

communication between any of her members, to afford means of usefulness for earnest and active spirits, seems a most legitimate field of action in which I may labor—endeavoring not merely to promote union of members, but that full unity of spirit which may be expected among those, who profess to worship together in one body and in one spirit—to wait on the same ministry, and give utterance with the same voice to their prayers and praises before the *Throne of Grace*.

Now, in the formation from time to time of any such associations as this, or any others with kindred objects in view, viz., the furtherance of true religion, or, as it was stated in the distinctive name at first adopted by the association in London—"The Aiding Missions at Home and Abroad," it is very necessary that we should keep in view certain great principles of action to guide us: which will serve to do away with many objections sometimes started in opposition to such associations, and will be a useful guide and rule to those who advocate them. Now, "A Church of England Young Men's Association," from its very name necessarily implies its connection with the Church, whose name it bears; but as I said before, these associations are new creations, and there are persons who, on this ground alone, object to their introduction, and think, because they were not in use in former times, they ought not to be allowed now. It will not be difficult, and may perhaps not be out of place, to show the fallacy of such an argument.

Now in all important corporate societies there are certain original principles embodied in their charters, which are essential to their existence, and which the members have no authority over, or liberty to alter. But in order to carry into effect the end of their incorporation, they have the power of making and remaking, amending or modifying, certain rules and by-laws, which regulate the detail of their operations; and of delegating to sub-committees certain duties, and thus providing for the necessities of any particular occasions, or for meeting any unforeseen difficulties in the way of the action of the corporation itself.

And this is exactly the state of the case with the Church. There are certain principles connected therewith which are fixed by the Divine Will—certain fundamental laws which are essential to its existence—certain ordinances without which it cannot exist. The 19th article of our Church declares, "That the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things, that of necessity are requisite to the same." And elsewhere she teaches us in her catechism, that there are only two sacraments "generally necessary to salvation, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord." In the preface to her ordination service she teaches us, "That it is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors that from the Apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in the Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons;"—who are appointed to serve in the office of the ministry, to preach the pure word of God, and duly administer the holy sacraments. She teaches us also from the plain statements of Scripture, that it is essential to the fulness of the sacrament of Christian baptism that there must be the application of water, and that it must be performed "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," while the giving and receiving of the elements of bread and wine are essential in the administration of the sacrament of the Supper of the Lord. And also by the adoption into her formularies of the three great Catholic creeds: the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, she has provided for the promulgation of a pure faith and for her unity in doctrine with the universal Church; on which Christ promised that his blessings should rest, and against which the gates of hell should never prevail. But

while the Church receives her ministry and Sacraments as of divine institution, and her creeds as a sacred trust: while the former have been unchanged from the first and are in their very nature unchangeable; and the latter are consecrated and endeared as the peculiar expression of the Church's faith from the earliest ages even until now—it has been left to the wisdom of the Church in all times according as it may seem necessary to provide means for the effectual discharge of her calling, whether of converting the heathen, or building up her own children in the knowledge and practice of pure and undefiled religion.

Changes of circumstances may certainly produce a species of necessity, requiring the engrafting of new institutions upon the Church. And when we look at the antiquity of the Church, and the extraordinary changes of circumstances which have attended its history from the commencement to our own times, we must wonder at the manner in which it has been able often to meet and provide for the emergencies in which it has been placed. This has been effected in two ways, namely, first by completing and carrying out institutions founded from the beginning—in a manner filling up and finishing what had already been chalked out in a bold simple outline; and secondly, by throwing out new institutions adapted to the peculiar exigencies which a more advanced state of the church, or of civil society, or other circumstances of the times required.

To this power of filling up outlines, and supplying things wanting in matters of discipline, the learned *Hooker* refers, in Book III, ch. iv, of his "Ecclesiastical Polity." In this remarkable passage he takes a profound view of a great feature in the economy of the Divine Government: namely, that some things are directly revealed, and others are left to be worked out by a certain machinery adapted to that purpose; and there is an analogy in this respect between the Government of the Church and the physical constitution of men.

There is a remarkable exemplification of this theory to be found, for example, in the whole nature of the relations between the Church and the State, or civil government, and the great and intricate system of ecclesiastical public law arising out of that relation. Such a state of things as we now understand by a connexion between the Church and the State—such as now exists, for example in England—was certainly not primitive, for it did not commence for 300 years after Christ, until the reign of the Emperor Constantine. But when it did take effect it had nothing to do with the essential existence of the Church; no commission derived from any civil authority could confer ministerial office, nor add to or take from the sacraments or interfere with those matters of faith which are entrusted to the Church, as the keeper and witness of the truth. But though it introduced a system before unknown, inasmuch as up to that period the anti-Christian authorities had been persecutors of the church; yet there was in truth nothing novel in the principle upon which the system was founded, since it sprang from the duty of the Christian prince to obey, to protect, and in every way to favor the true Church, on the ground that he is bound by the obligations of Christianity, not only in his private, but in his public capacity also. But whether there be this connexion between the Church and the Civil Government, as at first established by Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, and as now exists in England, or whether the Church, in consequence of the state of parties, be independent of such connexion, as we see it on this continent, can merely be regarded as an accidental circumstance, assisting or impeding the working of the Church; but in no way, by any possibility, affecting that which is of the essence of the Church itself. But this was not the only important change that was evolved by the force of circumstances as time ran on; and the Church, sometimes influenced by individual agency, sometimes in her more corporate character, sometimes as it

were imperceptibly led by some secret life within, sometimes answering to outward calls, has met, or endeavored to meet, the difficulties which beset her; and like a skilful general in the day of battle, has hinged her front in the face of the enemy, or redispersed her forces, or called up fresh troops to check the advancing foe.

At this distance of time, and living as we do in an age when the principle of religious toleration so prevails, as even to be in danger almost of lapsing into indifference, it is not easy for us, though we read the history of the early Christians, and the fiery persecutions that tried so severely the steadfastness of their faith; it is not easy for us, I say, to realize the actual state of society at that time, or always to do justice to the principles by which men were then actuated.

Historians usually reckon ten general persecutions of the early Christians previous to the reign of Constantine—the first Emperor of Rome who was converted to Christianity. The first was under the tyrant Nero, who having set fire to Rome, threw the odium of the act upon the Christians. Multitudes of them were in consequence massacred. Some were wrapped up in skins of wild beasts and torn and devoured by dogs; others were crucified, and others burned alive; and amongst those who suffered about this time, was the Apostle St. Paul. The second was under the cold-blooded Emperor Domitian, about thirty years after. Then followed, very speedily, the third under Trajan; and others, with brief intervals of rest, under the Emperors Adrian, Severus and Maximin, till the seventh persecution occurred under the Emperor Decius, in the year 248, after Christ, and was more bloody than any that had preceded it. The Christians were in all places driven from their habitations, plundered, and put to death by torments, the rack and the fire.

It does not concern my present subject to go into any of these details; but I have alluded to this merely for the purpose of stating that it was at this period, and in consequence of the severity of this very persecution, under the Emperor Decius, that Christians began to betake themselves to the life of the hermit, the anchorite or the monk: at first acting by individual impulse, in order to avoid the desolating fury of their persecutors, and afterwards being formed into a systematic rule and order. The names of hermit and anchorite are both derived from Greek words, signifying that the persons lived in deserts and retired places; as in also that of monk, signifying that they lived each alone.

I mentioned that the persecution under the Emperor Decius, which commenced in the year 248, was the most cruel of any under which the Christians had yet suffered; and at this time a Christian of the name of Paulus, a native of Thebes, retired, after losing his parents in the persecution, into a distant part of the country. But a relative, for the purpose of obtaining the property of Paulus, which was considerable, threatened to accuse him of what was then so fatal a crime, viz: that he was a Christian. Paulus, therefore fled into a desert, and for ninety-two years lived in a cave, where he attained the great age of 113 years, rigidly practising all the rules of the ascetic life. He is called the founder of the Hermits, or Solitaries, and was canonized under the name of St. Paul, the Hermit. In the year 270—that is, rather more than twenty years after Paulus commenced his life of solitude,—another great patriarch of the monastic life, and whose fame is more widely spread, commenced his career, viz: St. Anthony. He is said to have been moved by those words of Scripture, 19 St. Matthew: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come and follow me." He embraced the ascetic life, retired into a desert in Egypt, and died there in the year 356. St. Anthony, however, did not, like St. Paul the Hermit pass his life in solitude. A great number of persons placed themselves under