

*THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IN THE EPISTLE  
TO THE EPHESIANS.*

THE Epistles of the Roman captivity when compared with the earlier and later Epistles of St. Paul are seen to have several strongly marked characteristics. Not only do we find a maturity of thought and experience, but the topics also are different both in character and treatment. It is to one of these characteristic differences that we now desire to call attention by considering the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians on the Church.

The special interest and importance of Ephesians in regard to the Church is that apart from its companion Epistle to the Colossians it is, after St. Matthew xvi., the next and perhaps the only place in the New Testament where the Church is regarded absolutely as the one universal Church. In all other Epistles, as well as in the Acts, the term seems to be applied to a local Church and a number of local Churches, or else to the one universal Church as represented in the individual Church or local Churches. Out of the 110 places where the word occurs in the New Testament 86 are in the Epistles of St. Paul, and of these 11 only appear to refer to this idea of an universal Church ; i.e., 9 in Ephesians and 2 in Colossians (Col. i. 18, 24). This does not mean that the idea of the unity of all believers was not in the Apostle's mind and teaching before this time. As a matter of fact it is clearly traceable in earlier Epistles. The principles and duties of unity as based on fellowship with all Christians are already clear (1 Thess. ii. 14 ; 1 Cor. i. 12, 13, vi. 9), while St. Paul had also emphasized the essential oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ (Gal. iii. 28 ; Rom. xi. 17). Thus the idea of all believers being one in Christ is evident from the first, but it is only in the Epistle

to the Ephesians that we find it receiving full expression and adequate treatment.

This extension of idea and usage to include all Christians in one great universal Church is characteristic of these two Epistles of the Roman captivity, and for several reasons it is noteworthy and very significant. The time had evidently come for the Christians to receive this fuller teaching as the complement and crown of what they already knew. It was the necessary consequence and completion of the teaching given in the earlier Epistles. Thus the Epistle to the Romans deals mainly and primarily with the relation of the individual to God in Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians, on the other hand, starts from the corporate side of Christianity and views the individual as one of the Body. Further, Romans deals with the great problem of how Jew and Gentile were to be received respectively, and as it were separately, into fellowship with Christ. Ephesians contemplates them both as already in Christ and making one body in Him. Again, while in 1 and 2 Corinthians St. Paul emphasizes and urges unity in the local Church, in Ephesians the thought takes a wider and universal sweep as including all believers of all Churches at all times. We may perhaps also note how the Apostle, writing from Rome and possibly influenced by the imperial atmosphere, might be led to conceive of the Church of Christ as one vast organism and to emphasize the solidarity of all Christians in Him. It is also noteworthy that this conception of one universal Church was a revelation granted to the Apostle Paul only.

The full revelation respecting the Gentiles to which St. Paul refers in Ephesians iii. 6 ff. was not obviously involved from the first in the charge to preach the Gospel to all nations. It was to St. Paul himself doubtless that this prophetic illumination came in the first instance (Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 166).

The "mystery" referred to in this Epistle cannot be interpreted to mean simply that the Gentiles were to be

brought into blessing in connexion with Christ. This was clearly shown even in the old Testament (Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18) and was no "mystery" at all (Gal. iii. 8; Rom. i. 2, iii. 21). The *μυστήριον* of Ephesians is that a people should be taken out from Jews and Gentiles and should be made a joint body (*σύσσωμα*) in Christ (Eph. iii. 2, 9).

Turning to the Epistle we seem to see the Church considered in four distinct though connected aspects.

### I. THE CHURCH AS A BODY.

Up to the writing of Ephesians St. Paul had used the idea of a body either simply as an illustration (Rom. xii. 3-5) or else with reference to the local Church only (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 27). Now, however, he regards all Christians together as the Body of Christ. The following are the main outlines of his teaching on this subject.

1. Christ is the Head of the Body. "Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22f.). "The Head, even Christ" (chap. iv. 15). "Christ is the Head of the Church" (chap. v. 23). As the head to the body so is Christ to the Church. Head and body are correlative and organically connected. We are thus taught that the Church is not a fortuitous collection of individuals, but a Society with a Head, an organism and not merely two parts in juxtaposition. This connexion between Christ and the Church as illustrated by the metaphor of a Body can be variously applied. (1) There is a connexion of life. He is the source of life to the Church. Apart from Him the Body is dead, for the Church has no life in itself. (2) There is a connexion of cause and effect. The thoughts and purposes of the Head are expressed in the activities of the Body. (3) There is a connexion of power. All energy in the Body comes from the Head and through union with Him. (4) There

is a connexion of sympathy. Head and Body are in one feeling, whether of pain or joy. (5) There is a connexion of obedience. The Body responds to the orders of the Head, and what the will directs the members carry out. We may say, then, that there is a two-fold need ; that of the Head by the members, and that of the members by the Head. The members need the Head for life, sensation, and volition. The Head needs the members for expression and activity.

In some mysterious sense the Church is that without which the Christ is not complete, but with which He is or will be complete. That is to say, he looks upon the Christ as in a sense waiting for completeness, and destined in the purpose of God to find completeness in the Church (Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 42 f.).

2. The Holy Spirit is the Life of the Body. The emphasis laid on the Holy Spirit in this Epistle is very clear and striking, and with the one exception of Romans viii. there is more about the Spirit of God in this short Epistle than in any other of St. Paul's writings. There are at least twelve references to His Divine grace and work in relation to the Body of Christ. From the moment of conversion He is everything to the individual Christian and to the whole Church. It is the Spirit who seals the believer as belonging to Christ (chap. i. 13, iv. 30). By the Spirit we are introduced to the Father (chap. ii. 18). We are indwelt by the Spirit (chap. ii. 22). We are taught by the Spirit (chap. iii. 5). The Spirit is the secret of inward strength (chap. iii. 16), of outward unity (chap. iv. 3), of inward sensitiveness (chap. iv. 30), and of spiritual fulness (chap. v. 18). The Word of God is described as "the sword of the Spirit" (chap. vi. 17), and prayer is to be offered "in the Spirit" (chap. vi. 18). Thus in every way, whether we think of the individual or the community, the Spirit of God actuates all.

3. Each individual Christian is a member of the Body.

Believers are viewed first in relation to the purpose of the Father (chap. i. 4-6a), then in relation to the work of the Son) chap. i. 6b-12), and lastly in relation to the grace of the Holy Spirit (chap. i. 13, 14), and thus we are members of His Body (chap. v. 30). To each and every individual member is some grace given (*ἐκάστω*, chap. iv. 7), and every one can supply something to the progress and growth of the Body: "according to the proportional energy of each single part" (chap. iv. 16). Each individual member is (1) a channel of nourishment to the rest (chap. iv. 16; cf. Col. ii. 19); (2) a means of unity as a joint and ligament harmoniously fitted and compacted, holding together the framework (chap. iv. 16); (3) a condition of growth, all acting as fitted, and so making continual increase (chap. iv. 16; cf. Col. ii. 19). Christians are therefore needed by one another for nourishment, growth, progress, fellowship, blessing, and it is a profoundly striking and deeply solemn thought that individual Christians can hinder blessing and growth from coming to the entire Body, hindering the flow of grace and keeping back spiritual power. Thus, while the Church as a whole is the Body, very clear and significant stress is laid on the importance, necessity, and due position of each single member of It. The individuality of single, though not separate, Christians could not be more clearly taught. The importance of this social and corporate aspect of the Christian life is very great and needs constant emphasis.

The believer's union to Christ, which is the deepest of all personal things, always involves something social. The call comes to him singly, but seldom solitarily (Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, p. 7).

We see, therefore, the great value of the Church. It is true, that each man is saved solitarily and alone by direct contact as an individual with Christ, but it is equally true that

he is sanctified in association with others. It must be constantly borne in mind that the true, full, vigorous, mature Christian life is impossible to any Christian who tries to live a solitary life. Individual Christianity can easily be carried to extremes—and become something very different from the Christianity of the New Testament. The Christian must realize in some way “the Communion of Saints” if he is to be a true saint himself. St. Paul prayed that the Christians of Ephesus might comprehend “with all saints” the love of Christ (chap. iii. 18), each saint apprehending a little and all together comprehending that which is intended for the whole Church.

4. Jews and Gentiles go to make up the unity of the Body. It is pointed out by the Apostle that in the atoning death of Christ this oneness of Jew and Gentile was really contemplated, intended, and provided for. “He is our peace, who hath made both one” (chap. ii. 14). “That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross” (chap. ii. 16). “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (chap. ii. 18). And the fact that there was to be one Body consisting of Jews and Gentiles which, as we have seen, was the special revelation to St. Paul is stated in very definite and significant terms. The Apostle’s language in chapter iii. 3–6 is particularly noteworthy with its emphasis on *σύν* in the words “joint heirship,” “joint body,” “joint partakers.” This thought of Jew and Gentile as one Body in Christ, not as two separate bodies, but a “joint body” of which Christ is the Head, is the magnificent thought of this Epistle, and it is thence that we derive the only true ideas of unity and catholicity. The unity is that which is dealt with in chap. iv. 4–6, a seven-fold unity, of which three aspects are associated with the Holy Spirit, three with our Lord, and the concluding and culminating one with God the Father. This unity is essentially spiritual and eternal rather

than merely ecclesiastical and local. It starts with the union of the soul to Christ by the Spirit ; then as a result comes union with our fellow-believers by the same Spirit ; then follows unity of life in Christ and unity of doctrine in Christ through the Spirit. The Church is a *congregation*, and not an *aggregation*. It is a community of those who have Christ for their source and centre of life and unity. This unity is not to be confused with unanimity of opinion on every point. This is manifestly impossible. Nor is unity to be identified with uniformity of usages and forms of worship. Unity means life. Uniformity often means death. Nor is it to be limited to a unit of organization. That is an absolute impossibility, remembering differences of time, place, nations, and races in the Church. Our Lord clearly distinguishes (John x. 16, R.V.) between the unity of the fold and the unity of the flock, and clearly teaches us that the latter is essential and important, and that the former is but secondary and temporary. True unity can exist and flourish without absolute uniformity of opinion and custom, or without needing a unit of organization, because it is a unity of life, nature, teaching, and purpose in Christ.

And because the unity of the Church of Christ is a primary verity of the Christian faith, it can never be adequately represented in any outward polity, but must always be, in the first instance at least, a religious experience. Its source and centre can never be an earthly throne, but must always be that heavenly place where Jesus sits at the Right Hand of God (Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, p. 14).

The catholicity or universality of the Church necessarily arises out of this unity, and it follows that this is also spiritual. The Church as catholic means the Church as embracing all times, all places, all people, all revealed truth. It is, as the Prayer Book has it, "the whole state of Christ's Church," "the blessed company of all faithful people." It is an inclusive term, applying to all "who profess and call them-

selves Christians." The word is therefore very appropriate as testifying to the world-wide extension of the Gospel in the purpose of God. Christianity is intended for all men, and all Christians form the Catholic Church. The sole use of the term "Catholic" by any one body of Christians is obviously a contradiction in terms, and an utter impossibility. The Church Catholic is the Church Catholic, not any one Church, however large or well known. In this catholicity all differences and distinctions, whether of race or position or capacity, are non-existent, or rather are all unified and utilized by reason of the one fellowship of the saints in Christ Jesus.

It has frequently been inquired why St. Paul uses Baptism in connexion with unity in this Epistle instead of the Lord's Supper, which, from the treatment in 1 Corinthians, chap. x., might seem so suitable and beautiful as a symbol and means of unity. It may be because the Lord's Supper is the expression of an existing and recognized unity, while Faith and Baptism initiate us into that unity. This explanation, however, is not entirely satisfactory, but everything is quite clear if for "one baptism" in this passage is understood the spiritual reality rather than the outward symbol. In 1 Corinthians xii. 13 we are taught that it is "by one Spirit" that we are all baptized into one body. It is the province of the Holy Spirit to baptize individuals into union with Christ and with His spiritual Body, while baptism in water introduces us into the visible Church. At any rate the two parts of Baptism are to be distinguished and not confused or "identified." It is at least noteworthy that apart from this one aspect of unity the other six members in chap. iv. 4-6 are all purely spiritual and not ecclesiastical.

5. The diversities of gifts in the one Body. As verses 4-6 deal with unity, so verses 7-14 bring before us the diversities of gifts in the one Body. The entire passage needs careful consideration.



(a) The spiritual character of the gifts. It is to be carefully noticed that we have to do here, not with offices, but with functions. The reference is not to so many different and separate offices exercised by so many separate officials; they are functions of the Body, and in certain cases several of these functions may have been, and doubtless were, exercised by one person. That they represent functions rather than offices may be argued from the difference found in the list here as compared with that in 1 Corinthians xii. 28. These five functions are probably mentioned as examples and not as exhaustive, and also because they apply more to the Church as universal than as local. At any rate, the first three—apostles, prophets, evangelists—clearly refer to functions exercised generally throughout the whole Church; while the fourth and fifth—pastors, and teachers—which are again not to be distinguished as referring to different persons, are concerned with an office which is of a most general kind—the pastoral and teaching office. The inclusion of apostles in this list is not so much a reference to their formal office as to their membership in and functions for the whole Body (Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 157 f.).

(b) The divine source of the gifts. This is very emphatic. "He himself gave" (v. 11). All spiritual gifts come and must come, from above. No man can rightly take upon him to exercise a gift he has not received and does not possess. Ἐδόθη is closely associated with the reception of the gifts from the Father by the ascended Christ, and the thought may be contrasted with the ἔθετο, "appointed," "set," in 1 Corinthians xii. 28. The thought, therefore, of a divine gift is very emphatic. The χαρίσματα come from the free bounty (χάρις) of the glorified Lord.

(c) The immediate purpose of these gifts is particularly noteworthy. They are intended to serve a very definite end; "for the equipment of the saints for their work of

ministry" (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας). This seems to be a truer rendering than that of the A.V. It is not that there is a three-fold co-ordinate purpose—"for . . . for . . . for"—but rather, an immediate and an ultimate purpose. Thus the work of the ministry refers to the saints as a whole and not to a class called ministers (Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 162). We see, therefore, that these spiritual gifts from God are given for the edification of the membership of the Body that "every member of the same in his vocation and ministry may truly and godly serve." This ministering to the saints in order that they in turn may realize and fulfil their duties as members of the Christian Body is an important element of New Testament teaching (see 1 Cor. xvi. 15; 2 Cor. viii. 4; 2 Cor. ix. 1, 12; 2 Tim. i. 18; Heb. vi. 10). The word *καταρτισμός* needs special notice. Quite literally it means "repair" or "adjustment," and (with its cognates) is used in the New Testament with the idea of bringing into a proper condition, fitting or adjusting persons or things in order that they may realize and execute their duties (Mark i. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 9; Gal. vi. 1; Heb. xiii. 21; 1 Pet. v. 10. See Lightfoot, *Notes on St. Paul's Epistles*, p. 47).

In this passage *καταρτισμός* suggests the bringing of the saints to a condition of fitness for the discharge of their functions in the Body (Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 182).

The purpose of the spiritual gifts, therefore, is the edification of all, and the phrase "work of ministry" shows that all the saints have something to do since each one has received some gift (*ἐκάστω*, v. 7).

(d) The ultimate object of these gifts. "For the building of the body of Christ" (v. 12). The Body is to grow continually, and these gifts are intended to serve this pur-

pose. The full and final realization is seen in the words of verse 13: "Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." To this ultimate object and purpose the exhortations in verses 1-3 and verses 14-16 clearly point.

## II. THE CHURCH AS A BUILDING.

Side by side, with the metaphor of a Body and associated with it is the metaphor of a Building. The whole Church is regarded as a great structure, and several aspects of truth are brought before us by means of this symbol.

1. The foundation. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (chap. ii. 20). It seems clear that the reference in this phrase is to the New Testament and not to the Old, and concerns the two forms of spiritual ministry by which the Church was commenced and continued (Acts xi. 28, xiii. 1, xv. 32, xxi. 10; Eph. iii. 5, iv. 11. See also Armitage Robinson, and Moule *in loc.*, and Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 165). In speaking of apostles and prophets as a foundation it is clear that the reference is not to any official position of authority, but simply to the order of the growth of the Church from them and their ministry (Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, p. 167).

2. The Corner-stone. "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone" (chap. ii. 20). In 1 Corinthians iii. 11 our Lord Himself is put as the Foundation (cf. 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7; Isa. xxviii. 16). In this passage, however, He is the Corner-stone. As to the precise meaning of this phrase as compared with the idea of a foundation two ideas are prevalent. The first of these may perhaps best be given in the words of the Bishop of Durham.

On the whole we take the image to be that of a vast stone at an angle of the substructure, into which the converging sides are

imbedded, "in which" they "consist"; and the spiritual reality to be, that Jesus Christ Himself is that which gives coherence and fixity to the foundation doctrines of His Church; with the implied idea that He is the essential to the foundation, being the ultimate Foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11). Apostles and Prophets reveal and enforce a basis of truths for the rest and settlement of the saints' faith; those truths, at every point of juncture and prominence, are seen to be wholly dependent on Jesus Christ for significance, harmony and permanence (Moule, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Cambridge Bible, p. 84).

The other view is that given by the Dean of Westminster.

He is part of the House which He founds, for He is its Corner-stone. The passage in St. Paul's mind at this point is Isaiah xxviii. 16, as it was rendered by the Septuagint: "Behold, I lay for the foundations of Sion a stone costly *and* chosen, a precious corner-stone for the foundations thereof." And just because he will speak of Christ in the old prophet's terms as a corner-stone, he cannot here speak of Him as the whole foundation. When St. Paul speaks of Christ as the corner-stone, he uses a metaphor which appears to be wholly Oriental. The Greeks laid no stress on corner-stone. We must go to the East if we would understand at all what they mean. The corner-stones in the Temple substructures, which have been excavated by the agency of the Palestine Exploration Fund, are not, as we might perhaps have supposed, stones so shaped as to contain a right-angle, and thus by their projecting arms to bind two walls together. They are straight blocks which run up to a corner, where they are met in the angle by similar stones, the ends of which come immediately above or below them (Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 68 f.).

The difference between these two views is not really fundamental, for in either case it implies that our Lord is essential to the coherence and stability of the structure.

3. The stones of the Building. By implication individual Christians are regarded as stones, each in his own place contributing his part to the progress and completeness of the whole (chap. ii. 19 f.; cf. 1 Pet. ii. 5, "living stones"). The individual aspect, however, is not the predominant, or even the prominent point in this Epistle, but the corporate and united effect of the whole.

4. The character of the Building. The Building is to be a Temple (chap. ii. 21). The *ναός* is the shrine, the actual house, answering to the Holy Place and the Most Holy, the place of the Presence of God, and the Church thus regarded as a shrine is to be the *permanent* abode of God (*κατοικήτηριον*, chap. ii. 22; *κατοικῆσαι*, chap. iii. 17).

5. The progress of the Building. Stress is laid on the gradual upbuilding of this Divine and spiritual structure. The tenses of the verbs are particularly noteworthy in this connexion. The Christians have been definitely and once for all placed on the foundation (Aorist, chap. ii. 20). They have been permanently founded (Perfect, chap. iii. 17). They are continually being built together (Present, chap. ii. 21, 22). They are being continuously fitted together harmoniously in the process of building (Present, chap. ii. 21, iv. 16). The result is that the whole Building is to be one perfect outcome of a continuous increase and growth (chap. ii. 21, iv. 12, 16).

In this connexion it is necessary to note the force of *πᾶσα οἰκοδομή* (chap. ii. 21) which Dr. Hort (*The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 164) renders with the Revised Version, "each several building," and says that "the thought of a universal spiritual temple of God is, to say the least, not definitely expressed anywhere by St. Paul." On the other hand it seems impossible to doubt that Dean Armitage Robinson gives the truer idea when he renders the passage "all the building" according to the Authorised Version.

Such a rendering then as "every building" (that is to say, "all the buildings") is out of harmony with the general thought of the passage. If the Apostle has in any way referred to parts which go to make up a whole, it has always been to two parts, and only two, viz., the Jew and the Gentile. To introduce the idea of many churches going to make up one Church is to do violence to the spirit of this whole section. The rendering "each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple" offends the most conspicuously against the Apostle's thought. For it must logically

imply that the "several buildings" grow into "several temples": and this is at once inconsistent with the single "habitation" or "dwelling-place" of God, which the Apostle mentions in the next verse (Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 70).

It is noteworthy that we have in this Epistle the blending of the two ideas of the Body and the Building (chap. ii. 21; iv. 12, 16; cf. iii. 17).

### III. THE CHURCH AS A BRIDE.

This metaphor is brought before us in chapter v. with reference to the whole Church, though it had already been used in connexion with a local Church in 2 Corinthians xi. 2, and implicitly with reference to individual Christians in Romans vii. 1-4. It is urged by some authorities that as in the metaphor of the Body the Church is a part of Christ, it cannot be intended to represent the Church as His Bride, since the Bride is not a part of the Husband, but separate from Him. It is, however, more likely that we are to regard these metaphors as two aspects of the same relationship between Christ and the Church, the one a relationship of life, the other a relationship of love. This is especially probable in view of the words, "They twain shall be one flesh," and also in the light of chapter v. 32, "This is a great mystery," as though the Apostle would say, there is more in it than appears. Taking it, therefore, as a separate though connected metaphor we notice several aspects of spiritual teaching in the relationship of the Church as the Bride of Christ.

1. The thought of Union. "The mystical union betwixt Christ and His Church." This union is wrought and maintained by the Holy Spirit (chap. i. 13-ii. 18), whereby every believer and all the Church is "joined to the Lord" (*κολλῶμαι*, 1 Cor. vi. 17).

2. The thought of Love. Christ loves the Church as the husband is to love his wife, and accordingly our Lord's love

is brought before us as proved by the gift of Himself (chap. v. 25). Love in our Lord's case is no sentiment, but a sacrifice, and it does not even cease with His sacrifice of Himself; it is maintained and continued in service. " Loving and cherishing it " (v. 29).

3. The thought of Duty. Here we see the Bride's part, that of subordination and loyalty. So is it to be with the Church in relation to Christ. The two aspects of wifely duty, submission (v. 22) and fear (v. 33), are exactly equivalent to those required of the Church in relation to her Lord.

4. The thought of the Future (v. 27). Christ's purpose in relation to the Church is that by means of His sacrifice and service on her behalf " He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Thus the glorious future of the Bride, the Church of Christ, is brought before us as " holy and without blemish." In like manner in Revelation, chapters xix. and xxi., we have the picture of the glorious future of the Lamb's Wife in all the eternal glory of heaven.

#### IV. THE CHURCH AS A BROTHERHOOD.

Here metaphor is dropped, or at least changed, and the life of the Church is depicted mainly in terms of actuality. At the same time there are the two metaphors of the Household (chap. ii. 19) and the State (chap. ii. 19). The Church is thus brought before us under what may be regarded as the figure of a great Brotherhood having relation to God and to one another.

1. The Godward attitude of this Brotherhood. This is taught under several aspects.

(a) God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in Him (chap. i. 2, 3, 17, iii. 14, 15).

(b) We are His children in Christ Jesus adopted into His family (chap. i. 5), beloved (chap. v. 1), children of light (chap. v. 8), and members of His household (chap. ii. 19).

(c) We are also citizens of a Divine commonwealth (chap. ii. 19; cf. ii. 12; Phil. iii. 20).

(d) We are also saints, that is, those who belong to God, separated for, consecrated to, and possessed by Him. The prominence given to this aspect of the Christian life in relation to God is very noteworthy (chap. i. 15, 18, iii. 8, 18, vi. 18).

(e) We are also described as faithful (chap. i. 1), which seems to blend the two ideas of trustful and trustworthy.

In these various figures, which, however, are strongly expressive of real relationships, we see something of the Church as a Brotherhood. God is our Father, and in Him all Fatherhood and paternal relationships find their source and warrant.

2. The life of this Brotherhood. This thought is brought before us in relation to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. All Christians are led to God by Him (chap. ii. 18), He is the bond of peace between believers (chap. iv. 3, 4), and they are sealed by Him in view of the great future when redemption will be completed (chap. i. 13, iv. 30).

3. The unity of this Brotherhood. With very great fulness and definiteness we are taught the solidarity of the Christian Brotherhood in this Epistle (chap. iii. 15, iv. 3, 4). It is a unity based upon love, and the phrase "in love," which occurs six times in the Epistle, is applied four times to Christians in relation to one another. None of St. Paul's Epistles are so clear as this as to the unity of Christians as members of the family of God, and a very special feature of the Epistle is the use of the preposition *σύν* both in connexion with our relation to Christ, and also in particular with our relation to one another. In regard to Christ, we have



been quickened and raised with Him and are seated with Him (chap. ii. 5, 6). In relation to our fellow-Christians we are being fitted together (chap. ii. 21), builded together (chap. ii. 22), and compacted together (chap. iv. 16). We are fellow-citizens (chap. ii. 19). We have a joint-inheritance, we are a joint-body, and joint-partakers of the promise of Christ ( $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ , three times in chap. iii. 6). We are to comprehend the love of Christ "with all saints" (chap. iii. 18). We are not to be sharers-together of evil (chap. v. 7), or fellow-partners with the works of darkness (chap. v. 11).

4. The reciprocal duties of this Brotherhood. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is very striking that several practical duties are emphasized in special view of our Brotherhood with fellow-Christians. This is all the more striking when we compare the companion Epistle to the Colossians, which deals with the same duties from another point of view, basing them, not on our relation to one another, but on our relation to our Lord. Thus, in Ephesians, we are to speak the truth because we are members one of another (chap. iv. 25). We are to avoid theft, and work for our living in order to share with the needy (chap. iv. 28). We are to avoid evil speech, and say that which is good for the purpose of edifying and ministering grace (chap. iv. 29). We are to avoid all bitterness and anger, and to be kind one to another, taking our Lord's forgiveness of us as our standard and example (chap. iv. 31, 32). Uncleanness and avarice are not to be named, "as becometh saints" (chap. v. 3), and we are all to submit one to another in Christ (chap. v. 21). Prayer is to be made for all the saints (chap. vi. 18), and we are to walk in love (chap. v. 2), the Epistle closing for grace to be with all those that love our Lord in uncorruptness (chap. vi. 24).

It can readily be seen from this brief summary what a

wealth of teaching there is concerning the Church as a Family, or Brotherhood, and how important and essential are our relations to our fellow-Christians and to the whole Church in the light of the Apostolic teaching.

Reviewing the entire teaching of the Epistle with regard to the Church in this four-fold aspect as a Body, a Building, a Bride, and a Brotherhood, there are several points of immediate and practical importance which arise out of it. The consideration of the one Body of Christ and of our Lord as its Head should dominate all our thinking and action in relation to the various questions connected with the Church to-day. Some of these applications may be fittingly considered as we draw to a close.

1. We can readily see from the teaching of Ephesians that the primary idea of the Church is that of an organism rather than of an organization. "Christianity came to the world as an idea rather than as an institution" (Newman, *Development*, p. 116). If instead of "idea" we substitute the indwelling presence of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, there is no doubt of the truth of these words and their agreement with the Pauline doctrine. The Church in its true idea is a spiritual force rather than a visible institution. Such was the case as it was originally constituted on the Day of Pentecost by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and that which we find recorded in Acts ii. of the birthday of the Church in its present form must necessarily determine its true nature in all ages.

It is, in its true being and essence, the temple of the Holy Ghost, founded and built up on the doctrine of the Apostles. . . . Its progress was in accordance with this beginning. . . . it developed itself from within outwards—not in the reverse direction. . . . Instead of passively receiving a superinduced stamp from without, the Christian society supplied its needs from within, and of itself, that is, the invisible Church preceded the visible. . . . The result is, that when we come to define the Church—when the question relates

to its essence, not to its accidents—we must adopt the old explanatory addition of the Article in the Creed, and speak of it as “the communion, or congregation of saints”; of saints not merely by profession, or external dedication (though this, of course, is included), but in reality and truth (Litton, *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, Second Edition, p. 360 f.).

2. This idea of the universal Church and its gifts as primarily spiritual should therefore dominate all our views of the local and ecclesiastical Church and ministry.

All other meanings of the word “Church” are derived and modified from this, but this must not be modified by them (Moule on Ephesians i. 22).

When we take up this standpoint and judge everything by this standard, we can see how truly sad, really small, and practically futile are many of the controversies about Catholicity, Ministry, and Priesthood and how dangerous to the true ideas of Church and ministry some of the developments in Church history have been.

3. It follows from the foregoing that the reference to “the visible Church” in Article XIX. of the Church of England is not otiose, but expresses a truth arising out of the Epistle to the Ephesians, a truth, moreover, which is supported by the Prayer Book, and especially by the Creeds. These two words, “visible” and “invisible,” represent the Church in two aspects, according as it is viewed inwardly or outwardly, according to spiritual nature or according to earthly organization. The Church is visible as to those who compose it, but invisible as to its Divine Head and the spirit of its life. The two aspects are necessarily connected, but they do not cover exactly the same ground. A man may belong to the Church as visible without belonging to the Church as invisible. He may be united to the outward society of Christians without being spiritually united to Christ. But it is also true, according to the New Testament, that a man will not belong to the Church as invisible without

belonging to the visible Church. A man in Christ will join himself to other Christians. Christians living and working alone, apart from brethren, are quite unknown to the New Testament. As there depicted they are all united in fellowship and included in the Church of Christ, "the blessed company of all faithful people." A purely individualistic Christian life is an utter impossibility.

It is for this reason that we use the words "I believe" when we repeat the Creed about the Holy Catholic Church. We say "I believe," not "I see," for the essence of the Church is a matter of faith, not of sight, and lies in its invisibility to the outward eye and its visibility to the eye of faith.

For lack of diligent observing the difference between the Church of God mystical and visible, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed (Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.*, B. iii. 9).

4. Not less important in this connexion is the consideration of the relation of the one universal Church to the various local Churches, and, as Dr. Hort points out, it is certainly very striking and significant that the units which compose this one universal Church are not Churches but individuals.

The One Ecclesia includes all members of all partial Ecclesiae; but its relations to them are all direct, not mediate. It is true that, as we have seen, St. Paul anxiously promoted friendly intercourse and sympathy between the scattered Ecclesiae; but the unity of the universal Ecclesia as he contemplated it does not belong to this region: it is a truth of theology and of religion, not a fact of what we call Ecclesiastical politics (Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 168; cf. Hort's *Prolegomena to Romans and Ephesians*, p. 130 f.).

A consideration of this simple fact will always be a safeguard against the erroneous, because inadequate, view that, the one universal Church, which is the Body of Christ, is necessarily limited to and only coterminous with the sum total of local visible Churches.

That Church of Christ, which we properly term His body mystical, can be but one ; neither can that one be sensibly discerned by any man, inasmuch as the parts thereof are some in heaven already with Christ, and the rest that are on earth (albeit, their natural persons be visible) we do not discern under this property, whereby they are truly and infallibly of that body. Only our minds by intellectual conceit are able to apprehend that such a real body there is, a body collective, because it containeth a huge multitude ; a body mystical, because the mystery of their conjunction is removed altogether from sense. Whatsoever we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and the saving mercy which God showeth towards His Church, the only proper subject thereof is this Church. Concerning this flock it is that our Lord and Saviour hath promised, " I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish " (John x. 28). They who are of this society have such marks and notes of distinction from all others as are not object unto our sense ; only unto God, who seeth their hearts and understandeth all their secret cogitations, unto Him they are clear and manifest (Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.*, B. iii.).

5. Last of all, the Epistle to the Ephesians in two notable passages bids us look forward to the future of this great Church in relation to the universe. While the Church is to be presented pure and spotless to her Lord in the Great Day (chap. v. 27), the presentation is with a view to yet further service for Him. Even now in the present age God's glory is manifested in the Church, and this glory is to be continued " unto all the generations of the age of the ages " (chap. iii. 21, Greek), and we are further told that during the present dispensation (*ἡ νῦν*) there is being made known to the " principalities and powers in the heavenlies by means of the Church the ' many coloured ' wisdom of God " (chap. iii. 10).

This is the Church in which the Holy Spirit dwells as the present, continuous, and permanent life, the Church to which all the promises of God are made, the Church outside which no one can ever be saved, the Church from which no believer can ever be excommunicated, the Church against which the gates of Hades shall never pre-

vail, the Church in which God's presence is continually realized and manifested, the Church through which His grace and glory will be displayed to the spiritual universe throughout the ages of eternity.

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