

**CHRISTIAN UNITY
AND ITS RECOVERY,
PP. 1-117**

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Christian Unity and Its Recovery, pp. 1-117 by John S. Davenport

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BY

JOHN S. DAVENPORT.

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CHRISTIAN UNITY.



INTRODUCTION.

THE divided state of Christendom is a subject that never fails to excite the deepest interest in all who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an instinct in the Christian life which forbids Christian men to rest satisfied with division. Ever since the consummation of the great schism between the East and the West, in the eleventh century, efforts have from time to time been made to heal the breach, though without any substantial success. The nearest approach to it was made by the Council of Florence, in 1439; which, however, was rendered futile by the refusal of the Greeks to assent to the reconciliation. In the next century occurred the Protestant Reformation, since when no serious efforts have been made by the Roman Church to restore the broken connection, and the principles of Protestantism preclude every wish or desire for a union with Roman Catholics.

Some members of the English Church have endeavored to fix principles of approximation on the part of that communion with the Roman Church, one consequence of which has been the secession of large numbers of her best and ablest men to Rome. But this very result has shown how utterly futile must be any attempt to reconcile these two ecclesiastical systems. Among Protestants there have been, and continue to be, discussions upon the union of various sects and churches, and a very strong feeling of the evil of division prevails.

Special interest is manifested in the subject at the present time, and it is supposed that the state of the popular religious mind is favorable to the consideration of any suggestions offered for its solution.

The interest that is felt on this subject generally, has essayed something like organization to secure the end.

1. There is, I believe, a wide-spread agreement, especially among members of the English Church, together with Episcopalians in this land, in concert with members of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, for prayer to God to restore unity to divided Christendom. Such an agreement is always a hopeful sign of good. We know that unity is a result acceptable to God, and may be well assured that such a united prayer, going up from so many hearts, is the inspiration of the Spirit of God, who teaches the Church what to pray for. The answer may not come in the form in which many expect it, but if God's children ask for bread He will not give them a stone, and He will grant their requests in such

way that they shall know that He has heard their prayers.

2. An effort is being made on the part of the Episcopalian bodies in England and America, to bring about intercommunion between these churches and the Greek and Russo-Greek churches. When we consider the conflicting opinions on all the questions involved that prevail in these Protestant churches, to say nothing of the other party, we cannot suppose that any thing can be effected that will materially change the relations of these bodies to one another. The English Church, even if there were no other obstacles, can do nothing without the consent of the Government, and there is no probability that the Government will give assent to any movement that is at all likely to bring the Establishment into any intimate relations with other State churches; and the Episcopal Church in the United States cannot speak with any unanimity on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions involved. The most that can be accomplished, therefore, is the interchange of good feeling and the increase of mutual intelligence. But still, if intercommunion could be effected in the way sought for, it would come very far short of the unity which is the perfect condition of the Church.

3. The various Protestant denominations in this land, who for the most part deny any exact divine organization of the Church, are engaged in an association for Christian union, the plan of which seems to confine itself to the coöperation of the different Christian bodies,