

## Declaration and Address

**NOTE:** This document, published in 1809, is in the public domain and may be copied and distributed at will. This version was scanned and marked up for inclusion in the Restoration Literature Meta-Index by Jim McMillan in March, 1995.

FROM the series of events which have taken place in the churches for many years past, especially in this Western country, as well as from what we know in general of the present state of things in the Christian world, we are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act, for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our measures directly and immediately from the Divine standard; to this alone we feel ourselves Divinely bound to be conformed, as by this alone, we must be judged. We are also persuaded that as no man can be judged for his brother, so no man can judge for his brother; every man must be allowed to judge for himself, as every man must bear his own judgment--must give account of himself to God. We are also of opinion that as the Divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be bound by it, and it alone; and not by any human interpretation of it; and that, therefore, no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. That every such judgment is an express violation of the law of Christ, a daring usurpation of his throne, and a gross intrusion upon the rights and liberties of his subjects. We are, therefore, of opinion that we should beware of such things; that we

should keep at the utmost distance from everything of this nature; and that, knowing the judgment of God against them that commit such things, we should neither do the same ourselves, nor take pleasure in them that do them. Moreover, being well aware, as from sad experience, of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and, were it possible, we would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches: as would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole Church of God. This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair either to find for ourselves, or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions: nor, indeed, can we reasonably expect to find it anywhere but in Christ and his simple word, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Our desire, therefore, for ourselves and our brethren would be, that, rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the Church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things; returning to and holding fast by the original standard; taking the Divine word alone for our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth; and Christ alone, as exhibited in the word, for our salvation; that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Impressed with these sentiments, we have resolved as

follows:

I. That we form ourselves into a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.

II. That each member, according to ability, cheerfully and liberally subscribe a certain specified sum, to be paid half yearly, for the purpose of raising a fund to support a pure Gospel ministry, that shall reduce to practice that whole form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. And, also, for supplying the poor with the holy Scriptures.

III. That this Society consider it a duty, and shall use all proper means in its power, to encourage the formation of similar associations; and shall for this purpose hold itself in readiness, upon application, to correspond with, and render all possible assistance to, such as may desire to associate for the same desirable and important purposes.

IV. That this Society by no means considers itself a Church, nor does at all assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, consider themselves as standing connected in that relation; nor as at all associated for the peculiar purposes of Church association; but merely as voluntary advocates for Church reformation; and, as possessing the powers common to all individuals, who may please to associate in a peaceable and orderly manner, for any lawful purpose, namely, the disposal of their time, counsel and property, as they may see cause.

V. That this Society, formed for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence; only such as reduce to practice that simple original form of Christianity, expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without at tempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of men, as having anyplace in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the Christian Church, or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there can not be expressly produce a "Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent."

VI. That a Standing Committee of twenty-one members of unexceptionable moral character, inclusive of the secretary and treasurer, be chosen annually to superintend the interests, and transact the business of the Society. And that said Committee be invested with full powers to act and do, in the name, and behalf of their constituents, whatever the Society had previously determined, for the purpose of carrying into effect the entire object of its institution, and that in case of any emergency, unprovided for in the existing determinations of the Society, said Committee be empowered to call a special meeting for that purpose.

VII. That this Society meet at least twice a year, viz.: on the first Thursday of May, and of November, and that the collectors appointed to receive the half-yearly quotas of the promised subscriptions, be in readiness, at or before each meeting, to make their

returns to the treasurer, that he may be able to report upon the state of the funds. The next meeting to be held at Washington on the first Thursday of November next.

VIII. That each meeting of the Society be opened with a sermon, the constitution and address read, and a collection lifted for the benefit of the Society; and that all communications of a public nature be laid before the Society at its half-yearly meetings.

IX. That this Society, relying upon the all-sufficiency of the Church's Head; and, through his grace, looking with an eye of confidence to the generous liberality of the sincere friends of genuine Christianity; holds itself engaged to afford a competent support to such ministers as the Lord may graciously dispose to assist, at the request, and by invitation of the Society, in promoting a pure evangelical reformation, by the simple preaching of the everlasting Gospel, and the administration of its ordinances in an exact conformity to the Divine standard as aforesaid; and that, therefore, what ever the friends of the institution shall please to contribute toward the support of ministers in connection with this Society, who may be sent forth to preach at considerable distances, the same shall be gratefully received and acknowledged as a donation to its funds.

ADDRESS, ETC.

To all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in

sincerity, throughout all the Churches, the following Address is most respectfully submitted.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:

That it is the grand design and native tendency of our holy religion to reconcile and unite men to God, and to each other, in truth and love, to the glory of God, and their own present and eternal good, will not, we presume, be denied, by any of the genuine subjects of Christianity. The nativity of its Divine author was announced from heaven, by a host of angels, with high acclamations of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will toward men." The whole tenor of that Divine book which contains its institutes, in all its gracious declarations, precepts, ordinances, and holy examples, most expressively and powerfully inculcates this. In so far, then, as this holy unity and unanimity in faith and love is attained, just in the same degree is the glory of God and the happiness of men promoted and secured. Impressed with those sentiments, and, at the same time, grievously affected with those sad divisions which have so awfully interfered with the benign and gracious intention of our holy religion, by exciting its professed subjects to bite and devour one another, we cannot suppose ourselves justifiable in withholding the mite of our sincere and humble endeavors to heal and remove them.

What awful and distressing effects have those sad divisions produced! what aversions, what reproaches, what backbitings, what evil surmisings, what angry contentions, what enmities, what excommunications, and even persecution! ! ! And, indeed, this must, in some measure, continue to be the

case so long as those schisms exist; for, saith the apostle, where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. What dreary effects of those accursed divisions are to be seen, even in this highly favored country, where the sword of the civil magistrate has not as yet learned to serve at the altar. Have we not seen congregations broken to pieces, neighborhoods of professing Christians first thrown into confusion by party contentions, and, in the end, entirely deprived of Gospel ordinances; while, in the mean time, large settlements and tracts of country remain to this day entirely destitute of a Gospel ministry, many of them in little better than a state of heathenism, the Churches being either so weakened with divisions that they cannot send them ministers, or the people so divided among themselves that they will not receive them. Several, at the same time, who live at the door of a preached Gospel, dare not in conscience go to hear it, and, of course, enjoy little more advantage, in that respect, than if living in the midst of heathens. How seldom do many in those circumstances enjoy the dispensations of the Lord's Supper, that great ordinance of unity and love. How sadly, also, does this broken and confused state of things interfere with that spiritual intercourse among Christians, one with another, which is so essential to their edification and comfort, in the midst of a present evil world; so divided in sentiment, and, of course, living at such distances, that but few of the same opinion, or party, can conveniently and frequently assemble for religious purposes, or enjoy a due frequency of ministerial attentions. And even where things are in a better state with respect to settled Churches, how is the tone of discipline relaxed under the

influence of a party spirit; many being afraid to exercise it with due strictness, lest their people should leave them, and, under the cloak of some specious pretense, find refuge in the bosom of another party; while lamentable to be told, so corrupted is the Church with those accursed divisions, that there are but few so base as not to find admission into some professing party or other. Thus, in a great measure, is that Scriptural purity of communion banished from the Church of God, upon the due preservation of which much of her comfort, glory, and usefulness depend. To complete the dread result of our woeful divisions, one evil yet remains, of a very awful nature: the Divine displeasure justly provoked with this sad perversion of the Gospel of peace, the Lord withholds his gracious influential presence from his ordinances, and not unfrequently gives up the contentious authors and abettors of religious discord to fall into grievous scandals, or visits them with judgments, as he did the house of Eli. Thus, while professing Christians bite and devour one another, they are consumed one of another, or fall a prey to the righteous judgments of God; meantime, the truly religious of all parties are grieved, the weak stumbled, the graceless and profane hardened, the mouths of infidels opened to blaspheme religion, and thus the only thing under heaven divinely efficacious to promote and secure the present spiritual and eternal good of man, even the Gospel of the blessed Jesus, is reduced to contempt, while multitudes, deprived of a Gospel ministry, as has been observed, fall an easy prey to seducers, and so become the dupes of almost unheard of delusions. Are not such the visible effects of our sad divisions, even in this otherwise happy

country. Say, dear brethren, are not these things so? Is it not then your incumbent duty to endeavor, by all Scriptural means, to have those evils remedied. Who will say that it is not? And does it not peculiarly belong to you, who occupy the place of Gospel ministers, to be leaders in this laudable undertaking? Much depends upon your hearty concurrence and zealous endeavors. The favorable opportunity which Divine Providence has put into your hands, in this happy country, for the accomplishment of so great a good, is, in itself, a consideration of no small encouragement. A country happily exempted from the baneful influence of a civil establishment of any peculiar form of Christianity; from under the direct influence of the antichristian hierarchy; and, at the same time, from any formal connection with the devoted nations that have given their strength and power unto the beast; in which, of course, no adequate reformation can be accomplished, until the word of God be fulfilled, and the vials of his wrath poured out upon them. Happy exemption, indeed, from being the object of such awful judgments. Still more happy will it be for us if we duly esteem and improve those great advantages, for the high and valuable ends for which they are manifestly given, and sure where much is given, much also will be required. Can the Lord expect, or require, anything less from a people in such unhampered circumstances--from a people so liberally furnished with all means and mercies, than a thorough reformation in all things, civil and religious, according to his word? Why should we suppose it? And would not such an improvement of our precious privileges be equally conducive to the glory of God, and our

own present and everlasting good? The auspicious phenomena of the times furnish collateral arguments of a very encouraging nature, that our dutiful and pious endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord. Is it not the day of the Lord's vengeance upon the anti-christian world--the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion? Surely, then, the time to favor her is come; even the set time. And is it not said that Zion shall be built in troublous times? Have not greater efforts been made, and more done, for the promulgation of the Gospel among the nations, since the commencement of the French revolution, than had been for many centuries prior to that event? And have not the Churches, both in Europe and America, since that period, discovered a more than usual concern for the removal of contentions, for the healing of divisions, for the restoration of a Christian and brotherly intercourse one with another, and for the promotion of each other's spiritual good, as the printed documents upon those subjects amply testify? Should we not, then, be excited by these considerations to concur with all our might, to help forward this good work; that what yet remains to be done, may be fully accomplished. And what though the well-meant endeavors after union have not, in some instances, entirely succeeded to the wish of all parties, should this dissuade us from the attempt! Indeed, should Christians cease to contend earnestly for the sacred articles of faith and duty once delivered to the saints, on account of the opposition and scanty success which, in many instances, attend their faithful and honest endeavors; the Divine cause of truth and righteousness might have long ago been relinquished. And is there anything more formidable in

the Goliath schism, than in many other evils which Christians have to combat? Or, has the Captain of Salvation sounded a desist from pursuing, or proclaimed a truce with this deadly enemy that is sheathing its sword in the very bowels of his Church, rending and mangling his mystical body into pieces? Has he said to his servants, Let it alone? If not, where is the warrant for a cessation of endeavors to have it removed? On the other hand are we not the better instructed by sage experience, how to proceed in this business, having before our eyes the inadvertencies and mistakes of others, which have hitherto, in many instances, prevented the desired success? Thus taught by experience, and happily furnished with the accumulated instructions of those that have gone before us, earnestly laboring in this good cause, let us taken unto ourselves the whole armor of God, and, having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, let us stand fast by this important duty with all perseverance. Let none that love the peace of Zion be discouraged, much less offended, because that an object of such magnitude does not, in the first instance, come forth recommended by the express suffrage of the mighty or the many. This consideration, if duly weighed, will neither give offense, nor yield discouragement to any one that considers the nature of the thing in question in connection with what has been already suggested. Is it not a matter of universal right, a duty equally belonging to every citizen of Zion, to seek her good? In this respect, no one can claim a preference above his fellows, as to any peculiar, much less exclusive obligation. And, as for authority, it can have no place in this

business; for, surely, none can suppose themselves invested with a Divine right, as to anything peculiarly belonging to them, to call the attention of their brethren to this dutiful and important undertaking. For our part, we entertain no such arrogant presumption; nor are we inclined to impute the thought to any of our brethren, that this good work should be let alone till such time as they may think proper to come forward and sanction the attempt, by their invitation and example. It is an open field, an extensive work, to which all are equally welcome, equally invited.

Should we speak of competency, viewing the greatness of the object, and the manifold difficulties which lie in the way of its accomplishment; we would readily exclaim, with the apostle, Who is sufficient for these things? But, upon recollecting ourselves, neither would we be discouraged; persuaded with him, that, as the work in which we are engaged, so, likewise, our sufficiency is of God. But, after all, both the mighty and the many are with us. The Lord himself, and all that are truly his people, are declaredly on our side. The prayers of all the Churches, nay, the prayers of Christ himself (John xvii: 20, 23), and of all that have ascended to his heavenly kingdom, are with us. The blessing out of Zion is pronounced upon our undertaking. "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." With such encouragements as these, what should deter us from the heavenly enterprise, or render hopeless the attempt of accomplishing, in due time, an entire union of all the Churches in faith and practice, according to the word of God? Not that we judge ourselves competent to effect such a thing; we utterly disclaim the thought; but we judge it our bounden duty to

make the attempt, by using all due means in our power to promote it; and also, that we have sufficient reason to rest assured that our humble and well-meant endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The cause that we advocate is not our own peculiar cause, nor the cause of any party, considered as such; it is a common cause, the cause of Christ and our brethren of all denominations. All that we presume, then, is to do what we humbly conceive to be our duty, in connection with our brethren; to each of whom it equally belongs, as to us, to exert himself for this blessed purpose. And as we have no just reason to doubt the concurrence of our brethren to accomplish an object so desirable in itself, and fraught with such happy consequences, so neither can we look forward to that happy event which will forever put an end to our hapless divisions, and restore to the Church its primitive unity, purity, and prosperity, but in the pleasing prospect of their hearty and dutiful concurrence.

Dearly beloved brethren, why should we deem it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ, in this highly favored country, should resume that original unity, peace, and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitute its glory? Or, is there anything that can be justly deemed necessary for this desirable purpose, both to conform to the model and adopt the practice of the primitive Church, expressly exhibited in the New Testament? Whatever alterations this might produce in any or in all of the Churches, should, we think, neither be deemed inadmissible nor ineligible. Surely such alteration would be every way for the better, and not for the worse, unless we should suppose the divinely

inspired rule to be faulty, or defective. Were we, then, in our Church constitution and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the apostolic Church, would we not be, in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?

It is, to us, a pleasing consideration that all the Churches of Christ which mutually acknowledge each other as such, are not only agreed in the great doctrines of faith and holiness, but are also materially agreed as to the positive ordinances of the Gospel institution; so that our differences, at most, are about the things in which the kingdom of God does not consist, that is, about matters of private opinion or human invention. What a pity that the kingdom of God should be divided about such things! Who, then, would not be the first among us to give up human inventions in the worship of God, and to cease from imposing his private opinions upon his brethren, that our breaches might thus be healed? Who would not willingly conform to the original pattern laid down in the New Testament, for this happy purpose? Our dear brethren of all denominations will please to consider that we have our educational prejudices and particular customs to struggle against as well as they. But this we do sincerely declare, that there is nothing we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice which is not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms or approved precedent, that we would not heartily relinquish, that so we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church; and, in this happy unity, enjoy full communion with all our brethren, in peace and charity. The like dutiful condescension we candidly

expect of all that are seriously impressed with a sense of the duty they owe to God, to each other, and to their perishing brethren of mankind. To this we call, we invite, our brethren of all denominations, by all the sacred motives which we have avouched as the impulsive reasons of our thus addressing them.

You are all, dear brethren, equally included as the objects of our love and esteem. With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity--Christ alone being the head, the center, his word the rule; an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things--the terms. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you; nor, indeed, can we reasonably suppose any would desire it, for what good purpose would it serve? We dare neither assume nor propose the trite indefinite distinction between essentials and non-essentials, in matters of revealed truth and duty; firmly persuaded, that, whatever may be their comparative importance, simply considered, the high obligation of the Divine authority revealing, or enjoining them, renders the belief or performance of them absolutely essential to us, in so far as we know them. And to be ignorant of anything God has revealed, can neither be our duty nor our privilege. We humbly presume, then, dear brethren, you can have no relevant objection to meet us upon this ground. And, we again beseech you, let it be known that it is the invitation of but few; by your accession we shall be many; and whether few, or many, in the first instance, it is all one with respect to the event which must ultimately await the full information and hearty concurrence of all. Besides, whatever is to be done, must begin, some time, some where;

and no matter where, nor by whom, if the Lord puts his hand to the work, it must surely prosper. And has he not been graciously pleased, upon many signal occasions, to bring to pass the greatest events from very small beginnings, and even by means the most unlikely. Duty then is ours; but events belong to God.

We hope, then, what we urge will neither be deemed an unreasonable nor an unseasonable undertaking. Why should it be thought unseasonable? Can any time be assigned, while things continue as they are, that would prove more favorable for such an attempt, or what could be supposed to make it so? Might it be the approximation of parties to a greater nearness, in point of public profession and similarity of customs? Or might it be expected from a gradual decline of bigotry? As to the former, it is a well-known fact, that where the difference is least, the opposition is always managed with a degree of vehemence inversely proportioned to the merits of the cause. With respect to the latter, though we are happy to say, that in some cases and places, and, we hope, universally, bigotry is upon the decline; yet we are not warranted, either by the past or present, to act upon that supposition. We have, as yet, by this means seen no such effect produced; nor indeed could we reasonably expect it; for there will always be multitudes of weak persons in the Church, and these are generally most subject to bigotry; add to this, that while divisions exist, there will always be found interested men who will not fail to support them; nor can we at all suppose that Satan will be idle to improve an advantage so important to the interests of his kingdom. And, let it be further observed upon the whole, that, in matters of

similar importance to our secular interests, we would by no means content our selves with such kind of reasoning. We might further add, that the attempt here suggested not being of a partial, but of general nature, it can have no just tendency to excite the jealousy, or hurt the feelings of any party. On the contrary, every effort toward a permanent Scriptural unity among the Churches, upon the solid basis of universally acknowledged and self-evident truths, must have the happiest tendency to enlighten and conciliate, by thus manifesting to each other their mutual charity and zeal for the truth: "Whom I love in the truth," saith the apostle, "and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which is in us, and shall be with us forever." Indeed, if no such Divine and adequate basis of union can be fairly exhibited, as will meet the approbation of every upright and intelligent Christian, nor such mode of procedure adopted in favor of the weak as will not oppress their consciences, then the accomplishment of this grand object upon principle must be forever impossible. There would, upon this supposition, remain no other way of accomplishing it, but merely by voluntary compromise, and good-natured accommodation. That such a thing, however, will be accomplished, one way or other, will not be questioned by any that allow themselves to believe that the commands and prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ will not utterly prove ineffectual. Whatever way, then, it is to be effected, whether upon the solid basis of Divinely revealed truth, or the good-natured principle of Christian forbearance and gracious condescension, is it not equally practicable, equally eligible to us, as

ever it can be to any; unless we should suppose ourselves destitute of that Christian temper and discernment which is essentially necessary to qualify us to do the will of our gracious Redeemer, whose express command to his people is, that there be "no divisions among them; but that they all walk by the same rule, speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment?" We believe then it is as practicable as it is eligible. Let us attempt it. "Up, and be doing, and the Lord will be with us."

Are we not all praying for that happy event, when there shall be but one fold, as there is but one chief Shepherd? What! shall we pray for a thing, and not strive to obtain it! ! not use the necessary means to have it accomplished! ! What said the Lord to Moses upon a piece of conduct somewhat similar? "Why criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward, but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand." Let the ministers of Jesus but embrace this exhortation, put their hand to the work, and encourage the people to go forward upon the firm ground of obvious truth, to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity; and who will venture to say that it would not soon be accomplished? "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people," saith your God. To you, therefore, it peculiarly belongs, as the professed and acknowledged leaders of the people, to go before them in this good work, to remove human opinions and the inventions of men out of the way, by carefully separating this chaff from the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation; casting out the assumed authority, that enacting and decreeing

power by which those things have been imposed and established. To this ministerial department, then, do we look with anxiety. Ministers of Jesus, you can neither be ignorant of nor unaffected with the divisions and corruptions of his Church. His dying commands, his last and ardent prayers for the visible unity of his professing people, will not suffer you to be indifferent in this matter. You will not, you cannot, therefore, be silent upon a subject of such vast importance to his personal glory and the happiness of his people--consistently you cannot; for silence gives consent. You will rather lift up your voice like a trumpet to expose the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those unnatural and antichristian divisions, which have so rent and ruined the Church of God. Thus, in justice to your station and character, honored of the Lord, would we hopefully anticipate your zealous and faithful efforts to heal the breaches of Zion; that God's dear children might dwell together in unity and love; but if otherwise . . . we forbear to utter it. ( See Mal. ii: 1-10.)

O! that ministers and people would but consider that there are no divisions in the grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it! there our divisions must come to an end! we must all unite there! Would to God we could find in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here; that so we might leave a blessing behind us; even a happy and united Church. What gratification, what utility, in the mean time, can our divisions afford either to ministers or people? Should they be perpetuated till the day of judgment, would they convert one sinner from the error of his ways, or save a soul from death? Have they any tendency to hide the multitude of sins that are so dishonorable to God, and

hurtful to his people? Do they not rather irritate and produce them? How innumerable and highly aggravated are the sins they have produced, and are at this day producing, both among professors and profane. We entreat, we beseech you then, dear brethren, by all those considerations, to concur in this blessed and dutiful attempt. What is the work of all, must be done by all. Such was the work of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the work to which you are called, not by the authority of man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. By this authority are you called to raise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down among us, and to set it up upon its own base. This you cannot do, while you run every man to his own house, and consult only the interests of his own party. Until you associate, consult, and advise together, and in a friendly and Christian manner explore the subject, nothing can be done. We would therefore, with all due deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the obvious and important duty of association. Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity; in this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you. United we shall prevail. It is the cause of Christ, and of our brethren throughout all the Churches, of catholic unity, peace, and purity; a cause that must finally prosper in spite of all opposition. Let us unite to promote it. Come forward, then, dear brethren, and help with us. Do not suffer yourselves to be lulled asleep by that siren song of the slothful and reluctant professor: "The time is not yet come, the time is not come; saith he; the time that the Lord's house should be built." Believe him not. Do ye not discern the signs of the times? Have not the two

witnesses arisen from their state of political death, from under the long proscription of ages? Have they not stood upon their feet, in the presence, and to the consternation and terror of their enemies? Has not their resurrection been accompanied with a great earth quake? Has not the tenth part of the great city been thrown down by it? Has not this event aroused the nations to indignation? Have they not been angry, yea, very angry? Therefore, O Lord, is thy wrath come upon them, and the time of the dead that they should be avenged, and that thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to them that fear thy name, both small and great; and that thou shouldest destroy them that have destroyed the earth. Who among us has not heard the report of these things, of these lightnings and thunderings and voices; of this tremendous earthquake and great hail; of these awful convulsions and revolutions that have dashed and are dashing to pieces the nations, like a potter's vessel? Yea, have not the remote vibrations of this dreadful shock been felt even by us, whom God has graciously placed at so great a distance?

What shall we say to these things? Is it time for us to sit still in our corruptions and divisions, when the Lord, by his word and providence, is so loudly and expressly calling us to repentance, and reformation? "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust, O Jerusalem; arise, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Resume that precious, that dear-bought liberty, wherewith Christ has

made his people free; a liberty from subjection to any authority but his own, in matters of religion. Call no man father, no man master on earth; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Stand fast, therefore, in this precious liberty, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. For the vindication of this precious liberty have we declared ourselves hearty and willing advocates. For this benign and dutiful purpose have we associated, that by so doing we might contribute the mite of our humble endeavors to promote it, and thus invite our brethren to do the same. As the first-fruits of our efforts for this blessed purpose we respectfully present to their consideration the following propositions, relying upon their charity and candor that they will neither despise nor misconstrue our humble and adventurous attempt. If they should in any measure serve, as a preliminary, to open up the way to a permanent Scriptural unity among the friends and lovers of truth and peace throughout the Churches, we shall greatly rejoice at it. We by no means pretend to dictate, and could we propose any thing more evident, consistent, and adequate, it should be at their service. Their pious and dutiful attention to an object of such magnitude will induce them to communicate to us their emendations; and thus what is sown in weakness will be raised up in power. For certainly the collective graces that are conferred upon the Church, if duly united and brought to bear upon any point of commanded duty, would be amply sufficient for the right and successful performance of it. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same

Spirit; to another the discerning of spirits: but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. As every man, therefore, hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." In the face, then, of such instructions, and with such assurances of an all-sufficiency of Divine grace, as the Church has received from her exalted Head, we can neither justly doubt the concurrence of her genuine members; nor yet their ability, when dutifully acting together, to accomplish anything that is necessary for his glory, and their own good; and certainly their visible unity in truth and holiness, in faith and love, is, of all things, the most conducive to both these, if we may credit the dying commands and prayers of our gracious Lord. In a matter, therefore, of such confessed importance, our Christian brethren, however unhappily distinguished by party names, will not, cannot, withhold their helping hand. We are as heartily willing to be their debtors, as they are indispensably bound to be our benefactors. Come, then, dear brethren, we most humbly beseech you, cause your light to shine upon our weak beginnings, that we may see to work by it. Evince your zeal for the glory of Christ, and the spiritual welfare of your fellow-Christians, by your hearty and zealous co-operation to promote the unity, purity, and prosperity of his Church.

Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture toward a new creed or standard for the Church, or as in any wise designed to be made a term of communion; nothing can be further from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may

come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises, and take up things just as the apostles left them; that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning. Having said so much to solicit attention and prevent mistake, we submit as follows:

PROP. I. That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

2. That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

3. That in order to do this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of Divine obligation, in their Church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles

upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.

4. That although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the Church, and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members.

5. That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be, no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency by making laws for the Church; nor can any thing more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they observe these commands and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

6. That although inferences and

deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.

7. That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes, the better; yet, as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion; unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the Church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

8. That as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge or distinct apprehension of all Divinely revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the Church; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge; but that, on the contrary, their having a due

measure of Scriptural self-knowledge respecting their lost and perishing condition by nature and practice, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, accompanied with a profession of their faith in and obedience to him, in all things, according to his word, is all that is absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into his Church.

9. That all that are enabled through grace to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and Father, temples of the same Spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same Divine love, bought with the same price, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

10. That division among the Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antichristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is antisciptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is antinatural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work.

11. That (in some instances) a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God, and (in others) an assumed authority for making the approbation of

human opinions and human inventions a term of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship of the Church, are, and have been, the immediate, obvious, and universally acknowledged causes, of all the corruptions and divisions that ever have taken place in the Church of God.

12. That all that is necessary to the highest state of perfection and purity of the Church upon earth is, first, that none be received as members but such as having that due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge described above, do profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures; nor, secondly, that any be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their profession by their temper and conduct. Thirdly, that her ministers, duly and Scripturally qualified, inculcate none other things than those very articles of faith and holiness expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. Lastly, that in all their administrations they keep close by the observance of all Divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive Church, exhibited in the New Testament; without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men.

13. Lastly. That if any circumstantial indispensably necessary to the observance of Divine ordinances be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more sacred origin, so that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the Church.

From the nature and construction of these propositions, it will evidently appear, that they are laid in a designed subserviency to the declared end of our association; and are exhibited for the express purpose of performing a duty of previous necessity, a duty loudly called for in existing circumstances at the hand of every one that would desire to promote the interests of Zion; a duty not only enjoined, as has been already observed from Isaiah lvii: 14, but which is also there predicted of the faithful remnant as a thing in which they would voluntarily engage. "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; and shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." To prepare the way for a permanent Scriptural unity among Christians, by calling up to their consideration fundamental truths, directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling-blocks--the rubbish of ages, which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that in advancing toward the desired object they may not miss the way through mistake or inadvertency, by turning aside to the right hand or to the left, is, at least, the sincere intention of the above propositions. It remains with our brethren now to say, how far they go toward answering this intention. Do they exhibit truths demonstrably evident in the light of Scripture and right reason, so that to deny any part of them the contrary assertion would be manifestly absurd and inadmissible? Considered as a preliminary for the above purpose, are they adequate, so that if acted upon, they would infallibly lead to the desired issue? If evidently defective in either of these respects, let them be corrected

and amended, till they become sufficiently evident, adequate, and unexceptionable. In the mean time let them be examined with rigor, with all the rigor that justice, candor, and charity will admit. If we have mistaken the way, we shall be glad to be set right; but if, in the mean time, we have been happily led to suggest obvious and undeniable truths, which, if adopted and acted upon, would infallibly lead to the desired unity, and secure it when obtained, we hope it will be no objection that they have not proceeded from a General Council. It is not the voice of the multitude, but the voice of truth, that has power with the conscience; that can produce rational conviction and acceptable obedience. A conscience that awaits the decision of the multitude, that hangs in suspense for the casting vote of the majority, is a fit subject for the man of sin. This, we are persuaded, is the uniform sentiment of real Christians of every denomination. Would to God that all professors were such, then should our eyes soon behold the prosperity of Zion; we should soon see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. Union in truth has been, and ever must be, the desire and prayer of all such, "Union in Truth" is our motto. The Divine word is our standard; in the Lord's name do we display our banners. Our eyes are upon the promises, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Our humble desire is to be his standard-bearers, to fight under his banner, and with his weapons, "which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;" even all these strong holds of division, those partition walls of separation, which, like the walls of Jericho, have been built up,

as it were, to the very heavens, to separate God's people, to divide his flock and so to prevent them from entering into their promised rest, at least in so far as it respects this world. An enemy hath done this, but he shall not finally prevail; "for the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "And the kingdom and dominion, even the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and they shall possess it forever." But this can not be in their present broken and divided state; "for a kingdom or a house divided against itself cannot stand; but cometh to desolation." Now this has been the case with the Church for a long time. However, "the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his heritage; but judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it." To all such, and such alone, are our expectations directed. Come, then, ye blessed of the Lord, we have your prayers, let us also have your actual assistance. What, shall we pray for a thing and not strive to obtain it !

We call, we invite you again, by every consideration in these premises. You that are near, associate with us; you that are at too great a distance, associate as we have done. Let not the paucity of your number in any given district, prove an insuperable discouragement. Remember Him that has said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven: for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." With such a promise as this, for the attainment of every possible and promised good,

there is no room for discouragement. Come on then, "ye that fear the Lord; keep not silence, and give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a joy and a praise in the earth." Put on that noble resolution dictated by the prophet, saying, "For Zion's sake will we not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Thus impressed, you will find means to associate at such convenient distances, as to meet at least once a month; to beseech the Lord to put an end to our lamentable divisions; to heal and unite his people, that his Church may resume her original constitutional unity and purity, and thus be exalted to the enjoyment of her promised prosperity, that the Jews may be speedily converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in. Thus associated, you will be in a capacity to investigate the evil causes of our sad divisions; to consider and bewail their pernicious effects; and to mourn over them before the Lord--who hath said: "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense and seek my face." Alas! then, what reasonable prospect can we have of being delivered from those sad calamities, which have so long afflicted the Church of God; while a party spirit, instead of be wailing, is everywhere justifying, the bitter principle of these pernicious evils; by insisting upon the right of rejecting those, however unexceptionable in other respects, who cannot see with them in matters of private opinion, of human inference, that are nowhere expressly revealed or enjoined in the word of God. Thus associated, will the friends of peace, the advocates for Christian unity, be in a capacity to connect in larger

circles, where several of those smaller societies may meet semi-annually at a convenient center; and thus avail themselves of their combined exertions for promoting the interests of the common cause. We hope that many of the Lord's ministers in all places will volunteer in this service, forasmuch as they know it is his favorite work, the very desire of his soul.

You lovers of Jesus, and beloved of him, however scattered in this cloudy and dark day, you love the truth as it is in Jesus (if our hearts deceive us not); so do we. You desire union in Christ with all them that love him; so do we. You lament and bewail our sad divisions; so do we. You reject the doctrines and commandments of men, that you may keep the law of Christ; so do we. You believe that the word itself ought to be our rule, and not any human explication of it; so do we. You believe that no man has a right to judge, to exclude, or reject his professing Christian brother, except in so far as he stands condemned or rejected by the express letter of the law; so do we. You believe that the great fundamental law of unity and love ought not to be violated to make way for exalting human opinions to an equality with express revelation, by making them articles of faith and terms of communion; so do we. You sincere and impartial followers of Jesus, friends of truth and peace, we dare not, we cannot think otherwise of you; it would be doing violence to your character; it would be inconsistent with your prayers and profession so to do. We shall therefore have your hearty concurrence. But if any of our dear brethren, from whom we should expect better things, should, through weakness or prejudice, be in anything otherwise minded than we have ventured to

suppose, we charitably hope that, in due time, God will reveal even this unto them; only let such neither refuse to come to the light, nor yet, through prejudice, reject it when it shines upon them. Let them rather seriously consider what we have thus most seriously and respectfully submitted to their consideration; weigh every sentiment in the balance of the sanctuary, as in the sight of God, with earnest prayer for, and humble reliance upon, his Spirit, and not in the spirit of self-sufficiency and party zeal; and, in so doing, we rest assured, the consequence will be happy, both for their own and the Church's peace. Let none imagine, that in so saying, we arrogate to ourselves a degree of intelligence superior to our brethren; much less superior to mistake. So far from this, our confidence is entirely founded upon the express Scripture and matter-of-fact evidence of the things referred to; which may, nevertheless, through inattention or prejudice, fail to produce their proper effect, as has been the case with respect to some of the most evident truths in a thousand instances. But charity thinketh no evil; and we are far from surmising, though we must speak. To warn, even against possible evils, is certainly no breach of charity, as to be confident of the certainty of some things is no just argument of presumption. We by no means claim the approbation of our brethren as to any thing we have suggested for promoting the sacred cause of Christian unity, further than it carries its own evidence along with it; but we humbly claim a fair investigation of the subject, and solicit the assistance of our brethren for carrying into effect what we have thus weakly attempted. It is our consolation, in the mean time, that the desired event, as certain as it will be

happy and glorious, admits of no dispute, however we may hesitate or differ about the proper means of promoting it. All we shall venture to say as to this is, that we trust we have taken the proper ground; at least, if we have not, we despair of finding it elsewhere. For, if holding fast in profession and practice whatever is expressly revealed and enjoined in the Divine standard does not, under the promised influence of the Divine Spirit, prove an adequate basis for promoting and maintaining unity, peace, and purity, we utterly despair of attaining those invaluable privileges, by adopting the standard of any party. To advocate the cause of unity, while espousing the interests of a party, would appear as absurd as for this country to take part with either of the belligerents in the present awful struggle, which has convulsed and is convulsing the nations, in order to maintain her neutrality and secure her peace. Nay, it would be adopting the very means by which the bewildered Church has, for hundreds of years past, been rending and dividing herself into factions, for Christ's sake, and for the truth's sake; though the first and foundation truth of our Christianity is union with him, and the very next to it in order, union with each other in him--"that we receive each other, as Christ has also received us, to the glory of God." "For this is his commandment: That we believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us," even the spirit of faith, and of love, and of a sound mind. And surely this should suffice us. But how to love and receive our brother, as we

believe and hope Christ has received both him and us, and yet refuse to hold communion with him, is, we confess, a mystery too deep for us. If this be the way that Christ hath received us, then woe is unto us. We do not here intend a professed brother transgressing the express letter of the law, and refusing to be reclaimed. Whatever may be our charity in such a case, we have not sufficient evidence that Christ has received him, or that he has received Christ as his teacher and Lord. To adopt means, then, apparently subversive of the very end proposed, means which the experience of ages has evinced successful only in overthrowing the visible interests of Christianity, in counteracting, as far as possible, the declared intention, the express command of its Divine author, would appear in no wise a prudent measure for removing and preventing those evils. To maintain unity and purity has always been the plausible pretense of the compilers and abettors of human systems, and we believe, in many instances, their sincere intention; but have they at all answered the end? Confessedly, demonstrably, they have not; no, not even in the several parties which have most strictly adopted them; much less to the catholic professing body. Instead of her catholic constitutional unity and purity, what does the Church present us with, at this day, but a catalogue of sects and sectarian systems--each binding its respective party, by the most sacred and solemn engagements, to continue as it is to the end of the world; at least, this is confessedly the case with many of them. What a sorry substitute these for Christian unity and love! On the other hand, what a mercy is it that no human obligation that man can come under is

valid against the truth. When the Lord the healer descends upon his people, to give them a discovery of the nature and tendency of those artificial bonds wherewith they have suffered themselves to be bound in their dark and sleepy condition, they will no more be able to hold them in a state of sectarian bondage than the withes and cords with which the Philistines bound Samson were able to retain him their prisoner, or than the bonds of Antichrist were to hold in captivity the fathers of the Reformation. May the Lord soon open the eyes of his people to see things in their true light, and excite them to come up out of their wilderness condition, out of this Babel of confusion, leaning upon their Beloved, and embracing each other in him, holding fast the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This gracious unity and unanimity in Jesus would afford the best external evidence of their union with him, and of their conjoint interest in the Father's love. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples," says he, "if you have love one to another." And "This is my commandment, That you love one another as I have loved you; that you also love one another." And again, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are"; even "all that shall believe in me; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." May the Lord

hasten it in his time. Farewell.

Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

THOMAS CAMPBELL,  
THOMAS ACHESON.

## APPENDIX

To prevent mistakes, we beg leave to subjoin the following explanations. As to what we have done, our reasons for so doing, and the grand object we would desire to see accomplished, all these, we presume, are sufficiently declared in the foregoing pages. As to what we intend to do in our associate capacity, and the ground we have taken in that capacity, though expressly and definitely declared, yet these, perhaps, might be liable to some misconstruction. First, then, we beg leave to assure our brethren that we have no intention to interfere, either directly or indirectly, with the peace and order of the settled Churches, by directing any ministerial assistance with which the Lord may please to favor us, to make inroads upon such; or by endeavoring to erect Churches out of Churches, to distract and divide congregations. We have no nostrum, no peculiar discovery of our own to propose to fellow-Christians, for the fancied importance of which they should become followers of us. We propose to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express word of God, either as to matter of faith or practice; but every one that has a Bible, and can read it, can read this for himself. Therefore, we have nothing new.

Neither do we pretend to acknowledge persons to be ministers of Christ, and, at the same time, consider it our duty to forbid or discourage people to go to hear them, merely because they may hold some things disagreeable to us; much less to encourage their people to leave them on that account. And such do we esteem all who preach a free, unconditional salvation through the blood of Jesus to perishing sinners of every description, and who manifestly connect with this a life of holiness and pastoral diligence in the performance of all the duties of their sacred office, according to the Scriptures, of even all of whom, as to all appearance, it may be truly said to the objects of their charge: "They seek not yours, but you." May the good Lord prosper all such, by whatever name they are called, and hasten that happy period when Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye, and all be called by the same name. Such, then, have nothing to fear from our association, were our resources equal to our utmost wishes. But all others we esteem as hirelings, as idle shepherds, and should be glad to see the Lord's flock delivered from their mouth, according to his promise. Our principal and proper design, then, with respect to ministerial assistants, such as we have described in our fifth resolution, is to direct their attention to those places where there is manifest need for their labors; and many such places there are; would to God it were in our power to supply them. As to creeds and confessions, although we may appear to our brethren to oppose them, yet this is to be understood only in so far as they oppose the unity of the Church, by containing sentiments not expressly revealed in the word of God; or, by the way of using them, become the instruments of a human or implicit

faith, or oppress the weak of God's heritage. Where they are liable to none of those objections, we have nothing against them. It is the abuse and not the lawful use of such compilations that we oppose. See Proposition 7, page 46. Our intention, therefore, with respect to all the Churches of Christ is perfectly amicable. We heartily wish their reformation, but by no means their hurt or confusion. Should any affect to say that our coming forward as we have done, in advancing and publishing such things, has a manifest tendency to distract and divide the Churches, or to make a new party, we treat it as a confident and groundless assertion, and must suppose they have not duly considered, or, at least, not well understood the subject.

All we shall say to this at present, is, that if the Divine word be not the standard of a party, then are we not a party, for we have adopted no other. If to maintain its alone sufficiency be not a party principle, then are we not a party. If to justify this principle by our practice, in making a rule of it, and of it alone, and not of our own opinions, nor of those of others, be not a party principle, then are we not a party. If to propose and practice neither more nor less than it expressly reveals and enjoins be not a partial business, then are we not a party. These are the very sentiments we have approved and recommended, as a society formed for the express purpose of promoting Christian unity, in opposition to a party spirit. Should any tell us that to do these things is impossible without the intervention of human reason and opinion, we humbly thank them for the discovery. But who ever thought otherwise? Were we not rational subjects, and of course capable of understanding and forming opinions,

would it not evidently appear that, to us, revelation of any kind would be quite useless, even suppose it as evident as mathematics? We pretend not, therefore, to divest ourselves of reason, that we may become quiet, inoffensive, and peaceable Christians; nor yet, of any of its proper and legitimate operations upon Divinely revealed truths. We only pretend to assert, what every one that pretends to reason must acknowledge, namely, that there is a manifest distinction between an express Scripture declaration, and the conclusion or inference which may be deduced from it; and that the former may be clearly understood, even where the latter is but imperfectly if at all perceived; and that we are at least as certain of the declaration as we can be of the conclusion we drew from it; and that, after all, the conclusion ought not to be exalted above the premises, so as to make void the declaration for the sake of establishing our own conclusion; and that, therefore, the express commands to preserve and maintain inviolate Christian unity and love, ought not to be set aside to make way for exalting our inferences above the express authority of God. Our inference, upon the whole, is, that where a professing Christian brother opposes or refuses nothing either in faith or practice, for which there can be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," that we ought not to reject him because he cannot see with our eyes as to matters of human inference, of private judgment. "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish? How walkest thou not charitably?" Thus we reason, thus we conclude, to make no conclusion of our own, nor of any other fallible fellow-creature, a rule of faith or duty to our brother. Whether we refuse

reason, then, or abuse it, in our so doing, let our brethren judge. But, after all, we have only ventured to suggest what, in other words, the apostle has expressly taught; namely, that the strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves; that we ought to receive him that is weak in the faith, because God has received him. In a word, that we ought to receive one another, as Christ hath also received us to the glory of God. We dare not, therefore, patronize the rejection of God's dear children, because they may not be able to see alike in matters of human inference--of private opinion; and such we esteem all things not expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. If otherwise, we know not what private opinion means. On the other hand, should our peaceful and affectionate overture for union in truth prove offensive to any of our brethren, or occasion disturbances in any of the Churches, the blame cannot be attached to us. We have only ventured to persuade, and, if possible, to excite to the performance of an important duty--a duty equally incumbent upon us all. Neither have we pretended to dictate to them what they should do. We have only proposed what appeared to us most likely to promote the desired event, humbly submitting the whole premises to their candid and impartial investigation, to be altered, corrected, and amended, as they see cause, or to adopt any other plan that may appear more just and unexceptionable. As for ourselves, we have taken all due care, in the mean time, to take no step that might throw a stumbling-block in the way, that might prove now, or at any future period, a barrier to prevent the accomplishment of that most desirable

object, either by joining to support a party, or by patronizing anything as articles of faith or duty not expressly enjoined in the Divine standard; as we are sure, whatever alterations may take place, that will stand. That considerable alterations must and will take place, in the standards of all the sects, before that glorious object can be accomplished, no man, that duly considers the matter, can possibly doubt. In so far, then, we have at least endeavored to act consistently; and with the same consistency would desire to be instrumental in erecting as many Churches as possible throughout the desolate places of God's heritage, upon the same catholic foundation, being well persuaded that every such erection will not only in the issue prove an accession to the general cause, but will also, in the mean time, be a step toward it, and, of course, will reap the first-fruits of that blissful harvest that will fill the face of the world with fruit. For if the first Christian Churches, walking in the fear of the Lord in holy unity and unanimity, enjoyed the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and were increased and edified, we have reason to believe that walking in their footsteps will every where and at all times insure the same blessed privileges. And it is in an exact conformity to their recorded and approved example, that we, through grace, would be desirous to promote the erection of Churches; and this we believe to be quite practicable, if the legible and authentic records of their faith and practice be handed down to us upon the page of New Testament Scripture; but if otherwise, we cannot help it. Yet, even in this case, might we not humbly presume that the Lord would take the will for the deed? for if there be first a willing mind, we are told, "it is

accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." It would appear, then, that sincerely and humbly adopting this model, with an entire reliance upon promised grace, we cannot, we shall not, be disappointed. By this, at least, we shall get rid of two great evils, which, we fear, are at this day grievously provoking the Lord to plead a controversy with the Churches: we mean the taking and giving of unjust offenses; judging and rejecting each other in matters wherein the Lord hath not judged, in a flat contradiction to his expressly revealed will. But, according to the principle adopted, we can neither take offense at our brother for his private opinions, if he be content to hold them as such, nor yet offend him with ours, if he do not usurp the place of the lawgiver; and even suppose he should, in this case we judge him, not for his opinions, but for his presumption. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" But further, to prevent mistakes, we beg leave to explain our meaning in a sentence or two which might possibly be misunderstood. In the first page we say, that no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. By the law here, and elsewhere, when taken in this latitude, we mean that whole revelation of faith and duty expressly declared in the Divine word, taken together, or in its due connection, upon every article, and not any detached sentence. We understand it as extending to all prohibitions, as well as to all requirements. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." We dare, therefore, neither do nor receive anything as of Divine obligation for which there cannot be expressly

produced a "Thus saith the Lord," either in express terms or by approved precedent. According to this rule we judge, and beyond it we dare not go. Taking this sentiment in connection with the last clause of the fifth resolution, we are to be understood, of all matters of faith and practice, of primary and universal obligation; that is to say, of express revelation; that nothing be inculcated, as such, for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," as above, without, at the same time, interfering directly or indirectly with the private judgment of any individual, which does not expressly contradict the express letter of the law, or add to the number of its institutions. Every sincere and upright Christian will understand and do the will of God, in every instance, to the best of his skill and judgment; but in the application of the general rule to particular cases there may, and doubtless will, be some variety of opinion and practice. This, we see, was actually the case in the apostolic Churches, without any breach of Christian unity; and if this was the case at the erection of the Christian Church from among Jews and Gentiles, may we not reasonably expect that it will be the same at her restoration from under her long antichristian and sectarian desolations?

With a direct reference to this state of things, and, as we humbly think, in a perfect consistency with the foregoing explanations, have we expressed ourselves in the thirty-ninth page, wherein we declare ourselves ready to relinquish whatever we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice, not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, so that we and our brethren might by this mutual concession, return together to the

original constitutional unity of the Christian Church, and dwell together in peace and charity. By this proposed relinquishment we are to be understood, in the first instance, of our manner of holding those things, and not simply of the things themselves; for no man can relinquish his opinions or practices till once convinced that they are wrong; and this he may not be immediately, even supposing they were so. One thing, however, he may do: when not bound by an express command, he need not impose them upon others, by anywise requiring their approbation; and when this is done, the things, to them, are as good as dead, yea, as good as buried, too, being thus removed out of the way. Has not the apostle set us a noble example of this in his pious and charitable zeal for the comfort and edification of his brother, in declaring himself ready to forego his rights (not indeed to break commandments) rather than stumble, or offend, his brother? And who knows not that the Hebrew Christians abstained from certain meats, observed certain days, kept the passover, circumcised their children, etc., etc., while no such things were practiced by the Gentile converts, and yet no breach of unity while they charitably forbore one with the other. But had the Jews been expressly prohibited, or the Gentiles expressly enjoined, by the authority of Jesus, to observe these things, could they, in such a case, have lawfully exercised this forbearance? But where no express law is, there can be no formal, no intentional transgression, even although its implicit and necessary consequences had forbid the thing, had they been discovered. Upon the whole, we see one thing is evident: the Lord will bear with the weaknesses, the involuntary

ignorances, and mistakes of his people, though not with their presumption. Ought they not, therefore, to bear with each other--"to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; forbearing one with another in love?" What says the Scripture? We say, then, the declaration referred to is to be thus understood in the first instance; though we do not say but something further is intended. For certainly we may lawfully suspend both declaration and practice upon any subject, where the law is silent; when to do otherwise must prevent the accomplishment of an expressly commanded and highly important duty; and such, confessedly, is the thing in question. What says the apostle? "All things are lawful for me; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me; but all things edify not." It seems, then, that among lawful things which might be for borne--that is, as we humbly conceive, things not expressly commanded--the governing principle of the apostle's conduct was the edification of his brethren of the Church of God. A Divine principle this, indeed! May the Lord God infuse it into all his people. Were all those nonpreceptive opinions and practices which have been maintained and exalted to the destruction of the Church's unity, counterbalanced with the breach of the express law of Christ, and the black catalogue of mischiefs which have necessarily ensued, on which side, think you, would be the preponderance? When weighed in the balance with this monstrous complex evil, would they not all appear lighter than vanity? Who, then, would not relinquish a cent to obtain a kingdom! And here let it be noted, that it is not the renunciation of an opinion or practice as sinful that is proposed or intended, but merely a

cessation from the publishing or practicing it, so as to give offense; a thing men are in the habit of doing every day for their private comfort or secular emolument, where the advantage is of infinitely less importance. Neither is there here any clashing of duties, as if to forbear was a sin and also to practice was sin; the thing to be forborne being a matter of private opinion, which, though not expressly forbidden, yet are we by no means expressly commanded to practice; whereas we are expressly commanded to endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And what says the apostle to the point in hand? "Hast thou faith," says he; "have it to thyself before God. Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth."

It may be further added, that a still higher and more perfect degree of uniformity is intended, though neither in the first nor second instance, which are but so many steps toward it; namely: the utter abolition of those minor differences, which have been greatly increased, as well as continued, by our unhappy manner of treating them, in making them the subject of perpetual strife and contention. Many of the opinions which are now dividing the Church, had they been let alone, would have been long since dead and gone; but the constant insisting upon them, as articles of faith and terms of salvation, have so beaten them into the minds of men, that, in many instances, they would as soon deny the Bible itself as give up one of those opinions. Having thus embraced contentions and preferred divisions to that constitutional unity, peace, and charity so essential to Christianity, it would appear that the Lord, in righteous judgment, has abandoned his professing people to the

awful scourge of those evils; as, in an instance somewhat similar, he formerly did his highly favored Israel. "My people," says he, "would not hearken to my voice. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." "Israel hath made many altars to sin: therefore altars shall be unto him to sin." Thus, then are we to be consistently understood, as fully and fairly intending, on our part, what we have declared and proposed to our brethren, as, to our apprehension, incumbent upon them and us, for putting an end for ever to our sad and lamentable schisms. Should any object and say that, after all, the fullest compliance with everything proposed and intended would not restore the Church to the desired unity, as there might remain differences of opinion and practice; let such but duly consider what properly belongs to the unity of the Church, and we are persuaded this objection will vanish. Does not the visible Scriptural unity of the Christian Church consist in the unity of her public profession and practice, and, under this, in the manifest charity of her members, one toward another, and not in the unity of private opinion and practice of every individual? Was not this evidently the case in the apostles' days, as has been already observed? If so, the objection falls to the ground. And here let it be noted (if the hint be at all necessary), that we are speaking of the unity of the Church considered as a great, visible, professing body, consisting of many coordinate associations; each of these, in its aggregate or associate capacity, walking by the same rule, professing and practicing the same things. That this visible Scriptural unity be preserved without corruption, or breach of charity, throughout the whole, and in every

particular worshiping society or Church, is the grand desideratum--the thing strictly enjoined and greatly to be desired. An agreement in the expressly revealed will of God is the adequate and firm foundation of this unity; ardent prayer, accompanied with prudent, peaceable, and persevering exertion, in the use of all Scriptural means for accomplishing it, are the things humbly suggested and earnestly recommended to our brethren. If we have mistaken the way, their charity will put us right; but if otherwise, their fidelity to Christ and his cause will excite them to come forth speedily, to assist with us in this blessed work.

After all, should any impeach us with the vague charge of Latitudinarianism (let none be startled at this gigantic term), it will prove as feeble an opponent to the glorious cause in which we, however weak and unworthy, are professedly engaged, as the Zamzummins did of old, to prevent the children of Lot from taking possession of their inheritance. If we take no greater latitude than the Divine law allows, either in judging of persons or doctrines--either in profession or practice (and this is the very thing we humbly propose and sincerely intend), may we not reasonably hope that such a latitude will appear, to every upright Christian, perfectly innocent and unexceptionable? If this be Latitudinarianism, it must be a good thing, and, therefore, the more we have of it the better; and may be it is, for we are told, "the commandment is exceeding broad;" and we intend to go just as far as it will suffer us, but not one hairbreadth further; so, at least, says our profession. And surely it will be time enough to condemn our practice, when it appears manifestly inconsistent with the profession we have thus precisely

and explicitly made. We here refer to the whole of the foregoing premises. But were this word as bad as it is long, were it stuffed with evil from beginning to end, may be it better belongs to those that brandish it so unmercifully at their neighbors, especially if they take a greater latitude than their neighbors do, or than the Divine law allows. Let the case, then, be fairly submitted to all that know their Bible, to all that take upon them to see with their own eyes, to judge for themselves. And here let it be observed once for all, that it is only to such we direct our attention in the foregoing pages. As for those that either cannot or will not see and judge for themselves, they must be content to follow their leaders till they come to their eyesight, or determine to make use of the faculties and means of information which God has given them; with such, in the mean time, it would be useless to reason, seeing that they either confessedly cannot see, or have completely resigned themselves to the conduct of their leaders, and are therefore determined to hearken to none but them. If there be none such, however, we are happily deceived; but, if so, we are not the only persons that are thus deceived; for this is the common fault objected by almost all the parties to each other, namely, that they either cannot or will not see; and it would be hard to think they were all mistaken; the fewer there be, however, of this description, the better. To all those, then, that are disposed to see and think for themselves, to form their judgment by the Divine word itself, and not by any human explication of it, humbly relying upon and looking for the promised assistance of Divine teaching, and not barely trusting to their own understanding--to all such do we gladly

commit our cause, being persuaded that, at least, they will give it a very serious and impartial consideration, as being truly desirous to know the truth. To you, then, we appeal, in the present instance, as we have also done from the beginning. Say, we beseech you, to whom does the charge of Latitudinarianism, when taken in a bad sense (for we have supposed it may be taken in a good sense), most truly and properly belong, whether to those that will neither add nor diminish anything as to matter of faith and duty, either to or from what is expressly revealed and enjoined in the holy Scriptures, or to those who pretend to go further than this, or to set aside some of its express declarations and injunctions, to make way for their own opinions, inferences, and conclusions? Whether to those who profess their willingness to hold communion with their acknowledged Christian brethren, when they neither manifestly oppose nor contradict anything expressly revealed and enjoined in the sacred standard, or to those who reject such, when professing to believe and practice whatever is expressly revealed and enjoined therein, without, at the same time, being alleged, much less found guilty, of anything to the contrary, but instead of this asserting and declaring their hearty assent and consent to everything for which there can be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," either in express terms or by approved precedent? To which of these, think you, does the odious charge of Latitudinarianism belong? Which of them takes the greatest latitude? Whether those that expressly judge and condemn where they have no express warrant for so doing, or those that absolutely refuse so to do? And we can assure our brethren,

that such things are and have been done, to our own certain knowledge, and even where we least expected it; and that it is to this discovery, as much as to many other things, that we stand indebted for that thorough conviction of the evil state of things in the Churches, which has given rise to our association. As for our part, we dare no longer give our assent to such proceedings; we dare no longer concur in expressly asserting or declaring anything in the name of the Lord, that he has not expressly declared in his holy word. And until such time as Christians come to see the evil of doing otherwise, we see no rational ground to hope that there can be either unity, peace, purity, or prosperity, in the Church of God. Convinced of the truth of this, we would humbly desire to be instrumental in pointing out to our fellow-Christians the evils of such conduct. And if we might venture to give our opinion of such proceedings, we would not hesitate to say, that they appear to include three great evils--evils truly great in themselves, and at the same time productive of most evil consequences.

First, to determine expressly, in the name of the Lord, when the Lord has not expressly determined, appears to us a very great evil. (See Deut. xviii: 20:) "The prophet that shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, even that prophet shall die." The apostle Paul, no doubt, well aware of this cautiously distinguishes between his own judgment and the express injunctions of the Lord. (See I Cor. vii: 25 and 40.) Though, at the same time, it appears that he was as well convinced of the truth and propriety of his declarations, and of the concurrence of the Holy Spirit with his judgment, as any of our modern

determiners may be; for "I think," said he, "that I have the Spirit of God;" and we doubt much, if the best of them could honestly say more than this; yet we see that, with all this, he would not bind the Church with his conclusions; and, for this very reason, as he expressly tells us, because, as to the matter on hand, he had no commandment of the Lord. He spoke by permission, and not by commandment, as one that had obtained mercy to be faithful, and therefore would not forge his Master's name by affixing it to his own conclusions, saying, "The Lord saith, when the Lord had not spoken."

A second evil is, not only judging our brother to be absolutely wrong, because he differs from our opinions, but more especially, our judging him to be a transgressor of the law in so doing, and, of course, treating him as such by censuring or otherwise exposing him to contempt, or, at least, preferring ourselves before him in our own judgment, saying, as it were, Stand by, I am holier than thou.

A third and still more dreadful evil is, when we not only, in this kind of way, judge and set at naught our brother, but, moreover, proceed as a Church, acting and judging in the name of Christ, not only to determine that our brother is wrong because he differs from our determinations, but also, in connection with this, proceed so far as to determine the merits of the cause by rejecting him, or casting him out of the Church, as unworthy of a place in her communion, and thus, as far as in our power, cutting him off from the kingdom of heaven. In proceeding thus, we not only declare, that, in our judgment, our brother is in an error, which we may sometimes do in a perfect consistence with charity, but

we also take upon us to judge, as acting in the name and by the authority of Christ, that his error cuts him off from salvation; that continuing such, he has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. If not, what means our refusing him--our casting him out of the Church, which is the kingdom of God in this world? For certainly, if a person have no right, according to the Divine word, to a place in the Church of God upon earth (which we say he has not, by thus rejecting him), he can have none to a place in the Church in heaven--unless we should suppose that those whom Christ by his word rejects here, he will nevertheless receive hereafter. And surely it is by the word that every Church pretends to judge; and it is by this rule, in the case before us, that the person in the judgment of the Church stands rejected. Now is not this, to all intents and purposes, determining the merits of the cause? Do we not conclude that the person's error cuts him off from all ordinary possibility of salvation, by thus cutting him off from a place in the Church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation? Does he not henceforth become to us as a heathen man and a publican? Is he not reckoned among the number of those that are without, whom God judgeth? If not, what means such a solemn determination? Is it anything or is it nothing, for a person to stand rejected by the Church of God? If such rejection confessedly leave the man still in the same safe and hopeful state as to his spiritual interests, then, indeed, it becomes a matter of mere indifference; for as to his civil and natural privileges, it interferes not with them. But the Scripture gives us a very different view of the matter; for there we see that those that stand justly rejected by the

Church on earth, have no room to hope for a place in the Church of heaven. "What ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" is the awful sanction of the Church's judgment, in justly rejecting any person. Take away this, and it has no sanction at all. But the Church rejecting, always pretends to have acted justly in so doing, and, if so, whereabouts does it confessedly leave the person rejected, if not in a state of damnation? that is to say, if it acknowledge itself to be a Church of Christ, and to have acted justly. If, after all, any particular Church acting thus should refuse the foregoing conclusion, by saying: We meant no such thing concerning the person rejected; we only judged him unworthy of a place among us, and therefore put him away, but there are other Churches that may receive him; we would be almost tempted to ask such a Church, if those other Churches be Churches of Christ, and if so, pray what does it account itself? Is it anything more or better than a Church of Christ? And whether, if those other Churches do their duty as faithful Churches, any of them would receive the person it had rejected? If it be answered that, in acting faithfully, none of those other Churches either could or would receive him, then, confessedly, in the judgment of this particular Church, the person ought to be universally rejected; but if otherwise, it condemns itself of having acted unfaithfully, nay cruelly, toward a Christian brother, a child of God, in thus rejecting him from the heritage of the Lord, in thus cutting him off from his Father's house, as the unnatural brethren did the beloved Joseph. But even suppose some one or other of those unfaithful Churches should receive the outcast, would their

unfaithfulness in so doing nullify, in the judgment of this more faithful Church, its just and faithful decision in rejecting him? If not, then, confessedly, in its judgment, the person still remains under the influence of its righteous sentence, debarred from the kingdom of heaven; that is to say, if it believe the Scriptures, that what it has righteously done upon earth is ratified in heaven. We see no way that a Church acting thus can possibly get rid of this awful conclusion, except it acknowledges that the person it has rejected from its communion still has a right to the communion of the Church; but if it acknowledge this, whereabouts does it leave itself, in thus shutting out a fellow-Christian, an acknowledged brother, a child of God? Do we find any parallel for such conduct in the inspired records, except in the case of Diotrephes, of whom the apostle says, "Who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church."

But further, suppose another Church should receive this castaway, this person which this faithful Church supposed itself to have righteously rejected, would not the Church so doing incur the displeasure, nay even the censure of the Church that had rejected him? and, we should think, justly too if he deserved to be rejected. And would not this naturally produce a schism between the Churches? Or, if it be supposed that a schism did already exist, would not this manifestly tend to perpetuate and increase it? If one Church, receiving those whom another puts away, will not be productive of

schism, we must confess we cannot tell what would. That Church, therefore, must surely act very schismatically, very unlike a Church of Christ, which necessarily presupposes or produces schism in order to shield an oppressed fellow-Christian from the dreadful consequences of its unrighteous proceedings. And is not this confessedly the case with every Church which rejects a person from its communion while it acknowledges him to be a fellow-Christian; and, in order to excuse this piece of cruelty, says he may find refuge some place else, some other Church may receive him? For, as we have already observed, if no schism did already exist, one Church receiving those whom an other has rejected must certainly make one. The same evils also will as justly attach to the conduct of an individual who refuses or breaks communion with a Church because it will not receive or make room for his private opinions or self-devised practices in its public profession and managements; for does he not, in this case, actually take upon him to judge the Church which he thus rejects as unworthy of the communion of Christians? And is not this, to all intents and purposes, declaring it, in his judgment, excommunicate, or at least worthy of excommunication?

Thus have we briefly endeavored to show our brethren what evidently appears to us to be the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of that truly latitudinarian principle and practice which is the bitter root of almost all our divisions, namely, the imposing of our private opinions upon each other as articles of faith or duty, introducing them into the public profession and practice of the Church, and acting upon them as if they were the express law of Christ, by

judging and rejecting our brethren that differ from us in those things, or at least by so retaining them in our public profession and practice that our brethren cannot join with us, or we with them, without becoming actually partakers in those things which they or we cannot in conscience approve, and which the word of God nowhere expressly enjoins upon us. To cease from all such things by simply returning to the original standard of Christianity, the profession and practice of the primitive Church, as expressly exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament scripture, is the only possible way that we can perceive to get rid of those evils. And we humbly think that a uniform agreement in that for the preservation of charity would be infinitely preferable to our contentions and divisions; nay, that such a uniformity is the very thing that the Lord requires if the New Testament be a perfect model, a sufficient formula for the worship, discipline, and government of the Christian Church. Let us do as we are there expressly told they did, say as they said; that is, profess and practice as therein expressly enjoined by precept and precedent, in every possible instance, after their approved example; and in so doing we shall realize and exhibit all that unity and uniformity that the primitive Church possessed, or that the law of Christ requires. But if, after all, our brethren can point out a better way to regain and preserve that Christian unity and charity expressly enjoined upon the Church of God, we shall thank them for the discovery, and cheerfully embrace it.

Should it still be urged that this would open a wide door to latitudinarianism, seeing all that profess Christianity profess to receive the holy Scriptures,

and yet differ so widely in their religious sentiments, we say, let them profess what they will, their difference in religious profession and practice originates in their departure from what is expressly revealed and enjoined, and not in their strict and faithful conformity to it, which is the thing we humbly advise for putting an end to those differences. But you may say, Do they not already all agree in the letter, though differing so far in sentiment? However this may be, have they all agreed to make the letter their rule, or, rather, to make it the subject-matter of their profession and practice? Surely not, or else they would all profess and practice the same thing. Is it not as evident as the shining light that the Scriptures exhibit but one and the self-same subject-matter of profession and practice, at all times and in all places, and that, therefore, to say as it declares, and to do as it prescribes in all its holy precepts, its approved and imitable examples, would unite the Christian Church in a holy sameness of profession and practice throughout the whole world? By the Christian Church throughout the world, we mean the aggregate of such professors as we have described in Propositions 1 and 8, pages 48 and 50, even all that mutually acknowledge each other as Christians, upon the manifest evidence of their faith, holiness, and charity. It is such only we intend when we urge the necessity of Christian unity. Had only such been all along recognized as the genuine subjects of our holy religion, there would not, in all probability, have been so much apparent need for human formulas to preserve an external formality of professional unity and soundness in the faith, but artificial and superficial characters need artificial

means to train and unite them. A manifest attachment to our Lord Jesus Christ in faith, holiness, and charity, was the original criterion of Christian character, the distinguishing badge of our holy profession, the foundation and cement of Christian unity. But now, alas! and long since, an external name, a mere educational formality of sameness in the profession of a certain standard or formula of human fabric, with a very moderate degree of what is called morality, forms the bond and foundation, the root and reason of ecclesiastical unity. Take away from such the technicalness of their profession, the shibboleth of party, and what have they more? What have they left to distinguish and hold them together? As for the Bible, they are but little beholden to it, they have learned little from it, they know little about it, and therefore depend as little upon it. Nay, they will even tell you it would be of no use to them without their formula; they could not know a Papist from a Protestant by it; that merely by it they could neither keep themselves nor the Church right for a single week. You might preach to them what you please, they could not distinguish truth from error. Poor people, it is no wonder they are so fond of their formula! Therefore they that exercise authority upon them and tell them what they are to believe and what they are to do, are called benefactors. These are the reverend and right reverend authors, upon whom they can and do place a more entire and implicit confidence than upon the holy apostles and prophets; those plain, honest, unassuming men, who would never venture to say or do anything in the name of the Lord without an express revelation from Heaven, and therefore were never distinguished by the venerable titles of Rabbi or

Reverend, but just simple Paul, John, Thomas, etc. These were but servants. They did not assume to legislate, and, therefore, neither assumed nor received any honorary titles among men, but merely such as were descriptive of their office. And how, we beseech you, shall this gross and prevalent corruption be purged out of the visible professing Church but by a radical reform, but by returning to the original simplicity, the primitive purity of the Christian institution, and, of course, taking up things just as we find them upon the sacred page. And who is there that knows anything of the present state of the Church who does not perceive that it is greatly over run with the aforesaid evils? Or who that reads his Bible, and receives the impressions it must necessarily produce upon the receptive mind by the statements it exhibits, does not perceive that such a state of things is as distinct from genuine Christianity as oil is from water?

On the other hand, is it not equally as evident that not one of all the erroneous tenets and corrupt practices which have so defamed and corrupted the public profession and practice of Christianity, could ever have appeared in the world had men kept close by the express letter of the Divine law, had they thus held fast that form of sound words contained in the holy Scriptures, and considered it their duty so to do, unless they blame those errors and corruptions upon the very form and expression of the Scriptures, and say that, taken in their letter and connection, they immediately, and at first sight, as it were, exhibit the picture they have drawn. Should any be so bold as to assert this, let them produce their performance, the original is at hand; and let them show us line for line,

expression for expression, precept and precedent for practice, without the torture of criticism, inference, or conjecture, and then we shall honestly blame the whole upon the Bible, and thank those that will give us an expurgated edition of it, call it constitution, or formula, or what you please, that will not be liable to lead the simple, unlettered world into those gross mistakes, those contentions, schisms, excommunications, and persecutions which have proved so detrimental and scandalous to our holy religion.

Should it be further objected, that even this strict literal uniformity would neither infer nor secure unity of sentiment; it is granted that, in a certain degree, it would not; nor, indeed, is there anything either in Scripture or the nature of things that should induce us to expect an entire unity of sentiment in the present imperfect state. The Church may, and we believe will, come to such a Scriptural unity of faith and practice, that there will be no schism in the body, no self-preferring sect of professed and acknowledged Christians rejecting and excluding their brethren. This cannot be, however, till the offensive and excluding causes be removed; and every one knows what these are. But that all the members should have the same identical views of all Divinely revealed truths, or that there should be no difference of opinion among them, appears to us morally impossible, all things considered. Nor can we conceive what desirable purpose such a unity of sentiment would serve, except to render useless some of those gracious, self-denying, and compassionate precepts of mutual sympathy and forbearance which the word of God enjoins upon his people. Such, then, is the imperfection of our present state. Would to God it

might prove, as it ought, a just and humbling counterbalance to our pride! Then, indeed, we would judge one another no more about such matters. We would rather be conscientiously cautious to give no offense; to put no stumbling-block or occasion to fall in our brother's way. We would then no longer exalt our own opinions and inferences to an equality with express revelation, by condemning and rejecting our brother for differing with us in those things.

But although it be granted that the uniformity we plead for would not secure unity of sentiment, yet we should suppose that it would be as efficacious for that purpose as any human expedient or substitute whatsoever. And here we would ask: Have all or any of those human compilations been able to prevent divisions, to heal breaches, or to produce and maintain unity of sentiment even among those who have most firmly and solemnly embraced them? We appeal for this to the history of all the Churches, and to the present divided state of the Church at large. What good, then, have those divisive expedients accomplished, either to the parties that have adopted them, or to the Church universal, which might not have been as well secured by holding fast in profession and practice that form of sound words contained in the Divine standard, without, at the same time, being liable to any of those dangerous and destructive consequences which have necessarily ensued upon the present mode? Or, will any venture to say that the Scriptures, thus kept in their proper place, would not have been amply sufficient, under the promised influence of the Divine Spirit, to have produced all that unity of sentiment which is necessary to a life of faith and holiness; and also to have preserved the

faith and worship of the Church as pure from mixture and error as the Lord intended, or as the present imperfect state of his people can possibly admit? We should tremble to think that any Christian should say that they would not. And if to use them thus would be sufficient for those purposes, why resort to other expedients; to expedients which, from the beginning to this day, have proved utterly insufficient; nay, to expedients which have always produced the very contrary effects, as experience testifies. Let none here imagine that we set any certain limits to the Divine intention, or to the greatness of his power when we thus speak, as if a certain degree of purity from mixture and error were not designed for the Church in this world, or attainable by his people upon earth except in so far as respects the attainment of an angelic or unerring perfection, much less that we mean to suggest that a very moderate degree of unity and purity should content us. We only take it for granted that such a state of perfection is neither intended nor attainable in this world, as will free the Church from all those weaknesses, mistakes, and mismanagements from which she will be completely exempted in heaven, however sound and upright she may now be in her profession, intention, and practice. Neither let any imagine that we here or elsewhere suppose or intend to assert that human standards are intentionally set up in competition with the Bible, much less in opposition to it. We fairly understand and consider them as human expedients, or as certain doctrinal declarations of the sense in which the compilers understood the Scriptures, designed and embraced for the purpose of promoting and securing that desirable unity and purity which the

Bible alone, with out those helps, would be insufficient to maintain and secure. If this be not the sense of those that receive and hold them, for the aforesaid purpose, we should be glad to know what it is. It is, however, in this very sense that we take them up when we complain of them, as not only unsuccessful, but also as unhappy expedients, producing the very contrary effects. And even suppose it were doubtful whether or not those helps have produced divisions, one thing, at least, is certain, they have not been able to prevent them; and now, that divisions do exist, it is as certain that they have no fitness nor tendency to heal them, but the very contrary, as fact and experience clearly demonstrate. What shall we do, then, to heal our divisions? We must certainly take some other way than the present practice, if they ever be healed; for it expressly says, they must and shall be perpetuated forever. Let all the enemies of Christianity say Amen; but let all Christians continually say: Forbid it, O Lord. May the good Lord subdue the corruptions and heal the divisions of his people. Amen, and amen.

After all that has been said, some of our timid brethren may, possibly, still object, and say: we fear that without the intervention of some definite creed or formula, you will justly incur the censure of latitudinarianism; for how otherwise detect and exclude Arians, Socinians, etc? To such we would reply, that if to profess, inculcate, and practice neither more nor less, neither anything else nor otherwise than the Divine word expressly declares respecting the entire subject of faith and duty, and simply to rest in that, as the expression of our faith and rule of our practice, will not amount to the profession and practical

exhibition of Arianism, Socinianism, etc., but merely to one and the self-same thing, whatever it may be called, then is the ground that we have taken, the principle that we advocate, in nowise chargeable with latitudinarianism. Should it be still further objected that all these sects, and many more, profess to receive the Bible, to believe it to be the word of God, and, therefore, will readily profess to believe and practice whatever is revealed and enjoined therein, and yet each will understand it his own way, and of course practice accordingly; nevertheless, according to the plan proposed, you receive them all. We would ask, then, do all these profess and practice neither more nor less than what we read in the Bible--than what is expressly revealed and enjoined therein? If so, they all profess and practice the same thing, for the Bible exhibits but one and the self-same thing to all. Or, is it their own inferences and opinions that they, in reality, profess and practice? If so, then upon the ground that we have taken they stand rejected, as condemned of themselves, for thus professing one thing when in fact and reality they manifestly practice another. But perhaps you will say, that although a uniformity in profession, and it may be in practice too, might thus be produced, yet still it would amount to no more than a mere uniformity in words, and in the external formalities of practice, while the persons thus professing and practicing might each entertain his own sentiments, how different soever these might be. Our reply is, if so, they could hurt nobody but them selves. Besides, if persons thus united professed and practiced all the same things, pray who could tell that they entertained different sentiments, or even in justice suppose it, unless they gave some evident

intimation of it? which, if they did, would justly expose them to censure or to rejection, if they repented not; seeing the offense, in this case, must amount to nothing less than an express violation of the expressly revealed will of God--to a manifest transgression of the express letter of the law; for we have declared, that except in such a case, no man, in our judgment, has a right to judge, that is, to condemn or reject his professing brother. Here, we presume, there is no greater latitude assumed or allowed on either side than the law expressly determines. But we would humbly ask, if a professed agreement in the terms of any standard be not liable to the very same objection? If, for instance, Arians, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists, Antinomians, etc., might not all subscribe the Westminster Confession, the Athanasian Creed, or the doctrinal articles of the Church of England. If this be denied, we appeal to historical facts; and, in the mean time, venture to assert that such things are and have been done. Or, will any say, that a person might not with equal ease, honesty, and consistency, be an Arian or a Socinian in his heart while subscribing the Westminster Confession or the Athanasian Creed, as while making his unqualified profession to believe everything that the Scriptures declare concerning Christ? to put all that confidence in him, and to ascribe all that glory, honor, thanksgiving, and praise to him, professed and ascribed to him in the Divine word? If you say not, it follows, of undeniable consequence, that the wisdom of men, in those compilations, has effected what the Divine Wisdom either could not, would not, or did not do, in that all-perfect and glorious revelation of his will, contained in the Holy Scriptures. Happy

emendation ! Blessed expedient !  
Happy, in deed, for the Church that Athanasius arose in the fourth century to perfect what the holy apostles and prophets had left in such a rude and unfinished state. But if, after all, the Divine Wisdom did not think proper to do anything more, or anything else than is already done in the sacred oracles, to settle and determine those important points, who can say that he determined such a thing should be done afterward? Or has he anywhere given us any intimation of such an intention?

Let it here be carefully observed that the question before us is about human standards designed to be subscribed, or otherwise solemnly acknowledged, for the preservation of ecclesiastical unity and purity, and therefore, of course, by no means applies to the many excellent performances, for the Scriptural elucidation and defense of Divinely revealed truths and other instructive purposes. These, we hope, according to their respective merit, we as highly esteem, and as thank fully receive, as our brethren. But further, with respect to unity of sentiment, even suppose it ever so desirable, it appears highly questionable whether such a thing can at all be secured, by any expedient whatsoever, especially if we consider that it necessarily presupposes in so far a unity or sameness of understanding. Or, will any say, that from the youth of seventeen to the man of fourscore--from the illiterate peasant, up to the learned prelate--all the legitimate members of the Church entertain the same sentiments under their respective formulas? If not, it is still but a mere verbal agreement, a mere show of unity. They say an amen to the same forms of speech, or of sound words, as they are called, without having, at the same time,

the same views of the subject; or, it may be, without any determinate views of it at all. And, what is still worse, this profession is palmed upon the world, as well as upon the too credulous professors themselves, for unity of sentiment, for soundness in the faith; when in a thousand instances, they have, properly speaking, no faith at all; that is to say, if faith necessarily presupposes a true and satisfactory conviction of the Scriptural evidence and certainty of the truth of the propositions we profess to believe. A cheap and easy orthodoxy this, to which we may attain by committing to memory a catechism, or professing our approbation of a formula, made ready to our hand, which we may or may not have once read over; or even if we have, yet may not have been able to read it so correctly and intelligently as to clearly understand one single paragraph from beginning to end, much less to compare it with, to search and try it by the holy Scriptures, to see if these things be so. A cheap and easy orthodoxy this, indeed, to which a person may thus attain, without so much as turning over a single leaf of his Bible, whereas Christ knew no other way of leading us to the knowledge of himself, at least has prescribed no other, but by searching the Scriptures, with reliance upon his Holy Spirit. A person may, however, by this short and easy method, become as orthodox as the apostle Paul (if such superficial professions, such mere hearsay verbal repetitions can be called orthodoxy) without ever once consulting the Bible, or so much as putting up a single petition for the Holy Spirit to guide him into all truth, to open his understanding to know the Scriptures; for, his form of sound words truly believed, if it happen to be right, must, without more ado,

infallibly secure his orthodoxy. Thrice happy expedient! But is there no latitudinarianism in all this? Is not this taking a latitude, in devising ways and means for accomplishing Divine and saving purposes, which the Divine law has nowhere prescribed, for which the Scriptures nowhere afford us either precept or precedent? Unless it can be shown that making human standards to determine the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church for the purpose of preserving her unity and purity, and requiring an approbation of them as a term of communion is a Scripture institution. Far be it from us, in the mean time, to allege that the Church should not make every Scriptural exertion in her power to preserve her unity and purity; to teach and train up her members in the knowledge of all divinely revealed truth; or to say that the evils above complained of attach to all that are in the habit of using the aforesaid helps; or that this wretched state of things, however general, necessarily proceeds from the legitimate use of such; but rather and entirely from the abuse of them, which is the very and only thing that we are all along opposing when we allude to those subordinate standards. (An appellation this, by the by, which appears to us highly paradoxical, if not utterly inconsistent, and full of confusion.)

But, however this may be, we are by no means to be understood as at all wishing to deprive our fellow-Christians of any necessary and possible assistance to understand the Scriptures, or to come to a distinct and particular knowledge of every truth they contain, for which purpose the Westminster Confession and Catechisms may, with many other excellent performances, prove eminently useful. But, having

served ourselves of these, let our profiting appear to all, by our manifest acquaintance with the Bible; by making our profession of faith and obedience; by declaring its Divine dictates, in which we acquiesce, as the subject-matter and rule of both; in our ability to take the Scripture in its connection upon these subjects, so as to understand one part of it by the assistance of another; and in manifesting our self-knowledge, our knowledge of the way of salvation and of the mystery of the Christian life, in the express light of Divine revelation, by a direct and immediate reference to, and correct repetition of what it declares upon those subjects. We take it for granted that no man either knows God, or himself, or the way of salvation, but in so far as he has heard and understood his voice upon those subjects, as addressed to him in the Scriptures, and that, therefore, whatever he has heard and learned of a saving nature, is contained in the express terms of the Bible. If so, in the express terms, in and by which "he hath heard and learned of the Father," let him declare it. This by no means forbids him to use helps, but, we humbly presume, will effectually prevent him from resting either in them or upon them, which is the evil so justly complained of; from taking up with the directory instead of the object to which it directs. Thus will the whole subject of his faith and duty, in so far as he has attained, be expressly declared in a "Thus saith the Lord." And is it not worthy of remark, that of whatever use other books may be, to direct and lead us to the Bible, or to prepare and assist us to understand it, yet the Bible never directs us to any book but itself. When we come forward, then, as Christians, to be received by the Church, which, properly speaking, has but one book,

"For to it were committed the oracles of God," let us hear of none else. Is it not upon the credible profession of our faith in, and obedience to its Divine contents, that the Church is bound to receive applicants for admission? And does not a profession of our faith and obedience necessarily presuppose a knowledge of the dictates we profess to believe and obey? Surely, then, we can declare them, and as surely, if our faith and obedience be Divine, as to the subject-matter, rule, and reason of them, it must be a "Thus saith the Lord"; if otherwise, they are merely human, being taught by the precepts of men. In the case then before us, that is, examination for Church-membership, let the question no longer be, What does any human system say of the primitive or present state of man? of the person, offices, and relations of Christ, etc., etc.? or of this, that, or the other duty? but, What says the Bible? Were this mode of procedure adopted, how much better acquainted with their Bibles would Christians be? What an important alteration would it also make in the education of youth? Would it not lay all candidates for admission into the Church under the happy necessity of becoming particularly acquainted with the holy Scriptures? whereas, according to the present practice, thousands know little about them.

One thing still remains that may appear matter of difficulty or objection to some, namely, that such a close adherence to the express letter of the Divine word, as we seem to propose, for the restoration and maintenance of Christian unity, would not only interfere with the free communication of our sentiments one to another upon religious subjects, but must, of course, also necessarily interfere with the public preaching and

expounding of the Scriptures for the edification of the Church. Such as feel disposed to make this objection, should justly consider that one of a similar nature, and quite as plausible, might be made to the adoption of human standards, especially when made as some of them confessedly are, "the standard for all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government." In such a case it might, with as much justice, at least, be objected to the adopters: You have now no more use for the Bible; you have got another book, which you have adopted as a standard for all religious purposes; you have no further use for explaining the Scriptures, either as to matter of faith or duty, for this you have confessedly done already in your standard, wherein you have determined all matters of this nature. You also profess to hold fast the form of sound words, which you have thus adopted, and therefore, you must never open your mouth upon any subject in any other terms than those of your standard. In the mean time, would any of the parties which has thus adopted its respective standard, consider any of these charges just? If not, let them do as they would be done by. We must confess, however, that for our part, we cannot see how, with any shadow of consistency, some of them could clear themselves, especially of the first; that is to say, if words have any determinate meaning; for certainly it would appear almost, if not altogether incontrovertible, that a book adopted by any party as its standard for all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, must be considered as the Bible of that party. And after all that can be said in favor of such a performance, be it called Bible, standard, or what it may, it is neither anything more nor

better than the judgment or opinion of the party composing or adopting it, and, therefore, wants the sanction of a Divine authority, except in the opinion of the party which has thus adopted it. But can the opinion of any party, be it ever so respectable, give the stamp of a Divine authority to its judgments? If not, then every human standard is deficient in this leading, all-important, and indispensable property of a rule or standard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of God. But, without insisting further upon the intrinsic and irremediable deficiency of human standards for the above purpose (which is undeniably evident if it be granted that a Divine authority is indispensably necessary to constitute a standard or rule for Divine things, such as is the constitution and managements, the faith, and worship of the Christian Church), we would humbly ask, Would any of the parties consider as just the foregoing objections, however conclusive and well founded all or any of them may appear? We believe they would not. And may we not with equal consistency hold fast the expressly revealed will of God, in the very terms in which it is expressed in his holy word, as the very expression of our faith and express rule of our duty, and yet take the same liberty that they do, notwithstanding their professed and steadfast adherence to their respective standards? We find they do not cease to expound, because they have already expounded, as before alleged, nor yet do they always confine themselves to the express terms of their respective standards, yet they acknowledge them to be their standards and profess to hold them fast. Yea, moreover, some of them profess, and, if we may conclude from facts, we believe each of them is

disposed to defend by occasional vindications (or testimonies, as some call them) the sentiments they have adopted and engrossed in their standards, without at the same time requiring an approbation of those occasional performances as a term of communion. And what should hinder us, or any, adopting the Divine standard, as aforesaid, with equal consistency to do the same for the vindication of the Divine truths expressly revealed and enjoined therein? To say that we can not believe and profess the truth, understand one another, inculcate and vindicate the faith and law of Christ, or do the duties incumbent upon Christians or a Christian Church without a human standard, is not only saying that such a standard is quite essential to the very being of Christianity, and, of course, must have existed before a Church was or could be formed, but it is also saying, that without such a standard, the Bible would be quite inadequate as a rule of faith and duty, or, rather, of no use at all, except to furnish materials for such a work; whereas the Church of Ephesus, long before we have any account of the existence of such a standard, is not only mentioned, with many others, as in a state of existence, and of high attainments too, but is also commended for her vigilance and fidelity in detecting and rejecting false apostles. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." But should any pretend to say that although such performances be not essential to the very being of the Church, yet are they highly conducive to its well-being and perfection. For the confutation of such an assertion, we would again appeal to Church history and existing facts and leave the judicious and intelligent Christian to

determine.

If after all that has been said, any should still pretend to affirm that the plan we profess to adopt and recommend is truly latitudinarian, in the worst and fullest sense of the term, inasmuch as it goes to make void all human efforts to maintain the unity and purity of the Church, by substituting a vague and indefinite approbation of the Scriptures as an alternative for creeds, confessions, and testimonies, and thereby opens a wide door for the reception of all sorts of characters and opinions into the Church. Were we not convinced by experience, that notwithstanding all that has been said, such objections would likely be made, or that some weak persons might possibly consider them as good as demonstration, especially when proceeding from highly influential characters (and there have not been wanting such in all ages to oppose, under various plausible pretenses, the unity and peace of the Church), were it not for these considerations, we should content ourselves with what we have already advanced upon the whole of the subject, as being well assured that duly attended to, there would not be the least room for such an objection; but to prevent if possible such unfounded conclusions, or if this cannot be done, to caution and assist the too credulous and unwary professor, that he may not be carried away all at once with the high-toned confidence of bold assertion, we would refer him to the overture for union in truth contained in the foregoing address. Union in truth, among all the manifest subjects of grace and truth, is what we advocate. We carry our views of union no further than this, nor do we presume to recommend it upon any other principle than truth alone. Now,

surely, truth is something certain and definite; if not, who will take upon him to define and determine it? This we suppose God has sufficiently done already in his holy word. That men therefore truly receive and make the proper use of the Divine word for walking together in truth and peace, in holiness and charity, is, no doubt, the ardent desire of all the genuine subjects of our holy religion. This, we see, however, they have not done, to the awful detriment and manifest subversion of what we might almost call the primary intention of Christianity. We dare not, therefore, follow their example, nor adopt their ruinous expedients. But does it therefore follow that Christians may not, or can not take proper steps to ascertain that desirable and preceptive unity which the Divine word requires and enjoins? Surely no; at least we have supposed no such thing; but, on the contrary, have overtured to our brethren what appears to us undeniably just and Scripturally evident, and which, we humbly think, if adopted and acted upon, would have the desired effect; adopted and acted upon, not indeed as a standard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church, for it pretends not to determine these matters, but rather supposes the existence of a fixed and certain standard of Divine original, in which everything that the wisdom of God saw meet to reveal and determine, for these and all other purposes, is expressly defined and determined; between the Christian and which, no medium of human determination ought to be interposed. In all this there is surely nothing like the denial of any lawful effort to promote and maintain the Church's unity, though there be a refusal of the unwarrantable inter position of an unauthorized and

assuming power.

Let none imagine that we are here determining upon the merits of the overture to which, in the case before us, we find it necessary to appeal in our own defense against the injustice of the supposed charge above specified. To the judgment of our brethren have we referred that matter, and with them we leave it. All we intend, therefore, is to avail ourselves so far of what we have done, as to show that we have no intention whatsoever of substituting a vague indefinite approbation of the Scriptures as an alternative for creeds, confessions, and testimonies, for the purpose of restoring the Church to her original constitutional unity and purity. In avoiding Scylla we would cautiously guard against being wrecked upon Charybdis. Extremes, we are told, are dangerous. We therefore suppose a middle way, a safe way, so plainly marked out by unerring wisdom, that if duly attended to under the Divine direction, the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein, and of such is the kingdom of God: "For he hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things that are wise." We therefore conclude it must be a plain way, a way most graciously and most judiciously adapted to the capacity of the subjects, and consequently not the way of subscribing or otherwise approving human standards as a term of admission into his Church, as a test and defense of orthodoxy, which even the compilers themselves are not always agreed about, and which nineteen out of twenty of the Lord's people cannot thoroughly understand. It must be a way very far remote from logical subtleties and metaphysical speculations, and as such we have taken it up, upon the plainest and most obvious principles of

Divine revelation and common sense-- the common sense, we mean, of Christians, exercised upon the plainest and most obvious truths and facts divinely recorded for their instruction. Hence we have supposed, in the first place, the true discrimination of Christian character to consist in an intelligent profession of our faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, the reality of which profession is manifested by the holy consistency of the temper and conduct of the professors with the express dictates and approved examples of the Divine word. Hence we have humility, faith, piety, temperance, justice, charity, etc., professed and manifested, in the first instance, by the persons professing with self-application the convincing, humbling, encouraging, pious, temperate, just and charitable doctrines and precepts of the inspired volume, as exhibited and enforced in its holy and approved examples, and the sincerity of this profession evidently manifested by the consistency of the professor's temper and conduct with the entire subject of his profession, either by an irreprovable conformity, like good Zachariah and Elisabeth, which is of all things most desirable, or otherwise, in case of any visible failure, by an apparently sincere repentance and evident reformation. Such professors, and such only, have we supposed to be, by common consent, truly worthy the Christian name. Ask from the one end of heaven to the other, the whole number of such intelligent and consistent professors as we intend and have described, and, we humbly presume, there will not be found one dissenting voice. They will all acknowledge, with one consent, that the true discrimination of Christian character consists in these

things, and that the radical or manifest want of any of the aforesaid properties completely destroys the character.

We have here only taken for granted what we suppose no rational professor will venture to deny; namely: that the Divine word contains an ample sufficiency upon every one of the foregoing topics to stamp the above character, if so be that the impressions which its express declarations are obviously calculated to produce be truly received; for instance, suppose a person profess to believe, with application to himself, that whole description of human depravity and wretchedness which the Scriptures exhibit of fallen man, in the express declarations and dismal examples of human wickedness therein recorded, contrasted with the holy nature, the righteous requirements, and inflexible justice of an infinitely holy, just, and jealous God, would not the subject-matter of such a profession be amply sufficient to impress the believing mind with the most profound humility, self-  
abhorrence, and dreadful apprehension of the tremendous effects of sin? Again, should the person profess to believe, in connection with this, all that the Scriptures declare of the sovereign love, mercy, and condescension of God toward guilty, depraved, rebellious man, as the same is manifested in Christ, and in all the gracious declarations, invitations, and promises that are made in and through him for the relief and encouragement of the guilty, etc., would not all this, taken together, be sufficient to impress the believing mind with the most lively confidence, gratitude, and love? Should this person, moreover, profess that delight and confidence in the Divine Redeemer-- that voluntary submission to him--that worship and

adoration of him which the Scriptures expressly declare to have been the habits and practice of his people, would not the subject-matter of this profession be amply sufficient to impress the believing mind with that dutiful disposition, with that gracious veneration and supreme reverence which the word of God requires? And should not all this taken together satisfy the Church, in so far, in point of profession? If not, there is no alternative but a new revelation; seeing that to deny this, is to assert that a distinct perception and sincere profession of whatever the word declares upon every point of faith and duty, is not only insufficient, as a doctrinal means, to produce a just and suitable impression in the mind of the believing subject, but is also insufficient to satisfy the Church as to a just and adequate profession; if otherwise, then it will necessarily follow, that not every sort of character, but that one sort only, is admissible upon the principle we have adopted; and that by the universal consent of all that we, at least, dare venture to call Christians, this is acknowledged to be, exclusively, the true Christian character. Here, then, we have a fixed point, a certain description of character, which combines in every professing subject the Scriptural profession, the evident manifestation of humility, faith, piety, temperance, justice, and charity, instructed by, and evidently answering to the entire declaration of the word upon each of those topics, which, as so many properties, serve to constitute the character. Here, we say, we have a fixed, and at the same time sweeping distinction, which, as of old, manifestly divides the whole world, however, otherwise distinguished, into but two classes only. "We know," said the

apostle, evidently speaking of such, "that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Should it be inquired concerning the persons included in this description of character, whether they be Arminians or Calvinists, or both promiscuously huddled together? It may be justly replied, that according to what we have proposed, they can be nominally neither, and of course not both, for we call no man master on earth, for one is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren, are Christians by profession; and as such abstract speculation and argumentative theory make no part either of our profession or practice. Such professors, then, as we intend and have described, are just what their profession and practice make them to be; and this we hope has been Scripturally, and we might add, satisfactorily defined, in so far, at least, as the limits of so brief a performance would admit. We also entertain the pleasing confidence that the plan of procedure which we have ventured to suggest, if duly attended to, if fully reduced to practice, would necessarily secure to the professing subject all the advantages of divinely revealed truth, without any liability to conceal, to diminish, or to misrepresent it, as it goes immediately to ascribe everything to God respecting his sovereignty, independence, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, truth, holiness, mercy, condescension, love, and grace, etc., which is ascribed to him in his word, as also to receive whatever it declares concerning the absolute dependence of the poor, guilty, depraved, polluted creature, upon the Divine will, power, and grace for every saving purpose; a just perception and correspondent profession of which,

according to the Scriptures, is supposed to constitute that fundamental ingredient in Christian character: true evangelical humility. And so of the rest. Having thus, we hope, Scripturally and evidently determined the character, with the proper mode of ascertaining it, to the satisfaction of all concerned, we next proceed to affirm, with the same Scriptural evidence, that among such, how ever situated, whether in the same or similar associations, there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions, but that they ought all mutually to receive and acknowledge each other as brethren. As to the truth of this assertion, they are all likewise agreed, without one dissenting voice. We next suggest that for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing, etc., and that this rule is, and ought to be, the Divine standard. Here again we presume there can be no objection; no, not a single dissenting voice. As to the rule itself, we have ventured to allege that the New Testament is the proper and immediate rule, directory, and formula for the New Testament Church, and for the particular duties of Christians, as the Old Testament was for the Old Testament Church, and for the particular duties of the subject under that dispensation; at the same time by no means excluding the Old as fundamental to illustrative of, and inseparably connected with the New, and as being every way of equal authority, as well as of an entire sameness with it in every point of moral natural duty, though not immediately our rule, without the intervention and coincidence of the New, in which our Lord has taught his people, by the ministry of his holy apostles, all things whatsoever they should observe and do, till the end of the world. Thus we come

to the one rule, taking the Old Testament as explained and perfected by the New, and the New as illustrated and enforced by the Old; assuming the latter as the proper and immediate directory for the Christian Church, as also for the positive and particular duties of Christians as to all things whatsoever they should observe and do. Further, that in the observance of this Divine rule, this authentic and infallible directory, all such may come to the desirable coincidence of holy unity and uniformity of profession and practice, we have overtured that they all speak, profess, and practice the very same things that are exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament Scripture, as spoken and done by the Divine appointment and approbation; and that this be extended to every possible instance of uniformity, without addition or diminution, without introducing anything of private opinion or doubtful disputation into the public profession or practice of the Church. Thus and thus have we overtured to all intents and purposes, as may be clearly seen by consulting the overture itself; in which, however, should anything appear not sufficiently explicit, we flatter ourselves it may be fully understood by taking into consideration what has been variously suggested upon this important subject throughout the whole of these premises; so that if any due degree of attention be paid, we should think it next to impossible that we could be so far misunderstood as to be charged with latitudinarianism in any usual sense of the word. Here we have proposed but one description of character as eligible, or, indeed, as at all admissible to the rights and privileges of Christianity. This description of character we have defined by certain and distinguishing properties,

which not only serve to distinguish it from every other, but in which all the real subjects themselves are agreed, without one exception, all such being mutually and reciprocally acknowledged by each other as legitimate members of the Church of God. All these, moreover, agreeing in the indispensable obligation of their unity, and in the one rule by which it is instructed, and also in the preceptive necessity of an entire uniformity in their public profession and managements for promoting and preserving this unity, that there should be no schism in the body, but that all the members should have the same care one for another; yet in many instances, unhappily, and, we may truly say, involuntarily differing through mistake and mismanagement, which it is our humble desire and endeavor to detect and remove, by obviating everything that causeth difference, being persuaded that as truth is one and indivisible wherever it exists, so all the genuine subjects of it, if disentangled from artificial impediments, must and will necessarily fall in together, be all on one side, united in one profession, acknowledge each other as brethren, and love as children of the same family. For this purpose we have overtured a certain and determinate application of the rule, to which we presume there can be no reasonable objection, and which, if adopted and acted upon, must, we think, infallibly produce the desired effect; unless we should suppose that to say and do what is expressly said and done before our eyes upon the sacred page, would offend the believer, or that a strict uniformity, an entire Scriptural sameness in profession and practice, would produce divisions and offenses among those who are already united in one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one

baptism, one hope of their calling, and in one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all, as is confessedly the case with all of this character throughout all the Churches. To induce to this we have also attempted to call their attention to the heinous nature and awful consequences of schism, and to that evil anti-scriptural principle from which it necessarily proceeds. We have likewise endeavored to show, we humbly think with demonstrable evidence, that there is no alternative but either to adopt that Scriptural uniformity we have recommended, or else continue as we are, bewildered in schisms and overwhelmed with the accursed evils inseparable from such a state. It remains now with our brethren to determine upon the whole of these premises, to adopt or to reject, as they see cause; but, in the mean time, let none impeach us with the latitudinarian expedient of substituting a vague, indefinite approbation of the holy Scriptures as an alternative for the present practice of making the approbation of human standards a term of communion; as it is undeniably evident that nothing can be further from our intention. Were we to judge of what we humbly propose and urge as indispensably necessary for the reformation and unity of the Church, we should rather apprehend that there was reason to fear a charge of a very different nature; namely: that we aimed at too much strictness, both as to the description of character which we say ought only to be admitted, and also as to the use and application of the rule. But should this be the case, we shall cheerfully bear with it, as being fully satisfied that not only the common sentiment of all apparently sincere,

intelligent, and practical Christians is on our side, but that also the plainest and most ample testimonies of the inspired volume sufficiently attest the truth and propriety of what we plead for, as essential to the Scriptural unity and purity of the Christian Church, and this, we humbly presume, is what we should incessantly aim at. It would be strange, indeed, if, in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we should overlook those fruits of righteousness, that manifest humility, piety, temperance, justice, and charity, with out which faith itself is dead, being alone. We trust we have not so learned Christ; if so be we have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, we must have learned a very different lesson indeed. While we would, therefore, insist upon an entire conformity to the Scriptures in profession, that we might all believe and speak the same things, and thus be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, we would, with equal scrupulosity, insist upon and look for an entire conformity to them in practice, in all those whom we acknowledge as our brethren in Christ. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Therefore whosoever heareth those sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye say and do not." We therefore conclude that to advocate unity alone, however desirable in itself, without at the same time purging the Church of apparently unsanctified characters, even of all that cannot show their faith by their works, would be, at

best, but a poor, superficial, skin-deep reformation. It is from such characters, then, as the proposed reformation, if carried into effect, would entirely deprive of a name and a place in the Church, that we have the greatest reason to apprehend a determined and obstinate opposition. And alas! there are very many of this description, and in many places, of considerable influence. But neither should this discourage us, when we consider the expressly revealed will of God upon this point, Ezek. xlv: 6, 9, with Matt. xiii: 15, 17; 1 Cor. v: 6, 13, with many other scriptures. Nor, in the end, will the multitude of unsanctified professors which the proposed reformation would necessarily exclude, have any reason to rejoice in the unfaithfulness of those that either through ignorance, or for filthy lucre's sake, indulged them with a name and place in the Church of God. These unfaithful stewards, these now mistaken friends, will one day be considered by such as their most cruel and treacherous enemies. These, then, are our sentiments upon the entire subject of Church-reformation; call it latitudinarianism, or Puritanism or what you please; and this is the reformation for which we plead. Thus, upon the whole, have we briefly attempted to point out those evils, and to prevent those mistakes which we earnestly desire to see obviated for the general peace, welfare, and prosperity of the Church of God. Our dear brethren, giving credit to our sincere and well-meant intention, will charitably excuse the imperfections of our humble performance, and by the assistance of their better judgment correct those mistakes, and supply those deficiencies which in a first attempt of this nature may have escaped our notice. We are

sorry, in the mean time, to have felt a necessity of approaching so near the borders of controversy, by briefly attempting to answer objections which we plainly foresaw would, through mistake or prejudice, be made against our proceedings; controversy making no part of our intended plan. But such objections and surmises having already reached our ears from different quarters, we thought it necessary to attend to them, that, by so doing, we might not only prevent mistakes, but also save our friends the trouble of entering into verbal disputes in order to remove them, and thus prevent, as much as possible, that most unhappy of all practices sanctioned by the plausible pretense of zeal for the truth--religious controversy among professors. We would, therefore, humbly advise our friends to concur with us in our professed and sincere intention to avoid this evil practice. Let it suffice to put into the hands of such as desire information what we hereby publish for that purpose. If this, however, should not satisfy, let them give in their objections in writing; we shall thankfully receive, and seriously consider, with all due attention, whatever comes before us in this way; but verbal controversy we absolutely refuse. Let none imagine that by so saying, we mean to dissuade Christians from affording all the assistance they can to each other as humble inquirers after truth. To decline this friendly office would be to refuse the performance of an important duty. But certainly there is a manifest difference between speaking the truth in love for the edification of our brethren, and attacking each other with a spirit of controversial hostility, to confute and prove each other wrong. We believe it is rare to find one instance of this kind of arguing that does not

terminate in bitterness. Let us, therefore, cautiously avoid it. Our Lord says, Matt. xvii: 7: "Woe unto the world because of offenses." Scott, in his incomparable work lately published in this country, called his Family Bible, observes in his notes upon this place, "that our Lord here intends all these evils within the Church which prejudice men's minds against his religion, or any doctrines of it. The scandalous lives, horrible oppressions, cruelties, and iniquities of men called Christians; their divisions and bloody contentions; their idolatries and superstitions, are this day the great offenses and causes of stumbling to Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans in all the four quarters of the globe, and they furnish infidels of every description with their most dangerous weapons against the truth. The acrimonious controversies agitated among those who agree in the principal doctrines of the Gospel, and their mutual contempt and revilings of each other, together with the extravagant notions and wicked practices found among them, form the grand prejudice in the minds of multitudes against evangelical religion, and harden the hearts of heretics, Pharisees, disguised infidels, and careless sinners against the truths of the Gospel. In these and numberless other ways, it may be said: 'Woe unto the world because of offenses,' for the devil, the sower of these tares, makes use of them in deceiving the nations of the earth and in murdering the souls of men. In the present state of human nature, it must needs be that such offenses should intervene, and God has wise and righteous reasons for permitting them; yet we should consider it as the greatest of evils to be accessory to the destruction of souls; and an awful woe is denounced against every one whose

delusions or crimes thus stumble men and set them against the only method of salvation." We conclude with an extract from the Boston Anthology, which, with too many of the same kind that might be adduced, furnish a mournful comment upon the text; we mean, upon the sorrowful subject of our woeful divisions and corruptions. The following reply to the Rev. Mr. Cram, missionary from Massachusetts to the Senecas, was made by the principal chiefs and warriors of the six nations in council assembled at Buffalo creek, State of New York, in the presence of the agent of the United States for Indian affairs, in the summer of 1805. "I am come, brethren," said the missionary, "to enlighten your minds and to instruct you how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his will, and to preach to you the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. There is but one way to serve God, and if you do not embrace the right way, you cannot be happy hereafter." To which they reply: "Brother, we understand that your religion is written in a book. You say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there be but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree as you can all read the book? Brother, we do not understand these things. We are told your religion was given to your forefathers; we, also, have a religion which was given to our forefathers; it teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love one another, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion. We are told you have been preaching to the white people in this place. Those people are our neighbors, we are acquainted with them. We will wait a little to see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them

honest, and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again of what you have said." Thus closed the conference. Alas, poor people! how do our divisions and corruptions stand in your way! What a pity that you find us not upon original ground, such as the apostles left the primitive Churches! Had we but exhibited to you their unity and charity; their humble, honest, and affectionate deportment toward each other and toward all men, you would not have had those evil and shameful things to object to our holy religion, and to prejudice your minds against it. But your conversion, it seems, awaits our reformation; awaits our return to primitive unity and love. To this may the God of mercy speedily restore us, both for your sakes and our own, that his way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Amen, and amen.

THE END.