

It is equally obvious that the visible unity of the Apostolic Church was not grounded in uniformity in organization, forms of worship, or even details of faith. There was, no doubt, a good degree of similarity in all these matters in all parts of the Church. A local form of government was imposed on the churches. Everywhere men observed the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, prayed with outstretched hands, sang psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, read the Scriptures and preached the Gospel. But this general similarity fell far short of complete uniformity. Jerusalem had differentiated for itself a "bishop" out of its board of overseers, while as yet the separate pastoral office was unknown to the rest of the Church; and even after it had spread to Syria and Asia it was still lacking in Philippi. The Temple-service was part of Christian worship in Jerusalem; and even the Apostle to the Gentiles kept Jewish feasts and customs. Everywhere Christian Jews observed circumcision and the seventh day, while others were free from the Law. Christian worship was characterized everywhere by charismatic freedom, and resembled more our open prayer-meeting than our church service. Doctrinal and practical heresies were continuously springing up out of the fertile soil of Jewish and heathen superstition and habit, imported into the Church by those who, awakened to new life by the Gospel, had not yet been able to put off from them all the grave clothes of their dead past. There were probably few churches in the Apostolic age whose condition in knowledge and practice, or whose usages in church government and Christian worship would attract any modern denomination to seek to include them in its fellowship.

It is, if possible, even more clear that the unity of the Apostolic Church was not grounded in a claim to singleness of origin. The Church spread by the scattering abroad of Christians, taking their Gospel with them. Nobody cared whence a church drew its origin, so only it existed. Who founded the Church of Rome? or of Alexandria? or of Antioch herself, the mother of churches? Paul resisted the demand for commendations and found the credentials of ambassadorship in the fruits of work (2 Cor. iii:1 *sq.*). The church in Jerusalem with the Apostles and elders hearkened to Paul and Barnabas when they rehearsed what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, and seeing that they had been entrusted with the Gospel of the uncircumcision, gave them the right of fellowship (Acts xv:12; Gal. ii:7). The question of importance was not the *media* through which *men* obtained the call, but whether they had received it.

In a word, the unity of the Apostolic churches was grounded on the only thing they had in common—their common Christianity. Its bond was the common reception of the Holy Spirit, which exhibited