

Division among the churches : a letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Derby, Her Majesty's First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, &c.;, &c.; / John Spurgin.

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DIVISION AMONG THE CHURCHES.

A LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF DERBY,

Her Majesty's First Lord of the Treasury,

CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

&c., &c.

Ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ κατοικεῖ πάν τὸ πλήρωμα
τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς.

Vide Coloss. ii. 9.

"And teach a thoughtless world to think."

Bioscope, by Granville Penn. Edit. 1814, p. 2.

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DIVISION ALONG THE CHURCHES

A LETTER

TO THE
HON. THE EARL OF DERBY

My dear Lord,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th inst.

My Lord,

The subject of Clerical Visitation is now much more connected also with the Church of England is as a ship on a troubled ocean.

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Such, my Lord, is the state of things as regards a reasonable lesson. It warns us all that the mind of this free country should exert its advancing intelligence, in order to discern the signs of the times. It prompts us to in-

TO THE

RT. HON. THE EARL OF DERBY,

Her Majesty's First Lord of the Treasury,

&c., &c.

MY LORD,

The subject of Clerical Visitation is now much mooted, connected also with that of Auricular Confession. The Church of England is as a ship on a troubled ocean. Other Churches are looking on her struggles, as from terra firma, with more or less of anxious interest for the future. The Church of Rome is doing so with thorough complacency, doubtless—as well she may.

Striking circumstances to think about.

Surely, my Lord, this state of things teaches us a seasonable lesson. It warns us all that the mind of this free country should exert its advancing intelligence, in order to “discern the signs of the times.” It prompts us to in-

Suggestive consideration and momentous questions.

quire, What mean all the present divisions, agitations, and interferences, in Ecclesiastical subjects? Are not these subjects daily becoming, as to their every form and action, points of inquiry and discussion, more than matters of implicit faith; questionable sources of light, instead of undoubted dogmas? Do they not now resemble mere transient meteors, gleaming for a preparatory period, in a dark and gloomy sky, instead of shining as stars in the mental firmament, or, like the glorious orb of day itself, pouring forth its all-illuminating and all-cheering rays into every human faculty at once?

Strong admonitions.

It is possible, my Lord, that, as the Temple of the Jews—their boast in the very ears of Him who rightly prophesied, that ‘not one stone thereof should be left upon another’—was overwhelmed with swift and signal destruction; so, the present points of religious doctrine, constituting a fancied spiritual fabric, on which as Christians we are priding ourselves, may be falling asunder for want of consistency. It is possible — may we not even say probable? — that they

are in this condition through a lack of reverence for the Words of the Living Temple Himself, which so distinctly assure us that He is the Corner Stone; that He visits His Church and people; that He is with them always; that He illuminates the mental world; that He is the Good Shepherd; that He forgives sin and grants freedom from the dominion of evil; that He establishes the unity, not the division, of those who believe in Him; that He would have His ministers to be ministers of peace, without going from house to house (Luke x. 7).

The fact is, my Lord, that a great characteristic of this age is, its presumption; and bitter and abundant are its fruits. In Ecclesiastical matters even, the chief concern would seem to be to assert for them superiority, power, and infallibility, at the cost of harmony, consistency, peace, and good-will. We forget that these virtues are based upon the humility, the self-sacrifice, the simplicity, and the innocence of the Glorified Jesus, whose Name is, nevertheless, "WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER,

Wrong condition and notion of the age in relation to God and His Name.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE." Before THIS ONLY WISE GOD OUR SAVIOUR must crumble away all systems and hierarchies, which hide the brightness of His appearing, by their false notions that He has but a delegated and divided rule. In the light of His truth must the folly of all mere human theories regarding His Divine Nature, however trifling or terrifying they may seem, vanish for ever. For HE ALONE is the King of Glory, and besides Him there is no God—apart from Him there is no Saviour. "JEHOVAH OF HOSTS is His name, and THY REDEEMER, The Holy One of Israel; THE GOD OF THE WHOLE EARTH SHALL HE BE CALLED" (Isaiah liv. 5).

The duty of
the Preachers
of the Gospel
and the result.
See Ephesians
iv. 11—16.

If the professing apostles of the present day would but inculcate this, according to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and if they would give ear to obvious, rather than to proverbial revelations, concerning the ONE GREAT OBJECT of our worship, and the ONE GREAT EXAMPLE of our practice, the Church of Christ would then soon become the centre of unity, and all disputing sects would cast away their conflicting and perplexing inferences as idols, "to

the moles and to the bats." They would then gladly enter its one quiet Fold, and place themselves under its One Divine Shepherd.

But, my Lord, a result so glorious and so desirable, can be witnessed only when all of us, each in his place and according to his power, welcome the ever-comforting Advent of His Goodness into our own hearts, through the instrumentality of clear and attractive, rather than dark and conventional, interpretations of His will.

Requirement on the part of the people in order to understand "all parables." See John vii. 17; Mark iv. 2, *et seqq.*

The toleration enjoyed by this nation, favours the united action of all that is good and true, to render us as sensible, as rational, and as intelligent, in spiritual concerns, as we are in those that are civil and natural. Alas, that the divisions from which we have so long suffered, should have arisen from our own perversion, in mistaking the mystery of human theory for the revelation of Divine Truth! We have thus severed in a variety of ways the very elements of our spiritual subsistence, regardless of the deplorable consequences, and the fearful responsibility, which neither the plea of mystery, nor the display of zeal, nor

Great Britain free to unite good and true principles, that have been weakened and falsified by unlawful separation.

the plausibility of appearances, will ever remove or diminish.

Judgment
operating up-
on Doctrine
and Practice
to separate
from them all
that is false
and evil by
the help of
what is
plainly true
and good.
See John xvi.
25, *et seqq.*

Scores of thousands in this country are impatient for clear and heartfelt religious conviction, rather than for dogmatic religious teaching. They cannot be convinced, still less persuaded, by the divided Churches. Their ranks are rapidly increasing. And surely in this very division we have an undoubted sign that a revision of creeds is indispensably necessary, indicating also the close of an old system, and proclaiming the advent of a brighter and a better, in reference to which THE ONE GREAT HEAD OF THE CHURCH declares: "Behold, I make all things new."

I have the honour to be,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP's most obedient,

and very humble Servant,

MEDICUS CANTABRIGIENSIS.

November, 1858.