

T H B

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The Evils of a Sectarian Spirit.

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MR. EDITOR:—Having in the foregoing number exhibited the nature and foundation of a sect, we now proceed to examine in detail some of the evils of the sectarian spirit.

The first evil we notice, is that it contracts the affections, and thereby militates against that unrestricted benevolence, which is required by the law of God, and which is abundantly illustrated in the gospel of his Son. Selfishness is the root of every sin, as benevolence is of every virtue; and this selfishness, when embodied, is stronger and more destructive than in its solitary existence in an individual. The division of mankind into nations, communities and families, is convenient and necessary; but when a nation or family becomes an organized body of selfishness, the effects are most disastrous. This has been the fruitful source of nearly all the wars which have drenched the earth with blood; and history will abundantly prove, that in nine instances out of ten, the celebrated virtue called patriotism, has consisted in a blind partiality to our own people, and a malignant antipathy to others; the degree of love for the former is gratuitous and unfounded, as the hatred for the latter is unjust and extravagant. Now the way to cure the evil, is not to break down the nations and the families, but to melt down the selfish exclusiveness which sets one nation, or one family, in hostile array against another; or in other words, to exchange selfishness for that benevolence, which aims to promote the interests of the particular nation or family, so far only as will subserve the common welfare of the world, or of surrounding families. An organized body

has no more right than an individual, to pursue its own interest, or fame, or pleasure, at the expense of its neighbors, or of the general welfare of society.

Now these remarks will apply, in all their force, to religious denominations; for, alas! it cannot be successfully denied, that those bodies of men called churches, have disgraced the world, and outraged moral obligations by their selfish malignity as much as any other orders or communities of mankind. The affections becoming thus contracted, the whole tendency of the soul is to recede from the love of God; for God is universal love; and with him there is no respect of persons. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." 1 John, iv. 20.

A second evil of the sectarian spirit is, that it warps the judgment in matters relating to the essential interests of the soul. The attention being confined to matters of trivial import, which are peculiarities of the sect, these are magnified until in the opinion of the sectarian they become truths or duties of the first importance, while matters of the greatest weight are neglected, or esteemed of little value, because they are common property, and have nothing in them whereby the favorite party is distinguished. Thus the Pharisees payed tyths of mint, anise and cummin, and passed over judgment, mercy and the love of God. They were punctual in observing minute rules and regulations concerning the Sabbath, fasting and making long prayers, as well as in washing cups and tables, because these things were established by the tradition of the elders; that is, because they were sectarian peculiarities. The Romish sect is very strict in observing precise rules, and stated times of fasting, the observance of which, in their estimation, becomes a great duty, because these are the fasts ap-