

significant, when weighed in the balance against the sense of our tremendous responsibility for the stewardship of truth,—for the keeping intact and beautiful the faith once for all delivered to the saints. A deepened sense of that responsibility seems to me one of the clear gains that have come to us as the outcome of the careful consideration with which this important problem has been met. To some it may seem that the Church has stood aside, and taken no decided action. From one quarter and another the charge may come that the Church has missed a precious opportunity. But,—and this is the only answer we can give,—the truth which we hold, and the trust by which we hold it, are the greatest things of all, and dearer than the praise of men, for liberality must be the consciousness that we have tried to keep the faith.

When we examine our position in the light of our own standards and professions, it seems to me quite clear and perfectly consistent. For what has the Church said about herself? Amidst many other statements, there are these three that stand out distinct and definite,—First, and most familiar, there is the informal saying of the postcommunion prayer that “we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of God’s Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.” Then, in the second place, there is the formal definition of the 19th Article, that “the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same.” And, thirdly, the Homily for Whitsunday tells us that “the Church is a universal congregation of God’s faithful and elect people, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”

These are the things that the Church has said about herself, and any project of re-union must be considered in their light. When we come to examine them a little closely, we are impressed with two points,—they include so many, and they exclude so much. Breadth and definiteness,—these are their characteristic marks. No one can read that post-communion statement without rejoicing in its splendid breadth. The “blessed company of all faithful people.”—that, in the deepest sense of all, is the Church of Jesus Christ. There must be breadth. We must never dare to draw the lines so tight as to shut out a single faithful soul. Never, even in thought, must we dare to deny membership in the Church to those who are by Baptism incorporate in the mystical body of God’s Son. And we do rejoice in that truth. In the strength of its conviction, we break down all barriers, and reach out hands of brotherhood to those whose Lord is also ours. To emphasise that fact of brotherhood in separation, to lay all solemn stress upon its splendid meaning, to lose no opportunity of living in its light, to welcome every challenge that it brings us in the sphere of social service, to keep wide open always hand and heart of love,—to that divine task let us set our hands. Breadth is the first characteristic mark in what the Church has said about herself.