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Poetry.

"Mizpah."

GENESIS XXXI. 49.

Once more, dear friend, farewell, farewell,
That way is thine, and this for me;
What is the end we cannot tell,
How near—how far—we may not see.
Our hearts are faint, our eyes are dim,
The road seems dark and rough and long,
But we are God's, we trust in Him,
And He is good, and great, and strong.

Though miles and years between us be,
And we may never meet again,
He sees 'tis best for thee and me
To know this sorrow, bear this pain.
So we'll not weep, we will not grieve,
But strive to be more brave and true;
God's way is best, we will believe,
And do as He would have us do.

And so we build this altar here,
And lay thereon an offering
Of perfect faith and holy fear,
Calm trust in God through everything.
Write "Mizpah" now upon this stone,
Carve every letter plain and clear;
God bless the years that we have known,
God keep a watch between us, dear.

Springfield, Mass. M. C.

Religious.

Are Denominations a Mistake?

BY REV. CHARLES M. JONES.

The subject of Christian union is a sadly serious one. The man who shall contribute something, however humble, to restrain the range of unkindly recrimination, will do a good service. In such spirit, this article would commend denominations as not the enemies of man's best interests, but rather the best, if not the only, means of evangelising the world.

Christian union is sought in three different ways. By those who idolise their own, and utterly disparage the faith of others, the hope is entertained that the light of the coming time will bring all sects, like poor prodigals, back to the one already perfect home. This is union by absorption. Another class believing that all denominations are wrong in holding principles which separate, expect that the good time coming will witness a gradual dropping of these unhappy distinctions. This is union by dissipation.

But these are extremes. Between them lies a ground which allows that each denomination has some great distinguishing principle, whose specific assertion is its providential commission and its warrant for existence; that true union consists in recognising the value of these separate bodies to give emphasis to truths; and that a living maintenance is better than a dead monopoly of truth. This conception, which reconciles us to that diversity which has afflicted many noble minds with a sense of incongruity, does also other grateful services in divesting denominationalism of that offensiveness which sectarianism and sect worship has always suggested.

The *analogies* are in favour of denominations. It was a good providence which confounded the tongues at Babel and scattered men over the earth. The Lord scattered the Church at Jerusalem, to carry the Gospel widely. And as Christians have diversity of graces, and not every one possesses all, so do denominations embody separate truths in division of labour. The Lord seems to have distributed to each a talent of doctrine for choice custody and faithful employment. The history seems to be only progress as we regard acquiescence in the mission of denominations to be the true advantage. Romanism grew and rooted itself in the hot-bed of uniformity. Anglican indifference was the child of conformity. The Dissenting bodies have provoked this dead arrangement into a semblance of life.

Who can say what impulse toward downright earnestness and self-sacrificing energy has come to all Christians from the practical success of the Methodist circuit rider. And the world has other sources than self-praise for knowing its debt of obligation to the Baptist denomination for Christian liberty and loyalty. How soon shall we expect to see all Christians emphasizing, unitedly, these great essentials—doctrine, energy, loyalty? Do we desire them to unite at the expense of their dishonour?

But we are assured that it is not church union which the sentiment of the age demands, only Christian union. Presbyterians must drop the absurd Confession of Faith, Methodism its ignorant zeal, and above all, Baptists must cease to insult true believers with special forms! Suppose a general compliance, these matters of conscience dismissed, and these great bodies appear before their judges with mere historical or geographical, but no longer logical, differences. They meekly request to be still permitted their separate church existence, and the request must be granted, if the language of the judges is sincere. And yet the absurdity of the position is only equalled by its falsehood.

Among the most plausible objections we note three which have had great force in the discussion of the value of denominations. It is urged that so many churches in one small town work great hardship, scandal, and real detriment to the cause of genuine evangelising. This, besides being visionary because the contrary is impossible, is really not true in its assertion. It is not true, because the tastes of men are such that if there could be such actual combination it would merely enlarge the range of church extravagance and sensationalism, prejudicing the cause of evangelising the masses, as the present system does not. We believe more tastes are suited, more people brought out, and more religious interest excited under the present system, than the proposed union could afford.

But it is urged that there is more unkindness of feeling among churches of different faith than if they were united in form. Examples in direct denial of this objection are frequent. We could name "sister churches" whose mutual irritation exceeds that of the most bitter sectarian feeling. No strifes have been more hopeless or unhappy than those which have disturbed and disrupted the great denominations, each in itself.

Finally, we are told that the mission of Christianity is not to manifest sectarian differences, but to bring a lost world to Christ. This has had most effect of all other objections. But it loses its force when we consider how untrue is its sweeping assumption that the great denominations are engines of proselytism, instead of evangelizing agencies. So untrue, that to these abused organisations has been left the very work they are charged with neglecting, but have actually, earnestly, and thoroughly undertaken. The liberal Christian is so much engaged in caustic criticism, or higher life self-indulgence in religious enjoyment, that no time is left for saving souls. The Unitarians sent one missionary to India, but, unlike Judson, whose convictions changed to deeper ones, this liberal resigned what feeble force he had for nothing at all.

William Carey, our English Baptist, was the leader of the world in foreign missions. And it is a remarkable fact that Baptists, American Baptists, have opened up and worked up the most hopeful fields abroad, so that the Karens and Telugus, by thousands, raise glad praises to God from regenerate hearts. Why, we must inquire, has liberal Christianity left to sectarian agencies the mighty work of saving the dying millions of heathendom? Perhaps when they shall have agitated the denomination into a lovely attitude, they will attend to this, to them, subsidiary interest.

It is not difficult to account for the efficiency of denominations in doing genuine Christian work. It takes an intense, thorough going man to do God's grandest work. Such men, constitutionally, think boldly, strongly, extremely; their moving forces are convictions, not sentiments. Compromise men are usually weak, and their work usually not permanently successful.

In fact, until we shall find a body of Christians absolutely unselfish and unsectarian, which engages more earnestly in saving men than these grand denominations, we shall esteem their existence more a blessing than a curse.

In fine, we deplore sentimental unionism, because it despises profound conscientious convictions, denies the manifold Christian experience and conception of truth, attempts an impossible harmony of opinions, and favours a falsehood in fact and disloyalty in position.

True Christian union is this: to acknowledge the value as well as necessity of denominations, and the peculiar services of each; to resolutely assert distinctive principles, without sectarian insolence, having "in all things charity"; to recognize the common bond of a heavenly birth and the affection of true Christian brotherhood.

No! a true denominationalism is not the worst fate for Christianity, nor a hopeless inertia. Sectarianism, which sees only good in one's own camp, and only evil in every other, is indeed disgusting and unworthy. The true union is a fellowship in admitted and vindicated diversity, a true commerce of grace and truth, not an arbitrary dispensary.

Sunday in the Home.

We know a household in which the Sunday is hardly over before the little ones begin the inquiry, "Mamma, when will it be Sunday again?" To these children Sunday is the "red letter" day of the week, looked forward to and backward to every other day. And this, because on Sunday they have their father at home all day. This wise father makes Sunday the children's day. He dismisses his business cares, gathers his children close about him, listens to their histories of the week, reads to them, or talks to them, or walks with them. He is making beautiful associations to cluster about this beautiful day.

This should be the day of days in every household. Six days must the bread and butter be earned, and the raiment taken thought of, and the raiment stitched. Six days must the father and sons and daughters and little children go abroad to their work and their lessons. But then comes the seventh day, the beautiful Sunday, in which business may be set aside, the lessons dismissed, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters re-united. Let this day be consecrated to all that is highest and best in our natures, to thanksgiving and aspiration, and to the development in the home of those spiritual graces which make our homes heavenly places. Wise parents will make the day so bright and sweet with their joy in their children, their sympathetic conversation, their choice books, their songs, and their bits of poetry, that those who come to their hearth-stone weary or discouraged will be renewed and cheerful for the coming week, and will bear in their hearts a bright memory to shine on them in cloudy weather.—*Golden Rule.*

Saving in the Wrong Place.

A great many persons, in order to maintain as far as possible a certain style of living, have denied themselves books, magazines, and papers. When the pressure of the times came upon them they decided that mental food was a luxury that could be dispensed with without injury; that a certain amount and kind of food and clothing for the body, to which they had become accustomed, were necessities to be obtained as far as possible. Beefsteak or chops, and rolls for breakfast; a liberal lunch at mid-day, and a substantial array of meat and vegetables for dinner have been considered indispensable to the maintenance of health and vigor of body and social position. A certain quality and variety of clothing has been regarded as equally indispensable. We are tempted to tell the results of our observation. We have witnessed some domestic management that would be amusing if one could forget the very sad side of it. These persons have no hesitation in reducing their gifts to Christian charities, and seem to think it a praiseworthy economy to refuse to buy a book, to stop a newspaper or magazine. In our judgment they are very much mistaken. A man's mind is quite as important as his body. Every man and woman has a place to fill in the world and ought to know how to do it. Every family has need of books, magazines, and newspapers as well as of food and clothing. We have just been reading the life of the famous and useful Rev. Wm. Arnot. He made his breakfast of oatmeal and milk, his dinner of bread and milk, that he might save money to be expended in informing and cultivating his mind. For doing so he was praiseworthy. Oat-meal and milk is by no means to be despised as nutritious food. For a year past, on many days, such has been our principal meal. And we have the recommendation of no less a man than Mr. William Cullen Bryant in favor of bread and milk. Far too much attention is paid by the people of these States to what they will eat and drink and wear. There is a needless and unwholesome expenditure for these things. There is no virtue in turning away from a good book, or in stopping a newspaper in order to gratify a carnal appetite, or to maintain a fair and vain show in the flesh.—*Christian Intelligencer.*

Reading Aloud.

When people speak of accomplishments they almost always mean music, vocal and instrumental, etc., and some knowledge of languages. Yet it seems to us that they should include the art of reading aloud, correctly and gracefully, among them, for this is an art as acceptable as it is uncommon. When we say *uncommon* we are not to be understood as saying that very few people can read aloud correctly. This would be an evident misstatement, but we do intend to say that to read with grace and elegance, in a pleasing tone, carefully modulated to suit the subject and style of the thing read (yet not with *too much* dramatic expression) is a gift of greater rarity than one would suppose.

Such a reader as we have described is a great acquisition to the social or the family circle, and oftentimes, when even music is not suitable, such an one may lend this charm of voice and expression to brighten most acceptably an otherwise dull hour.

We would have all young people cultivate themselves as readers, even if they are not called upon to exercise the faculty just now. Besides, a habit of reading aloud gives one the habit of clearer enunciation in ordinary talk. It overcomes the inelegance of clipping our words or running them too closely together, which disfigures so much conversation. For instance, "lem me see," does duty for "let me see," nine times out of ten, while "wherv' you bin," stands for "where have you been."

Now, to any one accustomed to much reading aloud, this fusing of sentences will be almost impossible, and every day speech will gain this much in clearness and correctness.

To the elders in our homes, it is often particularly pleasant to *listen* to what they find most interesting in the news papers or magazines, since they are spared the trouble of adjusting spectacles or seeking a favorable light. And when the reading is so well done that the ear is charmed by manner as well as matter, ought we not to class reading among the accomplishments?

It is particularly necessary and important that very young children should hear *good* reading, even if the literature selected be of the juvenile kind. The alert and imitative little listener catches at every trick of accent or pronunciation, and reproduces them faithfully again, and if the reader be awkward and monotonous the result may be difficult to combat.

One word more. Young girls are apt to read aloud in what (for want of a better term) we must call a *thin* voice, a voice which has no chest tone, no depth, and is consequently unsatisfactory when any expression of feeling is desired.

The remedy for this defect is, perhaps, only to be found by applying to a professor of elocution, but the fault is too serious a one not to be cured if possible.—*Intelligencer.*

TEMPERANCE.

We have been requested to publish the following Circular addressed

TO THE FRIENDS OF PROHIBITION.

The Conference of Prohibitionists, held in Toronto, September 18th and 19th, after fully considering the present position of the various Prohibitory organizations in Canada, agreed to recommend a union of the previously existing Alliance with the several Provincial Leagues, and the formation of a new Dominion Alliance. It was felt that more sympathy and support than have hitherto been given to the Societies named could be secured for a general Prohibitory organization, and, consequently, more practical work performed.

The recommendations of the Conference having been accepted, the Alliance as now constituted is a thoroughly National Society, with which Prohibitionists in all parts of the Dominion are invited to co-operate.

The Constitution of the new Alliance is framed to meet the circumstances arising out of the dissimilarity of laws in the several Provinces and the vast extent of territory embraced in the sphere of its operations.

To the end that the work of the Alliance might be under the immediate direction and supervision of an Executive, whose members could readily consult with each other, it was deemed necessary that some city should be made the centre of operations, and Toronto was accordingly selected for the present year.

The Executive Committee intend, as soon as practicable, to enter upon a vigorous and systematic work in all parts of the Dominion, and whilst never loosing sight of the great aim, "*Total Prohibition,*" they will endeavor to promote Provincial or Dominion legislation in harmony with the objects and principles of the Alliance.

The first great duty devolving upon the Executive, is to put the Alliance upon a sound financial basis, and to ensure a regular income for a term of years, with that end in view they have concluded to appeal to the friends of prohibition for subscriptions to a fund of $100,000 payable in five equal annual instalments. This sum may appear large, but it is by no means out of proportion to the importance of the cause, the magnitude of the work, the number of persons that are expected to aid, or the strength and boasted liberality of our opponents. Those whom Providence has blessed with wealth, influence and a disposition to promote the best interests of society will, doubtless, contribute liberally to this scheme; but its success cannot be secured without the cordial assistance of all classes according to their means. We also trust that all Temperance Associations throughout the Dominion will lend their hearty co-operation to ensure the success of this undertaking.

To indicate the practicability of raising the sum named, let it be supposed that

10	persons	gave each	$100	for 5 years	.....	$ 5,000
20	"	" "	50	"	.....	5,000
40	"	" "	25	"	.....	5,000
50	"	" "	20	"	.....	5,000
400	"	" "	10	"	.....	20,000
800	"	" "	5	"	.....	20,000
1,000	"	" "	4	"	.....	20,000
2,000	"	" "	2	"	.....	20,000
4,320						$100,000

Should this appeal meet with the response anticipated, there will be no difficulty in educating and directing public opinion so as to secure, at no dis-