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EDITORIAL:

Principles of Church Unity

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PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH UNITY

Almost a century ago—in April, 1866, to be exact—the noted Presbyterian theologian, Charles Hodge, preached a now long-forgotten sermon on “The Unity of the Church.” While voicing an impassioned plea for Protestant unity, the Princeton professor nevertheless escaped two perils that harass the contemporary ecclesiastical scene, namely, uncritical ecumenism and fragmenting independency. That this pertinent sermon remained unpublished (its outline appears in Hodge’s *Conference Papers* edited by his son) is one of the ironies of the times. (It should be noted, however, that the *Princeton Review* in 1865 carried Hodge’s article on “Principles of Church Union, and Reunion of Old and New School Presbyterians,” and that the article, incorporating much the same emphasis as the sermon, is abridged in Hodge’s book on *The Church and its Polity* which appeared in 1879.) The sermon manuscript was rediscovered recently in Princeton Theological Seminary library by Dr. David H. Baker, and *Eternity* magazine, which prints an abridgment in its June issue, has made the copy available for simultaneous use in CHRISTIANITY TODAY.

Much as Dr. Hodge’s sermon proved timely in his own day, it holds even greater relevance in ours. Its sturdy content of 6500 well-chosen words is a tribute to the congregation of William Kellogg’s church in New York City, its original place of delivery. Since Hodge gave the same message (according to his annotation) in the chapel at Princeton, on whose faculty he served for a half century, this sermon also yields an insight into the high level of seminary addresses in that day. Its primary value, however, lies in its exhibition of “the principles of Christian unity as held by the great body of evangelical Christians.”

These principles Hodge propounds with a passion both for the purity and for the unity of the Church. “Instead of conflict, we should have concord. Instead of mutual criminations, we should have mutual respect and fellowship.” If followed, the tenets he ventures to suggest would presumably transform the strained relations among churches. “Instead of rivalry and opposition, there would be harmonious cooperation . . . and the sacramental host, although marshaled under different banners, and organized into different corps, would still, in the sight of God and man, be one great body, glorious, and through grace, invincible.”

Professor Hodge sounds a clarion call to love; as the high and holy test of Christian discipleship, it tran-

scends distinctions and barriers of race, color, nationality, social status and denomination. Since a vital relationship to Christ and the family of the redeemed (and not mere doctrinal conformity) is the foundation of Christian experience, Hodge emphasizes “love . . . founded on congeniality . . . not on sameness of views, feelings, affections, and objects of interest and pursuit, but founded rather on relationship.” “The want of brotherhood, the isolation of Christians, so that every one seems to be seeking his own, and not the welfare of others,” he declares, “is perhaps the most glaring defect of modern Christianity. It was not so at the beginning, and it will not be so at the end.” That this verdict was uttered not long after the Civil War permits scant comfort to our own generation to which the rebuke still applies. “One of the first evidences” that strength is returning to the Church for her conquest of the world, Hodge would still say to us, “will be the diffusion of this consciousness of brotherhood among all her members.” He even affirms that absence of brotherly love is “evidence that we are not disciples, that we have never been taught of God.”

In view of this distinct emphasis on Christian love, we are not surprised that Professor Hodge’s exposition of unity stresses the primacy of spiritual union. Those condemned for their sins and who remain in an unregenerate state are excluded from the body of Christ. Saving faith and especially the indwelling Spirit are the constituents of Christian unity. Since the indwelling Spirit is “the real bond of union between Christ and his people, and of their union one with another as members of his body,” Dr. Hodge declares it obvious “that this must determine the nature of the unity of the Church.” The Holy Spirit is “a formative, organizing principle.”

As Professor Hodge sees it, unity of the Church is not simply a matter of isolated interrelationships between redeemed individuals. “A solitary Christian is but half a Christian. There are elements of the spiritual life which can only be brought into action in organic union with his fellow Christians.” Christians must be “statedly united, not only for worship and praise, but also for prayer,” and to discriminate between those who are eligible and ineligible for admission to the fellowship of faith. Christians are to associate in visible churches. In this collective relationship the New Tes-

tament imposes upon them explicit duties including public worship, the observance of baptism and of the Lord's Supper.

But there is more. Unity of the Church does not stop with "the inward spiritual unity of believers in faith and love," Dr. Hodge insists, nor with "a like spiritual unity of individual, separate churches or congregations." Specifically, "There is no reason why individual churches should remain isolated, without organic, visible union with other churches."

It would be easy to interpret these words as a prophetic approval of twentieth century ecumenism. But close study of Dr. Hodge's sermon yields no justification for this. Actually, what he approves and promotes is denominationalism. He maintains that "the law of the Spirit tends to the organic union of separate churches in the same way and to the same extent that it tends to the external union of believers in individual churches," that in all ages an inward law of the Spirit motivates the Church to outward unity. "The inward unity of believers expresses itself in the outward union of church organizations" and these separate churches (Hodge calls them "organic, external societies") thus remain one. Isolated churches that have no organic union with other churches are considered abnormal.

In keeping with Presbyterianism, Dr. Hodge affirms the obligation of individual member churches to defer to the Spirit's rule in the larger collectivities. He notes that in apostolic times all churches were subject to the over-all authority of the specially-gifted apostles, whose power extended to church government as well as to teaching. The churches continue "one body because they are subject to one common tribunal. That common tribunal at first was the Apostles, now the Bible and the mind of the Church as a whole. . . ."

This combination of spiritual and external unity marked by "the subjection of each part to the whole" has never been attained, says Hodge. It nonetheless remains the Church's proper norm. For this goal "she should strive, and . . . failure to attain . . . should be recognized as an imperfection and a sin."

Professor Hodge's proposals for diminishing "the evils of their external divisions" and for increasing the "spiritual fellowship" of the churches are significant for today's ecclesiastical debate. Concerned that "the Protestant world . . . present an undivided front against infidelity and every anti-Christian error," he offers five principles to advance Church unity: mutual recognition; intercommunion; recognition of the validity of sacraments and orders administered by the respective churches; non-interference; and cooperation in common

causes. In view of ingenious modern solutions such as emphasis on mission more than on doctrine; on creedal broadness rather than on precision; and on mammoth superdenominational structures, what Hodge does not include in his suggested remedies is equally noteworthy.

Professor Hodge does not unqualifiedly underwrite ecumenism at any price. "We must remember . . . that real union is within and by the Spirit. We must begin there. And as it is there perfected it will more and more manifest itself outwardly in unity of faith, of love, of worship, and obedience. . . ." "External union is the product and expression of internal unity. The former cannot be safe or desirable when pressed beyond the latter."

Moreover, Hodge particularly questions a least-common-denominator unity that blurs legitimate doctrinal considerations. Causes "legitimate and worthy of respect," he notes, may prevent "normal unity." Among these causes he specifically mentions "conscientious differences of opinion on questions of doctrine and order as render harmonious action in one and the same externally united body impossible." Hodge even asserts that "as believers are imperfect in knowledge and in grace, such diversities of opinion in doctrine and order unavoidably arise which render this external union of all local churches impractical and undesirable." Moreover, the Princeton theologian counsels: "It is better to separate than to quarrel or to oppress. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed." "Where two bodies of Christians differ so much either as to doctrine or order as to render their harmonious action in the same ecclesiastical body impossible, it is better that they should form distinct organizations." Until "such unity of opinion" is attained "as to render external union practicable and desirable . . . all attempts at external union are premature and injurious." Indeed, "the constantly recurring efforts to keep men united externally who were inwardly at variance" Hodge calls "one of the greatest evils in the history of the Church." Such forced union, he declares, "leads to persecution, to hypocrisy, and to the suppression of the truth."

It is clear that Professor Hodge supports the legitimacy of denominations over superdenominational agencies which sacrifice the lively sense of truth to the objective of unity. He specifically illustrates the divisions he has in view by reference to "Episcopalians . . . Presbyterians . . . Independents" and not alone to "Romanists and Protestants." "The existence of denominational churches in the present state of Christendom," he writes, "is unavoidable."

Since believers lack omniscience, their ignorance and diversity account for doctrinal differences no less than differences in the measure of love and zeal among each

other. Consequently, perfect unity continues to be a goal rather than an actuality. This lack in no way discredits Christian identification with "a common faith," however, nor does it impugn the Church's confidence in divinely revealed doctrines. In fact, Hodge introduces his sermon with the reminder that Church unity is among the most clearly revealed doctrines in Scripture. Similarly, his emphasis on Christian love is rooted in the authoritative biblical revelation to which he appeals again and again. Scriptural doctrines generate the first six ecumenical creeds. Through these creeds—despite denominational diversity and disagreement on nonessentials—the Church (as a regenerate body sharing the same inward religious life) retains one central creedal standard.

The scope Dr. Hodge assigns to truth as well as to love as the substance of Christian unity is therefore quite apparent. What he says to our day is worth hearing. Fragmentation is costly. So is mere external union. True unity, spiritual unity, is still a Christian imperative. It still obligates the body of Christ to fidelity both in love and in truth.

JAPAN'S CALL FOR EVANGELISTIC MISSIONARIES

Protestantism lost a golden opportunity in Japan when she failed to take advantage of the unprecedented opening for Christian missions following World War II. The chance for wholesale impact has now been lost but that nation is still wide open as a field for evangelistic endeavor, and while the missionary (fortunately) is no longer on a pedestal he is needed and he is welcome.

Technical aid and educational experts in missions are indeed necessary, but the great need is still for men and women to preach and live the Gospel in the midst of a people who have a great culture and the highest literacy rate in the world, so few of whom know Christ.

The Synod of Kyushu, which measures in number of churches and believers about one-tenth of the United Church in Japan (Kyodan), has made a careful evaluation of the work of that area, the unreached cities and villages and the need for additional evangelistic missionaries to aid in reaching the people of Japan with the Gospel.

A copy of this significant report has been forwarded to this paper by the Rev. Osamu Murakami, pastor of the Yahata Kyodan Church and a member of the standing committee which prepared the report.

Mr. Murakami solicits the prayers and help of those interested and writes: "We welcome missionaries."

This report is of more than passing significance because it points up the present trend of the eight cooperating boards operating as the Inter-Board Com-

mittee to send missionaries into institutional rather than evangelistic and pastoral work.

The fact that the Japanese church is asking for more ordained missionaries to come to share in pastoral and evangelistic work is also significant. This report states that less than half as many ordained evangelistic missionaries have been sent to Kyushu as before the war and that now the number of missionaries engaged in church extension is extremely small, while eighteen cities are mentioned in which there are no churches of any denomination.

One solution suggested is the waiving of retirement age for elderly missionaries in that area.

Japan desperately needs the Gospel and the Japanese Christians and the Japanese church continue to welcome missionaries. That they are pleading for pastors and evangelists should be a source of thankfulness and a challenge to those who are willing to heed the Great Commission.

Here is a challenge to men and women who have dedicated their lives to our Lord. It is a challenge because of the need and also because of the difficulties. An old and proud culture, a complicated language and many difficult adjustments are some of the obstacles in the way of an effective witness. But the rewards will be both immediate and eternal. END

CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

(*Cont'd from p. 14*) religion, therefore, deal with secondary and tertiary matters, never directly with the divine Spirit.

Second, that anything which attempts to ground the Christian faith solely in religious experience, or any movement within Christendom which exalts personal religious experience over against the God who creates true spiritual experiences must be resisted.

How much ado is there in Scripture over this or that man's conversion? Very little, with the exception of Paul's conversion of which some was made, due to the peculiarly theological cruciality of its nature. But the New Testament gives little regard to the conversion experience of this famous or that notorious character because, from the perspective of biblical faith, the real wonder is that God comes to us, and through Jesus Christ creates a living fellowship in our hearts. And as this is true, it is just as much miracle in the heart of a child as in the heart of a murderer; it is just as much miracle in the heart of a common daily laborer as it is in the heart of some world-renowned personality.

A theology that knows its Scripture never overemphasizes psychological experience at the expense of the miracle-action of God. Rather, it is careful to rest its apologetic not in the flux and flow of religious experience, but in the self-revelation of the eternal God. END

The Unity of the Church

CHARLES HODGE

By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

The unity of the Church is one of the most clearly revealed doctrines of the Bible. There is one fold, and one shepherd; one king, and one kingdom; one temple, an habitation of God through the Spirit; one vine, of which all believers are the branches; one body, of which all are members. The very expression "the Church," so familiar to the ears of the readers of the Scriptures, implies that there can be but one Church which Christ loved and for which he died.

I. *This one Church includes the saints in heaven as well as those on earth.* Both classes belong to that kingdom of which Christ is the Lord, and to that body of which he is the head. There is but one Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Such has been the common faith of Christians. They are taught to say: "We believe in the Holy Catholic Church." On this point there has never been any diversity of opinion.

II. A second point no less clear is that *believers are one in virtue of their union with Christ.* They are one body in Christ Jesus. He is the vine. They are the branches. Union with the same vine makes the branches one. He is the head. We are the members. Only those in vital union with the head are members of the body of Christ, which is his Church.

III. The next question is, what constitutes union with Christ? Who are in him, in the Scriptural sense of those words? This is a question which cannot be answered in a simple sentence, because *that union is manifold, and includes three distinct, although intimately related elements.*

1. *We are said to be in him before the foundation of the world.* There is a union in idea, in thought, of purpose, which antedates all that is real and actual. As we were in Adam before we were born, so we were in Christ before the worlds were made. This covenant union secured actual, living, saving union in time, according to the terms of the compact between the Father and the Son, on which it is founded.

2. *Those thus in Christ come into the world in a state of sin and condemnation, and so remain until united to him, by renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the indwelling of the Spirit.*

3. *The first conscious exercise of the new life thus imparted is faith in Christ.* As soon as the newborn child of God opens its eyes, it sees the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and receives him as its God and Saviour. The soul is now in him by faith. Faith is the living, abiding, conscious bond of union between the soul and Christ. . . .

In Ephesians 3:17 it is said, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. In 1 John 4:15 it is said: "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." As there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, so those who believe are not condemned. In Galatians

3:26 those who are in Christ are said to be sons of God. . . .

IV. *The unity by faith is however due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; so that it is by one Spirit we are baptized into one body.* As the vine is one because it has one life; and as the body is one, because animated by one soul, so the Church is one because there is one Spirit, the Holy Ghost, which is the Spirit of Christ, which is given to him without measure, dwelling in all his members. They have a common life. It is not they that live, but Christ that liveth in them. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

To this indwelling of the Spirit, the existence, continuance, and fruits of spiritual life are referred. And this being the real bond of union between Christ and his people, and of their union one with another as members of his body, it is obvious that this must determine the nature of the unity of the Church, and all its legitimate or normal manifestations and fruits.

1. *First, then, the Church is one in faith.* This follows because the Spirit is a teacher, and his teaching is common to all the people of God. The Spirit was promised to the disciples, and not exclusively to the apostles. Our Lord says of his followers: "They shall all be taught of God (John 6:45). The Apostle says of believers: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is the truth" (1 John 2: 20, 27). The natural man, says St. Paul, receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but the spiritual man discerneth or knoweth all things. It was promised of old that when Christ came the Spirit should be poured upon all men, upon young and old, upon men servants and maid servants, and the effects of this affusion should be not only temporary miraculous gifts, but spiritual illumination and divine teaching. For it is written of all the people of God: "I will put My laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts . . . and all shall know Me from the least unto the greatest" (Heb. 8:10-11).

As this teaching of the Spirit is common to all, it must produce the same effect in all, and that effect must be a common faith. Hence the Apostle tells us that the Church has one faith, as well as one Lord and one baptism. All are baptized in the name of the same God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; all acknowledge Jesus Christ to be their Lord; all believe the record which the Father has given of the Son.

As the promises of God, however, do not secure perfection to the individual child of God in this life, neither perfection in holiness or in blessedness, so neither do they secure perfection in knowledge. And so long as knowledge is imperfect, it will be attended more or less with ignorance and divinity.

In consistence, therefore, with this unity of faith in all that is necessary to the existence and fruits of the divine life, and to the salvation of the soul, there may be, and must be, in this world, differences of doctrine among the true members of the Church. Perfect unity is the goal toward which we tend. God has given us the means of instruction "until we are come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). So long as we know in part, so long as we see through a glass darkly, we must, within certain limits, see differently. But this is no more inconsistent with the real and living unity of faith than the different measures of our love and zeal are inconsistent with our having a common God and Saviour.

What is declared in the Scriptures to be true is found to be true in fact. All Christians adopt the Apostles' Creed. All historical churches subscribe to the doctrinal decisions of the first six Ecumenical Councils. Every doctrine essential to salvation is found in the creeds of the Greek, Latin, Lutheran, Reformed churches, and of every recognized Christian denomination on the face of the earth. In spite, therefore, of diversity of opinion on non-essential points, in spite, too, of mutual denunciations, and criminations, and sentences of excommunication, the Church emerges from the discord and tumult of conflict as one body, having one leader, and marshaled under one standard.

2. *The Church is one in its inward religious life.* The indwelling of the Holy Spirit produces the same effects in the hearts of all believers.

Conviction, regeneration, sanctification are essentially the same process in all the children of God. All are brought especially to acknowledge their just exposure to condemnation for the sin of not believing upon Christ. All are convinced of his righteousness, of the righteousness of his claim to be the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, who has wrought our everlasting righteousness for us sinners, and that he is therefore the only Saviour of the world. All therefore love, worship, and obey him as their God, and trust him as their Saviour. All are convinced of judgment, of the final condemnation of Satan and overthrow of the kingdom of darkness.

As human nature is everywhere the same, so that as in water face answers to face, heart answers to heart, so also one regenerate soul, the world over, answers to another. They all have the lineaments of their common Father. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Christ. They are one, therefore, by an intimate, enduring community of spiritual life, derived from Christ, head of the whole mystical body.

3. *The Church is one in virtue of the mutual love of all its members.* The Spirit dwells in all believers as the Spirit of love. This is the test of discipleship. "Hereby shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love for one another" (John 13:35). "If a man . . . loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). This love is founded on congeniality; not sameness of view, feelings, affections, and of objects of interest and pursuit, but founded rather upon relationship. They are brethren, children of the same Father, members of the same family, having a common object of adoration and love.

It is vain to ask why relationship produces love. This is a

law of our being, and the degree of love is in proportion to the intimacy of the relation. Members of the same nation have a feeling for each other which they have not for foreigners. Members of the same tribe or class in a community are bound together by a still closer tie. Parents and children, brothers and sisters constitute a unit in a yet higher scale; until we come to the vital union of the members of the same body, when the love becomes perfect. There can be no discord or alienation between the hands and feet, between the eye and the ear. If one member suffers all the members suffer with it. And if one is honored all rejoice with it.

It is this union between the members of the human body which the Apostle selects to illustrate the union of believers. They are one, as the body is one. They have a common life, the necessary result of which is mutual sympathy and affection. One true Christian can no more hate another, without doing violence to his nature, than the foot can hate the hand, or the hand the foot.

If brotherly love is the evidence of discipleship, the want of it, is evidence that we are not disciples, that we have never been taught of God. "Behold how these Christians love one another!" has been the exclamation of the world, in all ages, at every genuine exhibition of the Christian character.

Love is active. It is an operative principle. Wherever it exists, it will manifest itself in its appropriate fruits.

The mutual love of Christians, therefore, reveals itself, first, in mutual recognition. Christians know and acknowledge each other as brethren. One may be rich, the other poor; one bond, the other free; one a Greek, another a barbarian; one a Jew, another a Gentile; it makes no difference. All are one in Christ Jesus. They instinctively love, honor, and confide in each other as the common children of God. They recognize the dignity and the equality which belongs to this high relationship. Every believer has experienced this, and constantly experiences it in his own life. He knows that when he meets a true Christian in any part of the world, it matters not to what nation, or to what denomination he may belong, his heart goes out to him, and he cannot help giving him the right hand of fellowship. He will acknowledge that he possesses all the prerogatives and privileges of a child of God; that he is to be recognized as such and admitted to our Christian fellowship and communion. He will pray with him, worship with him, and sit down with him at the common table of the Lord. If this is not done, violence is done to the instincts of his Christian nature, and he withholds more or fewer of these recognitions of brotherhood out of regard to some external authority, or from obedience to some restrictive principle felt to be in conflict with the spirit of the Gospel.

Love which spends itself in words, which merely says: "Be thou warmed and clothed," is no love. The union which is produced by the Spirit of God among believers leads to a real brotherhood, a real community of interest, a real disposition to communicate of what we have, so that, as the Apostle says, there may be equality.

The want of brotherhood, the isolation of Christians, so that every one seems to be seeking his own, and not the welfare of others, is perhaps the most glaring defect of modern Christianity. It was not so at the beginning, and it will not be so at the end.

One of the first indications of the revival of the Church, one of the first evidences that strength is coming to her again for the conquest of the world will be the diffusion of this consciousness of brotherhood among all her members, so that no one will be disposed to say that aught of the things that he possesses is his own.

Christianity, however, is not agrarian. It joins no community of goods. It does no violence to the laws of our nature. Even in the best regulated Christian families there is often great disparity in the wealth and social position of its members. Nevertheless, they are brothers. They love each other as such, and are ever disposed to aid, comfort, and defend those with whom they are thus united. Thus it should be, and will be, in the brotherhood of Christians. If one suffers, all will suffer. If one is honored, all will rejoice. "Who is weak," says Paul, "and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?" (2 Cor. 12:29). "Inasmuch," says our Lord, "as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40).

What has yet been said of the unity of believers in faith, in Christian experience, in fellowship and love, concerns only their relation to each other as individuals. This, however, is not all that is meant by the unity of the Church.

The Holy Spirit, as he dwells in the hearts of the people of God, is a formative, organizing, principle. Such is the nature of man as constituted by God that he is a social being. Men by an inward law form themselves into families, tribes, and nations. This union of individuals into organized communities is necessary for security, for the well-being of the whole, and for the proper development of the individual. A hermit ceases almost to be a man. Half his nature lies dormant. All this is true of the Christian life. A solitary Christian is but half a Christian. There are elements of the spiritual life which can only be brought into action in organic union with his fellow Christians.

Believers have feelings to be exercised, exigencies to be met, and duties to be performed, which assume and demand organic union with his fellow believers. Having a common God and Father, a common Saviour, a common redemption, it is impossible that they should not write in acts of worship. They are impelled by a law of their new nature to call on all who are of a like mind, all who are partakers of the same redemption, to unite with them in worshipping and praising their common Redeemer. They have also the same necessities, the same dangers to fear, and the same blessings to seek. And therefore, just as a nation threatened with a common calamity, or groaning under a common judgment, unites in imploring the intervention of God in their behalf, so do Christians, whose common dangers are always imminent, and those common wants are always urgent, must be stately united, not only for worship and praise, but also for prayer.

Besides this, as believers are spiritually one, as they are bound together as professors of the same faith, and servants of a common master, they have not only a mutual interest in each other's welfare, but a mutual responsibility for each other's conduct. They are jointly intrusted with their Master's honor. They are therefore bound to decide who are, and who are not entitled to be recognized as Christians. They are essentially a communion, and must have the right of determining who are to be admitted to their fellowship, for whose faith and conduct they are jointly responsible.

The New Testament, therefore, not only assumes that believers will associate for worship and mutual watch and care, but it abounds with instructions and exhortations addressed to them in their associated capacity, that is, as churches. Most of the Epistles were written to such associations, and duties are enjoined upon them which can only be executed in their collective capacity.

They are to receive and reject members. They are to conduct public worship. They are to provide for the instruction of the people and the propagation of the Gospel. They are to

have their prescribed officers, and to be united in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The fact that believers in all ages under the guidance of the Apostles, and from their day to this, have thus associated as churches, proves that such is the Law of the Spirit. If what all men do is to be referred to a law of their nature, what all Christians do must be referred to a law of their nature as Christians.

Since all believers, as such, stand in the same relation to each other, and as the impulse and obligation to associate is common to all, it is obvious that there is nothing except considerations of convenience to determine the limits of such association or churches. Those living sufficiently near each other would naturally unite and form themselves into a Christian Church. Hence in the New Testament we read of the Church at Jerusalem, of the Church in Antioch, Philippi, and Corinth, and of the Churches of Judea and Galatia. Thus numerous individual churches were formed. Now as the unity of the Church does not stop with the inward spiritual unity of believers in faith and love, so neither does it stop with a like spiritual unity of individual, separate churches or congregations. There is no reason why it should stop there, and as an historical fact, it never has been thus limited.

First, there is no reason why individual churches should remain isolated, without organic, visible union with other churches. They constitute one body. They stand to each other in a relation analogous to that in which individual believers sustain, the one to another. They are bound to mutual recognition, to fellowship and intercommunion. A member of one is a member of all, for all have the same faith, the same Lord, the same terms of fellowship. A Christian in one place is a Christian in another place. His prerogatives arise out of his character and his relation to Christ, and therefore go with him wherever he goes.

From this it follows that in the ideal or normal state of the Church, all separate churches would be one, so far as their membership is concerned. A member of the Church in Jerusalem, if he changed his residence, became of right a member of the Church of Antioch or Corinth, or wherever else he might fix his dwelling.

Again, these separate churches are as much bound to be subject to one another as are individual believers. We are commanded to obey our brethren in the Lord, simply because they are our brethren; because they are the temple and agent of the Holy Ghost; and because they have a joint interest and responsibility in the character and conduct of all who profess the name of Christ. This obligation does not arise out of mere proximity of residence, and therefore is not limited to those who reside in the same place. Neither does it arise out of any covenant, or mutual promise of obedience, and therefore is not confined to those who may form that social compact. As it arises out of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, it extends to all in whom the Spirit dwells, and is to be exercised, of course according to the rule of Christ, whatever that may be. But the point now is that the law of the Spirit tends to the organic union of separate churches in the same way and to the same extent that it tends to the external union of believers in individual churches.

In the second place, what is thus seen to be the law of the Spirit, or the tendency of the internal life of believers, is found to be the fact in the history of the Church. Wherever churches remain isolated, out of organic union with all other churches, that condition has been recognized as abnormal, as something to be accounted for, if not always justified, by

ab extra influences.

In the apostolic period all churches were united, not only, as was remarked, because a member of one was entitled to membership in all, but each recognized all others as churches having all the Scriptural prerogatives and privileges of such organizations. They recognized the validity of each other's ordinances. A man baptized or ordained in Jerusalem had not to be rebaptized or reordained when he went to Corinth. A man excommunicated by one Church was excluded from all.

But besides all this, they were all subject to a common authority. The Apostles were not diocesan bishops. Their jurisdiction extended over all Christians, and over all churches. This necessarily arose from their gifts and from their commission. Hence, Paul wrote to the Church at Rome with full apostolic authority before he had ever visited that city. Peter, in like manner, addressed as an Apostle and Elder the Churches of Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, in the center of the field of Paul's missionary labors. The power thus assumed was not that of teaching only, but also of government. We find also that the Council of Jerusalem issued decrees for all the churches of the Gentiles to observe.

What was true in the apostolic age has proved, as a general rule, true ever since. In nature every thing organic, every plant or animal, has a *nisus formativus*, by which it is impelled, as by an inward necessity, to assume the form suited to its nature. This inward impulse may be impeded or perverted by various circumstances . . . nevertheless, it never fails to manifest its existence, and the state to which it tends.

So it is with the Church. It has always striven after unity. This has been its characteristic in all ages. It gave rise to the ideas of heresy and schism. It manifested itself in the provincial and general councils. At the Reformation the same feeling revealed itself. The churches then formed ran together as naturally as drops of quicksilver. And when union was in any case prevented, it was by insuperable hindrances, which counteracted an obvious and admitted tendency, and was deplored as an evil.

This historical fact, this continual effort of believers in all ages to present themselves before God and man as one body is the revelation of an inward law which must be recognized as the law of the Spirit. It operates according to the command of Christ, and toward an end which he has taught us to regard as of the highest importance.

The theory of the Church, therefore, everywhere presented in the Scriptures, is that believers are a band of brethren, children of the same Father, fellow-citizens, subject to the same King, united together as one mystical body by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and therefore having the same faith, the same inward life or experience, recognizing each other as fellow Christians, and loving each other as the hands sympathize with the feet, and the feet with the hands. This is the spiritual, or mystical union of believers, as individuals, scattered over the face of the earth.

But, as we have seen, as man is a social being, and is led to unite with his fellow men in organic, external societies, so believers, under the guidance of the Spirit, unite in forming themselves into separate, individual churches, for the purposes of worship, and mutual watch and care. Thus the inward unity of believers expresses itself in the outward union of church organizations.

These separate churches, however, remain one. 1. Because they continue to be subject to the same Lord, to be animated by the same Spirit, and to possess the same faith. 2. Because they recognize each other as churches, just as every Christian recognizes every other Christian as a fellow believer, and

consequently recognize each other's members, ordinances, ministers and acts of discipline. 3. They continue one body because they are subject to one common tribunal. That common tribunal at first was the Apostles, now the Bible and the mind of the Church as a whole, expressed sometimes in one way and sometimes in another.

Such at least is the normal state of the Church. It is one body, not only in virtue of its spiritual unity, but externally, by the subjection of each part to the whole.

It is a melancholy fact that this normal state has never been fully reached. It is a goal apparently as distant now as it was centuries ago. Still it should be recognized as the goal to which the Church tends, for which she should strive, and the failure to attain which should be recognized as an imperfection and a sin.

The causes which have prevented this normal unity of the Church are patent to every reader of its history. Some of these causes are altogether unworthy and evil, others are legitimate and worthy of respect, and such as, while they exist, should be patiently submitted to.

The former class do not demand our attention.

The second consists in such conscientious differences of opinion on questions of doctrine and order as render harmonious action in one and the same externally united body impossible. It is better to separate than to quarrel or to oppress. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed.

External union is the product and expression of internal unity. The former cannot be safe or desirable when pressed beyond the latter. One of the greatest evils in the history of the Church has been the constantly recurring efforts to keep men united externally who were inwardly at variance. Such forced union must be insincere and pernicious. It leads to persecution, to hypocrisy, and to the suppression of the truth. Where two bodies of Christians differ so much either as to doctrine or order as to render their harmonious action in the same ecclesiastical body impossible, it is better that they should form distinct organizations.

Such are the differences not only between Romanists and Protestants, but between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, between Presbyterians and Independents. We may lament over such differences, and the separations, alienations, jealousies, and conflicts which they are adapted to produce, but no wise man would propose to act as though the differences did not exist. They are facts which must be recognized and taken into account. We may labor to remove them, and to produce such unity of opinion as to render external union practicable and desirable, but until such unity is attained, all attempts at external union are premature and injurious.

Admitting, therefore, that the existence of denominational churches, in the present state of Christendom, is unavoidable, the practical question is: What course ought they to pursue to increase their spiritual fellowship, and to diminish the evils of their external divisions?

1. *The first of those duties is mutual recognition.* As we are bound to recognize every Christian as a Christian and treat him accordingly, so we are bound to recognize every Church as a Church, and treat it accordingly. And as we are not at liberty to give an arbitrary definition of a Christian so as to exclude any of the true children of God, so we are not at liberty to give an arbitrary definition of the Church, so as to exclude any of the true Churches of our common Lord.

A Christian is a man united to Christ by the Holy Spirit. A Church is a number of such men united together for the purposes of Christian worship and mutual watch and care. This is the Scriptural definition which we are not at liberty

to alter.

The Church consists of the Called. And an organized body of the Called, organized i.e. for church purposes, is a Church. Everywhere in the New Testament the word *ekklesia* is used as a collective term for the *kletoi*. As a man's being a Christian does not depend on anything external, upon stature, color, or nationality, so whether a body of Christians is a Church cannot depend upon the mode of their organization. There may be a wise or unwise, a good or bad, a Scriptural or unscriptural mode, but the form cannot be essential to the being of a Church unless it be essential to the Christianity of its members. *Ubi Spiritus Dei, ibi Ecclesia* has been a motto and an axiom with evangelical men in all ages.

There is indeed a theory which makes the form everything. Romanists teach that Christ gave the Holy Ghost to his apostles, and with it the power to communicate the Spirit by the imposition of hands. This gift and power they transmitted to their official successors, and they again to theirs in unbroken succession. It is in the line of this succession that the Spirit works. His saving influences are imparted to those only who receive the sacraments from men who have the supernatural power to render them efficacious. As no man, therefore, can be a Christian, who is not subject to those thus commissioned to impart the Holy Ghost, of course no organization can be a Church unless it be subject to the exclusive dispensers of salvation. This is a theory with which, at present, we have nothing to do. A man who confines Christianity to the members of any one external organization is not to be argued with.

Apart from this theory, we do not see how, on Scriptural principles, we can deny a church character in their collective capacity to those whom we are constrained to recognize as Christians.

2. *A second duty which denominational Churches have to each other is intercommunion.* The terms of Christian fellowship are prescribed by Christ, and are the same for all Churches. No particular or denominational Church has the right to prescribe any term of communion which is not common to all. And as we simply recognize as fellow Christians those with whom we commune, it is evidently a breach of Christian fellowship to refuse to join our fellow believers at the Lord's table, provided nothing is required of us beyond what Christ has enjoined.

3. *A third duty is that of recognizing the validity of their sacraments and orders.* If the validity of the sacraments depends on some virtue in him who administers them, then those only are valid which are administered by those having that virtue. But if their validity depends, first, on that being done which Christ has commanded; and secondly, on its being done by a Church, and by its authority, and by its appointed agents; and thirdly, with the serious intention of complying with the command of our Lord; then it follows that we must recognize the validity of the sacraments administered in any body which we recognize as a Church.

So also of ordination. If ordination be the communication of supernatural power (called the grace of order) by those to whom the ability to confer such power exclusively belongs, then those only can be regarded as true ministers who have been ordained by that specially gifted class of men. And if ordination be, in the strict sense of the term, the conferring of authority by those having the right of appointment, as a king or president, who grants commissions, then again those only can be recognized as clothed with the ministerial office, who have been appointed by those having the exclusive right to appoint and ordain.

But if the Protestant doctrine be true, that the call to the

ministry is by the Holy Ghost, and the office of the Church in the matter is simply to authenticate that call, and testify of it to the Churches, then we are bound to regard as a minister of Christ any man whom a Church has, by its appropriate agents, recognized as called by the Holy Ghost to the sacred office.

This of course does not imply that every denomination is bound to receive into the number of its own ministers any man whom any particular denomination may see fit to ordain. Every denominational Church has a right to determine its own standard of ministerial qualifications, according to its understanding of the law of Christ. But nevertheless we may consistently recognize him as a minister of Christ.

4. *A fourth duty of denominational Churches is non-interference.* The field is the world, and is wide enough for all. And therefore it is a breach of the principles of unity for one denomination to attempt to break down or to encroach upon the churches of another denomination.

5. *Finally, there is the duty of cooperation in the promotion of the objects of our common Christianity.*

Such is a meagre skeleton of the principles of Church unity as held by the great body of evangelical Christians.

All believers, scattered over the world, are one body in Christ Jesus, in virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This constitutes them one in faith, one in their inward religious life, one in love, and one in Christian sympathy and fellowship.

These individual Christians organize themselves into local churches for the purpose of worship and mutual watch and care. These local churches, in the normal state of things, would constitute one body, not only by the unity of their faith and fellowship, but also by their mutual subjection. But as believers are imperfect in knowledge and in grace, such diversities of opinion in doctrine and order unavoidably arise which render this external union of all local churches impractical and undesirable. Hence, denominational Churches become an absolute necessity. But these Churches are bound to recognize each other as Churches, to intercommune, to regard the sacraments and orders of each other as valid, to avoid interference with one another, and to cooperate in the promotion of the cause and kingdom of their common God and Saviour.

If these principles are correct, it is of the last importance that they should be acknowledged and practically followed out. Instead of conflict, we should have concord. Instead of mutual criminations, we should have mutual respect and fellowship. And instead of rivalry and opposition, there would be harmonious cooperation. The Protestant world might then present an undivided front against infidelity and every anti-christian error. And the sacramental host, although marshalled under different banners, and organized into different corps, would still, in the sight of God and man, be one great body, glorious, and through grace, invincible.

We must remember, however, that real union is within and by the Spirit. It must begin there. And as it is there perfected it will more and more manifest itself outwardly in unity of faith, of love, of worship, and obedience; until the whole multitude of believers shall, as at the beginning, be of one heart, and of one soul, and when they shall with one accord praise the Lord in all the languages of the earth. There is more included in union with Christ, and in the fellowship of believers, than has entered into the heart of man to conceive. Let us then see to it that we are in Christ, and be ever mindful that we are one body, and members one of another.

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