

would be only the members of the Church of England that he would call: it would not be that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues and sects, and eras, who are united by faith to the Saviour? Is it not certain that that Church would not be contented as with any earthly or visible organization, but "as long as the ages, as wide as the poles, as broad as the charity of God, including all in heaven or earth who hold the Head?" and if this would be true in the event of the Archangel's trumpet sounding to-morrow, it must be true to-day while He tarries; and in not recognizing it, and in considering many of his own to be outside the pale of his Body because they walk not with us, while they cast out devils in his name, it is we who are guilty of the sin of schism and not obey.

Is it not certain that hundreds of those who are amongst the most illustrious for learning, piety, and devotedness, and manifestly in Christ by faith, have been and are in Dissenting communities? Do we deny that they are in Christ? If we do, how do we account for the manifold fruits of the Spirit which they exhibit? If we do not, then to be in Christ is to be in the Holy Catholic Church, and to be a member of his Body and if this is the case, the only severance from the Church is through the severance of the souls trust in Christ, and he only is a schismatic who ceases to be Christ's; and the idea that the sin of schism is separation from the visible communion of the Church of England, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and tested by the Word of God is found wanting, and may, without loss, be consigned to the limbo of exploded fallacies.

I would not be misunderstood to imply that I see no distinction between the Church of England and the sects around her. I have no hesitation in saying that I know no organization calling itself a Church to compare with the Church of England. But, nevertheless I am constrained to believe that there is a bond of spiritual union which far overreaches and transcends the boundaries of the Church of England, and that thousands who are descended from those who in days gone by, conscientiously separated from the Church of England, though they are not in communion externally with us, are yet built into that spiritual fabric of which Christ is the chief corner stone, which is the Holy Catholic Church, and cannot therefore be stigmatized as schismatics.

I would therefore plead with my fellow-Churchmen to believe that rigidity is never a sign of life; bigotry is never effective spiritual force: and as to the mingling together in the Lord's name of Churchmen and Dissenters, and the interchange of pulpits between them, it is not spiritually healthy any more than it is ecclesiastically expedient for us Churchmen to busy ourselves in needlessly defining the limits of orthodoxy. I am convinced in the depths of my soul that the direction in which the Holy Ghost is working in this our day is against exclusiveness, and in the direction of the freest spiritual communion between those who differ as to methods, creeds, and definitions of the faith; and no English Churchman does credit to himself, or honor to his Church, by speaking superciliously of godly Dissenters, by calling them heretics and schismatics, and refusing to receive the word of God from their lips, when it is manifest they are doing, and doing well, nearly half the Christian work of this country.

Lastly, if schism did mean separation from the Church of England, one would hardly expect to find thoughtful men and staunch Churchmen seeking opportunities for spiritual communion and fellowship in Christian activity with them. The late Archbishop of Canterbury (page 14 of his last charge) says, "It is our duty when we can to cultivate friendly relations with Dissenters while we look for occasions in which, notwithstanding our differences, we may act together.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, which may be termed almost a Dissenting Society, contains among its Vice-Presidents nearly every Bishop of the Church of England. When the Church Congress met in Leicester, the Nonconformist ministers sent a deputation to the assembled clergy welcoming them in the name of the Lord, and they were cordially met and addressed in terms of brotherly kindness by the Bishop of Peterboro; and the same amenities took place at the Church Congress last autumn at Portsmouth. Quite recently, when the Congregational Union met at Bristol, the leading clergy waited upon them while in conference, with greetings and congratulations; and we all know that the Revised Version of the New Testament is the joint work of Churchmen and Dissenters.

What then is schism? Schism, true schism, Godward, is the severance of the soul's trust in Christ; he therefore is a schismatic who cuts himself off from Christ. Manward it is the want of soul love between members of the same external body, and also the absence of charity between spiritual members of the one body of Christ, even though not in the same external community. When we pray in the Church of England Litany against schism we are obviously referring not to Dissenters, but to the separating cancers of our own Church, to the malicious religious partizanship so common among ourselves, our being divided up into parties, factions (Gal. v. 20), under party names, with representative newspapers ever stirring up internecine warfare by reviling each other and heaping contempt upon each other's beliefs. I have no reason from shrinking from the admission that when first I came to this town the bitterest misrepresentations and the severest judgments came upon me, not from Nonconformists but from those of my own communion. This is "schism in the body;" this is wounding to the heart of Christ. Stillingleet, speaking of the evils of division, and of bitter party strife in the same fold, says, "Let us not rend the seamless robe of the Lord Jesus by our undutiful and unseemly divisions."

Whilst, therefore, I plead for an interchange of pulpits and a greater latitude for prayer and spiritual communion with Dissenters, believing that the Holy Catholic Church, which is his Body, transcends all human sects, systems, and denominations I consider that I am guilty of no paradox, when, remembering the urgent need for a truer spirit of unity within the Church of England herself, I am able to throw my whole heart into the supplication in the Litany, "from all schism Good Lord deliver us."

We have certain work to do for our heads, and that is to be done strenuously; other work to do for our delight, and that is to be done heartily; neither is to be done by halves or shifts, but with a will; and what is not worth this effort is not to be done at all.—Ruskin.