

**CHRISTIAN UNION, AND
THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH IN ITS RELATIONS
TO CHURCH UNITY**

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Christian Union, and the Protestant Episcopal Church in Its Relations to Church Unity by
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TO CHURCH UNITY.

Presented
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PREFACE.

This little work may be regarded as something in the nature of an apology, not in the common, but in the ancient acceptation of the term. It is designed as a book which a Churchman may put into the hands of those who are ignorant of, or prejudiced against his faith, or which he may give to any of that large and increasing class who are thoughtfully inquiring respecting his Church. In this light the Author trusts, though there may be a few things in these pages which may be regarded as mere private opinions, yet that his brethren generally will find nothing that they will be unwilling, and much that they will be glad to circulate. Whether the work will help the cause of Christian Union, may by some be questioned. But if that end is to be furthered by a frank declaration of one's own position, put forth in terms of kindness and Christian charity, it is hoped that the question will be answered affirmatively. Recently, in Boston, ministers of different religious bodies successively, in the same pulpit, advocated the claims each of his own Church, in itself considered, and in its relation to others. The effort was well received. The present publication is an attempt to do in a form adapted for general circulation what was so ably done in the pulpit, on that occasion, by the pleader for The Protestant Episcopal Church, and as the same mode of urging respective and comparative claims is open to all, and indeed used by all, no objection can rest against the plan of this book, as it is trusted, also, that none can be brought against its spirit and execution. It is commended to every reader with the prayer, "God speed the right and the truth!"

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone ; grant that, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, all Christians may be so joined together in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace, that they may be an Holy Temple, acceptable unto Thee. Give them the abundance of thy grace, that with one heart, they may desire the prosperity of Thy Holy Apostolic Church, and with one mouth, may profess the faith once delivered to the Saints. Defend them from the sins of heresy and schism. Let not the foot of pride come nigh to hurt them, nor the hand of the ungodly to cast them down. And grant that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, that so they may walk in the ways of truth and peace, and at last be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting, through Thy merits, O blessed Jesus, Thou gracious Bishop and Shepherd of our souls, who art with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIAN UNION. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

"Blessed are the Peace-makers."—*St. Matt.*, v. 9.

AT the last General Convention of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, the following resolutions were adopted by the House of Bishops :—

Resolved, As the opinion of the House of Bishops, That in view of the desirableness of union among Christians, and as a pledge of willingness to communicate or receive information tending to that end ; and, in order to conference, if occasion or opportunity should occur, this House will appoint, by ballot, a committee of five Bishops, as an organ of communication or conference with such Christian bodies, or individuals, as may desire it ; to be entitled " The Commission on Church Unity."

That, in making the above appointment, it is distinctly understood that the Commission is clothed with no authority to mature plans of unity with other Christian bodies, or to propound expositions of doctrine or discipline.

The Rt. Rev. T. C. Brownell, presiding Bishop, with Bishops McIlvaine, A. Potter, Elliott, and Burgess, were the Committee appointed under these resolutions.

Although that Convention was every way pleasant and greatly for the furtherance of Christ's cause, the above resolutions will be regarded by many of the good, and, we trust, by our divine Lord, as its most important act and crowning glory.

Few of us who owe allegiance to that body are so sanguine as to look for any immediate results from such action, and none of us can see any way by which its proposed final objects can be attained; yet we rejoice in it, because a move in a right direction often opens the way when there seems to be none, because it is high time that something should be done towards healing the dissensions of the Church of God, and because we believe that the very inception of such a movement will draw a blessing from the great Head of the Church, and may lead him to put us in the pathway to unity and peace. Some of our brethren of other names may regard this action of our Bishops as an arrogant assumption, founded on claims that can never be recognized; and some may expound it as a confession of weakness, but multitudes more who sigh for peace, and whose daily prayer is like our own—that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life, will rejoice with us in our present position. When war rages among nations, it is a hopeful sign if mediation be talked of, or ambassadors of peace be appointed, though the conflict still goes on, for it shows a weariness of strife that must soon bring it to a close. We are glad that in our own body there is now a hand no longer cloaked and muffled, though still hanging down inactive, for a Christian brother to grasp—if he will; and we trust

that it will yet lock us in true fellowship with all "who love our Lord—both theirs and ours."

The author of the present work proposes, first, to offer some thoughts on Christian union; and then, in a second part, to urge the claims which the Protestant Episcopal Church has for taking the initiative, and for being the rallying point, in the restoration of unity to the Church of Christ.

On the second branch of the subject, the writer will give his own views as an Episcopalian, and of course cannot expect a full concurrence from those of other names, though, he trusts, much that is said will commend itself to their approval. On the first point he has already published in *The New York Observer*, some of the thoughts that will appear here, and the interest awakened by those communications—their wide circulation through other religious papers, and the kindly responses drawn forth, are among the chief inducements to this further effort, for they show that there is deep feeling on the subject in the heart of the Church, and that the time for some action cannot be far distant.

We want discussion on these great points, that we may see how nearly we can agree, how much of union there is already among us, how much can be yielded for the sake of peace without any sacrifice of conscience, and that we may know the many and powerful reasons which should draw us together as the heart of one man. If there were as much effort to unite as there is to magnify points of difference, we should soon be united. Were a convention of the wisest and holiest of each denomination to assemble—excluding controversialists, usually not the wisest and holiest—no doubt they could soon find some common platform on which to stand.

We must, as much as possible, turn away from the past, except as we mourn over it. Quarrels in families never end so long as one criminating reference to old offences is indulged, and wars among nations are usually settled with little allusion to the disputes which caused them. Let by-gones be by-gones. We have all sinned against each other. Which has offended most deeply let God judge. We must look candidly at each other's position, make all due allowance for conscientious difficulties in the way of union, admit the features of special excellence in each other's system—for each has some, and no one has all excellencies—and be ready to sacrifice for peace sake, much that we love and deem truly desirable, if it can be done with a good conscience.

The author claims no right to speak for his own church, save such a right as every man has to cast water on a conflagration which is destroying life and property. A weak hand may bear a flag of truce, when a strong hand is wanted for the standard of war. A dove's feeble wing may carry the olive branch into the ark, when the raven's is needed to skim over the angry waves of strife. There are points in the subject of Christian union that will require the wisdom of our wisest men to handle, but the greater part of the field lies open to those of ordinary attainment and experience in the Christian life. And while so many thousands rush into the arena of controversy, and every stripling draws his weapon there unabashed and unrebuked, it surely may be permitted to one who has long sighed for peace, to speak a word for peace. May the God who maketh men to be of one mind in a house, grant that it be not spoken in vain.