

with a grace or dignity which is not its own. The amplification of poetry can scarcely be distinguished from exaggeration; but not so with the figurative language of Holy Scripture. There the metaphor does not transcend, but inevitably falls short of the heavenly or spiritual reality which it represents; it cannot possibly lead us beyond, it leads us only a little way towards the truth. But besides this, it is no mere metaphor that the apostle uses, when he speaks of the church as a body. He does not merely liken it to a body. He tells us expressly that it is the body of Christ. We learn then that it is no mere fortuitous resemblance, which is discovered between two things which stand in no real relation to each other—we are not invited to trace in the constitution and properties of the human body, some accidental correspondences between it and that which is not a body, but we are expressly told that the Church of Christ is the supreme realization of that which the term body implies, and are so taught to regard the bodies in which we now dwell, as standing in a typical relation to the church; as the inadequate, yet most instructive, earthly parable which embodies for us the spiritual reality. "There is one body," says the apostle, and surely it is not without significance that, in enunciating as he does in this passage, the great law of unity, the many and cogent reasons which conspire to sanction and enforce that law, he sets in the very fore-front of his argument the statement that the body to which Christians belong is one. Shall we be mistaken in deeming that we here discern the indication of a divine order? That as, at the first, God formed man—dust of the earth—and then breathed into his nostrils the breath or spirit of life; so, in the new creation, He was pleased to fashion for Himself a body, into which He might afterwards breathe His life-giving Spirit? Apostles were chosen and called by our Blessed Lord; inferior ministers, "other seventy also," were likewise ordained—disciples had been gathered: in the great gift of the new covenant—"the promise of the Father"—was bestowed; the "Holy Spirit" was not, in this sense, until Jesus "was glorified," and so, on the birthday of the church, the great Day of Pentecost—a body, fashioned by the hands of God the Son, had been prepared—to be moved to new life, endued with new power by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It is most true, indeed, that by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, that we cannot belong, except by the act of his Grace, to the sacred structure in which we are builded together for a habitation of God through Him; but we are thus graciously admitted, that we may become members of an external organization, in which it is the good pleasure of the Spirit to make His sacred and sanctifying abode. It would appear then that we are not at liberty to say, "there is one body, simply because there is one Spirit," and that His sacred influence upon the hearts of men is the sole source, and the only necessary condition, of the unity of the one body—that we are one in Him though our union may often not be cognizable by ourselves, and certainly not evident to others. Let us remember, brethren, that God's Spirit touched the hearts of men, and sanctified God's servants, that the penitent Psalmist could cry, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," ages before Christ had built His church on earth, or made us, as the wondrous fruit of His incarnation, death and resurrection, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." There is, no doubt,—there was, no doubt, in patriarchal and in Jewish times—a sacred bond

of union between those who follow the motions of God's good Spirit—a bond which may include those who in every nation, with whatever light, fear God and work righteousness." But surely the unity of the body of Christ our Lord is something far more than this—from Him, its Divine Head, "all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and being knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." It has its necessary outward organization, as well as its inward life; it is from the head, and through the joints and bands that the nourishment of the life-giving spirit is ministered. May we not see, then, a reason why the apostle should say, "One body, one Spirit;" not "one Spirit" only, or "one Spirit, and therefore of necessity one body," but rather "one body—the mystical body of the Son of God," in which it is the good pleasure of God our Father that the Spirit of His holiness, who in times past moved individual hearts alone, and sanctified individual servants of God, should take up His abode, conveying to every lively member of the body a blessing not the less, but ineffably the greater, because in addition to his own proper gifts and graces, every member partakes of the undivided life of the whole body—and becomes by a blessed necessity of his membership in the body—both a channel of grace to others and a recipient of grace through them. And now, brethren, let us ask what lessons we should draw from the fact that we are thus wondrously united in one body under our Divine Head. And first, I think, we should learn to lay very seriously to heart, that our Blessed Lord never meant us to be so independent of each other, as we sometimes seek to be. We may well believe that there is a law of our spiritual being which makes all such seeking vain—that there is, by God's appointment, an inter-dependence between all the members of Christ's body, from which they cannot possibly detach themselves; while they must both suffer and inflict very grievous loss and damage if they attempt to do so. Let us then consider for what wise and beneficent purposes our Blessed Lord has brought us into the intimate relation with each other in Himself. Did He not mean us to be helpers of each other in matters of belief, and while we "build up ourselves on our most holy faith," at least indirectly to give help to and receive help from our brethren in that faith? Does not experience, thank God, often teach us that such is His gracious will. We have the word of God, but do we not know that, again and again, a Christian brother's voice has unlocked to us its hidden treasures! If they who have little time for study of the Bible thankfully confess this, they who have studied it most will also make the same confession no less freely. Again the creeds of our church are guides for the faith of all. Yet here how endless is the grateful toil of elucidating their meaning, and how obvious is it not that the great prophet meant this work to be prosecuted by many and different minds, to whom His spirit has 'divided severally as He will.' And this leads us to recognize a truth, not very welcome to some minds, that we ought to regard not only those with whom we agree, but also those from whom we differ, as at least possible helpers of our faith. Is it wise or safe to assume that we have grasped the whole truth? Being strongly and justly persuaded of the importance of some Christian verity, may we not possibly be disregarding some other verity, no less important, which may appear to us irreconcilable with it? It is not so easy as we often imagine—either to declare or to receive the whole counsel of

God. The errors of past days have made the task harder for us—exaggerations and distortions of truth have discredited truth itself; men have been driven, or have thought themselves to be driven, by the exigencies of theological warfare, within the narrow limits of schools and systems, from which some portion at least of "the counsel of God" can scarcely escape exclusion. Why is it that we differ? Is it not because we have not as yet "all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God," and may we not help each other towards it? That great central object of our faith and hope may be—no doubt is—viewed by us from many different sides—and under many different aspects, all more or less partial. Believing ourselves then to be fellow-members in His one body, might we not—ought we not—to seek mutually to supplement each other's knowledge of Him, and if this were done in a loving humble spirit, might it not lead us, at least, to think more charitably—more justly of each other, and in many cases also less partially—less imperfectly of Him? Surely, brethren, He would look with gracious approval upon our patient and meek endeavour thus to draw nearer to Himself and to each other in Him. But again we must believe that our Blessed Lord the Head of the Body—meant us, as His members, to be helpers of each other in respect of the practical duties of the Christian character. We ought to learn from others what Christ would have us be and do. Here again the full record of His Will is found in Holy Scripture: but, as human teaching, by His grace, may cast a vivid light on Divine doctrine; even so too, may human conduct bring to light, as it were, Divine precepts, illustrating them so forcibly as to seem almost to reveal them. So by recognizing our relation to our brethren in Christ, and asking ourselves constantly and thoughtfully for what purpose we have thus been knit together—we may be stirred up to follow good examples—or at all events to esteem very highly those who present them—and to aid them by our prayers and kindly offices. And let us observe how the apostle's argument from the body tells here—we must all have the same faith—and herein a strict unity is to be earnestly sought, but in respect of Christian duty—works of charity and piety—a very wide field is opened, which all are not alike qualified to occupy; and accordingly, unless we learn practically to recognize our oneness in Christ—we shall be but too ready to say to fellow members, whose office is widely different from our own, "We have no need of you." Brethren, do not the words "There is one body" teach us here to exercise a large and self-controlling charity, a Christian esteem for those with whose vocation and ministry we may, perhaps, have but little natural sympathy; recollecting that "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gifts of Christ; that all receive not alike, and that if our sympathies are selfishly contracted to our own narrow sphere of capacity or service—we are forgetting the sacred tie which binds us alike to the Mighty Giver, and to those to whom His wisdom and His goodness have entrusted gifts differing widely from our own. And here we are led to observe that our incorporation in the 'one body,' as it is, doubtless, designed for the good of the whole, so also tends to the good of every individual member. Looking only to the perfecting of individual Christian character, we must devoutly admire the wisdom of Almighty God in calling us in "one body." What a cure for selfishness—that deadly evil—has been thus provided! The discipline to which we are thus subjected in the Church