes of universal applicability. The adaptation of such institutes to meet those wants, can be set forth in all the forms that moral or intellectual science suggest, without a disproportionate reliance on the scope of reason. The true doctrine of “God manifest in the flesh” commands the highest appreciation, when it is subserved by exhibitions of the antecedent demand in Nature for such manifestation, also of its rational probability, and of its all-sufficiency to humanity, both for the recovery of the latter from any depth of moral degradation, and for the satisfaction of any conceivable human aspiration, natural or inspired, towards moral elevation. Even this extent of appreciation, which is within the capacity of reason, necessitates, as a consequence, a recognition of the appointed resource for all aspiration that is founded on this central truth and basis of hope,—that resource being the Holy Spirit, inseparable from the glorified person of Christ. It is to the failure of a due collateral dependence on *him*, as the Giver of life,—the life *of* and *in* the glorified God-man, whose messenger and everliving channel of grace to us he is,—that those unhealthful developments are owing, which, while claiming to exalt the doctrine of the Incarnation, rather defeat the spiritual end and use of it, by inculcating undue dependence on subordinate means of participation in Christ. A sensibility to the operation of that Spirit, as our living tie with the Person of the Redeemer, is the best guarantee for a right estimate of visible institutions. And the doctrine of the Church then keeps

“eloquent prayer addressed to an audience,” who knows whether the spirit of *revision for publication* would have been as sensitive! To away with sectarianism is the only way to relieve the eye from the daily proofs—which are not all, by any means, of the same nature as the above—of moral obliquity in sectarian policy.

its place, less as a dogma for which people must have their definitions, than as held “of a true heart in love;”<sup>1</sup> in which case, there is all the salutary benefit from it, without the danger of Christ being obscured by the Church, as when the Sun,

— “from behind the Moon,  
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds.”<sup>2</sup>

This slight extension of remark on the probable result of a nearer relation between the castes of church literature, may appear at least relevant, in association with the tending guardianship of particular truths, or particular phases of truth, by different Christian bodies. It is through such conflict or amalgamation as is liable to result from this relation, that faith in divine truths becomes more intelligent and experienced, and the truths themselves better armed to make their way. To convert definitions of truth into exclusive canons, in order to set controversy at rest, is perhaps one way of causing Christians to *sleep* over those truths,—the duty of *watching* over them being in a manner dispensed with.

On the whole, the general principles of a proper union among Christians appear to be these,—to return to the starting-point of Christianity for indispensable general institutes;—to leave minor or less, indispensable institutes, together with the solution of questions depending on an estimate of historical development, to the sphere of the denominations as we find them;—also, to have a channel in common for ministerial commission, without impairing existing organizations—a spirit of conservatism rather than of change, presiding in these contemplations. Such a mode of convergence appears to be the best guarantee for the liberty of divergence, and the best security against union without unity, and unity without interest (or indifferent unity). If there is a practicable mode, whether it be this or any other, of effecting ecclesiastical unity, consistently with the maintenance of every form of Christian liberty, then the prolonged adjournment of it would too fully bear out the representation by an English non-conformist, that this is “an age which groans over the want of Union in the church, and yet, in too many instances, hugs that mental littleness which renders union impossi-

<sup>1</sup> Thus is rendered the expression ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ, (Ephes. iv : 15,) by Professor Lewis. See his remarks on the “subjective sense of the word ἀληθεύειν,”—note 3 to *Plato contra Atheos*.  
<sup>2</sup> Milton.

ble." The sectarian, morally such, is he who will not aid the furtherance of Christian unity. He who yearns for this consummation, but cannot see his desire realized, must have patience with that sectarian position, from which he cannot free himself by any change in his ecclesiastical relations.

There is abroad a spreading weariness of disunion, and desire of unity, which would no doubt be much greater, if it were generally imagined (though unnecessarily) that denominational predilections and associations must be sacrificed to its accomplishment. This sense of the ecclesiastical want of the age, checked as it is by sectarian tenaciousness, is rather coincident with a political spirit now diffused through several countries, in favor of federal unity, which is however impeded by an undue proportion of sectional jealousy. A period of the most perilous trial threatens to arrive; when these coincident waves may together have reached an impatient climax. For the uses of the age may then appear, possessing genius and infernal inspiration, adequate to sustain a fair promise to "gather together in one all things." Should therefore a character appear, aggregating the associate offices of Prophet, Priest, and King;—should merely a union of the imperial sceptre of the West and the keys of a Pontifex Maximus, in the same individual, become a world-question,—such a character may well, "if possible, deceive the very elect," ere the latter detect a *pretended Antichrist*. Thus, the continued unsettlement of the church question will be in itself a probable source of temptation, in such an epoch. But, to escape the snares of any false Messias, the indispensable securities for the individual Christian are an acquaintance with the *person* and *character* of the true one, also with his *voice*,—which latter is, and will be, no other than that of the Paraclete, until our Blessed Lord shall personally re-appear. Without a recognition of the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to our heart of hearts, how can we really know the person, from whom that spirit proceedeth as his Agent, and his re-appearing?—But, though it is only through the possession in common of that Spirit that we can all be one, as the Father and the Incarnate Son are one, that we may be *one in truth*, still Unity in the external relation of the professed followers of Christ tends materially—though of course in a less degree, than when they are quickened into the Unity of the Spirit, in the above sense,—to the moral effect of converting the world.

<sup>1</sup> Farrer's Schleiermacher—Let. Dedic. to Pye Smith.

<sup>2</sup> Germany and Italy, in particular.

## CYPRIAN.

## Second Article.

It has been already mentioned, that those who renounced their faith, under the sore pressure of the Decian persecution, were not willing for the most part to continue in this dreadful renunciation. Their sin of itself excluded them from the privileges and hopes of the Church. They professed repentance however, and sought to be restored to its communion. In many cases, this was without any proper evidence of such inward humiliation and true change of mind, as the solemnity of the penance required. The very number of the delinquents stood in the way of a just regard to discipline. It was easy to make light account of an offence, into which it had been found so easy to fall, and in which so many were concerned. The system of discipline too was not definitely settled at all points, in regard to the treatment of those who were brought into such condemnation. The cases of transgression also were by no means all of one and the same moral enormity. There was room for distinctions, and so for pleas of special indulgence and favor. Most of all however, reliance was placed on the intercession of the confessors and martyrs. It had long been a standing belief in the Church, that such faithful witnesses for Christ, besides winning an extraordinary crown for themselves, had power by their prayers and merits to recommend in a peculiar way the cause of others also who applied to them for such help. Many felt that a recommendation from this quarter, was equivalent to a full right and title to the privilege it enforced. The lapsed in particular, who had forfeited all merit of their own, considered it a most useful advantage to come in for a sort of partnership interest, in this way, in the merit of those who by their sufferings might be said to have made good in some sense to the Church, the sins and fall of her less constant children. Recourse was had to them accordingly in prison, for letters of peace, as they were called, or written testimonials, recommending such as received them to pardon and reconciliation with the Church. Such intercession was supposed to be specially of force, when obtained from one who was on the point of sealing his testimony with blood; the crown of actual martyrdom gave additional weight to the patronage, which was thus transferred from earth to heaven. Something of the same authority however was felt to belong to all the confessors. By showing themselves willing and ready to die for Christ, if necessary, they were all regarded