

## ARTICLE II.

## ORGANIC CHRISTIAN UNITY.

## THE POSITION OF AMERICAN CHURCHMEN.

BY THE REVEREND BURNETT T. STAFFORD.

NEVER before in the past four hundred years has the organic unity of all confessing the name of Christ been brought so conspicuously to the front as now. His manifest desire was that his followers should be united both spiritually and organically, as they moved to the redemption of the world. To-day, all who follow in his train, cordially accept the great primitive symbols of the faith; namely, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. The hindrances to organic unity are not in this quarter, since the facts of the faith abide the same from generation to generation. Difficulties come up, for the most part, over matters of expression: one party says one thing, and another something else. Both usually have an equal degree of positiveness; and, while honestly professing sincere regard for each other, both continue to move along well-defined parallel lines, if not positively divergent ones.

Academically considered, it would seem that the need of the world-embracing movement, which the Christ, with clear and well-defined purpose set agoing, should have some organ of expression. He certainly saw with unobscured vision into the future, as the message of redeeming love and grace should first take hold of the thoughts, and then of the ambitions, of men; and in the final place, reform and reconstruct human society in all respects. He knew human nature to the very core; so that he was en-

tirely conscious that the work to be done by his gospel was in those regions of soul, sensitive and resolute, where every point is one of warning and serious danger. Is it true that "he touched humanity with a magnificent enthusiasm," and that is all? Statesmen and reformers seek to embody their ideas and principles in organizations having platforms and constitutions as foundations for aggressive operations. The more perfect these can be made, the larger is the expectation of long-continued success. Was the Divine Man of Galilee profoundly lacking in this worldly wisdom? He was willingly subject to human conditions; and one ever-present need of all progressive movement is the presence of an organism of expression. Thought, however brilliant, never does work as long as it remains in the air. Spiritual good news and ambition bring things to pass only as they are forced into the fighting line of social and religious movement. To do this, an organization is imperative.

The unqualified affirmation of all Churchmen—commonly called Episcopalians—is that the Christ did create such a needed organization: it is the Church; and its authority and orders have come to the present day unimpaired.

And here, before it is safe to take a further step, the opposed positions of the English and Genevan reforms of the sixteenth century should be noticed. The English said that the Church was formed and organized by the Christ; it has become corrupted in both faith and practice by the isms of Rome; the need, therefore, is to purify it, and restore the faith and practice of the Apostles and the Apostolic fathers. From grand old John Wyclif to the Oxford movement, with, of course, varying shades and tones, this position has not been yielded by a single hair's-breadth. The Genevan Reformers said that the Church is founded on the New Testament literature, and comes out of it. The all-sufficient answer is that for years before there was

a single line of the New Testament written, the Church was fully organized, and doing wonderfully effective work in gigantic missionary undertakings. It is needless to occupy space with dates: one or two illustrations will serve for all. The epistle of St. Paul to the Romans was written to a local church for some time in existence: he wrote to help the Roman brethren out of some pressing difficulties. It is not true at all to the facts to say that the Church at Rome came into existence as the result of St. Paul's epistle to them. It is not true at all to the facts to say that, as the result of the four Gospel narratives being written, the Christian Church came to have being. The truth, rather, is, that the New Testament literature came out of the Church, and was given an existence, because it had been doing business for at least one generation. Clearly this is the distinct position taken by St. Luke in his preface to the Incarnation. In the Epistles the same fact is generally recognized.<sup>1</sup> In this very serious and fundamental matter, the English Reformers were right, and the Genevan wrong.

And now, coming to the authoritative evidence of the Christ himself, it is clear that, from the first hours of his public teaching, he spoke in terms of social relation. He would bring men together in a kingdom. This necessarily meant that he would organize them into a body. The thought and its realization were never lost sight of. And so, when the minds of the twelve were ripe to receive the truth, he made clear announcement, that upon the fact of the Word being "made flesh," he would build his Church, and all of the opposition of evil in the universe should not be sufficient to oppose it. There is no direct or indirect suggestion that this work would be given to others: the words of declaration of purpose are entirely definite: "Up-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 23; xv. 1, 2; Gal. viii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 6; Heb. vi. 1, 2; 1 John ii. 24, 27; Jude 3.

on this Rock I will build my Church." That it was founded by the Christ is recognized over and again by St. Paul: in no more clear way than in speaking of our Divine Lord's appearance after the resurrection: "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once." St. Paul here uses the word "brethren" as he does in all other places to mark out distinctly members of the visible body of the Christ, which is the Church. Coming to the day of Pentecost, the evidence is all of the same sort. St. Luke's concluding statement concerning that wonderful season of power and enlargement for the Christian cause, is this: "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Now it is conceded by all competent to pass judgment, that in all the Acts St. Luke is remarkably careful and accurate. In his account of the Pentecostal season, there is not one word of evidence, either direct or indirect, to the effect that the Church at this time was founded and organized. It is inconceivable that such a painstaking writer should have passed in utter silence such a momentous event, had it taken place. Believers were added to the Church, because it was already in existence to receive them. Our Divine Lord founded and organized it as he said he would.

"The Church's one foundation,  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord."

Early in his ministry the Christ called the twelve to be his close followers. The time and place are not specified, but it is certain that he ordained them to be ministers. St. Mark says: "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." According to St. John, he said to them: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Beyond dispute, Christian Ordination was of the Christ. All this is clearly

recognized and emphasized in his last words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; [and, because I give it now to you] go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The functions of these ordained ministers were two: (1) Living witnesses to the fact that the Word was made flesh: "That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the WORD of life . . . declare we unto you." (2) To be Bishops (or overseers) of the Church. The Christ said: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, . . . and [to] sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Almost from the earliest hour after the departed Lord left the administration of the Church in their hands, they exercised the functions of Bishops. At their suggestion and initiative, the seven Deacons were set apart to perform the peculiar duties of this office. "When the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, *they* sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they came down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." This is the first mention in Christian history of the rite of confirmation being exercised. It was bestowed by the Apostles, Peter and John, acting as officers of the Church. The same rite by the author of the Hebrews is declared to be a doctrine; that is, one of the permanent furnishings of the Christian body: and, as is well known, is now one of the functions of the office of the Bishop. At the first great council at Jerusalem, the Apostles, acting as Bishops, took the initiative. Beyond a doubt, the serious matters under consideration were talked over; but St. James, as presiding Bishop, indicated (as is the prerogative of the presiding Bishop to-day) what the finding should

be. The record says: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. . . . Then it pleased the Apostles and Elders with the whole Church" to adopt his opinion as the result of the council. In all of this the source of final suggestion and authority is with the Apostles acting as Bishops.

St. Paul appointed St. Titus Bishop of Crete as he placed St. Timothy over the diocese of Ephesus. His instructions to St. Titus were explicit. He says: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee." He tells us that he had "the care of all the churches." He ordained "elders in all the churches." Some did not recognize his authority, and he warned them that he would give them full proof of it when he should come among them. Some still further questioned his call and appointment to apostolic functions, and he vindicated the validity of both because of the message received on the road to Damascus from the Glorified Christ. Professor Ramsay of Aberdeen (Presbyterian) knows the literary history of the Apostolic and post-Apostolic periods of the church: more than this, he knows as no other man, the records of all the churches as these have come to us carved on marble and granite and now found on the sites of ruined church buildings and Christian homes. He says there is abundant evidence from these stones that the Episcopal order of Church organization and government were facts in St. Paul's day, and that he extended them. But this is not all of the ancient evidence by any manner of means. Short treatises on the same subject, or dealing with it, were written by the *immediate* disciples of the Apostles. Of the genuineness of these writings there is no doubt at all. The epistle of St. Clement was written about A.D. 67 or 70. In it he makes repeated mention of an orderly ministry having come from

the Lord Jesus Christ and expressly by his appointment. St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, suffered martyrdom at Rome A.D. 107. He makes it perfectly clear that the office of Bishop was a definite and precise thing. He indicates clearly the functions of each of the three orders of Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons, and then goes on to say that, "without these, there is no Church." To the Philadelphians he writes: "Take care to frequent but one Eucharist [i.e. to avoid schism], for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup for unity in his blood: one altar, as there is one Bishop, with the Presbyters and Deacons." These quotations are not all these early Fathers say on this important matter. The evidence of the later Fathers is to the same effect on the origin, organization, and government of the Christian Church.

Sometime in the early days of the Church, what are called the Apostolic Canons came to have being. From them, the above statements could be fortified: it would seem to be needless. But this may be said, that, at the Council of Nice (A.D. 325) these canons (laws) came up for consideration. The verdict was, "Let the ancient canons be maintained." The use of the word "ancient" certainly indicates that they were of no recent origin at the time of the council.

The important matter now is this: Has this "one Catholic and Apostolic Church" come to us of Anglo-Saxon blood in this year of grace, 1902? Again the statement must be of the briefest.

The definite date of the introduction and establishment of Christianity in Britain is not known. One thing, however, is certain: it took place long before the coming of Augustine and his monks: it took place long before the separation of the Western Church from the Eastern, and long before the Bishop of Rome ever dreamed of asserting and seeking to exercise supreme spiritual au-

thority over all the west. Tertullian and Origen both speak of the Church in Britain. Again, the early existence of the Church in Britain is found in the fact that at the council held at Arles, in A.D. 314, three Bishops from Britain, with Presbyters and Deacons, were present. The ancient roll of the Council tells us they were Eborius of the diocese of York, Restitutus of the diocese of London, and Caerleon of the diocese of Lincoln. This forms a safe and solid base for computing backward. Much time was necessarily consumed in forming a diocese under the conditions which then pertained. Three, much more; so that it is entirely a justifiable statement to say that the beginning of Christian labor in Britain must have been well-nigh, if not before, the beginning of the second century. And this foundation work in the planting of the English Church was never removed or submerged. By the incoming of the savage Saxons, it was driven west and north, but only for a while; and, as it would seem, to nurse its strength and faith that when its fullness of time should have come, it was to return to the regions whence driven to more than treble the glory of the first days. In all the annals of the Church, there is nothing at all more gloriously noble and Christianly heroic than the conquest of their native land by these British missionaries. Where the Roman monks signally failed, they were successful for all time. And they knew their rights and privileges as Churchmen, who stood in the succession of the Apostles. Augustine, in true Roman fashion, sought to place himself over them in ecclesiastical authority. The British clergy resented the attempt, and told him plainly that their orders were from the Christ and above them there were no others. He found seven Bishops when he landed: he called them together. When the British clergy came to the meeting, the Romans refused to rise as the token of equality in both orders and authority. Whereupon the na-

tive clergy resented the action, and refused further conference. The matter was arranged, but only on the full and complete acknowledgment by Augustine of the validity of the British Church as Catholic and Apostolic.

To follow the long course of events from this period on, both ecclesiastical and political, as they become blended and twisted, is impossible here, nor is it needful. The self-constituted spiritual lord of the Tiber, however, kept up the process on every possible occasion of meddling and encroaching to advance his interest. The gist of the history, as far as the present purpose is concerned, is this,—the English people and Church never for one moment forgot that, politically and religiously and ecclesiastically, they were free and independent of all foreign princes whatsoever. They were betrayed and falsely led by ecclesiastical politicians, but the old English heart of freedom in the people never ceased beating and hoping and waiting. The best summary of all these things is found in the reply of William the Conqueror to Gregory VII., when he called upon William to do fealty for his new kingdom. “Fealty I have never willed to do, *nor do I will to do it now. I have never promised it, nor do I find that any of my predecessors did it to yours.*” This is the whole story in most condensed form. The time was 1071. In the laws William laid down for the government of his realm, both ecclesiastical and political, the integrity and reality, and nationality of the Church of England were clearly marked. One hundred and fifty-four years brings the story to the ever-memorable times of the Great Charter. This first written constitution of Anglo-Saxon peoples makes the transition from the age of traditional rights and institutions to the age of written legislation along fixed lines and in harmony with the institutions of the historical past. With this truth in mind, the remark of Mr. Green is seen to be full of great significance, when he says, “In itself,

the Charter was no novelty, nor did it claim to establish any new constitutional principles." If, in the Federal Constitution, definite and clear mention were made of some religious body, and its rights and privileges were defined, the evidence would be absolutely conclusive that such a religious body was a real thing and had a *bona fide* existence at the time of the making and adoption of the constitution. The men who drew up the Great Charter, both religious and political, were among the best men of the realm. They knew what were the institutions of their fathers. The first clause of this instrument is this: *Quod Anglicana ecclesia libera sit, et habeat jura sua integra, et libertates suas illaesas* ("The Church of England shall be free, and shall have her rights entire, and her liberties uninjured"). In 1215, the Church of England was the national Church, and is so recognized in the fundamental law of the realm. "The ancient British Church," says Blackstone, "by whomsoever planted, was a stranger to the Bishop of Rome and all his pretended authority." The first and most conspicuous declaration of the Great Charter is that it was all this and should forever remain such.

The next important period is that of Henry VIII. It is a common saying, that extremes meet. As one studies these times, the impression deepens that Puritan and Romanist made common cause against a common opponent. Their plan of attack was the same, their argument in substance the same, and, of course, their conclusions have the same force and worth. If the Romanist could make clear that the Church of England began with the broil of Henry and the Pope, it at once became a schismatic body, and its orders were invalidated. If the Puritan and Independent could make good the same point, then their ordinances were given equal validity with the sacraments of the "one Catholic and Apostolic Church." No wonder the discussion was intense. As is always the case, those for the

time who made the most enthusiastic affirmations seemed to gain the day. It is always so. But the facts of history are like gems: they live on and, sooner or later, by some one are discovered. The one man of the last century who knew thoroughly every inch of English history was Professor Edward A. Freeman. On this matter, he says: "The facts of history compel us to assume the absolute identity of the Church of England after the Reformation with the Church of England before the Reformation. . . . There was no moment when the nation or its rulers made up their minds that it would be a good thing to set up an established Church any more than there was a moment when they made up their minds that it would be a good thing to set up a government by kings, lords, and commons. . . . They were neither pulling down nor setting up, *but simply putting things to rights.*" That was the constant appeal and effort of the English Reformers: back to the Church of the Christ, the Apostles, and the Catholic period. Henry—let the truth be said—was a brute and a liar from the top of his head clear down to the ground. Once started to have his own way, he gave the English clergy and people the long-cherished opportunity to break forever with the Bishop on the Tiber. And they improved it to the very best of their ability.<sup>1</sup>

The two convocations of the kingdom—Canterbury and

<sup>1</sup>The Providence Journal (R. I.) occupies the very highest rank for accuracy and sobriety in American journalism. Its following comment on the matter under discussion is that the assumed spiritual dictation of Rome was never "borne patiently by the English people, whose church organization was established long before Rome took the trouble to interfere with it; and several English kings had quarreled before Henry's time with the Holy See. *What the English Reformers wanted, and what they accomplished under Elizabeth, was reform within the Church. It was on the continent that Protestantism without the Church built up a new ecclesiastical organization.*" With the introduction of these continental nations into England, separation began, and has been going on ever since.

York—acted very soon. Canterbury took definite and decisive action March 31, 1534; York, June 1. The corporations of Cambridge and Oxford stood in line, and the ecclesiastical dictation of the Pope by legate was a thing of the past. Of course His Holiness was furious, but Henry was just the sort of man not to be afraid of any such fulminations. After matters were pretty well settled, Henry urged that he was to be the spiritual dictator of the realm, "next under God." To this, convocations refused to give any countenance, whatsoever. The Parliament acted accordingly. What he wanted *was one thing*: what the clergy and people of the realm were willing to grant *was another and very different thing*. Their united "No," Henry was wise enough, for once, to hear and heed in that he hesitated a good deal over the next step. Then with characteristic Tudor persistence, he said he would be such in so far as was "allowable by the law of Christ." The convocations, desiring to avoid trouble, consented under solemn protest. Under Elizabeth, this was finally righted. The judgment of Matthew Arnold on the matter under discussion certainly cannot be suspicioned of bias. He says the English Church purified herself, and "kept enough of the past to preserve, so far as this nation is concerned, her continuity, to be still the historic Church of England."

But Puritan and Romanist would not let go, and so the Nag's Head fable was invented by the latter, and used by the former, to discredit the consecration of Bishop Parker, December 17, 1559, in the strong hope of demolishing Apostolic continuity of orders. Professor Goldwin Smith, in his "Political History of the United Kingdom" (England), says: "The story of the consecration at the Nag's Head without the requisite forms (Bishops) is an exploded fiction." From the Mother Church in the old home, her daughter in America, shortly after the close of the Revolutionary war, received the principle of historical continuity.

Nothing has been said on the liturgy of the Church. The point in mind will be best presented by an imaginary incident. Suppose at morning prayer, on Sunday, before the reading of the sentences, St. John should be seen in the congregation, and should be invited to conduct the service. He could do it, because the fundamental lines of the office were marked out by him and St. Paul while he was over the Church at Ephesus. The facts of the Church's past in some matters have lain covered with dust in some cloisters of old cathedrals, when, lo, they tell unexpected things.

The position of American Churchmen on the matter of Organic Christian Unity is this:—

1. The Christ founded and organized his Church.
2. This divine organization has come to us, preserved and intact, through British and English channels.
3. It is adapted to all possible needs and emergencies. For the solution, for example, of the problem of "the federation of the churches," the Church furnishes the satisfactory and final answer in the authority of her local Bishop, as this is clearly defined in the Apostolic canons.
4. Because of these facts, the office and functions of the Christian ministry constitute a sacred trust from the Christ. This trust is not a matter of opinion, and in the very nature of things can be bestowed by those having received it.

A final word. The last time the Prayer-book was bound, the Thirty-nine Articles were put in the back part. The Creed retained its ancient place. The next time, the Articles will be put on the outside—left out—while the people, by repeating the Creed at morning and evening prayers, will keep the facts of Salvation ever fresh on their lips and alive in their hearts. In the few bits of direct personal biography of the twelve which have come to us, there are distinct traces of different interpretations of the Christ. Our Divine Lord never sought to change this. To have

done so would have involved giving to one and all the same intellectual perception, the same moral appreciation, and the same power of logical reasoning. What he did do was to vitalize in their souls the fact of his Incarnation, and all the present and future facts of human life it emphasized and anchored to itself. The Church to-day is concerned that her Bishops and teachers shall honestly and cordially accept the facts of Salvation as found in the Sacred Scriptures, and as epitomized in the Apostles' Creed. Of laymen, neither more nor less is expected. In her fold are found, at peace, many varieties of theological opinion. She gives to those who serve at her *altars*, as the Christ gave to the twelve, liberty to think and reason. As they thus increase in the knowledge of God, there need be no latent fear of being overtaken by some theological amazement. It is out of the facts of Salvation that spiritual strength and refreshment come. Organized theories are like transient clouds of shore-sand, swept seaward by some spiteful wind. They obscure one moment, and the next are at the bottom of the deep. The facts of the Christian faith, as they have organized themselves in human life for its spiritual betterment, abide: storms of criticism only remove from them the deposits of speculations. The formula of their manifested power is the ancient ground of assurance: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."