

Is this Disunion to be Perpetuated?

BY DR. THOMAS DICK.

The disunion of the Christian church is not to be perpetual. We are certain, that a period is hastening on when its divisions shall be healed, when its boundaries shall be enlarged, and when "*the name of Jehovah shall be one throughout all the earth.*" At some period or other, therefore, in the lapse of time, a movement towards such a union must commence. It cannot take place before the attention of the religious world is directed to this object. And why should not such a movement commence at the present moment? Why should we lose another year, or even another month, before we attempt to concert measures, in order to bring about a consummation so devoutly to be wished for? The present eventful period is peculiarly auspicious for this purpose; when the foundations of tyranny, injustice, and error are beginning to be shaken; when knowledge is making progress among every order of society; when reforms in the state, and in every subordinate department of the community, are loudly demanded by persons of every character and of every rank; when the evils attached to our ecclesiastical institutions are publicly denounced; when the Scriptures are translating into the languages of every tribe; and when missionary enterprises are carrying forward in every quarter of the habitable globe. To attempt a union of all true Christians at the present crisis, would, therefore, be nothing more than falling in with the spirit of the age, and acting in harmony with those multifarious movements which are destined to be the means of enlightening and renovating the human race; and at no period since the Reformation could such an attempt have been made with more sanguine expectations, and greater prospects of success. All eyes are now turned towards some eventful and auspicious era, when the light of science shall shine refulgent, when abuses shall be corrected, evils remedied, society meliorated, and its various ranks brought into more harmonious association. And shall Christians alone remain shut up in their little homesteads, apart from each other, stickling about phrases, and contending about forms, without ever coming forth to salute each

other in the spirit of union, and to give an impulse to the moral machinery that is hastening forward the world's improvement and regeneration? Such a surmise cannot be indulged: it would be a libel on the Christian world, and a reproach on the religion of which they profess themselves the votaries. I trust there are thousands in every department of the church who are ardently longing to break down the walls of partition which separate them from their brethren, and anxiously waiting for an opportunity of expressing their sentiments, and of giving the right hand of fellowship "to all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity."

In any attempts that may be made to promote this great object, *mutual concessions behoove to be made by all parties.* One general principle, that requires to be recognized, is this,—*that every opinion and practice be set aside which is acknowledged on all hands to have no direct foundation in Scripture,* but is a mere human fabrication, introduced by accident or whim; such as the observance of fast and preparation days previous to the participation of the Lord's Supper, kneeling in the act of partaking of that ordinance, repeating the Athanasian creed in the regular services of the church, &c. &c. It is a striking and remarkable fact, that the chief points about which Christians are divided, are points on which the volume of inspiration is silent, and which the presumption and perversity of men have attached to the Christian system, and interwoven with the truths and ordinances of religion; and therefore, were the line of distinction clearly drawn between mere human opinions and ceremonials, and the positive dictates of revelation, and the one separated from the other, the way would be prepared for a more intimate and harmonious union in the church of Christ. As a preparative measure to such a union, a friendly intercourse between the different sects should be solicited and cherished. Enlightened ministers of different denominations should occasionally exchange pulpits, and officiate for each other in the exercise of divine worship. This would tend to show to the world, and to each other, that there is no unholy jealousy or hostile animosity subsisting between them, which their present conduct and attitude too frequently indicate. It