

*DOCTRINES OF GRACE.*THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH (*continued*).

WHEN we come to define the Church which has such a place in Christian thought and love, then we are at once face to face with a certain distinction which has led to much debate, and, it may be added, much confusion of thought. The Confession of Faith speaks of "the Visible Church, which is also Catholic or Universal" under the Gospel; and the Nineteenth Article of Religion says, "The Visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure of Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered." This form of words implies that there is a sense in which the Church is not visible, and the distinction comes practically to be between the Church of Christ, which consists of all the members of its body, who, from the beginning to the end, shall be saved through His sacrifice, and made perfect before God in Him, and that number of the same multitude who at any time are in this world and are bound together in Christian fellowship, of which the sign shall be those mentioned in the above article (although there may be other notes) that the "pure word is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered." Against this distinction many pious and learned theologians of the present day have strongly protested, contending that it has no warrant in Apostolic thought or early usage, and they are also haunted with the fear that the practical use of this distinction will be to belittle the Church Visible—the assembly of faithful people—and to palliate the sin of schism as well as to lower the obligation of holiness and the claims of brotherhood. Whether the distinction be necessary in thought and be implied in the teaching of our Lord and St. Paul is a matter to which I

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am coming, but I wish to repudiate the suggestion that belief in the Church of all the ages, which is the Bride of the Lamb, should sap any one's loyalty to that portion of the Church which has not yet crossed the river but is still militant on earth, or that the profound sense that the Church of Christ is greater than the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland, either separately or all together, must on that account render a Christian indifferent to any Church which is one of the Visible representatives of the Spiritual body of Christ or lessen his grief that, say, there should be in one city both a Roman and an Anglican Bishop exercising jurisdiction, and claiming the loyalty of Christ's people, to the confusion of faith, and the disunity of the Visible Church. With this spectacle before his eyes—and it is one of the most painful in the spiritual world—one must hold either that the Roman Bishop and his people, among whom he knows many saints, or the Anglican Bishop and his people, of whom he holds as high a judgment, are in a state of wilful separation from the Church of Christ, and therefore, to use Calvin's words, are "beyond the pale of salvation," or he must fall back upon some larger conception of the Church, which will unchurch neither of those congregations of Christian people. At the same time he may firmly believe that it is only through human ignorance and human sin that this division has come to pass, and that there ought to be in every city or land only one great congregation which shall be the Visible representative of the Body of Christ. Very likely Calvin may be censured because he speaks, like the Nineteenth Article, of the Visible Church instead of saying only the Church, but certainly his intention was not to justify unwarrantable separation from the historic Church of his day, since no one, not even the theologians of the Roman Church, has denounced more strongly the self-sufficiency and pride of those who call themselves by

the name of Christ, and yet refuse to live in Christ's Household.

When one inquires whether this way of looking at the Church from two sides, as it were, to which the words, less than felicitous, "visible" and "invisible" have been given can be justified, then he must turn, first of all to the Gospels to discover whether it was in the mind of Christ, Who is the supreme Reason. There surely can be no doubt, and that will be taken up later, that Jesus did not leave His Disciples to form some kind of society of their own accord, but that He established it with all the necessary conditions of such a body, and that His desire was that His Church should be Visible and Undivided, but there seems to me as little doubt that He had a larger vision which was not confined to the Visible Society in the world. He is declared by the fourth Evangelist to be the "True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and wherever this light has been welcomed and obeyed, there, doubtless, have been Christ's Disciples; "and Thou, O Lord," we may say with confidence, "wast their Redeemer, though the preached Word was ignorant of them, and the Church Visible acknowledged them not." He were a bold man, and something worse than bold, who should deny the Saints outside the pale of Judaism and of Christianity, and he surely holds less than the truth of the Incarnation, and does less than honour to the Lord, the only Saviour of mankind, who does not ascribe all virtue in such men unto Him Whom, not having known, they followed. Some place must be found for those lonely, beautiful souls who by their faith and charity have put Christian folk to shame, and, as there is no just use of words by which they could be called members of the Church Visible, we gladly acknowledge all who "lived or live with right reason, as members of the Church Invisible." No blame, of course, can be attached to them because they did

not belong to a Church of which they had never heard ; but our Master goes farther, and extends charity to those who, being in contact with the company of His Disciples, yet for some reason remain separate. When St. John, seeing some one casting out devils in Jesus' name, asked the Master to forbid him, and that in the true ecclesiastical spirit, "because he followeth not us," Jesus said, "Forbid him not . . . He that is not against us is on our part." And in the same spirit was that great saying of His which remains for ever the standard of judgment as to who are Christians and who are not. "By their fruits ye shall know them." When Jesus taught the Samaritan woman the way everlasting, He told her that the exclusive dispensation of religion, binding it up with one nation and one form, was passing away, and that in days to come every one would be counted acceptable with the Father who worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth. And when Jesus laid down this weighty principle, we are not to understand that there would be no longer a Church, with its officers, and its rites, or that it would not be the duty and privilege of Christ's people to belong to it ; but surely we are to understand that all men who worship God with a sincere and pure heart are within the Church. One also finds himself, I humbly submit, in the larger atmosphere when a woman from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, an alien from the covenant and promises of Israel, was, for the trying of her faith, refused by the Lord in language which He borrowed from the bigotry of the Jewish Church. He distinguished between the Jews who were children and her who was a dog. She vanquished Him in the end Who was willing to be vanquished, and the Lord not only granted her request, but declared His amazement at her faith. If Faith be the bond that binds the soul to Christ, conscious or unconscious, then there was not greater faith in Israel than that of this Canaanite woman. Is it not also signifi-

cant that this distinction of Invisible and Visible receives a sanction from our Lord's two related ideas of the Kingdom and the Church? For is not the Kingdom that universal sphere of goodness in heaven and in earth, from which no good man and no good thing can be excluded, but whose influence is secret and subtle, and the Church that corporate institution which can receive and cast out, which can be attacked and triumph over attack? If any one have the Kingdom of God within him, and there is the home of the Kingdom, then surely he must belong to the larger Church, for Christ is his King, and Christ's Spirit dwells in his heart.

When we pass into the period when the Church was an organized and recognised institution, and when we read the Epistles of St. Paul, it is a little perplexing to understand his attitude, and his references to the Church appear sometimes to have an air of unreality. Nothing can be more stately or more beautiful than the address to the Church with which he opens his letters. It is to the "Saints" he writes, to the "Faithful in Christ Jesus," to them who are "chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world," to persons "called to be holy and without blame before Him in love." According to St. Paul, the Church is a body of people, whether in Ephesus or in Rome, separate from this world, united in Christ Jesus, showing forth His life, and holy even as He is holy. When we turn to any particular body of Christians whom St. Paul addresses after this lofty fashion, we suffer a great disillusionment, for one can hardly imagine a greater contrast between the salutation of St. Paul and the people whom he is addressing, between his description and their likeness. The members of the early Christian communities were bigoted, jealous, ungrateful, quarrelsome, and their lives were disfigured by gross sins of the heathen life which they had not yet completely thrown off. Nor was it only the purer Churches

whom St. Paul addressed as holy; he made no distinction of character in his opening salutation whatever he may have sometimes made of personal feeling. If he called those excellent Philippians, who had been so kind to him and so generous in all their ways, "Saints in Christ Jesus," he spoke of the Corinthians as "sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be Saints," yet he had to complain of the Corinthians that one of their number was guilty of a horrible sin, that some had been intoxicated at the Lord's Supper, that others had despised His Gospel, that others had spoken of himself with contemptuous ingratitude. Surely it is courtesy, or formality carried to a dangerous extent, to apply the word Saint to such people, and to refer to them as sanctified; yet there never was a man more sincere than St. Paul, never any one who dealt more closely with the facts of spiritual life. What is the explanation of this paradox, that St. Paul should begin his letter to the Corinthians with the word Saints, and a little later should be using the word fornication?

The explanation must be sought in the magnificent spiritual imagination of St. Paul, which was not confined by the things which are seen and temporal, but lived among the things which are unseen and eternal. Two worlds were his, this imperfect and corrupt world, which is passing away, and the perfect and holy world which remaineth. The real, which was often lamentable enough, disappeared in the vision of St. Paul before the ideal, and he saw not the thing which was, but the thing which was to be. When he looked upon a Christian Disciple, he saw not a Roman slave, ignorant, unclean, half brutalized, beset by the inevitable sins of his lot, an abject of humanity, but he saw a man who had been crucified with Christ upon the Cross, who had died with Christ unto this present world, who had risen with Christ from the dead, breaking all bonds, and now was seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

This diseased, and broken, and unsightly man Christ had loved from all eternity ; for him Christ had laid down His life, and this man Christ had purchased with His own precious blood. This was not a bondsman, he was a son of God ; he was not a miserable, he had all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places ; he was not an evil-doer, he was a Saint. He beheld the man in Christ Jesus, and it was in Christ Jesus St. Paul beheld all things. The life which Christ was living in the heavenly places was the life His Disciples were living in idea, and would one time live in reality ; and, therefore, when St. Paul addressed the Church, he thought of it as spiritual, the body of the Lord crucified, dead, risen, holy, the congregation of all the saints. This is the Church Invisible, because in its ideal beauty it can only be seen by faith—by those who can see it in the Lord. Turning, then, as it were from heaven to earth, and from Christ to Christians, he found in Corinth a company of self-conceited, contentious, ungrateful, and evil-living people, whom he must rebuke and teach and guard and endure, if haply, through his work and the grace of God, the real may be purified and elevated till it passes at last into the ideal, and even the Corinthian Church be presented as a pure Virgin unto Christ. This is the Church Visible ; and the contradiction which every one must have felt between the address at the beginning of St. Paul's letter and the contents of the letter is due not to the Apostle's unreality, but to his spirituality, and nothing is more likely to lift the Visible communities of Christian folk above this world and above their own sin than the constant vision of that glorious Body of Christ, which with her Lord is trampling this world and sin and death under her feet. The Church Invisible is at once the condemnation and the inspiration of the Church Visible.

When St. Paul carries about with him this distinction between an unseen perfection and a seen imperfection

which are closely related together, he is not thinking otherwise than we do ourselves. There is perfect beauty which is only suggested to us by the finest picture we have ever seen, there is perfect truth which is poorly shadowed by the deepest creeds we say, there is perfect life which is scantily embodied in the strongest man, there is perfect holiness which puts to shame the best man we have known. Within our minds we carry those ideals, and we see the real reaching after them and witnessing to them; and so behind the visible lies the invisible. If there be no other Church of Christ than that which we behold, torn by schism, coarsened by the world's spirit, corrupted by gross sin, then it is vain to talk of the Lord's Body, and the Bride of the Lamb. As one looks, however, more closely into the life of Christ's disciples on earth, he sees the faint traces of a character which is not of this world, a hard-fought battle with sin which carries with it the pledge of victory, and an aspiration after the Highest which is the prophecy of its own fulfilment. This character means some type after which it is being formed; this fight means some living force which is working to an end; this aspiration means some hope which will not make ashamed. The light begins to shine through the coarse screen, and as we look we forget the Church visible, and are comforted and inspired by the mystical figure of the Church, invisible to sight, but visible and altogether lovely unto every one who being in the Spirit hath seen an open heaven and Jesus at the right hand of God.

If any one believes that the Church is the mystical Body of the Lord, it follows that he must believe also in her unity, for the Body of Christ cannot be divided, but must be one through all the ages, and behind all circumstances. Between the innumerable Saints from the first, who saw Christ afar off, and reached forward to receive Him to the last, who shall hear the call of the Evangel, there will be incalculable differences of character, of experience, of know-



ledge, and of service, but in heart the Saints will be one— one in faith, because they believe in the same Lord ; one in hope, because they wait for the same event ; one in charity, because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. When Isaiah and St. John and St. Francis and John Bunyan meet, that wherein they differ in time and associations and theology fades away, and they greet one another as brethren in Christ Jesus. Being one with Christ and rivals in their love to the Lord, they are united one to other in a bond which the influences of this present time could not break, which the life of eternity will only confirm. When the devout disciple receives the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, and celebrates His dying love, he is united not only to the little company of fellow-communicants in a house made with hands, but also with all Christ's Disciples throughout the world, with those also whom He loves and has lost awhile, and with all the Saints who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Though He be the least of all the Saints, and the chief of sinners, yet hath he a place in the heart of the Lord, and his name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Therefore the chief of Saints must bid him welcome, and will not dare to cast him out. This is the one perfect fellowship within human knowledge, wherein all have one mind and one heart and one life, and within this fellowship is made known the mystery of the Divine will, " That in the dispensation of the fulness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth."

No imagery is too strong or too intimate to illustrate and enforce this unity, which was one of the deepest desires of the Lord, which He died to make possible, which He lives to make real. The centre of the unity is ever Christ Himself risen from the dead and alive for evermore ; and the condition of the unity is fellowship with Him by the

Holy Ghost. He is the vine whom His Father planteth, and every disciple is a branch thereof, drawing his sap from the central stock and partner with every other branch, because he is partner with Christ. No branch can cast out another branch; no branch can add another. One power only can engraft; one power only can cut off. For the unity stands not in the relation of the branches one to another, but in the relation of them all to Christ. The Lord is the foundation stone which the builders did despise, but Who has become for ever the head of the corner. And upon this foundation, not upon creeds, nor rites, but on the living person of Christ, rests every Christian soul, as a living stone upon the one foundation. Resting upon this one stone the others are compactly built together, and form a Temple for the habitation of God; apart from this foundation they are but a heap of stones scattered, disconnected, unprofitable. If any one be separate from Christ, then is he no part of the Divine Temple; if any one be resting on the Lord as his God and Saviour, then is he so built into the structure of God's Eternal House, that no hand of man can remove the stone. Christ is the Head, and His disciples are members of the Body, some of greater honour and some of less, but yet each one a part of the living organism. By faith the disciple has been born again into this new life, and by faith he continues therein; and though he be the humblest of all the members of Christ's Body, the minutest and most distant part, yet to it the blood flows from the heart, and it also is directed by the Head; and if it is hurt, every member of the Body suffers also, and the Head is the first to feel and sorrow. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the Church is the Bride, whom He has not only wooed, but also redeemed; and so every member of the Church is married unto Christ in a covenant which cannot be broken. From Christ the believer receives the right to his name, under the protection of Christ he lives, between him and Christ no one has any

power to come, and the intimacy and sanctity of the marriage state is but the shadow of the union between Christ and the souls which make His Church.

So profound and mysterious is this union first between Christ and the soul, and then in Christ between all Christian souls, that the Lord uses illustrations which transcend human knowledge. The unity of the Church is to be so spiritual, so unlimited, so lifted above time and space and every visible condition, so tender also, so gracious, and so holy, that it is to be like unto the relation of the persons in the Holy Trinity. As the High Priest and Head of His Church, Christ lifted up His hands to God before He offered His sacrifice, and now lifts them up for ever in the heavenly places, with the signs of sacrifice upon them, that the multitude of His disciples may be one in God the Father and in Him, according to the measure wherein the Father and the Son are one. As the Father and the Son have ever one thought, so that the Son is the Word of God, and have done one work, so that whatsoever the Son saw the Father do, that He also did, and one love, so that the Son lay in the bosom of the Father, and one life, so that the Son liveth by the Father; the Church is to be won in truth, in work, in love, and in life. "I in them and Thou in me that they may be made perfect in one."

The unity of the Church, according to the idea of the Lord, is first of all spiritual, and would exist although there were no visible organized body upon earth, as the unity of the Trinity existed before the incarnation of the Son, yet no one can read the mediatorial prayer of Christ without being persuaded that the unity of the Church should be realized and presented to the world. When the world saw a multitude of people of every nation, of every degree, of every disposition, of every circumstance, bound together in one, for the most heavenly ends and on the most gracious conditions, then the world would

have an unanswerable evidence that a new power was working in the midst of human life, and that God Himself was with us. The Incarnation of the Lord would be as it were continued and vindicated by this vast harmonious spiritual body which He inhabited, and the world would know "that Thou hast sent me and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me." It were strange, therefore, and one is amazed that devout and earnest men can be satisfied with such an idea of the Church visible, that Christ should give no directions for the organization and government of this great society on earth, but should leave His disciples to form societies of any kind they pleased, as many as might be convenient, and at any time which seemed expedient. The question is not whether the Jewish synagogue had not a certain system of government which was partly taken over into the Christian Church, nor whether the union of Christians in some sort of society was not a fulfilment of a natural desire for fellowship, nor whether the creation of a religious society did not receive a certain sanction and support from the existence of many philanthropic guilds throughout the Roman empire in the first century; nor is it whether the Christian Church did not develop the original organization given by the Lord and His Apostles. The question is this, whether Christ Himself laid down with His Divine authority the foundation of that universal society which was to be on earth the embodiment of the Church Invisible and Eternal. Is not the evidence conclusive? Did He not preach during all His ministry the doctrine of the Kingdom, and is not kingdom the strongest word for society? Did He not declare that He was Himself its Head, Whose teaching alone was authoritative, Whose presence was omnipotent, Whose judgment was to be final. Was there not a condition of admission into this society—faith in Himself? Was there not a condition of fellowship—love to God and man?

Were there not to be rewards to them who were faithful, punishments for them who were unfaithful? Did He not call twelve officers and place in their hands the government of the Church and its treasure of truth? Did He not institute two sacraments, the one to be the sign of union to Himself and through Him to the Church, the other to be the sign of communion with Him and through Him with the Church? With a chief officer, with rules and rites surely we have a society which may develop its organization to meet new circumstances, and apply its power in new directions, but which from the beginning has a constitution and an authority, and we are justified in saying that Christ gave her constitution to the Church during the days of His ministry, and that constitution was carried into effect in the period of His Apostles.

It is difficult also to resist the conviction that Christ intended that His Visible Church should be one society the world over instead of being divided into sections warring with one another and making sport for an unbelieving world. Surely every one will agree that it were more becoming, and therefore more in keeping with the mind of Christ, that in every country there should be one Church—the Church of Scotland or of England, by which is intended the Church of Christ in Scotland or England—and not half a dozen Churches; that in every parish there should be one place of worship where all should meet in the name of the Lord, not half a dozen fighting for the possession of the people. Nothing can more certainly hinder the faith of the world, and nothing has so weakened the energies of Christian people and so afflicted their hearts, as the schisms and feuds by which Christ's visible Church has been rent asunder.

When the Church Visible, which is the shadow of the Church Invisible, is rent—for the spiritual Body must ever be undivided—then the cause is always one and the same,

and it ought to lie much more heavily both upon the heart and conscience of believing Christians. The division of the Church into sects, whether Roman, Anglican, Scots, or Nonconformists, since any division does mean section, is not an accident, nor a misfortune, and certainly not an ingenious design to stir up the Church into greater activity, but is a distinct and flagrant sin. If Christian people, gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus and calling one another brethren, had obeyed Christ's commandments and yielded to the guidance of the Lord's Spirit, they had lived in purity and in charity, as did the Christians of Pentecost, and the Church on earth had been one to-day, as the Church in Heaven is one, and she had been "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Wherever there is holiness there is unity, wherever there is unholiness there is strife, and it was because the vision of the Lord grew dim and discipline was relaxed, and the world cast her tangling veil round the Christian heart, and brotherly love died into ashes, that the fair Church of Christ was scattered into contending fragments and became a scandal in the face of men. No doubt the divisions of the Church have been made the means of calling her to repentance and restoring purity, of moving her to good works and vast sacrifices, were it only through the criticism and rivalry of separate Christian bodies; but this does not mean that such divisions were the methods of the Lord, or that He had any pleasure when one crieth, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Cephas." What it means is that the Lord, Whose grace is marvellous as it is mighty, has caused light to arise out of darkness, and has made the wrath of men to praise Him, so that in the good which has come from this vast evil we have another illustration of the Apostle's triumphant word, "where sin abounded grace has much more abounded."

While schism is a sin both against Christ, the Head of

the Church, and the Church, which is His Body, it is not to be taken for granted that the sinners are those who are separated from the original and historic visible society. It may be, and it certainly often has been, that people have left that branch of the Christian Church into which they were born and baptized on grounds which cannot be justified because their pride had been offended, or their self-will checked, or because their brethren were poor and they desired the company of rich men. Secession from the Church of one's fathers on such grounds proves a frivolous and worldly temper of mind, and has deserved the censure both of Christ's people and of the Lord's. No one ought to leave his fold unless he be driven out, and unless he have good reason to believe that the Shepherd has been driven out with him, and in that case the fold to which he goes is the fold of Christ, and he carries the Church with him. If at any time the Church, for instance, becomes so impure that the Ten Commandments of Moses, to say nothing of the greater eleventh commandment of the Lord, are broken without rebuke, and the name of Christ's ordained ministers becomes a synonym in the satire of the day for a rascal and an evil liver, and if redress be asked from the governors of the Church and be refused, then, in honour to Christ and to conscience, nothing remains for Christian people but to depart from this polluted place and to build another purer home for the Lord. When such faithful men depart with sore hearts, they leave not the Church, they leave what is for the time the synagogue of Satan; they leave not their Lord, but the spirit of evil which has taken His place. The Lord goes with them in their exodus because they are keeping His words and following in His steps, and they are not the schismatics who are cleaving to their Saviour in obedience and holiness, but they are the schismatics who have denied the Lord and put Him to shame in His own house, who

have driven out both the Master and His disciples. If the chiefs of an army become disloyal to their king, and have entered into an open alliance with the enemy, then they are not the mutineers, even though they be only private soldiers, who break the bonds of discipline and desert to reform the army in the name of their king and for the support of his cause. They carry the colours with them which are of no use to the other side ; they are the army, and they have kept their sacramental oaths. When the king holds his court and judges between the loyal and the disloyal, he will not punish the soldiers who disobeyed the order of treason, but he will sharply judge the generals who betrayed their trust. And for such generals to accuse such soldiers and in such circumstances of mutiny—for the Borgias to accuse the saints of disloyalty—is the most monstrous irony in history.

Suppose, again, the State should lay so strong and profane a hand upon the Church that the civil power, through, it may be, an unbelieving and evil-living man, appoints the highest officers of Christ's house, and the Church must receive them whether they be spiritual or unspiritual men, and must even admit them to their offices with the sacred rites of Christ's appointment, till it be the Emperor of Rome, Nero or another, who reigns over Christ's Church. What, then, is the duty of His true disciples when they have done their utmost to cast out this usurper and to restore to the Church her freedom in Christ Jesus, and have failed because the world within the Church has become stronger than her Lord? Must they not leave this Egypt and all its treasure of riches and of rank and go out into the wilderness to serve Him in peace Who lived not in palaces, Who knew not where to lay His head? Will the Lord remain with the Emperor or go with His disciples? Is this institution the Church of the Galilean or the creation of kings? Have they not been true lovers of



the Bride of Christ, who could not bear to see her amid the luxury and seduction of Solomon's palace, but have brought her out, where in simplicity and in poverty she may keep the covenant of her heart with her beloved? They are not the schismatics whose love to Christ many waters could not quench, nor could the floods drown. They are the worst of schismatics, who, for the sake of a fair vineyard, whose keepers bring each one "a thousand pieces of silver," would sell the chastity of Christ's pure Bride.

When the Church Visible has been divided by her own sin, a new situation is created, and it is vain for any single part of the divided Church, Rome or another, to claim to be the original Church with an exclusive succession and authority. The Church of Rome made the position intolerable for the Church of England, and the Church of England compelled many of her godly ministers to leave her communion, though not the Communion of the Lord, for conscience sake, in the seventeenth century, and the Church of Scotland, by slavish submission to the State, lost a goodly portion of her clergy and people in 1843. Amid this lamentable confusion no Church has any right to exalt its head above its neighbours, but each Church must prove its right to be a true representative of Christ's one Church. Various tests may be justly proposed, but each one ought to be charitably applied. One is, that a Church hold the faith of the Saints and preach the pure Gospel of Christ, and that the two Sacraments of Christ's appointment be reverently administered. Another is, that her members keep the commandments of the Lord, and live together in brotherly love, showing forth the Lord's life, and commending Him unto the world by their talk and conversation. The chief and final test must always be that laid down by the Lord Himself, and which cannot be evaded—"by their fruits ye shall know them." Wherever people live the Christ life, there surely are so many Christians, or else the

evidence of religion has no meaning, and the relation between the soul and Jesus Christ is only a name. If twenty people separate themselves from the historic Church in some age of intolerable corruption, and meet to worship the Lord in an upper room, each one a true believer in His name, and a humble follower in His steps, are they to be considered outside the Church of God and the pale of salvation? If this be so, then Christ and the Church are in sharp collision, and one or the other must be wrong. The Church cuts off their names from her roll, but they are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Church casts them forth from her fellowship, but Christ has them in His heart. The Church holds out no hope for them, but Christ has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for them. When Christ said, "Him that cometh unto Me," those twenty people came, and now the word of Christ holdeth true, "I will in no wise cast him out." Excommunicated by the Church, they are received by the Lord; condemned by the Church, they are justified by the Lord; persecuted by the Church, they are comforted by the Lord. Who shall separate between them and Christ? Who can deprive them of His love and of His friendship? When they are cast out, Christ also is cast out; where they go He goes; where they live He lives; where they suffer He suffers; and in the world to come where He is there they also shall be, or else the invitation of the Gospel and the promises of the Lord shall be broken, and the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord be of no avail. We do not come to our Lord through the Church, and no authority of the Church can make us a member of His body; we come into the Church by coming to Christ, and He is in the Church now and for ever, who is in Christ Jesus, a member of the Church Spiritual and Eternal, although the whole of the Church Visible should declare Him to be accursed. When the Bishop of Vasona was pronouncing the degradation of Savonarola, he was so

shaken, as he might well be by his spiritual insolence, that he made a mistake in the formula of excommunication. "I separate thee from the Church Militant and Triumphant," he said, whereupon Savonarola cried in a tone that pierced to the soul of all who heard, "From the Church Militant, not from the Church Triumphant, for that is not within thy power." It is possible to cast out from the Visible society, and many a Saint of God has been cast out from the Lord Himself, Who was excommunicated by the Jewish Church, to the Prophet of Florence, who was degraded by the Romans; but no man can cast his brother from the Church, which is in God the Father and in our Lord Jesus Christ. "*Hoc enim tuum non est*" is a mighty truth, beating down the pride of men and setting a limit to their power. It is the protection of Christian liberty and the vindication of the supreme authority of Christ, Who is Lord in His own house. He that believeth and he that loveth is the friend of Jesus; and where two or three disciples are gathered together in the Lord's name, there is the Church, for there is Christ. Heresies there are and schisms, "nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' And, 'Let every one that loveth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'"

While the unity of the Church is in its essence spiritual, depending upon the relation of the soul to Christ, and the denial of this spirituality is profanity, yet every true disciple of Christ must pray also for that unity which is present and visible. He is not to be approved who belittles it, he will not be lightly judged who has wantonly broken it, he will be severely punished who has caused his brethren to break it against their will. Blessed is he who longs for the day when, from the rising to the setting of the sun, and from pole to pole, there shall be one Church Catholic and Apostolic, Holy and Undivided. Blessed is he who labours by

speech or deed to remove offences from between brethren, to bring together those who have been long separated, to widen the bonds of fellowship in Christ; blessed the man who shall see the day when the walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt, and the Church of God be as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Until that day come, let us pray for the peace of Christendom, and let every one prosper who loveth the Church of Christ.

JOHN WATSON.

### *THE NATURE OF HOLINESS.*

THE life of holiness is both an essentially separate and an essentially social life. Inwardly it is a life of separateness: outwardly, a life of fellowship. Contradictory as these two qualities, separateness and fellowship, may seem, both are indispensable to holiness. If either be lacking to our holiness, its nature is not complete and full.

The failure to perceive this essential, however seemingly contradictory, dualism in the nature of holiness has been the source of innumerable injuries to the Christian faith. It has been the cause of monasticism on the one hand, and of religious worldliness on the other. The monk is separate without being social, the religious worldling is social without being separate. Neither of them is completely Christian. Each is deficient in one of the cardinal properties of holiness. Both, as we shall afterwards see, are partially disloyal to the gospel of the Incarnation, which is the gospel of true holiness.

The Bible is the greatest of all authorities upon holiness. And when we inquire of the Bible concerning the nature of the holiness, whether of persons or things, we find that