

**SUGGESTIONS FOR A CHURCH OF
UNITY, EMBODYING A REVIEW OF
THE DISTINGUISHING DOCTRINES AND
PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH OF ROME,
AND THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

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Suggestions for a Church of Unity, Embodying a Review of the Distinguishing Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome, and the Society of Friends by A Layman

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BY A LAYMAN.

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PREFACE.

THE author is sensible of the feeling that will be produced by an attempt to lay down the principles of an universal church, and the judgment that will follow,—that it is a vain attempt to remove the divisions amongst Christians, as exhibited in their churches. Not only will self-interest operate to smother it, but the love of spiritual dominion, now lodged in the teachers of religion, and the conceit that they are the guides in faith and doctrine, will unite them against it; and the people, who have given themselves up to be taught religion by their ministers, whose itching ears love declamatory pulpit eloquence—doses of strong doctrine, and excited feelings, until many have become dead to the perception of the still small voice of the Spirit of God in the soul—will not like the simplicity of the system propounded; in which election and reprobation, imputative righteousness, baptismal regeneration, and eucharistic communion, have no place, or are made consistent with the

spiritual law of Christ. On the other hand, as no system not founded on truth can be permanent, and the day has dawned,—as shown by the number of individuals who think for themselves, and desire the establishment of a purer system, free from puritanical strictness, hyper-spirituality, ceremonial worship, or clerical authority;—a free system for free minds, in which all the faculties of man may be exercised under a loving self-denial of the abuse of man's lower nature, by a cheerful obedience to the law of the Lord;—there must be many in every church prepared dispassionately to consider any proposal for a reformation. Reflection as to the causes of decay in the Society of Friends has led to the conclusions embodied in the text; but instead of confining the inquiry to the causes of decay, it appears to be of far greater importance to attempt such modifications as would raise the fallen church to a higher standard of perfection, by pointing out what a Christian church ought to be. To effect this, it appeared necessary, not only to bring under review the faith and practice of the Society of Friends, but also that of other churches, in order to benefit by experience, and that the proposed reformation might be complete. All religious professors are, therefore, invited to consider the proposals for a church of unity—an external church, more sound in faith, in doctrine, and in practice, than any existing one; and rendered thereby better fitted for bringing the law of the Lord, in its fullness and its purity, into practice.

This treatise is more especially addressed to the Society of Friends—the greatest upholders of all abstract principles, which being just now in a transition state, may be expected to be more open to consider the propositions it contains than any other church. When a reformation is wanted, first principles should be studied, in order that the reformation may be complete; and it appears to the writer not only that great changes are required in the Society of Friends to adapt it to humanity, and make it the nucleus of an universal church, but that, in a much greater degree, do all other churches require reformation.

Truth is simple, but grand in its simplicity, in physics and in morals; and churches, which are human institutions to promote faith in God the source of truth, and obedience to the spiritual law, must ultimately assume this simplicity of character, and throw off all pretensions, mystical, ceremonial, and typical observances; and as already in physics the study of God's laws is become strict and simple, by reading in the book of nature, solely to get at the truths of the revelation therein contained,—so must any true church adopt the same method, and study the Bible, to know what are the cardinal truths of religion. It may then be expected to succeed in destroying the divisions amongst Christians, and that enslaving sectarianism, which sees everything through a distorted medium. Not only in the Society of Friends, but in all religious societies, there is a motion