

## **PUBLIC MEETING OF THE VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS** **NO. 377**

**WEDNESDAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1861**  
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

**FOR THE PURPOSE OF HEARING ADDRESSES ON CHRISTIAN UNITY.**

**The CHAIR**, which was occupied by **EDWARD BALL, Esq., M.P.**, was taken at half-past six o'clock.

The proceedings were commenced by singing and prayer.

**The REV. C. H. SPURGEON** briefly stated the objective of the meeting to be not to collect money, for they were now out of debt, but to testify to the essential union of the church. On the previous evening, a meeting had been held in the same place to afford an opportunity for the public exposition of the doctrines of Baptists, and there were some now present, perhaps, who would recollect how strongly Baptistical they all were on that occasion, and how they all spoke of their own denomination and its progress.

Now, he had no doubt, they would prove that they felt themselves to be none the less one with all believers in striving against error and upholding truth. The different brethren in the ministry who would address them would take up different points with regard to union. They had not an Episcopalian, because the clergyman whom he had invited, though perfectly willing, was unable to come.

Nor had they a Presbyterian. He had just received a telegram from the Presbyterian brother who was to have been there, saying that he was taken ill yesterday. He would now give the meeting to the guidance of his friend, **Edward Ball, Esq.**, of Cambridgeshire, and as he had often experienced the hospitality of Mr. Ball, he felt a very great pleasure in being his host, as it were, now, and making Mr. Ball the master of the occasion, so that he might rule the roost in their midst.

**The CHAIRMAN** said, if anything in connection with this extraordinary place of worship could be added to the feeling of surprise with which they had witnessed its progress, and now perceived its perfection and completion, it would have been the statement which had just been made by the minister, that not only had they built this house of such surpassing beauty, and such great convenience, and such large accommodation for all classes, but that they met at the opening of it entirely out of debt.

Those who were acquainted with the efforts made by the Christian world were well-aware of the difficulties that were oft-times found, in first of all raising a sufficient sum of money to commence an edifice, and that occasionally, when the edifice had been raised, there was such a heavy debt resting upon it, loading and oppressing the minds and efforts of the congregation, frequently discouraging the minister in his public duties, and altogether the occasion of sorrow and regret in the neighborhood in which the chapel was erected.

What, then, must they think of the church and congregation of this place? What must have been their untiring efforts, their constant diligence, the exercise of faith in God, to have completed such an undertaking as this, to have watched its progress, and now to assemble at its completion, when all their desires had been realized, when they had raised a fabric such as London could not equal, and when they might congregate, as upon this occasion, without soliciting the aid of anybody, and welcome their guests to a union meeting, where they could have a festival of love unaccompanied with the inconvenience and the distaste which so commonly were associated with such meetings as this—without soliciting their charity or asking their aid.

It was not only that they must recognize the great zeal and the unwearied exertion of the church and congregation under Mr. Spurgeon, but was it not manifest that God's hand was in the work, and God's power was exhibited. That power which was so constantly implored, had watched over, had given guidance to, and had successfully realized the wishes of the minister and of the people of this place.

Was not all they had seen in the progress of that congregation, under the minister, another evidence that not by might, nor by power, but by God's will, and God's help, and God's assistance, the mightiest projects, the grandest efforts, and all that a Christian could desire were to be accomplished, when they gave continued effort, and blended with that continued effort, an unwavering faith in the promises of God's immutable and indestructible Word?

Perhaps, while all of them sympathized and had pleasure in the association of this night, it was not everyone who had so intimate and immediate an appreciation of the Gospel in this place, or so deep a sympathy with the success of the ministry, as he had. As Mr. Spurgeon had stated to them, Mr. S. and he had long known each other, had lived in the same neighborhood, and had associated for public purposes, long before Mr. Spurgeon ever contemplated being a minister in London.

He had witnessed his first efforts, he knew the village in which he first settled, and he could bear testimony to the good sense and the good judgment of that portion of the Christian world who considered that his services ought not to be confined to a village, or limited to a small association, but that his sphere was the metropolis, and that to London he was to come, to awaken, to excite, and to give an increased effort to the Christian world, showing what might be done when people trusted in God, and when they labored continually and unweariedly in the service of God.

Those gentlemen who accomplished the removal of Mr. Spurgeon, provided for him a very convenient and a very nice chapel, but in proportion as they afforded accommodation for the public, did the demand increase. That chapel was renovated, improved, and considerably enlarged, and no sooner was that accomplished, than it was filled as theretofore to overflowing.

Why did he (the Chairman) mention this? To show that the grasp of mind of the congregation was justified—that it was not an aggressive undertaking, the erecting such an edifice as this—but that it was the continued success, the series of triumphs, the advancing interests, the multitudinous claims always attendant upon the ministry of this gentleman that justified them.

The Chairman next adverted on the value of Mr. Spurgeon's ministerial labors, which he considered ought not to be estimated by the visible effect upon his congregation, but also by the influence which the extended publication of his sermons throughout England and the Colonies, and the reprinting of them in America, might be expected to have upon multitudes of others.

But, to return to the special object of the present meeting, which he was told by Mr. Spurgeon was "Union," he was sorry to say, he thought the great calamity and error of the Christian church was want of union. He thought that all Christian people should adopt as their sentiment this—that in essentials, they should have unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in everything, they ought to have charity.

If they did observe and carry out this great maxim, those little bickerings and nasty jealousies, and unlovely envyings, which were the disgrace of the Christian church, would be known no more. What said divine John? There were multitudes of circumstances which showed to us the surpassing love of God, but—"Hereby," says he, "we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," and the inference which the divine apostle drew from this was that, "If God so loved the world, as to send His only begotten Son into the world," was it not a motive and an obligation for those people for whom He loved, and suffered, and died, to love each other?

Look, again, were we not all under the same condemnation, were we not all partaking of the curse and of the fall, had we not also the same hope, and the same expectation of redemption and deliverance from that fall, and should we not love one another as brethren? Were we not passing through the wilderness together? Had we not sorrow enough, and trial enough, and vexation enough, bodily pain and mental distraction enough, that we must increase its bitterness by a lack of love, and by a narrow jealousy one towards another?

Were we not all aiming at the same paradise above, banded together under one great Shepherd, and therefore we ought to love one another as God's people and as God's servants. Most of his hearers, perhaps, had a recollection of the circumstances of Ruth. Ruth was a most successful gleaner. She

collected a great quantity, and after she had done so, she beat it out, and part she carried away, and part she left behind.

Now what part did they suppose she carried away? Well, everybody would say she carried away the corn and left the chaff. Could not, therefore, we, in our mutual union in our common services—in our common duties—look upon one another, see what was good, receive what was good, lay aside and leave what was distasteful and unpleasant to any of us, take that which was in correspondence to our views of the truth, in harmony with our sentiments and our principles, and if there were anything disagreeable, ascribe it to that common infirmity to which they and we were subjected, and bear and forbear as it became Christian people to do one towards another.

He remembered once a large missionary meeting was to be held, and it was decided to hold it in the church. After the decision, it was found that there were no candles, no lamps in the church, and there was a question as to how it should be lighted up. Well, the friends there were not daunted by a few difficulties. The Episcopalians sent their lamps, the Wesleyans and other religious denominations sent their lamps, and others were sent from the Town Hall.

When they assembled it was beautifully lighted up, but it was said nobody could tell which was the light of the Church of England, and which was the light of the Baptists, and which was the light of the Wesleyans. But as one Spirit brought them together in the service of one Master, so one mind influenced the whole assembly, and they had a beautiful meeting in which they pledged their common faith diligently to preach the everlasting Gospel and to assist others in doing the same.

It was a remarkable circumstance, that whilst now they were continually hearing of some expressions of great bitterness of one class towards another class, which bitterness only generated similar bitterness in that class against whom they had spoken, or it only elevated the individuals against whom they had been denouncing, just in proportion as those things did occur, the church that used them, the minister who encouraged them, the individual that patronized as it were a nasty little bickering, envious spirit, was generally a minister that God would not own, whose services were never successful, whose congregation was an indifferent body of Christian people, and not unusually the very minister who had been so bitter in his invectives against others who had preached the Gospel of Christ, had himself by some strange circumstances been forbidden long to occupy that sacred office.

And therefore, he (the Chairman) would say that all should endeavor to carry out the principle which their minister had told them they were associated to celebrate, namely, union—that whether they were Wesleyans or Presbyterians, or whether they were Baptists or Independents, they were all under one Shepherd, they were all pledged to the same faith, they all had the same hope, and they would never advance their cause by repudiating and condemning others. They would never elevate their principles by speaking bitterly of those who could not agree with them, but in proportion as they demonstrated a Christian spirit, and showed forth the mind of their Master, God would commonly accept and bless their services.

He regretted the absence of any representative of the Church of England. He wished all classes, churchmen, and dissenters, would lay aside all angry and unkind feeling towards one another. They could not disguise from themselves that God had given great honor to the Church of England. They ought not to wish to disguise it, that that Church never put forth such energy, and exhibited such anxiety to fulfill its mission as it did now, and they ought to rejoice together as those having the same interest, members of the same commonwealth, embodied in the same regiment, and marching under the same leader, when any minister amongst the Church or among Dissenters was made preeminently useful in preaching the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If there was one thing that he (the Chairman) desired above all things in the Christian world, it was unity. He hoped he had always endeavored to carry that out. If they were God's people, there must be love in their hearts one towards another. He only wished he could give utterance to one idea that would have the tendency to link together Christian people in attachment to their Master, in affectionate union with those with whom they were fellow-travelers through the wilderness, in hopeful and joyful

expectation of associating with them in another and a better world, where they should live as brethren in perfect peace and unity. Let them bear with one another's infirmities.

**The REV. J. HALL**, Independent Minister, next addressed the meeting. He regarded it, and he thought all must do so, as a token for good, an auspicious sign of the times passing over us, that the friends there should attach so much importance to union among Christians, that they should give a whole evening to the discussion of this important subject.

Was it possible to over-rate its importance? Why, they could not read their Bibles, even with moderate care, without seeing that the practical exemplification of union among Christians was one of the grand designs of the Christian dispensation. Indeed, they were expressly told that the Savior purposed, by His death, to gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered over the earth, and they knew that for the accomplishment of this design He interceded, almost with His dying breath, in language that gave us to understand that the unity of the church was one of the grand means of the world's conversion.

And as a matter of fact, while visible unity prevailed among the disciples of the Savior, the cause of Christianity everywhere triumphed. Yes, the poor fishermen of Galilee, without wealth, without learning, without patronage—standing only on God's truth—were more than a match for all the powers of the world standing together on the devil's lie.

Real visible union was the glory of the church of Christ, and never till that glory of the Lord was seen afresh upon her would the nations come to her light and kings to the brightness of her rising. What was it that made it to be a good sign that they should meet together to talk about such a subject? The reason had already been referred to by the Chairman. Alas! the church of Christ still presented a scene of strife, and division, and contention, and Christians gathered together of all denominations to talk about this matter might, with divine blessing, be the means of healing, or helping to heal, the breaches of Zion.

We talked about the wonders of the age we live in. Well, it was an age of progress certainly. The inventions of science had come almost within the bounds of the supernatural, and natural marvels reached well-nigh to miracles. The impossibilities of our forefathers had become to us a traffic and a pastime—we ride upon the wings of vapor, we bind the winds of heaven to our car, we navigate the ocean against contrary winds and tempestuous waves, we lay hold of the lightnings of heaven, and make them the world's errand boy, and we make the light our portrait painter and yet—it brought the blush to our faces—union among Christians was an open question still, and Christians, the intended peacemakers of the world, were not able to settle the preliminaries of a truce among themselves.

Still, Christians who were commanded to love their own enemies, had not, many of them, enough religion to love one another. And still, Christians who were required to pray for their persecutors were yet to be found who would not pray with their brethren of other denominations. The question which he (Mr. Hall) had to consider was, "What do the Scriptures teach us concerning union among Christians?"

Now, it was evident from the whole Word of God, as well as from Christian experience, that there was an essential oneness among all the disciples of the Lord, whatever might be their party names or their sectarian divisions. By virtue of their common relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, they were allied one to the other in the bond of a common fellowship and in the hope of a glorious destiny.

Wherever real Christians might be, whatever the color of their skin, whether they were white or black, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—whether they burned at the equator or shivered at the poles—they were all one in Christ Jesus. They were willing too to relinquish the world's wealth, and the world's fame, and the world's honor, for the glory of His name and the blessings of His cross.

If they went round the whole world and just asked every Christian this question, "What think ye of Christ?" they would get but one answer from every one of them, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely."

If they were to bring together into one room Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan, and Baptist, and Independent, what would take place? If they named the prayer book, and found fault with it, he was afraid the Churchman would jump up. If they dared to call in question the confession of faith, he was

afraid the Presbyterian would be annoyed. The same with the Wesleyan, if they impugned the acts of the conference. And if they dared to say a word against the Baptist, he did not know how the Baptist brother would feel. And then if they presumed to call in question, for a moment, the divine origin of Independency, he did not know what the Independent would say.

Well, now, these were the little things that would divide even good men, and perhaps, for a time, set them by the ears. But just ask them to pray together, and they would all bow the knee in the name of Christ. Ask them to sing together, and they would shout in harmony, “God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ask them to work together, and though there might be many forms of work, and some in which they might not be able to unite, put before them God’s Holy Word, without note or comment, and ask them to lend their efforts and their sympathies to give the Word of Life to the nations, and with one heart, and with one hand, they would find Wesleyan and Baptist, and Episcopalian and Presbyterian putting forth their energies to do this common work of all who love the Redeemer.

Unity was the great thing which the Word of God demanded—that there should be an outward manifestation before the world of this internal oneness among all Christians. What was wanting was that union among Christians should be a visible reality—that there should be a public, palpable manifestation of that reality before the eyes of the world, in offices of brotherly kindness, and in efforts of Christian philanthropy.

It was very delightful to know that all Christians were members of one body, of which Christ is the glorified Head—but then that unity was known only to the church in heaven, and understood only by the church on earth. The world did not understand that—the world did not see that. What therefore was wanting, was what Christ prayed for—and prayed for as indispensable to the world’s conversion—that the real spiritual unity of the church should become a visible fact before the eye of the world.

Well, then, what did this unity mean? Of course it did not mean compromise. No. Mr. Spurgeon had told them that last evening when they had a meeting of their own, to hear the exposition of their own peculiar views. Well, he (Mr. Hall) honored them for that, because the union which the Bible inculcated was one which allowed the Baptist to remain a Baptist, the Episcopalian to remain an Episcopalian, the Presbyterian to remain a Presbyterian, and the Wesleyan still true to Wesley, and the Independent still an Independent. It aimed at combining them together on earth, on the same principle upon which it united them together in heaven, not as Denominationalists but as Christians.

He remembered reading one of Mr. Spurgeon’s sermons, in which he was indulging in some bright visions of the future, of the good time coming, when morn should come after the world’s long night, and Sabbath after the world’s long toil. And one of the visions was this—that they should certainly all be Baptists.

Well, he verily believed that if there should be a Metropolitan Tabernacle, it might be ornamented as this tonight, with the marble baptistry, and he believed that all Episcopalians and Presbyterians who did not believe in it, would have their own way of doing it, and yet the Baptist brother and the Paedo-Baptist brother would have more love.

He did not know that it would be all the better in the millennium that they should all be Baptists. He did not know that it would not be better for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, that there should be some little difference in these little matters still. Of course, the unity they had been speaking of did not mean uniformity.

They knew that the Church of Rome, when she had the power of coercion, had repressed all religious opinion, and produced a very exact conformity to one system of doctrine and one formula of worship, and she called that “unity.” Why, it reminded one of the unity of a Dutch garden, where the trees were all clipped to the same size and shape.

Unity! Why, it was the unity of the graveyard—where the prince and subject exhibited the same rotteness and molded to the same dust! Diversity in unity, unity in diversity—that was the characteristic of all life. The Dutch gardener, to whom he had just referred, must at times have trouble to

keep his trees all of the same size and shape. Life was a very vigorous thing, and depend upon it, he had to be very busy about these trees to keep up any appearance of visible uniformity.

There was a wonderful struggling in all life for individual manifestation. It would not be regarded as a very great compliment to his hearers, if for a moment he imagined that they were all stone statues—and he saw a Christian brother in the assembly who had just brought this thought to his mind—that they were all stone statues.

They might exhibit the most perfect uniformity—they might sit in the same attitude, with the same gesture, and in every respect, be all alike. Well, but suppose, just in the midst of this paradise of uniformity, they should be endued with the principle of life. The moment they began to live the uniformity ended—they would alter their attitude—one would be looking this way, and another would be looking that way. One would have a pensive look, and the other a joyful look.

And there would be all the while the play of the various emotions and passions of the human soul depicted in their various countenances. And just so where there was real life, there would be this diversity amid the underlying principle of unity. Why, the tastes and the temperaments of Christian people were as varied as their faces and their voices.

The natural temperament, doubtless, had a great deal to do in the growth of Christian graces. The temperament of a man before conversion remained with him after conversion, only with this difference—that now it was baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and consecrated to the service of God.

For example, it was divine grace operating upon a disposition naturally amiable, which produced a Barnabas, a son of consolation. It was that working upon an energetic disposition which had fired a soul with great boldness in the faith and produced a Boanerges, a son of thunder.

Look at Melancthon and Luther. Melancthon said the Scriptures imparted to the soul a holy and marvelous delight, it was the heavenly ambrosia. Now, Luther said, the Word of the Lord was a sword, it was a war, it was a destruction, and it leaped upon the children of Ephraim like lions of the forest. These men were equally pious, yet the gentle Melancthon saw in the Word of God little else than a fount of life, and a river of God's pleasure—while the impetuous and earnest Luther saw and heard only the thunder and the flame of an angry God.

They might look at the history of Whitefield and of Edwards. Why, the ministry of Jonathan Edwards burst upon the people as alarming as the trump of doom, terrible as the kindling of the last fires, while the preaching of Whitefield came down upon the ears of the people like rain upon the new-mown grass.

Depend upon it, Whitefield could never have preached that sermon, “Sinners in the hand of an angry God.” He would have been compelled to stop a hundred times in the course of the sermon to preach the love of Christ to sinners, and to shed tears over souls in peril of the wrath to come. Just for a moment look at it in the case of Peter and John, and the same difference might be discovered.

In conclusion, he would say that the three elements of Christian unity were unity of faith in relation to Christ, unity of affection in relation to one another, and unity of effort in relation to the world. With the visible practical union resulting from a common faith in Christ—brotherly kindness and confederated effort, the church once more as of old would, “Look forth clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as a bannered host.”

**EDWARD CORDEROY, Esq.**, said a more fitting theme could hardly be chosen in a house of prayer, erected by contributions from members of various Protestant churches, than that which had been announced this evening. To many it would be a subject of sarcasm—for it was not only by Papists that we were charged with lack of unity.

It would be useless to attempt to conceal our diversities, indeed it would be unwise if we could. Certainly the aspect of the churches of this land justified to the full the statement that we had embraced as Protestants most heartily one grand principle drawn from Scripture and put forth at the Reformation—the right of private judgment.

But there was a real, substantial, living unity among the disciples of Christ nevertheless. Except for the weakness and infirmity of men, or the obstinacy and the ignorance of men which occasionally magnified apparent into real differences, there was nothing in any church organization, nothing in the formularies of religion, nothing even in doctrine among what were called the Orthodox churches of this land—there was nothing if we but believed that there was only one name given to men under heaven, whereby we might be saved—to prevent a real, substantial, effective union amongst all the disciples of Christ.

The doctrine of true essential union amongst the disciples of Christ should, he took leave to say, be more fully explained, set forth, and generally received than it was at present. Oh, if they could imagine a spirit of the just made perfect, enabled to pierce that thin veil which screens an unseen world from our mortal view, with this topic to discourse upon, how he would tell them that union with Christ the Head must mean union of the members of His body one with another!

How he would tell them, as they had already been reminded, that it was written, “Beloved, if God so loved us, ought we not also to love one another?” How he would tell them that they fought for shadows if they fought for anything which bore not on the glorious hereafter! How he would tell them, with tones deepened from an intense realization of the things belonging to eternity, of the folly, the utter, miserable folly of those pettinesses which disfigure many Christian churches, because they come from weak, though in God’s mercy, good men.

How he would tell them of our Savior’s word, “A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you.” How he would tell them that some of the very last utterances of Scripture, possibly the very last, the epistle of John, breathed fully this doctrine, and the aged saint and apostle seemed to concentrate all the spirit of the Gospel in his exhortation, “Little children love one another!”

Union, merely in name, would be thoroughly useless. Lip profession, unaccompanied by kindly acts, was little to be relied upon, but a real spiritual, prayerful, brotherly union of the church of Christ would increase the tone of the church’s piety, quicken the church’s zeal, and bless the world.

The subject committed to him by Mr. Spurgeon was the influence of such a union upon the church itself. If this spirit of real union were cultivated, there would be a prayerful cultivation of those characteristics which made this union desirable, and thereby there would be the growth in grace of the whole church.

One of the first results would be an anxiety for the honor of Christ,

*“A jealous, just concern  
For His immortal praise,  
A pure desire that all might learn,  
And glorify His grace.”*

And whatever would magnify the Savior, add lustre to His many crowns, and bring the world to His feet—that would be the object of the church’s prayerful and devout effort. There would then be an earnest desire to grow more and more like the Savior, and as far as possible to follow in His steps. And as the church, by its individual members, sought to act in the Spirit of the Savior, more and more of His Spirit would be imbibed, and as they sought to grow more and more like the Head, they would more readily recognize His likeness in any of His members wherever they were and under whatever circumstances.

There would also be an honor placed upon the poor, humble, and afflicted members of Christ’s flock, which they sometimes did not now obtain. The charity which gives the cup of cold water to the disciple would no longer be dashed by the expectation of human applause, but it would be given to the disciple in the name of the disciple for the sake of the Master.

There would be an increase of the spirit of charity. We should have large eyes for each other's excellencies and small vision for each other's defects. Oh for more of the charity that forgives, the charity that covers the fault!

Another effect would be the ability to rejoice in each other's success. What a hard matter that was to some of us! Again, there would be a disposition to work together where practicable, or still, if not practicable together, yet in such a spirit that Judah should not envy Ephraim, nor Ephraim vex Judah.

There would be, too, the quickening of our zeal, and faith, and love. We should rejoice to help each other, to bear one another's burdens. We should learn to speak lovingly, and kindly, and honorably, and respectfully of each other, and not detractingly and as though we were glad to hear a whisper of any delinquency.

**The REV. ROBERT BUSHELL**, Free Methodist, next addressed the meeting in a very humorous speech. After some preliminary observations, he said he very much rejoiced in the erection of the building in which they were assembled, for one or two important reasons.

The first was he believed it would be the birth place of immortal souls. There was a spot in old England—he knew it quite well, the likeness of it was gratefully embalmed in his memory—he did not mean to say that it was a bit better than any other spot, but it was better to him. He could remember the shape of the windows and the doors. He knew the look of that old building altogether, and there was not such a house in old England as that house was to him. He would tell them why. He was born there and he was born again there.

A short time ago, he visited that spot—he went to follow his poor mother to the grave. He looked at the house, and could have wept over it, and if the people there would not have thought him superstitious, he would not have minded giving a shilling to go to the very room and kneel upon the very spot where he was when God converted him. It was the second birth which made it glorious.

And so he had no doubt at all that this house of prayer would be dear to thousands of souls, because they would be there born to God. But then, that was not all. He believed it would also be a place of spiritual refreshment for saints. He quite thought, notwithstanding all that people said to the contrary, that if they wanted a bit of good substantial food, they might get it there.

He came on Good Friday morning and he confessed that he felt it was God's house. He did not mean to say that they would get very many flowers there, they did not want them. Food was the sort of thing that they wanted. Flowers looked very well upon the tables, but they would not like the flowers if there was not food as well.

There were two men on a road one day, and they had had a very long journey, and were awfully hungry. At length, one of them saw what he conceived to be an inn. "This is it, brother," he said, "come on." So in they went, and the waiter came with an apron, just as they do, and he looked very natty, and there was a table very beautifully spread, and the crockery-ware, and all there.

So these men said to the waiter, "What have you got?" "Well,"—he hardly knew. "Have you got any ducks?" they asked. "No." "Chickens?" "No." "Beef steaks?" "No." "Why, what in the world do you keep then?" they said. "Well," he said, "we keep a tavern."

Now, there were some buildings in which there were all the things necessary except the one thing needful. He believed that in this house of prayer there would be meat for men, milk for babes, and spiritual nourishment for the fainting and the dying.

To come to the subject of unity, they all knew that unity was strength. A little drop of water might fall upon the face of a delicate lady, and she would hardly know it, but put a mass of drops together, and you have got the ocean big enough to bear or bury the Leviathan.

**Mr. Bushnell** then gave several illustrations of the manifestations of unity, concluding with that afforded by the erection of the Tabernacle itself.

**The REV. W. G. LEWIS**, of Bayswater, said the subject entrusted to him was one so vast in its extent, and so weighty in its consequences, that he almost felt guilty of temerity in attempting to handle it. It was, What are the limits of *practical* union.



There could be no union without a creed. Let it be distinctly understood, that beautiful, and fair, and celestial as charity was, truth was her lifeblood. Without it she could not exist. All associations of men of whatsoever kind existed upon sympathy of belief. Moral, political, scientific, or religious associations all had one common center, one basis of belief.

So long, however, as men were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, all their differences were cast into the shade. The old axiom of the Reformers was, "In essentials, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity."

For his own part, he hesitated not plainly to announce that he could have no practical union with a man unless he believed the inspiration of God's Holy Word, though he might feel charity towards him. He was not speaking of the limits of love, or attempting to put boundaries to the exercise of brotherhood and regard for the welfare of his fellow men.

But for all purposes of concerted usefulness and co-operation, he could have no Christian fellowship with the man who did not firmly hold the inspiration of God's sacred Word. They would have no platform upon which to stand, no standard to which to appeal in their differences. Such a man would go beneath the foundation of his (Mr. Lewis's) belief, and in these days, the great enemy of our souls was very busy in deluding and impelling men to make attacks upon the sacred Word.

He had no fear for the safety of the ark of God. It had survived already darker storms than those which seemed at this day to impend upon it. It was only seventy years ago that Voltaire, the high priest of infidelity, published that blasphemous threat, "In sixty years there shall be no Bible." And tonight, where was the printing press that was employed in publishing the threat? In the city of Geneva, *printing Bibles!* All that infidelity had at present accomplished in regard to the Bible had been to prove the bitterness of its malice, and utter impotency of its own attacks.

He could have no practical communion with a man who did not believe in the utter degeneracy of the entire human race in consequence of sin. He should not reiterate the statements of the Word of God to the effect that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. He need not point to the lives of men to illustrate it from their personal or individual history—it stood impressed upon every conscience that was not utterly seared and dead.

And it was written on every page that recorded human life—whether that page were sacred or profane—and his own experience led him to the firm belief that no man ever yet did embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ until he had a deep conviction of his condition as a lost sinner in the sight of God.

Neither could he have fellowship with a man who did not hold the doctrine of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity, to his mind, was essential to the very structure of the sacred oracles. The man who impugned the doctrine of the Trinity, to his (Mr. Lewis's) mind, impugned the veracity of God. Nor could he hold union and co-operate with any man who did not stand fast by the doctrine of the atonement. Catholicity was not compromise. Catholicity and Christian unity must imply "No surrender of vital doctrines."

**The REV. C. H. SPURGEON**, who was introduced as the representative of the Primitive Methodist and Presbyterian churches, made a few remarks upon the subject. It was among the Primitive Methodists that he first found the Savior. It was by one of their local preachers that he learned to look unto Jesus and be saved, and now, he was really a *Primitive Methodist*, for he practiced baptism after the most primitive form.

But next he claimed to represent the Presbyterians because their church was based on the Presbyterian model, and maintained the eldership. The union of which they spoke was a union of the church, and as the limit of union, the church had no spiritual union with the world, with worldly professors, nor with carnal men, although they might be in the church.

The church might sometimes be compelled to use worldly men, but any union with them would deceive and beguile her. The church might have to use men for her purpose that she might achieve her temporal and political liberties, but her real fellowship never extended beyond herself.

It was an awful truth, perverted and therefore forgotten, there was no salvation out of the pale of the church. But what was the church? Those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ—this was their visible character—those who were filled with the Holy Ghost—that was their secret character. It was utterly impossible to narrow the limits of Christian fellowship. He concluded by expressing his satisfaction at the meeting, and said it was a sweet and refreshing season.

A vote of thanks was then unanimously accorded to the Chairman, which was acknowledged by him, and the meeting separated.

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Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).