Papers of the American Society of Church History

<http://journals.cambridge.org/PCH>

Additional services for *Papers of the American Society of Church History*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Christian Unity, or the Kingdom of Heaven

Thomas Davidson

Papers of the American Society of Church History / Volume 4 / January 1892,
pp 55 - 78

DOI: 10.1017/S1079902800000449, Published online: 21 September 2009

Link to this article: [http://journals.cambridge.org/
abstract_S1079902800000449](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1079902800000449)

How to cite this article:

Thomas Davidson (1892). Christian Unity, or the Kingdom of Heaven.
Papers of the American Society of Church History, 4, pp 55-78
doi:10.1017/S1079902800000449

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

CHRISTIAN UNITY, OR THE KINGDOM
OF HEAVEN

CHRISTIAN UNITY, OR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

BY MR. THOMAS DAVIDSON, NEW YORK CITY.

No one can doubt that, if the Christian Church were one in spirit, and one in organization for work, she would fulfil her appointed mission better than she does. Indeed, since the establishment of brotherly love is a chief part of that mission, so long as that love is wanting, so long she fails in her mission. It may be safely said that no single cause so effectually obstructs Christianity within the Church, and none so prevents its acceptance outside, as the schisms and enmities whereby she is divided against herself. While she thus offers a ready text to her critics, detractors, and opponents, how can she hope to conquer the world for brotherly love?

Whatever weighty reasons there may have been in days gone by for rending to pieces the Christian body; whatever advantages may have seemed likely to spring therefrom, that rending, being an absolute belying of the Christian spirit, was, in itself, an unmixed evil. The Church that had so far lost the spirit of Christian love, as not to be ready to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things, rather than fall to pieces, was not the Church of Christ. No corruption or abuse, however glaring, could ever constitute a sufficient excuse for schism or revolt. Schism may be allowable in every other institution: in the Church of Christ it is forever forbidden; for the reason that her very essence is the unity of brotherly love, and where that fails, she fails. As St. Ignatius says: "If any one followeth one that maketh a schism, he doth not inherit the kingdom of God." (*Philad.*, iii.)

But the schisms exist, and we are not appointed the judges of those through whom they came. We leave them to Him who said: "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to him through whom the offence cometh." What concerns us is our present and future duty with regard to these schisms. And this duty seems clear enough. It is to labor with all our might, in the spirit of self-abnegation and brotherly love, to put an end to them. This is an ineluctable duty laid upon every Christian, and more especially upon those who hold office in the Church. Perhaps no other duty presses with such imperativeness at this moment.

Never were the efforts of a united Church so sorely needed as they are now; never was disunion so enfeebling and paralyzing. In the past, on several occasions, certain teachings and claims of the Church have been disputed and combated; at present, it is her fundamental claim, the very principle of her existence and life, that is at stake. It is now openly proclaimed, and widely believed, as never before since Christianity was a power in the world, that man is born, lives, and dies like the beast; that he has no loving Father, no moral nature, no hope for eternity; that all is matter, reducible to dust and ashes. And this, too, is proclaimed and believed, not merely by men ignorant, blinded by passion, or rebellious from adversity, but also by men of learning and position, who profess to lead the intellectual and practical life of the world—men great in science and in statesmanship. Upon their teachings is being built up an ideal of individual and social life, from which every motive borrowed from divine authority and moral obligation thereto is carefully excluded, and duty is expounded in terms of getting and having, of pleasure and pain, during the brief days of the flesh. Underneath all the threatening phenomena of our present life, underneath the socialisms, anarchisms, nihilisms; underneath the all but universal demand for self-satisfaction, coarse or refined, this is the force that works. It is a force directly opposed to that which the ideal of the Church seeks to exert; and it requires no spe-

cial gift of prophecy to see that the two must soon enter upon an open conflict, which can end only with the overthrow of the one or the other.

The fundamental question which the world of to-day is trying, more or less blindly, to solve, in theory and in practice, is: Shall man henceforth live as a mortal, or as an immortal, being? Shall he shape his action with reference to time only, or also for eternity? As applied to institutions, this translates itself into the question: Shall the State, whose function it is to regulate the claims of distinct selves to the things of time, be the supreme institution, and the Church disappear from the face of the earth, or shall the Church continue to grow and spread, taking hold of the self at the point where the State leaves it, and raising it to a divine consciousness, transcending self and time?

The right of the Church to exist is the question of the day. The answer to it will depend, in the main, upon the Church herself, and her fidelity to her divine ideal and mission. If she turn away from her Lord, if she become worldly, if she be found rent by schisms and enmities, and emptied of that God-consciousness which expresses itself in Faith, Hope, and Love, then we may rest assured that she will be treated, as her forerunner, the Hebrew nation, was treated of old, when guilty of a like disloyalty. She will be carried away captive among the nations; she will disappear in the dark places of worldliness, and it will be due to some Isaiah, whose lips are touched with a live coal from the altar, if even a "remnant" of her is left to rebuild Jerusalem.

In preparing for the struggle that awaits her, the first thing that the Church requires is unity. Her lost unity must be restored. In inquiring how this is to be accomplished, there are three things which we must consider: (1) the nature of the unity which properly belongs to the Church; (2) the causes which destroyed that unity; and (3) the possible means for the removal of those causes. Only if we can make these clear to ourselves, shall we be in a position to offer some practical suggestions for the restoration of Christian unity.

I.—THE NATURE OF CHURCH UNITY.

It is often said that unity is strength. This, however, is not universally true. All depends upon the nature of the unity. In order to be a source of strength, the unity of any thing, or any institution, must be one constituted by that which is its inmost essence. Any other unity may be, and often is, a source of weakness. A nation held together by an iron despotism is a feeble nation, because the only true principle of national unity is the patriotism of the citizens. Great despot-ruled Persia was powerless in the face of small patriotic Greece. In asking, then, what is the nature of the unity that properly belongs to the Church, we are virtually asking what is the inmost essence of the Church.

It is strange enough that in this nineteenth century there should be any doubt on this matter. Yet such is the fact, and it is a fact that contributes greatly to prevent any concentrated effort toward Christian union. Some look upon the Church as an institution for the promotion of morality, others as a means of escape from eternal perdition, others as a union for philanthropic purposes, and so on. It would be vain to hope for unity amid such divergent views. In endeavoring to state which is the essence and unitary principle of the Church, I shall not have recourse to any *a priori* or subjective considerations, but simply inquire what kind of unity the founder of Christianity sought to realize in it. If the Church be, as she professes, the embodiment of his will and spirit, then this must be the only correct method of discovering her essence. What, then, is the nature of the unity that Christ contemplated for his Church?

Before attempting to answer this, I must say one word about the term "Church" (Greek *ἐκκλησία*, Hebrew *הקָהָל*). It is a term rarely used by Christ.¹ His standing designation for the institution which he came to establish is the "Kingdom of Heaven," or the "Kingdom of God."² We

¹ It occurs only twice in the gospels, and both times in Matthew—xvi., 18; xviii., 17.

² "Kingdom of Heaven" occurs only in Matthew, who uses it very often. He uses likewise "Kingdom of God," which is the ordinary expression in the rest of the New Testament.

are told that, even after his resurrection, he appeared to his disciples for forty days "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." As I am inclined to believe that the use of the term "Church," to designate the Christian institution, tends to obliterate its true character, I shall, for the most part, drop it, and speak of the Kingdom of Heaven. What kind of unity, then, did Christ contemplate for his Kingdom of Heaven?

It would be comparatively easy, by comparing a number of Christ's sayings gathered from the different gospels, to answer this question in a formal way. But by so doing, I should leave the institution of Christ as something standing by itself, isolated from the course of history. Now, inasmuch as it is especially important, in the present condition of thought, to avoid this, and, by anticipation, to rebut the charge that Christianity is an unnatural intruder into the orderly course of evolution, I shall endeavor to show that what Christ contemplated, so far from being isolated and unnatural, was the true and necessary consummation of evolution, as properly conceived. Whether or not it is to be called supernatural, will depend altogether upon our definition of the natural.

The modern theory of evolution, which has taken the thought of our time, as it were, by surprise, does not essentially differ from the older theories on the same subject,³ except in this, that it is usually connected with a mechanical theory of action and life. This is a mere accident, due to the fact that the theory at first sought confirmation in departments of nature in which mechanical action mainly prevails, viz., in the physical structure of plants and animals. It is now turning to departments characterized by other forms of action—to psychology, ethics, politics, sociology, and even religion,—and, in so doing, is causing grave apprehensions in the minds of many thoughtful and pious men, lest these too should be shown to be

³ Theories of evolution are nothing new. We find them in the Hymns of the Veda, in the Ionic philosophers, in Æschylus, Empedocles, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius; in the Neo-Platonists, in the Arab Aristotelians, in the *Liber de Causis et Processu Unius*, in Nicholas Cusanus, etc., etc.

governed by mechanical laws. For this apprehension the pardonable materialism of the majority of evolutionists is chiefly to blame; but, after all, it is entirely groundless; for the further we extend the sphere of evolution, the more clearly shall we see that it cannot be explained by any merely mechanical forces, but that it demands, as its source, a conscious mind and a righteous will, and, as its consummation and crown, a Kingdom of Heaven, in which that will is done. It is only because we try to confine evolution to the region of mechanics that it remains mechanical. Extend it to the region of spirit, and it will soon become spiritual, just as ancient philosophy did in its progress from Thales to Aristotle.⁴ Indeed, evolution will never attain its full significance until, casting aside its mechanical connections, it proclaim itself to be what it really is, the method of the divine activity—of the divine thought or λόγος, manifesting itself in space and time, in nature and grace. When it has rid itself of Hegel on the one hand, and Spencer on the other, it will find that Christ's Kingdom of Heaven is only the last phase of the divine plan with reference to humanity; as Dante says: "Termine fisso d'eterno consiglio." Nay, more than this: as the doctrine of evolution will never show its true character and meaning until illuminated by the light of the Kingdom of Heaven, so that kingdom will never be seen in its true character until it is beheld as the consummation of evolution, as the

"one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."⁵

Let us, then, turn the light of the theory of evolution upon the inner world, the world of consciousness, and see

⁴ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, i., 3 sqq.

⁵ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, closing words. It appears to me that the future of the Christian religion will depend upon whether it can succeed in grafting itself upon the theory of evolution, and in showing itself to contain the meaning and aim of all development. If it does not, in fact, contain these, it is no finality, and must give place to something higher and truer; if it does contain them, it must, sooner or later, assert this. Nor need it fear the result.

what it reveals to us there. Beginning at its lower end, we find what we may call simply consciousness, which, in different degrees of intensity and comprehensiveness, belongs to the whole brute creation. All animals, as such, are apparently conscious of successive states of feeling, rising from mere sensation up to perception. Next above this comes self-consciousness, the exclusive property, it seems, of man, who is aware, not only of a succession of states, but also of himself as the permanent subject of these states, and of a world of things as the permanent cause of them. Before proceeding further, let us consider these two grades.

A being conscious merely of states, without any underlying self, cannot, of course, make any conscious provision for that self. Its actions, therefore, will be guided entirely by instinct, whose manifestations, however like those of prudence, are in reality fundamentally different. Such is the animal. Man, on the contrary, being conscious of self, naturally makes self the guide of his actions. He is, in

Christianity has been forced, so to speak, before now, to graft itself upon a prevailing philosophy, and has greatly gained by so doing. In the thirteenth century, for example, the Church, after doing her best to put down the philosophy of Aristotle, which the Arabs had made popular in the West, was compelled to make terms with it, and finally adopted it so far as to recast her whole dogmatic system in the light of it. In this way she turned Aristotelianism, from being an enemy, into the most powerful auxiliary, making possible the magnificent theology of Thomas Aquinas and the greatest of Christian poems. I am persuaded that an equally splendid result would follow, if the Church, instead of opposing evolution, should heartily adopt it, and claim that her ideal is precisely what it all tends to. True Christianity must be able to absorb all future true philosophies, just as it has absorbed all past ones. In a recent Roman Catholic work we read : " In pre-Christian times, Socratic philosophy attained a high degree of perfection, and became the foundation upon which Christian philosophy was built. The Fathers recognized in this fact the Hand of God preparing the way for the science of the Gospel. By Socratic philosophy, we mean the due combination of its two forms, Platonic and Aristotelian. These too correct and supplement each other, and should not be separated. Christian philosophy blends them together, although it has sometimes given more prominence to one than to the other " (*A Manual of Catholic Theology*. Based on Scheeben's *Dogmatik*. By Joseph Wilhelm, D.D., Ph. D., and Thomas Scannell, B.D. With a Preface by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. London, Kegan Paul, 1890, p. 149).

fact, essentially selfish, selfishness being the necessary correlate of self-consciousness. This selfishness may, indeed, assume a variety of forms, from the coarsest and most heartless self-indulgence, to the most refined prudence, worldly or other-worldly. It is this selfishness, in its various grades, that finds expression in the different social and political institutions in which men unite for mutual help. The aims of even the highest of these, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," are all purely selfish. The State exists for no other purpose but to secure to each individual self all possible satisfaction compatible with safety. Civic laws are rules for balancing the claims of opposing selves. Such is the kingdom of this world. If we examine the ancient world, prior to Christ, we shall find that it is almost entirely governed by the principle of self, in one form or another. In that world, with its four cardinal virtues, the great man was he who was master of all.

Let us now pass on to that kingdom which Jesus came to establish, and which he placed in such direct opposition to the kingdom of this world, viz., the Kingdom of Heaven, and let us inquire what is the essential principle that holds, or is expected to hold, it together. In order to do this, we must have recourse, first of all, to his own words, and they are, many of them, explicit enough. "I and the father are one" (John x., 30). "Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me, because I live and ye shall live. In that day ye shall know that I am in my father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John xiv., 19, 20). "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Consecrate them in the truth: thy word is truth. . . . Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also who believe on me through their word; that they may be all one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (John xvii., 16, 17,

21-23). It would be easy to multiply quotations to the same effect; but these, I think, suffice to show that the essence, the bond of union, of the Kingdom of Heaven was meant to be a God-consciousness, a consciousness of God as the cause of our being, the ground of our knowing, and the rule of our action, a consciousness that, deeper than that which divides us and opposes us to each other, is that which unites us and reconciles us through love.

Though this God-consciousness came into the world in its fulness in the person of Jesus, the first dim intimations of it date far back in the history of mankind—how far we cannot tell. It shows itself clearly enough in the Gâthâs, or Psalms of Zoroaster (B.C. 1100?), and in the Old Testament almost from the beginning. Ere the days of the great prophets it has received a name, the "Word of the Lord," a Word which "comes" to the prophets, and which they "see." Through them, in divers fragments and ways (*πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*), it appeals to the Jewish people, so that, after the bitter lesson of exile, they form themselves into a church, a theocracy, something quite different from the old Jewish kingdom. This theocracy, amid infinite difficulties, grows, and prepares the way for the full manifestation of the Word of God. At last that Word becomes flesh, and dwells among men. To Jesus the Word does not come in rare moments, with messages for particular occasions. He *is* the Word, and speaks for all eternity. Well might he say: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." No momentary, fleeting God-consciousness is His. He is continually aware that he is one with the Father, that he is the "son of the living God." And when Peter first enters into this consciousness far enough to recognize him as such, Jesus says: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee that thou art Rock, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth

shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi., 17-19). In the man with the God-consciousness, feeble though it was, Jesus recognized the foundation-rock of his new institution, the man fit to be entrusted with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. What, indeed, is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven, but this very God-consciousness? He who possesses that, binds and looses in heaven, when he binds and looses on earth. He leads a double life. He walks on earth; but his "commonwealth is in heaven" (Phil. iii., 20).

It is only when we begin to realize the nature of the unity of the Kingdom of Heaven that we can grasp the meaning of the two most comprehensive injunctions that Christ laid upon his disciples, (1) that referring to love, and (2) that referring to prayer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii., 37-39). Is not this double love the very God-consciousness, upon which the Kingdom of Heaven is built? "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. vi., 10). What is this but a prayer for the manifestation of the God-consciousness, of the Kingdom of Heaven?

It would be easy to follow, down through the Apostles and Apostolic Fathers, the clear conviction that the essential unity of the Kingdom of Heaven lies in a God-consciousness, mediated through Jesus. St. Paul, for example, says of himself: "It is no longer I that live; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii., 20). And what are his three Christian graces but aspects or, rather, grades of God-consciousness? How entirely different from the "cardinal virtues" of paganism! How unintelligible to the citizen of the kingdom of this world! Even the least of these graces is defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi., 1), words which the greatest of theologians paraphrases thus: "Faith is the habit of mind whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to

things that do not appear.”⁶ And who can forget St. Paul’s splendid pæan to the greatest of them, to Love! In this he shows how the God-consciousness, though it may here manifest itself in questionable shape, like the forms in a wizard’s mirror, nevertheless suffices to make life divine.

But there is throughout the New Testament a special name for the God-consciousness as manifested in men, as well as for the men in whom it is manifested. The former is the “Holy Spirit,” the latter are the Holy Ones, or “Saints.” Throughout the New Testament the members of Christ’s Kingdom of Heaven are spoken of as saints, and as being endowed with the Holy Spirit. It is just the possession of the Holy Spirit, or God-consciousness, that makes men members of that kingdom. St. Paul says distinctly that “the Kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. xiv., 17); and he asks the Corinthians: “Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have from God?” (1 Cor. vi., 19). Frequently also he closes his letters with the request, “Salute every saint in Christ Jesus,” adding, “All the saints salute you.” It would be easy to multiply quotations, proving that in the Apostolic age the unifying power of the Kingdom of Heaven was God-consciousness, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The same was true, in great measure, in the age of the Apostolic Fathers. St. Clement of Rome, writing to the Corinthian Church about the year 100 A.D., describes its condition a short time before, in these words:

“Ye were all lowly in mind and free from arrogance, yielding rather than claiming submission, and content with the provisions which God supplieth. And giving heed to His words, ye laid them up diligently in your hearts, and His sufferings were before your eyes. Thus a profound and rich peace was given unto all, and an insatiable desire of doing good. *An abundant outpouring also of the Holy Spirit fell upon all;* and, being full of holy counsel, in excellent zeal and with pious confidence ye stretched out your hands to Almighty God, supplicating Him to be propitious if unwillingly ye had

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, II^o, 4, 1.

committed any sin. Ye had conflict day and night for all the brotherhood, that the number of His elect might be saved, with fearfulness and intentness of mind. Ye were sincere and simple and free from malice one toward another. Every sedition and every schism was abominable to you. Ye mourned over the transgressions of your neighbors: *ye judged their shortcomings to be your own.* Ye repented not of any well-doing, but were ready unto every good work. Being adorned with a most virtuous and honorable life, ye performed all your duties in the fear of Him. The commandments and the ordinances of the Lord were written on the tables of your hearts."⁷

Here we see clearly, not only what constituted the unity of the Kingdom of Heaven, but also what were the results of that unity in the outward life and conversation. "Ye judged their shortcomings to be your own." These simple words tell the whole story. The unity wrought by the presence of the Holy Spirit was such that each member of the kingdom felt his brother's frailties as his own. That is the Christian spirit.

In the inimitable *Epistle to Diognetus*, written probably about A.D. 150, we read:

"Marvel not that a man can be an imitator of God. He can, if God willeth it. For happiness consisteth not in lordship over one's neighbors, nor in desiring to have more than weaker men, nor in possessing wealth and using force to superiors; neither can any one imitate God in these matters; nay, these lie outside His greatness. But whosoever taketh upon himself the burden of his neighbor, whosoever desireth to benefit one that is worse off in that in which he himself is superior, whosoever by supplying to those that are in want possessions which he received from God, becomes a god to those who receive them from him; he is an imitator of God. Then, though thou art placed on earth, thou shalt behold that God maketh commonwealth in heaven; then shalt thou begin to declare the mysteries of God."⁸

Here we see that the unity wrought by the Holy Spirit, not only made men act like God, but also revealed to

⁷ Clement, *Epist. to the Corinthians*, ii.

⁸ *Epist. to Diognetus*, x.

them the mysteries of God, manifested in them a divine consciousness. To know, to love, to act as God, and in God, that is the Kingdom of Heaven which Christ came to establish, and of which he was the first citizen.

I have dwelt at some length upon this question of the nature of the unity of the Kingdom of Heaven, because I could see no other way of discovering the kind of unity which the Church ought to strive for. The Kingdom of Heaven, then, is held together by a God-consciousness, revealing to men the mysteries of God, prompting them to love God with their whole being, and their neighbors as themselves, and to lose themselves in an absorbing passion for doing His will. We may now ask: What outward organization will the members of the Kingdom of Heaven adopt in order to recruit citizens for that kingdom? in other words, what will be the form of the Church? Will it be Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Papacy, Methodism, Quakerism, or what?

If we have understood the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, we shall have no difficulty in answering this question. We shall say: The spirit that animates the Kingdom of Heaven is bound to no one form of organization; but whatever form pure love to God and man may at any time suggest, that is, for that time and place, the appropriate outward form of the Kingdom of Heaven. Every form suggested by aught else is spurious. There is probably not one among the forms mentioned but has had, or has, its justification. If it be said that we ought to be guided by the example of the Apostles and early Christians, we may reply: Their example is valid for us in so far as, in organizing themselves for the work of the Kingdom of Heaven, they were guided by the Holy Spirit, which takes account of times and places; not one step further. Other times and other places demand other forms, and these the Holy Spirit is ever ready to suggest.

By thus making a clear distinction between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church, we are enabled to see how, while the former can never lose its unity, the latter may

very well consist of numerous parts, differently organized to suit different circumstances. These parts must, of course, all be animated by the same spirit, and work toward the same end ; but they need not have any other common bond. This common spirit and aim will suffice to make them love and work in harmony and brotherly love. We must, indeed, confess that this harmony and this love have rarely, if ever, embraced the entire Church ; and this brings us to our second consideration.

II.—THE CAUSES WHICH DESTROYED THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

The true unity of the Church is unity of spirit. This spirit is the Holy Spirit, the God-consciousness, expressing itself in Faith, Hope, and Love, to the complete discomfiture of self and all its manifestations. We may express this otherwise by saying that the Church finds its ideal unity in the Kingdom of Heaven, which it seeks to realize by bringing all men under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

If, now, we look back upon the history of the Church, we shall readily see, I think, that the cause of her disruption has been the presence in her of a spirit directly opposed to the Holy Spirit. This is none other than the "prince of this world," the spirit of worldliness, working for worldly ends, which has expressed itself chiefly in three forms, the opposites of Faith, Hope, and Love, viz., Rationalism, Materialism, and Selfishness. Let us consider these in their order.

Rationalism is the earthly counterpart of the heavenly faith. Faith is that faculty of the Holy Spirit whereby the invisible world, the Kingdom of Heaven, is founded and realized in us, whereby the individual soul is brought into the communion of the saints and animated with the life of God. In that world, reason is absolutely powerless and blind, just as sense is in the world of reason. The world of reason is a world of forms or objective concepts ; the world of faith is a world of subjects. As we advance in the former, we *know* more ; as we advance in the latter,

we *are* more. St. Paul expresses the difference very clearly, when he says: "We walk by faith, and not by form" (*εἰδελ*, concept). Now, when reason tried to perform the function of faith, and to intrude its forms into the Kingdom of Heaven, these came back to it as empty phantoms or idols (*εἰδωλα*); and, when it tried to fix these in permanent forms of speech, it created dogmas and creeds, which have been one fertile source of schism and unbrotherliness in the Church. But it will be said that dogmas and creeds were a necessity, in order to hold the Church together. The answer is, that they were a necessity only when the Church had lost her true bond of union, the Holy Spirit, manifesting itself as Faith, Hope, and Love. Again it will be replied: Granting that the true unity of the Church is the Holy Spirit, she still required certain common definite beliefs, which had to be formulated, and thus came to be dogmas. I think Jesus fully anticipated this objection when he said: "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God" (John vii., 16, 17). This means clearly that, if any man be possessed with the Holy Spirit, he will require no dogmas either for himself or for others. He will know and teach by living. This, it seems to me, was the very essential characteristic of the Christian position. Christians lived by faith from within, not by knowledge from without. Their knowledge was personal experience of the Holy Spirit, and they needed no other. What creed they had was summed up in the declaration of St. Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt. xvi., 16),—a creed which Jesus declared had been imparted by a direct divine revelation, and which he made the foundation-rock of his Church. Had the Christians contented themselves with this creed, and lived the life of the Holy Spirit, they would never, we may be assured, have been rent by schisms. If we study the history of the Church in the early centuries, we shall see that all the divisions in her were due to attempts to enlarge and define this creed, and that these attempts on the part of the

reason marked a gradual decline of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, of faith, and of the divine life of the Church.

But along with the decay of faith, and the growth of creed-making rationalism, went a decay of hope and a growth of materialism. Hope is that imperfect, anticipatory enjoyment of the spiritual things of the Kingdom of Heaven which is possible in this life. The heart that is filled with this hope cares but little for the things of this world, using them merely as means, never as ends. So long as this hope was a living thing among the Christians, they regarded the property of each as the property of all, and exercised the largest hospitality and charity. Recognizing that it is more blessed to give than to receive, to serve than to be served, they considered it a privilege to be able to help those that were more needy than themselves. For a time they even went so far as to practise communism, but soon abandoned it, no doubt for good reasons. This disregard of worldly goods followed naturally from the conviction that for every saint there was treasure laid up in heaven,—treasure which could be neither corrupted, devoured, nor stolen. But no sooner did this conviction, which was the work of the Holy Spirit, begin to fade away, than the things of the world began to resume their importance, and the question of property to divide brother from brother. And not only the question of property, but also those of honor and position. Service, which was the title to honor in the Kingdom of Heaven, gave place to mastership, the title prevailing in the kingdom of this world. In fact, the Church gradually became worldly, and worldliness is the deadly foe of the Holy Spirit. "Friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James iv., 4). When, finally, the Church was united to the empire, and posts in the Church were accompanied with worldly emoluments and dignities, the process was complete, and Antichrist had triumphed.

When Faith and Hope gave way to Rationalism and Materialism, it was no wonder that Love was replaced by Selfishness. The Love inspired by the Holy Spirit is a sense of the unity of all men with each other and with God in

the Holy Spirit. It is redemption and blessedness. In this world it takes, for the most part, the form of love for one's fellow-men, a love which involves complete and unquestioning self-sacrifice. It is the love which makes martyrs. So long as it was alive in the Church, and men regarded not their own lives, if they could but bring their brethren under the influence of the Holy Spirit, she was irresistible. Imperial Rome fought with her in vain. But the day came when this love died out, and its place was taken by the spirit of selfishness, which revealed itself as pride, envy, hatred, and wrath, setting man against man, sect against sect, and church against church, until what was intended to be a Kingdom of Heaven became more like a kingdom of hell. There can hardly be any doubt that the Church would have gone to pieces in the fourth century, had it not been held together and crystallized through its connection with the Empire, which suppressed heresy by main force.

If we follow the divisions that have taken place in the Church since then, we shall easily see that they have all arisen from the three causes which I have enumerated,—from Rationalism, Materialism, and Selfishness, in one word, from the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, which is its life.

The first great schism in the Christian body was that between the Greek and Latin churches. That this was due to rationalism, attempting to define dogma, to a conflict for worldly superiority, and to a lamentable want of charity, there can be no question. In the end the difficulties clustered round a single question—the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Franks had compelled the Latin Church to erect the double procession into a dogma, and the Greek Church refused to follow her. The contention regarding this matter lasted for several hundred years, and finally broke the Church into two parts, each of which goes its own way, and regards the other as heretical.

The second great schism was that due to the Protestant Reformation. It is not necessary to say what party or parties were to blame for this. That it was due to the causes named, and to none other, is only too obvious.

When it was over, the Christian Church was broken up into three great divisions—the Greek Church, the Roman Church, and the Protestant Church; and the last again into three subdivisions—the Lutheran, the Reformed, and the Anglican; and these again into a number of smaller sects. Of all these parts the only one that maintained itself in complete independence of the civil power was the Roman Church. Indeed, one of the worst effects of schism in the Church has at all times been, that the schismatic fragments have fallen under the control of the State, and become worldly. Here, as everywhere, disunion has been weakness. It was disunion that brought the whole Church under the control of the Empire in the fourth century; it was disunion that brought the Greek and Protestant churches under the control of the State in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Owing to a lucky combination of circumstances and the energy of a few good popes, the whole Church was enabled to reassert its independence previous to the great schisms; but no sooner did these take place than the separated parts again fell back into a state of bondage. It is to a rebellion against this bondage that many of the smaller sects in the Greek, Reformed, and Anglican churches owe their existence. Only in America does there exist an entire separation between Church and State.

III.—THE POSSIBLE MEANS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE CAUSES WHICH HAVE DESTROYED CHURCH UNITY.

Before proceeding to consider these means, we shall perhaps do well to cast a glance at the comparative size of the different divisions of the Church. According to the latest statistics, the Christian Church numbers 429,391,500 adherents. Of these, about 215,938,500 belong to the Roman Church; about 130,329,000 to the Protestant, and about 84,017,000 to the Greek, while some 9,000,000 belong to Asiatic and African churches not included in the great divisions. If we omit the last, we find that fully one half of Christendom belongs to the Roman communion,

while of the other half, three fifths are Protestant, and two fifths Greek. We may add that about two thirds of the human race still stand outside of the Christian Church, while of the third which stands inside, a very large proportion is only nominally Christian.

These simple facts suggest two important reflections, *e.g.*, *first*, that the christianization of the world has hardly done more than made a good beginning; and, *second*, that any attempt to reunite the fragments of the Church has to reckon, above all, with the Roman division. Let all the other parts unite without this, and half of Christendom will still be outside the union. Nay, more, the part outside will be just the one that can most fairly claim to be the trunk of the Church, the others being severed branches; so that, even if these should unite, they would be but an assemblage of branches without a trunk. It is to the sense of this fact that the Roman Church owes that feeling of security and superiority which enables her to say virtually to the other churches: "I am the Church; ye are rebellious children." No other church can do the same. The Greek Church may indeed claim an antiquity equal to that of the Roman, and Protestant sects may claim that their Christianity comes nearer to the primitive type than that of either; but all this is nothing to the point, unless it can be shown that the beliefs and organization of the Church were intended to be exempt from the otherwise universal law of development. And this cannot be shown. On the contrary, if the Holy Spirit be really present in the Church, we must expect that she will be led from truth to truth, and to ever more perfect forms of organization—that is, to an ever more perfect unity.

It is obvious where these reflections lead us—to this namely: The union of Christendom, if it is ever to be accomplished, must, in the last resort, mean the return of all the severed churches to the Roman communion. How this is to be brought about is, therefore, the question before us. I am aware that the bare notion of such a return is still shocking to a great many people; so shocking, indeed, that

they will not even consider it for a moment. But the number of these is now not so great, proportionally, as it once was, and it is yearly diminishing. And it must diminish in proportion as the different sections of the Church come to understand each other and to realize what Christianity essentially is and demands. In fact, the two prime conditions for the restoration of Christian unity are (1) the growth of mutual understanding between the sundered parts of the Church, and (2) a true comprehension of Christianity. And these will and must, necessarily, go hand in hand.

As to the former of these conditions: While the different sections of the Protestant Church are visibly coming into closer sympathy, and in many cases openly demanding corporate unity (a most encouraging symptom!), there still exists between the three great divisions of the Church an amount of misunderstanding and uncharitableness that is truly surprising, and almost inexcusable. Not only does each consider the others heretical (which is intelligible enough), but each is wont to accuse the others of bad faith, and not seldom of immorality. If the recent attacks by Roman Catholics upon the private character of Luther show what blindness and rancor still linger on that side, the wholesale charges levelled by Protestants at the Roman Church are equally discreditable. Mr. Gore, the principal of the Pusey House in Oxford, a very pious and able man, representing a considerable section of the Anglican Church, permits himself to say that "the whole of modern Roman literature has become saturated with a spirit of unfaithfulness to history and to fact," and many similar things equally unfair and uncharitable. And within a few days I have heard a very cultivated and liberal Protestant declare that "Roman Catholicism is an immoral religion." It is needless to say that, while this spirit continues, no Christian unity is possible. The Holy Spirit will not dwell with uncharity.

I am convinced that much of the alienation prevailing between the sections of the Church is due to absolute ignorance, which, again, comes from the failure on the part of

each to study the others' position. Let me cite a striking example of such failure. The philosophy of the Roman Church is scholasticism, and especially the scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas. Now, in all the Protestant universities of Germany there is not offered, at the present day, a single course in scholasticism,⁹ and I am inclined to believe that the same thing is true of American universities, and even of theological seminaries. The truth is, that Protestant theologians, as a rule, know little or nothing of Catholic philosophy and theology. While this condition of things lasts, it is vain to expect that the Roman and Protestant churches will ever come to a mutual understanding. It is but fair to say that Roman Catholics know much more about Protestant philosophy than Protestants know about Roman Catholic philosophy.

As to the second condition of Church unity—a true and ever deepening comprehension of Christianity—we have good reason for hope. This comprehension demands the whole human being, head, heart, and will, especially the last. As to head-comprehension, it seems to me that this is being greatly advanced by modern criticism and research, which, while they are clearing away many old beliefs, are thereby only bringing out into clearer relief the majesty and unity of the divine plan, and connecting it with the whole course of evolution, as its spirit and consummation. We are slowly coming to see that the history of nature finds its meaning only in the history of grace, the individualism of civil society only in the unity of the Church, animated by the Holy Spirit. And alongside this head-comprehension of Christianity goes a certain amount of heart-comprehension, in the form of humanity and charity. This charity, to be sure, is, to a very large extent, formal and material, rarely rising to the Christian standard; but it is a promise of better things, of the true love or charity of which St. Paul speaks: "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burnt, but have not love, it profiteth

⁹ See an article on *The Present Condition of German Universities*, in the first number of *The Educational Review*, pp. 28 sqq.

me nothing." We are very far from any such attitude as this, so far, indeed, that we can hardly comprehend it, or even sympathize with it; but, after all, the giving of our goods for love's sake is the first step toward giving our bodies, and, finally, our souls. Before we can do this, we must rise to a will-comprehension of Christianity, of all things the most difficult and the most rare. Christianity, as I have said, is primarily and specially addressed to the will. It finds its chief and full realization in the manifestations of the will—Faith, Hope, and Love. It is through these that the Kingdom of Heaven is realized. Only the man who can say in every thought, word, and deed: "Not my will, but thine be done," fully comprehends the meaning of Christianity, or enters, as a saint, into the Kingdom of Heaven.

From what has been said, we may draw, I think, this conclusion: The different sections of the Church will never unite until they learn mutually to understand and sympathize with each other, and they can never do this except on the basis of a clear comprehension, with head, heart, and will, of what Christianity is; in other words, until they are made one by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this conclusion is merely formal, and leaves unanswered the all-important practical question: "How shall the churches be made to comprehend the meaning of Christianity, with head, heart, and will? But even this question does not seem to me difficult to answer. I should say: "Through organizations for Christian study, and organizations for Christian work." The first will instruct the head; the second will train the heart and the will. I believe the establishment of such organizations will be the first important step toward Christian unity. And this leads me to consider for a moment the nature of the efforts that have been made in the past to restore Christian unity. I need not repeat the history of these efforts. It is sufficient to know that their aim was to bring about unity on a basis of common dogma or belief. Now, I believe that this was an exact inversion of the true mode of procedure, and that all future efforts must set out from the other end, aiming

first at a unity for study and work, and trusting that this will ultimately lead, as surely it must lead, to a unity of belief. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God." All Christian belief, worthy of the name, must rest on a basis of Christian action, guided by Christian knowledge and Christian experience.

The first step, then, toward restoring Christian unity will be the establishment of super-denominational schools for Christian study. Such schools ought to flourish in every city, town, and village, and to command the co-operation of all scholars thoroughly versed in Christian doctrine and history, and in the results of recent discoveries and criticisms. These must not content themselves with any mere catechism or homily instruction, but must treat Christianity profoundly, as the most momentous fact in history. The Old Testament, the New Testament, the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, of the Church Fathers, of the Schoolmen, of the Mystics, of the Reformers, of the Protestant divines, of the modern Roman Catholic theologians, of the founders of sects, and even of heretics, must be carefully studied in their proper connection, and in the light of history. We can know what Christianity is, only by knowing what it has been. Indeed, in a very profound sense, Christianity is a history.

It is encouraging to observe that in recent years considerable advance has been made toward a thorough and general study of Christianity, with the result that religion is yearly claiming a larger and larger share of public attention, and is even coming to compete with base-ball and horse-racing for space in our daily newspapers. But there is still much left for those who are in earnest about Christian unity to do.

The second step toward Christian union will be the establishment of super-denominational organizations for Christian work, perhaps in connection with the schools for Christian study. By Christian work I do not mean merely charity in the modern beggarly sense, but all work whose aim is man's spiritual welfare, whether here or hereafter. All such work

is Christian work, and friendly co-operation in such work is eminently Christian. A first step toward such organization we find in the "Associated Charities" of some of our great cities. These are certainly excellent, as far as they go, but their scope is too narrow, and cripples them even within the limits which they set themselves. They offer too restricted a field for the training of heart and will to Christian perfection. What we need is a complex of organizations, having for its aim the realization of the Christian ideal of life, with its piety, its simplicity, its purity, its unworldliness, its power of self-sacrifice, its patience, its faith, its hope, its love. I believe there is nothing so necessary at this moment, nothing that would be productive of such extensive good, as the establishment of such organizations; and I see no reason why any section of the Christian Church, whatever its creed, should refuse to take part in them. It would not, I believe, be difficult to draw up for such an organization a programme to which no body of Christians could object on conscientious grounds.

Were these two institutions established and successfully carried on, they could hardly fail, it seems to me, to lead ultimately to the restoration of Christian unity. Indeed, I cannot imagine such unity being reached in any other way. A mere formal unity of creed, resting upon no profound Christian knowledge and no Christian ideal of life, would be utterly formal and hypocritical. On the contrary, let men and women study Christianity together, and pursue together the Christian type of life, and they must of necessity come at last to see the object of their study and of their endeavor in the same light. Their community in knowledge and in aim will enable them to understand each other, will bring them into spiritual sympathy with each other, and will dispose their hearts in such a way that the Holy Spirit will descend into them and guide them into all truth, and into the Kingdom of Heaven, wherein alone is complete Christian unity.