

ORATION V

ON RECONCILING RELIGIOUS DISSENSIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS

Never since the first entrance of sin into the world, have there been any ages so happy as not to be disturbed by the occurrence of some evil or other; and, on the contrary, there has been no age so embittered with calamities, as not to have had a sweet admixture of some good, by the presence of the divine benevolence renewed towards mankind. The experience of all ages bears witness to the truth of this observation; and it is taught by the individual history of every nation. If, from a diligent consideration of these different histories and a comparison between them, any person should think fit to draw a parallel of the blessings and of the calamities which have either occurred at one and the same period, or which have succeeded each other, he would in reality be enabled to contemplate, as in a mirror of the greatest clearness and brilliancy, how the Benignity of God has at all times contended with his Just Severity, and what a conflict the Goodness of The Deity has always maintained with the Perversity of men. Of this a fair specimen is afforded to us in the passing events of our own age, within that part of Christendom with which we are more immediately acquainted. To demonstrate this, I do not deem it necessary to recount all the Evils which have rushed, like an overwhelming inundation, upon the century which has been just completed: for their infinity would render such an attempt difficult and almost impossible. Neither do I think it necessary, to enumerate, in a particular manner, the Blessings which those evils have been somewhat mitigated.

To confirm this truth, it will be abundantly sufficient to mention one very remarkable Blessing, and one Evil of great magnitude and directly opposed to that blessing. This Blessing is, that the Divine clemency irradiates our part of the world by the illustrious light of his sacred truth, and enlightens it with the knowledge of true religion, or Christianity. The Evil opposed to it is, that either human ignorance or human perversity deteriorates and corrupts the clear light of this Divine truth, by aspersing and beclouding it with the blackest errors; creates separation and division among those who have devoted themselves exclusively to the service of religion; and severs them into parties, and even into shreds of parties, in direct contradiction to the nature and genius of Christianity, whose Author is called the "Prince of peace," its doctrine "the Gospel of peace," and its professors "the Sons of peace." The very foundation of it is an act of pacification concluded between God and men, and ratified by the blood of the Prince of peace. The precepts inculcated in each of its pages, are concerning peace and concord; its fruits are "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and its end is peace and eternal tranquillity. But although the light from this torch of truth, which is diffused through the Christian world, affords no small refreshment to my mind; and although a view of that clearer light which shines among the Churches that profess to have been Reformed from Popery, is most exhilarating; yet I cannot dissemble the intense grief

which I feel at my heart on account of that religious discord which has been festering like a gangrene, and pervading the whole of Christianity:

Unhappily, its devastations have not terminated. In this unfeigned feeling of deep regret, I think, all those who love Christ and his Church, will partake with me; unless they possess hearts of greater hardness than Parian marble, and bowels secured from compassionate attacks by a rigidity stronger than that of the oak, and by defenses more impregnable than those of triple brass.

This is the cause which has incited me to offer a few remarks on religious dissensions in the Christian world; for, according to that common proverb, "Whenever a man feels any pain, his hand is almost spontaneously moved to the part affected." This, therefore, is the subject which I propose to introduce to the notice of the present celebrated assembly, in which the province has been awarded to me, of delivering an oration at this Academic Festival, according to an established and laudable custom. I shall confine myself to three particulars: In the first place, I will give a dissertation on This Discord Itself and The Evils Which Spring From It. I will then show its Causes; and, lastly, its Remedies.

The first particular includes within itself the Necessity of removing such a great evil; and the last prescribes the Manner in which it may be removed, to which the middle particular materially contributes. The union of the whole together explains and justifies the nature of the design which I have now undertaken.

I humbly pray and intreat the God of peace, that he will, by his Spirit of truth and peace, be present with me while engaged in speaking; and that he will govern my mind and direct my tongue, that I may utter such things as may be pleasing to him and salutary to the Church of Christ, for the glory of his name and our mutual instruction.

I likewise prefer a request to you, my very famous and accomplished hearers, that you will deign to grant me your favourable attention, while I glance at each of these particular, with much brevity, and discharge the office of a director to you rather than that of an orator, lest I trespass on your patience.

I. Union is a great good: it is indeed the chief good and therefore the only one, whether we separately consider each thing of which it is composed, or more of them contained together by a certain social tie or relation between themselves. For all things together, and each thing separately, are what they are by that very thing by which they are one; and, by this union, they are preserved in what they really are. And, if they have need and are capable of further perfection, they are, by the same union, still more strengthened, increased, and perfected, until they attain to the utmost boundary prescribed to them by nature or by grace, or by God the Author of both grace and nature. Of such certainty is this truth, that even the blessedness of God consists in that union by which he is ONE and always present with himself, and having all things belonging to him present together with him. Nothing, therefore, can be more agreeable or desirable than Union, whether viewed in reference to single things

or to the whole together; nothing can be more noxious and detestable than Dissension, by which all things begin at first to decline from their own condition, are afterwards diminished by degrees, and, at length, perish. But as there are differences of Good, so are there likewise of Union. More excellent than another is that good which in its own nature obtains the pre-eminence above the other, on account of its being more general and durable, and on account of its approaching more nearly to the Chief Good. In like manner that union is also more excellent which consists of a thing of greater excellence, belongs to many, is more durable and unites itself most intimately with the Deity. The union of true religion is, therefore, one of the greatest excellence.

But as those evil things which are opposed to the good things of greatest excellence, are the very worst of their kind, so no discord is more shocking and hideous than that about religion. The truth of this remark is confirmed by the inward nature of this discord; and it is further manifested most clearly by the effects which proceed from it.

1. We shall see its Nature (1.) in the object of discord, (2.) in the ready inclination for this object, which is evinced by the discordant partizans, (3.) in its extensive range, and (4.) its long continuance.

(1.) The Christian Religion is the Object of this discord or dissension. When viewed with respect to its form, this religion contains the true knowledge of the true God and of Christ; and the right mode in which both of them may be worshipped. And when viewed with regard to its end, it is the only medium by which we can be bound and united to God and Christ, and by which on the other hand God and Christ can be bound and united to us. From this idea of connecting the parties together, the name of religion is derived, in the opinion of Lactantius. In the term "Religion," therefore, are contained true wisdom and true virtue, and the union of both with God as the Chief Good, in all of which is comprehended the supreme and the only happiness of this world and of that which is to come. And not only in reality, but in the estimation also of every one on whose mind a notion of religion has been impressed, (that is, on the whole of mankind,) men are distinguished from other animals, not by reason, but by a genuine character much more appropriate and indeed peculiar to them, and that is Religion, according to the authority of the same Lactantius.

(2.) But if bounds be imposed on the desire towards any thing by such an opinion of its value as is preconceived in the mind, an inclination or propensity towards religion is deservedly entitled to the highest consideration, and holds the preeminence in the mind of a religious person. Nay, more than this, if, according to St. Bernard and to truth itself, "the measure to be observed in loving God, is to love him without measure," a propensity or inclination towards religion, (of which the chief and choicest part consists of love to God and Christ,) is itself without bounds: For it is at once illimitable and immeasurable. This is tantamount to the declaration of Christ, the Author of our religion, who said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters,

yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." ([Luke xiv. 26.](#)) This strong affection for religion answers equally to that immeasurable love by which any one desires the union of himself with God, that is, desires the greatest happiness, because he knows that Religion is the strongest bond and the most adhesive cement of this union. Most serious, therefore, is religious discord when it is engaged in disputes about the altar itself.

(3.) Besides, it spreads and diffuses itself most extensively; for it involves within its vortex all the persons that have been initiated in the sacred rites of the Christian religion. No one is permitted to profess neutrality; nay, it is impossible for any man to remain neutral in the midst of religious dissension. For he who makes no advances towards the opposite sentiments of each of the dissidents, is induced thus to act from one of these four causes: (i.) He either cherishes a third opinion in the Christian Religion, far removed from both the others: (ii.) He thinks some other religion better than Christianity. (iii.) He places Christianity and other systems of religion on an equality: Or, (iv.) He entertains an equal disregard for the Christian system and all other modes of religion. The first of these characters is not neutral, but becomes a third party among the disputants. The second and the third dissent entirely from the Christian Religion, the axioms of which are, "that it is true, and that it alone is true:" for it is not so accommodating as Paganism, it admits of no other system to be its associate. Besides, the second of these characters is an Atheist according to the Christian Religion, one of the statutes of which, is, that "whosoever denieth Christ the Son, the same hath not God the Father." ([1 John ii. 23.](#)) Against the third party this sentence is pronounced:

"He that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." ([Matt. xii. 30.](#)) The fourth is considered an Atheist by all mankind, and is deemed a second and adverse party in that most general kind of dissension which exists between true religion and its adversaries.

(4.) Lastly. This discord is very long in its continuance and almost incapable of reconciliation. For these traits in it, two causes may, I think, be assigned, and both of them deducible from the very nature of religion.

The first is, that since religion is both in reality a matter that belongs to the Deity, and is so accounted by every one, being subject to his sole pleasure and management, and exempt from the jurisdiction of men; and since it has been bestowed, that it may exercise authority as a rule for the direction of life, and for prescribing some limits to liberty, and not that it may be slavishly subservient to the wills of men, like a Lesbian rule, which may be accommodated to every condition; since these are some of the properties of religion, man is not permitted to stipulate concerning it, and scarcely any one has had the audacity to arrogate to himself such an assumption of authority.

The other cause is, that the parties individually think, if they concede even the smallest particle of the matter of discord, such a concession is nearly connected with the peril of their own salvation. But this is the genius of all separatists, not to enter into any treaties of

concord with their adversaries, unless they be permitted to have life at least, and liberty, secured to them inviolate. But every one thinks, that his life, (that is, his spiritual life,) and the liberty which is proper for that life, are included in religion and its exercise.

To these a third cause may be added, which consists of the opinion, that each party supposes life and eternal salvation to be denied to them by their opponents, from this circumstance, because those opponents disapprove of their religion, and when it is compared with their own, they treat it with the utmost contempt. This injury appears to be the most grievous and aggravating. But every act of pacification has its commencement in the oblivion of all injuries, and its foundation in the omission of those injuries which (to an eye that is jaundiced with such a prejudice as that which we have just stated,) seem to be continued and perpetual grievances.

When the nature and tendency of this species of discord have become quite apparent to worldly-minded Rulers, they have often employed it, or at least the semblance of it, for the purpose of involving their subjects in enmities, dissensions and wars, in which they had themselves engaged for other reasons. Having in this manner frequently implicated the people committed to his charge, a prince has become at pleasure prodigal of their property and their persons. These were readily sacrificed by the people to the defense of the ancient religion; but they were perverted by their rulers, to obtain the fulfillment of their desires, which they would never have procured, had they been deprived of such popular assistance. The magnitude of the dissension induces the willing parties cheerfully to make contributions of their property to their prince; the multitude of the Dissidents ensures their ability to contribute as much as may be sufficient; and the obstinate spirit which is indigenous to dissension, causes the parties never to grow weary of giving, while they retain the ability.

We have now in some sort delineated the nature of this discord or dissension, and have shewn that it is most important in its bearings, most extensive in its range, and most durable in its continuance.

2. Let us further see what have been, and what still are, the Effects of an evil of such a magnitude, in this part of the Christian world. We may, I think, refer the infinitude of these effects to two chief kinds. The first kind is derived from the force of the dissension on the Minds of men; and the second kind has its commencement in the operation of the same dissension on their Hearts and affections.

First. From the force of this dissension on the Minds of men, arises, (1.) a degree of doubtful uncertainty respecting religion. When the people perceive that there is scarcely any article of Christian doctrine concerning which there are not different and even contradictory opinions; that one party calls that "horrid blasphemy" which another party has laid down as a "complete summary of the truth;" that those points which some professors consider the perfection of piety, receive from others the contumelious appellation of "cursed idolatry;" and that controversies of this description are objects of warm discussion between men of

learning, respectability, experience and great renown. When all these things are perceived by the people, and when they do not observe any discrepancy in the life and manners of the opposite disputants, sufficiently great to induce them to believe that God vouchsafes assistance by "the spirit of his truth," to one of these parties, in preference to the other, on account of any superior sanctity, they begin then to indulge in the imagination, that they may esteem the principles of religion alike obscure and uncertain.

(2.) If an intense desire to institute an inquiry into some subject shall succeed this dubious uncertainty about religion, its warmth will abate and become cool, as soon as serious difficulties arise in the search, and an utter despair of being able to discern the truth will be the consequence. For what simple person can hope to discover the truth, when he understands that a dispute exists about its very principles—whether they be contained in the scriptures alone, or in traditions not committed to writing? What hope can he entertain when he sees that, question often arises concerning the translation of some passage of scripture, which can be solved only by a knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages? How can he hope to find out the truth, when he remarks, that the opinions of learned men, who have written on religious subjects, are not unfrequently quoted in the place of evidence—while he is ignorant of all languages except that of the country in which he was born, is destitute of all other books, and possesses only a copy of the scriptures translated into the vernacular language? How can such a person be prevented from forming an opinion, that nothing like certainty respecting the chief doctrines of religion can be evident to any one, except that man who is well skilled in the two sacred languages, has a perfect knowledge of all traditions, has perused with the closest attention the writings of all the great Doctors of the Church, and has thoroughly instructed himself in the sentiments which they held respecting each single principle of religion?

(3.) But what follows this despair? Either a most perverse opinion concerning all religion, an entire rejection of every species of it, or Atheism. These produce Epicurism, a still more pestilent fruit of that ill-fated tree. For when the mind of man is in despair about discovering the truth, and yet is unable to throw aside at the first impulse all care concerning religion and personal salvation, it is compelled to devise a cunning charm for appeasing conscience: (i.) The human mind in such a state will either conclude, that it is not only unnecessary for common people to understand the axioms of religion, and to be well assured of what they believe; but that the attainment of these objects is a duty incumbent on the clergy alone, to the faith of whom, as of "them that must give account" to God for the salvation of souls, ([Heb. xiii. 17.](#)) it is quite sufficient for the people to signify their assent by a blind concurrence in it. The clergy also themselves, with a view to their own advantage, not unfrequently discourage all attempts, on the part of the people, to gain such a knowledge of religion and such an assured belief. (ii.) Or the mind in such circumstances will persuade itself, that all worship paid to God, with the good intention of a devout mind, is pleasing to him; and

therefore under every form of religion, (provided such good intention be conscientiously observed,) a man may be saved, and all sects are to be considered as placed in a condition of equality. The men who have imbibed such notions as these, which point out an easy mode of pacifying the conscience, and one that in their opinion is neither troublesome nor dangerous—these men not only desert all study of divine things themselves, but lay folly to the charge of that person who institutes a labourious inquiry and search for that which they imagine can never be discovered, as though he purposely sought something on which his insanity might riot.

But not less steep and precipitous is the descent from this state of despair to absolute Atheism. For since these persons despair of offering to the Deity the adoration of true religion, they think they may abstain from all acts of worship to him without incurring any greater harm or punishment; because God considers no worship agreeable to him except that which he has prescribed, and he bestows a reward on no other. The efficacy of this despair is increased by their religion which seems to be interwoven with the natural dispositions of some men, and which, eagerly seizing on every excuse for sin, deceives itself, and veils its native profaneness and want of reverence for the Deity under the cloak of the grievous dissensions which have been introduced about religion. But other two reasons may be adduced why Religious differences are, in the Christian world, the fruitful causes of Atheism. (i.) The first is, that by this battering-ram of dissensions, the foundations of Divine Providence, which constitute the basis of all Religion, experience a violent concussion. When this thought enters the mind, that "it appears to be the first duty of providence, (if it actually have an existence,) to place her dearest daughter, Religion, in such a luminous light, that she may stand manifest and apparent to the view of all who do not willingly drag their eyes out of their sockets." (ii.) The other is, that when men are not favoured with Christian prophecy, which comprises religious instruction, and are destitute of the exercise of Divine worship, they first almost imperceptibly slide into ignorance and into the complete disuse of all worship, and afterwards prolapse into open impiety. But it has not unfrequently been the case, that men have suffered themselves to be deprived of these blessings, sometimes by the prohibition of their own consciences, and sometimes by those of others. (i.) By the prohibition of their own consciences, when they do not think it lawful for them to be present at the public sermons and other religious ordinances of a party that is adverse to them. (ii.) By that of the consciences of others, when the prevailing party forbid their weaker opponents to assemble together as a congregation, to hear what they account most excellent truths, and to perform their devotions with such rites and ceremonies as are agreeable to themselves. In this manner, therefore, even conscience, when resting on the foundation of religion, becomes the agent of impiety, where discord reigns in a religious community. From Atheism, as a root, Epicurism buds forth, which dissolves all the ties of morality, is ruinous to it, and causes it to degenerate into licentiousness. All this, Epicurism effects, by previously breaking

down the barriers of the fear of God, which alone restrain men within the bounds of their duty.

Secondly. All these evils proceed from religious dissension when its operation is efficacious on the Mind. Most sincerely do I wish that it would remain there, content itself with displaying its insolence in the hall of the mind where discord has its proper abode, and would not attack the Affections of the Heart. But, vain is my wish! For so extensively does it pervade the heart and subdue all its affections, that it abuses at pleasure the slaves that act as assistants.

1. For since all similarity in manners, studies and opinions, possesses very great power in conciliating love and regard; and since any want of resemblance in these particulars is of great potency in engendering hatred, it often happens that from religious dissension arise Enmities more deadly than that hatred which Vatinus conceived against Cicero, and such exasperations of heart as are utterly irreconcilable. When religious discord makes its appearance, even amongst men the most illustrious in name and of the greatest celebrity, who had been previously bound together and united among themselves by a thousand tender ties of nature and affection, they instantly renounce, one against another, all tokens of friendship, and burst asunder the strictest bands of amity. This is signified by Christ, when he says, "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." ([Matt. x. 31-36.](#)) These words do not indicate the end and purpose of the coming of Christ, but an event which would succeed his coming; because he was then about to introduce into the world a religion which differed greatly from that which was publicly established, and concerning which many dissensions would afterwards arise, through the vicious corruption of mankind.

This dissimilarity was the origin of the rancor of the Jews against the Samaritans, which displayed itself in not allowing themselves to derive any benefit from the services of the Samaritans, even in matters that were necessary for their own convenience. It was the existence of this feeling which caused the woman of Samaria to wonder, concerning Jesus, "how he, who was a Jew, could ask drink of her, a Samaritan woman." ([John iv. 9.](#)) Indeed, it is the utmost stretch of hatred, to be unwilling to derive any advantage from another person that is an enemy.

2. Enmities and dissensions of the heart and affections branch out and become Schisms, factions and secessions into different parties. For as love is an affection of union, so is hatred an affection of separation. Thus synagogues are erected, consecrated and thronged with people, in opposition to other synagogues, churches against churches, and alters against alters, when neither party wishes to have intercourse with the other. This also is the reason why we frequently hear expressions, entirely similar to those which were clamorously echoed through the assembled multitude of the Children of Israel when they were separating into

parties, "To your tents, O Israel! for our adversaries have no portion in God, nor any inheritance in his Son Christ Jesus." (1 Kings xii. 16.) For both factions equally appropriate to themselves the renowned name of "the true Israel," which they severally deny to their adversaries, in such a peremptory manner as might induce one to imagine each of them exclusively endowed with a plenary power of passing judgment upon the other, and as though it had been previously concluded, that the name of ISRAEL, by which God accosts in a most gracious manner the whole of his Church, cannot encircle within its embrace those who differ in any point from the rest of their brethren.

3. But the irritation of inflamed hearts does not prescribe a boundary to itself in schism alone. For if it happen, that one party considers itself the more powerful, it will not be afraid of instituting Persecutions against the party opposed to it, and of attempting its entire extermination. In effecting this, it spares no injury, which either human ingenuity can devise, the most notable fury can dictate, or even the office of the infernal regions can supply. Rage is excited and cruelty exercised against the reputation, the property, and the persons of the living; against the ashes, the sepulchers, and the memory of the dead; and against the souls both of the living and the dead. Those who differ from the stronger party are attacked with all kinds of weapons; with cruel mockings, calumnies, execrations, curses, excommunications, anathemas, degrading and scandalous libels, prisons and instruments of torture. They are banished to distant or uninhabited islands, condemned to the mines, prohibited from having any communication with their fellow-creatures by land or sea, and excluded from a sight of either heaven or earth. They are tormented by water, fire and the sword, on crosses and stakes, on wheels of torture and gibbets, and by the claws of wild beasts, without any measure, bounds or end, until the party thus oppressed have been destroyed, or have submitted themselves to the pleasure of the more powerful, by rejecting with abjurations the sentiments which they formerly held, and by embracing with apparent devotion those of which they had previously disapproved; that is, by destroying themselves through the hypocritical profession which had been extolled from them by violence. Call to mind how the Heathens persecuted the Christians; and the persecuting conduct of the Aryans against the orthodox, of the worshippers of images against the destroyers of images, and vice versa. That we may wander to no great distance let us look at what has occurred within the period of our recollection and that of our fathers, in Spain, Portugal, France, England, and the Low Countries; and we shall confess with tears, that these remarks are lamentably too true.

4. But if it happen that the contending parties are nearly equal in power, or that one of them has been long oppressed, wearied out by persecutions, and inflamed with a desire for liberty, after having had their patience converted into fury, (as it is called,) or rather into just indignation, and if the pressed party assume courage, summon all its strength, and collect its forces, then most mighty wars arise, grievances are repeated, after a flourish of trumpets the herald's hostile spear is sent forth in defiance, war is proclaimed, the opposing

armies charge each other, and the struggle is conducted in a most bloody and barbarous manner. Both the belligerents observe a profound silence about entering into negotiations for peace, lest that party which first suggests such a course, should, from that very circumstance, create a prejudice against its own cause and make it appear the weaker of the two and the more unjust. Nay, the strife is carried on with such willful obstinacy, that he can scarcely be endured who for a moment suspends their mutual animosities by a mention of peace, unless he have placed a halter around his neck, and be prepared to be suspended by it on a gibbet, in case his discourse on this topic happens to displease. For such a lover of peace would be stigmatized as a deserter from the common cause, and considered guilty of heresy, a favourer of heretics, an apostate and a traitor.

Indeed, all these Enmities, Schisms, Persecutions and Wars, are commenced, carried on, and conducted with the greater animosity, on account of every one considering his adversary as the most infectious and pestilent fellow in the whole Christian world, a public incendiary, a murderer of souls, an enemy of God, and a servant of the devil—as a person who deserves to be suddenly smitten and consumed by fire descending from heaven—and as one, whom it is not only lawful to hate, to curse and to murder without incurring any guilt, but whom it is also highly proper to treat in that manner, and to be entitled to no slight commendation for such a service, because no other work appears in his eyes to be more acceptable to God, of greater utility in the salvation of man, more odious to Satan, or more pernicious to his kingdom. Such a sanguinary zealot professes to be invited, instigated and constrained to deeds like these, by a zeal for the house of God, for the salvation of men, and for the divine glory. This conduct of violent partizans is what was predicted by the Judge and the Master of our religion: "When they shall persecute you and kill you for my sake, they will think that they do God service." ([John xvi. 2.](#)) When the very conscience, therefore, arouses, assists and defends the affections, no obstacle can offer a successful resistance to their impetuosity. Thus we see, that religion itself, through the vicious corruption of men, has been made a cause of dissension, and has become the field in which they may perpetually exercise themselves in cruel and bloody contests.

If, in addition to these things, some individual arrogate to himself, and, with the consent of a great multitude, usurp authority to prescribe laws with respect to religion, to strike with the thunderbolt of excommunication whomsoever he pleases, to dethrone kings, to absolve subjects from their oaths of allegiance and fidelity, to arm them against their lawful rulers, to transfer the right over the dominions of one prince to others who are his sworn confederates, or to such as are prepared to seize upon them in the first instance, to pardon crimes however great their enormity may be, and whether already perpetrated or to be hereafter committed, and to canonize ruffians and assassins—the mere nod of such a man as is here described, must be instantly obeyed with blind submission, as if it were the command of God. Blessed God! what a quantity of most inflammable matter is thus thrown upon the

fire of enmities, persecutions and wars. What an Iliad of disasters is thus introduced into the Christian world! It is, therefore, not without just reason that a man may exclaim, "Is it possible, that Religion can have persuaded men to introduce this great mass of evils?"

But all the ills which we have enumerated do not only proceed from real dissensions, in which some fundamental truth is the subject of discussion, but also from those which are imaginary, when things affect the mind not as they are in reality, but according to their appearances. I call these imaginary dissensions. (i.) Either, because they exist among parties that have only a fabulous religion, which is at as great a distance from the true one, as the heaven is distant from the earth, or as the followers of such a phantom are from God himself. Differences of this description are found among the Mahomedans, some parties of whom, (as the Turks,) follow the interpretation of Omar; while others, (as the Persians,) are proselytes to the commentaries of Ali. (ii.) Or, because the discordant parties believe these imaginary differences to be in the substance of the true doctrine, when they have it in no existence whatever. Of such a difference Victor, the Bishop of Rome, afforded an instance, when he wished to excommunicate all the Eastern Churches, because they dissented from him in the proper time of celebrating the Christian festival of Easter.

But, to close this part of my discourse, the very summit and conclusion of all the evils which arise from religious discord, is, the destruction of that very religion about which all the controversy has been raised. Indeed, religion experiences almost the same fate, as the young lady mentioned by Plutarch, who was addressed by a number of suitors; and when each of them found that she could not become entirely his own, they divided her body into parts, and thus not one of them obtained possession of her whole person. This is the nature of discord, to disperse and destroy matters of the greatest consequence. Of this a very mournful example is exhibited to us in certain extensive dominions and large kingdoms, the inhabitants of which were formerly among the most flourishing professors of the Christian Religion; but the present inhabitants of those countries have unchristianized themselves by embracing Mahomedanism—a system which derived its origin, and had its chief means of increase, from the dissensions which arose between the Jews and the Christians, and from the disputes into which the Orthodox entered with the Sabellians, the Aryans, the Nestorians, the Eutychians, and with the Monothelites.

II. Let us proceed to contemplate the Causes of this Dissention. Philosophers generally divide causes, into those which directly and of themselves produce an effect, and into those which indirectly and by accident contribute to the same purpose. The consideration of each of these classes will facilitate our present inquiries.

1. The accidental cause of this dissension is (1.) the very nature of the Christian religion, which not only transcends the human mind and its affections or passions, but appears to be altogether contrary to both it and to them. (i.) For the Christian Religion has its foundation in the Cross of Christ; and it holds forth this humbling truth, "JESUS THE CRUCIFIED, IS

THE saviour OF THE WORLD," as an axiom most worthy of all acceptation. For this reason also, the word of which this religion is composed, is termed "the doctrine of the cross." (1 Cor. i. 18.) But what can appear to the mind more absurd or foolish, than for a crucified and dead person to be accounted the saviour of the world, and for men to believe that salvation centers in the cross? On this account the Apostle declares in the same passage, that the doctrine of the cross, [or, the preaching of Christ Crucified,] is unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness. (ii.) What is more opposed to the human affections than "for a man to hate and deny himself, to despise the world and the things that are in the world, and to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts?" Yet this is another axiom of the Christian Religion, to which he who does not give a cheerful assent in mind, in will and in deed, is excluded from the discipleship of Christ Jesus. This indispensable requisite is the cause why he who is alienated in mind from the Christian Religion, does not yield a ready compliance with these its demands; and why he who has enrolled his name with Christ, and who is too weak and pusillanimous to inflict every species of violence on his nature, invents certain fictions, by which he attempts to soften and mitigate a sentence, the exact fulfillment of which fills him with horror. From these circumstances, after men have turned aside from purity of doctrine, dissensions are excited against religion and its firm and constant professors.

(2.) In the scriptures, as in the only authentic document, the Christian Religion is at present registered and sealed; yet even they are seized upon as an occasion of error and dissension, when, as the Apostle Peter says, "the unlearned and unstable wrest them unto their own destruction," because they contain "some things hard to be understood." (2 Pet. iii. 16.) The figurative expressions and ambiguous sentences, which occur in certain parts of the scriptures, are undesignedly forced to conduce to the adulteration of the truth among those persons, "who have not their senses exercised" in them.

2. But omitting any further notice of these matters, let us take into our consideration the proper causes of this dissension: (1.) In the front of these, Satan appears, that most bitter enemy of truth and peace, and the most wily disseminator of falsehood and dissension, who acts as leader of the hostile band. Envyng the glory of God and the salvation of man, and attentively looking out on all occasions, he marks every movement; and whenever an opportunity occurs, during the Lord's seed time, he sows the tares of heresies and schisms among the wheat. From such a malignant and surreptitious mode of sowing while men are sleeping, (Matt. xiii. 23,) he often obtains a most abundant harvest. (2.) Man himself follows next in this destructive train, and is easily induced to perform any service for Satan, however pernicious its operation may prove to his own destruction; and that most subtle enemy, the serpent, finds in man several instruments most appropriately fitted for the completion of his purposes.

First. The mind of man is the first in subserviency to Satan, both with regard to its blindness and its vanity. First. The Blindness of the mind is of two kinds, the one a native

blindness, the other accidental. The former of these grows up with us even from the birth: our very origin is tainted with the infection of the primitive offense of the Old Adam, who turned away from God the Great Source of all his light. This blindness has so fascinated our eyes, as to make us appear like owls that become dim-sighted when the light of truth is seen. Yet this truth is not hidden in a deep well; but though it is placed in the heavens, we cannot perceive it, even when its beams are clearly shining upon us from above. The latter is an accidental and acquired blindness, which man has chosen for himself to obscure the few beams of light which remain him. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) God himself, the just punisher of those who hate the truth, has inflicted on them this blindness, by giving efficacy to error. This is the cause why the veil that remains upon the mind, operates as a preventive and obstructs the view of the gospel; (2 Cor. 3,) and why he on whom the truth has shone in vain, "believes a lie." (2 Thess. ii. 11.) But assent to a falsehood is a dissent and separation from those who are the assertors of truth. Secondly. The vanity of the mind succeeds its blindness, and is prone to turn aside from the path of true religion, in which no one can continue to walk except by a firm and invariable purpose of heart. This vanity is also inclined to invent to itself such a Deity as may be most agreeable to its own vain nature, and to fabricate a mode of worship that may be thought to please that fictitious Deity. Each of these ways constitutes a departure from the unity of true religion, on deserting which men rush heedlessly into dissensions.

Secondly. But the affections of the mind are, of all others, the most faithful and trusty in the assistance which they afford to Satan, and conduct themselves like abject slaves devoted to his service; although it must be acknowledged that they are frequently brought thus to act, under a false conception that they are by such deeds promoting their own welfare and rendering good service to God himself. Love and Hatred, the two chief affections, and the fruitful parents and instigators of all the rest, occupy the first, second, third, and indeed all the places, in this slavish employment. Each of them is of a three-fold character, that nothing might be wanting which could contribute to the perfection of their number.

The Former of them consists of the love of glory, of riches, and of pleasures, which the disciple whom Jesus loved, thus designates, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John ii. 16.) The Latter consists of hatred to the truth, to peace, and to the professors of the truth.

(i.) Pride, then, that most prolific mother of dissensions in religion, produces its fetid offspring in three different ways: For, First, either it "exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," (2 Cor. x. 5,) and does not suffer itself to be brought into captivity by the truth to obey God, being impatient of the yoke which is imposed by Christ, though it is both easy and light. Pride says in reality, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Psalm ii. 3.) From this baneful source arose the sedition of Korah, Dathan, and

Abiram, who arrogantly claimed for themselves a share in the priesthood, which God had given exclusively to Aaron. (Num. 16.) Or, Secondly, it loveth to have the pre-eminence in the Church of God, and "to have dominion over another's faith;" the very crime of which St. John accuses Diotrephes, when he complains that "neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church." (3 John 9, 10.) Or, Lastly, having usurped an impotent sovereignty over the souls of men by appointing and altering at its pleasure the laws concerning Religion, and over the bodies of men by employing menaces and force to bring into subjection to it the consciences of men, it compels those churches which cannot with a safe conscience bear this most iniquitous tyranny, to depart from the rest and to assume to themselves the management of their own affairs. The Greek Church declared itself to be influenced by this cause, in refusing to hold communion with the Latin Church, because the Roman Pontiff had, in opposition to all right and law, and in defiance of the rule of Christ and of the decrees of the Fathers, "arrogated to himself a plenitude of power." From the same fountain has flowed that immense schism which in this age distracts and divides all Europe. This has been ably manifested to the whole world by the just complaints and allegations of Protestant States and Protestant Princes.

But envy, anger, and an eager desire to know all things, are other three darts, which Pride hurls against concord in religion. For, first, if any one excels his fellows in the knowledge of divine things, and in holiness of life, and if by these means he advances in favour and authority with the people, pride immediately injects envy into the minds of some persons, which contaminates all that is fair and lovely; asperses and defiles whatever is pure; obscures, by vile calumnies, either his course of life or the doctrines which he professes; puts a wrong construction, by means of a malevolent interpretation, on what was well intended and correctly expressed by him; commences disputes with him who is thus high in public estimation; and endeavours to lay the foundations of its own praise on the mass of ignominy which it heaps upon his name and reputation. If by such actions as these it cannot obtain for itself a situation equal to its desires, it then invents new dogmas and draws away the people after it; that it may enjoy such a dignity, among some individuals who have separated from the rest of the body, which it was impossible for it to obtain from the whole while they lived together in concord and harmony. Secondly. Pride is also the parent of anger, which may stimulate any one to revenge, if he think himself injured even in the slightest degree by a professor of the truth. Such a person reckons scarcely any injury better suited to his purpose or more pernicious to the affairs of his adversary, than to speak contumeliously and in disparagement of his sentiments, and publicly to proclaim him a Heretic—than which no term can be more opprobrious or an object of greater hatred among mortals. Because, as this crime does not consist of deeds, but of sentiments, the aspersions cast upon them cannot be so completely washed away as to leave no stains adhering to them, or as to create a possibility at least for the calumniator to remove from himself by some evasive subterfuge the

infamy which attaches itself to him who is an utterer of slanders. The third weapon which pride employs in this warfare, is a passionate desire to explore and know all things. This passion leaves no subject untouched, that its learning may be displayed to advantage; and, (not to lose the reward of its labour,) it obtrusively palms upon others as things necessary to be known, those matters which, by means of great exertion, it seems to have drawn out from behind the darkness of ignorance, and accompanies all its remarks by great boldness of assertion. From such a disposition and conduct as this, offenses. and schisms must arise in the Church.

(ii.) Avarice, likewise, or, the love of money, which is termed by the Apostle, "the root of all evil," (1 Tim. vi. 10,) brings its hostile standard into this embattled field. For, since the doctrine of truth is not a source of profit, when those who have faithfully taught it are succeeded by unbelieving teachers, "who are ravening wolves, and suppose gain to be godliness," the latter effect a great change in it, (1.) either by "binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laying them on the shoulders of the disciples," (Matt. xxiii. 4,) for whose redemption votive offerings may be daily made; (2.) by inventing profitable plans for expiating sins; or, lastly, by preaching, in soft and complimentary language, such things as are agreeable to the ears of the people, for the purpose of gaining their favour, which, according to the expression of the Apostle, is a "corrupting of the word of God," or making a gain of it. (2 Cor. ii. 17.) From these causes dissensions have often arisen; (1.) either when the faithful teachers that are in the church, or those whom God raises up for the salvation of his people, marshal themselves in opposition to the doctrine which is prepared for the sake of profit; or, (2.) when the people themselves, growing weary of impositions and rapine, become seceders from these pastors, by uniting themselves with such as are really better, or by receiving those as their substitutes who are in their estimation better. This was the torch of dissension between the Pharisees and Christ, who opposed their avarice and came to loose all those grievous burdens. This was also the primary consideration by which Luther was excited to obstruct the sale of Popish indulgencies; and from that small beginning, he gradually proceeded to reforms of greater importance.

(iii.) Nor only that Pleasure or "lust of the flesh," which specially comes under this denomination, and which denotes a feeling or disposition for carnal things, takes its part in the performance of this tragedy, but that also which in a general sense contains a desire to commit sin without any remorse of conscience: and both these kinds of pleasure most assiduously employ themselves in collecting inflammable materials for augmenting the flame of discord in religion.

For this passion or affection, having had some experience in the important "doctrine of the cross," desires as the very summit of all its wishes, both to riot, while here, in the pleasures of voluptuousness, and yet to cherish some hopes of obtaining the happiness of heaven. With two such incompatible objects in view this passion chooses teachers for itself,

who may in an easy manner "place under the arm-holes of their disciples, pillows sewed and filled with soft feathers," ([Ezek. xiii. 18](#)), on which they may recline themselves and take sweet repose, although their sins, like sharply pointed thorns, continue to sting and molest them in every direction. They flatter them with the idea of easily obtaining pardon, provided they purchase the favour of the Deity, by means of certain exercises apparently of some importance, but possessing in reality no consequence whatever, and by means of great donations with which they may fill his sanctuary. This is the complaint of the Apostle, who, when writing to Timothy, says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." To this is subjoined an admonition, that Timothy should watch and discharge with fidelity the duties of his ministry. ([2 Tim. iv. 3-5](#)). According to this quotation, a difference must of necessity exist between Timothy and those teachers.

But these three capital vices are serviceable to Satan, their author, in another way, and contribute under his direction to introduce changes in religion, and, consequently, to excite discord among Christians. In both sacred and profane history, egregious examples are recorded of princes and private men, who, being instigated by such a desire of power as partook at once of ambition and avarice, have invented new modes of religion, and accommodated them to the capacities, the wishes, and the opinions of their people; by means of which they might either restrain their own subjects within the bounds of their duty, or might subdue to their way the people that were under the rule of other princes. Ambition and avarice suggest to such aspiring persons the desire of inventing those modes of religious worship; while an itching for novelty, a wish to enjoy their pleasures, and the obvious agreement of the new doctrine with their preconceived opinions, influence the people to embrace the modish religion. With these intentions, and under the impulse of these views, Jeroboam was the first author of a change of religion in the Israelitish Church. He built altars in Dan and Bethel, and made golden calves, that he might prevent the people from proceeding at stated periods to Jerusalem, for the purpose of offering sacrifice, according to the command of God, and from returning to the house of David, from which they had rent themselves. The same reasons also induced Mahomet to invent a new religion. By his frequent intercourse with Jews and Christian, he had learned from both parties those things which were most agreeable to them; he therefore adopted the very crafty counsel of Sergius, the monk, and devised a new mode of religion, which was gratifying to the human senses, and which, as it was digested in his Alcoran, he persuaded many people to embrace. The few individuals with whom he was able to prevail, were the foundation from which arose the immense Ottoman empire, and those extensive dominions which are to the present time in possession of the Turks.

2. We have now seen in what manner the love of glory, of riches, and pleasure, performs its several parts in this theater of religious dissensions. Let Hatred next appear and exhibit to us its actions, which, from the very nature of the cause, have a proper and direct tendency to excite discord.

(1.) The first of its actors that appears upon the stage, is a hatred of the truth, and of true doctrine. This species of hatred is conceived, partly from an anticipated notion of the mind, which, since it cannot be reconciled to the doctrine of truth, and yet is with difficulty drawn away from it, excites hatred against a sentiment that is opposed to itself. It is also partly conceived, because the true doctrine becomes the accuser of man, forbidding those things which are the objects of his desires, and commanding those things which he is most reluctant to perform. While it urges its precepts so rigidly, that every one who does not seriously regulate and conform his life to the conditions which they contain, is excluded from all hope of salvation.

(2.) The next in order, is the hatred of peace and concord. For there are men of a certain description who cannot exist without having an enemy, which Trogius Pompeius declares to have been a trait in the character of the ancient Spaniards. To such persons concord or amity is so offensive, that, out of pure hatred to it, they willingly expose themselves to the enmity of others. If such characters happen to obtain a station of some honour in the Church, it is amazing what scruples and difficulties they will not raise, what intricate sophisms they will not frame and contrive, and what accusations they will not institute, that they may have an opportunity of raising a contest about the articles of religion, from which proceed private enmity and rancor that can never be appeased, and dissensions of a more deadly kind than the greatest of those which relate to the present life.

(3.) The last which comes forward, is a hatred against the professors of the true doctrine, from which the descent is very rapid downwards to a dissent from that doctrine which those good men profess; because it is the anxious study of every one that hates another, not to have anything in common with his adversary. Of this the Arabians afford an example. Out of hatred to Heraclius Cæsar, and to the stipendiary Greek and Latin troops who served under him, they, who had long before departed from them in will and affection, effected a still more serious separation from them in religion; for, although they had previously been professors of Christianity, from that period they embraced the doctrines of the Alcoran and became followers of Mahomet.

But the professors of the true doctrine incur this species of hatred, either through some fault of their own, or through the pure malice of men. (i.) They incur this hatred by their own fault, if they do not administer the doctrine of the truth, with that prudence and gentleness which are appropriate to it; if they appear to have a greater regard for their own advantage, than for the advancement of religion, and, lastly, if their manner of life is in opposition to the doctrine. From all these circumstances a bad opinion is entertained of them, as

though they scarcely believed the principles which they inculcate. (ii.) This hatred is also incurred by the fault of another, because the delicate and lascivious hearts of men cannot bear to have their ulcers sprinkled and purified by the sharp salt of truth, and because they with difficulty admit any censors on their life and manners. With a knowledge of this trait of the human heart, the Apostle inquires, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth," (*Gal. iv. 16.*) For truth is almost invariably productive of hatred, while an obsequious complaisance obtains friends as its reward.

3. The preceding appear to be the procuring causes of dissensions in religion; and as long as their efficacy endures, they tend to perpetuate these dissensions. There are other causes that we may justly class among those which perpetuate discord when once it has arisen, and which prevent the restoration of peace and unity.

(1.) Among these perpetuating and preventing causes, the first place is claimed for the various prejudices by which the minds of the Dissidents are occupied, concerning our adversaries and their opinions, concerning our parents and ancestors, and the Church to which we belong, and, lastly, concerning ourselves and our teachers.

(i.) The prejudice against our adversaries is, not that we think them under the influence of Error, but under that of pure malice, and because their minds have indulged their humour in thus dissenting. This cuts off all hope of leading them to adopt correct sentiments, and despair refuses to make the attempt. (ii.) The prejudice against the opinions of our adversary is, that we condemn them ourselves not only for being false, but for having been already condemned by the public judgment of the Church; we therefore consider them unworthy of being again brought into controversy, and subjected anew to examination. (iii.) But the preconceived opinion which we have formed concerning our parents and ancestors, is also a preventive of reconciliation, both because we account them to have been possessed of such a great share of wisdom and piety, as rendered it improbable that they could ever have been guilty of error; and because we conceive favourable hopes of their salvation, which is very properly an object of our most earnest wishes in their behalf. But these hopes we seem to call in question, if, in an opinion opposed to theirs, we acknowledge any portion of the truth appertaining to salvation, of which they have either been ignorant or have disapproved. It is on this principle that parents leave their posterity heirs as of their property so also of their opinions and dissensions. (iv.) Besides, the splendour of the Church, to which we have bound ourselves by an oath, dazzles our eyes in such a manner that we cannot suffer any persuasion whatever to induce us to believe the possibility, in former times or at present, of that church having deviated in any point from the right way. (v.) Lastly. Our thoughts and sentiments concerning ourselves and our teachers are so exalted, that our minds can scarcely conceive it possible either for them to have been ignorant, or not to have had a sufficiently clear perception of things, or for us to err in judgment when we approve of their

opinions. So prone is the human understanding to exempt from all suspicion of error itself and those whom it loves and esteems!

(2.) It is no wonder if these prejudices produce a pertinacity in eagerly defending a proposition once laid down, which is a most powerful impediment to reconciliation.

Two kinds of fear render this pertinacity the more obstinate:

(i.) One is a fear of that disgrace which, we foolishly think, will be incurred if we acknowledge ourselves to have been at all in error. (ii.) The other is a fear which causes us to think, that the whole doctrine is exposed to the utmost peril, if we discover it even in one point to be erroneous.

(3.) In addition to these, the mode of action commonly adopted both towards an adversary and his opinion, is no small obstacle to reconciliation, although that mode may seem to have been chosen for conciliatory purposes.

(i.) An adversary is treated in a perverse manner, when he is overwhelmed by curses and reproaches, assailed with detractions and calumnies, and when he is menaced with threats of violence. If he despises all these things, which is not an uncommon occurrence when "the testimony of his conscience" is in opposition to them, (2 Cor. i. 19,) they produce no effect whatever. But if his spirit broods over them, his mind becomes disturbed, and, like one stricken by the Furies, he is driven to madness, and is thus much worse qualified than before to acknowledge his error. In both these ways he is confirmed rather the more in his own opinion; either because he perceives, that those who use arms of this kind openly betray the weakness as well as the injustice of their cause; or, because he draws this conclusion in his own mind, that it is not very probable that those persons are instructed by the Spirit of truth, who adopt such a course of conduct.

(ii.) But contention is rashly instituted against the opinion of an adversary, first, when it is not proposed according to the mind and intention of him who is the assertor; Secondly, when it is discussed beyond all due bounds, and its deformity is unseasonably exaggerated; and, lastly, when its refutation is attempted by arguments ill calculated to produce that effect.

The first occurs when we do not attend to the words of an adversary, with a becoming tranquillity of mind and suitable patience; but immediately and at the mention of the first word, we are accustomed to guess at his meaning. The second arises from the circumstance of no one wishing it to appear as if he had begun to contend about a thing of trifling importance. The last proceeds from ignorance or from too great impetuosity, which, on being precipitously impelled into fury, augments its mischievous capabilities. It then seizes upon anything for a weapon, and hurls it against the adversary. When the first mode is adopted, the person whose meaning is misrepresented, thinks that an opinion, not his own, has been calumniously attributed to him. The second course, according to his judgment, has been pursued for the purpose of affixing an envious mark upon his opinion, and upon the dignity which it has acquired. When the last is put in practice, he considers his opinion to be incap-

able of refutation, because he observes that it remains uninjured amidst all the arguments which have been directed against it. All and each of these add fuel to the flame of dissensions, and render the blazing fire inextinguishable.

III. We have now considered the Nature, the Effects and the Causes of religious dissension. It remains for us to inquire into the Remedies for such a great evil. While I attempt this in a brief manner, I beg that you will favour me with that degree of attention which you have already manifested. The professors of medicine describe the nature of all remedies thus, "they are never used without some effect." For if they be true remedies, they must prove beneficial; and, if they do not profit, they prove hurtful. This latter circumstance reminds me, that I ought first to remove certain corrupt remedies which have been devised by some persons and occasionally employed.

1. The first of these false remedies which obtrudes itself, is the fable of the sufficiency of implicit faith, by which people are called upon, without any knowledge of the matter, to believe that which is an object of belief with the Church and the Prelates. But the Scripture places righteousness "in the faith of the heart," and salvation "in the confession of the mouth;" ([Rom. x. 10.](#)) and says, "The just shall live by his faith," ([Heb. ii. 4.](#)) and "I believe and therefore have spoken." ([2 Cor. iv. 13.](#)) This monstrous absurdity is, therefore, exploded by the scripture. Not only does this fable take away all cause of religious dissension, but it also destroys religion itself, which, when it is destitute of Knowledge and Faith, can have no existence.

2. The next figment is nearly allied to this; it concludes, that every one may be saved in his own religion. But while this remedy professes to cure one evil, it produces another much more hurtful and of greater magnitude; and that is, the certain destruction of those who are held in bondage by this error. Because this opinion renders the error incurable; since no one will give himself any trouble to lay it aside or to correct it. This was Mahomet's devise, for the purpose of establishing his Alcoran free from all liability of its becoming an object of dispute. The same doctrine obtained in Paganism, where the worship of demons flourished, as is evident from the title on a certain altar among the Athenians, the high stewards of Pagan wisdom. That altar bore the following inscription, "To The Gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa; To The Unknown and Foreign Gods:" which was after the manner of the Romans, at that period, "the masters of the world," who were accustomed to invoke the tutelary deities of an enemy's city before they commenced hostilities against it. In this manner has Satan exerted himself, lest his "kingdom, being divided against itself should fall."

3. The third false remedy is a prohibition of all controversies respecting religion, which lays down the most stupid ignorance for a foundation, and raises upon it the superstructure of religious concord: In Russia, where such an ordinance is in operation, this is obvious to every one that contemplates its effects. Yet it is hurtful, whether it be true religion that flourishes, or it be false. In the first case, on account of the inconstancy of the human mind;

and in the second case, because it stamps perpetuity on error, unless the preceding fiction concerning the equality of all religions meet with approval, for on that foundation, Mahomet raised this prohibition against religious controversies.

4. Next to this in absurdity is the advice, not to explain the sacred Scriptures, but only to read them: which is not only pernicious, on account of the omission of their particular application, and repugnant to the usage both of the ancient Jewish Church and of the primitive Church of Christ; but it is also of no avail in the cure of the evil, since any one might, by reading, discover the meaning for himself, according to his own fancy; and that reading which is instituted at the will of the reader, would act the part of an explanation, on account of the parallelism of similar and dissimilar passages.

But the Popish Church exhibits to us Three Remedies.

First, that, for the sake of certainty, we shall have recourse to the Church Universal. However, since the whole of this church cannot meet together, the court of Rome has appointed in its place a representative assembly, consisting of the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops, and the rest of the prelates who are devoted to the Roman See, and subject to the Pontiff. But, in addition to this, because it believes that it is possible for all the Cardinals, Bishops and Prelates to err, even when united together in one body, and because it considers the Pope alone to be placed beyond the possibility of error, it declares that we must apply to him for the sake of obtaining a decisive judgment concerning Religion. This remedy is not only vain and inefficient, but it is far more difficult to induce the rest of the Christian world to adopt it than any controverted article in the whole circle of religion: And since the Papists endeavour to prove this point from the scriptures, by that very circumstance they declare that the scriptures are the only sanctuary to which we can repair for religious information.

Secondly. Their next remedy is proposed, if I may, be allowed the expression, merely for the sake of form, and lies in the writings and agreement of the ancient Fathers. But, since the Christian Fathers have not all been authors, and few of those who have written, have concerned themselves with controversies, (which takes away from us the universal consent of all of them together,) this remedy is also useless, because it is a fact to the truth of which the Papists themselves assent, that it was possible for each of these Fathers to err. From this circumstance, therefore, we conclude, that the consent of all of them is not free from the risk of error, even if each had separately declared his own individual opinion in his writings. Besides, this general agreement is no easy matter; nay, it is to be obtained with the greatest difficulty; because it is in the power of very few persons, (if of any man whatever,) to make themselves acquainted with such universal consent, both on account of the bulky and almost innumerable volumes in which the writings of the Fathers are contained, and because the dispute among different parties is no less concerning the meaning of those Fathers than concerning that of the Scriptures, the contents of which are comprised in a book of small

size when compared with the dimensions of their massy tomes. We are thus sent forth on an endless excursion, that we may at length be compelled to return to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Thirdly. The other remedy of the papists is not much dissimilar to the preceding one. It is thus stated: The decrees of former councils may be consulted; from which, if it should appear that the controversy has been decided, the judgment then passed upon it must stand in the place of a definitive sentence: nor must any matter, the merits of which have been once decided, be brought again into judgment. But of what avail would this be, if a good cause had been badly defended, and had been overpowered and borne down, not by any defect in itself, but through the fault of those who were its defenders, and who were either awed into silence through fear, or betrayed their trust by an incompetent, foolish and injudicious defense? And of what consequence does such a remedy appear, if one and the same spirit of error have conducted on such an occasion both the attack and the defense. But grant that it has been fairly defended: Yet, I declare that The Cause Of Religion, Which Is The Cause Of God, Is Not An Affair To Be Submitted To Human Decision, or to be judged of man's judgment."

The Papists add a Fourth remedy, which, on account of its fierce and most violent efficacy, will not easily be forgotten by us as a people who have been called to endure some of its cruelties. It acts like the fulcrum of a lever for confirming all the preceding suggestions, and is the foundation of the whole composition. It is this: "Whosoever refuses to listen to the councils and writings of the fathers, and to receive them as explained by the Church of Rome—whosoever refuses to listen to the Church, and especially to her husband, that High Priest and Prophet, the vicar of Christ and the successor of St. Peter, let that soul be cut off from among his people: And he who is unwilling to yield to an authority so sacred, must be compelled, under the sword of the executioner, to express his consent, or he must be avoided," which, in their language, signifies that he must be deprived of life. To murder and utterly to destroy the adverse and gainsaying parties is indeed, a most compendious method of removing all dissensions!

In the midst of these difficulties, some persons have invented other remedies, which, since they are not within the power of man, ought, according to their views, to be asked of God in prayer.

1. One is, that God would be pleased to raise some one from the dead, and send him to men: From such a messenger, they might then hope to know what is God's decisive judgment concerning the clashing opinions of the various dissidents. But this remedy is discountenanced by Christ when he says, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." ([Luke xvi. 31.](#))

2. Another of these remedies is, that God would by a miracle distinguish that party of whose sentiments he approves; which appears to have been a practice in the times of Elijah. But if no sect be entirely free from every particle of error, can it be expected that God will

set the seal of his approval on any portion of falsity? But this wish is unnecessary, since the things which Christ did and spoke "are written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name." ([John xx. 31.](#)) But the remedy itself, if applied, would prove to be inefficacious. For even in the days of Christ and his apostles, dissensions existed; and many of them were excited against the primitive heralds of the gospel, although they had acquired great renown by the benevolent exercise of the miraculous powers with which they were endued. To this remark I must add that the approaching advent of Antichrist is predicted to be "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." ([2 Thess. ii. 9.](#))

3. A third remedy, of a horrid description, remains to be noticed, which, nevertheless, is resorted to by some persons. It is an adjuration of the devil, to induce him by means of incantations and exorcisms to deliver an answer, from the bodies of deceased persons, concerning the truth of such doctrines as are at any period the existing subjects of controversy. This method is both a mark of the utmost desperation, and an execrable and insane love of demons.

But, dismissing all these violent medicines, that are of a bad character and import, I proceed to notice such as are holy, true and saving; these I distribute into preparatives and aphæretics or removers, of this dissension.

1. To the class of preparatives belong, (1.) in the first place, Prayers and Supplications to God, that we may obtain a knowledge of the truth, and that the peace of the Church may be preserved: and these religious acts are to be performed, at the special command of the magistrates, with fasting, and in dust and ashes, with seriousness, in faith, and with assiduity. These services, when thus performed, cannot fail of being efficacious; because they are done according to the ordinance of God, whose command it is, that "we pray for the peace of Jerusalem," ([Psalm cxxii. 6.](#)) and according to the promise of Christ, who has graciously engaged that "the Spirit of truth shall be given to those who ask him." ([Luke xi. 13.](#))

(2.) Let a serious amendment of life and a conscientious course of conduct be added: For, without these, all our prayers are rendered ineffectual, because they are displeasing to God, on the ground, that "he who misemploys that portion of knowledge which he possesses, becomes, by his own act, unworthy of all further communications and increase of knowledge." This is in accordance with that saying of Christ: "Unto every one that hath, shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him." ([Luke xix. 26.](#)) But to all those who employ and improve the knowledge which is given to them, Christ promises the spirit of discernment. in these words: "If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." ([John viii. 17.](#))

2. But amongst the very first removals, let those causes be put away which, as we have previously stated, have their origin in the affections, and which are not only the instigators

of this dissension, but tend to perpetuate and keep it alive. Let humility overcome pride; let a mind contented with its condition become the successor of avarice; let the love of celestial delights expel all carnal pleasures; let good will and benevolence occupy the place of envy; let patient forbearance subdue anger; let sobriety in acquiring wisdom prescribe bounds to the desire of knowledge, and let studious application take the place of learned ignorance. Let all hatred and bitterness be laid aside; and, on the contrary, "let us put on bowels of mercies" towards those who differ from us, and who appear either to wander about in the paths of error, or to scatter its noxious seeds among others.

These necessary concessions we shall obtain from our minds without much difficulty, if the following four considerations become the objects of our sedulous attention:

First. How extremely difficult it is to discover the truth on all subjects, and to avoid error. On this topic, St. Augustine most beautifully descants, when he thus addresses those worst of heretics, the Manichees: "Let those persons be enraged against you, who are ignorant of the immense labour that is required for the discovery of truth, and how difficult it is to guard against error. Let those be enraged against you who know not how uncommon a circumstance and how arduous a toil it is to overcome carnal fantasies, when such a conquest is put in comparison with serenity of mind. Let those be enraged against you who are not aware of the great difficulty with which the eye of "the inner man" is healed, so as to be able to look up to God as the sun of the system. Let those be enraged against you, who are personally unconscious of the many sighs and groans which must be uttered before we are capable of understanding God in the slightest degree. And, lastly, let them be enraged against you, who have never been deceived by an error of such a description as that under which they see you labouring. But how angry soever all these persons may be, I cannot be in the least enraged against you, whose weaknesses it is my duty to bear, as those who were near me at that period bore with mine; and I ought now to treat you with as much patience as that which was exercised towards me when, frantic and blind, I went astray in the errors of your doctrine."

Secondly. That those who hold erroneous opinions have been induced through ignorance to adopt them, is far more probable, than that malice has influenced them to contrive a method of consigning themselves and other people to eternal destruction.

Thirdly. It is possible that they who entertain these mistaken sentiments, are of the number of the elect, whom God, it is true, may have permitted to fall, but only with this design, that he may raise them up with the greater glory. How then can we indulge ourselves in any harsh or unmerciful resolutions against these persons, who have been destined to possess the heavenly inheritance, who are our brethren, the members of Christ, and not only the servants but the sons of the Lord Most High?

Lastly. Let us place ourselves in the circumstances of an adversary, and let him in return assume the character which we sustain; since it is as possible for us, as it is for him, to hold

wrong principles. When we have made this experiment, we may be brought to think, that the very person whom we had previously thought to be in error, and whose mistakes in our eyes had a destructive tendency, may perhaps have been given to us by God, that out of his mouth we may learn the truth which has hitherto been unknown to us.

To these four reflections, let there be added, a consideration of all those articles of religion respecting which there exists on both sides a perfect agreement. These will perhaps be found to be so numerous and of such great importance, that when a comparison is instituted between them, and the others which may properly be made the subjects of controversy, the latter will be found to be few in number and of small consequence. This is the very method which a certain famous prince in France is reported to have adopted, when Cardinal Lorraine attempted to embroil the Lutherans, or those who adhered to the Augustan Confession, with the French Protestants, that he might interrupt and neutralize the salutary provisions of the Conference at Poissy, which had been instituted between the Protestants and the Papists.

But since it is customary after long and grievous wars, to enter into a truce, or a cessation from hostilities, prior to the conclusion of a treaty of peace and its final ratification; and, since, during the continuance of a truce, while every hostile attempt is laid aside, peaceful thoughts are naturally suggested, till at length a general solicitude is expressed with regard to the method in which a firm peace and lasting reconciliation may best be effected; it is my special wish, that there may now be among us a similar cessation from the asperities of religious warfare, and that both parties would abstain from writings full of bitterness, from sermons remarkable only for the invectives which they contain, and from the unchristian practice of mutual anathematizing and execration. Instead of these, let the controversialists substitute writings full of moderation, in which the matters of controversy may, without respect of persons, be clearly explained and proved by cogent arguments:

Let such sermons be preached as are calculated to excite the minds of the people to the love and study of truth, charity, mercy, long-suffering, and concord; which may inflame the minds both of Governors and people with a desire of concluding a pacification, and may make them willing to carry into effect such a remedy as is, of all others, the best accommodated to remove dissensions.

That remedy is, an orderly and free convention of the parties that differ from each other: In such an assembly, (called by the Greeks a Synod and by the Latins a Council,) after the different sentiments have been compared together, and the various reasons of each have been weighed, in the fear of the Lord, and with calmness and accuracy, let the members deliberate, consult and determine what the word of God declares concerning the matters in controversy, and afterwards let them by common consent promulge and declare the result to the Churches.

The Chief Magistrates, who profess the Christian religion, will summon and convene this Synod, in virtue of the Supreme official authority with which they are divinely invested, and according to the practice that formerly prevailed in the Jewish Church, and that was afterwards adopted by the Christian Church and continued nearly to the nine hundredth year after the birth of Christ, until the Roman Pontiff began through tyranny to arrogate this authority to himself. Such an arrangement is required by the public weal, which is never committed with greater safety to the custody of any one than to his whose private advantage is entirely unconnected, with the issue.

But men endued with wisdom will be summoned to this Synod, and will be admitted into it—men who are well qualified for a seat in it by the sanctity of their lives, and their general experience—men burning with zeal for God and for the salvation of their mankind, and inflamed with the love of truth and peace. Into such a choice assembly all those persons will be admitted who are acknowledged for any probable reason to possess the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of discernment between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, and those who promise to abide by the Scriptures, that have been inspired by the same Holy Spirit. Not only will ecclesiastics be admitted, but also laymen, whether they be entitled to any superiority on account of the dignity of the office which they sustain, or whether they be persons in private stations. Not only will the representatives of one party, or of some parties, be admitted, but deputies from all the parties that disagree, whether they have been defenders of the conflicting opinions that are at issue, or whether they have never publicly explained their own sentiments either in discourse or by writing. But it is of the utmost consequence, that this sentence should, after the manner of Plato, be inscribed in letters of gold on the porch of the building in which this sacred meeting holds its sittings:

"Let no one that is not desirous of promoting the interests of truth and peace, enter this hallowed dome" It is my sincere and earnest wish, that God would "place his angel with a flaming two-edged sword at the entrance of this paradise," in which Divine Truth and the lovely Concord of the Church will be the subjects of discussion; and that he would by his Angel drive away all those who might be animated with a spirit averse to truth and concord, while the sacred guardian repeats, in tones terrific and a voice of thunder, the warning words used by the followers of Pythagoras and Orpheus preparatory to the commencement of their sacred rites:

Far, far from hence, ye multitude profane!

The situation and other circumstances of the town or city appointed for holding such a Council, must not be neglected. It should be so accommodated to the convenience of those who have to assemble in it, that neither the difficulty of approaching it, nor the length of the journey to it, should operate as a hindrance on any of the members deputed. It should be a place free from danger and violence, and secured against all surprise and ambuscades, in order that those who are summoned may come to it, remain in it, and return to their

homes, in perfect safety. To secure these benefits, it will be necessary for a public pledge to be given to all the members and solemnly observed.

In this council the subjects of discussion will not be, the jurisdiction, honours, and rights of precedence on the part of princes, the wealth, power and privileges of Bishops, the commencement of war against the Turks, or any other political matters. But its discussions will relate solely to those things which pertain to Religion: Of this description are the doctrines which concern faith and manners, and ecclesiastical order. (1.) In these doctrines, there are two objects worthy of consideration, which are indeed of the greatest consequence: (i.) Their truth, and (ii.) The degree of necessity which exists for knowing, believing and practicing ecclesiastical order, because a good part of it is positive and only requires to be accommodated to persons, places and seasons, it will be easily dispatched.

The end of such a holy convention will be the illustration, preservation, and propagation of the truth; the extirpation of existing errors, and the concord of the Church. The consequence of all which, will be the glory of God and the eternal salvation of men.

The presidency of that assembly belongs to HIM ALONE who is the Head and the Husband of the Church, to Christ by his Holy Spirit. For he has promised to be present in a company that may consist only of two or three individuals gathered together in his name: His assistance, therefore, will be earnestly implored at the beginning and end of each of their sessions. But for the sake of order, moderation, and good government, and to avoid confusion, it will be necessary to have presidents subordinate to Christ Jesus. It is my sincere wish that the magistrates would themselves undertake that office in the Council; and this might be obtained from them as a favour. But in case of their reluctance, either some members deputed from their body, or some persons chosen by the whole Synod, ought to act in that capacity. The duties of these Presidents will consist in convening the assembly, proposing the subjects of deliberation, putting questions to the vote, collecting the suffrages of each member by means of accredited secretaries, and in directing the whole of the proceedings. The course of action to be adopted in the Synod itself, is this; (1.) a regular and accurate debate on the matters in controversy, (2.) mature consultation concerning them, and (3.) complete liberty for every one to declare his opinion. The rule to be observed in all these transactions is the Word of God, recorded in the books of the Old and New Testament. The power and influence which the most ancient Councils ascribed to this sacred rule, were pointed out by the significant action of placing a copy of the Gospels in the first and most honourable seat in the assembly. On this point the parties between whom the difference subsists, should be mutually agreed. (1.) The debates will not be conducted according to the rules of Rhetoric, but according to Dialectics. But a logical and concise mode of reasoning will be employed; and all precipitancy of speech and extempore effusions will be avoided. To each of the parties such an equal space of time will be allowed as may appear necessary for due meditation: and, to avoid many inconveniences and absurdities, every speech intended

for delivery will be comprised in writing, and will be recited from the manuscript. No one shall be permitted to interrupt or to close a disputation, unless, in the opinion of the whole assembly, it appear that sufficient reasons have been advanced to satisfy the subject under discussion. (2.) When a disputation is finished, a grave and mature deliberation will be instituted both concerning the controversies themselves and the arguments employed by both sides; that, the limits of the matter under dispute being laid down with great strictness, and the amplitude of debate being contracted into a very narrow compass, the question on which the assembly has to decide and pronounce may be perceived as at one glance with complete distinctness. (3.) To these will succeed, in the proper course, a free declaration of opinion—a right, the benefit of which will belong equally to all that are convened of each party, without excluding from it any of those who though not invited, may have voluntarily come to the town or city in which the Synod is convened, and who may have been admitted into it by the consent of the members.

And since nothing to the present period has proved to be a greater hindrance to the investigation of truth or to the conclusion of an agreement, than this circumstance—that those who have been convened were so restricted and confined to received opinions as to bring from home with them the declaration which they were to make on every subject in the Synod: it is, therefore, necessary that all the members assembled, should, prior to the commencement of any proceedings, take a solemn oath, not to indulge in prevarication or calumny. By this oath they ought to promise that every thing shall be transacted in the fear of the Lord, and according to a good conscience; the latter of which consists, in not asserting that which they consider to be false, in not concealing that which they think to be the truth, (how much soever such truth may be opposed to them and their party,) and in not pressing upon others for absolute certainties those points which seem, even to themselves, to be doubtful. By this oath they should also promise that every thing shall be conducted according to the rule of the word of God, without favour or affection, and without any partiality or respect of persons; that the whole of their attention in that assembly shall be solely directed to promote an inquiry after truth and to consolidate Christian concord; and that they will acquiesce in the sentence of the Synod on all those things of which they shall be convinced by the word of God. On which account let them be absolved from all other oaths, either immediately or indirectly contrary to this by which they have been bound either to Churches and their confessions, or to schools and their masters, or even to princes themselves, with an exception in favour of the right and jurisdiction which the latter have over their subjects. Constituted after this manner, such a Synod will truly be a free assembly, most suitable and appropriate for the investigation of truth and the establishment of concord. This is an opinion which is countenanced by St. Augustine, who, expostulating with the Manichees, in continuation of the passage which we have just quoted, proceeds thus: "But that you may become milder and may be the more easily pacified, O Manicheans, and that you may no

longer place yourselves in opposition to me, with a mind full of hostility which is most pernicious to yourselves, it is my duty to request of you (whoever he may be that shall judge betwixt us,) that all arrogance be laid aside by both parties; and that none of us say, that he has discovered the truth. But rather let us seek it, as though it were unknown to each of us. For thus it will be possible for each of us to be engaged in a diligent and amicable search for it, if we have not by a premature and rash presumption believed that it is an object which we had previously discovered, and with which we are well acquainted."

From a Synod thus constructed and managed, those who rely on the promise of God may expect most abundant profit and the greatest advantages. For, though Christ be provoked to anger by our manifold trespasses and offenses, yet the thought must not be once indulged, that his church will be neglected by him; or, when his faithful servants and teachable disciples are, with simplicity of heart, engaged in a search after truth and peace, and are devoutly imploring the grace of his Holy Spirit, that He will on any account suffer them to fall into such errors as are opposed to truths accounted fundamental, and to persevere in them when their tendency is thus injurious. From the decisions of a Synod that is influenced by such expectations, unanimity and agreement will be obtained on all the doctrines, or at least on the principal part of them, and especially on those which are supported by clear testimonies from the Scriptures.

But if it should happen, that a mutual consent and agreement cannot be obtained on some articles, then, it appears to me, one of these two courses must be pursued. First. It must become a matter of deep consideration, whether a fraternal concord in Christ, cannot exist between the two parties, and whether one cannot acknowledge the other for partakers of the same faith and fellow-heirs of the same salvation, although they may both hold different sentiments concerning the nature of faith and the manner of salvation. If either party refuse to extend to the other the right hand of fellowship, the party so offending shall, by the unanimous declaration of all the members, be commanded to prove from plain and obvious passages of scripture, that the importance attached to the controverted articles is so great as not to permit those who dissent from them to be one in Christ Jesus. Secondly. After having made every effort toward producing a Christian and fraternal union, if they find that this cannot be effected, in such a state of affairs the second plan must be adopted, which indeed the conscience of no man can under any pretext refuse. The right hand of friendship should be extended by both parties, and all of them should enter into a solemn engagement, by which they should bind themselves, as by oath, and under the most sacred obligations, to abstain in future from all bitterness, evil speaking, and railing; to preach with gentleness and moderation, to the people entrusted to their care, that truth which they deem necessary; and to confute those falsities which they consider to be inimical to salvation and injurious to the glory of God; and, while engaged in such a confutation of error, (however great their earnestness may be,) to let their zeal be under the direction of knowledge and attempered

with kindness. On him who shall resolve to adopt a course of conduct different to this, let the imprecations of an incensed God and his Christ be invoked, and let the magistrates not only threaten him with deserved punishment, but let it be actually inflicted.

But the Synod will not assume to itself the authority of obtruding upon others, by force, those resolutions which may have been passed by unanimous consent. For this reflection should always suggest itself, "Though this Synod appears to have done all things conscientiously, it is possible, that, after all, it has committed an error in judgment. Such a diffidence and moderation of mind will possess greater power, and will have more influence, than any immoderate or excessive rigor can have, on the consciences both of the contumacious dissidents, and of the whole body of the faithful; because, according to Lactantius, "To recommend faith to others, we must make it the subject of persuasion, and not of compulsion." Tertullian also says, "Nothing is less a religious business than to employ coercion about religion." For these disturbers will either then (1.) desist from creating further trouble to the Church by the frequent, unreasonable and outrageous inculcation of their opinions, which, with all their powers of persuasion, they were not able to prevail with such a numerous assembly of impartial and moderate men to adopt. Or, (2.) being exposed to the just indignation of all these individuals, they will scarcely find a person willing to lend an ear to teachers of such a refractory and obstinate disposition. If this should not prove to be the result, then it must be concluded that there are no remedies calculated to remove all evils; but those must be employed which have in them the least peril. The mild and affectionate expostulation of Christ our saviour, must also live in our recollections. He addressed his disciples and said, "Will ye also go away," ([John vi. 67.](#)) We must use the same interrogation; and must rest at that point and cease from all ulterior measures.

My very famous, most polite and courteous hearers, these are the remarks which have been impressed on my mind, and which I have accounted it my duty at this time to declare concerning the reconciliation of religious differences. The short time usually allotted to the delivery of an address on this occasion, and the defects of my own genius, have prevented me from treating this subject according to its dignity and amplitude.

May the God of truth and peace inspire the hearts of the magistrates, the people and the ministers of religion, with an ardent desire for truth and peace. May He exhibit before their eyes, in all its naked deformity, the execrable and polluting nature of dissension concerning religion; and may He affect their hearts with a serious sense of these evils which flow so copiously from it; that they may unite all their prayers, counsels, endeavours, and desires, and may direct them to one point, the removal of the causes of such a great evil, the adoption of a mild and sanatory process, and the application of gentle remedies for healing this dissension, which are the only description of medicines of which the very weak and sickly condition of the body of the Church, and the nature of the malady, will admit. "The God of peace," who dignifies "the peace makers" alone with the ample title of "children," ([Matt.](#)

v. 9,) has called us to the practice of peace. Christ, "the Prince of peace," who by his precious blood, procured peace for us, has bequeathed and recommended it to us with a fraternal affection. ([John xiv. 27.](#)) It has also been sealed to us by the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of peace, and who has united all of us in one body by the closest ties of the new covenant. ([Ephes. iv. 3.](#))

Let us be ashamed of contaminating such a splendid title as this by our petty contentions; let it rather be to us an object of pursuit, since God has called us to such a course. Let us not suffer that which has been purchased at such a great price to be consumed, and wasted away in the midst of our disputes and dissensions; but let us embrace it, because our Lord Christ has given it the sanction of his recommendation. Let us not permit a covenant of such great sanctity to be made void by our factious divisions; but, since it is sealed to us by the Holy Spirit, let us attend to all its requisitions and preserve the terms inviolate. Fabius, the Roman ambassador, told the Carthaginians, "that he carried to them in his bosom both War and Peace, that they might choose either of them that was the object of their preference." Depending not on my own strength, but on the goodness of God, the promises of Christ, and on the gentle attestations of the Holy Spirit, I venture to imitate his expressions, (full of confidence although they be,) and to say, "Only let us choose peace and God will perfect it for us." Then will the happy period arrive when with gladness we shall hear the voices of brethren mutually exhorting each other, and saying, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," that he may explain to us his will; that "our feet may joyfully stand within the gates of Jerusalem;" that in an ecstasy of delight we may contemplate the Church of Christ," as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel to give thanks unto the name of the Lord:" that with thanksgiving we may admire "the thrones of judgment which are set there, the thrones of the house of David," the thrones of men of veracity, of princes who in imitation of David's example are peace makers, and of magistrates who conform themselves to the similitude of the man after God's own heart. Thus shall we enjoy the felicity to accost each other in cheerful converse, and by way of encouragement sweetly to whisper in the ears of each other, "pray for the peace of the Church Universal," and in our mutual prayers let us invoke "prosperity on them that love her;" that with unanimous voice, from the inmost recesses of our hearts, we may consecrate to her these votive intercessions and promises. "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces: for our brethren and companions' sakes, we will now say, peace be within thee! Because of the house of the Lord our God we will seek thy good." ([Psalm 122.](#)) Thus at length shall it come to pass, that, being anointed with spiritual delights we shall sing together in jubilant strains, that most pleasant Song of Degrees, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," &c. And, from a sight of the orderly walk and peaceable conduct of the faithful in the house of God, filled with the hopes of consummating these acts of pacification in heaven, we may conclude in these words of the Apostle, "And

as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God." (Gal. vi. 16.) Mercy, therefore, and Peace, be upon the Israel of God. I have concluded.