

During the centuries between Joshua and David, there was apparent chaos, but round the name of Jehovah the tribes could always be rallied. Differing on many points, agreement on one essential point was enough. The disruption of David's kingdom led before long to the destruction of the kingdom of God on earth. For seventy years the visible Church apparently ceased to exist. Between the return from the exile and the coming of Christ, the Church was one, though its members were dispersed over the world.

In the apostolic and sub-apostolic ages the Church was one, on the basis of toleration of differences—speculative and practical—more than sufficient in the opinion of modern sectarianism to have warranted division. The mother Church of Judæa believed, and acted on its belief, in the perpetuity of the Jewish Sabbath and other holy days, of the right of circumcision, of the Temple of Jerusalem as the appointed centre of the Christian Church for ever, and the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic law and Levitical sacrifices. To Jewish Christians these were all important matters and the letter of the old Testament was in favor of their views. No command of Jesus could be quoted on the other side. Yet on all the points named they were wrong. The Gentile Churches took up opposite positions, and were warranted by the spirit of Christianity in doing so. Paul sympathized with the Gentile positions, but far from counselling division, his life work was to retain the unity of the Church. He succeeded, but only on the basis of Christian agreeing to differ.

The Church was one in the succeeding centuries when it did its great work of conquering the Roman Empire for Christ. It could never have succeeded, had it existed in the form of warring sects.

The Church was to a great extent one in the succeeding centuries, when it did its next great work of evangelizing the nations that constitute modern Christendom. We ought to know more of the epoch between the sixth and thirteenth centuries, an epoch that notwithstanding the darkness, disorder and confusions caused by the inrush of barbarians from every side, may well be called glorious, instead of dwelling all the time on the abuses that characterized the Church immediately prior to the Reformation. We sometimes seem to imagine that the Church began in the sixteenth century with Luther and Knox, or in the seventeenth century with the Westminster Divines, or that nothing was done in the long