

**THE UNION OF CHURCHES IN THE
SPIRIT OF CHARITY; WITH ITS
ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION AND
TRUST, AND THE RITUAL OF THE
CHRISTIAN LITURGY ACCEPTED**

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The Union of Churches in the Spirit of Charity; With Its Articles of Association and Trust, and the ritual of the Christian Liturgy accepted by Various

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VARIOUS

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UNION OF CHURCHES
IN THE
SPIRIT OF CHARITY;

WITH
ITS ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION AND TRUST, AND THE RITUAL
OF THE CHRISTIAN LITURGY ACCEPTED.

UNDER THE SANCTION OF
The Congregation of the Distinguished Clergy and Laity of New England.

INCORPORATED 1860.

BOSTON:
JOHN WILSON AND SON.
1865.

P R E F A C E.

THE leading object of Christ's Church, Longwood,—a Gospel Church, and the first of the Union of Churches in the spirit of charity,—is to adopt the broad platform of religious opinion alluded to in the introduction to the Christian Liturgy, and to accept that Liturgy and the trust of the Church, as providing a Ritual which comprehends those doctrines which are especially essential to guide the mind in a right worship of God. It is obvious that men who differ as to the origin of sin, the precise nature of the atonement, or the particular relations of the Old Testament to the New, may nevertheless equally love God, and may be alike grateful to him for his mercy, and desire his approval, and seek his will, and adore his infinite perfections. They may differ on many theological questions, and yet may have the same sentiments of devout trust and reverential gratitude, and may equally feel the need of

Divine help. If they may thus agree in what is essential to devotion, why may they not unite in religious worship? If they will abstain from obtruding into the act of worship those theological speculations which have no necessary connection with it, why may they not bow together before that God which they all adore?

The Liturgy of the Gospel Church professes to give expression to those feelings which should be in man's heart when he looks up to God. It would leave the theological questions on which sects divide to be settled by each individual in his own way, while it would draw all Christian people together in the sentiment and offices of devotion.

Christendom agrees that there is but one God, — the Great Spirit of the Universe, supreme and everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; the Creator and God of all; around whom circle a thousand brilliant worlds, governed by one law, and guided by one will.

The Gospel Church puts forth the declaration, that His manifestations for the government of this world — so far as the Bible teaches — are apparently made through the following divine agencies; namely, *Λόγος*, *Ζωή*, and *Πνεῦμα*, our Father in Heaven, our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost.

That these three beings are recognized as the messengers of his will; and may therefore be called "the Holy Trinity for the salvation of man," and be worshipped under the name of "The Gospel Trinity," in the manner set forth in its appropriate prayer, and adopted by the Gospel Church.

How the several worlds which compose our planetary system, and the thousand other worlds of the boundless universe, are governed, we are in entire ignorance; but we cannot doubt that the same Almighty Power which made them upholds and guides them by suitable divine agencies, in accordance with his infinite mercy.

It is earnestly hoped, that, in conformity to the Ritual of the Gospel Church, all honest Christians may be able cheerfully to join in the morning and evening worship of the one living, true, and Almighty God,—the Great Spirit of the Universe,—and give to the various manifestations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—under the name of the Gospel Trinity for the salvation of man,—all the reverence and homage due to their respective attributes and powers, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

On this broad foundation, united and bound together by the orders of prayer of the Gospel

Church, "the Union of Churches in the spirit of Charity" is founded. It is hoped, that, in time, by mutual concession, and in a feeling of Christian Brotherhood, an elementary Church may thus be formed, open to all denominations, and for the common benefit and universal acknowledgment of the Christian religion.

It is at present represented by *the Gospel Church* of Longwood, in which the teaching of our Saviour, as set forth in the Evangelists, is proclaimed, and clearly and faithfully interpreted according to its true intent and meaning, untrammelled by the decrees of ecclesiastic councils, the articles of foreign churches, or the dicta of special reformers.

The Union admits all Christian preachers into its pulpits on the single condition that they read the Ritual of the Christian Liturgy; and they tender the hand of fellowship, unrestrained by sectarian bias, to all whose interpretation of the Scriptures shall be made with honesty of purpose and charity of spirit, and in accordance with the theory of the Union, its hopes, expectations, and belief, based on a foundation of love and mutual concession.

THE UNION OF CHURCHES

IN

THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY.

IN 1838 a number of gentlemen associated themselves together for the purpose of aiding in the erection of a Church based on a broad platform of religious opinion, on which Christians might stand in amity, and join in a common worship of Almighty God. They were induced to give their patronage and support to this object by many and cogent reasons; and, among others, from the great results which have gradually arisen from the almost universal distribution of the Bible.

Under active and benevolent agencies, this holy book is now open to every man, and circulates through the world, for good or for evil, without note or comment. Millions of minds are at work upon it; and the laity are thus becoming the judges and critics of our Holy Writ, analyzing and discussing the ordinances of the Old Testament and the declara-

tions of the New, and gradually establishing for themselves separate theories of religious belief.

From this cause, among others, arises the increased and increasing subdivision of opinions among the followers of Christ, working, and still threatening to work, injurious consequences to society. This evil can be checked only by *toleration*.

And toleration is a virtue much needed in the present state of religion, and especially in communities where minute differences of religious faith, when they find no neutral ground to stand on, are apt to become the pregnant causes of unchristian strife, engendering bitter feelings among Christians; dividing them into numerous and rival parties; inflicting sorrow and unkindness upon the nearest and dearest social relations of life; and, finally, closing our village churches, or at least rendering their several congregations so weak and poor as to prevent their obtaining well-educated teachers to instruct them, and frequently leaving those who for many long years have administered to them in want of the ordinary comforts of life.

The necessity of allowing to man a liberal range in matters of doctrine, in order to fix him in matters essential, is yearly becoming more apparent; and although error, bigotry, and superstition are still abounding, and primitive Christians perhaps hardly recognize their pure and simple religion in many of the dogmas of the present day, yet surely an observant eye may discover signs which indicate that the