

entire Church to which that congregation belongs. The communicant is entitled to pass freely from one congregation to another by certificate. For he is already a member of the whole body. His certificate is simply valid evidence that he is a member of the whole Church, and as such is entitled to all the rights and privileges of a member wherever he may go. It is manifest that if widely divergent views of the terms of communion are adopted and acted upon in the Presbyterian Church, this unity would be severely strained, if it did not entirely disappear. Should some Sessions not only err in the application of a common standard of admission, but avowedly adopt a different standard, then other Sessions might feel compelled to disregard the visible unity of the body by rejecting such certificates when presented, or, if forced by a central authority to disregard their own conscientious convictions, they might, in a manner not less dangerous, impair the inward unity by a sullen submission to what was regarded as an unrighteous requirement. It is true that we usually accept readily certificates from other Evangelical Churches whose views and practices differ to some extent from our own, but such certificates do not carry those who bring them into the Presbyterian Church, as a matter of right. We accept these documents because we believe the Church which grants them, acts, in this matter, on substantially the same principles as our own. We feel ourselves, however, at liberty to supplement the certificate by such examination as may be necessary to assure us that the applicant meets the requirements of the Presbyterian Church. Those coming with certificates from other Churches cannot claim admission as a matter of ecclesiastical right, as those can who bring letters from other congregations of the Presbyterian Church.

It is evidently a matter of vital concern that a Church which is Presbyterian in its organization should have a uniform standard for the admission of its members. Considerable practical diversity will necessarily emerge in the application of any standard by the Sessions of a large Church, but where a uniform standard is not acknowledged, the unity of the body must disappear.

On what terms then does the Presbyterian Church admit applicants into full communion? The Shorter Catechism, in pointing out the subjects of baptism, answers this question