

IV. *Activity* will be one of the necessary notes of such a body, instinct with such life. Here, as elsewhere, life means movement, inertia death. The first commission delivered to the Apostles bore this law inscribed in its very forefront. "Go ye" was the imperial mandate of the Head, and, waiting only for the Pentecostal quickening, they went forth on their world-embracing errand, burning with a zeal which knew neither pause nor weariness, constrained by a love which "waters could not quench, nor the flood drown;" nay, which flamed forth in brighter effulgence when confronted with the agonies of martyrdom. The result we know. The primitive Church found herself face to face with Paganism—in Greece, refined and cultivated; in Rome, fierce, strong, masterful—and yet within three centuries she had so completely broken its power as to warrant Tertullian's proud boast that, though but of yesterday, she had filled their cities, camps, forum, islands, assemblies, leaving them only their temples.

Brethren, if the Church of England in Canada desires to give infallible proof of her identity as a true member of Christ's Body, believe me, it is on this pivot, very largely, the process of identification must turn. Ours is an intensely practical age, which cares nothing for abstract theories, but everything for tangible facts, which weighs churches, as all other organizations, in the scales, not of well-balanced argument, but of visible results, and, rightly enough, attaches to lofty claims, by whomsoever vaunted, a weightier obligation, and a demand for better work. The blood of first century Apostles, Martyrs and Confessors may run in the veins of the body, but "*noblesse oblige*;" what avails it if, instead of coursing through them in healthful pulsations, thrilling and throbbing from head to foot, it only creeps lazily and languidly, carrying with it, wherever it goes, the chill as of ice? The religious communions of this Dominion are now on their trial, and that Church, I believe, is destined (shall I not say, deserves) to occupy the foremost place which, whether primitive and Apostolic in its organization or not, shows itself the quickest and wisest in mastering the problems now pressing us so closely, alike in our cities, where thousands perish annually of drunkenness, impurity and unbelief; our far-stretching prairies, where the lonely emigrant, like David in the wilderness, yearns, too often vainly, for the courts of the Lord's House; and the regions yet beyond, where eight hundred millions of heathens are still, in this 19th century of Christian light and knowledge, "sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death."

V. Need I say that *Elasticity* should be another note of the body of Christ. The Apostle's figure suggests this, and furnishes also the necessary limitations. How manifold the movements of the human body; how perfectly it can adopt and accommodate itself to the varying exigencies of the passing hour. Yet it does this only on certain lines, and within a certain area, its liberty circumscribed by the base line of the spinal column. Even so, brethren, with the Church and her methods. Observe, I say, *her methods, not her doctrines*. These were definitely formulated eighteen centuries since, and call for no 'restatement.' Here there can be no departure, even by a hair's breadth. No compromise, even of a syllable. But her modes of work; these surely should be variable, elastic, susceptible of adaptation to her varying needs, whether of time, temperament, or nationality. The garment of the child is not fitted for the man. Neither is the method of the fourth century suited, necessarily, to the nineteenth. What the Church today needs most urgently, if she would prove herself Catholic as well as Apostolic, is a spirit of conservative flexibility, which, while zealously guarding every essential, enables her to reach out in this direction and in that, as ne-

cessity may require—not revising, but at least, enlarging and enriching her Prayer-book, and making it the book of her children's *understanding*, no less than of their heart—showing herself observant of every popular religious movement, even the noisiest and most sensational, and willing to learn any lesson it can teach—quick to appreciate the priceless wealth of energy latent in the hearts and wills of the Christian women, and only too glad to provide scope for its exercise—not less jealous than hitherto of the legitimate prerogatives of her duly ordained ministry, but more ready to acknowledge the royal priesthood of her godly laity, and assign them functions somewhat more spiritual than the care of her finance—these are a few among many forms in which the Church might well display a judicious flexibility.

VI. What, brethren, shall I say of the *unity* which should mark Christ's body? In naming it, I know full well, I may seem one of those who "rush in where even angels fear to tread," but with reverence for truth as his guide, and for his motto, the maxim: "Better to harmonize our theology with the facts than force the facts into harmony with our theology," no man need shrink from venturing even on this historic battle ground. And here there are certain facts and fixed lights which shine steadily in our path. The body of Christ—one body, not one among many, and this one universally recognized as 'the body,' 'the churches' of the New Testament, all together forming in the aggregate the one spiritual body known as "the Church," all subject to the same central authority—all owing allegiance to the same form of Ecclesiastical government—all professing "one Faith, one Lord, one Baptism." Into the *invisible* region of heart, and will, and conscience, doubtless, only the heart searcher could penetrate, but none the less, the tares and the wheat grew side by side in one field—the good fish and the bad were held in the net by one encircling cord. True, the separating tendency displayed itself at an early period; but, wherever it lifted its head, apostolic authority confronted it, and frowned it down. There must be no "schism in the body." The Roman Christians were to "mark them which caused division, and avoid them." The Corinthians were all to "speak the same thing," and to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Divisions in the body and separation from it, so far from being even tacitly tolerated, are strictly forbidden and severely denounced. The dismemberment of the Body of Christ is nowhere even contemplated as a possibility. I cannot find one word in the New Testament anticipating, or providing for any departure from the then existing order of things. Christ certainly rebuked his disciples for their intolerance towards an individual miracle worker, but he did not authorize an organization to act independently of the Apostolic twelve. St. Paul invokes a blessing on "all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," but no manuscript yet found contains the customary modern gloss, "be their denomination what it may." These, brethren, are the facts, as I find them in Scripture. And this also I find, that the force of this unity of the Body of Christ soon made itself felt, for by its unity, welded as it was into one solid, compact phalanx, under the impulse of the divine life that animated it, the Church was able to storm the seemingly most impregnable strongholds of paganism, and bring ancient, hoary idolatries in meek subjection to her feet.

Where is this compact, unbroken body now? Alas, the fair vision is departed, and instead we behold, with heavy heart and tear-filled eyes, the pitiable, humiliating spectacle of a divided Church in a rent, divided Christendom—the one body broken up into a multitude, known, each by its own distinctive signs—pronouncing, each its own peculiar shibboleth—worshipping, each after its own form, and all striving together,

not for victory over the common foe, but for the pre-eminence.

Can this, brethren, be the real sation of the divine ideal? this, the answer to the High Priestly prayer, "that they all may be one, that the world (*beholding, as it can behold, only a visible, manifested oneness*), may believe that thou has sent me?"

This melancholy spectacle, I know, has its apologists. Unity, we are told, is not uniformity—nature itself proclaims the universal law, not of sameness, but diversity. These various bodies are simply the varieties of operation, referred to by the Apostle—so many regiments in the same army—clad, each in its own uniform, bearing aloft each its own standard, but all fighting under one Captain in one holy cause. But the theory utterly breaks down under the burden laid on it. It sounds liberal, large-hearted, Catholic, but there is a hollowness in its ring which proves it not the true metal. In a word, it is at best an *ex post facto* theory—a theological afterthought, ingeniously contrived for the vindication of that which, in the light of Scripture, reason and experience, is a sin against God, a reproach to the Church and wrong to mankind. That even our brethren of these separated communions do not themselves believe in this theory we have the best possible proof, in the fact, that in an almost simultaneous movement, two of the most influential of them have effected an amalgamation of their respective subdivisions into one compact, powerful whole. We thank our brethren for this honest, and to them, most honorable acknowledgement that mere differences of opinion do not justify schism in the body of Christ, and that the fewer divisions we have the better.

Pushing this principle to its legitimate issue, may I not ask, *why have any?* Why not find our way back, if we can, to the simple, undivided unity which originally characterised the Body of Christ?

But can we? The pathway will doubtless be long and difficult. The religious eccentricities and aberrations of three centuries cannot be adjusted in a day, or possibly a life-time, but does not the divine promise guarantee to faith the removal of mountains? And here, I think, the Church of England owes it to herself, and to her children, who have gone from beneath her roof, to be the first to attempt the solution of this grave problem. So far from advances and overtures on her part being a confession of weakness, she will simply *put herself right*, when she candidly acknowledges any error in her past policy which may have alienated any of her sons, and driven them to seek elsewhere the bread they might have eaten at her table. For churches, as for individuals, the first step towards the undoing of a wrong is, the confession of it.

On the very threshold of the problem, however, lies the question, can we find a solid basis for reunion, some fixed, determinate principle round which the component, scattered members of the Body of Christ may crystallise, or group themselves for harmonious concentric action? *Clearly that basis must be essential Christian truth, held by all in common, and binding all in closest bonds of union with the one body of the first century.* A reunited Christendom, must, above all, keep touch with that. The law of historic continuity 'altereth not.' We are bound to the primitive Apostolic Church by a "threefold cord which cannot be broken." To let go our hold upon it were to drift out from the old fixed moorings, into a tossing, troubled sea, which can never rest.

The adoption of a principle like this clears our way wonderfully.

First, it disposes, once for all, of all hope of a corporate reunion with Rome. Strangely enough, its advocates fail to see that the very proposition involves a direct stultification of our own standing as a Church, and cuts the ground completely from under our feet, for if there be no insuperable barriers to our reunion