

been enunciated as a law of the Christian life; and the word engraved in the religious dialect. Upwards of twenty times he recurs to the thought. And with him the thought is more copious than it is with St. Peter. With St. Peter the whole church is the building—each particular Christian is one stone. With St. Paul, too, the Church, collectively, is "God's building." Each particular Christian, however, is not a single stone, but rather a wall, or compartment, which is to be built up—course upon course—layer upon layer—into the solidity and compactness of Christian characters. And when one of these pieces of spiritual masonry is built up, the Church is edified through the rise and progress of religion in the individual soul. Also the Church is edified when these are fitted to their places, and the whole building grows in the harmony of a just proportion, into an holy temple in the Lord. The fullest expression of this thought we have in the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians:

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone—in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God, through the spirit." Here we have the fuller presentment of the architectural idea involved in the nature of the Church.

There is: I. The Foundation, and II. The Superstructure.

I. The Foundation.—It is built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. The Christian religion is a historical religion. It is not based upon sentiment, but founded in fact. It is not a self constituted society, but a kingdom, regular in the descent of its authority, authentic in the story of its origin. The Christian religion is not a human invention—a point in the progress of thought—a stage in the natural growth and development of the human race. It is a revelation from heaven. Apostles and Prophets laid its foundation, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

1. The Apostles laid its foundation by their (a) testimony. In the first chapter of their Acts we have this capacity to testify from personal knowledge to the facts of Christ's life, laid down as a fundamental qualification of one who was to discharge the functions of an Apostle.

"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." In the solid ground of historical fact, then, the Apostles laid the Church's foundation.

(b) They were its founders, too, by giving it a constitution and organization. They ordained the ministry; they regulated worship; they guarded the deposit of the faith; they committed to the Church's keeping "the form of sound words." So the Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles.

2. And the Prophets? what of them? There were prophets in the Old Testament times, and prophets in the times of the Apostles. It would seem that the Prophets of the Old Testament times were here meant. But whichever class was in St. Paul's mind it comes to the same thing; for the essential characteristic of the prophet which distinguished him from other teachers was, that his message came—not as an inference and a probability,—not as an insight into divine things proportioned to, and limited by, that degree of the purity of heart to which he might have attained—as the message of other teachers, and preachers, comes. The characteristic which distinguished the prophet from other teachers was, that his message came direct, authentic from God. The "Holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," were preachers of righteousness, inspired by God to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. And they foretold—enlightened by God's inspiration—they

foretold the facts to which, when in the fulness of time they actually happened, the Apostles bore their testimony. And this is how the Church is built upon the foundation of the Prophets, as well as of the Apostles. Testimony, then, Organization, Inspiration. This is the triple foundation of the Apostles and Prophets upon which the Church is built.

3. And the chief corner-stone is Jesus Christ. On Him—on His person—His words—His acts—the whole fabric rests. (a) On His person. He is the restoration of the lost image in which man was created. He is Immanuel—God with us—the God-Man—capacitated by His Incarnation to be the Mediator between God and man, the Redeemer, and spiritual reproducer of the soul. On the Person of Jesus Christ the fabric rests. (b) And on His words. The winged words that passed His lips well nigh two thousand years ago strike still upon men's ears as though just uttered. The tones of that voice—we hear them yet, in all their first freshness—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And as we hear we are moved, and melted—lifted out of ourselves, and hallowed by the holiness of Him who speaks as never man spake. (c) On His acts, too, the building stands—for, after all, it is not so much that Jesus preached the Gospel, as that He is the Gospel. The life He lived—the death He died—the life He lives now—in these lies the virtue of the great Atonement—the reconciliation of the world to God. This is how Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone of that house which is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.

II. Passing now from the foundation, we come to the superstructure. What is the thought, or the principle, symbolized by representing the Church under the form of a house? The answer comes in the words "fitly framed together into an holy temple in the Lord." "Fitly framed together, groweth into a temple." That is it! Composition as against aggregation, not isolation and separation, but interdependence and unity, is what this imagery contains and presents. Now, unity is a wide word—apt to be somewhat vaguely used; but the setting of circumstance, in this particular instance, gives a limit to its extent, and directness to its bearing. It is the unity that there is in a building that is here put before us as the unity belonging to the Church. And what is that?

1. Well, there is in the first place a unity of coherence. A house must be fitly framed together. Nothing stands alone and separate. All the parts must be mutually connected in a wall.

2. And then there is a unity of support. The walls, beams, pillars, buttresses, are so arranged as to contribute to the strength and support of the building.

3. And there is yet a further unity—a unity of design. Every building is constructed for some purpose, and the completeness of its beauty consists in its adaptation, and suitability to that purpose. These three, then, are modes of unity every building has—unity of coherence, of support, of design. And this is the unity there ought to be in God's building—the Church of Christ—the house not made with hands built up of the souls of the saints.

1. The living stones of God's building all cohere together. The touch of souls is of the essence of spiritual religion. Sympathy—Christian sympathy is the tempered mortar that binds stone to stone—soul to soul; and preserves the spiritual touch, which being lost, the stone ceases to be a living stone. No soul stands alone and lives. Our common worship goes a great way towards the keeping up of this union and communion, where we come together with one mind, and one mouth to confess our sins, to pray, and to praise—when we partake together of the bread that is broken, and the wine poured out—we cannot altogether forget that there is but one body, and one spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. And so our common worship tends to make us of one heart, and one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith, and charity. And in so far as the tone, and spirit, and practice of our common prayer lays hold of us, and sinks into us,

we shall carry on this habit of mind into our interior life; and cultivate, in meditation, in progress and intercession, in the general posture and attitude of our spirits—the feeling of the fellowship of the brotherhood of Christians.

2. And out of this will come the mutual comfort, help, and support that all owe to each, and each owes to all. For if that sympathy, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead in God's sight, is once attained, its tendency is to be active. But lest this principle of active sympathy—the life blood of spirituality—the air which saving grace must breathe to live—the very bond of peace, and of all virtues—lest this principle, reaching out instinctively to soothe, and to bless, and to help, lest this principle, consuming inwardly, should feed upon itself, and degenerate into barren sentiment, we must find, or make an outlet for it: Yes, that "Bear ye one another's burdens" is as much an essential principle of self culture, as it is a precept of beneficence. The best that is in us will shrivel up without it. The stone, and the beam in God's building, no less than in the house made with hands, is maintained in its position, and endued with its strength, by the very pressure of the superincumbent weight it supports. "We must bear one another's burdens." That is what we learn from the suggestion of mutual support contained in the picture held up to us of Christ's Church painted as a building.

3. And then there is that other suggestion, inseparable, from the notion of a building, the suggestion of design. What is all this for? What is the design and purpose of this spiritual building? What is the use of it? "For an habitation of God through the spirit;" that in it "ye may be fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." That is the design of God's Church. Jesus Christ gathered His disciples into a society—a kingdom. He united them together by the obligations of mutual dependence. He cemented their union by the Sacrament of His Body, and His Blood, on which He commanded them perpetually to feed. He fused their spirits in the crucible of a common worship; because it was of God's appointment that through these agencies and instrumentalities His Holy Spirit should rule and reign; that the whole being the temple of the Holy Ghost, and each a stone in that temple, we "might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith—that, being rooted, and grounded in love, we might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, length, depth, and height—and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. That is the ideal of God's Church. How far the actual Church is from being a complete realization of the great design, we know too well. In the edification of God's Church—in the erection, and consolidation of His House, having for its foundation the Apostles and Prophets, and whose corner stone is Jesus Christ—in the raising in all beauty of proportion, and richness of material, to its predestined grandeur this glorious fabric—not made with hands—built up of the souls of the saints, and knit together by the power of the indwelling spirit—in carrying on to its predestined completion this God's most glorious Temple, which, when the fashion of this world shall pass away, and the element melt with fervent heat, shall rise through the wreck, undimmed by the fire, unscathed by the storm—"without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," much remains yet to be done. You, my brother, are now called to be a masterbuilder for the up-raising of this magnificent structure. The work is a perilous work, for "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." "If any man's work abide, which he hath built" upon those imperishable foundations, "he shall receive a reward; but if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss." That you will be a "wise masterbuilder," we hope, we trust, we believe. This we trust, this we believe, because we know that, over and above your gifts of organization and administration, of rule and government—besides your energy and zeal for the edifying of Christ's Church, and for the extension of His kingdom over, and the intensifying of His rule and reign in, the hearts of men, you have