

as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." This should give us unity of aim, unity of work, unity of spirit. It should be a corrective to the tendency we have each of us to isolate ourselves. It reminds us of the connecting links which unite us to others. It bids us remember that we are members of one vast union and fellowship.

We are members of a spiritual body, not only of a body social, and a body politic and a religious body in the common sense of the word, but of a spiritual body. There is much in this expression. It raises us at once to a region of higher obligations than any which spring from the thought of our common nature, or of our ordinary human society, even when regarded in its best aspects. It makes us think of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, of things spiritual, and reminding how it is through our union with Him that we are most intimately united one to another, it seems to call upon us to think of each other as redeemed by the blood of Christ, and animated by His spirit. We are the body of Christ and severally members thereof. We share in a larger life, but that we may do so according to the will of God, we use the individuality of our own life. Each man has a function or office assigned to him. One man may as little do the work of another as the hand can do the work of the foot. The whole human body is admirably arranged for growth and vigor. Every joint and member contributes to its healthful and harmonious action. Every member is made useful to the whole body; all depend upon the head with reference to the most important functions of life. So it is in the Church. There is to be the mutual helpfulness of one member to another, and to the whole body.

Men are wonderfully ready to join themselves together in the bands of one common fellowship. They feel that for any enterprise such union gives both courage and strength. God Himself, indeed, from the very first, sanctioned and established such union in the family, and, as the family expanded into a clan, and then into a state, so God, seeking man's highest progress, united him in a Church, and at last into the Christian Church, a spiritual body,—a body, that is, in which men are held together, not only by professing a common belief and having common religious aims, but by loving the same Lord and Saviour and by having their hearts the subjects of the same spiritual influence, through God the Holy Spirit. This unity between man and man is based on a higher unity with God in Christ. This was the only true and lasting unity which St. Paul knew of. He recognized, indeed, the other bonds which unite man with man. He appeals over and over again to the instincts of family love, of national spirit, of the love of all humanity, but he even delights to clinch all with the declaration "Ye are the Body of Christ."

This union in a spiritual body does, we have seen, far transcend all other unions—in the thoughts which it suggests of Christ and His spiritual influence, in the sacredness of the motives by which it appeals to us, and in the resistless force of the help which it secures. A man who realizes that he is indeed a member of the body of Christ, does not mean by this that he is a professing or baptised Christian merely; he does not mean merely that he believes in the tenets of the Christian faith and acknowledges the obligation to live according to Christian rules, as he might adopt the doctrine or practice of any human system of philosophy. He means

much more than all these together. Feeling, indeed his weakness and unworthiness, and deeply sensible of it, he still knows and rejoices that he is joined in heart and spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the limbs of the human body are to the head, the seat of thought and thought and life; as the branches are to the tree from which they derive their sap and nourishment. And the thought is full of inexpressible comfort to him. He learns that this gracious Lord, with whom he is thus united, loves him with an everlasting love, and has proved that love by laying down his life for him.

Ah! my friends! is this the aspect in which our union as members of Christ's Church presents itself to you and me? Is this the thought with which we continually refresh ourselves, and stir ourselves to new exertions? In our private prayers; when we read God's Word; when we draw near to the Lord's Table; do we understand how close we are thus brought to the Lord who loves us? If so, be sure you love,—not merely your common amiable regard,—but your real active, Christian love, will be stirred for other souls besides your own—souls for which Christ died, and to which, in Him, you feel yourselves wonderfully drawn and united. This is indeed, beyond all question, one of the severest tests of our soul's state, viz: that the more we love Christ and understand that we are loved by Him, the more tenderly sensitive do we become as to the highest interests of others.

This, too, should help us wonderfully in our Christian work. Other motives may give a temporary impulse, this will give a lasting impulse. It will stimulate us to persevere in spite of all discouragements, when we have a deep feeling of our nearness to God in Christ, when we realize our obligation of love through Him to the souls for which He died; and when we think of the all-powerful aids which our Lord has promised through His Holy Spirit

Our work shall endure. Whatever is of Christ, whatever is unselfish, whatever is true, shall live. There is an immortality even here in this earth to a living work. So that all we have to do is to work on always by the help of the Spirit, undiscouraged and undismayed, in the unalterable, invincible conviction that in the path of duty, failure can never be more than apparent; and that, to the end of time, because God is God, good deeds can never die.

Let us, then, to-day, be earnest for life, and rejoice in it. Let us rejoice in our work for God. Let us live with high hopes, with united ranks, with resolute determination. Let us help one another to live a true life, and to work true work for the good of men and the glory of God.

Voices of life from the years that are past blend with ours to-day. Let us bless God for all these unseen influences, these spirit-breathings, life-touches of true life, telling of many a past year of holy trial, and holy victory, reminding us that there is an enduring corporate life. For ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular." Though we are separated by distance from each other in our work, let us learn to cultivate more and more real fellowship, of spirit. There is nothing more trying to any of us than to feel or fancy that he is alone, even in the service of God. You know how it made Elijah at Horeb pray God to take away his life; you know how pathetically St. Paul spoke of his desolation, when "all men sought their own;" you know how, even in our Lord's words, there is a deep though chastened sadness, when he said, "Ye shall leave me alone, yet I am not alone, be-