

ARTICLE V.

THE ORGANIC AND VISIBLE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST'S
KINGDOM, AND THE HUMAN AGENCY IN ITS ADVANCE-
MENT.

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PART I.—THE CHURCH THE ORGANIC OUTGROWTH OF THE LIFE-GIVING
AND REDEEMING GRACE OF CHRIST PENETRATING HUMAN HISTORY
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

JOHN in his first epistle, presents Christ's life as penetrating humanity and manifesting itself therein by a growth vitalized by that life and having its character; as the vital force of a seed penetrates inorganic nature and creates a growth "after its kind." The eternal life which was with the Father is in his Son; by him, the Word of Life, it is manifested to men. He that hath the Son hath the life, and participating in his life, is like him. The life penetrating human history, creates a growth after its kind. That life in God is light, and as it unfolds in man it is light, and in it is no darkness at all; in God it is love, and unfolding in humanity it is love, excluding all selfishness and hate; in God it is absolute purity, and among men whosoever hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure, this life entering the human heart effects a new birth; and "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." The "fellowship" on which the apostle insists is more than communion in meditation and worship; it is participation in the life that was in Christ, as a plant participates in the life of the seed. The apostle proceeds to teach that it is by the Holy Spirit that Christ abides in us. The criterion by which we discern the Spirit of God is that he is the Spirit

of Christ, confesses him as the life of the world, and creates an outgrowth of the life that is in him.

Since the life that was in Christ is thus penetrating and vitalizing humanity, it must manifest itself in effects which can be historically traced. In some form the kingdom of heaven must reveal itself in human history rising from the ruins of humanity and shaping itself in its divine beauty. Somewhere must appear the living tree into which the mustard-seed is growing. Goethe calls nature the living garment which is always weaving for Deity in the whizzing loom of time, and by which we see him. So the kingdom of heaven, forming itself in human history, is the garment which God is weaving by which we see him as the Redeemer and the life of men.

The more spiritual and profound historians of the church recognize it as the manifestation of this divine life flowing into human history. But this is true of the organized church only with important qualifications. The life must manifest itself in an organization ; but the organization is neither the only nor the complete exponent of the life. The kingdom of heaven is organizing rather than organized. It creates for itself an organization, yet the kingdom of heaven is not the organization, but rather the life which produces it. The life which creates the organization, penetrates and purifies also the family and the state, renovates individuals, and blooms and fructifies in Christian civilizations ; and these also are its historical manifestations. Always the kingdom of heaven is within you. In the variously organized churches of history, without doubt, the life has been revealed and organized. But no one has been the only and complete outgrowth and manifestation of the life. The kingdom of Christ is neither identical nor co-extensive with them.

These qualifications must be kept in mind as we proceed to consider the church as the organic outgrowth in human history of the life that is in Christ.

There are two maxims which express what is essential in the two conflicting theories of the church. The first is :

“Where the Spirit of God is, there is the church.” The second is: “Where the church is, there is the Spirit of God.” All organizations of the church fall into two classes, according as they express the one or the other of these principles.

According to the first of these principles, the Spirit of God is always originating and sustaining the new spiritual life, and the church is the constant and spontaneous development of this spiritual life into outward organization. The Spirit and life are primary and originant; the organization secondary and dependent. The church is not perpetuated by the cohesiveness of the organization, but by the indwelling Spirit. If Christianity is introduced into a heathen country, those whom the Spirit renews become a church through their fellowship one with another in that new life. If in any country the church becomes corrupt, any whom God's Spirit renews, withdraw from the corrupt organization and originate the visible church anew. The organization, forsaken by the Spirit, is no longer a church, but a carcass needing to be buried. The organization developed from the pre-existing life and perpetuated by the vitalizing and ever-present Spirit is subordinate to the life, and exists to promote the edification of its members and to facilitate the performance of their Christian work.

According to the second principle, the church came forth as an organization from Christ's hand to stand unchanged to the end of time. The organization is the vehicle through which God's grace and Spirit are conveyed to men. The organization is primary and originant, the Spirit and life secondary and dependent. The organization perpetuates itself by its own strength and cohesiveness. If Christianity is introduced to a heathen land, the church must be imported. If the church becomes corrupt, true believers may try to reform it; but to withdraw from it is schism. The life is subordinate to the organization. The church stands between the individual and Christ, to convey God's grace to him by its action in his behalf. And the church, speaking officially, is infallible, and its dicta binding, as the voice of God, on every individual's conscience.

The first of these conceptions of the church is from Christ. The second is historically from heathenism. The Christian church, first constituted as Christ willed, gradually took up into itself the principle of Roman imperialism and was corrupted into a hierarchy. Romanism is the logical result. Protestantism acknowledges the first principle. Yet Congregationalism is the only polity which carries out the principle, "Where the Spirit of God is there is the church," to its legitimate results.

In the light of this maxim, consider, next, in some details, what is the true idea of the church as the outgrowth in human history of the life which was in Christ and is manifested among men.

I. The Spirit acts primarily on Individuals, and the Life manifests itself primarily in them.

The divine action in redemption is directed primarily upon individuals, and not upon organizations and institutions. It is not a diffused daylight, an all-pervading electricity, acting equally and indefinitely on society as such, through institutions, public sentiment, and the spirit of the age, and lifting society in mass to a higher level. Its aim is not primarily the promotion of general culture, and refinement, and the advancement of civilization. It is the direct action of God on individuals to bring them into reconciliation with himself. Redemption aims to save souls. It is becoming fashionable in some circles to ridicule this phrase. A writer in a leading Review has even said that the idea of missions "to save souls" is becoming obsolete. The phrase, like any other, may degenerate into cant. But rightly understood it is the doctrine of Christianity, that redeeming grace is acting in human history to save souls. Christ came "to save the lost." The "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation" is, that Christ came "to save sinners." They who are offended at this are offended at Christianity itself.

This individualism attaches to the redemptive agency in all its forms. Christ tasted death for every man — the sin-

gular number, the distributive pronoun. The attraction of the cross fastens immediately on every soul, as the attraction of the sun fastens with undivided power on every planet. Every one is invited to equal intimacy with God, each in the secrecy of his own closet. Every Christian, born of the Spirit, is the child of God and not removed by any intervening agency to a remoter relationship. Justification by faith gives to every sinner free access to God without priestly mediation.

Accordingly the Spirit is represented in the Bible as dwelling in the individual, not in the church. The temple of God, which Paul admonishes the Corinthians not to defile, is not the organic church, but the body of the individual.

Thus Christianity is characterized by intense individualism. This has originated the individualism which characterizes modern political institutions. But all experience confirms, what reason teaches, that political welfare is not attainable by that one-sided individualism which prompts every one to regard only his own liberty and rights. This is an individualism which is identical with selfishness. It must be supplemented by a regard to society. And it is remarkable that, while Christianity teaches an intense individualism, it insists on individual responsibility, duty, and love, rather than individual liberty and rights. Thus, while vitalizing the grand movement of society against oppression and slavery, and in favor of equal rights, it supplies the needed check to selfishness and the needed impetus to live for others and to guard and promote the interests of society.

II. A Church is an Organized Association of Persons Renewed by the Holy Spirit.

This follows directly from the principle, "Where the Spirit is, there is the church." When Christ's sheep hear his voice and follow him, they are thereby separated from others and united to Christ; and in their union with Christ and following of him, united also to each other. Thus the church comes into being. It is an association of persons

effectually called to Christ by his voice speaking through the Holy Spirit. They are united not by force or external authority, nor by the tie of birth; but by their own free act and covenant in the fellowship of their common faith in Christ, and the common character, ideas, and aims of their new spiritual life. Yet the church is not merely a voluntary association, dependent for its existence on the will of man. It is of divine origin, because it is the spontaneous outgrowth of the "life" that is in Christ, penetrating human history through the Holy Spirit; it exists by divine authority, because it has the reason of its existence in God's redeeming energy working always among men; it is lifted above the creations of human will, and is perpetuated and imperishable in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and his continued life-giving and renovating agency in the world.

The church, as an organization thus constituted, necessarily made its appearance so soon as Christianity began to prevail. And the principles thus organized in the churches necessarily tended to pass over into the constitution of the state.

Allusion has been already made to the intense individualism of Christianity. This is embodied in the church. The individual is the unit of the organization. This was contrary to the conception of society universally prevalent when the first Christian churches were established. The heathen conception of society emphasizes the race, rather than the individual. It begins with the race, and proceeds downwards to the individual; it begins with institutions, and proceeds downwards to the men who live under and for them. In heathen society the individual is lost in the mass; the individuals exist as the planets did when dissolved and lost in the nebulous matter diffused through space; not, as now, in the solar system, moving in their individuality harmoniously under law. It was an epoch when, in society thus constituted, the apostolic church appeared, an institution embodying the Christian idea of the worth and rights

of man — an association of individuals of every caste, rank, and race, “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” In the church the king and his subject, the master and his slave, the nobleman and the peasant, stand on a level, having equal rights in its privileges, equal vote in the management of its affairs, and equal eligibility to its offices. Such an institution could not flourish, retaining its purity, in such a state of society, without coming into conflict with it, diffusing new ideas, and gradually infusing its own principles into the constitution of the state and the usages of society.

Such has been the historical fact. In the very beginning of the propagation of Christianity we find Peter and John arraigned before the Sanhedrim declaring the rights of conscience, and announcing the principle which has ever since underlain the martyrdoms and conflicts for liberty of conscience and the rights of man against oppression. Even amid Roman imperialism, the churches retained their primitive constitution for a time. After being corrupted and consolidated by taking into itself the imperial idea, the church long retained features of its original constitution in the election of bishops, in holding its offices open to men of every degree, in its steady and successful opposition to slavery, in affording through all the reign of violence an asylum for the oppressed, in its action through the Middle Ages in the interest of human rights against the tyranny of the secular rulers, and in its attitude as an adjudicator of wrongs by an appeal to justice and law in antagonism to the brute force and bloody lawlessness of the feudal barons. People willingly appealed to tribunals that recognized law and the authority of God against lords who decided everything by the sword; and in this way the growing hierarchy was encouraged in its usurpations of authority. Even in the theological writings of the Middle Ages are found distinct traces of the modern doctrine of the rights of the people against oppressive rulers.”¹

¹ “A man is bound to obey secular rulers only so far as justice requires.

After the Reformation, the same principle reasserted itself. The church was organized as an association of persons, and with the recognition of personal rights. The principle passed from the church into the state. Geneva became "the seed-plot of liberty." Subsequently the Puritan churches more completely transferred the principle of their own organization into the Puritan state.

Thus the principle of the organization of the church, as an association of persons united in the fellowship of a common life, common interests and ends, and a common law, went out into human thinking, and became a power in civilization, loosing the bond of race and force with which society had been bound by Satan, bowed down and nowise able to lift up itself during all the centuries. The state is no longer a race united by common descent, and holding down subject races by force; but it is a people, of whatever locality, united by common interests under law; and the jurisprudence of Christendom assumes that government, whatever its form, rests ultimately on the consent of the people. Even the doctrine of the "social contract," elaborated by the Jesuit Suarez, taught by Locke, Sidney, and Rousseau, and terribly declared in the first French Revolution, is a recognition and distorted expression of this truth.

Perhaps it may not be going too far to say that the constitution of the church as an association of *regenerate* persons has furnished an important principle of political and social progress. It is in antagonism to the heathen conception, which regards the man as subordinate to his institutions, and which looks primarily to a change of institutions for the improvement of the man. The same is the error of modern "socialism." In opposition to this error, the church embodies the principle, which all experience veri-

Therefore, if the rulers have not the right to rule, but are usurpers, or if rulers require what is unjust, their subjects are not bound to obey them, unless perhaps, in exceptional cases to avoid scandal or danger." In confirmation he quotes Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*, Lib. iv. Cap. 4). "Aside from justice, what are kingly governments but great robberies."—*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae*, Second Division of Part ii. Quest. 104, Art. 6.

fies, that the only real progress of society consists in the actual improvement of the individuals composing society. A strong and virtuous people insure a strong and just government.

The second maxim: "Where the church is, there is the Spirit," gives the contrary conclusions. The child is regenerated in baptism by the *opus operatum* of the church in its behalf. It is thus born into the church, and thenceforward governed by enforced authority. If afterwards the baptized person deviates from the faith, or disobeys the commands of the church, he is subject to inquisitorial torments and death. Thus the old principle of despotism becomes the principle of the church itself; and the power which was working to redeem the world becomes imprisoned in an iron arm that smites and kills.

III. The Church as an Organization is Subordinate to the Life.

1. The organization is the outgrowth of the life.

Man, by virtue of his rationality, is an organizer. As God expresses his thoughts in worlds and systems, man expresses his thoughts in cities, states, institutions. It is man who forms his institutions, not the institutions which form the man. So Christian faith and love create Christian institutions. The new Christian life displaces the old, and creates all things new. The church, as an organization, is the outgrowth of the life. It may be said to be the organization of the life, as the mustard-plant is the organization of the life of the mustard-seed.

2. The organization exists for the ends or purposes of the life.

The conception is of spiritual persons united in fellowship by their oneness with Christ for the purpose of mutual edification and helpfulness in Christian life and work. This principle is determinant of the constitution of a church. It is incompatible with the conception of a church that it should

absorb the individual in the society, or by its organization come down on him to suppress or crush his personality. The conception of a church requires that its organization and its organic action emphasize and develop the individual personality. It exists for the very purpose of subserving the spiritual life, growth, and power of its members. It must not be, therefore, an organization so massive as to oppress the life, but so consonant with the life as to help it, as a trellis sustains and helps the vine.

Accordingly the growth, power, and prosperity of a church are proportional to the degree in which it calls out its individual members to spiritual life and activity. If it becomes only a receptacle, taking in and holding its members as dead things, it is thenceforth only a whited sepulchre, full of dead men's bones.

3. The church is not mediatorial. It does not stand between man and God, to bring the divine blessing from heaven by its sacraments and the *opus operatum* of its service.

The subordination of the organization to the life necessarily involves the three characteristics just mentioned, and is a necessary inference from the principle: "Where the Spirit is, there is the church."

From the church this idea of the subordination of organization to the life has penetrated human thought respecting political and social institutions. When Christ came, the iniquity of the world was full. As at that time religious faith was withered, and scepticism had attained its greatest power and widest dominion, so the principle of government by force had reached in the Roman empire its consummation. The Western nations were ruled under military despotism by the will of one man, and held in his hand for his own personal use and enjoyment. The people, educated through many generations under the reign of force, had lost the capacity of refinement of feeling and the enjoyment of the gentle and kindly emotions, which were displaced by

ferocity and blood-thirstiness, so that even theatrical spectacles were insipid if not spectacles of blood.

In the midst of this civilization the Christian church appears, like a dewdrop, distilling silent and unseen from the air. It makes no direct assault on existing institutions. Not claiming the sword, which rightfully belongs to the civil ruler, it can only stand in the presence of the great organizations embodying the power of the strongest, and let its presence do its work, educating the world to understand that institutions are the outgrowth of human thought and life, and that they can never be right and salutary till they embody truth, justice, and love, and not selfishness grasping and ruling by force. It introduced Christian charity as a power in civilization. It taught men self-sacrifice in service. The Roman slavery passed away before it. At last the conception embodied in the Christian church when it first stood in the civilization of the Roman empire, like a dewdrop trembling on a leaf, has created a new conception of political and social institutions and a new civilization. Man is no longer regarded as existing for institutions forced upon him; but institutions exist for man, and are the creation of his thought and life. In like manner, the church has educated man to the true method of securing the progress of man and the reorganization of society. It is not by immediately assailing institutions, as if a change of institutions would recreate the man; but by new creating the man, that he may cast away institutions no longer fitting him, and create new.

It has been the great mistake in the education of the race to believe that there is no safety for man except as by external and superior power he is restrained and constrained, and institutions and rules are framed and put on him, into conformity with which his thought and life must grow. But the words of Milton are always true:

"Who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe."

There is no real progress, except as men accept truth on conviction, conform their lives to it in Christian love, and

freely embody their Christian thought and love in institutions. This is the truth evermore embodied and expressed in the Christian church. Fearful forebodings agitate some minds, whether republican government will not prove a failure, and men are discussing what will be the political constitution of the future. But all experience is teaching and emphasizing the doctrine of Christianity, that the true order of human advancement is from the individual to the organic, and not the reverse; and that the grand requisite is to educate the people in knowledge and true piety. An ignorant, selfish, irreligious people will fail under any government. An intelligent and Christian people cannot miss a wise and beneficent government.

All this is reversed by the other maxim: "Where the church is, there is the Spirit." It gives us the organization first, the life created by and flowing from it; the organization externally and authoritatively established, and externally and authoritatively imposed on men, cramping, confining, crushing them to its own rigid form; the individual existing for the organization, and to be used for its purposes. It makes the church as an organization the mediator between God and man. The Spirit of God and his redeeming grace are communicated only through it. The sinner cannot come to God, nor God to the sinner, except through it. Thus the church takes up into itself the principles of heathen civilization, which exalts the organization above individuals, and loses them in the homogeneous pulp into which it grinds them. The church becomes a spiritual despotism, which suppresses the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free, dries up the springs of spiritual life, whence the freedom of man must flow, and perverts the authority of God and the sanctions of the world unseen to uphold oppression.

It is a curious fact in the history of the hierarchy that the inextinguishable truths of Christianity find utterance in it, but in perverted and monstrous forms. For example, the hierarchical church denied the doctrine of the divine right

of kings and taught that civil rulers derive their right to rule not immediately from God, but mediately. But it did not teach that doctrine in its true and Christian form, that the civil ruler derives his power from God mediately through the people, for whose good they are God's ministers; but through the church, which derives its authority immediately from God. For another example, the church insisted on its own independence of the civil ruler; it denied that the spiritual power is subject to the civil, or can rightfully be coerced by the sword; it taught the separation of the church from the state. The world owes the union of church and state, not to the papacy, but to Henry VIII. and the English Reformation. The pope, it is true, became a temporal sovereign. But the function of civil ruler was distinct from the function of the papal supremacy; and in theory his temporal sovereignty was always for the very purpose that the head of the church might be independent of all civil rulers, and the church be always separate from the state and independent of it. At the same time the church asserted its supremacy over the state, and compelled the use of the sword of the magistrate to suppress heresy; it repudiated liberty of conscience, and subjected not the actions only, but the very thoughts of men to spiritual inquisition and despotism. For another example, the church taught that the subjects of a king who was a usurper, or of a legitimate monarch who issued unjust commands, were not bound to obey him; but in such cases it alone, by its divine supremacy, could absolve the subjects from their allegiance. Again, the church opened an asylum for the oppressed, and took their part against the violence of the red-handed baron or king; but it subjected them to itself in a worse tyranny. Thus the imperishable principles of Christianity were asserted in the darkest ages, but in perverted and monstrous forms. The pure milk of the word was changed into the gall of bitterness. The church, the legitimate mother and nurse of human liberty, became the harlot-mother and nurse of monsters. This world-wide organization claimed to be the

mediator, not only between God and the individual sinner, but between God and society itself, determining all political and social action and organization.

IV. The Unity of the Churches is the Unity or Fellowship of the Spirit.

1. The church is local or congregational, not national or ecumenical. It is an association of Christians by their own covenant in fellowship in Christ for their mutual edification in the Christian life and co-operation in the Christian work. If the maxim with which I started and the principles already evolved from it are correct, every such association is a Christian church. Whatever larger associations, national or ecumenical, may be formed, they cannot take away the church-character of these local churches.

2. A church has no authority to govern. Government implies authority to enact laws and to enforce obedience to them. In the proper sense of the word, there is no such thing as church-government. The authority of the church is exhausted in giving or withholding fellowship. A church must determine whether it will give fellowship to any person as a Christian or to any association as a church.¹ Beyond this it has no governmental power whatever, neither legislative, judicial, nor executive. It cannot make laws nor enforce obedience.

Accordingly our Saviour gives to the church the power of the keys, but withholds the power of the sword. But the power of the keys, the power of opening and shutting, is simply the power of giving or withholding fellowship. On the other hand, the New Testament explicitly gives to the state the power of the sword, but withholds from it the

¹ Some insist that the determination of fellowship must be left to the conscience of the individual claiming it; and that every person who claims to be a Christian and every association claiming to be a church, must be received to fellowship as such. But the teaching of the New Testament that the responsibility of determining who shall be received to fellowship is imposed on the church, is explicit. See Matt. xviii. 15-18; 1 Cor. v. 4-13; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15; Titus iii. 10; Rom. xiv. 1-3; xv. 7.

power of the keys. The magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain." The civil government exists to maintain the peace and order of society, to protect the people in their rights, and to enforce justice by penalty. For these ends it is intrusted with the sword. But it is not intrusted with the keys. It has not authority to determine who are entitled to fellowship as Christians, or to enact any law which presupposes that the state has determined that question, or which in its execution necessitates an official discrimination between Christians and unbelievers.

Here, through the Christian church, comes into human history a principle which has become a power in civilization: the separation of church and state. This principle was unknown in heathen civilization, in which was no religious organization analogous to the church, and the civil and religious functions were not entirely separate. In its application it does not mean that in making, adjudicating, and executing laws, government is exempt from obeying the law of God. Government has no right to shut out the light of Christianity, and to go back and take up heathen morality. It means that the sphere of government's action is secular. Whatever the laws or institutions through which it accomplishes its ends, it is absolutely precluded from deciding who are entitled to fellowship as Christians.

On the other hand, the authority of the church is limited to the determination of fellowship, with no power to inflict any penalty on those from whom it withholds its fellowship. The purity of the church is perpetuated from generation to generation by the spiritual life and the indwelling Spirit. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Christ trusts to the spiritual mind always in his church to discern that which is spiritual, to unite by its own spiritual affinities with all which is spiritual, and to repel all that is "earthly, sensual, devilish." It is the only possible preservation of spiritual purity. The difference between the spiritual and its opposite can only be spiritually discerned. When the preservation of the purity of the church is intrusted to the sword suppressing

heresy, or to the weight of massive organization, or to ecumenical councils and standards of faith by them authoritatively decreed, these coarse and hard agencies do not discriminate between spiritual truth and life and the opposite, but only between outward organizations. If the Spirit always sustains the spiritual life, and the church is the outgrowth of the life, the spiritual church may be trusted in every generation to discern for itself that which is spiritual. It is because the church is spiritual that it is intrusted with the keys, and authorized to open and shut. Christ alone openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. The act of the church in opening and shutting is Christ's act, only as Christ is in the church quickening its spiritual discernment. The power of the keys is not given to the church of a particular generation, but to the church in all generations. We must confide in God's indwelling Spirit, and not imagine that we must see to everything, and bind everything fast for all coming time. The church of a former age had not power to settle all questions of fellowship so as to deprive the church of to-day of the power of the keys. The Comforter, "even the Spirit of Truth," is to "abide with you forever."

Because the unity of the church is the unity of the Spirit, and the authority of the church is limited to determining fellowship, the action expended in sustaining the organization and its machinery is reduced to a minimum, and the combined energies of the church have free course in beneficent service.

3. The national or ecumenical unity of the churches is the unity of the Spirit. It has been already said that Christians are spontaneously drawn into fellowship. It is also true that Christ requires them to be in fellowship. This fellowship is to extend through the world, that all Christian churches may work together in saving the world from sin. But this ecumenical union cannot be by an ecumenical organization, but only by fellowship in the Spirit. Any union by an ecumenical organization is incompatible with the fundamental principle of church organization. The

Romish church is constituted as an ecumenical organization. Its entire history has demonstrated that the differences among men are so great that an organization can never become ecumenical. It has also demonstrated that such an organization, so far as it does extend, is necessarily a hierarchy. The same conclusions are necessary, from the nature of the case.

4. The method by which the fellowship of the churches shall be determined is not definitely and authoritatively prescribed in the New Testament.

The primitive churches seem to have determined their fellowship in the natural method by mutual acquaintance in Christian work. This knowledge was extended to remoter regions by apostles and messengers of the churches sent abroad on various errands of Christian work, or by Christians scattered by persecution. This must always be the primitive method, and it is always valid. If a church is not at its organization regularly brought into fellowship with other churches by a council, and yet, subsequently, by its faith and works, demonstrates its Christian character, it gradually acquires the confidence of the churches, and is recognized as a church. All determination of church-fellowship rests ultimately on this ground—the knowledge of the Christian faith and practice of a church by the Christian churches in its neighborhood.

The next method is that of the Congregational council, growing immediately out of the primitive and natural method, giving formal and official declaration, after investigation, of the fellowship of the churches, and sometimes, also, rendering to a church in circumstances of embarrassment the advice and aid of sister churches. This is supplemented by the Congregational conference, which, assuming the question of fellowship to be already settled, and excluding all investigation of it, is a union of churches, already in acknowledged fellowship with each other, solely for mutual help and co-operation in the Christian life and work. This is a method of determining fellowship capable of uniting all

Christian churches throughout the world in the unity of the Spirit, without impinging on their Christian freedom.

Other methods, more complicated and imposing, may be adopted without contravening the fundamental principle of the ecclesiastical constitution. The Presbyterian church, for example, may be conceived of in this way. Its presbyteries, synods, and general assembly may be conceived of as agencies for ascertaining and declaring the fellowship, and for making effective the union and co-operation of the local churches. But this method is too complicated and cumbersome to become ecumenical; it issues in a continual cleavage into sections, even when it aims only to be national. And the very weight of the machinery perpetually tends to a unity of organization in which the local churches lose their distinct existence.¹

The Congregational method is to be preferred, because it is most accordant with the primitive simplicity of the communion of the apostolic churches; because it is most consonant with the scriptural idea that the church in every generation is the creation of the living Spirit, and is to preserve its purity by the sensitiveness and discernment of spiritual life; and because it alone is adequate to secure an ecumenical unity of churches, without extinguishing the local church, or repressing individual life and liberty.

5. The Christian church is necessarily catholic. It is in fellowship with all churches in which is the spiritual life. It acknowledges as a Christian church every association of regenerate persons who are united by their own free covenant in Christian fellowship for the purpose of edification and co-operation in the Christian life and work, whatever be the

¹ Accordingly, while the text of the Presbyterian "Form of Government" acknowledges the local church, a note authoritatively explains that "the several congregations of believers taken collectively constitute one church of Christ, called emphatically *the church*"; and that the government of that one church is by the majority of its representatives in Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly (Chap. xii. and note). And the Confession of Faith (Chap. xxx.), declares that the government of the church is "in the hand of church-officers," to whom, and not to the church, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed."

particular form of their union, and however encumbered with human accretions. As in a crystal, however peculiar its shape, we find by cleavage the primitive form, and by that determine its kind; so into whatever form the church, modified by peculiar circumstances, has grown, if underneath we find the primitive, apostolic church, by that we recognize it as a true church. Thus the Congregational church is essentially and necessarily undenominational, catholic, and Christian. It cannot acknowledge as a church a national or ecumenical organization, the synod, assembly, convention, or whatever may be the complicated machinery by which local churches seek concentration and more imposing union. It cannot acknowledge its own council or conference as a church. But in any organization, national or ecumenical, in any association of churches, however confederated, it acknowledges the local churches which are thus united. The Congregational is the primitive, apostolic church. It takes into its constitution only the essential elements of the church. Christ did not institute this apostolic church as a denomination, but as the Christian church, to be in fellowship with Christian churches everywhere. It is in its very constitution catholic. All who insist that human accretions on this simple form are essential to the church—who set up their national or ecumenical organization as the church, and refuse fellowship to the church in its simple and primitive form—are guilty of schism.

V. The Continuity of Christ's Kingdom in History is the Continuity of the Spirit and Life, rather than of the Organization.

The tendency in investigating religion is now to the historic method. The rationalism which develops religion from the personal consciousness, and resolves Christianity into philosophy and ethics, is congenial to an age of metaphysical speculation, and belongs to a period and type of thinking which is now passing away. The profoundest thought and

scholarship of the day investigate religion historically. But the history of Christianity did not end with the events recorded in the New Testament. The redeeming grace, working in humanity, creates for itself a continuous history. The apologists for Christianity are not to confine themselves to the evidences of the credibility and genuineness of the Bible used by the apologists of the last century. The argument now must take a wider range. It must show Christianity as a power in human history, evolving a system of truth the most satisfactory to human reason as an exposition of the relations of God and man, and effecting a process of renovation of individuals and of society, and a Christianizing of civilization, which, if completed, will realize the highest well-being of man. Christianity, in what it has accomplished, tends to accomplish, and promises to perfect, proves itself divine. When, in some future age, the Christian idea of the kingdom of God shall be realized in society, and it shall be seen, in tracing the history of Christianity, that from the beginning it had promised this result, and tended towards it, then Christianity will have wrought into history a demonstration of its divine origin.

What I now say is, that the continuity of this historical manifestation, so far as it has yet proceeded, is found in the spirit and the life, rather than in the outward organization.

1. The organization is itself an expression of the life. The church, as an organization distinct from the family and the state, is a peculiarity of Christianity. The Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, the Mahometans, Boodhists, and Brahmans, have a religion, but not a church. The very existence of a church, separated from the world by fellowship in a new and spiritual life, and distinct from the state, is a peculiar and remarkable manifestation of the divine life in humanity. Recall the characteristics of this organization, the new principles embodied in it, the revolution in human institutions wrought by it, and you will see that the organization itself is a wonderful exponent of the divine and renovating life of the Spirit working in humanity.

2. The organization itself has a continuity that is historical. Man organizes his thought and life in institutions. He is liable, therefore, to take up into the church the ideas and spirit of the age in which he lives, and thus to encumber it with accretions of human origin. But the overlaying of the church with these accretions, does not destroy it. The Lord, who knoweth them who are his, has owned every association of devout and spiritual worshippers as a church. Thus the church, even as an organization, has had historical continuity. It was, indeed, at times, a hidden church, — the real churches not even knowing themselves as such, — yet not the less real. When the Romanist asks: "Where was your church before the Reformation?" the answer is ready: "It was wherever those whom the Spirit had renewed were associated in spiritual fellowship; according to the words of Jesus: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'"

3. But this continuity is through the Spirit, more than through the organization. If the church is constituted according to the maxim, "Where the church is, there is the Spirit," then the divine action in redemption culminated in setting up a massive organization, in which the Spirit is imprisoned, like a bird in a cage, and which is to stand unchanged through all generations; salvation is only in it, and all that is done in it is Christ's doing. Then the history of Christianity is the history of this organization; Christianity is responsible for its corruptions; the history of Christianity becomes the history of intolerance, persecution, corruption, oppression, and opposition to human progress; and history becomes a perpetual refutation of the claim of Christianity to be from God.

We cannot accept this fatal doctrine. The church of today is not one with the apostolic churches by the line of apostolic succession, stretching without a break through the dark ages, like the electric wire beneath the ocean, and transmitting the life of Christ only by the completeness of the tactual connection. The historical continuity of the

church, even as an organization, is the continuity of the life, always quickened by the Spirit and organizing itself in the church. The institution is not perpetuated by the tenacity of the organization, cohering as it stretches through the centuries, but by the organizing force of the inward life; as an animal body is not perpetuated by the coherence of its material, which is always passing away, but by the indwelling and ever-organizing vital force.

Therefore Christianity is not responsible for the abuses which have dishonored the history of ecclesiastical organizations.

4. While the church, in its historical continuity as an organization, manifests in history the continuous presence of God's redeeming grace and of his kingdom, that manifestation extends beyond the church in purifying and transforming society. This is like the diffused daylight, filling the atmosphere, which more than the sun's direct rays manifests his light. This manifestation is in the clearer and more complete system of doctrine evolved by the thought and life of the advancing ages; in the broader, clearer, and more spiritual ethics; in the higher tone of the moral life; in political institutions founded on justice and human rights; in the pre-eminence of philanthropy; in the creation of a Christian civilization.

5. The historical continuity is such that the present is always evolved from the past. While the Christian church does not, by an organization taking precedence of the Spirit, impose the past as an unchangeable mould on the present, yet it does not cut the present adrift from the past. While the unity is of the Spirit, yet it is the same Spirit, advancing always the same truth and life, meeting with the same redeeming grace the corruptions and perversions of humanity in the diverse forms in which in different ages they appear, and setting up the same kingdom of righteousness on earth. As in the individual "the child is father of the man," so in the life of the church the present is the offspring of the past.

This may be illustrated in the Romish and the Protestant doctrines of tradition. Tradition, in its primitive form, was

held to be the unwritten teachings of Christ and the apostles, preserved from generation to generation, and promulgated by the church. But tradition as the Council of Trent explains it, includes also interpretations of scripture which had been unanimously accepted by the Fathers, and dogmas and rules which had received the sanction of the church; and the whole rests ultimately on the authority of the church. This crude mass the Romish church imposes on the thought and life of the ages, as the gods put Aetna on Enceladus; and every turning and motion of human thought beneath its load produces volcanic disturbance. The Protestant believes in tradition; but it is tradition which acknowledges the written word as its source, and appeals to it as the sufficient rule of faith and practice; which is itself the meaning of the Bible, as it flows down through the ages in the Christian consciousness of the church, as it finds expression in the writings of theologians, in the creeds of councils and churches, in the teachings of parents and pastors, in the renovated Christian life, usages, and institutions of society, and the growth of Christian civilization. Protestantism puts the Bible into every man's hand to read and interpret for himself; but it comes with surer evidence, with richer meaning, with more diversified and far-reaching applications won from the thought and experience of successive generations. If "the meaning of the Bible is the Bible," the Bible itself comes down through the ages like a river of life, purifying, deepening, and broadening its waters as it flows.

6. While the church has historical continuity, it is in every generation as immediately connected with Christ and his Spirit, as was the first church ever planted. So every generation receives the immediate light of the sun. Christianity has to be received by each generation anew. It comes as new to this generation as to that of Christ. Christianity is never consolidated. Like light, heat, electricity, and vital force, it is perpetuated only as it acts, it continues only as it is perpetually renewed, it must be received afresh

by every one who feels its power. It is old, and yet forever new. It can never be antiquated. It is the same to every generation, as the sun climbs the sky every day, and the stars every night, fresh and vigorous as in the earliest days.

7. Hence the church in its very organization is adapted to human progress; it is receptive of it, and it quickens it. It is not a cast-iron organization, refusing all change and crushing all growth, but capable of existing in any condition of society and under any human institutions. It insists on the free circulation of the scriptures, the right of private judgment, liberty of conscience, the equal privilege of all men to have access to God, justification by faith. Hence it trains its members to alertness to discover and receive whatever light may break forth from God's word, to sensibility to whatever influences may come from the Spirit, to keen spiritual discernment, and to a lively sense of personal responsibility to bring their own lives into conformity with God's will, and as much as in them lies to establish his kingdom on the earth. Hence it always has in it the power of revival and reformation, as fire always has in it the power of kindling. And whatever the intellectual and social progress of man, the church is able both to adapt itself to it and to guide and quicken it. Thus it stands in contrast with a hierarchical organization, which becomes by its massiveness incapable of adapting itself to new conditions antagonistic to human progress, and obliged to perpetuate the unchanged past in order to perpetuate its own existence.

PART II.

THE NECESSITY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HUMAN AGENCY IN
ADVANCING CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

God's agency in advancing his kingdom is not extra-human. Even his miraculous revelation was made in and through human history. The Eternal Word becomes the Redeemer of men only as he was made flesh and dwelt among us, under human limitations and in the courses of human history, working redemption. The redemptive energy of God, in each dispensation and in all its manifestations, works in and by humanity. Accordingly, in the dispensation of the Spirit, he works in and by humanity, and intrusts the advancement of his kingdom to his people. On them he imposes the responsibility of carrying the gospel to all mankind.

I. The Necessity of Human Agency.

Why is redemption dependent on human effort? Why does not God's love sweep over all human conditions, and extend his kingdom at once through the world?

1. This is only one form of the general question pertaining to the manifestation of the infinite in the finite. As such it transcends the limits of human knowledge. So far as we can conceive, God can manifest or reveal himself only by limiting or circumscribing himself. Every manifestation of the divine perfections, being through the finite, must be limited, incomplete, and progressive. At any given point of time in the manifestation, it must always be conceivable that a more complete manifestation might be made. This is as necessarily true of the manifestation of his infinite love in the redemption of sinners, as of the manifestation of his infinite power in the works of nature. The delay of

Christ's coming is no more an objection against the perfection of God's love, than the delay in the creation of man is an objection against the infinitude of his power. The existence of heathen on the earth to-day is no more an objection against the reality of Christ's reign of grace than it is an objection against God's government of the world that there have been immeasurable periods when the earth was occupied by animals of a low organization, of which an eminent professor used to say, that he did not believe the time ever was when the Almighty reigned over nothing but bull-frogs. The great cosmic agencies act slowly.

Nor is any force added to the objection by the degree of limitation or incompleteness. Wherever the limitation is drawn around the works by which God reveals his glory, it is still a limitation, and the question recurs: "Why not more?" The worm, were it intelligent, would have no right to complain that it is not a quadruped, nor the quadruped that it is not a man, nor the man that he is not an angel, nor the angel that he is not a thousand times greater. Because the divine bounty is inexhaustible, every divine gift suggests the question: "Why not more?"

If this objection is valid, it proves that God cannot reveal himself in finite effects, that is, that God cannot act; in other words, that there is no God. It arises from attempting to scrutinize with the logical understanding the measureless grandeurs which are revealed to faith. Analogous objections would be met by one who should study the starry heavens with a microscope.

2. Dependence on human agency is involved in the historical character of redemption. God's redeeming grace can manifest itself only in human history. But, since it must be in human history, it must advance by human agency, and its advance must be subject to the processes and changes of human history.

3. The same is evident from the nature of redemption. If, indeed, God converts and sanctifies men by sheer almightiness, accumulating souls in his kingdom as one scoops

up sand in a shovel and throws it over a wall, it might reasonably be supposed that he would at once convert and sanctify all. But God's action on man is in harmony with man's mental constitution. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Therefore human faithfulness or negligence, human willingness or opposition, are to be taken into the account in determining the progress of Christ's kingdom.

4. This intrusting of the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom to human hearts and hands is itself the most beneficent and effective discipline in training Christians to love like Christ. There would be no training of men to the purity, the strength, and the helpfulness of Christlike love, if God by his miraculous energy should establish his kingdom, and leave his redeemed with folded hands to gaze indolently on his work.

We may draw from this fact a lesson for our own guidance as Christian ministers. Since God reveals himself and carries on his work of redemption in human history, laying hold of humanity and working through its thoughts, processes, and development, the same law governs our action in preaching his truth. It is not enough for a preacher to express his own thought and life. If his thoughts and his methods are foreign to the thought and life of the people, he cannot carry them with him, nor advance them in the divine life. The seed must take root in the hearer's heart. He alone preaches with power who grafts his thought on the thought and life of his hearers, and from and by these advances them to higher thought and life.

II. Characteristics of the Human Agency in advancing Christ's Kingdom.

The general principle is that already presented as fundamental in the constitution of the church: "Where the Spirit of God is, there is the church." In all our thinking respecting the human agency in the conversion of the world, we must conceive of the agency of God's Spirit as going

before it and quickening it. "We are laborers together with God." Man's Christian work, in every part and aspect of it, is accordant with the truth which the whole work of redemption expresses: "We love him, because he first loved us."

1. The first characteristic is spontaneity. Paul was thus actuated: "Whereunto I labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Here is a wonderful accumulation of the strongest Greek words, expressing the intensity of the apostle's action, and the intensity of the Spirit's energy in him quickening the apostle's action: "Whereunto I labor to exhaustion, agonizing, according to his energy energizing in me with might." As if driven by a resistless impulse, he says: "The love of Christ constraineth us"; "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."

This zeal is a fire kindled fresh from heaven, enveloping the soul, like the burning bush, ever burning, never consumed. It does not lead its subjects to announce the marvellous work which they are about to do—as if a reformation could be manufactured to order. They do their great deeds in unconsciousness, because their zeal for truth and right, their love to God and man compel. The greatest works in the kingdom of grace, like the majestic movements of the heavens, are marked by stillness, and reveal themselves by their effects. They come up, like the sun, and reveal themselves by their own light.

Luther did not set out to work the Protestant Reformation. In the outset he did not even see the reformation needed. He simply followed the leadings of the Spirit; and before he was aware, behold, the Reformation.

The first settlers of New England exemplify the same truth. It was no expectation of founding an empire, of being enrolled among the benefactors of mankind, "all of them princes to look to," which brought them hither. With hearts yearning for dear old England they came, impelled by the fear of God and the purpose to worship him according

to the dictates of their own consciences. When we see the pilgrims hunting, fishing, digging, suffering, we cannot separate their acts from the glory which has followed; we think of them as acting consciously in the presence of posterity and the foresight of the glorious future. But, in fact, they were buried in a wilderness at the ends of the earth; and as to their future, their concern was, that it should not be to perish by savages or by starvation. Theirs was the stern and suffering toil of poverty, disease, and hardship in every form; and the glory which shone into their unglazed cabins was the glory of Calvary and of heaven. And had it been otherwise,—if, instead of this simple and sublime obedience to the Spirit, they had lived in the foresight of their fame, boasting of the greatness of their mission,—they would not have been the Christian heroes that they were, and the pigmies of this self-conscious age would point at them, and cry: “Art thou, also, become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?”

Thus history teaches that the power of God, working mightily in the human heart, is the spring of all abiding spiritual power; that it is only as men are constrained by the energy of the inward spiritual life that they do great things for God. It is the spirit of Gordon Hall, who was determined to work his passage to Asia, if he could not go otherwise. It is the spirit which impelled Newell and Judson to create an organization to send them out, when no organization had existed. It is the spirit which moved the Macedonian Christians, who, not waiting to be solicited, sought out an agency through which to expend their gifts, “praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”

It is remarkable, in Christ's conception of his kingdom, that he expects the abiding presence of God's Spirit, quickening men to spiritual life; he expects that the enthusiasm of devotedness to God and self-sacrificing love to man, and of fidelity to truth and duty, will be undying powers in

human history, overpowering selfishness and inspiring men to toil and self-denial for others. On these abiding spiritual forces he throws himself without reserve.

This enthusiasm has shown itself a power in the world in all the progress of Christianity. They miserably mistake who calculate the courses and issues of human action with the recognition only of the forces of selfishness, and overlooking the power of the Spirit and the forces of the spiritual life.

2. A second characteristic is the prominence given to the individual as distinguished from the organization. This follows from what has already been said of the prominence of the individual in the constitution of the church.

Isaac Taylor says: "The influence of individual men seems to have ceased almost to make itself felt. The course of events and the progress of opinion is the tide-wave of a mighty ocean, in relation to which the very mention of individual agency would sound like a mockery." This opinion grows out of naturalism — the doctrine that man is but a necessary development of nature. It can never harmonize with Christianity, which always depends on the faith, love, and enterprise of individuals whose hearts God has touched. And it is not a fact. Let a Paul arise to-day, and he will wield Paul's power. It is as true to-day as it was in Paul's day, as true in America as it was in Palestine, that a soul filled with God's Spirit will be mighty through him. The contrary opinion, born of naturalism, is the antagonist of faith and the destroyer of courage and enterprise. We talk sorrowfully of the Elijahs, who once moved the world. Where are the Elishas, who call on the Lord God of Elijah, and divide the waters? Oh for the power of God's Spirit to turn the hearts of his people from looking fearfully one to another for help, from trusting to outward machinery, — "sacrificing to their net and burning incense to their drag," — and to inspire them with personal zeal and enterprise in Christ's work. Great periods and great men have the imprint of the divine seal, and prove God present on

the earth. If we despair of their reappearance, we despair of Christianity. If we suppose that organization and association alone are left us in their place, we suppose that God has abandoned us to our own devices, and that life and growth have given place to mechanism.

It may be objected that we cannot expect every year to be an epoch, and the whole of life to glow with enthusiasm. This is true; yet Christianity accomplishes something like this. It inspires every soul with the faith and love which are the springs of heroism, and ennoble the most commonplace life with consecration, aspiration, and loving service like Christ's.

It may be objected that the office of a settled pastor is widely different from that of a prophet. This is true. God has in every age prophetic spirits — quickened by the Holy Ghost to declare God's wrath against specific sins, and to call his churches to new thoughts and new duties — who cannot be expected to confine themselves to any professional routine. Yet every minister and every Christian is a witness for God, called and qualified to testify for God's truth and righteousness, and to stand against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Every Christian, therefore, is to act in his individuality. He must "attempt great things, and expect great things." One secret of the success of the apostolic church was this spirit of individual love and responsibility. When scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the word. Like Michael's angels, fighting against Satan,

" Each on himself relied,
As only in his arm the moment lay
Of victory."

Such a spirit is essential to success. Pervaded by it, "how should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." Then the hosts of God's people, in their organized and associated assaults on the kingdom of Satan, would be like the angelic army,

“ Though numbered such
As each divided legion might have seemed
A numerous host; in strength each armed hand
A legion.”

Without this fire of heaven in individual hearts, associations will be powerless as burning-glasses which concentrate moonbeams.

3. Christianity opens spheres of action adapted to the peculiar proclivity and capacity of every Christian.

Carlyle exclaims: “Blessed is the man who has found his work.” And, since man’s blessedness is realized not in receiving, so much as in giving; not in indulgence, but in work, blessed indeed is the man who has found a work in which he is conscious that all his faculties are putting themselves forth in their full activity, and all his tastes and aptitudes are fully met.

Every situation, indeed, will bring its chagrins which must be swallowed in silence, and its drudgery which must be toiled through with patience. The world has no patience with the weakling who fills the air with complaints of the hardness and disagreeableness of his work, and especially no patience with complaining and disconsolate ministers. Learn to burn your own smoke, and not pour it forth to make the atmosphere sooty and choking to all around you.

Man is greater than his profession. He is many-sided, many-handed. If one pursuit is not open to him, he can adapt himself to another. Yet the most effective work is that in which the man can most joyfully engage, and in which is consciously satisfied the radical and irrepressible impulse to put forth all his powers in action, and to push forth on every side to the utmost compass of his being.

This adaptation of the individual to his work Christianity permits. Since the Christian work is so broad, since every sphere of human life is to be purified and consecrated to God, there is scope for the highest Christian service to every variety of talent and in every sphere of life. Christianity has great breadth, compass, and flexibility. Its spirit is one

— the spirit of faith and love ; its service is as diversified as human life.

In this respect, the Romish church has shown itself wiser than the Protestant. It has provided a sphere for every kind of talent and for every type of Christian life. When Loyola arose, with his fiery zeal, setting forth new ideas and new measures, the church did not drive him into opposition by suspicion and antagonism, but allowed him to work in his own way ; and the society which he formed became the ally of the church. When Wesley, with his purer, but not less fiery zeal, arose in the church of England, he was driven out. A certain narrowness and rigidity, a certain inability to recognize Christianity except in a specific type and fashion, has been a weakness of Protestantism from the beginning, and has broken it into sects, until the right of private judgment seems almost to mean the right of each Christian to impose his own private judgment on the whole church of Christ.

Here we may properly glance at the Christian work of woman. In the lives both of Jesus and of the apostles, woman is presented as specially susceptible of spiritual impressions and capable of giving forth Christian influence. This has become proverbial : “ Last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre.”

Dante's Beatrice may be taken as a type of woman's position and influence according to the Christian conception— the quickener, guide, and exemplar of man in the spiritual life. In her pure presence, in conscious shame at his own impurity, he says :

“ Down fell mine eyes

On the clear fount ; but, there myself espying,
Recoiled and sought the greensward, such a weight
Of shame was on my forehead. With a mein
Of that stern majesty which doth surround
A mother's presence to her awe-struck child
She looked.

And again, at her appearance :

“ Suddenly, upon the day appeared
 A day new-risen ; as he who had the power
 Had with another sun bedecked the sky.
 Her eyes fast fixed on the eternal spheres,
 Beatrice stood, unmoved ; and I, with ken
 Fixed upon her, from upward gaze removed,
 At her aspect such inwardly became
 As Glaucus, when he tasted of the herb
 That made him peer among the ocean gods.
 Words may not tell of that transhuman change.”

The Christian desire of purity early deteriorated into the doctrine of the meritoriousness of celibacy and monasticism. This was natural in an age utterly corrupted by heathenism. It may be doubted whether the licentiousness which from the heathen temples began to show itself even in the apostolic churches could have been successfully resisted except by an antagonism as concentrated and one-sided as monasticism. It is not strange, therefore, that in the Christian Fathers we sometimes find expressions of passionate horror at the fascinations of the fair sex.

But the true Christian conception of woman gradually asserted itself. Not to mention the influence of the more directly spiritual teachings of the gospel, the story of Mary the mother of Jesus, the reverence which it created for her, the expression of that reverence in art, taught reverence for woman and for maternity. The truth inherent in the story of Jesus penetrated society even through perversions and errors ; as light is light, through whatever medium it may shine.

The principal spheres of action for the majority of women must always be the domestic and the social. In these realms she reigns — “ *incedit regina.*” Those whose lives are in these spheres may give personal aid in specific efforts to advance Christ’s kingdom. Others may devote themselves entirely to missionary work. Labors of both kinds are commemorated in the New Testament. Joanna, the wife of a high officer under Herod, ministered to Jesus ; Dorcas

made clothing for the poor; Lydia opened her house to entertain Paul; Priscilla, Phoebe, and other women were laborers with Paul in the gospel. In modern missions have been women who, by the exaltation of their spiritual lives, by beauty and completeness of character, and by activity in the missionary work, have made their names illustrious. Nothing, during this century, has more than the missionary work exemplified the power of woman, the variety of lines in which she can act effectively, the purity, intensity, and compass of her influence, and thus has illustrated and enlarged the sphere of her activity, and ennobled her in the estimation of man.

4. The human agency in advancing Christ's kingdom demands wise forethought in planning the enterprises to be undertaken, and in judiciously adapting means to ends, and in organizing the agencies to be employed. The doctrine that action must be spontaneous under the inspiration of faith and love, does not mean the disuse of human faculties, but the inspiring of them to intense action. Wisdom and inspiration go together; "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Forethought is no substitute for zeal; but zeal is misdirected without forethought. It has been said that the piety of theological seminaries is all kept packed ready for exportation. This would be forethought shutting out the inspiration of faith and love—the fire going out, while year after year you heap the wood-pile; the wood itself meantime becoming dozy and slow to burn. On the other hand, zeal is not to bring you to a premature beginning of activity, to the exclusion of diligent preparation. You must not grind and bake your seed-wheat. So it is in all Christian life. Christian spontaneity is not quietism, which excludes the vigorous use of the faculties, and waits, inactive, for the heavenly breeze; nor fanaticism, which, because the breeze is fresh, neglects to plan and direct the voyage. Christianity lays hold of all the faculties, and its inspiration quickens them to keener discernment, more far-reaching sight, and more vigorous exertion.

I shall apply this thought principally to the choice of a profession. The remark used to be common, that every pious young man should assume that he ought to be a minister, unless he could show special reasons to the contrary. The same remark is sometimes made respecting the missionary work. But this is a drag-net, which gathers of every kind. No pursuit is absolutely the most useful. We can only say that a particular individual may be most useful in a particular pursuit. Providence, indeed, shuts us up closely, and gives to each but a limited range of selection. But, so far as a man has range of selection, he ought to be able to give some positive reason for his choice—some special adaptation, some inward proclivity, some leading of God's Spirit and providence, something to kindle enthusiasm, and make every man believe that for him his own life-work is the highest and best. This cannot be less true of the choice of the missionary work than of ordinary pursuits. A man must not drift into the missionary work merely because he cannot show any reason to the contrary, but must choose it with a positive conviction of duty and earnestness of purpose which shall concentrate all his energies on his work. It is the last work to enter with a divided heart.

The object of enthusiasm is not generic, but specific. We are taught that Christians must live to do good. Yet I suspect no enthusiasm was ever kindled by any object so indefinite as doing good. The most you can get out of it is a mild and diffused daylight of goodness,—very mild and diffused,—never the direct sunbeams, much less the burning focus of his rays. It is analogous to teaching children: "You must be good, because it is good to be good." Enthusiasm is always about something in particular—specific persons, specific truths and errors, specific virtues and vices, specific ends to be attained.

It is a distinctively Christian idea that a man's work is a *calling*. In determining what is your calling, your subjective state, your inward conviction, drawing, and interest are important considerations. He must be comparatively ineffi-

cient who is obliged to grope his way by the dim light of prudence, with no inward impulse impelling and guiding him. His whole life must be a groping and a stumbling, advancing slowly, pausing often to consider what is the road, mistaking his way, and losing time in retracing his steps. Happy is the man who runs the way of God's commandments, because God has enlarged his heart—his energies concentrated in running towards the goal, not wasted in groping for the way.

Fenelon, giving directions for attaining a higher Christian life, says: "The essential point is only to follow, step by step, the divine grace, with an infinite patience, carefulness, and delicacy. We must limit ourselves to letting God act, and never lay hold of the pure love, except as God by his inward anointing begins to open the heart to that word which is so hard to souls still clinging to self, and so liable to offend them and plunge them into sin. . . . The genuine simplicity of pure love confines itself to following the divine grace, without ever undertaking to anticipate it."¹

This is the wisdom of God, though it is foolishness with men. Christianity safely trusts and follows the grace of God, without undertaking to anticipate it. It will be fatal if, in the management of our missions, this fundamental principle is left out. Missions can succeed only as God calls, qualifies, and impels into the work men and women "whose hearts God has touched." The perfunctory services of the ablest and most scholarly persons will be an inefficient substitute.

But this special anointing or call is not miraculous. It connects itself with, and manifests itself through, the special natural endowments, the circumstances and events of the life, the specialties of training, of acquisitions, and of spiritual experience which have turned the attention to the work, forced the question of duty on the mind, given preparation for the work, or awakened interest in it. God's Spirit always acts in harmony with his providence. The call to the

¹ Explication des Maximes des Saints, Art. iii.

missionary work differs from the call to any other only as it is a greater work. In determining whether one is called to this work, the Christian is not to wait for a resistless *afflatus*; but he is carefully to study the leadings of God's Spirit and providence, and by the use of his reason determine his calling.

And here love itself is the light by which the Christian sees. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him." Self-devoting love is the safeguard against mistake in deciding questions of duty. If the pure light of love is clouded by the mingling of selfish desires; if the motive of action is interest in literature and intellectual culture, or ambition to shine as an orator, or desire to be established in an elegant and refined home, these desires obscure the mind and vitiate its decisions.

Hence the duty of entering a missionary life usually appears less clear at the outset, to one called to it, than afterwards. A young man must decide the question before his entrance to the ministry, before he has attained that stronger and purer faith and love which afterwards shine like a cloudless day upon his life. We can hardly expect, therefore, that the inward call will present itself in the most pronounced form, constraining him beyond all doubt. But the true missionary after entering his field sees more and more clearly that it is the work to which God had called him. Hence that remarkable characteristic of missionaries, their joy in their work, their reluctance to leave it, their eagerness to return to it, and the rounded fulness of life which they seem to realize. Every one, therefore, who is called to the missionary work, has reason, with Paul, to thank God, who counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. If that call comes in connection with the man's natural endowments, his education, all the providential circumstances and shaping of his life, and the peculiar leading of the Spirit, then evidently the man and his life have been shaped for the work, and the only possibility for that man

of realizing the harmony, fulness, and blessedness of life, is to follow the Spirit, accept the calling, and do the work. It is idle to let the fear of difficulties and privation bias the decision; for the work to which he is called is the only work in which, for him, blessedness is possible. Here is the significance of the saying: "It is better to be out of the world than out of the path of duty."

The same train of thought applies to the prosecution of missionary work. It cannot be carried on by the impulse of enthusiasm. It demands the highest practical wisdom in planning and administering, the most thoughtful and persistent action in organizing, concentrating and directing the energies of the church.

5. The work of Christian missions and of social renovation, outreaching the scope of the local church, is properly performed through associations of churches or of individuals, such as the spiritual wisdom of Christ's people, taught by the Spirit and providence of God, shall find most effective to meet the exigency of the time and place.

(1.) This is necessary to enable the churches to meet effectively the changes of time and the peculiarities of place. The church is a permanent organization, the same for all countries and for all time. But as Christ's kingdom advances through successive ages and different countries peculiar exigencies arise, demanding work peculiar to the age or people. For this work special and temporary associations are properly organized.

(2.) This is necessary to Christian liberty. It has already been shown that Christianity opens a sphere of action for every Christian to which, by a peculiarity of natural capacity and proclivity, and by the training of God's Spirit and providence, he is specially adapted. On account of these diversities, every Christian cannot be expected to be active in every Christian enterprise. And in the progress of Christ's kingdom Christian action must be directed from time to time into new enterprises, to meet new exigencies as they arise, the importance of which many Christians will not at once

appreciate. If every enterprise to carry the gospel abroad or to accomplish the renovation of society at home must be carried on by the church as such, this establishes new criterions of fellowship, infringes on the liberty of Christians, and "causes divisions and offences" in the church of Christ.

(3.) Voluntary associations for specific Christian enterprises are accordant with the apostolical constitution of the church as a local or congregational church. If missions and all Christian work must be done by the church in its organic capacity, the local church must be lost in an ecumenical organization. On the contrary, missionary associations are accordant with the constitution, the genius, and spirit of the local church. They are agencies which come into being for a specific purpose. When the work is done, when churches are established no longer needing aid, the missionary association disappears, and the new churches go on with the work.

(4.) The voluntary association accords with the prominence given to the individual in the constitution of the church, and with the spontaneity characteristic of Christian action. It implies, always present in the church, the spiritual wisdom and life, which will discern what Christian work the existing time demands, and will plan the agencies and measures best fitted to accomplish it. The other supposition implies that the church in its organic capacity is to devise, plan, and execute all Christian work, and that the agencies exist organized in it; permanent and unchanged through all time. This necessarily implies that Christian work is not individual and spontaneous, but is given out to be done under orders. The result must be not only the absorption of local churches in an ecumenical church, but also, somewhere, a central permanent power through which the church utters its commands, and in obedience to which all Christians act. An ecumenical church cannot be self-governing. In its very conception it implies a hierarchy.

The supposition that the church in its organic capacity is to plan, direct, and execute all the Christian enterprises

incident to the conversion of the world and the renovation of society is incompatible with the local constitution of the church, and logically involves both an ecumenical church and a hierarchical government.

(5.) The voluntary association is in accordance with the methods of the apostolic missions. They were pre-eminently spontaneous and individual, committing the continued prosecution of the work to the local church so soon as one was gathered on missionary ground.

(6.) It is in accordance with the common practice of the church ever since the apostles' day. Even the Catholic church never assumed to itself as an organization all Christian enterprises. Its missions and other religious work gave birth to innumerable orders and associations called into being for special work to meet the peculiarities of particular ages — orders of monks and nuns, the Sisters of Charity, the Society of Jesus, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and many others, through which the diversified energies of the church found scope for action. It is in accordance with the universal usage of the church that there be Missionary Boards, Bible and Tract Societies, Young Men's Christian Associations, Temperance Societies, and others, giving scope to the diversified energies and interests of Christians, expressing the ideas and meeting the wants of particular localities and times, and disappearing when the specialty which called them forth has passed away.

(7.) This method of administration is recommended by its superior efficiency. This is an inference from what has already been said.

It may be added that the contrary principle, limiting Christian enterprise to what is done through the church as an organization, deprives Christianity of the credit of its indirect influences on society. The church is separated from the state, and ill-adapted to carry on social reform. Enterprises for political and social progress necessarily fall to individuals and voluntary associations, carrying out Christian principles to their remoter applications. But these, not being

recognized as legitimate agencies for Christian action, are thrown into antagonism to the churches, practical morality comes to be separated from religion, and the very influences of political and social renovation which Christianity originated are used as weapons of assault on the churches. This antagonism would be in a great degree avoided, and Christianity have the credit of the indirect influence on society which it actually exerts, if it was understood as accordant with the true conception of the church, that, while it remains from age to age the same, Christian enterprise is always to outreach the organic agency of the church, and enterprises and agencies are in every age to spring up around it, carrying out Christian principles to special applications and by special methods adapted to the exigency of the time.

On the contrary, if the church as an organization attempts this work, it insures a civilization, types of which have repeatedly appeared in history, in which the priestly element is dominant, and the civilization lacks the stimulus, the progressiveness, and the varied development which Christianity gives, and becomes stagnant and monotonous.

Further, the freedom and flexibility and individuality involved in this method are elements of power. "A system which raises the individual to the primary place of religious importance, places him nearest to the supernatural energy of God naturally draws to it minds of marked vigor and trains men in self-subsisting habits." It develops the individual. It inspires him. It works towards the realization of the wish "that all the Lord's people were prophets." It shows its power, not in producing a perfect mechanism directed by one engineer, but in multiplying strong and earnest Christians. And it produces unity of action, not by the mechanical unity of organization, but creating a type of man—men and women acting individually, spontaneously, and earnestly, yet by the formative power of common convictions, and common faith and love, made of one type, so that spontaneous working is working in a spontaneous harmony for one result. Puritanism and Methodism each creates its type

of man. The religion and education of New England have produced a type of man. Plant New Englanders anywhere on the face of the earth and they spontaneously reproduce New England institutions. Such is the action of Christianity. It creates a type of man. Christians of whatever age or country understand each other, and sympathize in the deepest experience and most cherished aim of life. Their real unity is here, and not in the unity of organization.

Thus the church is efficient, because it is alive in every part, and

“Vital in every part,
Cannot but by annihilating die.”

When any organization passes away, this deathless and all-pervading energy embodies itself anew and works out its great result. Such was the ancient prophecy: “The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion and upon her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night.”