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I. LITERARY.

THE CHURCH'S POLICY TOWARD THE HOME MISSION WORK.¹

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It is often the case that the strong churches, which sustain the Home Mission work and young men looking for fields of usefulness in which to settle, do not appreciate the church's progress in the home field. A summary of the progress made by Lexington Presbytery in her West Virginia territory west of the Alleghany Mountains, known as the Trans-Alleghany field, will furnish food for thought. The figures here given are for the last eleven years, from 1878 to 1889, and may be verified by reference to the Assembly's Minutes. These dates are chosen because, in 1878, the Presbytery began with more vigor and a new policy to press this work.

We find the increase in these eleven years to be: In territory actually occupied, 350 per cent.; in ministers in the field, 150 per cent., with an urgent demand *at once* for two more; in church organizations, 100 per cent.; in number of church members, nearly (net) 150 per cent.; in church buildings, 166 per cent.; in manses, the whole number, 2; in value of church property accumulated, about 500 per cent.; in the *spirit* of liberality, about 150 per cent., not including four churches from which no reports could be

¹ Condensed from an address delivered in the stronger churches of Lexington Presbytery by the order of Presbytery.

CHURCHSHIP.

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A CHURCH is an organization of people, including their children, if there be any, holding the essential doctrines of Christianity, constituted for the worship of God in the administration of the sacraments, in the preaching of his word, in the offering of prayer and praise, and in the prosecution of Christian work.

A body of people thrown together fortuitously, as for example on shipboard, might do all the things mentioned in this definition, but they would not be a church, because not organized. On the other hand, a body of men and women organized for work and worship are not a church unless, as an organization, they, through their officers, administer and receive the sacraments. The Young Men's Christian Association is a body organized for work and worship, but it is not a church, nor does it claim to be. Though it preaches the gospel, in its own peculiar way, just as any individual should do, it does not assume to administer the sacraments.

It is not essential to its churchship that an organization should bear any peculiar name. It may call itself Presbyterian, and it could hardly do better, or Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, all of which are good, or by any other title; if it be what the above definition indicates, it is *a church*. Nor is it a matter of fundamental importance that it should be organized upon any special principle of government. We confidently believe that the Presbyterian principle of church government by representative assemblies, composed of the two classes of elders, ruling and those who both rule and teach, is the scriptural one, and best suited to the wants of mankind, but no peculiar form of government is essential to the existence of a church, if it professes the essential doctrines of Christianity. In point of fact the principle of government by representative assemblies obtains to a greater or less extent in every Protestant body, and is making its way more thoroughly every day into all their ramifications of order and dis-

cipline. The holding of the true doctrines tends to bring men right in government, and scriptural government operates towards the maintenance of the truth.

Furthermore, it is not necessary that a church should be organized by any peculiar mode or in any line of ecclesiastical succession. The best way to organize a church is by a presbytery, but a bishop may do it, or an evangelist, or a committee, or the church, in certain circumstances, may organize itself, and hold organic connection with no ecclesiastical body whatever. For example, suppose a number of people travelling by ship should be cast away upon an uninhabited or heathen isle. They find a Bible among the treasures saved from the wreck, and being cut off entirely from civilization, they think of organizing themselves into a church. They do so, electing some of their number to hold office, and one to preach. Have they not a right to do it? Undoubtedly, and as they study their Bible, they organize themselves, as they understand it, upon the Bible model. It may turn out to be a Presbyterian church, or a Methodist, or a Congregational, or a Lutheran, or an Episcopal, or some other, or they may invent some name and peculiar form never used before, but they are a church, if they hold the essential doctrines of Christianity, have the sacraments administered, and meet together for divine worship. If a body like this should at last come into communication with Christendom, still keeping their home in the island of the sea, and should apply for recognition in Protestant churches, would they not receive it? Yes, by all means; and a member dismissed from them by letter would be received into any church except those which always refuse to acknowledge the churchship of those who do not conform to their peculiar usages. The Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Reformed would receive him on his letter, thus fully recognizing the churchship of the body from which he came. Indeed, the church itself would be received as organized by any denomination with whose order it agreed. So it is not essential, in order to be a church, that a body shall bear any peculiar name, maintain any special principle of government, nor be organized by any particular method of ecclesiastical procedure. It derives its succession from Christ through his word, and every

true church is really organized by the Lord, whatever means he may use to accomplish it. An organization, the profession of the essentials of our holy religion, and the maintenance of the sacraments, are distinctive characteristics of a *church*. Nay, there must be one thing more—some fruits of the Spirit must be seen in the lives of the members. A wholly corrupt body could not claim to be a church under any circumstances. But, so far as history informs us, such a case has never occurred, and probably never will occur to the end of time. The essential truths of Christianity, the sacraments and the organization of a body for the worship of God, have always been found in connection with more or less righteousness of life.

But some man will say, does not a Roman Catholic church come under your definition? No; for, though they do hold the essential doctrines of Christianity, they also hold and teach most earnestly other doctrines and usages which fundamentally contradict and destroy them. So it cannot be said that the Roman Catholic Church does in any true and effective manner hold the essential doctrines of religion.

What are the essential doctrines? They all cluster about one word—CHRIST. Salvation by faith in Christ crucified and risen, a divine Saviour, is the central orb of Christianity. This involves of necessity, the Trinity, natural depravity, the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, the resurrection, the final judgment, and the whole constellation of doctrines which fill the firmament of truth. Christ is the Sun, and all other religious truth is seen by his reflected light.

These statements may seem broad, and they are, but they are no broader than the Bible, nor than the principles and genius of the Presbyterian Church. These are the principles on which it stands before mankind, as the most liberal of all churches; and along the line of these sentiments it has worked to the position which it now holds, of being the largest body of Protestant Christians in the world.

What is *the church*? Not the Presbyterian denomination, nor any other. How foolish in any division of the great family of Christ to claim to be *THE church*! The church is the great

body of all people, including the children, who hold the essential doctrines of Christianity. This church is one and the same in all ages. It is not divided, it never has been, and never can be. Its unity may be obscured and denied, but it is indestructible. Brothers are brothers, whether they acknowledge one another or not. They may refuse to sit at each other's table, or even to speak, but they never can be anything but brothers. No power on earth can alter the fact. They are brothers because they are children of the same father. When we pray for Christian unity we are simply praying that a family feud may be healed.

The invisible church is the whole body of the redeemed. No one knows but God the whole number of its members. Their names are written in the "Lamb's Book of Life." O how delightful it would be to look into that book and find your name written there! Yes, but you would be made miserable by the thought that there might be another person of the same name as yourself. Better than to read your name in the Book of Life, is to read Jesus' name written on your own soul. This is what all may do, for if we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will write his name upon our souls with a finger dipped in the blood of Calvary.

The church of the living God, in this last, truest sense, is in both worlds. The great majority are in heaven. The members are constantly going over to the places prepared for them. Somewhere in the East was a city, in ancient times, built on both sides of a river. But the people gradually moved from the eastern side, and at last they were all living on the western. It is so in the city of God. It is built on both sides of the river of death, and the inhabitants are constantly moving over. After awhile they will all be on the other side, and in this world will be left nothing but ruins and old deserted houses from which the occupants have gone away forever. Then will the church be perfect and complete, her unity will be manifested, and her holiness, and God shall dwell in the midst of her through all eternity. This is the Holy City—New Jerusalem.