

in the world, but which it was an absolute impossibility for him to prevent, if he created moral beings, and which he cannot even attempt to diminish without danger of increasing it.

The New theology claims to be an improvement upon the Old, and the Old to find its substantive doctrines in the Old and New Testaments, which cannot be improved. It counts no human creeds or compendiums perfect, and uses them only as helps. Welcoming all forms of expression that convey essential gospel truth, and finding the fundamental Christian doctrine in all the evangelical denominations, it holds fast to the catholic counsel of the elders at Saybrook: "to account nothing ancient that will not stand by this rule — the Old and New Testaments, — and nothing new that will."

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## ARTICLE VI.

### THE CHURCH AND CHURCHES.

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THERE are few sentences which furnish a more fruitful theme of meditation than that which fell from the lips of Paul on Mars Hill: "in Him we live, and move, and have our being"; "We are His offspring." But more wonderful are those words of our Lord: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

What, to the ancients, was an uncertain theory, to us is a reality: "Now are we the sons of God." Despite the broken ties, there is yet a family of God on earth, made up of those within whom he dwells, and who have begun to be

holy, in the obedience of love. Here shall the race attain, at last, its fore-ordained but forfeited unity; the prayer of Christ and the doubts of the ancients shall be answered; in Christ shall all be made one. In the *love of God* shall souls rise to their true life, and enter into oneness with the Father and with each other.

The history of language furnishes no instance of the *apotheosis* of a word more remarkable than that which the word "love" has experienced in Jesus Christ. In Immanuel, we may reverently say, God makes bare his heart before man, and shows to him the motion of his own holiness. And this, for want of a nobler or more kindred element in human speech, receives the name of *love* — a word long familiar and dear, but now exalted and transfigured with a divine brightness. There is nought else that we can conceive as within finite reach, so excellent as this holy, voluntary impulse and delight; and, in its absolute perfection, it is what we necessarily think of as constituting God's own essential glory. If asked to describe what we mean by this love, we may say: It is an energy within us, in which our souls freely go forth in blissful adoration and desire toward the holiness and blessedness of Jehovah, or the likeness of the same in his offspring; in which we give ourselves up, with a peculiar, deep, sure joy, to God, or, with accordant delight, to that which is God-like in man. The love is, fundamentally and supremely, a delight in this good, a yearning after it and a free consecration to it. It involves an endless aspiration (for others as for ourselves) and a ceaseless prayer, a perpetual adoration of the All-holy, and a perpetual benediction and beneficence upon his intelligent creatures. There is no end to the power of this love; for it can never be satiated, though ever satisfied, but is ever striving, while yet ever at peace. So, it binds forever; uniting man with God and men with one another in a union which is ever attaining, yet has never fulfilled its end. It is the eternal tie.

It is also the perfect law. The *law of love* — set forth in

scripture, and illustrated in the life and in the death of Immanuel; it is the one all-comprehending law of the kingdom of heaven; being the law of God's own soul, and of all who bear his image, and summing up within itself all forms of moral excellence: justice, no less than mercy; fortitude, magnanimity, and brotherly kindness; the innocency, the sanctity, the dignity, the beauty of holiness. It is the law enfolding all moral laws; the form and expression of the very life of the soul; so that he who is without this love is empty of holiness — dead in sin; while he who should love God perfectly would lack no virtue.

It is in love, therefore, as has been said, that man returns to his true life, in oneness with God and with his kind. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God," and is a member of his family, the church. The church consists of those whom God has thus reunited to himself in love.

The condition of admission to the church, therefore, is this love: when the love begins, the membership begins. For faith without love is dead. But since it is the blood of Christ that hath redeemed us from our sins; and since it is in believing in Christ that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, — as many as are, with open face, beholding, being changed into the same image; and since it is in union with Christ that men become at one with God and each other, therefore is this church the church of Christ; all who are members of God's family form one body, of which Christ is the head; and the love which admits to this family is not to be distinguished (for those who hear the gospel) from the "believing" which unites to Christ.

The church is "visible" on earth. In all ages, men have seen, have heard, and have felt it. Its life, its counsels, its holy song and its word of power have ever witnessed of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, and of redemption.

But though seen, it has not been wholly seen. Men

have never known it perfectly, as God knows it. They have never been able to trace the boundaries of this kingdom with accuracy, and to say "here, but not beyond." It has been a presence and a power, but of more or less shadowy outline, changing in form and in place — seen, known, but not wholly known.

There has been, however, and there still is, a certain definite and determinable number of men — determinable through their regular admission by baptism,<sup>1</sup> and their formal organization — in which the church is visibly present on earth. This body, though in appearance, and even in reality, containing some who are not members of God's real household and not containing others who are, has been, for convenience, called *the visible church*; and for many purposes — always bearing in mind the imperfect sense in which the term is true — the distinction thus made is important, indeed we may say indispensable. Many topics related to the church organic compel us to speak of it. It must have a name.

As the church universal is composed of all those who are united to God in love, so the visible church, in a certain general sense, may be said to be composed of all who visibly love God, and embraces every human soul who gives good evidence of genuine piety. The organic church is obliged to determine for itself what evidences can safely be taken as valid.

Properly, piety is evidenced by its fruits — in those views of divine and of human character, those sentiments, purposes, and habits, which are involved in the indwelling of God in the soul. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

There are, for example, certain views of God which cannot be wanting where love of God is present. There are estimates of human character and condition that are in

<sup>1</sup> Baptism admits to the visible church, but not necessarily to a particular local organization, as in the case narrated in the eighth of Acts. The visible church and the organic church are not, therefore, absolutely conterminous. Yet they are so nearly so, that for ordinary purposes the terms are interchangeable.

harmony with these views, and a love of man that agrees with this love of the Father, and is essentially one with it. There are certain feelings and certain purposes involved in the views and estimates just referred to, as well as certain acts and habits, and a mode and tone of life, with which these all accord. Now, although it is not within the scope of human faculties to penetrate with certainty all secrets of the soul, and know, beyond possibility of error, its character and state, it is possible to attain a probable knowledge of these matters, and men are, every day, affording reasonable grounds for opinions concerning them. Who has not rejoiced in beholding manifestations of faith and love, which were as convincing as they were delightful?

Some kind of inquiry, therefore, into personal views, experiences, and character is a necessary preliminary to a recognition as a member of the church universal, through a formal admission, in full, into the organized visible church, —into what may be called the church *organic*. Any denomination of Christians (that is, any body of believers organized in church relations, under a distinctive name) which has nothing in its mode of admitting or of treating members equivalent to such an examination, is irregular; and any local society, calling itself a church, which should essentially omit this needful inquiry, would, at the very least, be a defective organization.

The form, indeed, in which this investigation should be conducted, though a matter of great importance, is yet of but secondary consequence, and necessarily varies somewhat with circumstances. In certain conceivable cases, the bare fact that a person has requested the seal of baptism, would afford reasonable ground for believing him a Christian; though even in these cases, such inquiry as should bring to view the apprehensions of truth and the tone of feeling under which the request was made would add to the clearness and satisfactoriness of this conclusion. When, again, persons have grown up from infancy in the bosom of a Christian community, such a tender and watchful

inspection *may* have been exercised over their spiritual state and growth as to diminish the importance of further scrutiny, if not to render it unnecessary. But, on the other hand, in cases of an opposite character, a formal and searching examination would be imperatively demanded. In what way soever the facts may be discovered, it is indispensable that *reasonable grounds* exist for a charitable belief that the persons seeking admission are true Christians.

The genuineness of the organic church cannot otherwise be maintained. For, obviously, unless it be composed of Christians, that is, of those who are members of that only true church which is Christ's spiritual family, then this family is not present in it, and the *church* is not visible in it; but, instead, it might even come to be an organic "visible" manifestation of the kingdom of darkness itself. In order to be able to justify its claim to be a part of the visible family of God, it must be substantially made up of his children; and however burdened and stained with imperfection, must yet be so joined to God and so filled with God, as to reflect his likeness in *holiness*. Any society claiming to be a visible, organic church, must be made up of church-material, must be holy, or its claim is, *prima facie*, unsound.

Moreover, were we to organize churches of persons affording no reasonable grounds for a hope and belief in their genuine discipleship, we should do a wrong to Christ, who does not ask us to call by his name them that are not his; and a wrong and injury to the souls of these persons themselves, who are thus made to wear unworthily a name and seeming which do not belong to them, and who may be cheated into the belief that they are the Lord's, while yet in voluntary and obstinate bondage unto sin; and an injury and a wrong to the church, building its walls of unseemly and treacherous material,—the stones of this palace are of adamant; and, finally, an injury to the world, dying for lack of the truth, and needing true, not false, examples. The sayings of our Lord, the tenor of the New Testament

instructions, the example of the apostles and of their immediate successors, all ratify this view; while the history of later times is full of loudest testimonies to the lamentable consequences of a corruption of the church material, and the folly of building the walls of Zion of crumbling stones and untempered mortar.

We must think of the church, therefore, and of particular churches, as rightly composed of persons in whom dwells a true love of God and a godly love of man, in which their souls begin to partake of the Divine likeness in a genuine holiness.

But a society may be composed of such persons, and yet be an association for temporal, secular ends, and no church. In order that it may be a church, it must not only be made up of the church material, but must have the *church end*.

What, then, is the end for which God's family on earth exists? In general terms, we may answer: The church exists, that it may perfect itself as the body of Christ on earth and, in union with him as its head, continue his work; or, more particularly, that its members may, in public and in private, pay homage unto God; that they may learn God, through a united study and practice of his truth and his will; may cherish and enlarge their love of God, in associated worship, labor, and self-sacrifice; may be happy in this blissful communion; and may give to others what they thus receive and gain—becoming God's instrument for the deliverance of the world from its iniquities.

But a society of good men may exist for the promotion of this end, and yet not be a church, but only, for example, an association of Christian teachers or missionaries. The church is not a mere voluntary society, born of the will of man, and for a temporary or fragmentary end; it is a divine society, ordained of God, for immortal wants. It is the body of Christ, and exists only as it is instinct with his Spirit and perpetuating his memory and work, in the ways which he has appointed. Accordingly, it is as truly the

necessity as it is the joy of the church, to observe the *sacraments*, baptism and the Lord's supper; and no society, however useful, can make a valid claim to be considered a church unless it honors these essential rites. In other words, we must not only have the church-material and the church-end, but also the church-mode; which connects a holy witnessing, teaching, worship, and labor with the appointed, solemn recognitions of the divine covenant and sacrifice. Any form of organization which secures this end, by a use of this material, in accordance with this mode, must be considered as essentially fulfilling the idea of a church; but, obviously, only that form which is the one most perfect expression and instrument of the Spirit of Christ—being, in fine, the stated and necessary method in which the law of love acts itself out, for its own end, in a society, constituting a polity—this form is the only one which can claim pre-eminence over all others, as the divinely sanctioned polity of the church. Even this is only the best, and not the sole, form under which churches may exist.

Wherefore we may say, that an organized body of men may properly call themselves a church, and are to be recognized as an orderly branch of the general organic church, when, and only when, the condition, bond, and law of their organization is that love which is holiness; when the end of their organization is the promotion of their own and of universal holiness; and when the mode in which this end is sought includes a holy life, doctrine, and worship, and the communion with Christ in the sacraments—the standard of holiness being the Bible, as interpreted by the Holy Ghost to docile and prayerful believers. Or, in other words:

An organized body of men is a Christian church, when the terms of admission are such as, in effect, to secure penitence for sin and faith in Christ on the part of the members; when the object of the organization is the glory of God, in a pure worship and a true penitence, love, and service among its own members and among all men; when

this object is pursued by holding up a Christian example and testimony, by the preaching of God's word, by public adorations, and the communion in the sacraments; and when the form of the organization provides, in reasonable measure, for the attainment of the object, in the modes specified. Where these things are, there is a visible organic church.

The object of the church, as already explained, is three-fold: to render homage to God, to perfect its members in a Christ-like character, and to Christianize mankind.

To the family of God belongs that sweetest duty and privilege of adoring his absolute and eternal majesty, of pouring forth, in presence of the universe, expressions of the unutterable reverence and love, in which holy souls strive in vain to utter forth God. In prayers and songs and all service, in every act that can be made to express a sense of divine pureness and love and might and wisdom, in all readiness of obedience and gladsome trust and patient endurance, in all toil and suffering in which the heart of man can speak when language fails, in whatsoever contains the essence of worship, it is the proper work of the church to pay homage unto her king. Long as creatures continue to adore that absolute perfection of spiritual being which for creatures must ever remain unattainable; long as a yearning and reaching forth toward the knowledge, the love and the life of God shall live in created souls, until aspiration ceases, until finite no longer falls short of the Infinite, must worship continue — the employment, alike, of the church on earth and the church triumphant in heaven. That "charity which never faileth," is itself a perpetual incense going up sublimely from all realms of sanctified being, forever and forever, unto God.

The church enjoys a second privilege, in the duty of aiding all her members to become Christ-like.

Immanuel is God-with-us. Being the archetype according to which, in the beginning, man was made, he furnishes

the end toward which man is eternally to advance—the fulfilment of all human possibility, the *SUMMIT*, far off, glorious, never reached though forever apprehended, wherein God and man incomprehensibly unite and become one person.

True Christians are those who have caught sight of this archetype and have loved it; and to them it has been given, in this knowledge and love of Christ, to begin to be such as he is, and to do his work. They have seen Christ, and they know the Father. United in the church, they individually furnish assistance to one another in the divine life; and, together, constitute an instrumentality whereby God promotes the attainment of a Christly life and character.

God lives for each one of us; and the wealth of his being is waiting to be ours. But God is so great that all that he is cannot be imparted. Some are capable of one good, others of a different good; and we can often receive through our brethren what could not so soon have been directly conveyed. Hence, our real fraternity, and the divine appointment of a society—the church. The church is a true channel of grace to its members, bringing them gifts through one another that could have come so soon by no other route. There is a real life in the church, through the vital indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls that compose it; and it helps them to a nobler fruitfulness and beauty, through the greater and more varied fulness of the Spirit of God, which, through his grace, they are jointly and severally enabled to intercommunicate.

These blessings the church conveys in many obvious ways. It perpetually makes known and applies the gospel and the power of it. It exhibits Christ, and so holds him up to view, that none but those who wilfully refuse to see can fail to discern him. In providing times, places and modes of worship, it promotes those liftings of heart in which the soul draws nigh unto God (the church is the mother of aspiration); and in the preaching of the gospel,

and a holy and timely witnessing unto its demands, it furnishes admonition concerning sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come; stirs up sleeping sensibilities, alarms, encourages, instructs, counsels, comforts, edifies. It records baptismal vows, and applies the seal. It spreads the table of the Lord; and enables believers to commune "in remembrance of" him, feeding their souls, as they take the bread and the wine, upon that which makes these material elements sacred, and receiving the blessing of their Saviour's prayer,<sup>1</sup> while thus before the world renewing their *sacramentum* — the oath of their consecration, the solemn sign of their union.

The church organic furnishes, moreover, a needed leadership, system, and discipline; without which it would not be possible for believers to do so much either for one another or for the world.

What is hardly less important, it supplies an atmosphere of opinion, a social support and defence, to most souls indispensable for their health and for their protection from assaults. The world's air is debilitating and miasmatic. Unless God had provided some mountain, therefore, gifted, by its nearness to heaven, with clearer light and more wholesome winds, souls must sink enfeebled. The world is full of enemies of truth and goodness, and every heart carries the world within it. Unless there were some power provided, to ward off attacks and to help half-emancipated wills to bind and slay their rebellious, base impulses, many hearts would be overcome. The church is appointed, that it may be a sheltering home of souls, wherein they rest and are medicined and armed for the ever-fresh conflict — a home of consolation and of reinforcement. It is, properly, a society wherein a man is sure of finding true friends, who, for Christ's sake, will love him and will help him, whatever his soul's hurt or want may be; of which he is able to say: Here I am sure of justice; and more, I am sure of kindness; and more still, I am sure of finding a love like Christ's own

<sup>1</sup> John xvii.

love, self-sacrificing for my sake, whensoever such I need. Here, also, are furnished examples showing what the divine life is, and avenues are opened for the exercise of love, in good works, to all them that hunger and thirst after righteousness. But these interior offices and operations of the church need to be developed more in detail.

Our life begins in the family. The family is a divine institution; and is appointed, not merely for the continuance, but also for the sanctification, of the race. The love between the one husband and one wife, faithful unto death, with the wider affection which enfolds children and others near of kin, checks the tendency, so strong in the heart, to a total centering upon self, and awaits only the action of the Universal Spirit, to become a love broad as creation and rising supreme toward its divine Author. The family, being thus the birth-place of a love resembling the heavenly love, and the home of the heart's early discipline, is also — and doubtless for this reason — the instrument divinely ordained for the introduction of the soul into the ways of the life of God and into his kingdom; which, accordingly, has its natural and best growth in and through families.

But as the family is the fold where individual souls receive their first nurture, so the church is, properly, a nursery of families, wherein they are planted, as it were, that they may be engrafted with a new, divine life, so as to grow strong and beautiful in holy love. The church is the guardian of the idea of this love; and endows therewith all who welcome her care. Under her hand it is, that the family is sanctified and becomes an integral Christian power. If we ask, How? the answer is: Through the influence of its atmosphere, its sunlight of divine wisdom, its presence of the Holy Ghost; and, specifically, through a solemn observance of the sacrament of baptism, and fidelity to its vow. Household worship and instruction may, indeed, fall short of this standard; but if so, the church fulfils its office, when faithful to its trust, in vividly remind-

ing its members of their neglect, and compelling them to sit in judgment on their fault.

But baptized children are children of the church itself; which has a distinct responsibility of its own concerning them, and finds its most natural, reliable, and valuable growth in maturing them into full membership. The church that is truly wise in its ways, aims to secure to the child of its baptism an effective Christian nurture, and through the season of early youth to guard him so skilfully, and encompass him with influences so sweet and potent, that, on reaching years of reflection, he shall voluntarily ratify his baptism, and, owning himself the Lord's, remember ever after with gratitude the love that has been so faithful to him, and look upon the church as a true family of God (a fragment of his universal household), which has been keeping a place for him, and waiting and watching for his coming, gently drawing and leading him along, until at last it has joyfully, with open arms, received him, to go no more out. Few churches realize this picture. But, ah! we are barbarians yet, and have not learned the civilities of our new home.

But furthermore, not for its children alone, but for all its members, the church is, properly, a spiritual *home*. All who enter a church which fulfils its ideal, find a home-life there, that nurtures and disciplines them in spiritual strength; if any fall, they are tenderly helped to rise; and partition walls are so broken down that the poor and rich are not shut out from each other's respect and sympathy — the envy and contempt which are the subversion of society being themselves slain, and the love of God shed abroad throughout all ranks and classes, making them *one*.

No church can be found, perhaps, that has steadily, for a long course of years, accomplished all this; but many have for brief periods realized such an ideal; and it is the standard towards which all strive, and which will at last be reached. A communion that is small in numbers furnishes such a home to its members so long as the tone of its piety

is really warm; but in a large church, many of whose members seldom meet except in the sanctuary, for worship, and among whom strong repellances frequently exist, *special arrangements* need to be devised for promoting such a Christian intercourse as shall bring the rich and poor, the refined and rude, the born conservative and the born radical, to a mutual understanding. The prayer of the Saviour is not fulfilled until his disciples have become ONE. His last command is not obeyed until they love one another. This unity in love cannot be made real and be kept up without intercourse; and, in most churches, an effective Christian intercourse—such as shall make the church a true household of the Lord, a home and refuge of souls tempted and distressed—cannot be maintained, except upon some carefully matured system.

But still again, the church is not only a home, it is also a *practical school* for its members; and a part of its office is, to build them up in the knowledge of God's will, in knowledge and spiritual understanding.

True wisdom is that comprehension of God's will in reference to the affairs of life, in which we see things as he sees them. It is essential, not only to progress in holiness, but to an advance in anything truly good. Without it, men know nothing as they ought to know; and though ever learning, never come to knowledge. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of it; and he only who doeth the truth cometh to its light. For it is not an acquisition of mere intellect, like natural science; but a gift of God, and the fruit of an active experience in godliness. He who would know the life divine, must always be living it. Wanderers from Christ's ways stumble among dark mountains.

Whoso enters the church, therefore, which is the true family of God on earth, has a right to trust that he is entering a school, where arrangements have been carefully perfected that will help him to grow in the practical knowledge of God's will. The new disciple, in the dawning of his Christian apprehensions, may justly anticipate,

that in joining Christ's household, he goes where he will come into such living contact with duty, that he will be helped to apprehend it and will be led to apply Christian principles to the shaping of his whole life; so that it shall come to pass, that his daily acts shall be carving, in God's imperishable memory and in the immortal substance of his own soul, an image of divine beauty.

So far, then, as it is possible for the church to thrust questions of moment upon its members, in such a way as to compel a decision of them under strong Christian influences and on Christian principles, it is manifestly its duty to do so. If it can so shape its structure and its usages as to bring home forcibly to the hearts of believers the solemn *thou shalt* of Christ's law, in the varied fulness of its meaning, if it can make this ever vivid, imperative, pressing; if it can necessitate a decision, an adoption; if it can habituate its members to such decisions and to such adoption, multiplying the forms in which the great question comes, so that it shall cover all issues, public and private, it will, in all this, be but fulfilling the appropriate, peculiar office of a church of Christ. For, as the world works in the hearts of all men, to produce its own image there, so the church, God's kingdom within the world, works in the hearts of all its members, restoring the lost likeness of the glory of God; stimulating dormant spiritual powers and employing them as fast as they are developed, so that by exercise they ripen into character.

Now it is very clear that no fitful efforts or temporary expedients suffice for such results, and indeed nothing short of a permanent habit that is equivalent to organization. The very structure of the church, indeed, has to be moulded with a reference to this end, and in such a manner, that so long as the church shall continue to exist, it cannot fail of continuing this essential part of its work.

For it is impossible that a Christian should grow in wisdom, except by the use of such wisdom as he already owns. He needs, and his whole nature cries out for, the

privilege of responsibility in counselling and laboring in behalf of the interests of Christ's kingdom. An opportunity to do this, to the full measure of his ability, is his want and his right, and every church is bound so to adjust its structure and usages as to afford all possible facilities and motives to its members for such associate counsel and effort. It has no more right to take from them opportunities and incitements for doing the word of God than for learning it; and is as much bound to secure the one as to furnish the other. And this obligation of the church to its members agrees with its duty to itself; for the development of individual spirituality and power in an associate church-action, is but a development of the church's own power; and the service which she owes to her Head is not rendered, if it include not this.

The correctness of these observations is, if possible, even more obvious when we come to consider the *third* great duty and end of the church, to wit, *the Christianization of mankind.*

The earthly kingdom of God is ordained to the conquest of the world. Every church has a part in this work of divine love, and is impelled thereto by its own love, which is its life; nor can it cease from this holy yearning and labor, while any souls remain in bondage, without entering the shadow of death. The church lives, only as it is animated by the love of God. The energy of its love is the measure of its vitality. It was by virtue of having this love, and consecrating itself wholly thereto, that it became a church at the first; and only by continuing as it begun, can it retain its character as a municipality of Heaven. Nor is the exercise of a Christly love more the duty of any one church member than of every other. For only as partaking of it are any of them members of his body at all. The glorious work of the Lord is no more the property of a particular class than is the privilege of loving him; and every one who loves is not only permitted, but is bound,

to labor for him; being the faith that shows not itself by works is counted dead, since it is dead.

Every individual member of Christ's body, in that he is a member, is held to Christ's work; and the measure of his opportunity and ability is the sole measure of his duty. The antipodes are embraced in his field, if he can reach them, and the dwellers on the uttermost islands are his neighbors, if it is possible for him to touch them with the blessing of a Christian deed or word.

Nor has any creature a right to interpose an obstacle to such exercise of Christian love on the part of any disciple toward any human being; least of all may the church do it. On the contrary, it is the most solemn duty of the church to furnish every possible help to this love's working; and this, both for the sake of its own children and of them that are without. It was, indeed, organized for this very purpose, to wit: that God's people might, through combination and method, be able to do more for each other and the world than was possible if they should act separately. A church, therefore, which should refuse or omit to open the door of Christian usefulness to its members, to throw upon them the responsibility essential to a steady and effective activity, and to favor in all ways, the best development of their energies, in private efforts and in public united labors, would not merely be unfaithful, but would stultify itself, contradicting the acknowledged end of its existence.

Every member of every church has property in that church's work, which no man may take from him; it is his birthright, a part of his inheritance as a saint. He owns the privilege of doing as much of it as divine providence renders possible. If he receives from the Spirit a word of wisdom, it is his duty to contribute that; if a gift of exhortation and "prophecy," it is his privilege to exercise it; if of help, or of government, knowledge of tongues, a gift of teaching, of comforting, or of reclaiming, it is his privilege to exercise that; if he is clothed with a spirit of prayer or a knowledge of mysteries, or if he is able only to

walk humbly, in meekness and in fear, or if, shut out from all activity, he can only silently endure, while his body wastes and life's fountains break,— whatever, under the ordering of Infinite Wisdom, he is able to do, that it is his privilege and duty to do; and he may justly claim of every man and of every human organization, that no hinderance be thrust in his way; and that the whole kingdom of God be united in rendering him every possible help.

From all this it follows: 1. That every church is bound to instruct its members in the duty of thus putting *into life* their love to all men; and of combining for mutual help in fulfilling this love's high behest.

2. That every church is bound, as a church, to incite and assist its members in all such labors.

3. In order that they may be incited, it is bound to impose upon them, in the most impressive and authoritative manner, *the responsibility* of doing the Lord's work.

4. That they may be assisted, it is bound so to arrange its own structure and usages, that this responsibility shall always bear directly upon all, and opportunity for meeting it be always open to all.

5. In order that responsibility and opportunity may be thus universal, the structure and usage of the church must make its work the duty, not of a select few, but of the entire membership.

6. But as each church is an organized society, and must be, its structure provides for leadership, and the due ordering and portioning out of labor; in which, of course, every member cannot have the same office, or be doing at every time the same work or kind of work. Indeed, while the general structure of the church proclaims its own fundamental law, declaring, "all we are brethren," many of its details furnish a commentary thereto, saying with equal emphasis, "in honor preferring one another," "he that is greatest among us is as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve." But all distinctions are made solely with a view to Christian efficiency; the question of church

polity being, properly, not a question of authority, rank, and dominion, but of instruments, adjustments, and modes of usefulness. But it is desirable to examine, still more minutely, certain particulars of church organization.

As already stated, the ends of the local church are, the worship of God, the building up of its members in Christ's likeness, and the Christianization of the world, particularly of the community in which the church itself stands.

The first of these objects ordinarily demands that the members regularly assemble in one place; and therefore limits their number to as many as can do this without too great inconvenience.

It is desirable, however, that churches be large. Large churches and congregations demand and create church leaders and teachers of superior abilities; are more dignified, impressive, and powerful, than the same numbers broken into feeble fragments; and favor a varied development of Christian activity and growth. A people gathered into noble churches is better off than one whose worshipping congregations are individually despicable from their smallness.

The other two objects demand (A) *in general*: 1. That all the members of the church *take an interest* in its work, and, accordingly, that they *share* in the work and in its responsibility. This is necessary, as has been already shown, to the church's greatest efficiency for good, alike upon those without and those within; to the greatest amount of Christian work and of Christian growth. The claim in behalf of the members is, not to power as such, but to power as the necessary means of their growth in the divine life and their most telling service in Christ's work. Whatsoever is essential to these two ends is their's by divine right.

It is not enough that questions of practical moment be rightly decided by somebody, whom the church shall blindly and unconcernedly follow; but, so far as possible, they must be decided by the church. The household of God is not

constituted for the purpose of educating a few, merely, into the wisdom of the "mind of Christ," but of putting all its members, individually and collectively, in possession of it. The church itself, therefore, the whole church — if possible, every member — should be brought face to face with the issues that involve foundation principles of truth and duty, be made to see and to feel their glory and imperative authority, and, under that impression, to decide. Thus should the decision be the act of the church — done in the light.

Wherefore, so much of authority necessarily belongs to the members of a church as suffices to awaken a living interest and sense of responsibility. But there can be no feeling of responsibility where there is not a consciousness of power. The power, therefore, must largely, must substantially, rest with the membership of the church.

And this, furthermore, because its strength cannot otherwise be fully called out. If it be understood that responsibility for the work of the church is confined to one man, set over it and salaried for that specific purpose, or to a limited number, named, chosen, and consecrated thereto, then obviously it is also understood that the church's own immediate responsibility is met when it has thus provided itself with laborers. The work that is not theirs, they will not think of attempting; nor can the inertia of indolence and preoccupation be overcome, while they feel no responsibility; nor will they feel it until it exists. When the church itself is the responsible power, then will it act with a sense of direct accountability and as under its great Taskmaster's eye; not before. Furthermore still: No men are *able* to put forth all their power, though ever so desirous of doing it, upon work in which they do not feel a property, and which is not theirs; and any society or combination of men must have conferences and discussions in order to reach, and to diffuse among its members, the best views and the highest enthusiasm, and secure a fusion of warm hearts in one glowing purpose. But it is futile, and so it is impossible, to confer and discuss on questions of practical interest,

unless something can be decided and done. In a word, there must be power in the church, or it is powerless. This power properly extends, not to matters of secondary consequence merely, but,

(2) The *supreme* local authority is in the church as a whole, acting through its leaders and according to its law.

The choice of the highest officers — even those of apostolic dignity — the admission, exclusion, and readmission of members, in fine, the *supreme acts* were thus performed while the apostles were living, and can only be safely and wisely performed in the same manner now. The questions of truth and duty involved in *fundamental decisions* are the very matters which believers most need to study, under an immediate sense of solemn, personal responsibility; for only by such prayerful and earnest inquiry after God's way can they be quickened in spiritual wisdom, and grow to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. The gospel is a system of great truths and of great precepts; and it is one of its ends to train men to a familiarity with those thoughts that take hold on eternity, withdrawing them from an exclusive interest in small things, and stirring their souls with things infinite. A mighty, purifying, and enlarging influence is poured through the hearts of a people who are thus led to familiarize themselves with the fundamental principles of the heavenly kingdom; nor is it always found, by any means, that they who excel in knowledge and acumen are the best learners in this nobler lore. Out of the mouths of those who in such things are but babes, has God often perfected praise. Wholly to withhold from church members a motive and responsibility for the study of the highest and deepest questions, is to balk one of the main ends for which the church exists, to debase the church itself, to cripple its power, and imperil its life. For if this life be removed from the members of the body and centered in some local ruling organs, the body is no longer celestial, vital everywhere, but has taken on mortality, and, if wounded in one of those vital parts, may die. In its essential idea, the church is the union

of God with man, the presence of Christ in those who have become branches of the Vine. But the omnipresence of God does not divide him into parts, or allow one place to have more of him than another. So, the pure idea of the church demands that God and his action be in all its members; and this is the idea which we are to try to realize. Every soul in the church is to be both instructed and exercised in the fundamental principles, the great truths and precepts which make up the heavenly wisdom, so that the whole body of believers shall be alive with the thoughts of God, and the life of the church shall have its centre everywhere, and thus be indestructible save by annihilation of all its members.

The churches early lost the spirit of the gospels and the epistles, departed from the apostolic maxims and the precepts of Christ, tolerated horrible *shams*, stripped themselves of their immortality, fell into dreary decays, desolations, and death; and some into a life worse than death, which may be called a second death, since they died, not into extinction, but into vile and base action. Had the ancient purity and fraternity been maintained by the churches, what graves of perished glory had now been empty, what deserts were now gardens of the Lord.

The body of Christ, in its proper form, is vital everywhere; not a monarchy, or an oligarchy, nor yet a democracy, or any form of dominion known among earthly powers, but, in contradistinction from all, a *fraternity*, having its unity in that oneness of spirit which comes of its union with Christ, the indwelling of God. It knows no coercion, except such as resides in truth, in love, and in the Holy Ghost. The church is a fraternity, because all its members are such solely by virtue of their oneness in the Spirit, who graciously imparts himself to all, and whose eternal power is in all. The church is a fraternity; and the question, Who is greatest? is without pertinency here; since he who humbled himself, even to death, and that the most ignominious, taking the form of a servant, and not hesitating to stoop

down and wash the feet of his followers, he is the Lord and Master of all. So that they are nearest the Master who are the lowliest of the brethren, and their servants; and the least is the greatest — a paradox which signifies that here such terms as great and small have no place. The church is a fraternity, therefore, whose members, submitting themselves one to another in the fear of God and in honor preferring one another, esteem very highly in love, for their *works'* sake, them that are over them in the Lord, receiving them with gladness, holding them in honor, and thankfully striving to obey their holy admonitions and counsels. For it is not to be forgotten that,

3. Each church has its *leaders*, who are, not its governors, having dominion, but helpers of its joy, in counseling, planning, preparing matters for consideration, promoting a general understanding, agreement, and interest, and securing a proper dignity, deliberation, system, and vigor of execution.

Churches have always had leaders. They ought never to have had rulers. In the world,<sup>1</sup> men "exercise dominion" and "authority;" but, said our Lord: "it shall not be so among you." "One is your Master, even Christ; all ye are brethren." The apostle disclaimed domination; and all who have since assumed it in the name of Christ and his church, have so far put themselves out of the line of the apostolic succession.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" but where the Spirit of the Lord is not, true liberty is impossible. It is one of the lamentable consequences of the admission to the church of persons not in union with the Spirit but still in voluntary alienation from God, that there speedily springs up, within her bounds, either some counterfeit of liberty, or an authority, the very idea of which is fundamentally at variance with the character of the church as a kingdom *not* of this world. So, likewise, the imposition of such rule checks that divine communion and

inspired, spontaneous activity, in which is the secret of perpetual growth and purity.

4. Each church properly has one chief leader, upon whom responsibility centers, who is specially educated for his work, and gives himself wholly to it, the "servant of all." This is demanded by the nature of the church's work, and accords with fundamental principles, which decree that every organization, to be complete, must have a head, and that every distinct work, to be properly cared for, must be put into the hands, not of many, but of one, who shall be mainly accountable.

5. If it be possible, church acts should be done with a unanimous consent of the members.

If differences exist, Christian charity and expediency both demand, in cases where delay is possible, that time be taken for prayer and counsel; and Christians counsel best with one another when they unitedly take counsel of God. The Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; Christ is with his disciples to the end of the world, and they that seek him find him. The numerous quarrels among believers are but an exemplification of that vanity of mind and darkness of understanding still prevailing even among good men, who, notwithstanding they have turned unto God, are yet in part "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The remedy for this is to be found in counselling together in prayer. Tricks of organization may hide, they cannot heal.

Such, very briefly, are the outlines of the general arrangements needful to secure the internal and external usefulness of particular churches. We come next to consider, more in detail, (B) What is necessary to a church's *internal efficiency*.

It is bound to prove itself a true home of souls, a household of instruction, nurture, and consolation, to all its members. Hence it must provide, (1) For *public worship*. (The discussion of this topic we are obliged to omit.) (2) For *general instruction*. Accordingly, there must be at

least one man in the church who has access to all the important sources of knowledge on divine things; who has, furthermore, the leisure to prosecute his work of study and instruction thoroughly; and who, from long familiarity, becomes acquainted with the peculiar wants of his people. In short, the church must have a teacher, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, educated for this sacred ministry unto spiritual wants, freed from worldly cares, and permanently settled and consecrated to this one only employment, a shepherd of souls, knowing how to lead them into the pastures of divine knowledge, and to the living waters.

But one man cannot give all the instruction that is wanted; and all who are able to teach, do themselves need, for their own good, the privilege of imparting what they have to give. The church should see, therefore, that in Sunday schools and in Bible classes, and in family circles under the care of Christian parents, this work is faithfully prosecuted; and it ought to be at all times informed respecting the fidelity or the lack of fidelity with which these blessed privileges are improved.

But the church that is to prove itself a true home of souls, must not only provide for worship and instruction, but also, (3) For *familiar intercourse* among its members.

The best Christian intimacy is secured in social "neighborhood prayer-meetings," in classes for the study of the scriptures, and in associated labors among the young, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, and the erring. Let every church bring as many of its members as possible into such Christian contact. Nothing else will so quicken their mutual love, or furnish such favorable opportunities for an interchange of experience, sympathy, and counsel.

But there will always be some, and generally many, who cannot thus be brought together. For the benefit of such, and indeed of all, *social assemblies* for conversation and the promotion of acquaintance and friendship, are desirable. It is wonderful how the crust is broken from off dried hearts by a few expressions of cordial sympathy or friendly regard;

and how persons who, through seclusion and care, had long been growing selfish may have their latent Christian feeling suddenly kindled into a bright blaze of affection by a single evening's intercourse; and how those who, through diversity of temperament and education, had been unable to understand each other, have the mist taken from their eyes by one hour's frank talk. Those who cannot be united in the intimacies of social worship and of personal Christian labor, must therefore, if possible, be at least brought face to face thus in friendly conversation. But there are some who withhold themselves, or are withheld, even from this. And such must be *visited at their homes*, not by the church's "servant of all" alone, but by others also; and that this may not fail to be done, definite arrangements need to be made to secure it. Again, it is not easy to see why the plan of dividing the membership of a large church into suitable portions, which should severally be committed to the fraternal watch and care of fit persons from among their own number, is not well conceived.

Finally, it should be the study of the church and its leaders to secure the greatest possible variety of labor, and to impose distinct responsibilities upon as many as it can. Thus shall a variety of capabilities be developed and cultivated, while numerous opportunities shall be afforded for that intercourse which is strength and comfort. The mere effort to do all this, in the conscious purpose of making the church a spiritual home, will go far toward accomplishing the end.

We must next consider, somewhat in detail, (C) What is needful to a church's *external efficiency*.

The first thing necessary is, that the church, *recognizing* its duty toward those without, should proceed to *organize* itself after the general manner just described. By this organization the church becomes a regular and complete society for Christian aggression. The next thing to be done is, to ascertain and define its field. Every church occupies a parish. Every bishop has a diocese. To every church is committed, of God, a certain community, which

it is to Christianize ; its members not omitting, of course, to join their brethren of other churches in sending the gospel to them that are outside the bounds of any particular congregations.

Having fixed upon the limits of its own field, the church next determines the work to be done therein ; settles what is now possible, and, through its leaders, divides this work into varieties and quantities, to suit the capabilities and the leisure of its different members.

It provides for Christian instruction, not from the pulpit alone, but in Sunday schools, Bible classes, and children's meetings. It furnishes opportunities for worship and for awakening, cherishing, and correcting religious feelings and aims, not in the sanctuary alone, but also in neighborhood prayer meetings and lectures. It strives to reach some of those who stand aloof, by an organized and systematic visitation of them in their own homes, a distribution of tracts and Bibles, and of such charities as may be needed by those who are poor, and, better than all, by *readings of the Bible* to the illiterate and to any who are willing to hear. These labors are readily followed up in the neighborhood meetings, already mentioned, which afford opportunities for the most varied religious instruction and impression.

These several departments of Christian labor, with such others as the condition of the community may demand, need superintendents, whose duty it shall be to see that each is vigorously conducted, and to keep the whole church informed of all success and failure, so that all its members may have a share in the whole work and in the Christian interest which it creates.

Nor is it enough that the facts should somehow be communicated to the members individually. The *church* does not know them until they have been stated in her presence, and the members are not likely to appreciate them until they have been publicly reported and made a subject of fraternal conference and of prayer. No amount of pains in spreading the information privately would in-

sure the results that can be gained by its communication to the church, in due form, in one of its solemn assemblies.

"Tell it unto the church," therefore, is a fundamental article in church polity; and applies not only to cases of discipline, but to all matters of church interest, and especially to its own success or failure in its own work. The omission to observe this has been the occasion of much want of success. Any other society might as well neglect to make report, to itself and to those whom it wishes to interest, of what it has done; and organizations for the prosecution of Christian missions and for the exercise of political rule, could as well afford to be ignorant of their own doings as the church can.

Wherefore it is of essential importance to the church's efficiency and well-being, that it regularly assemble for hearing reports concerning all its labor, from that of the bishop to that of the youngest and the most preoccupied member, and for prayer and counsel thereupon. Thus only is it brought into contact with its whole field, and kept acquainted with the progress of its whole work for Christianizing the population entrusted to its care. So may it become a "living creature, going whithersoever the Spirit goes," and, "vital in every part, cannot but by annihilating, die." Thus doth it prove itself the "body of Christ," being instinct with his Spirit, showing forth his beauty, continuing his work, participating in his joy—a fulness of him who filleth all in all.

Suppose, now, the power of the church of God and the dominion over all churches and Christians to be put into the hands of a guild of experts, who, from generation to generation hold this control, under the claim of a divine commission, and exercise absolute authority, as in place of God, and as being the sole appointed channels of his grace. How alien from the Christian idea of the church would such an organization be, and for *Christian* uses how feeble. The life is all concentrated in the head,

which drags the mass of the body after it, an obedient, but a passive, and hardly vital, load.

Or suppose *all* responsibility within the local church to be centered in one leader or rector, who shall do all that is done, alone by himself, or else by his own authoritative direction. How unworthily would this, again, realize the idea of a household of Christ, a band of apostles, a brotherhood of disciples.

Still again, gather all the power and responsibility into the hands of a few, elected, if you please, or their nomination consented unto, by the church. With the sense of responsibility, and the necessity of Christian oversight and effort, you have largely centered also the Christian interest, and your organization still but feebly realizes the idea of a Christian church. Relax this centralization; allow to the members the privilege of taking a part in prayer meetings, in Sunday schools and Bible classes and religious visitation; in other words, concede to them duty, prerogative, responsibility, a real share in the church's living being and work, and, with every such step, you come nearer the pattern given in the New Testament, and furnish a better expression of the Christian spirit and aim.

But start, now, with the idea of our Lord, upon which he sought to found a new society among men: "all ye are brethren"; adopt the law, Thou shalt *love* God supremely and thy neighbor as thyself, as the organizing principle of your society, and an embodiment of its aim, which is, the perfecting its members and the whole world in that divine life of love which the law defines; in accordance with this law, make your society a *brotherhood*, — not like those of earth, in a temporal tie for a temporal end, but in an eternal bond and for an eternal end; cause all your methods and detail of rules and procedures to breathe the same spirit of divine brotherhood; arrange everything so as to express, infuse, and cherish this spirit; lean on this spirit — the indwelling of God; make this the life and power and hope and aim of your society; educate all its

members, not only to labor for such divine indwelling in themselves and others, but to be associated, so far as possible, in all this their labor and experience; do this wisely, i. e. by a systematic and orderly division and combination, under the counsel and lead of such as are best fitted by the Spirit of God for such leadership; do all this, and you have established and set in motion a true church of Jesus Christ, modelled after his own precepts and the example and teachings of the apostles—a body full of life, and exactly fitted for its work; a work that stands alone among all the doings of earth, single in its immeasurable importance, its essential grandeur, its infinite excellence, its eternal effect and power. It is not strange that such a work should require an instrumentality also peculiar. And it does; in all the world there is not another society like the church. The family comes nearest to it, but is still unlike. Every church, when rightly organized and rightly acting, is an organization in which the world cannot help seeing an embodiment of Christ. His spirit is its vital principle, and moulds every feature and motion into an expression of itself.

The "Jerusalem which is above" "is the mother of us all." There are those who are fond of bestowing this endearing and venerable name upon an earthly and imperfect society. So far as any such society can justly be viewed as one with the church universal, the honor is not misapplied; but in proportion to the discrepancy which may in any case exist, it becomes an abuse of terms. There are theories, however, which seem to demand it. It is natural for those who in effect limit the term "church" to certain privileged individuals constituting a teaching and ruling hierarchy; in whose theories the church is viewed as seated on high, aloof from the multitude, whom she governs and feeds with a certain superior and matronly condescension; it is very natural for such to speak of the particular denomination of their love as "mother church"; for when they laud and magnify her authority and dignity, they are

thinking of the authority and dignity attributed to these higher "orders," from whose consecrating touch is supposed to flow the very essential power and substance of God; the mass of believing mankind being, thus, rather members off, than of, the church — dependent, not constituent.

Thanks be to God for a revelation of the truth; which sublimely contradicts these creations of a lordly fancy, unveiling "the mystery," so long concealed, that it is the very end and consummation of God's kingdom here, that all partition walls having been broken down, this divided race should be made one in Christ, whose last commandment, "love," "as I have loved," shall then define the terms of human relation and intercourse. The prevalence of a habit of life in accord with this command is the prevalence of the church. When it has been reached, and our Lord has drawn all the race after him into brotherhood, and the tired world has rested on her Sabbath-day, and the heavens and the earth are ripe for renewal, then shall "the Jerusalem that is the mother" welcome all her earthly children home, with a public greeting and the fulness of her impartial love.

We, too, believe in "Mother Church"; and, lifting that name above its lower use, we dedicate it to the church invisible, immortal, universal; while our beloved fellow-disciples here, we delight to look upon as a *brotherhood*. Bound in tenderest ties of equality and oneness, all confessing, a like, just condemnation, trusting in the same redemption, sustained by the same hope of eternal life, together striving against sin, bearing one another's burdens, rejoicing together in tribulations, helpers of each other unto the end, and crowned at last with one joy of their Lord, every company of believers on earth, and the whole together, is a true household of Christ — a brotherhood. Nor do we confine this intimate and endearing name to the church on earth; for THE CHURCH is all a glorious brotherhood — militant, triumphant — martyred, crowned — with garments stained, and garments washed white — through weary centuries here, throughout eternal ages of rest — it is one

undivided family, an *eternal* brotherhood. And it is with peculiar joy that we remember, that many who have been counted among "the last" here, and have meekly borne their lot of poverty and toil, shall shine as stars there, and stand noble pillars in the temple of our God; that all things shall blessedly be "made even" there — they that have mourned shall be comforted, all that have hungered after righteousness shall be filled, and the pure in heart — many of them so doubtful and timid in time — in eternity shall see God.

Beautiful and glorious, exceedingly, is the church, seen thus in her proper image, as designed of God; holy, full of worship and of Christly labor and sacrifice, a home of souls, fragrant with piety, an atmosphere of truth, a spring of healing wherein Christ's living waters flow for all that have sinned; a peaceful shelter for the weary, the tempted, the broken-hearted — outcast from a scornful world; the sacred and pure temple of God wherein his presence shines with a lustre unknown and impossible to suns and stars or to forms of merely sentient being; God's hand, with which he blesses his creation; Christ's body, clothed with his beauty, fulfilling his work, entering into his joy; the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost; the blessed Brotherhood of the Just.

Organisms material and finite, have finite times. But this, in which God takes man into union with himself, shares God's day.

The principles and duties which we have been contemplating, as we have turned our thoughts upon that ever-glorious kingdom, the church of the blessed Redeemer, are full of sublime consolation and incitement. Here is a peaceful harbor. Here an endless, satisfying work. Meditation on these things is communion with God. We cannot have too much of it. No man can make such thoughts too familiar, or inculcate them too earnestly. The doctrine of the church is of the very substance and richness of the gospel; and is essential to the gospel's prevalence, not only

throughout the world, but throughout any local community. And more, a church whose communicants are not duly instructed in their privileges and duties as members of Christ's body, cannot itself maintain a proper Christian steadfastness or joy. The truths embodied in the "doctrine of the church" are essential to the progress and to the stability of the church. Wherefore "thou shalt *teach* them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."  
 "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence."

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## ARTICLE VII.

### THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE PENTATEUCH.

BY REV. S. C. BARTLETT, D.D., PROFESSOR IN CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THAT the five books of Moses retain their hold on the confidence of intelligent men, certainly is not due to any special forbearance with which they have been treated in modern times. For a long time, and more particularly during the present century, much of the ablest scholarship in the world has been engaged in assaults, direct and indirect, upon their credibility and authority. And last of all, the appointed expounders and sworn defenders of the word have gone forth from the interior of the citadel to aid the enemy.

Let the sacred books be subjected to every legitimate test. Only let there be judicial fairness. Let no man come with a theory which absolutely precludes evidence of facts in advance, or prescribes to God that he cannot interpose in the world that he made. No man may *assume* that the narrative of a miracle is proof that that account is "not