

having a common hope, therefore being members of the body of Christ,—it was based on a common experience of the practical effects of Christianity.¹ This view prevailed till about 160 A. D.

The second idea of this unity arose under the pressure of heretical opposition, and the necessities of the controversies which took place, and it was now made to consist in a reception of the true tradition of Christian teaching: it was the unity based on a common creed. This prevailed till nearly the close of this age.

The third notion of this unity was, that it consisted in a common organization. A good and holy life was not sufficient, but to this must be added a common belief. But these were not enough; the possessor of these must also belong to a church which was united with all other churches, thus forming the one Catholic church.²

The germ of this idea of Christian unity began with Cyprian, and developed till in the fourth century it was perfected, and has remained the dominating, mistaken, and misleading idea till to-day. But the true unity was that which Tertullian describes: "They are all proved to be one in unbroken unity by their peaceful communion, title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality."³ "The true communion of saints, upon which all churches are built, is not the common performance of external acts, but a communion of soul with soul, and of the soul with Christ. It is a consequence of the nature which God has given us, that an external organization should help our communion with one another: it is a consequence both of our two-fold nature, and of Christ's appointment, that external acts should help our communion with Him. But subtler, deeper, diviner, than anything of which external things can be either the symbol or the bond, is that inner reality and essence of union,—that interpenetrating community of thought and character which St. Paul speaks of as the "unity of the Spirit," and which, in the sublimest of sublime books, in the most sacred of sacred words, is likened to the one-

¹ 2 Clem. Rom. 14. Hermas: Vis., 2, 4.

² Neander: G. H., Vol. I. p. 207, sqq. ³ Prescript: Heret. 20.