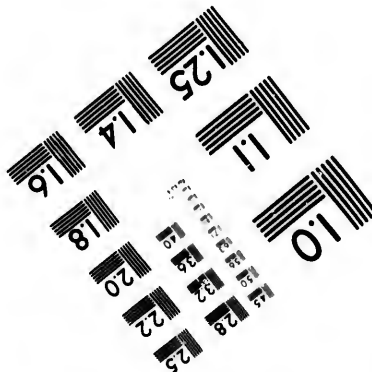
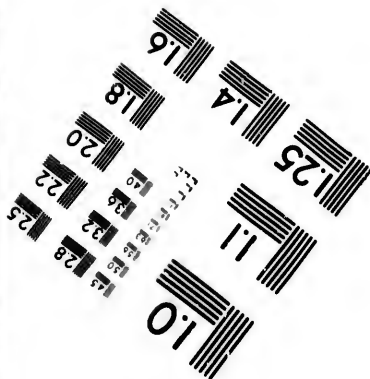
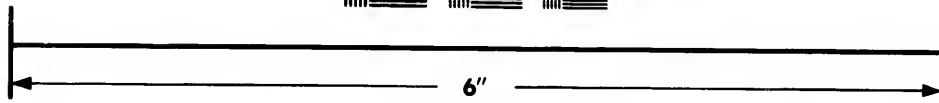
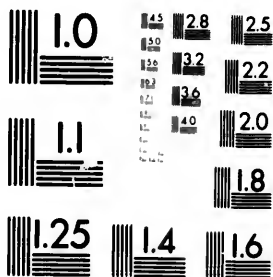


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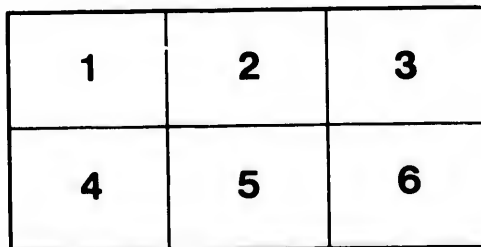
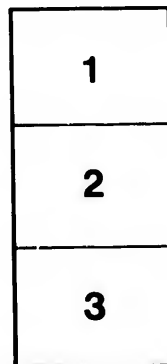
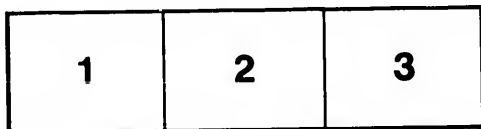
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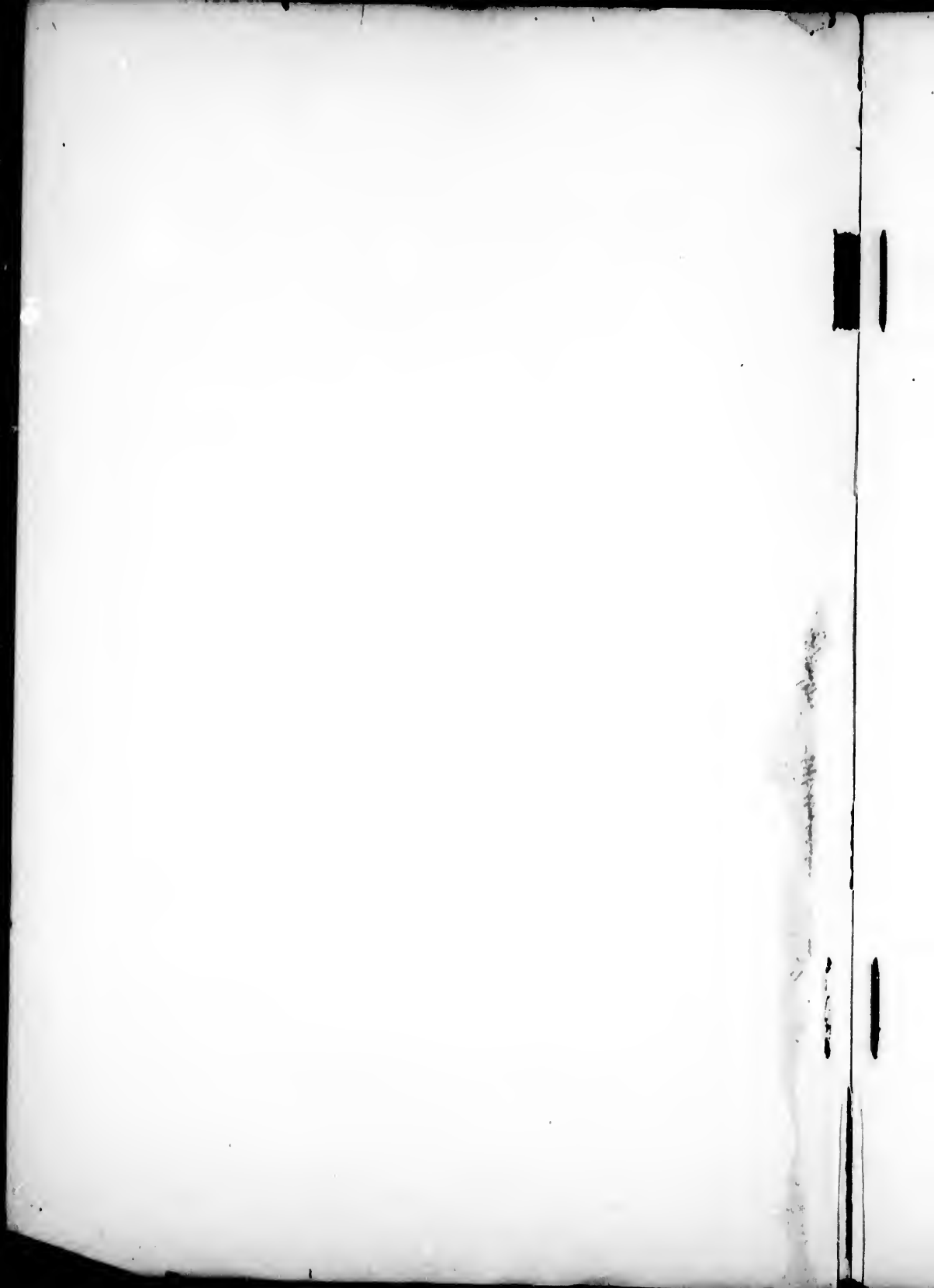
THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH
AND
CHURCH UNIONS

BY REV. PROF. MACLAREN, D.D.,
Professor of Systematic Theology, Knox College, Toronto.

WITH AN APPENDIX

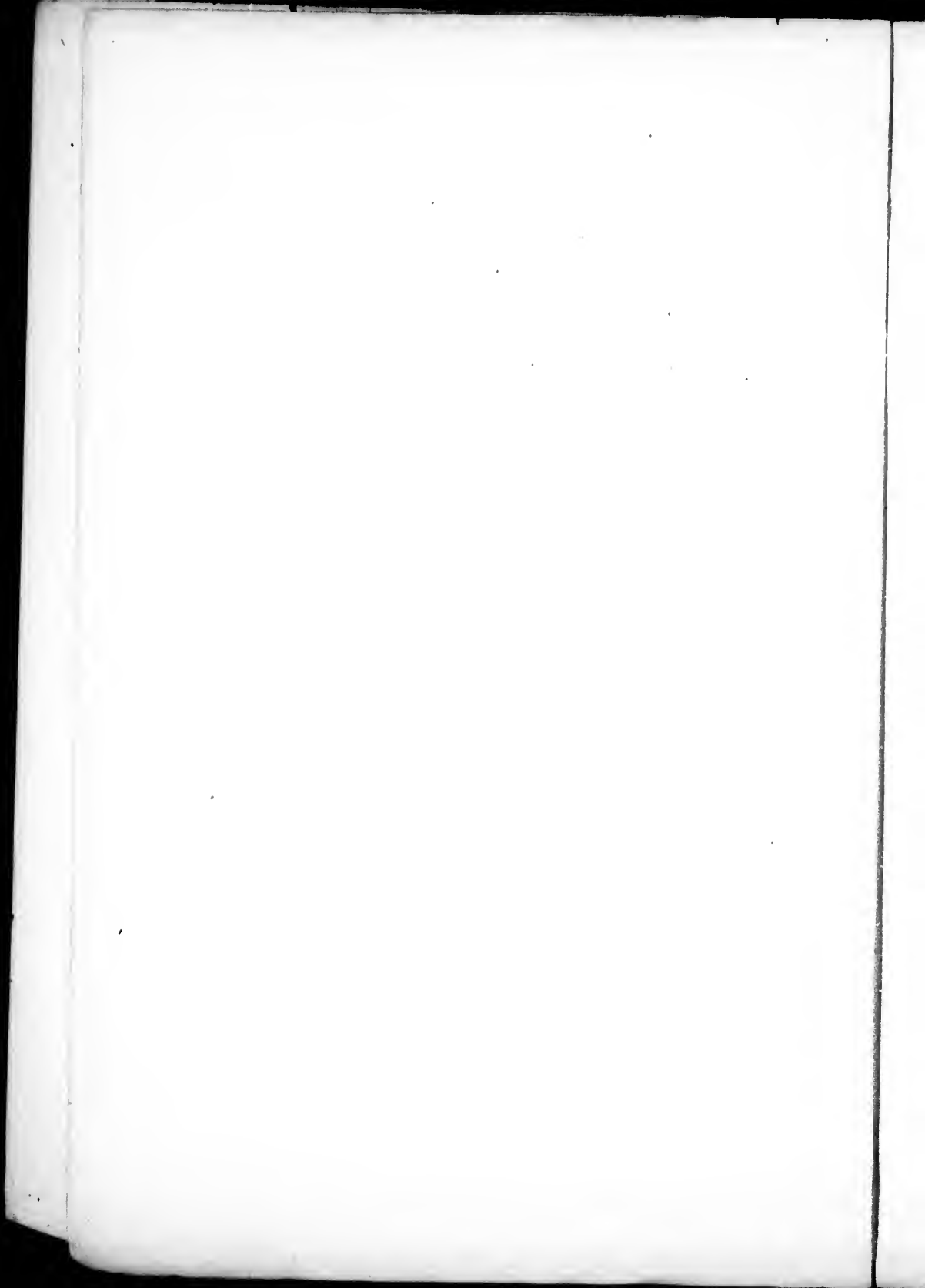
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The following lecture was delivered at the opening of Knox College, in October last, and was very cordially received by the large audience who heard it. Many who listened to it expressed the conviction that it was a valuable contribution towards the discussion of a living question, in which all Christians are deeply interested. The reports of the lecture published in the daily papers were widely read, and called forth very general expressions of satisfaction in Protestant circles. But these voices of approval were not universal. Rev. John Langtry, M.A., D.C.L., rector of St. Luke's in this city, published three letters in the *Mail* newspaper, in which from the High Church or Tractarian standpoint, he criticised the lecture somewhat sharply. To these strictures, Dr. MacLaren replied in three letters, which appeared also in the *Mail*. It is believed that these letters and the lecture have to some extent met a felt want. From distant parts of the country and from various sections of the Protestant Church, very cordial words of approval have come, and a strong desire has been expressed for the publication of the lecture and letters in a shape better fitted for future reference. To meet this wish, they are now issued by the Presbyterian News Company in pamphlet form. In the Appendix, it has been decided also to reprint Dr. Langtry's letters, so that the reader will have both sides of the question before him, as far as they have been presented in this discussion. The Lambeth Articles, to which reference is made in the lecture and letters, are also added.



THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND CHURCH UNIONS.

THERE has sprung up in many quarters an earnest feeling in favor of the reunion of Christendom. Thoughtful persons readily admit that the condition of the Christian world is by no means satisfactory. The numerous divisions in the visible Church, the frequent controversies and heart burnings which occur among Christian people, and the small progress made in the evangelization of the world, indicate that, in some way, full justice has not been done to the Gospel system. It is not surprising, in the circumstances, that some have been led to turn to the organic union of the Churches of Christendom as a panacea for the evils which are seen to exist.

Thirty years ago, there was organized in England, an "Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom," by intercessory prayers. In 1868, some two years after this Association had been publicly condemned by the Roman Inquisition, it had 12,684 members, drawn chiefly from the Anglican, Romish and Oriental Churches, with a few from various Protestant communities. This society which, I presume, still exists, embodies largely the aspirations of those who long for the visible union of the Anglican, Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, and then look, perhaps, for the absorption of smaller Christian bodies.

There has been also in recent times not only a happy breaking down of the prejudices with which the different evangelical Churches were wont to regard each other, but, in many instances, where the bodies were closely allied, organic unions have been successfully accomplished.

A movement has, moreover, been recently initiated in

Canada looking towards the visible union of influential denominations which have long stood ecclesiastically apart. The distinguished prelate who recently preached before the Triennial Session of the Dominion Synod of the Anglican Church, in Montreal, declared his conviction that of the many great questions coming before that body, "not one ranked in importance with that as to the reunion of Christendom." In his sermon, the preacher has honied words both for Roman Catholics, and for those whom he scarcely knows how to classify, whether as "organized dissent," or as "non-conformity;" and he evidently longs and prays for a union comprehensive enough to include Rome and Canterbury, Moscow and Geneva, not to mention other ecclesiastical centres less known to fame.

There is much in these movements and utterances in which earnest Christians may rejoice. They seem to indicate that the Divine Teacher is leading good men to feel after truer views of the unity of the Church, and to cherish feelings towards their fellow Christians, in other sections of the Church, which can scarcely fail to bear good fruit. It is, at the same time, clear that in many quarters, there mingle with these movements for the reunion of Christendom, confused and erroneous views of the Church and its unity, which we should avoid.

This topic not only concerns us on account of the weighty practical interests which commend it to the consideration of all Christians, but it has theological bearings which naturally invite attention in a School of Divinity.

The unity which we predicate of anything depends on the nature of the thing of which it is predicated. Whether we ascribe unity to a watch, a tree, an animal or a society, the unity in each case corresponds to the nature of the thing of which it is predicated. Our idea of the Church will necessarily determine our view of its unity, and will modify our conception of the importance of a corporate union, and of the extent to which it is attainable.

Our Lord declares to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi. 18.) This statement distinctly involves the unity and the perpetuity of the Church. But the question at once arises what is that Church, whose unity and perpetuity are promised by Christ? We must ask:

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE CHURCH?

There are in reality only two conceptions of the Church which are radically distinct. These we may, for brevity's sake, style the Romish and the Protestant. That these views differ widely need occasion no surprise; for they are not derived from the same source. The proximate ground of faith, according to the Roman Catholic, is the living infallible Church, whose office it is to authenticate and explain Scripture and tradition, and whose voice is decisive on all points upon which it speaks. According to the Protestant, the proximate ground of faith is the Bible alone.

Prior to the Reformation, there may be found in Christian writers a good deal of confusion of thought on this topic, which largely disappears after that date. The great religious struggle of the sixteenth century turned upon questions which compelled men to think themselves out on this subject, and attain a definiteness of conviction, which made dogmatic definition possible and inevitable. Even since the Reformation, some excellent men have failed to apprehend the import and bearing of the distinctions then made. And, if we are not mistaken, we can discover in some of the good men who are agitating for the re-union of Christendom, a sort of mental vacillation on this point which introduces weakness and confusion into their discussions.

1. The Romish definition of the Church, as given by Cardinal Bellarmine, is as follows, viz: "The Church is a Society of men on earth, united together by the profession of one and the self-same Christian faith and the communion of the same sacraments under the government of lawful pastors, and especially the Roman Pontiff." (De eccl. Lib. III, Cap.

II.) This definition is not deduced from the Bible, and it is impossible to find any real ground for it there. It suits, however, exactly what the Church of Rome is. It is a visible Society of men on earth who make a certain profession of the Christian faith, participate in the same sacraments and are subject to certain pastors and especially the Pope of Rome. Those who hold this view regard the Church as a purely external and visible Society, made up of all sorts of men, and even of "reprobates," as Bellarmine expressly affirms. The Church may promote or develop spiritual life and holy character, but it is itself made up of all sorts of men. It is admitted that many of that mixed Society over which the Pope presides, perish, but as saving grace flows only in the channel of the sacraments, those who are not united to this Church, necessarily come short of salvation. To this mixed community of saints and reprobates, according to Papal divines, belong the promises made to the Church in the Word of God. It possesses all the prerogatives of the Church. To it pertain all those attributes which from antiquity have been ascribed to the Church. It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

2. The Protestant conception of the Church is derived from a careful examination and induction of the teaching of Scripture direct and indirect, bearing upon it. Time will not permit our even sketching the wealth of evidence bearing on the true idea of the Church. We can only note the result at which Protestants have arrived. What they have gathered from the Word of God is that the Church consists of the whole number of those "that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof." In reply to the question, What is the Church? the Geneva Catechism answers, "The Society of believers whom God hath predestinated unto eternal life." This is substantially the common doctrine of Protestants. The Church in its true idea is the body of Christ; or the *coetus fidelium*, the company of believers. As the Augsburg Confession expresses it, "The Church of Christ is a congregation of the members of Christ; that is, of the saints which do truly believe, and rightly obey Christ."

Whether we regard God's purpose, the divine foreknowledge or the actual outcome of history, there rises before the mind the conception of a body, or society which includes the entire number of those ultimately saved through faith in Christ. According to the first view, it is the Society of the predestinated ; according to the next, the Society of the saved as foreknown of God ; and according to the last, the Society of believers. All these descriptions come to the same thing, and include the same persons. A Protestant can, according to his theological standpoint, select which of these representations he prefers, without varying the substance of the doctrine respecting the membership of the Church. We do not say that the abundant Scripture evidence of the Protestant idea of the Church will group itself with equal ease around any of these representations. We believe, on the contrary, that the view taken in our Standards is the strongest and the best, and that around which the Scripture testimony most naturally arranges itself.

On this we do not insist. The point of most importance is that the Church as set forth in the new Testament is not, in its widest conception, a mixed body made up of all sorts of men, good and bad. It is composed of "saints" and "the faithful in Christ Jesus." It is the body of Christ "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." It is a flock made up of sheep, which hear Christ's voice and follow him—to whom he gives eternal life and they shall never perish. There are no hypocrites and no reprobates in the Church.

Protestants admit that the word Church has, in Scripture, various shades of meaning, but so far as sacred things are concerned, they are all derived from the general idea already stated. As every part of the Church, in the sense defined, has a common nature, or in other words, is composed of those who believe in Christ and are the habitation of God, through the Spirit, it is evident the word Church may be applied appropriately, either to the entire body of Christ in all ages and lands, (Col. i. 18) or to any smaller portion of it, united by

some tie, on account of which it may be contemplated as a unit. This accounts for the manner in which we find it applied to Christ's professed followers, united in the bonds of ecclesiastical fellowship in a province, a city, or even in a house. They are regarded and spoken of as being, in the judgment of charity, what they profess to be, a society or community of the members of Christ's mystical body. (Acts ix. 31, Revised. 2 Cor. i., 1, and Romans xvi., 5). In the New Testament, believers are required to associate themselves for Christian fellowship, mutual watch and care, and the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. These societies thus formed, are spoken of as Churches. But unworthy members may easily find a place in the fellowship of these visible Churches, and this fact also is recognized in the Scriptures but the body, as a whole, receives the name which is appropriate to it, from the profession and standing of its members. But while unworthy members are in the visible Church, they are not there as its rightful members. They do not share in the promises and prerogatives of the body of Christ, whose name they have assumed. And they are not members of that Church of which we predicate Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity.

And when, in the providence of God, their real character is revealed, and they are separated from the fellowship of the faithful, we can say of them with John, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would, no doubt, have continued with us." (1 John ii. 19).

It is manifest that if we predicate of a mixed society, made up of all sorts of men, what the Scriptures affirm only of the true people of God, we will be led to conclusions very remote from the truth, and our reasonings upon the unity of the Church, and, indeed, upon nearly all matters connected with this mixed society will be entirely vitiated.

We have mentioned two views of the Church, radically distinct, one or other of which men who think clearly should embrace.

3. There is, however, an intermediate position which has been assumed by some writers of ability, and which is involved in the reasonings of others who do not avow it. They hold the Romish idea of the Church as an external visible society made up of all sorts of men, and yet they admit, with Protestants, that the visible Church is divided, and needs to be re-united. Dr. Döllinger, of Munich, who writes so ably on the re-union of Christendom, evidently occupies this peculiar ground. In his lectures, without formal discussion, he everywhere assumes the Romish idea of the Church as an external visible organization, with very mixed moral elements in its membership; but somehow this Church, to which the promises pertain, has become divided, and must be re-united, before it can successfully achieve its mission in the world. Tractarians occupy the same ground; they can accept Bellarmine's definition of the Church, with the exception of the last clause, which requires submission to the Roman Pontiff. They even teach that the undivided Church was infallible, or practically infallible, until it became fallible by committing ecclesiastical suicide, when it divided itself into its Eastern and Western sections. There are also not a few Protestants who, when they deal with the re-union of Christendom, appear to halt between two opinions. They see clearly that the Church is no longer to be found in any one visible organization. The visible Church is divided. But when they reason about re-union, they seem insensibly to slide into the Romish conception of the Church, and argue as if the body, which is divided, is identical with that whose unity is proclaimed in the Word of God, to which pertain the promises. The varying conceptions of the Church and its unity, affect very directly the views which we cherish in reference to Church unions.

II. CHURCH UNIONS IN RELATION TO THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

1. The Romish idea of the Church clearly bars, so far as Roman Catholics are concerned, all thought of union with

other Churches. The church is held to be one and indivisible: and there can be no union, because the unity of the Church has never been broken. Rome is compelled to take this position, because she predicates of a visible society, made up of saints and reprobates, what is true only of the real body of Christ, the *coetus fidelium*. Cardinal Manning declares, "the Union of the Holy Ghost with the Church is not conditional, but absolute, depending upon no finite will, but upon the Divine Will alone, and therefore indissoluble to all eternity." (Temp. Mission etc., p. 73.) If the Church, which Jesus Christ founded upon a rock, is a visible corporation, made up of all sorts of men, reprobates included, it exists somewhere in tangible form. Its unity is unquestionable, and its perpetuity sure. It is the one Church of Christ. Separated religious communities are only branches broken off from the living tree. The tree retains the life, and the separated branches are withered and dead. A union of Churches is an absurdity. Individual members of separated Christian societies may be converted, and received into the fellowship of the true Church, but to imagine that the Church, which is one and indivisible in all ages, can enter into union with these separated communities, is a thought which cannot be entertained. It is easy to understand why the Roman Inquisition has forbidden Roman Catholics to pray for the re-union of Christendom. Such prayers ignore the claim, that the entire Church of Christ, to which salvation belongs, is comprised within the Papal fold. It should be noticed that this stupendous claim, which Rome desires to impose on the world, is the logical outcome of her false and earthly view of the Church.

The logic of Papal theology scouts the thought of Church union. But common sense has occasionally asserted itself even in the Church of Rome, and in spite of logic, there have been repeated attempts made by the highest ecclesiastical authority in that body, to effect a union with the Greek Church, and a basis of agreement was definitely reached at

the Council of Florence, in 1439, from which, however, the Greeks withdrew. And the Uniate Churches were admitted into the communion of Rome, preserving their own form of creed, with the *filioque* clause omitted, retaining their ancient rites and the use of the cup at the Lord's Supper. Distinguished divines, moreover, like Spinola and Bossuet, with the private sanction of the reigning Pontiff, entered into negotiations with Protestants to secure a re-union of Western Christendom.

2. The bearing of the Protestant idea of the Church on union. We have seen that according to the Protestant view, the Church which Christ founded on a rock, and whose unity and perpetuity He revealed, is a society of the faithful, and is composed of saints. It includes in its widest range, the whole sacramental host of God's elect, all who have been, all who are, and all who shall be, gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof. It is the mystical body of Christ. Its members in whatsoever nationality, or ecclesiastical organization they may be found, are so united that they necessarily constitute one body in all ages. Christ dwells in each of them by his Holy Spirit, and each of them, as a result of the Spirit's grace, abides in Christ by faith. This union is indissoluble and eternal. For the members of Christ's mystical body "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter, i. 5). He who founded the Church on a rock has declared in reference to all his believing people, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "John x. 28.) The members of Christ's mystical body are not only made one with Christ by the bonds of this blessed union, but they are made one with each other in Him. They are the habitation of the same Spirit, and partakers of the same faith, and are animated by a common life. In its most fundamental aspect, this union is not a thing to be sought after, or aspired unto. It is a present reality, an existing fact, which should be recognized and acted upon, but not sought after.

We admit that there is an important sense in which this unity may be viewed as progressive. The Spirit may be imparted to us daily in richer measure, and our faith may, with firmer grasp, appropriate Christ in the fulness of His redemptive work and sanctifying grace. And as the result of this richer inflow of the divine life into the soul, there will be a growing conformity of the thoughts, feelings, purposes, desires and life of the believer to the perfect example of Christ. And as we get nearer to the Master, we shall find that we are getting nearer to all who bear his image; and the oneness by which we are knit to Him and them, will stand forth before our minds as a blessed fact. And this progressive work of the conscious personal unification of the believer with Christ and His redeemed shall go on, until it attains perfection, as the Christian enters on the blessed life to come.

This Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic; and we have no occasion to degrade these predicates to a low or non-natural sense, when we apply them to it. As the oneness of the Church depends on the presence of Christ by His Spirit in believers and their abiding in Christ by faith, it supplies no pledge for oneness of organization. If any Scripture evidence could be produced to show that Christ has promised, or indicated that there is to be oneness of organization in the Visible Church, we would feel that we have solid ground to go upon in looking for such a unity. This, however, is what is conspicuously wanting. The Scripture argument, so far as we have seen it, is purely constructive, and its entire force is due to the underlying supposition that the Romish conception of the Church as a visible society, is correct. The moment we rise to the Scriptural idea of the Church as the body of Christ, the *coetus fidelium*, the argument disappears.

Dr. Dollinger, in his interesting volume on the re-union of Christendom, supplies an excellent example of the reasoning to which we refer, but which, unfortunately, is by no means confined to the Munich Professor. This distinguished divine pleads earnestly for the incorporation of all the Churches of

Christendom, East and West, into one grand ecclesiastical organization, which he seems to desire shall be equally removed from the Protestantism of the Reformation, and the Catholicism of the Vatican Council.

He sets out with the precarious assertion that such a union "must be possible, for it is our duty," which looks very like a new version of the old Pelagian maxim that, "ability limits responsibility." But passing this over for what is more important: he writes, "that Christ, the Founder of the Church, desired and enjoined its unity is clear. In His eucharistic prayer we read, "That they may all be one; that as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." He emphasizes the fact that "the unity of Christian believers is itself to serve as the means to a further end: it is to be a testimony for the world in general, and for all nations, of the truth and divinity of the teaching of Christ." (p. 15). He closes his volume with these words, addressed especially to German Christians: "But if we are willing to march to this contest, we march under a leader whose name may inspire the most faint-hearted with courage. It is He from whom descends every good and perfect gift, whose word is not yet fulfilled, but must be fulfilled in time to come: 'There shall be one fold and one shepherd.'" (p. 165).

It is important to ascertain the meaning of Christ's language here quoted, and its bearing on the unity of the Church, and the re-union of Christendom. From the manner in which Dr. Dollinger handles it, it is evident that if he and his friends of the Old Catholic party, have, since the Vatican Council, broken with Rome, they have not broken with the Romish idea of the Church. He assumes, as quietly as if it had never been disputed, that the oneness for which Christ prayed, and which He intimated as a fact in reference to His Church, (John xvii. 21 and Matthew xvi. 18) is the unity, or, at least, involves the unity of a visible organization. He quotes, probably following the Vulgate, the words "There

shall be one fold and one shepherd." Had he examined the Greek, he would have seen that the words *μία ποιμνη, εις ποιμήν* will not bear this rendering, but must be translated, as they are in our Revised Version, "one flock, one shepherd." But what constitutes a flock one, is not the inclosure in which they are folded, but the relation they sustain to each other and especially to the shepherd, whose sheep they are, and whose voice they obey. There is nothing in this text which is unfulfilled, or which necessarily contemplates that all Christians shall yet be embraced in one external organization. When we turn to Christ's prayer in John xvii. 21, we discover no petition that all Christians may be united in one visible society. The words run, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father art in me and I in thee: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

When it is assumed, as self-evident, that the reference here is to an outward and visible unity, almost the first thought which suggests itself is: Has this prayer remained unanswered for eighteen centuries? Or, taking the most favorable view of the facts of history, shall we say, it was answered for five or six centuries, until the unfortunate division between the East and the West, and overlooked ever since? And may it not be asked "If this prayer was unanswered as respects so many generations which are gone, who can assure us that it will prove more potent for the generations to come? This interpretation of Christ's prayer cannot be correct.

But as we examine the prayer itself, this conviction grows upon us:

1. It is a prayer, as we gather from verse. 20, for all Christ's believing people then in the world, and "for them also which shall believe on me through their word." It is a prayer which is presented expressly for all believers, from Christ's day to the end of time. There is no reference to an external society made up of all sorts of men. It includes none but believers.

2. What is asked on their behalf does not include the

organic unity of the visible Church, It is a prayer that believers may be one. But in what respect? Certainly not one in everything. No one imagines that the meaning is that they shall be one in statute, colour or nationality! No one believes that they shall be one in learning, mental powers, or general culture. Why then should we suppose they must be one in the profession of faith which they make, the sacraments they enjoy, and the ecclesiastical government under which they live? Such a meaning must be put into Christ's words, from some other source, before it can be extracted from them. The language clearly points to a unity of a very different kind: "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us." It cannot be supposed that this unity is realized in all the members of a visible society which includes both believers and reprobates. Reprobates who are acknowledged by Bellarmine to have a place in the Church cannot be one in the Father and the Son. Judas Iscariot and Simon Magus were not in the company for whom Christ here prays, and did not share in the blessing sought, but they were both members of the visible Church.

3. It is claimed, however, that the end for which this oneness of believers is sought, viz: "That the world might believe that thou hast sent me," implies a unity which is visible and palpable. Dr. Dollinger attaches great weight to this consideration, and we would admit its force, provided it could be shown that the unity of a great visible organization is the only thing the world can see, and be impressed by. But such a unity does not necessarily lead the world to believe. When the character and spirit of the organization happen to be bad, it may have the very opposite effect. It is only when the members of the visible Church illustrate in their lives the spirit of Christ, that the world is impressed; and we venture to think that the impression will not depend so much on their being grouped in one, or in many visible organizations, as upon the beauty of their lives. History pours contempt upon the dream that the world is to be converted through the im-

pression made by the unity of a great compact visible Society of all sorts of men. In the Western part of Christendom, prior to the Reformation, there was an external visible unity in the church, but the world was not converted by it. We do not claim perfection for the Christian world, in its present divided state, but no one can assert that the state of matters was better then. It is notorious that unbelief and immorality were then rampant, and the high places of the Church were disgraced by every kind of enormity. We need not go beyond Dr. Dollinger's testimony. "No doubt," he writes, "a great purification and renewal of the Church in the sixteenth century was a pressing need; the condition of things had become untenable and intolerable." (p. 14.) Something very different from the unity of a vast ecclesiastical corporation is needed to convince the world of the divinity of Christ's mission.

We hold that Christ's prayer is answered, and his promise that there shall be "one flock and one shepherd," has been made good. His petition for the unity of believers does not stand alone in this prayer. There are other petitions whose meaning should guide us in understanding this. In verse 17 he prays, "Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth." To this petition there is given a threefold answer: (1) Fundamental, (2) progressive and (3) perfect or final. Every living Christian has been sanctified. He has experienced a fundamental spiritual change, in which the reigning power of sin is broken, his heart is devoted to God, and grace is enthroned as the ruler of his life. The transformation of the character and life thus begun, advances progressively, and the Christian "is enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness," until the work is perfected as the believer enters on the glory to come.

Christ's prayer for the holiness of his people is not unanswered, because the Christian's life on earth is marred by sin, and a divine order is observed in conferring the blessing. And why should we not look for a similar fulfilment of Christ's

promise, and a corresponding answer to his petition for the oneness of believers? This is exactly what we find as we study the Holy Scriptures. We have seen that the oneness of believers with Christ and with each other in him, is, in its most fundamental aspect, an accomplished fact. We have seen that so far as the conscious personal unification of the believer with Christ and with those who bear his image, is concerned, the work is progressive, and shall finally attain a glorious completeness and perfection. The Scripture evidence for either the present, or ultimate organic unity of the visible Church on earth, disappears, as soon as it is understood that the Church for which Christ prayed, and whose unity he announced as a fact, is not a visible Society of all sorts of men, but the body of Christ, made up of the Lord's redeemed, "out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation."

But there is another consideration which Protestants, at least, should not overlook. If we seek unity in the line indicated by the Tractarian conception of the Church, as a visible Society of mixed moral elements, we must be ready to advance further than even they are prepared to go. It will not suffice to have a number of independent national Churches, whether Prelatic or Presbyterian, all modelled after the same pattern, and holding communion with each other, and unitedly embracing all Christendom. This gives similarity, but not oneness in the visible Church.

According to the Tractarian idea of the Church, in which some Evangelical Christians seem to be partially entangled, there are three things in which the Church is one, viz., (1) the faith professed, (2) the sacraments enjoyed, and (3) the government under which its members live. But oneness in government, in this connection, can only mean one government. France, Switzerland and the United States of America, are all Republics, living in friendly relations with each other, but we cannot predicate unity of their government, nor will we ever be able to do so, until these three Republics are merged in one. The Church of England and the Protestant

Episcopal Church in the United States, live under the same form of Government, are on the most friendly relations with each other, but they are not one Church. The numerous bodies which form the Presbyterian Alliance are substantially identical in creed, sacraments, and form of Government, but they are not one Church; because they do not live under one government, or submit to a common authority. The logic of Rome is inexorable. If government enters into the definition of the Church, where there is one Church there must be one government. If the unity promised by Christ to his Church has relation to the fold, and not to the flock, there must be one fold in which all the sheep are found. What is promised is not met by numerous sheep-folds scattered peacefully over the world, although all modelled after one pattern.

The oneness must respect all the elements which enter into the definition of the Church. And if government and organization enter into the conception of the Church, to which pertain the promises, there can be only one government and one organization in the Church. This is what the Papacy dreams, and then teaches, what Tractarianism logically demands, and what some bewildered Protestants seem to be feeling after in the dark, but it is precisely what the Word of God does not teach. What is set up before us in the sacred page is not one shepherd and one sheep-fold, but "one shepherd, one flock."

We have seen that Christ has not commanded, or promised the organic union of the visible Church, except in so far as it may be involved in that higher spiritual union which makes all believers one with Christ, and one with each other in Him. It is an interesting, important, and by no means an easy question to decide, how far a cordial recognition of this spiritual unity of believers, should carry us in the direction of the organic union of the visible Church. It seems reasonable to believe that where existing divisions are due, as, no doubt, some of them are, to pride, passion, self-will, prejudice and removable ignorance, that a richer baptism of the spirit of Christ, and a closer approximation to the living centre of

unity, would lead divided Christians to cast a bridge over the gulf of separation, and come together in visible unity.

We cannot, however, assume that any measure of grace, attainable in this world, will insure an undivided state of the visible Church for two reasons, viz ; (1) On nearly all questions of importance thinking minds are liable to arrive at somewhat different views. In philosophy, science and history, earnest and honest thinkers examine the same data, and draw from them diverse conclusions. Certain it is that no measure of grace which has ever yet descended upon the Church of God has led, even its most devoted members, to think alike on matters of Christian doctrine ; and we can scarcely assume that the government of the Church is likely, in the future, to prove an exception. If God had promised the unity of the visible Church, we would expect him to find some way to overcome the imperfections of the human mind, but in the absence of such a promise, our expectations must be regulated by the lights of experience. (2) We have no reason to believe that an undivided state of the Church would promote the highest welfare of the body of Christ. There are natural limits to the extent of any organization, commercial, civil or ecclesiastical which can be controlled successfully by man. Human ambition has often sought to establish a universal empire, but human resources have never been found equal to its successful administration. And we may safely affirm that " a universal Church would be as surely a misgoverned Church, as a universal empire would be a misgoverned empire." Those who believe that a universal Church is the only channel of saving grace, and that it has, in some way, been clothed with infallibility, may give a forced submission to its rule ; but others will seek a government more capable of dealing intelligently with their interests, and advancing their welfare.

In determining the area over which a particular Church should extend, many considerations, linguistic, national, geographical and political, need to be carefully weighed ; and sanctified common sense will find ample play. For here, in

the words of our Confession, we deal with "circumstances concerning the government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

But even when we confine our attention to a single country, where one visible Church could efficiently attend to the ecclesiastical interests of the people, very serious difficulties stand in the way of an incorporating union. We admit that in such a case an undivided state of the visible Church is the ideal condition of things. This, however, does not throw much light practically on the attainableness of such a union, as we live in a world where ideals are not generally realized. An ideal man is probably one who is always in perfect health, who never makes mistakes or acts foolishly, and never disregards his neighbor's rights, and always acts from pure and exalted principle, who loves God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. It is no doubt most desirable that we should aim at this ideal, as closely as possible. But were we to devote ourselves to search for such ideal men, or give ourselves to study the social arrangements suitable for such a "Coming Race," we might probably spend a great deal of valuable time, which might be more usefully devoted to something else. And we may add that, as ideal men and ideal Churches are very closely connected, they will probably both be discovered about the same time.

It is a pleasant, and may be a very useful, thing for the representatives of different sections of the visible Church to come together to ascertain the measure of their agreement with each other, and to speak those fraternal words which Christian feeling impels them to utter, but it is not wise to build too high expectations of an organic union on such things, until we have endeavored to gauge intelligently some of the difficulties which must be overcome before the visible Church can be brought to present an undivided organization, even in one country, such as Canada.

“When men differ, it is better to avow their diversity of opinion or faith, than to pretend to agree, or to force discordant elements in a formal uncongenial union.” Where Christians cherish antagonistic convictions on important points of religion, we can only expect them to work together when their views have been brought into harmony.

If we aim at healing the divisions even of Protestant Christendom, we cannot leave out of view a denomination which has produced Bunyan, Carey, Marshman, Ward, Judson, Spurgeon, and a host of men whose names are high on the honor roll of the Church of Christ. But how can they be brought into the same organization with those who are constantly acting upon the most opposite convictions of duty? There is but one way possible: we must persuade all Baptists to become Pedo-Baptists or all the Pedo-Baptists to become Baptists. We cannot suppose the initial rite of the Christian Church left, both as to its subjects and mode, an open question. Union here apart from a radical change of convictions, on the one side or the other, would work confusion in the Church of God, and do anything rather than edify the body of Christ.

But leaving the peculiar views of our Baptist brethren out of account in the meantime, what are the prospects of attaining unity in the matter of Church government? The forms of Church government which obtain among Protestants may be regarded as practically three, viz: Prelatic, Presbyterian, and Congregational or Independent. Baptists and Congregationalists agree in their views of Church government, regarding each congregation as a self-governing, spiritual republic. Not only these Churches which are usually styled Presbyterian among us, but the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of Europe, and the Methodist Churches throughout the world are Presbyterian in Church government. We are aware that the Methodists, in the United States, have bishops, but they are not regarded as an order distinct from and superior to ordinary ministers of the Gospel, with func-

tions which they alone can lawfully discharge. They are set apart to their work as a matter of convenience, very much as superintendents were appointed in Scotland, for a short time after the Reformation, as a temporary expedient. The parity of the ministers of the Word is recognized in all these Churches, and no order of clergy superior to them is admitted. But while the forms of government, in the Churches of the Reformation can be reduced to three, it is evident that the three cannot work together in a visible Church, unless we call that one Church, which is made up of several distinct bodies, united by some federal compact. A congregation cannot be ruled at the same time by a bishop, by a presbytery, and by itself.

How are we to arrive at unity in government? There are those who hold that while Church government is of God, the form is of man. This view is widely accepted in reference to civil government. It is supposed that a nation is free to select the form of government which seems best suited to its circumstances, and whether it is a monarchy, a republic, or a democracy which is chosen, divine authority requires us to honor and obey it. By some it is held that this view applies substantially to the Church, as well as to the State. Where this view prevails, men may feel themselves free to make almost any change in the government of the Church which they consider expedient, or to allow all existing forms to go unchallenged. A variety of this phase of opinion has been adopted by some divines whom we highly esteem. They suppose that the form of Church government emanated from within, under the quickening influence of the Spirit upon the Church, leading it to adopt the organization necessary for it, in view of its surroundings. It is believed, "The organization of the Church was gradually formed, the living body putting forth, from time to time, the organs necessary for the discharge of its functions." This application of evolution to the organization of the Church might have seemed very reasonable, had the New Testament not been written, and

might have been found very convenient by some, as supplying a satisfactory answer to the objections which Protestants make to the late appearance of the organ of infallibility in the Church of Rome. But as this development is not supposed to take place under supernatural guidance, all existing forms of Church government have practically equal authority, and an equal right to contend for supremacy. Our minds, however, are calmed in view of the apparently ceaseless struggle of opposing systems, with the thought that, if we wait patiently, we will doubtless see "the survival of the fittest."

The New Testament, however, has been written, and many who read it carefully believe that it has not left us without definite guidance in the matter of Church government. Dr. Witherow, indeed, assures us that "The opinion of all theologians who have not studied the subject is, that no system of Church Polity is contained in the New Testament." This is not his opinion. On the contrary, he gives it as his "conviction, founded on a careful examination of the Word of God, that Church Polity is an important portion of Christianity."

The barrier to organic union, which, at present, is insuperable, is that earnest Christian men differ widely with regard to the import of what the New Testament teaches respecting the government of the Church. Congregationalists have been wont to plead Scriptural authority for their system of Church government. Episcopalians, although somewhat divided among themselves, as to the kind of Scriptural evidence which they adduce, do, very many of them, allege a divine warrant for Prelacy. Presbyterians hold that their system of government is "founded on, and agreeable to the Word of God." While employing this language with greater or less stringency, a large proportion of those who have given most attention to the question, agree with Dr. Witherow, in believing that the Scriptures supply a divine warrant for the essential features of Presbyterian government. They do not claim a *jus divinum* for the details of their system, but only for its formative principles. They readily admit that "there

are many circumstances concerning the government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word." From their examination of the Word of God, Presbyterians believe that the apostolic office has not been perpetuated in the Christian Church. They hold that "Presbyters, who labor in word and doctrine, are the highest permanent officers of the Church, and all belong to the same order." They also believe that each worshipping congregation should not regard itself as a self-governing and independent body, but so linked to the visible Church at large that, according to the law of Christ, a smaller portion owes subjection to a larger. With such formative principles as these, embedded, as they believe, in the Holy Scriptures, Presbyterians cannot willingly aid in establishing any system of Church government which ignores or rejects them. When the Master has made known his will, they must obey. Even when, for example, they are asked to accept the "Historic Episcopate," not as an article of faith, but as a form or government by which the Church shall be ruled, they cannot accept the responsibility of setting aside a divine system for one which, however respectable and venerable, is merely human. In these circumstances, a union of Churches implies either a radical change of convictions, or a sacrifice of conscience and self-respect.

Must we then abandon hope of further progress in the work of union? It is not for us to say what new light shall yet break in on the Church of God to unify the conflicting views of its members. It has been said with much force that "A true union between Churches must be grown into, rather than striven for." But we do not object to striving, provided it is put forth on the right lines. When the views and feelings of Christians have been unified, organic unions, so far as workable, will soon follow.

We have viewed the attainableness of organic unions, entirely in relation to the divisions of Protestantism. Fidelity

to the truth will not permit us to entertain seriously the wide range which some are anxious to give to union negotiations. We have not ceased to be Protestants. We do not regard the Reformation as a mistake, and we have no sympathy with those whose eyes wander towards the Seven Hills.

There may be no very definite prospect, at present, of healing even the divisions of Protestantism, but there are certain things which may be done, which will greatly facilitate practicable unions, will lessen the evils of division, while they continue, and which are, moreover, in themselves right, whether organic union is the outcome of them or not.

1. We should cherish an earnest and unbiased love of the truth. While not lightly throwing away views we have learned from those who, in God's Providence, have been our teachers, we should study God's Word dispassionately for ourselves, and use honestly all the sources of information within our reach. And when any new truth is discovered by us, we should seek grace and strength to follow where it leads.

2. We should in this spirit, openly acknowledge as Churches all those bodies to which that character really belongs. If we accept the Protestant idea of the Church to which Christ has given the promises, we must rank as visible Churches all bodies of Christians, holding the fundamental verities of the Gospel, associated for the worship of God, mutual watch and care, and the extension of Christ's Kingdom. We sin against Christ, the Head of the Church, and against the Holy Spirit, when we do not cheerfully acknowledge, in all suitable ways, societies of believers, whose character and work have already received the divine *imprimatur*. This mutual recognition is specially called for between bodies which are feeling their way towards organic union. A union is in place only between homogeneous bodies. A Church cannot unite with a Board of Trade, a Temperance Society, or anything save a Church. An uncertain or hesitating recognition of other Churches, will not do much to

advance union, or to promote that Christian feeling which, apart from organic union, is most desirable.

3. There should be a mutual recognition on the part of Evangelical Churches of each other's discipline and official acts. Owing to differences of standard in the matter of discipline, this may not be absolutely practicable in all cases. But where there is a proper sense of the relation which visible Churches sustain to the mystical body of Christ, we will be very slow to welcome into our fellowship fugitives from the discipline of other Churches. And in this connection we may add, that if nothing more, in the meantime, is attainable, there seems no reason why Evangelical Churches should not have a Standing Committee or Council, with purely advisory functions, where their representatives might consult together about common interests with a view to secure united action.

We may see no feasible prospect of the early re-union of Christendom, but we can at least, by God's grace, say "Whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk." We know that the oneness of believers for which Christ prayed is an existing fact, and that underneath all external divisions, there is among Christians a profound and living unity. If we keep this fact distinctly before our minds, it brings our thoughts and feelings gradually into harmony with itself, and many of the worst evils of Church divisions pass away. When a false view of the Church leads us to dwell on outward unity as of vital moment, the members of other communions seem separated from us by a great gulf, and we become so estranged from them, that had we not been taught to love our enemies, we would feel that we owe them nothing save suspicion and aversion. But when we think of believers of every name, as the body of Christ, and, with ourselves, the habitation of God's Spirit, our love goes forth towards them, and alienation and bitterness, give place to the "unity of the Spirit," and the good offices of Christian brotherhood.

REV. DR. MACLAREN'S LETTERS.

LETTER I.

To the Editor of The Mail.

SIR:—I observe that Rev. Dr. Langtry has honoured my lecture at the opening of Knox College on "The Unity of the Church and Church Unions," with two letters of animadversion, and the promise of more. I have not much time at my disposal for newspaper discussion, but recognizing the importance of the subject raised in my lecture, and the legitimacy and value of fair criticism, I shall await with interest the further statements and criticisms Dr. Langtry intends to give to the public, and I may then ask your permission to make some observations in reply. In the meantime allow me to say:—

1. That my lecture was published in full in the *Knox College Monthly* for October, and those who wish to know my views will find them stated there correctly. The daily papers, and especially *The Mail*, gave excellent reports of my address, but for the lack of space, I presume, did not report it fully.

2. That an error occurred in my lecture, as printed, which I desire to correct. A copy of it was made for the press by a friend, and in transcribing it he appears to have missed out an entire line in my MS., and as this omission happened in the middle of Cardinal Bellarmine's definition of the Church, the definition, of course, became unintelligible. I mention this, the rather, because my learned censor quotes the definition in the erroneous form in which it was printed, and he comments upon the definition, without apparently suspecting the omission. This is certainly very remarkable, for when I observed, from Dr. Langtry's first letter, that he took some interest in my lecture, I ventured to send him a copy of it in the *Knox College Monthly*, with the Cardinal's definition corrected. Yet in his second letter, written two or three weeks later, he gives the uncorrected definition as mine. The definition as given by me in my lecture is as follows:—"The Church is a society of men on

earth, united together by the profession of one and the self-same Christian faith, and the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of lawful pastors, and especially the Roman Pontiff." (De Eccl., Lib iii., cap. 11.) The definition which Dr. Langtry represents me as attributing to Cardinal Bellarmine is in the following terms, viz:—"The Church is a society of men on earth, united together by the profession of one and the self-same sacraments, under the government of lawful pastors, and especially the Roman Pontiff." Anyone, even if unacquainted with such a familiar definition, should have known that Cardinal Bellarmine could never have written such nonsense.

3. There is another remark which I cannot avoid making before closing this letter, viz. : that Dr. Langtry's expression of surprise and regret at the attitude assumed by me "towards the Christian reunion movement" seems to me entirely misplaced. What he calls my theory of the Church is the thing which appears to fill him with surprise and sorrow. Had he been more familiar with the divines and symbolic books of the Presbyterian Church, he would have been aware that there is nothing original, or peculiar in the view which I presented of the Church. He would have known that it is taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and by nearly all our great divines who treat of the subject. And should space be accorded me in the columns of *The Mail*, I shall hope to satisfy the public that my view of the Church is the common doctrine of Protestantism. And should Dr. Langtry do me the honour of reading my whole lecture, which his criticism indicates he has not yet done, I shall not despair of leading even him to see that I am in harmony with the creeds of Protestantism, and with the views of the leading divines of the Church of England at the Reformation period.

If there is no ground for surprise there is less for sorrow. I have taught that the Church which Christ founded on a rock, whose unity and perpetuity is proclaimed in the Scriptures, is not a mixed society, made up of all sorts of men, but of those who "do truly believe and rightly obey Christ." It is not co-extensive with any, or all ecclesiastical organizations, but embraces living Christians in all communions—the entire sacramental host of God's elect. We have expressed our firm conviction that Christ has not suffered His declaration of the unity of His Church to be falsified for eighteen

centuries. Dr. Langtry may believe that, if he can ; we cannot. We hold that the unity of the Church, in the sense promised, has been made good, and is now a blessed reality to be recognized and acted upon, not to be sought after.

Now, should it ever dawn upon the learned doctor's mind that this view, held by so many of the excellent of the earth in his own and other Churches, is, in reality, the truth, there is nothing which, it appears to me, should fill his soul with lasting sorrow. It may turn him aside from an arduous, and, perhaps an impracticable enterprise, on which he has set his heart, but does it not give him ample compensation? No doubt when a gentleman has made all arrangements to signalize his fraternal affection by setting out to Central Africa to search for a long-lost brother, it will be a matter of surprise, and perhaps even of chagrin, to discover accidentally, in a near neighbor whom he has long known, the very brother he desires to find ; but, if his brotherly love is very strong, his transient regret will give place to a permanent joy. The African journey may be spoiled, but the brother is found. And it does seem to me that should Dr. Langtry discover that these Methodists and Presbyterians with whom he is negotiating for union are one with him in Christ, and are already, like himself, members of the true Church whose unity and perpetuity are proclaimed in the Word, there is nothing which need fill him with "a spirit of downright sorrow and disappointment," unless, indeed, he is alarmed at the thought that in the better life, he shall have to associate somewhat closely with men who, in this world, could never bring themselves to recognize the authority of "the historic episcopate."

LETTER II.

To the Editor of The Mail.

SIR,—In your issue of the 11th inst. I observe a third letter from Rev. Dr. Langtry, in which he intimates that he has completed his criticisms on my lecture at the opening of Knox College. Permit me now to employ some spare hours to make a few observations in reply. The points on which I differ from my critic are so numerous that I can refer only to a few of them.

Dr. Langtry deals very largely in inferences which are frequently very wide of the mark. He is evidently not familiar with the Protestant ideas of the Church, and many of his mistakes, though not all, are of a kind to which foreigners are exposed in travelling in a strange country. He represents what he is pleased to call my theory of the Church as not only "barring all progress towards reunion," but as making it "an impeachment of Divine wisdom and a foolish waste of time even to talk about it." He speaks of me as "dispensing with the duty or even the desirability of arriving at and striving after visible reunion." I have certainly not said so; and it appears to me that had the learned doctor reflected that I belong to a Church which through repeated reunions has reached the position which it now occupies in this land, he might have hesitated before drawing such a sweeping inference. It is quite true that Protestants who believe that we are justified and saved by a personal faith in Christ, cannot attach such importance to organic union as those who accept the Romish idea, that the Church, as a visible organization, is the only channel through which grace and salvation flow to men; but it does not follow that where union can be effected without the sacrifice of principle they regard it as undesirable. I venture to think that the principle advocated by Dr. Langtry bars any progress towards reunion. For if, as he asserts, the Scriptures show that "the name Church is never applied to anything that is not a visible organized society," and if the New Testament teaches, as it repeatedly does, that there is only one Church,

then there can be no reunion, for there never has been, and there never can be any division. It is not, therefore, my theory of the Church but Dr. Langtry's which makes it "an impeachment of Divine wisdom, and even a foolish waste of time to talk" of reunion. The view which I have given of the Church leaves it open to us to seek organic union wherever Christian principle and common sense do not bar the way. Some unions are practicable and some impracticable. In my lecture I pointed out that, in the case of many of our Churches, an organic union would imply either a radical change of convictions, or a sacrifice of conscience and self-respect. Dr. Langtry has not grappled with this difficulty, and until he does, I venture to think that his writing in favor of organic union will prove a waste of ink and paper.

Dr. Langtry assumes that what I call the Protestant view of the Church, denies the existence of a visible Church, and that he is refuting it when he proves that there is a visible Church. The Westminster Confession, after defining who constitute "the Catholic or universal Church which is invisible," goes on to say:—"The visible Church, which is also Catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those who profess the true religion, together with their children, etc." This is also the common doctrine of the Reformers, as we shall presently show. They held that the word Church is, in Scripture, used in more than one application, and that the primary meaning from which the others are derived is the collective body of those called by God's grace into living union with Christ. The word is sometimes applied to the Church invisible, and sometimes to the Church visible. It is clear that when anyone dealing with this question, spends his strength to show that there is a visible Church or Churches recognized in Scripture, he asserts what no intelligent Protestant denies, and makes it apparent either that he does not comprehend the real point at issue, or has deemed it prudent to avoid it.

Dr. Langtry represents me as identifying the Protestant and the Calvinistic conception of the Church. This I carefully avoided. I can only account for this misrepresentation on the supposition that Dr. Langtry had not read my lecture, when he penned it. I said that "Whether we regard God's purpose, the Divine foreknow-

ledge, or the actual outcome of history, there rises before the mind the conception of a body or society which includes the entire number of those ultimately saved through faith in Christ." I pointed out that these views, so far as the membership of the Church is concerned, come to the same thing, and a Protestant, according to his theological standpoint, could adopt which of them he prefers. The doctor's antipathy to Calvinism would be amusing, if it had not a sadder side. I refer to Bellarmine's admission that, in the Church as defined by him, there are "reprobates," and, in the discussion which follows, I use the word invariably in the sense in which it is employed by the cardinal, but Dr. Langtry, with a rare lack of exegetical discrimination, assumes that I use the word with reference to the Divine decree, a sense in which Bellarmine could not possibly have used the word. For the cardinal was a Jesuit theologian, and must have held almost the same views on the Divine purposes as Dr. Langtry himself.

Dr. Langtry refers to the "doctrine of predestination and reprobation as set forth in the Shorter Catechism" as rejected by nine out of every ten Protestants in the present day. Probably the doctor knows as much of the views of Protestants as he does of the teachings of the Shorter Catechism. And had he known anything of the Shorter Catechism, beyond its name, he would have been aware that from beginning to end it does not refer to reprobation. It teaches the doctrine of predestination, but so do the 39 Articles of the Church of England, which I presume Dr. Langtry has subscribed. The 17th Article says:—"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour, etc." The Shorter Catechism contains nothing stronger, or clearer on the doctrine of predestination.

Many years ago, when travelling, I was drawn, almost accidentally, into discussion with an able Roman Catholic controversialist, with whom I was not personally acquainted. Mistaking me apparently for a member of the Church of England, he opened his batteries against that body by saying, "There is the Church of Eng-

land, it has 39 Articles, and not one of her ministers believes them. Some of them believe 20, some believe 18, and some not even that." I felt it incumbent on me to stand up in defence of an honoured branch of the Church of Christ, and I replied, "Sir, you are making grave charges against the clergy of the Church of England, and I am sure had you a divine of that Church here to meet you, he would not admit the correctness of your assertions." Had Dr. Langtry's letters been written in those days, I might have spoken with more reserve.

Dr. Langtry finds fault with me for saying that there are only two views of the Church. What I really said is, that there "are only two conceptions of the Church radically distinct," viz.:—the Romish and the Protestant. This statement I am fully convinced is correct. I did not ignore the variety of opinion known as Tractarianism, but gave my reasons for classing it under the Romish type. It was shown that, according to Cardinal Bellarmine's well-known definition, the Church is a society of men on earth bound together by, (1) the profession of the same Christian faith; (2) the participation in the same sacraments; and (3) subjection to legitimate pastors, and especially the Pope of Rome. In none of the three particulars enumerated, which are common to all the members of the Church, is vital religion demanded. A man may have it, or he may not. All that is requisite to membership in this Church as defined, is something purely external. The Tractarian definition, as given by Palmer, includes all the three elements in Bellarmine's definition, only it does not include the Pope of Rome as the chief of the legitimate pastors. But this is a very subordinate variation, and does not change the general character and drift of the system, which has already carried hundreds of the clergy and laity of the Church of England over to Rome. Dr. Langtry, however, presents us with a definition of the Church fresh from his own mint, which he assures us is alike distinct from the Romish and the Calvinistic. It runs as follows:—"The Church of the New Testament is a living entity, having an abiding inner life, and a visible outward bodily form. It grows out of Christ, and not out of the act of individual believers voluntarily associating themselves," etc. This may be part of a speech or a sermon, but whatever it is, it is not a definition of the Church. No human being could tell from it what

the Church is, where it is, or how to discriminate it from other entities. A basswood tree is "a living entity, having an abiding inner life, and a visible outward bodily form." But "the Church," he informs us, "grows out of Christ;" there are, however, a good many other things besides the Church which, in some sense, "grow out of Christ." This is a definition which defines nothing. If Dr. Langtry cannot do better, he should leave the work of definition to Cardinal Bellarmine. The idea of an inner life and an outward visible bodily form, as characteristic of the Church, which Dr. Langtry sets forth in his misnamed definition, is one long familiar to Romish divines, and quite consistent with Bellarmine's definition, drawn from purely external features. If anyone wishes to see it set forth with marked ability, he has only to turn to Cardinal Manning's "Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost," p. 72-76. The new coin comes, after all, from the Roman mint.

But what I specially took up my pen to do, was not so much to answer the many points in Dr. Langtry's letters which are open to criticism, as to show that the conception of the Church, which I have called the Protestant, is in harmony with the creeds of Protestantism, and with the views of the leading divines of the Church of England at the Reformation period.

For the views of the Lutheran Church, I have already referred to the Augsburg Confession, which declares that to "speak properly, the Church of Christ is a congregation of the members of Christ; that is of the saints which do truly believe and rightly obey Christ, though in this life there be many wicked ones and hypocrites mingled with this company, and shall be until the day of judgment." Hall's Harmony, p. 230. This creed also distinguishes further on, between the Church as invisible and visible, as the words already cited do by implication. Dr. Langtry quotes from the Saxon and several other Confessions to show that these creeds recognize a visible Church. He might with equal ease have quoted from my lecture or the Westminster Confession words to that effect. The Protestant creeds assert that there is a Church which is visible and a Church which is invisible. The Saxon Confession, which, like the Augsburg, speaks the views of the Lutherans, declares in reference to the human race that by God they were "created not to eternal destruction, but that out of mankind He might gather unto himself a

Church to which in all eternity He might communicate His wisdom, goodness and joy." Further on, this confession speaks of the visible Church. In Luther's Small Catechism, the Church is viewed solely as the body of those called by the grace of the Holy Spirit to true faith and holiness, without any reference to a visible organization. In the Articles of Smalcald, composed by Luther, thanks are given to God that "in these times, even a boy of seven years of age can tell what the Church consists of, viz., believers, holy persons, Christ's sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd. For so do children declare their faith:—I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." And it is explained that this holiness does not consist in outward things, but in the possession of the Word of God and true faith. *Vide* Art. Smal., Art. 12.

For the views of the Reformed Churches we may appeal, in the first place, to the Sixty-seven Articles defended by Zwingli at Zurich in 1523, seven years before the Augsburg Confession was presented to the Diet. The 8th Article declares:—"That all who live in this Head (Christ) are His members, and children of God. And this is the Church, the communion of saints, the spouse of Christ, the Catholic Church." This position, which cannot be mistaken, was assumed by Zwingli at the very dawn of the Reformation.

In the latter Confession of Helvitia, one of the most authoritative and widely accepted of the Reformed creeds, it is asserted to be necessary that there should be "to the end of the world, a Church—that is, a company of the faithful, called and gathered out of the world; a communion (I say) of all saints, that is, of them who do truly know and rightly worship and serve the true God, in Jesus Christ the Saviour, by the word and the Holy Spirit, and who by faith are partakers of all those good graces which are freely offered through Christ." "Of these is that article of our creed wholly to be understood, 'I believe in the Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.'" Farther on, this Confession adverts to the distinction of the Church invisible and visible. "Whereupon the Church of God may be termed invisible, not that the men, whereof it consisteth, are invisible, but because, being hidden from our sight, and known only to God, it cannot be discerned by the judgment of man. Again, not all that are reckoned in the number of the Church are saints

and lively and true members of the Church." "Yet these men whilst they do pretend religion they are accounted to be in the Church, howsoever indeed they be not of the Church. Even as traitors in a commonwealth before they are detected are counted in the number of good citizens."

The Heidelberg Catechism, published in 1563, has always been regarded by the Reformed Churches as a peculiarly clear and excellent statement of their views. It has been translated into all European and several Asiatic languages. It has still symbolic authority in Holland and the Reformed Churches of the United States. The 54th question is: "What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Catholic Church? Answer—That out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God, by His Spirit and Word, gathers, defends, and preserves for himself unto everlasting life a chosen communion in the unity of the true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain a living member of the same." Space will not allow me to add more quotations from the Reformed Confessions of Europe. All are not alike full and definite, but all present the same type of doctrine. The Confessions of Basle, France, Belgia, Bohemia, Poland, Scotland, Wirtemberg, and of the Waldenses teach the same general view of the Church, and none of their authors seem to have got a glimmering of the position which Dr. Langtry asserts with such cheerful confidence, viz., that in Scripture, "the name Church is never applied to anything that is not a visible organized society."

For the views of that section of the Reformed Churches which diverged into Arminianism in doctrine, no symbolic statements bearing on the Church can be quoted. It was not a point on which they differed from the Reformed, and did not enter into the distinctive articles which they drew up. But Limborch, one of their leading divines on the Continent, in his body of divinity, makes the following decisive statement, which I hope will satisfy Dr. Langtry that the Protestant doctrine can be stated quite clearly, apart from the peculiar terminology of Calvinism, viz.: "The Catholic as well as the particular Church is distinguished into visible and invisible. The visible is a congregation, or society of those persons who openly profess the true and living doctrine of the Gospel, although all the members thereof should not heartily believe it, nor be the lively

members of the body of Jesus Christ. The invisible Church is a society of those who not only profess the doctrine of the Gospel with their mouths, but likewise sincerely believe in Christ, and heartily lead lives conformable to the precepts of our Saviour." Book VII., chap. 4. Richard Watson also, in his *Institutes*, recognizes the same distinction, although he does not follow it out with his usual accuracy. Hagenbach, in his *History of Doctrine*, after stating, substantially as we have done, the views of the Reformed Churches in reference to the Church, adds: "The Arminians and Mennonites adopted substantially the same principles as the Reformed." Vol. III, p. 127.

I have adduced only a small portion of the evidence at my command, but I hope enough has been presented to show that what I called the Protestant conception of the Church is that of the creeds and confessions of the Reformation period. Enough has been cited to show that the Reformers believed that the word Church has more than one application in Scripture, and that the one Holy Catholic Church of the creed is not a mixed visible society, made of all sorts of men, good and bad, but is the communion of saints, the society of those united to Christ by faith and the indwelling of His Spirit. But Dr. Langtry claims that whatever may be alleged about the Continental and Scotch Reformers, the English held no such views. I am almost as much surprised at this as my critic is at my attitude on the reunion movement. If you will allow me to use your columns, I shall, in another letter, introduce Dr. Langtry to the Reformers of his own Church, with whom he appears to be strangely unacquainted, and shall call attention to one or two other points of interest.

LETTER III.

To the Editor of The Mail.

SIR,—In my last letter I adduced evidence, chiefly from the Creeds and confessions of Protestant Churches, to show that what my lecture called the Protestant view of the Church had been rightly so named. The testimonies selected, though necessarily limited by the space I could venture to appropriate in your columns, were, I think, sufficient to prove that Protestants generally, whether Lutherans or Reformed, Calvinists or Arminians, recognize the distinction between the Church visible and invisible, and that they regard the Church in its highest sense, “the Holy Catholic Church” of the creed, not as a mixed visible organization of professing Christians, of all sorts, bad and good, but as the society of the faithful, made up of all those called by God’s Word and Spirit into living union with Christ. But Dr. Langtry gives us to understand that, whatever may be alleged of the Continental and Scotch Reformers, no such views were held by the English.

It may seem almost presumptuous for me to question Dr. Langtry’s statements in reference to the Reforming divines of his own Church, but I am compelled to characterize them as in the last degree inaccurate. He alleges only one proof that the English Reformers differed either from the Continental Reformers, or from what I have called the Protestant view of the Church; and the proof selected is, for him, a very unfortunate one. Dr. Langtry writes as follows:—“And so we read in ‘The Institution of a Christian Man,’ written by Cranmer, ‘I believe,’ not that the Catholic Church is made up of elect believers, but, ‘I believe the said Church of Rome with the other particular’ (*i.e.*, national) ‘Churches in the world compacted together, do make and constitute one Catholic Church or body.’” Dr. Langtry gives no reference to the particular part of “the Institution” cited, and I have not been able to verify his quotation. I have before me “the Corrections of the

Institution by Henry VIII., with the Annotations of Cranmer," as published by the Parker Society, and I find there a passage closely resembling that alleged by my critic, except that it makes no reference to the Church of Rome. It reads as follows:—"I believe that these particular Churches, in what place soever they be congregated, be the very parts, portions, or members of this Catholic and Universal Church." If this is not the passage which Dr. Langtry quotes, it is evident the same mode of interpretation will apply to both.

Henry VIII. suggests, in the margin of the passage I have cited, the insertion of the words "that all" instead of "these" before the word "particular." Cranmer rejects the change proposed by his royal master in these terms, viz.: "This word 'these' must needs remain, and not be put out; and it were better to say, 'and that all these particular Churches,' for if there were any particular Church out of the number of the elect, it is no number (member?) of this universal, holy Church." *Vide* Cranmer's Works, vol. ii., p. 91. Cranmer, like the Westminster divines, evidently believed in an invisible and in a visible Church. But according to Cranmer, it is the presence of the elect, or of the living Christian element in particular Churches which constitutes them members of the Holy Catholic Church; in other words, a mere collection of formal professors, such as Bellarmine's definition of the Church demands, would not constitute a society, a Church, or a member of the Catholic Church, in the true sense of that term. And no less than four times, in the course of two pages, do Cranmer's Annotations explain of the elect, what is said in "the Institution" of the Catholic Church or its members. Cranmer even proposes to amend a passage of the "Institution" so as to read, "The elect shall follow Christ's precepts, or when they fall they shall repent and rise again and obtain remission," etc. Like all the leading English Reformers, Cranmer was a decided Calvinist, and could have had no hesitation in speaking of "elect believers." But this is not all. The witness cited to prove that the English Reformers did not believe in an invisible Church, proves the opposite. In his "Confutation of Unwritten Verities," Cranmer writes:—"If we shall allow them for the true Church of God, that appear to be the visible and outward Church, consisting of the ordinary succession of bishops, then shall we make Christ, who is

an innocent lamb without spot, and in whom is found no guile, to be the head of ungodly and disobedient members." And this he declares is as impossible as to make God the author of Sin. Works, Vol. I., p. 13.

In the year 1553, there was published by the authority of Edward VI. a short catechism, "for all schoolmasters to teach," which certainly may be regarded as expressing the views of Cranmer and the other Reforming divines, who directed the youthful monarch. In this catechism, the Holy Church is represented as "a most beautiful kingdom and holy commonwealth;" and then it is added, "To the furnishing of this commonwealth belong all they, as many as do truly fear, honour, and call upon God, wholly applying their mind to holy and godly living; and all those who, putting all their hope and trust in Him, do assuredly look for the bliss of everlasting life. But as many as are in this faith steadfast, were forechosen, predestinate, and appointed out to everlasting life before the world was made." This catechism then proceeds to describe a Church or "congregation that may be seen"—*i. e.*, a visible Church—and thereafter, it describes the Church invisible, in these words, viz:—"But the Church which is an assembly of men called to everlasting salvation, is both gathered together and governed by the Holy Ghost, of whom we even now made mention. Which thing sith it can not be perceived by bodily sense, or light of nature, is by right and for good reason here reckoned among things that are known by belief." *Vide* Liturgies of King Edward VI., p. 511-514. Whether Dr. Langtry can believe it or not, this catechism makes it abundantly evident that Cranmer and the Reforming divines of England were not afraid to speak of the Holy Church, in its highest sense, as made up of those who "were forechosen, predestinate, and appointed out to everlasting life before the world was made," and that they were just as familiar with the distinction between the Church, visible and invisible, as the Continental and Scottish Reformers.

Ridley, bishop and martyr, says:—"The Holy Catholic Church, which is the communion of saints, the house of God, the city of God, the spouse of Christ, the body of Christ, the pillar and stay of the truth: this Church I believe, according to the creed." It is evident that Ridley, like Coverdale, Bradford, Nowell, and many of the writers of the Continental Confessions, regarded the clause in the

creed, "the Communion of Saints," not as a separate article, but as in apposition to "the Holy Catholic Church," and defining what it is; and this definition has nothing in it respecting visible organization. Ridley deals with an objector who says, "That Church which you have described unto me is invisible, but Christ's Church is visible and known." Ridley answers this objection by showing that the members of this Church are visible, but that the imperfection of our eyes and the darkness caused by Satan "make it hard to discern the true Church." Ridley also says, "I grant that the name of the Church is taken after three divers manners in Scripture." Works, p. 122-125. He had not learned, like my critic, that the word Church has only one meaning in every part of Scripture."

John Philpot, Archdeacon of Winchester and martyr, 1555, on his examination was asked by the Archbishop of York, "Is the Church visible or invisible?" Philpot replied, "It is both visible and invisible. The invisible Church is of the elect of God only; the visible consists of both good and bad, using all things in faith according to God's Word" (Writings, p. 136). John Hooper, bishop and martyr, after defining the Holy Catholic Church as "the congregation and assembly of all faithful believers, which are chosen and predestinate unto everlasting life," etc., goes on to say, "I believe this Church is invisible to the eye of man and is only to God known." He then speaks of "the visible Church, which is the congregation of the good and of the wicked" (Later writings, p. 40-41). It is evident that even had Dr. Langtry lived in England 340 years ago, he would have run no risk of being burnt either with Philpot or Hooper.

Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's, was a distinguished and influential divine of the Reformation period. He was prolocutor of the Convocation which, in the reign of Edward VI., revised the Articles of Religion which, after further modifications, ultimately became the 39 Articles. He drew up a catechism, which was published during the reign of Elizabeth, about the year 1570. This Catechism and abridgments of it were for some time the only catechisms which were allowed to be used by clergymen and schoolmasters. It has the weight due to a public document. It discusses the subject of the Church with great care and fulness. A single quotation will show the ground taken. After speaking of the "Holy Catholic Church,"

the question is asked, "But may the Church be otherwise known than by believing—by faith?" To this the scholar answers, "Here in the Creed is properly handled the congregation of those whom God by his secret election hath adopted to Himself through Christ: Which Church can neither be seen with the eyes nor can continually be known by signs. Yet there is a Church of God visible, or that may be seen, the tokens or marks whereof He doth shew and open unto us." Catechism, p. 174.

Thomas Rogers, chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, published in 1586 an exposition of the 39 Articles, which received the approval of the Archbishop. Dr. Langtry evidently finds some difficulty in making Article XIX., which treats of the Church, harmonize with his theory. This exposition will not make it any easier. It is conducted by propositions, in which are embodied the leading positions supposed to be involved in the Article, and then proofs from the Word of God are given. The first proposition under Article XIX. is, "There is a Church of Christ both invisible and visible." Then he adds, "A true saying is it, the Lord, and He only, knoweth who are His. For to man the Church of Christ is partly invisible and visible partly. The invisible are all the elect, who be or shall be either in heaven triumphing, or on earth fighting against the flesh, the world, and the devil. These as members of the Church are said to be invisible, not because the men be not seen, but for that their faith and conscience to Godward is not perfectly known unto us. The members of the visible Church are some of them for God and some against God." And although Rogers was no prophet to anticipate what might be written three centuries after he was in his grave, he adds on the next page, "Some think the Church Catholic to be visible: as the Papists."

The judicious Hooker, in his *Eccl. Polity*, Book III., 1,* distinguishes between the Church visible and invisible almost exactly as

* "That Church of Christ, which we properly term His body mystical, can be but one; neither can that one be sensibly discerned by any man, inasmuch as the parts thereof are some in heaven already with Christ, and the rest that are on earth (albeit their natural persons be visible), we do not discern under this property, whereby they are truly and infallibly of that body, only our minds by intellectual conceit are able to apprehend, that such a real body there is, a body collective, because it containeth an huge multitude; a body mystical, because the mystery of their conjunction is removed altogether from sense. Whatsoever we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and the saving mercy which God showeth towards His Church, the only proper subject thereof is this Church. Concerning this flock it is that our Lord and Saviour hath promised 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'"

Rogers ; and his friend and contemporary, Richard Field, in his important work on "The Church," does the same. Indeed, I know of no influential writer of the Church of England from the Reformation to the close of the 16th century, who rejects the distinction between the Church visible and invisible. Of course when the school of Laud arose in the 17th century, they developed views of the Church more in harmony with Dr. Langtry's sentiments.

Even in the early part of the 17th century, most decisive testimony was borne to what we have called the Protestant view of the Church in "the Articles of Religion agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops and the rest of the clergy of Ireland in the convocation holden at Dublin in the year of our Lord God, 1615." These articles declare that "there is but one Catholic Church, out of which there is no salvation ; containing the universal company of all the saints that ever were, are, or shall be gathered together in one body, under one head, Christ Jesus," etc. . . . "This is called the Catholic or universal, and the invisible Church." "But particular and visible Churches (consisting of those who make profession of the faith of Christ and live under the outward means of salvation) be many in number."

These testimonies, which might be greatly multiplied, will, I hope, satisfy every person capable of understanding the force of plain English, that not only did the English reformers at the era of the Reformation, but the entire Church of England for nearly a century, maintain with remarkable unanimity the same views of the Church, both as visible and invisible, which we have seen prevailed in the other Churches of the Reformation. If Dr. Langtry knew the facts which I have brought out regarding his own Church, it is very wonderful that he could write as he did, and if he did not know them, it is very marvellous that he felt himself in a position to write at all.

Dr. Langtry tells us, however, that the Protestant view of the Church is "a wholly new opinion." "It had never been heard of in the Christian Church till the middle of the sixteenth century." In his last letter he emphasizes these assertions. "This modern notion that the Church which Christ said He would build upon this rock, and which St. Paul tell us He did build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head

cornerstone, is an invisible thing, is a manifest fiction invented to hide from men's eyes the enormous guilt of the sin of schism, with which the Christian world is afflicted and humiliated to-day, and which Holy Scripture everywhere so sternly condemns." These strong assertions are likely to impress people in proportion to their ignorance. The truth is that the word *schism* occurs only once in the New Testament, and the Greek word usually translated division, from which we derive it, occurs eight times, and only twice is the thing meant referred to in terms of disapproval. But the thing which Dr. Langtry calls schism, a breach in the outward unity of the visible Church, had no existence then, and is not once referred to, unless by implication, in the New Testament. The divisions referred to, and deprecated in the New Testament are breaches of charity and brotherly sentiment, which often find entrance among brethren of the same congregation or communion, and have no necessary connection with organic divisions in the Church. Schism such as is discountenanced by Paul may flourish, as it did in the apostolic age, under the cover of external unity, and may be largely absent where external divisions in the Church exist. The schism which some men regard as worse than the breach of all the ten commandments, is a purely artificial sin, manufactured out of a false view of the Church and its unity, and which, I shall not say, "was invented," but is admirably suited, to make ill-instructed people submit to all the claims of a sacerdotal despotism.

Dr. Langtry's fling at the Protestant view of the Catholic Church as "an invisible thing" will move no one who remembers the well-defined sense in which Rogers, Hooker and Protestant divines, apply the epithet invisible to the Church. Cardinal Bellarmine, when assailing the Protestant view, asks, "Are the members of the Church ghosts?" And it was quite natural that when Dr. Langtry was defending the Romish view, he should borrow a weapon from the Papal arsenal. The answer in both cases is the same: part of the Holy Catholic Church is on earth and part of it in heaven, and, as a whole, it is never visible to the human eye at once. And, moreover, although the members of this Church, when on earth, are as visible as other men in the flesh are, and their faith is in some measure seen in their works, profession, and life, yet only He who reads the hearts of all men can infallibly discern whether the

inward reality corresponds with the outward appearance. Only the Lord knoweth them that are His. The distinction between the visible and the invisible Church is one which must be admitted by all who do not confound formal religionism with vital piety. That what we have called the Protestant view of the Church was more widely accepted and clearly stated after the era of the Reformation is readily admitted, but that it was "not heard of until the middle of the 16th century" is what few intelligent men will assert. We have seen that the Apostles' Creed, as understood generally by the English and Continental Reformers, contains a distinct enunciation of it. As they understood it, it defines the Holy Catholic Church to be the communion of saints, so that wherever you have saints and saints in communion with each other, there you have "the Holy Catholic Church." The Apostles' Creed certainly did not come from the apostles, but I presume Dr. Langtry will not deny that it existed a millennium before the 16th century.

Nearly two hundred years before "the middle of the 16th century," John Wickliffe had stirred England to its centre by his translation of the Scriptures and his powerful preaching. What then was the distinctive peculiarity of his teaching? Prof. Lechler, of Leipsic, who has given us the most thorough work we possess in "John Wiclif and his English Precursors," writes as follows:—"But there is certainly one peculiar feature in his fundamental idea of the Church. Not that this peculiarity was anything new, or belonging only to Wiclif (he has it, as he was well aware, in common with Augustine), but it is a peculiarity of very great importance, and runs like a red thread through the whole system of Wiclif's thinking—we mean the thought that the Church is nothing else than the whole number of the elect. According to Wiclif the eternal ground, or basis of the Church, lies in the divine election. He always defines the Church to be the communion of the whole body of the elect. In other words, he places himself in deliberate opposition to the idea of the Church which prevailed in his time, and expressly disapproves of those notions and forms of speech according to which men took the Church to mean the visible Catholic Church—the organized communion of the hierarchy."—p. 322. If this is not the same doctrine which the Reformers taught, will Dr. Langtry explain wherein it differs?

Coming down to the beginning of the 15th century, we find John Huss before the Council of Constance, charged, among other so-called errors, with holding the very views of the Church which Wicliffe taught. And Loserth, who, in his valuable work on "Wiclif and Hus," has traced with great care the connection between these illustrious men, has shown that their views upon the Church were identical, and that both claimed for them the sanction of Augustine's great name. P. 185. Milman, in his "Latin Christianity," Book XIII., chap. ix., gives the same view of the sentiments of Huss respecting the Church. He represents him as charged before the Council with holding these views, accepting the responsibility, justifying himself by an appeal to "the all-honoured name of Augustine," and finding "none who dared to answer." So that at the date of the Council of Constance (1414 A.D.) this "invention" to cover our modern sin, must have been a thousand years old. We may add that Hagenbach in his history of Doctrine, Vol. II., p. 312-15, not only credits Wickliffe and Huss with teaching the Protestant view of the Church, but he enumerates Hugo St. Victor, Matthias of Ianow, Johann Von Wesel, and Savonarola as substantially at one with them.

The reader is now in a position to judge of the astounding assertion that, the view adopted by the Reformers, "was never heard of in the Christian Church, till the middle of the 16th century," and also to estimate the value of other statements, which we have not time to examine. Dr. Langtry's Scriptural argument against the Protestant conception of the Church, presents matter which is very tempting. He has convinced himself that the Scriptures teach exactly what he believes. "I go further," he says, "and affirm, without fear of contradiction, that the name Church is never applied to anything that is not a visible organized society." This shows a great talent for affirmation, and a happy courage which is afraid of nothing. All the Lexicons of the New Testament Greek contradict him; for not one of them, that I have seen, can discover a trace of "visible organization" in the primary meaning of the word *ecclesia*—Church. He is contradicted by numberless commentators, many of them the most careful, exact, and learned, like Meyer. He is contradicted by nearly all the Reformers of his own Church and of the Continent of Europe; and he is contradicted by the mass of Protestant authors

for three hundred and fifty years, but what of that? "They are not infallible," but Dr. Langtry—well, he is "without fear of contradiction!!" The man who knows that the word translated Church, by its native force, signifies simply an assembly called together, must have wonderful clearness of vision if he can see that it involves visible organization everywhere, and that it has the same meaning when applied to that Church which Christ founded on a rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, and when applied to that Church Christ declares He will spue out of His mouth. If a man can see a visible organization in "the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood," and in "the General Assembly and Church of the first born written in heaven," and in that Church through which glory shall be given to God throughout all ages, he must have a sharpness of vision which nothing can equal, but the eye of the lynx, which, according to Erasmus, "can see even in the densest darkness that which does not exist."

And now in closing, so far as I am concerned, this discussion, I may say that I have not thought it necessary, except incidently, to refer to the re-union movement. Any well considered plan, which does not sacrifice principle, designed to foster brotherly feelings among Christians, or to promote union, organic or federal, among Protestants, has my cordial sympathy; but I believe that unity of feeling and conviction must precede organic union. And I may also add that, while I have no right to speak for the Church to which I belong, I know something of the sentiments of the Presbyterian and other evangelical Churches; and I venture to say that, so far as they are concerned, any movement for re-union that is inspired and directed by a rejection of the fundamental principles of the Reformation, is foredoomed to failure. The shadow on the world's dial is not likely to move backward at the behest of mediævalism.

TEXT OF LAMBETH ARTICLES.

“That in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God’s blessing made towards Home Re-union; (a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation,’ and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith. (b) The Apostles’ Creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith. (c) The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him. (d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

“That this Conference earnestly requests the constituted authorities of the branches of our communion, acting, so far as may be, in concert with one another, to make it known that they hold themselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference (such as that which has already been proposed by the Church in the United States of America) with representatives of other Christian communions in the English-speaking races, in order to consider what steps can be taken either toward corporate Re-union or toward such relations as may prepare the way for fuller organic unity hereafter. That this Conference recommends as of great importance, in tending to bring about Re-union, the dissemination of information respecting the standards of doctrine and the formularies in use in the Anglican Church; and recommends the information be disseminated, on the other hand, respecting the authoritative standards of doctrine, worship, and government adopted by other bodies of Christians into which the English-speaking races are divided.”

REV. DR. LANGTRY'S LETTERS.

LETTER I.

To the Editor of The Mail,

SIR,—I venture to say that Professor MacLaren's address at the re-opening of Knox College, published in your issue of to-day, will make many sad hearts throughout the country. It seems to me, unless we were altogether deceived in the meaning of the language used, to breathe a spirit the very opposite of that which animated every one of the Presbyterian delegates who spoke at the conference on union last spring. I have also been greatly misled if it is not the direct contradiction of the sentiments and aspirations expressed by that entire delegation. It is true that Dr. MacLaren said but very little on that occasion, and it may be that he did not agree with the opinions expressed by his co-delegates; but it is certain that if any such convictions had been expressed then as those to which the Rev. Dr. gave utterance yesterday, then instead of going away with glad hearts and high expectations of being yet permitted to witness the restoration of "brotherly union and concord," for which we have so long been praying, every hope would have been crushed, and we should have regretted that we ever came together at all.

It is to me amazing that any thoughtful man could ever have persuaded himself, and much more amazing that he should attempt to persuade others, that the spectacle of our divided, storm-tossed, warring sects, with their rivalries and enmities, is a realization of that unity for which our Lord prayed, and there is nothing to be ashamed of and sorry for in the many Protestant sects into which the world is to-day divided. "*Divide et impera*" was the motto of heathen Rome. It is the motto of Papal Rome. It has always been the motto of hell. It is surely the source of infinite weakness and endless failure. It perplexes men. It dishonours God. It contradicts Scripture: "For whereas there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal and walk as men." "Mark them that cause divisions contrary to the doctrine which ye have received and avoid them," so writes St. Paul. But St. Paul, according to Dr. MacLaren, wrote nonsense, for division in the Church of Christ is impossible, and the sects of Christendom, if they are based upon national, political, or personal preferences, are natural, and are beneficial. I have not time now to enter upon the discussion of Dr. MacLaren's—I think—unscriptural and irrational view of what the Church of Christ is. I ask leave, in the interest of far off unity, to be allowed to do so as, in my busy life, I shall find opportunity. In the meantime I wish,

through you, to call Dr. MacLaren's attention to what I think he will feel to be the great unfairness of trying to prejudice his hearers and readers against every view of the Church differing from his own by dubbing it Romish. It looks as though the doctor knew the value of giving a dog a bad name, and was not unwilling to take that advantage of some not-to-be-despised opponents of his modern theory of the Church.

LETTER II.

To the Editor of The Mail.

SIR,—You were good enough to publish recently a letter of mine, expressing what I believe to be a very widely felt surprise and regret at the attitude assumed by Rev. Dr. MacLaren, in his address at the opening of Knox College, towards the Christian reunion movement. Will you kindly allow me space to discuss, as briefly as I can, the doctor's theory of the Church as there propounded? It is evident that if that theory be correct then not only is all progress towards reunion barred, but it is an impeachment of the Divine wisdom and a foolish waste of time even to talk about it. Now, I want to say that I am not approaching this subject in the least degree in a controversial spirit, but in a spirit of downright sorrow and disappointment, and in the humble hope that I may be able to do something to clear away the fog in which this subject has become involved in many minds.

The doctor says, "There are in reality only two conceptions of the Church radically distinct—the Romish and the Protestant. The Romish definition, he states, quoting Cardinal Bellarmine, to be "that the Church is a society of men on earth, united together by the profession of one and the self-same sacraments, under the government of lawful pastors, and especially the Roman Pontiff." Those, he says, who hold this view "regard the Church as a purely external and visible society, made up of all sorts of men, even of the reprobate, as Bellarmine expressly affirms." The Protestant definition of the Church, the doctor tells us, is, that it "consists of the whole number of those that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one Church under Christ, the Head thereof," a general definition surely, which I am satisfied, Roman Catholics would readily accept, as far as it goes. But the professor, quoting with approval the Geneva Catechism, further defines who

these are: "The Church is the society of believers whom God hath predestinated unto eternal life." "This," he says "is substantially the common doctrine of Protestants." I do not want to say any offensive word, but I cannot help asking in what far-off region of dreamland has Dr. MacLaren been living for these many years? Does he really believe that it is the common doctrine of Protestants that the Church consists only of "believers whom God hath predestinated to eternal life?" I venture to say that it is not the belief of one Protestant in a thousand—that it is not the belief of one half the members of his own denomination; that the whole doctrine of predestination and reprobation, as set forth in the Shorter Catechism, is absolutely rejected by nine Protestants out of ten in the present day. People certainly do not believe that the Church contains reprobates, as the doctor fears they may, because they do not believe that there are, in his sense of the word, any such people in existence—people, *i.e.*, who have been left out of the redemption of Christ, and have been doomed to everlasting destruction before they were born. So that the professor has certainly not given us a full and fair statement of the belief of even a considerable minority of Protestants about the Church. I fear he has been equally unfair in his statement of what he calls the Romish view. I do not believe that any educated Roman Catholic will accept the quotation from Bellarmine as a full, fair, or adequate statement of his belief as to what the Church is. It does not appear that Bellarmine intended it to be such. I doubt very much whether any instructed Roman Catholic will regard the doctor's statement that he looks upon the Church as a "purely external society" as other than a slanderous statement. Moreover, I cannot understand how a man, of Professor MacLaren's learning, could tell a receptive class of young men that the only two views of the Church that have been, or in fact ever were, held are that which maintains its subjection to the Pope, or limits it by a decree of predestination to eternal life.

The doctor evidently knows better, for he casually refers to Dr. Döllinger, the most learned theologian of this age, and to the Tractarians, a not contemptible set of men either in numbers, learning or ability, as believing that the Church is, amongst other things, a visible organized society. This he characterizes as a Romish conception of the Church, and says that they who hold it "argue, when they speak about re-union, as if the body which is divided is identical with that whose unity is proclaimed in the Word of God. This the doctor utterly rejects, and says that the Church for which Christ prayed, and "to which pertain the promises, is not a visible society of all sorts of men, but the body of Christ made up of the Lord's redeemed," "The Church as set forth in the New Testament is not in its widest conception a mixed body made up of all sorts of men, good and bad. It is composed of the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus." "It includes none but believers." "There are no hypocrites and no reprobates in this Church."

The doctor's position then is plain. The Church which Jesus our Lord said He would build upon this rock, which St. Paul says He did build upon

the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner-stone; "the Church to which the promises are given, to which the privileges belong, for which Christ prayed, is not an external visible organization," and he says that those who speak of it as "a visible society" have only the "Romish conception of the Church." He says that in the New Testament believers are required to associate themselves for "Christian fellowship, mutual watch and care, and the extension of the kingdom of Christ," (will the doctor tell us where this requirement is to be found?), "and these societies thus formed are spoken of as Churches." "But it is a Romish conception to teach that this body is (he ought surely to have said these bodies, are) identical with that whose unity is proclaimed in the Word of God and to which pertain the promises."

Now, first I want to tell the professor and his young friends quite clearly that neither what he gives as the Romish conception, nor the Calvinistic conception is the only possible conception of the Church. I want to tell them in the second place that all those who believe that the Church of the New Testament is a visible organized society do not regard it as a purely external organization. I wish to say in the third place, if I may venture upon another definition, that the Catholic conception of the Church, as opposed alike to the Romish and Calvinistic conception, is that the Church of the New Testament is a living entity, having an abiding inner life and a visible outward bodily form. It grows out of Christ, and not out of the act of individual believers, voluntarily associating themselves together for the purposes named by Dr. MacLaren. Christ, the true Life, came, as He himself tells us, that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly. That life, like all other life of which we can take cognizance, took to itself an outward bodily form. That body, however, is not, like the natural body, built up out of the elements of the material world, but out of the material of individual human beings. They, to use another figure employed by St. Paul, are the living stones of which it is built. The process of building is not carried on and accomplished by any act of individual believers, but by the operation and engrafting of the Holy Ghost. For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body (I. Cor., xii., 13), and so have been made the body of Christ, and members in particular (v., 27). This body thus constructed has been made the habitation of God through the Spirit, the Body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. In this body He dwells as a man dwells in his body, and is personally present in every part of it. Into it we are engrafted by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and so are made partakers of His Incarnate life—members, as St. Paul expresses it, of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. And so the Christian who is using God's unspeakable gift can say, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and so St. Paul can ask, Know ye not that Christ is in you except ye be reprobate? The Church then is not an invisible association of individual believers on the one hand, nor is it a purely external and visible society on the other. It is a living entity—the new creation of God,

with its inner life and outward form, both subsisting and both necessary to its being. This, if I am not greatly mistaken, was the accepted doctrine of the Church from the beginning. And so it is not true, as Dr. MacLaren assumes, that all who do not believe his doctrine of an invisible Church have of necessity held what he calls the Romish view. Thus:

St. Ignatius, for instance, who was martyred 20th Dec., A.D. 107 (Ep. ad Trail. iii.), says "that apart," not from the Roman Pontiff, "but apart from the bishops, priests, and deacons, there is no Church." He certainly did not think of the Church as an invisible thing, and yet he lived some hundreds of years before Popery in any form existed in the world

St. Irenæus, who wrote about A.D. 170, says "the Church consists of those who have received the adoption," i.e. baptism. "It is a visible body, animated by one spirit, everywhere preaching one and the same faith, one and the same way of salvation." Lib. i., cap. 3, and Lib. v., cap. 20. This is certainly not identical with either of the professor's definitions.

St. Athanasius speaks of Christ as the foundation of the Church, and of unfaithful Christians as the tares among the good seed.

Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine say the Church is the ark of Noah, and as there were evil beasts in the ark, so bad Christians in the Church. (Hierem., Ep. 78; Aug., Tom. IV., p. 131.) Again, the Church is the field of God, in which, however, spring both tares and wheat. The Church is not all pure and free from stain. The just are mingled with the unjust. (August., Tom. IV., p. 1,497, and De Civitate, Tom. VII., p. 30.) The writers of this and the succeeding age teach unmistakably that the Church is a visible body, capable of being known and recognized; that baptism admits to it; that it is essential to its existence to have a rightly ordained ministry who are able to minister the sacraments, which sacraments are spoken of as forming the Church: "*procul dubio sacramenta sunt quibus formatus ecclesia*" (St. Augustin, serm. CCXIX., Tom. V., p. 962, and Chrysostom, Tom. II., p. 915). Professor MacLaren says that only Romanists hold such views, and yet I think he will hardly class Ignatius, Irenæus, Chrysostom, Jerome, or Augustine as Romish writers. It is true that some of the Reformers, notably Calvin, envolved the idea of the Church for which the doctor contends, as an invisible society made up only of true believers, and distinct from those visible societies into which men may, according to their teaching, form themselves. This was a wholly new opinion. It had never been heard of in the Christian Church till the middle of the sixteenth century. It would never have been heard of had not men felt that such a thing was necessary to justify their action in not reforming but overthrowing the old historic Church and founding new ones, according to their own fancy. In England, where the old Church was not destroyed but reformed, no necessity for this new theory was felt. And so, except in imitation of the Continental writers, or as an apparently logical outcome of the Calvinistic system, it was not adopted. It is true that the XIX. Article teaches that the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of

faithful men, in 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. But the men who wrote that article had already determined that a priest was one of those things that of necessity are requisite to the same; and that a priest could only be made by a bishop. And it is evident that the word "faithful" is used in this article in the technical sense attached to it at the time, as including all who accept and confess the faith of Christ. For in the XXVI Article it is said:—"In the visible Church the evil are ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority." And so we read in "The Institution of a Christian Man," written by Crammer, "I believe," not that the Catholic Church is made up of elect believers, but "I believe that the said Church of Rome, with all the other particular (*i.e.*, national) Churches in the world compacted and united together, do make and constitute but one Catholic Church or body." So that Dr. McLaren is not justified in assuming that all the Reformers (including, I suppose, the English) held his theory of an invisible Church. If it were true that the Continental and Scotch Reformers universally adopted that opinion, then I think it would be fair to reply that they were not infallible, and that they may well have been mistaken in this, as they certainly were in a cognate matter. They all acted on the principle *cujus regio, ejus religio*, as Read shows in the Hibbert Lectures of 1883, *i.e.*, that the subject should follow the religion of his ruler. And thus regional uniformity was enforced by the sword. "Again, the reformers were absolutely against toleration," and I suppose that nobody will hold that they are to be blindly followed here also.

I am not able to speak with anything like the positiveness of Dr. MacLaren about the individual opinions of the Reformers, but it is a fact that the visibility of the Church is affirmed in all the public confessions of the Continental Reformers. It would occupy too much space even to condense the proof of this; that is supplied in the *Syntagma Confessionum*. But the Helvetic is identical with the Anglican. The Gallic XXVI. says: "Credemus igitur licere sese cœtibus subducere et in seipso acquiescere. Sed potius omnibus serunt tenendam et conservandam esse Ecclesia unitatem, sese communi institutione et jugo Christi subjiciendo, ubicunque Deus veram illam disciplinam Ecclesiasticam constituerint etiamsi Magistratum edicta reclamant a quo ordine quicunque seipsos segregunt ordinatione Dei resistant." And XXV., "We by no means deny that many hypocrites and reprobates are mingled with the faithful—Sed quorum malitia ecclesia nomen delere non possit." XXIX., "The Church should be governed by the polity or discipline which our Lord Jesus Christ authorized. "The Saxon Confession says:—"Ac fatemur de ecclesia visibile in hæc vita sentiendum esse, sicut inquit Dominus, Matt. XXII., simile est regnum cœli sagena Missæ in Marc," etc. If, however, Dr. MacLaren can show that all this counts for nothing, and that these Reformers, in spite of these public confessions, held his view of the

invisibility of the Church, I would still ask him to consider whether it is wise or safe to put the opinions of men in a time of confessed fluctuation and transition above the Scriptures of truth and the judgment of fifteen hundred years of the Church's life. I say above the Scriptures, for, with your permission, I will undertake in my next letter to show that the professor's theory, that the Church of Jesus Christ, to which the promises belong, is an invisible thing, has not one shred of authority in the Bible, and is absolutely excluded by many of its statements.

LETTER III.

To the Editor of The Mail.

SIR,—I do not feel that I would be called upon or justified in criticizing Dr. MacLaren's opinion as to what the Church of Christ is were it not that he has published that opinion to the world as dispensing with the duty or even the desirability of arriving at and striving after visible reunion. And indeed, if his opinion be correct, the state of division that exists at the present time is the divinely intended and normal condition of the Christian Church, and it is therefore wrong to try to end it.

In his lecture, at the re-opening of Knox College, the professor states in explicit terms that the Church for which Christ prayed, the Church to which pertain the promises, is not a visible society. And again, "That the Church as set forth in the New Testament... is not a mixed body made up of all sorts of men, good and bad." "It includes none but believers." "There are no hypocrites and no reprobates in this Church." On the positive side the professor tells us that "the Church of Christ is a congregation of the members of Christ, that is, of the saints who do truly believe and rightly obey Christ." Or, "the society of believers whom God hath predestinated to eternal life." This, Professor MacLaren tells us, is the Protestant conception of the Church, and he says it is derived from a careful examination and induction of the teaching of Scripture, direct and indirect, bearing upon it. I can only say that there is nothing more astonishing in the history of human opinion than the fact that people think they find in the Bible, or may deduce from it, that which is manifestly not only not contained in it, but which is altogether excluded by many of its plainest statements. And, to my mind, there is no more astounding illustration of this

phenomenon than is supplied by the notion that the Bible teaches that the Church of the New Testament, to which the promises are made, and to which the privileges of the Gospel belong, is an invisible, unorganized association of all true believers; all who are predestinated to eternal life, as the Calvinists put it, or of all who are truly converted, as modern sentiment would prefer expressing it.

Whatever else may be affirmed of it, it is beyond dispute that that thing, to which the name Church is applied in the New Testament, is a visible organized society, with its visible officers and laws and mode of initiation and badges of membership. I go further, and affirm, without the fear of contradiction, that the name Church is never applied to anything that is not a visible organized society. The word *Ecclesia*, which we translate Church, was not a new term invented by our Lord or His Apostles. It was familiar to the ears of His hearers. It was employed in the Septuagint version of the Scriptures, which was in common use at that time, to describe the Jewish nation, the chosen race (see Ps. xxii., 32). It is used by St. Stephen (Acts vii., 38) to describe that people as a whole. St. Paul applies it to them (Heb. ii., 12). Now it will not be pretended that God's ancient people, the Jewish nation, were an invisible unorganized community. Nor will it be contended that they were true believers—truly converted men and women—amongst whom no hypocrites and no reprobates were to be found. Here then is a term in familiar use employed by everyone to describe a visible organized society. Surely if its meaning was now to be wholly changed; if it was to be henceforth employed to describe a different kind of society altogether from that to which it always had been applied; surely, surely, in very mercy, the merciful Lord, to say nothing of His apostles, would have told His hearers plainly of this change and the reasons for it. But not a hint of any such change, intended or accomplished, is to be found anywhere.

But further, the word Church occurs over a hundred times in the New Testament, and there is not one passage in which it occurs which either by direct statement or fair induction can be made to teach Dr. MacLaren's idea of an invisible Church, made up only of true believers, or of those who have been "predestinated to eternal life." There are many passages which altogether exclude any such meaning. The Church at Pergamos had amongst its members those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and others who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Were these true believers, predestinated to eternal life? The Church at Thyatira had the woman Jezebel, who set herself up to seduce God's servants to commit fornication and eat things offered to idols, for a member. Was she truly converted? Was she not manifestly either a hypocrite or a reprobate? The Church at Sardis had many members whose names were going to be blotted out of the Book of Life—(Rev. iii., 5). They were surely not all predestinated to eternal life? The whole of the members of the Church at Laodicea were so lukewarm that they were only fit to be "spued out of the mouth of Christ." Were

they truly converted people? The Church at Corinth had in it one member who was guilty of the fondest incest; many members who showed that they "were carnal and walked as men by the parties and divisions that had sprung up among them"; many members who were utter sceptics, denying the fundamental doctrine of the Resurrection; many who were guilty of gross profanation of the Lord's Supper. The Church in Galatia had been bewitched, and had all but apostatized. Were all these members of these Churches, in spite of the Apostle's condemnation, "true believers, who were truly obeying our Lord Jesus Christ?" Again, if the Church be invisible how can anyone obey the Lord's command, "Tell it unto the Church?" Where could we find an invisible Church, or how could the offending brother hear or refuse to hear the Church if the Church could nowhere be found to hear the complaint or speak to the offender? How, again, could the discipline commanded be exercised? How could you cast a man out of an invisible Church? If he were a good man you could not cast him out of your invisible Church, for all good men are members of it by virtue of their goodness. And if he were a bad man you could not cast him out, for he did not belong to this invisible Church, and never could according to the professor's teaching. How, again, could a great persecution come upon an invisible Church (Acts viii., 1)? How could the persecutor find it? Or how could the Apostles have assembled with an invisible Church? How could they have ordained elders in every church if the Church was invisible (Acts xii., 27)? Or how could they be brought on their way by an invisible Church? Or how could those at Rome salute an invisible Church? Or how could Saul make havoc of an invisible Church? Or Diotrephes cast men out of an invisible Church? or Timothy take care of an invisible Church? Were the Churches to which St. Paul wrote his Epistles at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica invisible Churches? How, again, could the members of an invisible Church "obey them that have the rule over them?" Who would they be? where could they find them?

There is no sin more sternly denounced in Holy Scripture than the sin of schism, the dividing the body of Christ. But if the Church be invisible, how could parties be formed in it or schisms from it? You might set up as many sects or parties as you liked, and yet you could not, by any act of visible, external separation, divide an invisible community, made up of true spiritual members; and so it would follow not only that many parts of Holy Scripture were written in vain, but are positively chargeable with the fraud of trying to confound a visible society with the one true invisible Church. But no. This modern notion that the Church which Christ said He would build upon this rock, and which St. Paul tells us He did build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone, is an invisible thing, is a manifest fiction invented to hide from men's eyes the enormous guilt of the sin of schism with which the Christian world is afflicted and humiliated to-day, and which Holy Scripture everywhere so sternly condemns.

It is surely manifest at once that if the Church of the New Testament be an invisible fellowship, then every visible thing on earth calling itself a Church is unscriptural and wrong; is in fact nothing less than a wicked attempt on the part of a mere human and unauthorized society, by appropriating a name which does not belong to it, to delude people into the notion that by joining it they will secure to themselves the promises and privileges which belong to another society altogether. It would hardly be honest for a new firm to take the name of an old and well-established house in order to gain for itself the credit and custom that belonged to the ancient and secure establishment; or, to take another illustration still fresh in men's minds, it was surely not right, it was most wicked and wrong, for the butcher, Arthur Orton, to take the name of Roger Tichborne that he might be able to appropriate as his own the rich estates of the Tichborne family. And yet this theory about the Church being invisible obliges us to believe that any visible thing on earth calling itself a Church is guilty of just such a crime as that.

But what then, you ask; do you deny that there is an invisible Church? And I answer yes, in the sense described by Dr. MacLaren, I do. The company of those who have passed out of the body into the presence of their Lord is invisible to us now, but it is not another Church, it is part of the same. It is also true that those who belong to Christ, not in name and by profession only, but in spirit and in truth, are invisible to us, and known only to God; but neither of these are ever called the invisible Church in the New Testament. That Church is a visible organized body, made up of good and bad members, tares and wheat, wheat and chaff, good fishes and bad, foolish virgins and wise, branches of the true vine, some living, some withering, some dead.

To all the members of this visible Church—this one body of Christ—as far as God's intention and gift and act can make them so, all the promises of the Gospel, all the privileges of the Church—membership in Christ, adoption and sonship, and inheritance among the saints—are pledged and do belong. Only, as in other matters, a gift has not only to be given but to be taken. A privilege must not only be conferred but accepted. An estate bequeathed must also be claimed and taken possession of before it benefits him to whom it has been given. But many, alas, to whom these high privileges belong, like Esau, despite their birthright, do not claim or seek to appropriate as their own these unspeakable gifts of God, and so forfeit and lose them. And yet they are gifts which God conveys in and through the visible Church to all who will receive them. And so I end this letter, as the last, by asserting, without any fear of contradiction, that there is not a shred of positive evidence in the Bible for the theory of an invisible Church which Dr. MacLaren tells has been learned from the Bible. And further, that that theory is positively excluded by many positive statements, and by the unvarying use of the term Church.

I am sorry to take up so much of your valuable space, but it is all-important in the interests of the reunion of divided Christendom that this woolly way of thinking about the Church should be expunged from men's minds as an utterly unscriptural and irrational idea.

NOTE BY THE PUBLISHERS.

The above Letters are published with the consent of the writers duly obtained. Dr. Langtry informs us that there are still in the hands of the *Mail* two letters in reply to Dr. MacLaren unpublished; but rather than Dr. MacLaren's article and letters should go forth without any of his replies, he prefers to give the three already published.

