

ject as one, and not many. If the whole Church were united under one human ecclesiastical government, it would not be more manifestly one than it now is; just as the ocean would not become one whit more a unit than it is, if it all came under the sway of a single human government.

Indeed, consolidation or federation might supposably hinder the unity of the Church, instead of promoting it. The most discreditable church conflicts we have are often those within particular denominations, and not those between the denominations. It is easier for me to love and trust a good man who seems to me to be in error, when he belongs to a different branch of the Church from mine, so that I am in no danger of being held responsible for his errors, than when he belongs to the same branch. When our denominational positions define our differences, we have no need to keep insisting on the differences, but are at liberty to attend to the things wherein we agree.

Any possible church unity must of course be a unity made up of parts. The present churches are simply parts of the one Church, defined by peculiarities of doctrine, polity, and forms. If the present lines of distinction were obliterated, other lines of distinction would appear; for such a whole cannot possibly exist except in parts. Suppose we wipe out the present boundaries, do we know of any rule for drawing better boundaries? Now, ordinarily, a person associates himself with that branch of the Church whose characteristic beliefs and practices seem to him, on the whole, most correct. If you remove this reason, can you give him any better reason to take the place of it?

Doubtless men will always differ theologically, and will regard their differences as important. They will feel called upon to testify, and will esteem it a grievance, if they are forced to be silent. God loves bold and conscientious witnesses to the truth. The truth we have he does not authorize us to suppress because other men think it to be error. But the testimony to the truth will be fairest, kindest, most effective, where men of like views associate themselves together, and manage their own affairs in their own way. When Paul and Barnabas separated, it was in the interests of Christian harmony, and not the opposite. Just this often occurs. When men separate because they can work more lovingly and more effectively apart, the separation is not schism, but is action in the interests of church unity. A large proportion of the existing churches owe their origin not to schism, but to wise counsels. They came into being, not as the rending of the body of Christ, but as the development of needed organs in that body.

Denominational rivalries are often spoken of as if they were altogether evil, and were the mere product of denominationalism; but