

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XXVIII.—NO. 1.

JANUARY, MDCCCLXXVII.

ARTICLE I.

JOHN KNOX AS THE ENGLISH AND AS THE SCOTTISH REFORMER.

In connexion with a notice of Dr. Lorimer's monograph on the "Knox Papers," recently discovered in the Williams Library, it was proposed in our number for July last to present the character of John Knox as a Reformer in the new light thrown upon it by the discovery of these papers. And as the best method of presenting this character, it was proposed to exhibit him, first, in the light of the newly discovered papers, as the English Reformer; then, with the key to his character thus furnished, to reëxamine the current conception of Knox as the fierce, implacable, narrow, iron-sided Reformer of the Church of Scotland.

It has been shown from the "Knox Papers" that in his career as a Reformer of the Church of England under Edward VI., and among the English exiles on the Continent, embracing nearly the first half of his public life, Knox exhibited little of the fierceness and harshness of character which is popularly attributed to him; and therefore the presumption is that any fierceness and harshness exhibited by him during his career as the Scottish Reformer may not have been from the inherent tendencies of the man's mind and heart, but because the circumstances that surrounded him and the work which he was called upon to do, forced upon him as the leader of reform the exercise of harsh and seem-

be the ordinar calling of the kirk and congregation Mr. James Lansome, he tuk him to his chamber, and most happilie and comfortablie departed this lyff.”*

The man of whose last days the memories of a college student were such as these, could have been stern and harsh only for the same reason that Elijah was. And indeed the life and character of John Knox bears a striking resemblance to that of the great prophet reformer of Israel.

ARTICLE II.

THE ONE VISIBLE CHURCH AND THE MANY
DENOMINATIONS.

When we speak of a local church convening in one place for the worship of God, there is no danger of being misunderstood. When the apostle Paul declares that “the care of all the churches” rests upon him, we easily apprehend his meaning. The churches of Macedonia or of Asia have a distinctness in our minds that requires no illustration to render the terms more expressive, or their signification more palpable. But when we undertake to define the Church in a more comprehensive sense, whether provincial, national, or universal, a difficulty is at once experienced that demands for its solution much thoughtful consideration, and a careful analysis. What do we mean by the “Church of England,” the “Methodist Church,” or the “Lutheran Church?” What exact idea is conveyed to our minds by “the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth?” It is obvious that, in such cases, definition is as difficult as it is important. Its importance cannot be overestimated. As to the task, its arduous nature becomes more and more apparent as we advance in the effort to accomplish it. Whether it is possible to attain the end, in any degree satisfactory to the conscientious reader, is the object of the present inquiry.

*Mr. James Melville's Diary, pp. 26 and 33.

The first step we propose is to ascertain, as far as possible, the relation of the parts to the whole. The Church is certainly an organism, not a mere concretion. Its parts are not like counties delineated upon a map. Nothing would be easier, if such were the case, than to trace its limits and lines of sub-division. But this is plainly impossible in describing the Church. Its parts overlap one another, and are interlaced in endless ramifications. And besides, we are aiming at a definition of an organised object, a complex, living, moving, thinking body. The relation of parts, in the geographical example, is easy and simple. It is fearfully complicated in the other. For we are not considering the local churches to which allusion was first made. These are evidently connected with one another in the simple relations of number and space. But, on the one hand, they are not the ultimate result of analysis; and, on the other, they are not so complex as to defy definition. The chief difficulty is presented by the vast aggregates they form under various denominational designations. In these bodies, the visible Church most obtrusively manifests itself to the superficial observer, and the mind of an inquirer is painfully embarrassed by the variety of aspects they assume, and the conflicting claims which they press upon the attention of the world. To discover the organic principle that connects these parts or their elements with the true catholic Church, and to reach the ideal of that sacred unity which belongs to the body of Christ, is neither an easy nor an unimportant undertaking. Yet it must be admitted that there is most valuable truth somewhere within the range of our research. To deny the possibility of solution, would be equivalent to an abandonment of visible Christianity itself.

If the Church is a true organism, its parts must be connected by an organic principle. This union will vary with the view in which it is observed. The parts vitally connected, differ in position, office, and importance. A living tree is a unit, composed of a multitude of constituent elements and members, sustaining an organic relation to the whole and to one another. The root, the trunk, the branches, the leaves, have different local positions. They differ also in respect to form, function, and relative influ-

ence upon the tree itself. Again, a transverse section of the trunk will exhibit to the eye in a certain order, the bark, the nutritive system, the fibre, and the heart. These, too, are mutually related in respect to their vital influence upon the whole structure. The Church may be compared with a living object of this kind. It will be found here, also, that the parts have a vital union, presenting a complex variety of relations extremely difficult to analyse, describe, and classify. If we were now observing it in this light, we might be confident of ultimate success. But the different denominations composing the Church are not organs in themselves. They assume to be complete Churches, independent of one another. In this view, they would each be regarded as an epitome or type of the whole. The Church would be a collection or combination of churches. But this is not the fact, according to our present premises. We assume, on positive scriptural grounds, a Church of Jesus Christ, one body, of which he is the Head. The denominations are not its organs, by their own confession; and they differ so much among themselves, that they cannot represent it as types of the whole. What, then, are their relations to the Church at large?

We must enter a little more minutely into their ecclesiastical character. The organs of a living body have different functions. The offices of the brain, the lungs, and the heart, are entirely distinct. They never invade one another. The brain does not digest, the liver does not respire. But the different denominations of Christians undertake all the functions of a complete Church. They ordain, baptize, and administer the Supper, independently. Each one assumes, and perhaps correctly, that if no other denomination existed, all the promises and privileges of the Church would belong to its own organisation. The different bodies are not, therefore, organs of the one Church of Christ. They make no such claims; and if made, it would be absurd. We say also, with equal confidence, that they are not so many complete churches associated together to form one universal Church. For if it is a living organism, it cannot be a cluster of independent bodies. In that case, the organic unity would be in the constituent members, and not in the composite whole. The

visible Church would be a convenient phrase, denoting the coëxistence and juxtaposition of a certain number of organisations. However close the connexion, the union of the original elements of each body would be still more complete. The life of the Church is one; and two or more lives cannot, by any artificial process, be so blended as to lose their individuality. The Bible nowhere recognises a plurality of organisms, except in a local sense. According to this supreme authority, the Church has always been one. It can no more be divisible than Christ himself. It cannot be represented as a composition of several bodies originally separate and independent. If one now, it must have been so from the beginning. Otherwise, it would be a monstrosity, like the Siamese twins. The Scriptures speak of it as one body from the first. "On this rock I will build *my Church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This Church is a unit, not only in space, but in time. It existed long before the manifestation of its Divine Head in the flesh. The apostle Paul clearly indicates its historical unity in the eleventh chapter of Romans, where the Gentile converts are represented as engrafted upon the original stock. Its origin was the true Israël, traced back to Abraham himself. And this primitive Church was not constituted by the association of organised elements, but was itself the source from which the materials were derived. The unity generated the parts. It is evident, therefore, that sects or denominations do not now constitute the one Church of Christ, in any such sense that its existence and permanence are derivative from them. The Church antedated them all. Its unity preceded its diversity, as one seed originates a boundless variety of leaves and flowers.

All known ecclesiastical bodies combined cannot constitute the one true Church of Christ. And the principle of unity equally excludes the thought that any smaller number associated together could claim that sacred character. A Church constructed of pre-existent churches, would be a violation of scriptural premises, and of every just conception of vital integrity. The inference is unavoidable, that none of the denominations bearing the Christian name can be a part of the catholic Church, in the sense to

which we refer. Even a vital union, if it were conceivable in such a case, could not bind several churches originally independent, into that historical unity of which the apostle speaks. In the order of nature, one living principle always aggregates and controls the materials essential to growth. There must be presupposed a generating power concerned in the organisation of every living thing. All assimilation is due to it. Without it, unity would be a mere fancy. It could not be wanting in a plant or animal; much less in the Christian Church, which is not a monster with one head and many bodies, but a glorious, complete, and heaven-born system.

These observations equally militate against the notion that the denominations are so many *sections* of the Church. Division of the vital parts of an organism implies its death. The union of its parts is of such a nature that separation cannot be effected without fatal invasion of its essential integrity. We cannot believe that, at the Reformation, the one true Church was divided into many Churches which still retained in themselves the qualities and powers of the original. If popular ideas were correct, such must have been the nature of that event. There may be schism *in* the body, but there is no possibility of successful schism *from* the body. The separated parts cannot become living churches without destruction of unity. We are involved at once in that plurality of visible Churches which has been shown to be unscriptural and irrational.

In view of the difficulties standing in the way of every theory of sectarian division, High Churchmen, everywhere, resort to the opposite doctrine, that some *one* denomination must inherit the legitimate titles and prerogatives of the Church. The Greek, the Romish, the Anglican, and certain other smaller sects, make bold pretensions, in their public symbols, or in the spirit of their current history, to this divine monopoly. They either condemn or refuse to recognise the ecclesiastical legitimacy of every other body. These are invited and urged to return, as individual Christians, into the one true fold, as the only one completely representing the primitive apostolical model.

How do such pretensions accord with the vital unity of the

Church? A great difference in the degree of earnestness with which these claims are presented, is observed in different quarters. According to some, there is no salvation outside of the one recognised fold. According to others, the separate state does not necessarily destroy, although it to some extent endangers the spiritual safety of the individual. Between these two extremes, a wide margin of doubt and suspicion—a border land of casuistry and controversy—remains undefined upon the map of the Church. But in all these exclusive claims, the assumption remains, subject to all its logical consequences, that outside of the recognised boundary lines, the Church does not exist. The existence of Christianity may not be denied, but it is supposed to be in a kind of *nebular* state. Our proposed examination of these pretensions need not, therefore, be affected by such a concession. For we are not in search of nebular Christianity. The Scriptures give us no information concerning it. So far as visible religion is or can be known, we maintain that there is no such state. There may be faith without an external expression. But the man who exercises it belongs evidently to the invisible Church. The exclusive theory takes no account of this class of persons. It simply assumes the identity of its creed with that of the Church. Its language is, "The temple of the Lord are we."

What does this assumption imply? As we have shown, the degree of earnestness and consistency with which it is held has nothing to do with our inquiry; but it is important only in proportion to its practical exclusiveness. A comparatively numerous body, covering vast portions of the globe, and boldly proclaiming that salvation is ordinarily impossible to any but its own members, may be odious and terrible, but cannot be despised. The relative proportion of the Christian elements within and without its borders, does not suggest contempt or warrant indifference. On the other hand, a comparatively small sect, claiming to be the only true Church, necessarily exposes itself to derision. Admitting that far more of nominal Christianity may be found outside of its limits than within them, it yet insists that the Church is confined to these narrow bounds. A certain feeling of contempt is the natural effect of such as-

surance. We are disposed in general to regard exclusiveness with interest according to the numbers, area, and power by which it is sustained. When Lilliput aims at universal empire, and mentions Brobdignag among its outlying provinces, we are compelled to laugh in spite of decorum. With a view to more serious consideration, we must turn our attention to the claims of more dangerous and more consistent parties. Whatever we shall say of the more formidable organisations, will apply with yet greater force to the insignificant pretenders who follow their example. The main issue is the same for all. Whether the claim to universality sits well or ill upon the claimants, is a question of taste, not of logic. We only inquire for truth. Are such pretensions in any case credible? Our answer to the question must be according to facts. A denial *a priori* would be a confession that visible unity is impossible. Let us therefore refer to the most imposing example known to the world, and endeavor to discover whether the Romish Church can meet the requirements of such a claim.

In the first place, we lay it down as a postulate that the one true Church must be actually universal, or so thoroughly adapted to this condition, that the entire responsibility for separation must rest upon the recusant parties. If this great body falls short of either of these conditions, her claim must be rejected. "There is one fold and one Shepherd." This fold must contain, or be capable of containing, the entire flock. The Church of Rome affirms of herself both of these conditions. She not only claims to be adapted to embrace all Christendom under her sway, but boldly declares that all Christianity lies within her bounds. If we can show that these pretensions are false—that in point of fact she does not embrace the whole number of Christ's disciples, and is so constituted that many conscientious Christians are excluded from her communion, her assumption of catholicity must appear impious and absurd.

The Church is the body of Christ. How far does the vital blood circulate? The body cannot be perfectly complete if any member is separated from it. We maintain that the visible Church is coextensive with visible Christianity—that if one

member may be excluded, millions may be also. Can no professed disciple of Christ be found outside of the Romish communion? She opens her doors and invites all others to enter. But as a matter of fact, do all so enter? We are almost ashamed to propound such questions, but they are necessary to our inquiry. An answer is not expected. The burthen of proof is evidently devolved upon the shoulders of the Church of Rome. Whenever she can demonstrate that her communion embraces all the visible elements of the Christian Church, her pretensions will be admitted promptly. To make the absurdity of her claim palpable, without waiting for a satisfactory demonstration of her legitimacy, let us see what such a claim amounts to. What are the scriptural terms of admission to a nominal connexion with the Church of Christ? We dare not deny that the eunuch whom Philip the Evangelist baptized in the desert, was a true and declared Christian, and thereafter a member of the true catholic Church. He was admitted to this membership on the open confession of his faith in Jesus Christ. Multitudes of converts, at the present day, make the same confession, and are admitted to communion in Protestant Churches on account of it. But the Romish Church refuses to recognise them. Not because the required confession is not made, but because it is not made to her own priesthood. Here then it is obvious that she does not actually embrace all who make the nominal confession of Christ. That profession would be all-sufficient, if repeated at her altars. She virtually acknowledges the very fact which she formally denies. She is driven, before the battle begins, from this her first entrenchment, and compelled to fall back upon the second—her alleged adaptation to universality.

Of the church organisations known to mankind, that of Rome ostensibly presents the most plausible claim to this distinction. Those very characteristics which render her most obnoxious to condemnation from the Scriptures, are those which most eminently fit her for universal dominion. Her infallible head; her banded, trained, and servile priesthood; her elastic creed; her flexible worship; her facility in adopting as her own the popular superstitions of various countries—all these features of her pro-

tean system combine to give her an advantage over her rivals which cannot be avoided or counteracted. But leaving out of view all scriptural objections to this system, we may easily discover certain fatal difficulties which even Rome cannot conquer. That any one Church shall be qualified for universal dominion, it is essential that there shall be nothing in her creed or her practice which must exclude any conscientious Christian from her communion. The one fold must be so constructed that none of the sheep shall be repelled from entering. The shorter the creed, the wider will be the door. True catholicity demands that none but fundamental and necessary articles of faith shall be required as terms of communion. The platform must be wide and comprehensive, to accommodate the endless variations of human opinion. There is a minimum of faith as well as of vision, which practical Christianity is bound to recognise, and beyond which reduction cannot be carried. What that minimum is, we do not presume to determine. But it is evident that a universal Church, claiming a present adaptation to the whole world, must adopt that standard, if she expects to realise her designs. Now, the true creed of a Church is found in her practice. The Romish Church is no exception. And practically she makes no allowance for differences of opinion. Whatever may be the private thoughts of her votaries, they are all compelled, as her subjects, to approve of, adopt, and scrupulously follow, with closed eyes and chained minds, whatever she may dictate. What she dictates is not so much a creed as a system of religious observances, which her members must rigorously obey. Her position is that there is no salvation for those who reject this system. All are required, on pain of perdition, to conform to her peculiar ritual, and submit to her exactions. But this requirement of abject submission is the narrowest of all creeds, the most unrelenting form of spiritual despotism. It cannot become universal, as that Church is well aware, without adequate physical force. It is her policy, throughout the world, to secure the strong arm of the civil power, and employ it for the suppression of dissent and the enforcement of her arbitrary purposes. Wherever her numbers are sufficient, at this hour, she is using the temporal government

to compel mankind to submit to her demands. She cannot therefore become universal without acquiring a paramount control of all civil government. The supremacy of the Pope must first be established, not only in ecclesiastical but in civil affairs, in every nation; and he must be recognised as the absolute sovereign of the inhabited globe. This Church therefore requires of its subjects the practical adoption of a creed embracing all her observances and superstitions and political assumptions. No allowance is made for the exercise of opinion. All differences are interdicted by the dogma of infallibility. It surpasses all other denominations in the efficiency of the means employed to secure an apparent uniformity. But this very fact fatally disqualifies it for the mission of a universal Church. Protestantism has had its martyrs, and will have them again. There will always be sincere confessors of Jesus Christ who cannot be compelled to embrace what they regard as the shocking impieties of the Church of Rome. This must be conceded, unless it can be maintained that a refusal to submit to her authority is incompatible with sincerity of faith. But this is impossible. The dungeon, the rack, the stake, attesting the depth of conviction, furnish evidence of its genuineness which such a test can never impair. The fold of the Church of Rome is so constructed that some at least of Christ's sheep will always be excluded. It is not, therefore, the one fold of which he is the Shepherd.

So much for the pretended visible uniformity of Rome. But if her uniformity is impossible, what must we say of her unity? Can any sane man believe that the unity of the body of Christ is a *compulsory* submission of all nominal Christians to one ritual system? If such a submission were ever secured by the combined forces of the world, would it be the bond of perfectness and peace which St. Paul describes? We will not insult the reader with the suggestion of such a thought.

If the Church of Rome fails to establish her claim of true catholicity, all other exclusive Churches must go down with her. The unavoidable conclusion is, that such an ecclesiastical body does not exist under any denominational form. Unity is not a formal condition. The Church is like water, shapeless and color-

less, yet distinctly visible. It exists and manifests itself to the observer, like her Lord after his resurrection, in a manner somewhat independent of ordinary appearances, and partially veiled from carnal eyes. No denomination perfectly represents it. It cannot be verbally portrayed. We have reached certain negative attributes; but her positive, visible unity is as yet undefined. We can say this much and no more, that no one nominal Church, and no combination of known sects, can establish a claim to exclusive enjoyment of the promises.

Since no Church organisation now known could maintain a visible unity over a converted world, we must look for unity of a different kind. It cannot depend upon local intercourse, or even upon constant correspondence. Both conditions are impossible. An organised universal Church cannot exist without a common bond pervading the whole body. Now what is this bond? There are two classes of promises left by the Redeemer for the comfort of his people—one to individuals, the other to the Church. Among the latter, none seems to us more closely connected with the present question than that which assures us of his social presence: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The presence of Jesus Christ is elsewhere promised to each of his disciples. But here is a special and more emphatic assurance of that presence to those who meet in social worship in his name. When several Christians are thus assembled, there is a principle that unites them, the principle of religious association. The common purpose of their meeting, and the common exercises in which they engage, constitute the visible tie that distinguishes their social from their individual state. We are far from inclining to a mystical interpretation of the Scriptures, but cannot avoid the impression that as the Head is invisibly present on such an occasion, the body of Christ also is virtually there. Its authority and sanction cannot be wanting when the living Head is present. But it is only in a spiritual sense that this can be true of either. Neither Christ nor the invisible Church is visibly at that point. But the essential conditions of a true Church are presented. Those conditions are not local communication with one another, but community of

principle and purpose in the worshippers. But this community may exist among all Christians ; and all, in their associate capacity, constitute the body of Christ. The tie that connects the persons who are met in one place, is the same that binds the most distant members together. The more simple it is, the more easily is it adapted to universal extension. Whatever the *name* of Christ implies in this promise, is the connecting link, the cementing material, by which the elements of the Church are held together. His name gives unity to the smallest body associated for his worship, and is the sacred bond that organises into one the whole number of his disciples. In the words of St. Paul, there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." The true elements of this body are evidently the professed members of Christ, without distinction of office or order. The Romish and Anglican idea that the clergy are the Church, receives no countenance whatever from the Scriptures. Every kind of ministry is a gift to the Church for its edification and spiritual benefit. The Church itself is the entire number of those who adopt as their guide in faith and practice the fundamental truths which are essential to salvation. This unity is not a thing of the future, but of the present. It has existed from the foundation of the Church. It cannot be destroyed. The present question does not so much concern its reality, but the sense in which it is visibly one. To the careless observer, the elements are separated by a thousand differences of name, creed, worship, and national boundaries. The unity, if acknowledged, is supposed to be latent, as a purely spiritual principle animating the body with common hopes and purposes.

It cannot be denied that the principle of union is spiritual and invisible. But the effect of this principle is an outward thing that may be made evident to the candid inquirer. All vital powers are beyond the reach of the senses. But we may, nevertheless, discover a certain order of arrangement, and a certain correspondence of action in the living structure, which justifies us in ascribing to it a visible unity. It is the same with the Church. It visibly confesses a common Lord. It openly embraces a common faith. It applies to its members, as parties to a covenant, the common seal of its sacramental ordinances.

To what extent the validity of these expressions of unity should be recognised, is a subordinate question that does not affect the general proposition. They are variously interpreted. Great differences of opinion prevail in regard to the articles of faith that are necessary to salvation. And others, equally familiar, have reference to the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the orders and prerogatives of church officers. We cannot here discuss them, except so far as they relate to the recognition or exclusion of professed disciples of Christ. It has already been shown that so far as doctrine is concerned, the visible Church cannot be more exclusive than the invisible. Whoever may be recognised as a Christian indeed, should be recognised also as a member of Christ's visible body. But we must admit that, among the necessary evidences of Christian character which Church authorities must demand, a readiness to obey the known requirements of Christ occupies an important place. A refusal to submit to Baptism, or to partake of the Eucharist, would, under all ordinary circumstances, be regarded as a positive bar to membership in the Church. The one baptism is therefore essential to the existence of the visible Church.

This article cannot be burthened with an inquiry whether baptism by sprinkling is according to the command. We simply say that immersion is not plainly required as the only valid mode of performing the rite, because such a proposition involves consequences evidently inconsistent with the integrity of the Church. If all those who reject immersion are to be regarded as outside of the fold, being placed thus by their own choice, they must exhibit insufficient evidence of Christian character, and should not be considered Christians at all. For a true Christian will obey any plain command. Exclusive immersionists are, therefore, driven to one or the other of two alternatives: they must either maintain that other evangelical Christians are wanting in satisfactory evidence of piety, or that immersion is *not* obviously commanded in the word of God. If they choose the latter, they cannot continue to make their mode of baptism a test of communion. If they adopt the former, they make their own denomination the only true Church, and consign all others to fatal

unbelief. We know very well that almost all immersionists are disposed to escape from this dilemma. But the more intelligent must see that escape is impossible. In the meantime, the disciples of Christ who are not involved in this difficulty, will readily perceive that the "one baptism" of the Church does not mean one mode of baptism, but one signification of the rite.

Another question bearing upon our definition of the Church is that of the subjects of baptism. To insist upon the exclusive validity of believers' baptism, would probably reduce the number of members more than one half, and undermine the legal ordination of an equal proportion of Christian ministers. The gravity of the question is obvious. What, then, is the scriptural status of the infant children of Christian parents? Have they no connexion with the visible Church? The apostle Paul declares that such children are *holy*, where but one parent is a professed believer. Holiness is used in the Bible in two senses—that of spiritual purity, and that of consecration. It is not pretended, on either side, that children are sanctified in the former sense; and we are compelled to infer that the apostle employs the term in the latter. Children of believers have, therefore, some sort of Christian character or relation to the Church, which does not belong to others. To deny it were the height of presumption. The connexion is clearly recognised, however difficult it may be to describe it. This relation is attributed to the natural connexion of the parent and child. It is plain that if the Scriptures point it out, the Church should recognise it. The position is impregnable. And another collateral truth is equally at hand. The Head of the Church invites parents to bring their little children to him, that he may bless them. For the *coming* of infants must be conveyance in the arms of others. Infants, therefore, as well as adults, may in some sense comply with the invitation of the Saviour, and come to him, with hope, on the part of those who bring them, that they may receive some kind of spiritual benefit. We generalise the terms with a purpose. These two undeniable truths certainly establish an important connexion between such children and Christ and his visible Church. It is unnecessary to define this relation. We are only concerned with

its existence, and with the obvious inference that the Church should recognise it. Let it be also observed, that no exercise of personal faith, or profession of faith, is expected in such cases. The holiness of the children is not dependent upon such conditions, and the blessing of Christ, conferred upon them, is not predicated upon conscious obedience to his commands. Faith and obedience on their part would be impossible. Yet faith and obedience are indispensable. There is no acceptable approach to Christ without them. There is but one solution possible. The faith of the parent, which unites him to Christ, also brings his child into this new relation to him. It is due to the fact that the parent is a *believer*. Now baptism is an official recognition of the profession of faith; and if this profession in any sense relates to the child, the act of recognition should also be extended to him. He should share in the baptismal rite, because he has an interest in the faith which that rite approves and seals. With such considerations before us, we can understand the repeated statement in the Acts of the Apostles of the baptism of entire households. And the subsequent history of the Church conclusively confirms our interpretation. Well may the learned Calvin declare, concerning the antiquity of infant baptism, that "there is no Christian writer who does not refer its origin, as a matter of certainty, to the age of the apostles."

The visible Church embraces all persons who profess the true religion, with their children. This conclusion is not only scriptural, but in harmony with nature and reason; for the adoption of any religion must, if sincere, be not only for one's personal benefit, but for those most closely connected with him. The parent not only engages himself as a disciple of Christ, but pledges himself to impart a Christian education to his offspring. In every kingdom, the children of legitimate subjects have a certain relation with it. The naturalisation of foreigners always extends to them. This does not imply full citizenship or complete responsibility. It only expresses the prompt understanding of common sense, that the assumption of new duties and privileges by the parent, must bring his offspring into a new relative position. In no case could this obvious proposition be denied on

the ground that the child is unconscious of the change. Children become members of the family and the commonwealth, without their own knowledge or agency. The lambs always belong to the fold, and are never excluded from the care of the shepherd because they are incapable of enjoying the provision made for others. The Scriptures do not destroy natural relations. They recognise and sanctify them. The children of Christian parents are, therefore, considered holy, or dedicated to God. As everything connected with the Jewish temple was sanctified by it, so the children of the Church are sanctified by their natural union with its members.

We have endeavored, so far, to exhibit the evidence of a true visible unity pervading the Christian Church throughout the world. It consists, in our judgment, in an avowed community of saving doctrine and sacramental conformity to the will of Jesus Christ. It exists under his guardianship, even when it is denied, contradicted, or rejected. We are now better prepared to point out the duty of the members of this body towards one another, in reference to this connecting link by which they are cemented into one. Negatively speaking, we can discover no obligation resting upon them to become one in any other sense. Diversity in unity seems to be the true doctrine of Christian liberty. The apostles never required Jewish converts to abandon circumcision, or Gentile Christians to submit to it. In all matters of inferior moment, in all observances that did not conflict with fundamental principles, the human mind was left to work out its honest convictions from the word of God. A common faith implies a common standard of authority. But beyond the limits therein laid down, the private judgment of interpretation is the only guide. Hence we believe that uniformity of Christian worship and government is not contemplated in the scheme of a universal Church. Whether it is desirable, is an open question which we decline to discuss. We simply insist that the spirit of the New Testament does not require all the members of the visible Church to be one in opinion, taste, or habit. All efforts to reduce them to a dead uniformity, are vain and impracticable. The enjoyment of our own conscientious convictions and preferences need not conflict with

the preferences of others. As far as it is possible to approximate the standard of primitive practice, it is our obvious duty to conform to it. But no portion of the Church has a right to dictate to another what that standard is. And until we are assured of perfect conformity on our own part, it is presumptuous in the extreme to censure the nonconformity of others.

We are thus brought naturally to reflect upon the war of various denominations upon the unity of the Church. What constitutes the sin of schism? Not separation from the true Church; for this is apostasy. Schism is an evil prevalent *within* the body of Christ. It does not consist in local separation, or in separation by mutual consent to worship and labor in different spheres. The word itself implies, in a living body, a harsh and painful division of parts that ought to remain united. As unity is adherence to the same faith and institutions, it is violated whenever one part of the Church refuses to recognise another. There is then a painful antagonism between vital parts. Sin may be committed on both sides, but the sin of schism rests upon those who have caused the rupture.

It requires very little sagacity to perceive that the spirit of unity should correspond with its actual existence. All the professed people of Christ should be acknowledged as such. Even grave errors and offences do not justify expulsion, in the judgment of the apostle. Nothing but a total abandonment of Christian doctrine and principle can furnish ground for excommunication. But the war of sects is a perpetual invasion of the integrity of the Church. It violates the spirit of union, and tends to destroy the ties formed by divine wisdom for its perpetuity. There is something of this error in the conduct of all sectarian bodies. But it is time for the Church to know that the most odious form of schism is chargeable to those who assume an exclusive attitude toward their brethren. The charge is often brought against those who separate themselves and seek new associations. But mere change of position in the Church is not schism. No division that is not dangerous to the vital organism, can be so regarded. But, on the other hand, the spirit that represents an allowable separation, and treats the receding party as

apostates, refusing to recognise their rights in the Church of God, cannot be defended against the imputation of schism. Yet many of the denominations into which Christendom is distributed, are arrayed against one another in an attitude of distrust and hostility. Comparatively few recognise a comity of Churches. By some, the ministers of other Christian bodies are excluded from their pulpits and churches, and their members debarred from their communion, with a rigor as unrelenting as the ban of Mahomet. They refuse to recognise as Christians those whose Christian character they know to be as good as their own. Tested by the faith they profess, and the fruit they bear, they cannot pretend to any better evidence of true membership in the Church than that of their brethren whom they condemn. But they nevertheless refuse to recognise them. They deal with them as they would with the heathen or the publican. We insist, therefore, that if schism is to be denounced as a pernicious error in the Church, the charge should be directed against those denominations which exhibit before the world the most exclusive attitude towards others. Such bodies have an especial reason to pray for deliverance "from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism."

But this deplorable spirit does not confine itself to the scornful airs of High Church assumption. It manifests itself in other ways, and among other parties. Churches may recognise one another, and yet indulge in the most bitter accusations. To say nothing of their inconsistency, it is not possible to rescue them from a fearful responsibility. Such denunciations are at war with the unity of the Church—not with its integrity, but that sacred reverence all should entertain for the principle. Unity cannot be destroyed, but its spirit can be sadly impaired.

On a sober review of the whole subject, the various Christian denominations stand in need of a faithful monitor, who shall remind them that they are not churches in any scriptural sense. They are different forms which the one true Church has taken. We do not question the validity of their ministry or ordinances. Validity attends the Church wherever it is found. But the catholic Church is a system to which they belong. In the centre is the true ideal model of a perfect Church, and these several

bodies revolve around it at various distances. It is a profitable reflection, tending to promote a becoming humility, that the distance between the actual organisations and the divine model, is vastly greater than that which separates them from one another. It will be time enough for mutual reproaches when they find themselves free from error. A body of Christians is as much bound as an individual to cultivate humility, and should abase themselves if they would be exalted. An arrogant spirit is contrary to the gospel, and none the less so when manifested by a large society of Christians. The first lesson all these bodies have to learn, if they desire to realise the unity of the Church, is the extent of their own imperfections and their want of conformity to the perfect standard.

The next step we beg leave to suggest is an abatement of those abuses which have created so many barriers between the members of the Church of Christ. Although, according to St. Paul, "he hath broken down the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles, it is sadly true that, in the modern Church exclusive parties have been organised, which have busily employed themselves in again erecting similar barriers between his professed followers. Rival denominations are seemingly engaged in active competition for popularity and success. Scorn, denunciation, and spoliation, have marked their history, and the scandal of repeated appeals to secular courts has left a disgraceful stain upon their records. *Reform* should be the motto of the Church as well as of the State. But all true reform must begin with repentance. This is the solemn call of the Spirit in the Book of Revelation, addressed to the angels of the several churches. A new spirit must be cultivated, a different demeanor must be manifested between the various bodies. Without this, the unity of the Church must remain obscured and hidden from the eyes of mankind. The world will never be converted so long as the reproach of irreparable division and permanent strife casts its hideous shadow upon the character of the Church.

Again, and finally, in seeking to promote the unity of the Church, it should be remembered that these efforts should be directed to the spirit rather than the form. The fact of union is

already established. The Church has always been one. Why waste our energies in endeavoring to give it a unity which it now possesses? To recognise and realise this fact, is the true object of pursuit. The general diffusion of a fraternal spirit would make the union more and more distinctly visible. The true experience of such a feeling would soon banish from our sectarian system every rule or provision that is incompatible with it. Offensive action lying on the records of the past, would be promptly repudiated. Insults and accusations, conceived in jealousy or hate, would be acknowledged, deplored, forgiven, and forgotten. As expressions of judgment or preference, the lines that are necessary to distinguish one body from another might continue as visible and permanent as ever; but they would no longer convey the thought of alienation, or represent to the world the bitter antagonisms of hostile parties. The fraternity of which we speak need never express itself in the deceptive guise of formal correspondence. The language of mutual confidence and regard will not seek to embody itself in gushing speeches, flattering resolutions, or the interchange of commissioners who are expected to be profuse in diplomatic eloquence. Such formalities have proved unsatisfactory and vain. They are liable to degenerate into a hollow mockery, that seeks to hide the wounds it cannot heal. True unity, like true love, cannot be formulated. The language of compliment has no place in its spontaneous intercourse. It manifests itself in incidental expressions and unpremeditated signs of confidence and love. The brotherhood of Churches, like that of individuals, is natural and unconstrained, and will be exhibited in a thousand ways unknown to the world's diplomacy. Especially will it display itself in action. Coöperation in the work of converting the world must take the place of a counteractive policy, if the Church desires to give to mankind an impressive exhibition of its unity. In this there can be no sham. Action is too earnest for deception. It is seen as well as heard. It is substantial and permanent in its beneficent results. The life of the Church can be, and ought to be, one, like that of its divine Master. Spiritual unity consists chiefly in common motives and aims. The more all the Churches become absorbed

in the service and glory of the Redeemer, the more they will realise and enjoy the truth of his precious promise, to be with them always, even to the end of the world. Then also will be fulfilled the spiritual import of his prayer, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

ARTICLE III.

PERFECT SANCTIFICATION.

The subject of personal holiness is one of deepest interest to the theologian, the pastor, and the Christian. Sanctification as a doctrine is so thoroughly interwoven into the fabric of revealed truth that each one's views of it give form, color, and general effect not only to the system as a whole, but to each prominent feature. They necessarily shape the creed, the experience, and the practice. They determine the whole religious character and the prevailing spirit and influence of members and churches. Hence, the intelligent and faithful pastor, who is studying and toiling to train his flock for the highest results of divine truth, is deeply concerned to investigate most thoroughly the gracious process by which God developes the piety of his people. He longs to understand it in its real aims, its workings, its instrumentalities, its history, in fine, in every aspect of it which may throw light upon his own path as he pursues this grand purpose of his ministry. He looks forward with inexpressible joy to the time when the glorified Shepherd will present before God these members of his great flock "holy and unblameable and unreprouable" in his sight. Hence, like Paul, he longs so to preach Christ, and so to warn every man, and to teach every man, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto he also labors, striving according to Christ's working which worketh in him mightily.

With all this anxiety and effort every true Christian is in full sympathy. We will not say his interest in this is next to his