

THE
CORPORATE
LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

A

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“The head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—Eph. iv: 15, 16.

IT is a familiar affirmation of theology, that Christianity is a life, and not a mere dogma or law. It is not simply a creed to be believed, or a rule to be obeyed, but a life of God in the soul of man, of which faith and obedience are manifestations. This life of the soul, is in some respects analogous to the life of the body. We see the manifestations of both, and understand them largely, but the nature and source of each are alike inscrutable. The life of the body lies hidden among the unrevealed secrets of our physical organization, too deep for the knife of the anatomist, or the test of the chemist. The

life of the soul lies hidden behind the phenomena of consciousness, too deep for the analysis of the philosopher, for it is "hid with Christ in God." Most of the controversies in both departments of science, refer to this hidden domain, and not to the resulting manifestations of life, after it comes forth to our vision. Physiologists dispute about the nature and source of the vital principle, just as theologians discuss the great facts which lie behind human consciousness and head up in Divine agency, and most of the insoluble problems of both sciences will be found to terminate in this inaccessible region. Those who speak slightingly of theological controversies, seem to forget that they are precisely analogous to the deeper discussions of physiology and psychology, which men have often sneered at likewise, but never when they understood them, and the silliness of sneers in these cases, ought surely to check them in the other.

But this analogy between the life of the body and that of the soul, is found in the manifestations, as well as the nature and source of each. There is a certain identity in the laws of all life, that hints its common origin in that one mighty and self-subsisting Life, the living God, "who only hath life in Himself," who "giveth to all life and breath and all things," and "in whom we live and move and have our being." Some of these laws pertaining

to the physical life, are perfectly familiar to us, especially those by which its continuance and growth depend on proper aliment and exercise. The living body must have pure and sufficient nutriment, or the flame will expire for the want of fuel. But aliment is not enough. It must also have exercise to secure a healthful growth. By this law of exercise the human body is capable of indefinite improvement, so that by proper gymnastic training a man of common vigour can be developed into a Hercules, whilst by the same law, a neglect of suitable exercise will cause the strongest frame to dwindle, pine and finally perish. The same laws precisely govern the spiritual life. It also needs both aliment and exercise, or it will grow sickly and feeble. That aliment is the "truth as it is in Jesus;" that exercise, what the Apostle terms the gymnastic of godliness, when he exhorts Timothy (1 Tim. iv: 6,) to exercise himself (gymnaize) unto godliness. The manifold duties of the Christian life constitute the appointed training of the living soul.

This individual life of the soul is the first stage in the matter of personal religion. We must be born again, born of the Spirit, and this life is hid with Christ in God. But it needs for its growth to be fed on the truth, and to exercise itself in the duties of godliness, and according to the purity of

that truth, and the perfectness of that obedience will be its development.

But as soon as this personal life begins, the individual Christian finds that there is another life into which he is introduced by the same act of regeneration. Christ is revealed in Scripture, not only as the Saviour of the individual soul, but also as the Saviour of the collective Church, His body, of which individual Christians are members in particular. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ;" and this image is elaborated to great length by the Apostle in the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians, as well as in other Epistles.

Here is a new life, distinct from the individual life of the Christian, the life of the body of Christ, the gradual formation of a great corporate existence, into which each regenerate soul is introduced, in which that soul shall be perfect, when the Spouse, the Lamb's wife is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This grand fact of a corporate existence into which each individual believer is grafted, is represented to us by a great variety of illustrations. Now it is a kingdom of which each believer is a citizen, yea, more, a king and a priest, one of a commonwealth of kings, a congregation of priests, each individual sharing a part of the glory of the

whole. Now it is a building, (the *kuriou oikos*, from which we derive our Kirk or Church,) the stately temple, of which each believer is a living stone, chosen and precious in its own chiselled individuality, yet deriving its most surpassing glory from being built into that splendid edifice of which Jesus is at once the foundation and "the headstone of the corner." But the favourite image of Paul seems to be that of the human body, because of its peculiar fitness to set forth the various points of instruction. Just as the body exhibits in a visible form that invisible life that vitalizes every living member of that body, so the visible Church exhibits in outward form that invisible Church, which is the real Spouse of Christ, and although now there are many lifeless members in that visible body, in the consummation of all things, these lifeless portions shall be removed, and the visible be identical with the invisible, in the faultless Bride of the Lamb.

The Apostle presents this image with great force in this passage in Ephesians. He states first, that Christ gave His Church a visible organization, with offices, such as those of Apostle, Evangelist, Pastor, &c., in order that individual saints might be perfected, and that this Church might not remain in a state of childhood, but grow up to one of maturity. This growth was to take place by a process, which

the words "speaking the truth in love," very inadequately express, as we read the phrase in the original. Indeed the words *aletheuontes en agape* cannot be literally rendered in English, and can only be indicated by a paraphrase. They express the fact, that just as food is assimilated into blood, and vitalizes the body, so truth is assimilated into love and vitalizes the soul, and thus enables that soul to grow up into Christ, to get higher and nearer to Him, the living Head, and have a fuller tide of vital energy flowing through it, and thus as each joint and member of this compacted body receives its measure of life, and in turn imparts it to every other by harmoniously working with it, so the whole body grows in spiritual girth and stature towards the perfect manhood of Christ Jesus.

The topic then which we detach from this passage for special consideration is, the *Corporate Life of the Church*, and shall endeavour to show its nature, the use made of it by the primitive Church, and the use that may be made of it by us.

I. *The Nature of this Corporate Life of the Church.*

One of the most potent agencies in modern civilization is this principle of corporate life, i. e., the power that is generated by the union of individuals in a corporation. The real power of this principle has only been discovered of late years, and the

wonderful results of its application to various ends have made its use almost like the discovery of a new mechanical force. Hence the marvellous multiplication of all kinds of corporations, manufacturing, commercial, banking, insurance, railway, &c., &c. It has been discovered that when men unite in a corporate body, there is generated by this union an increase of power, greatly beyond the mere arithmetical aggregate of the parts working separately. Hence, one of the most striking features of our modern civilization, as compared with that of the ancients, is the manifold and increasing applications of this principle of corporate power.

A fact of some interest has been brought out by a distinguished member of the legal profession, who investigated the subject with special reference to this point. It is that corporations, as a matter of history, had their origin in religion. His words are: "The corporations of England are derived from the *Municipia, Universitates* and *Collegia* of the Romans. And there are municipal corporations which date back to the institutions of the Western Empire. This is said of the *Municipia* especially. But to what do they owe their idea? I have no doubt that all, lay, civil, eleemosynary, trace to the *Ecclesia*, and the *Ecclesia* to the the worship of God among the Jews, or the gods among the heathen, i. e., to Religion. The *Ecclesia* was the 'general

assembly' of Grecian history. They were of two kinds, Ecclesia and Kataclesia. They had places, times of meeting, Heads and Lexiarchs. These usages among the Greeks can be traced to the Egyptians. The term Ecclesia was transferred to the Church, and so remains. The Colleges of the British Empire are all doubtless traceable to the Ecclesia and not to the Municipia. Thus it would seem that municipal corporations were derived from Collegia and Ecclesia, and these from Religio, (re-ligare, to bind fast,) because from the first it caused these companies or corporations of men, binding them to each other, and to God, as their head. The Religious societies would seem, therefore, in the 'Universitas' sense, to have been the first corporations. The first corporation of government itself was a Theocracy, and the second, of Kings by Divine appointment and Hierarchies, have made and unmade governments from that time to this, out of which mere Municipia have sprung." Thus, according to this high legal authority corporations from the beginning took their rise in religion, and it was not a surprising thing that when Jesus established the final and perfect form of religion, he should link with it this great principle of corporate life, and that the richest development of this law of corporations should be in Christian lands.

This great idea of corporate life is an essential

element of New Testament Christianity. Men are not converted and saved merely as isolated units, but as members of Christ's family, into which they are born by the new birth, and from which they cannot rightfully segregate themselves. This could be amply illustrated in the gradual developments of the idea which we find from its germ in the gospels, through its developments in the epistles to its magnificent completion in the Apocalypse, when "the holy city, New Jerusalem, comes down out of Heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." But our limits forbid this illustration in detail.

It is true that this element of corporate power may be developed in a corrupt Church to a spiritual despotism, in which the individual life shall be smothered, but it may also be kept so much in abeyance as to lose its legitimate force and give an exaggerated development of the principle of individualism, tending to schism, contention, and paralysis of this power of corporate action. And it is probably true, that this is the real danger in much of our modern Protestantism, and the cause of much of our unsuccessful activity. "The eye saith to the hand, I have no need of thee, and the head to the feet, I have no need of you." And the very evils which existed among the Corinthian Christians exist among us, and need to be corrected

to restore our efficiency. If then we can revive this corporate life, without weakening the individual life, and bring it to bear on our daily work and warfare, as parts of the Sacramental host, citizens of the city that hath foundations, members of the household of faith, portions of the body of Christ, we shall remedy an undoubted defect in our modern piety, and give an added energy to every operation of our beloved Church. Hence we now inquire—

II. *How did the Primitive Church embody and use this principle of corporate life?*

We may perhaps best see this by following Timothy or Titus in some of their evangelistic tours through Crete or Galatia. They enter a city where Paul has sown, and Apollos watered, but where the increase has not yet been gathered, and garnered. They find a small company of persons ready to take their stand as avowed believers of Jesus. Some of them are isolated individuals, cast off by their families; some compose an entire household; and they are baptized therefore as individuals or households, and thus organized into a church. It is very difficult for us in these distant days, when familiarity with Christian truth has blunted our perceptions, to comprehend the exquisite freshness of the wonderful facts revealed by Christianity to its first converts. It was Heaven

let down upon earth, and awakened a vividness of emotion that is but dimly apprehended now, even by "a soul in its earliest love." A midnight landscape of utter darkness is suddenly flushed with the rosy tints of the dawn, and every headland and mountain top stands flashing in crimson and gold, as the day star arises in their hearts. The very hatred of Jew and Gentile binds them together by the common sympathy of a common suffering, and the love that is repelled by all without burns with only an intenser fervour towards all within. Robbed often of all worldly goods, so that they feel deeply their insecurity, and kindling with the consciousness of a treasure in Heaven, they feel that the best and safest use they can make of these uncertain riches is to share them with one another, and so by mere spontaneous impulse, have all things common. The little band of believers are thus fused into the brotherhood of a common family, whose mutual love is intensified by common joys and sorrows. When they meet and part it is with the family kiss of charity. When they salute each other it is not with the usual phrases of salutation, but with the words, "Christ is risen." When they wish to recognise each other by a secret token they use perhaps the sign of the cross, or some other expedient to elude the vigilance of their enemies. Thus they are daily drawn closer and closer to

each other by attraction from within, and by pressure from without.

But they need instruction and supervision. Grave and devout men are selected to do this; now called elders, because of their identity with the elders of the synagogue; now bishops, because of their supervision of the flock; now pastors, because they feed Christ's sheep and lambs; and to this collective eldership the spiritual care of the Church is entrusted. Some of these elders, being "apt to teach," are called to labour in "word and doctrine," and give themselves wholly to "prayer and the ministry of the word." Thus the Church is furnished with that eldership, which these evangelists were to ordain in every city.

But many of these people are poor, disowned by their friends, widows, orphans, aged or sick, and need aid to keep them from actual suffering. There are no hospitals or asylums to receive them, and provision must be made for them. Hence another set of officers is chosen, men of prudence and active benevolence, who are called deacons or administrators. They are to act as overseers of the poor, hospital stewards, nurses of the sick, guardians of the orphan, and take charge of the temporal wants of the Church, as the elders do of its spiritual; and as the habits of Grecian society prevent men from performing these duties efficiently to the other

sex, grave and mature women are selected to do this work, and like Phebe of Cenchrea, become deaconesses.

But the children need instruction. If sent to the ordinary schools they will be ostracised like their parents, and taught what these parents know to be false. Hence suitable teachers are selected, and the children of the Church, and all others who are willing to attend, are organized into a school, and taught on Christian principles.

But these operations require funds, and hence on the first day of the week each Christian brings his savings as God has prospered him, and deposits them in the treasury of the Church as a savings bank, whose security and dividends he knows to be all that he can desire, and from which, as a life-insurance and health-insurance agency of the simplest and safest kind, he knows that he or his widowed and fatherless family can certainly expect such disbursements as they may need. Now as their lowly style of living cuts off much useless expense, whilst their industry meets with its due reward, these weekly deposits by each member of this simple and loving corporation, make a very large aggregate, which is to be disbursed by the board of deacons to whom this business is entrusted.

Here then we have a primitive Church, organized and at work, every heart throbbing with brotherly

and sisterly love, helping, shielding, comforting each other as members of the same family, guarding each others good name and worldly weal as carefully as they do their spiritual condition, and living for each other and with each other as members of one large, loving, compact, and helpful family. It is a living, working corporation whose aims and agencies include both "the life that now is, and that which is to come."

But these churches do not feel themselves as isolated entities, any more than this is felt by each individual Christian. They feel themselves bound by living ties of a common brotherhood to all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and to all the churches that are seen springing up in other cities and countries, messengers are sent from church to church to keep alive this feeling of oneness, and secure such uniformity of faith and practice as may be desirable. When the "poor saints," in one region are heard of in want, contributions for their relief are sent by the hands of these "messengers of the churches," and in many cases "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality," and Achaia and Macedonia, Ephesus and Jerusalem are connected by a system of exchanges, conveying richer treasure than was ever covered by the bills of a Rothschild. When a Christian travelled, he carried a circular letter with him as

potent as the circular notes of modern travel, or perhaps only a white stone with a new name engraven thereon; but, however he may have made himself known, he is welcome in every Christian family as a brother, so that wherever there is a Christian household, there he finds a home. If sick, imprisoned, or in trouble, the ever active diaconate is ready to render him such aid as he needs, because of this bond of brotherhood. So extensive was this that Lucian makes it a subject of one of his satires, and mocks at the credulous hospitality of the Christians, which his poor, shrivelled heathen heart could not comprehend.

The amount of work done in this way by these poor, despoiled primitive churches was amazing. During the Decian persecution, the Church in Rome supported 1500 widows, besides many other poor. The Church of Antioch, although not at all a rich Church, supported more than 3000 widows and maids, besides providing for its clergy, for strangers, lepers, and those in bonds. During the wars in Numidia some Christians were made prisoners, and their ransom greatly exceeded the means of their own Church. They applied to Cyprian in Carthage, and in a few days he raised and sent to them \$4,000, a sum which at that day, considering the difference in the value of money, was enormously large. In this same city of Carthage, when

the plague broke out, the heathen fled and left their sick unattended, and their dead unburied. The Christians had just been subjected to a bitter persecution, but taught to return good for evil. Cyprian called the church together, organized its members for work; buried the dead, nursed the sick, took care of the children, and in a short time the plague was stayed. The same thing happened in Alexandria and in other cities, demonstrating to the very heathen themselves, that a new and strange life had entered the world, a life hid with Christ in God.

Thus does this great principle of corporate life work itself out into all the manifold extensions of the Christian Church, until by the multiplication of these living centres throughout the Roman Empire, a net-work of vitalizing energy is silently and steadily spread all over that mighty domain. The heathen see it with wonder, for they have never before seen men love one another, live and even die for one another in that way, and they are alarmed at this new power that is rising silently around them. They try to crush it out, but the more they try the more it grows, and the more these Christians love one another, and the sublimer and stronger grow their faith and self sacrifice. The dungeon echoes to the notes of midnight hymns; the sands of a hundred amphithea-

tres are wet with Christian blood; the feeble old man goes with an unfaltering step to the lions; the timid maiden welcomes the hissing flames like the silken drapery of a bridal attire; the little child looks fearlessly into the face of the cruel judge and says: "I am a Christian," and then goes calmly to its death singing words of strange melody that soften even the hard heart of the executioner, and lead him sometimes to fling down the instruments of his torture and present himself as a candidate for the crown of martyrdom; and thus by this simple might of love, by this simple working of a new and blessed life, in which the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, made increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love; by the simple power of this corporate life binding every Christian heart to Christ, and thus binding it to every other Christian heart, the religion of Jesus conquered the world.

III. *How may we more efficiently use this great principle in our day?*

We need no new machinery for this purpose. The Church is the Divine corporation for all the ends of its institution, and if properly worked, needs no supplementary expedients to complete its equipment. Every such human device, how-

ever plausible, is a wen or a parasite on the Church corporate, and draws away some of its vital force, and sometimes becomes a serious disease. The sling of David is better than the armour of Saul, if the Lord God of Israel nerves the arm that wields it. Hence no associations, corporations or expedients besides this simple, symmetrical system of compacted organization found in the Church itself, are needed to do its work, if that organization is instinct with Divine life. This we have seen was true in the primitive Church, and it is equally true now. Just as the organic life-cell in the living body develops into the perfect organization, so the principle of life in the heart of the individual Christian works outward through the single congregation to the whole Catholic Church of true believers. This will appear clearly, if we take a single congregation and show how the practical use of this principle of corporate life will enlarge the efficiency of any church that rightly uses it.

The prime requisite, in this case, is suggested by the words in the text, "every joint and every part." It is in the supply furnished by *every* joint, and the work performed by *every* part, that the secret lies. In other words, every member of the Church must be an active, not an honorary member of the association; a worker, not a drone in the hive; and Wesley's motto, in which is

wrapped up the whole history of Methodism, must be realized, "all at it, and always at it." Love, the life blood of this body corporate, must flow rich and warm, love to Jesus, love to souls, love to one another. This will give us in such a Church, one large, loving family, clinging to one another, caring for each other's welfare, good name and general interests, just as members of the same household do; each seeking, not his own, but the things of another; in honour preferring one another; and so fulfilling the traditional words of the last, loving apostle, whose aged lips were wont to say, when he could utter no other exhortation, "Little children, love one another."

This premised, and the work of that church is easy. The Pastor and Elders devote themselves to the spiritual watch and culture of every member and of every family. The meetings for worship on the Sabbath and during the week will be full, and the mere magnetism of a crowded assembly of loving, eager worshippers will give a fervour to praise, prayer and preaching, that, like heaped-up coals of burning juniper, will generate a power of fusion before which hardness and coldness must inevitably give way. Others will be attracted to such meetings by that resistless sympathy which belongs to every living form of human emotion, and above all to that which is kindled by a coal

from the innermost altar. The baptism of fire and the cloven tongues could not long be absent from such assemblies met, with one accord, in one place.

Then the Deacons become a living, real power in the congregation, taking charge of such temporal interests as pertain to their flexible office, which adapts itself to the manifold needs of every community. They do not merely take up the collections, and disburse alms to the few poor in the Church, but become their counsellors, visiting them as friends, aiding them to get employment, acting as guardians to the orphan, or the neglected child, taking by the hand the young man who comes a friendless stranger to the city, and saving him from the deacons of the Devil, who so soon look after him there, aiding the struggling brother whom misfortune has overtaken, seeing that the sick and the stranger are cared for; in a word, doing in the Church, for those who need that which is professed to be done by Masonry, Odd-Fellowship, and similar orders for their members; by Sisters of Charity and various Brotherhoods in the Church of Rome; by Union Benevolent and other charitable societies in the world; or by any organized, efficient agency for relieving temporal want and suffering in the world. The order of Deacons was created to perform all that kind of service before the world had ever dreamed of hospitals, asylums, or

charity boards, and perhaps the world would never have found the necessity it has had to create these outside agencies, but for the practical dis-use of the primitive functions of the office of Deacon in the Church, as they were originally intended to be performed.

Nor will the officers be the only active workers in such a Church. One of the great evils of the day is an impression with many that the work of the Church is to be done by its officers, not its members; and many private Christians seem to feel no responsibility for this work, leaving it to the pastor, elders and deacons. This is like giving the fighting in an army to its officers, and exonerating the privates; or giving the work of any association to its official members, whilst the others go free. No corporate association ever succeeds which acts on such a principle, and the Church is no exception to this rule. Men must enter the Church as they unite with any other corporate body, not to elect officers as proxies to do their work, but to take their own share of the labour, as they expect their own share of the rewards. In a Church thus vitalized with the true conception of its corporate life, the officers will be the leaders, not the substitutes of the working members, and every man will do his duty.

The training of the young will then be better

performed. The Sunday-school will enlist the best talent and energy of the Church, not as a mere expedient to keep children from mischief on Sabbath mornings, or a substitute for family instruction, but as a supplementary link between parental and pastoral training, in which the best results of honest, prayerful study of the Scriptures are instilled into the minds of children, and they are brought to Christ, so that not only the children of the Church, but the out-lying masses of neglected childhood may be brought in and trained to their places in the ranks of active church-membership, fully equipped for their work.

Nor will religious training alone be secured. Secular education will be brought under religious influence, and we shall have Presbyterian schools. By this it is not meant that we must necessarily have schools under ecclesiastical supervision and control, a mode of securing this end which may be regarded as wrong in principle, and injurious to the practice, a question which we cannot, and need not now discuss. The great end aimed at is to have Presbyterian schools, male and female, especially the latter; schools under Presbyterian management and influence, whatever form may be chosen in each case to secure this result. This we hold to be one of the most vital necessities of our churches if we would not lose ground in our day. Other

churches have their denominational schools, and they are slowly but surely absorbing much of our best material. These schools are showy, attractive and cheap, and our people send their children, especially their daughters to them, from various motives, at that precise stage of life when the deepest impressions are made. Removed from the influence of their own Church, and subjected to other forms and teachings, the attachments that inevitably spring up in the schools are transferred to the Church, and when they settle in life, they abandon the Church of their parents and unite with that of their teachers, and are thus lost to us permanently. Is this strange? Is it not the simple working of that great law on which all education rests, that as a child is trained, so will it go; as a twig is bent, so the tree is inclined? The loss to our Church within the last thirty or forty years from this source would startle us, if the statistics were presented. There are single churches near our connection that have lost in that time nearly the number of their present membership, in this way. The loss has been so gradual it has not been noticed, but the aggregate is enormous if it were summed up. Let any pastor take his Church register and trace the history and present relationships of all the families belonging for thirty or forty years, and the result will

amaze him. This loss is due mainly to this educational influence in some form. Presbyterians weakly yielded to the clamour against what was called "sectarian education," more than other churches, and the practical result has been simply to transfer a large number of their children to a "sectarian education" of another kind, such as they could not approve, whilst they gained nothing of value for what they thus lost. The amount of this influence is vastly greater than most persons are aware.

A recent article in one of the most influential monthlies of the day, designed to show how admirably the Roman Catholic system is working in its aggressive movements in this country, describes in glowing terms the showy attractions of the convent and parochial schools, and states as the result of actual investigation, that "one-fourth and perhaps one-third of all the pupils in them are the children of Protestant parents;" and further on adds that, "probably seven of these Protestant pupils out of ten become Catholics sooner or later." If this be true, can any one wonder at the growth of the Church of Rome. Now, add to these losses those caused by other denominational schools, and the result will show the annual sacrifice that our Church is making by its abandonment so largely

of the principle of denominational schools, especially primary schools, and female schools of a higher order. There is no finer tribute to the wonderful energy of our Church, and to its steady growth, than that it should have borne so long and so well such a drain as this, a drain that will continue until we provide schools of our own, where our children shall not be educated to be ignorant or ashamed of the grand old martyr Church of their fathers.

But it may be said, all this is very well, but it is too costly and hence Utopian. So far is this from being true, that it is not nearly so costly as the present system, considering the work done. The water that now flows idly through meandering channels in neglected meadows, if gathered into a mill-race and turned upon a turbine wheel, will do the work of a thousand men, and yet do all that it is doing now. So the money that is given and frittered away in mere isolated, individual action, will set and keep in motion a Divinely constructed machinery that will do vastly more than is done now by this wasteful individualism. Let the money that is now paid for charitable and educational purposes by the members of any given Church be collected and used by that Church in an awakened activity, and it

will accomplish vastly more than is now done, and do it better. A very simple calculation will demonstrate this clearly.

Let us select the Church in which we are now meeting as an illustration. Suppose that we guarantee to the members of this Church, that we will perform all their present charities, provide a good ordinary education for all their children, support their pastor and Church enterprises as well as they do now, provided they all give us a weekly instalment of money, and such time and labour as a living, working Church can easily give, and not neglect a single secular duty. Might not ten persons in this Church, in that event, give \$10 per week, twenty persons \$5, fifty persons \$3, and the rest \$1, by doing as the primitive Church did, laying by on the first day of the week as the Lord had prospered them? Would this be an exacting scale? Is it not less than some of you now give? Yet probably few persons would be able at a single conjecture to come near the amount that would be raised by this single Church, of four hundred and thirty members. The amount of these weekly instalments for one year, from this single Church, would be \$36,400. Now let the other Presbyterian churches of the city give in the same way, and add to that the princely donations that individual

Christians of large means and large hearts would make, and you have an aggregate that is enough to educate every child, care for every widow and orphan, sick or friendless sufferer, save from ruin every outcast, penetrate every street and alley with healthful working agencies, and leave a large surplus for wider operations. All this you would have without feeling it, by simply using this principle of corporate life in the Church, securing the result of every member of the Church working and paying in that corporation just as men work and pay in manufacturing or financial corporations. But suppose instead of working and giving without feeling it, these members worked and gave until they did feel it, who can compute the result then?

Here then we have the working of this principle in a single congregation. Now extend it to that entire Church of which this Assembly is the visible representative, and the accelerated vigour in the works of Sustentation, Education, Publication, and Missions, must be just as great as we have seen it in that of a single congregation, and in spite of our poverty, every Church operation could be sustained and enlarged indefinitely by the mere "power of the littles," and the mere honest contribution by every one of his easy share

of that which every joint supplieth in the effectual working of every part of the organization of this Church.

The world has only begun to learn the value of this corporate principle in our generation. May not this also be true of the Church? Is it not true of most of the Protestant Churches? Is not much of the prodigious power of the Church of Rome due simply to the fact that she uses this corporate principle so much more perfectly than we do? She is the most gigantic corporation, in some respects, that the world ever saw, and owes much of her wonderful successes to the use she makes of this principle, as Macauley has shown with great clearness in his review of Ranke's History of the Popes, as well as other writers who have gone into the wonderful tendency of the Church of Rome to develop this principle in distinct working organizations. There are more than 250 separate orders of a corporate nature in this Church, some of them like the Jesuits, Sisters of Charity, &c., of the most gigantic size and power, and new ones are constantly forming as new schemes of activity are devised. One of the most stupendous of these, the great Propaganda Society, derives its imperial incomes from contributions of one cent a week from its members, col-

lected by circles of ten all over the Catholic world, in which the dime of one circle becomes the dollar of a higher, and that the larger sum, until its income is reckoned by millions. Thus it is by applying this simple principle of corporation she is doing a work so vast in the world, and expects in fifty years to have the controlling power in the United States, with what results let history and existing facts declare.

Protestantism, and especially Presbyterianism, has failed to use this principle as it might have been used, because of the undue development of the antagonizing principle of individualism, resulting in so many divisions, that at this hour there are met in our country five *General Assemblies* and two *General Synods* of Presbyterian Churches, and yet there are as many more whose general or supreme judicatory is not in session. Can we wonder that the old story of Bothwell Brig is so often repeated in our history? Can we wonder that this guerilla system often accomplishes so little? But what is the cure for all this? Not surely a premature attempt to clamp together heterogeneous materials in a seeming unity, like making a human body by sewing together some amputated limbs; for that is working in the wrong direction and in the wrong way. True unity is a

thing of growth and not of glue, a living development from within, and not a mechanical operation from without. Each severed part must receive a higher vitality, and with this a stronger assimilating power, and then, what God hath joined together shall no man keep asunder. Bone shall come to his bone, sinews and flesh and skin shall cover them apace, and when the four winds breathe the kindling life, they shall stand up an exceeding great army. Oh, for the life-giving breath! "Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Amen and Amen!

Your patience has been so severely taxed by this effort to develop the successive and widening applications of this great principle, that we have only room left, in conclusion, merely to touch at the widest of them all, and yet it cannot wholly be omitted, not only because it completes the applications, but because it is so eminently practical. It is its application to the whole body of Christ, that elect bride, the spotless spouse of the Lamb, "the whole Family in Heaven and earth," of which each believer is an adopted child.

Every careful reader of the New Testament must have noticed how rarely motives are drawn from the fact of our individual salvation at death,

compared with those from the future glories of the Church, when the Lord shall return to claim His Bride. Hence the second coming of Jesus, and not the happiness immediately after death, is the motive most frequently held up to the Christian in the latter books of the New Testament. The whole force of all this class of appeals rests on this great principle of the corporate life of the Church, and the sharing of each believer in a history and destiny larger and grander than his own salvation. Hence his hope is pointed forward, not to the old Eden, but to the new Jerusalem, not to the garden with its individual perfection, but to the city, with its corporate perfection, complete in all its glorious equipments, when it shall descend from Heaven in the splendid Apocalypse of the future, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."

It is thus to motives drawn from this great principle in its widest application that the latter apostles continually appeal, and hence to the power of this principle, thus applied, that the primitive Church owed much of its magnificent energy. And truly it is a mighty motive for such a purpose, for it lifts the struggling spirit away from

all its mere individual life of sorrow and trial, and causes it to forget the narrow and painful present in that glorious future which hangs rich and radiant in the unseen and eternal. It links us with the mighty dead, and peoples the hard and lonely present with blessed memories of the past and more blessed hopes of the future. This has always been the case in the dark days of the Church's history, when her sons did battle and suffered sore tribulations for Christ's Crown and Covenant, and may well be so in these days of sorrow, when there are "signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Twenty years ago to-day, a General Assembly met in this city, that was opened by JAMES H. THORNWELL. How much has been crowded into that sorrowful score of years? How many a home, then bright and vocal, is now dark and silent! How many a landscape, then an Eden in loveliness, is now a blackened desolation! How many a gallant and saintly spirit has since then "passed over

the river to rest under the trees!" How many a true and gentle heart is now breaking in unspoken agony for the unreturning dead! Oh, in this time of sundered ties, and scattered households, and broken hearts, were there nothing to link us to the sainted dead, we were "of all men most miserable." But, blessed be God, there is a tie that never severs, a household that never scatters, a home within which there are no breaking hearts, in our Father's house, with its many mansions. To these blessed hopes we are pressing on through "rude and stormy scenes."

"One army of the living God,
At His command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

Soon we too shall come to the margin when the day is done, but we shrink not from the deep waters, for "we shall all meet again in the morning;" the "saints of all ages," the gentle and noble and loving that have gone up from our homes and hearts, all meet on the "strong eternal hills," where "the Lamb shall lead us to the fountains of living waters and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes."

Then when our hearts grow weary let us be cheered by this grand thought so often thus used

in the Holy Scriptures, and fix our gaze on "the
city that hath foundations," and sing as we go up

"Jerusalem, the Golden,
I languish for one gleam,
Of all thy glory folden
In distance and in dream!
My thoughts like palms in exile
Climb up to look and pray
For a glimpse of that dear country
That lies so far away.

Jerusalem, the Golden,
I toil on day by day,
Heart-sore each night with longing
I stretch my hands and pray,
That midst thy leaves of healing
My soul may find her nest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest."

March 16th 1870