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THE
CHURCHMAN

FEBRUARY, 1895.

ART. I.—THE CATHOLIC CHURCH—SCHISM.

“I BELIEVE one Catholic Church.” This is the Creed. I do not believe one Catholic *visible* Church; the word “visible” is not in the Creed; there is nothing in the context to justify the introduction of the word. The words “I believe,” as Ussher says, point to a Church which is not visible. Belief, or faith, is the confidence or evidence of things *not seen*. Therefore it is not a natural construction of the Creed to aver it has the same meaning as if the word visible had been used. It is illogical. However, albeit the Creed is silent, it may be alleged that Scripture declares that the one Catholic Church is visible or the contrary; or that our Churches of Ireland and England teach that this Church is visible, or the contrary; or perhaps that reason or the evidence of the senses prove that this Church is visible or the contrary. Such considerations do not affect the question, What is the natural construction of the words of the Creed? Nevertheless, it may be well to examine these considerations one by one, and see how the interpretation of the Creed is affected by Scripture, the teaching of our Churches, by reason and the evidence of the senses.

It is certain that in Scripture and the documents of our Churches the word Church (*Ecclesia*) has, amongst others, two distinct meanings. We read of the Church—the *one* Catholic Church. There can be only one Catholic Church. The idea of two Catholic or Universal Churches is self-destructive. Christ speaks of “*My* Church,” and St. Paul of *the* Church, the body of Christ—both using the singular and referring to the one Catholic Church; and so our Churches speak in the singular of “*one* Catholic Church”—“*the* holy Church universal,” “*an* Universal Church,” “*the* Universal Church,” etc. But in Scripture and the documents of our Churches we also read of a plurality of visible Churches—of many Churches of Christ—*e.g.*, St. Luke speaks of the Churches in Judea, Galilee, etc., so early as A.D. 35, and mentions the

ordination of presbyters in *every* Church A.D. 46. St. Paul writes of *all* the Churches—of “all Churches of the saints,” “of the Churches of God in Christ Jesus”—and in one chapter refers to the particular Church of the Thessalonians and also to the Churches of God; and we find St. John writing to the angels of the seven Churches in Asia epistles dictated by the Son of God. These local visible Churches were homogeneous, possessing all the characteristics of visible Churches of Christ—congregations of faithful men, with a mixture of men not faithful, to whom a pure gospel was preached and the sacraments duly ministered—subject, apparently, to the same system of government, but possessing self-contained and independent powers of discipline, including the power of excommunication and restoration to communion. During the first century we find no trace in history, in the New Testament or outside it, of schism in the sense of visible separation from a visible Church. Dissenting communions did not exist, and of course we find no reference to separated Churches in the New Testament. Our Churches, like Scripture, refer to several visible Churches—Churches in Asia, Africa, and Europe.¹

This difference in the signification of the word Church—one Catholic Church and many particular Churches—must not be lost sight of in discussing what we read in Scripture and the documents of our Churches on the subject of the Church. It will also assist our judgment on the moot question—if we can determine the composition of the one Catholic Church—who are the members of this one Church? Does Christ's Catholic Church include or exclude the blessed saints who have departed this life in His faith? Are the expressions “Christ's Church militant *here on earth*” and the “one Catholic Church” synonymous? Are they equivalents? Why did our Churches add “militant on earth” to the words “Christes Church” used in the first book of Edward VI.? In a little book “Prayers for the Dead and the Communion of Saints,” by an Anglican Priest, the writer, contending that room was left in our Book for Prayers for the Dead, says: “The prayer for the Church militant would be incomplete without a reference to its relation to *the Church in Paradise*. While in the prayer of oblation we distinctly plead for ourselves and the *whole Church*,” *i.e.*, for the whole Catholic Church and all its members quick and dead. Hitherto I have understood that it was the doctrine of Christian Churches that Christ's Catholic Church included the blessed saints, the

¹ These numerous homogeneous visible Churches may in their sum total be regarded as one Church, but it is not the mystical body of Christ. Hooker explains the distinction.

whole family in heaven and earth, and I shall not pursue the subject further.

Does Scripture declare—can it be proved from Scripture—that this one Catholic Church, universal and comprehending quick and dead, is visible? The words of our Lord are quoted, “I will *build* My Church.” I do not deny that “My Church” means the Catholic Church, but the primary sense of the Anglo-Saxon word “*build*” is not physical, it is *establish*, or confirm, words applicable to a spiritual and invisible body, and therefore the quotation does not suggest, much less prove, that this Church is visible. Again our Lord is quoted, “Tell it unto the Church.” Here the reference points to a visible Church, but not to the Catholic Church. A man is supposed to trespass against his brother: how could such a matter be complained of to the Universal Church? Where is any representative of the Catholic Church to be found to hear and to adjudicate, to acquit or to excommunicate? The Council of Jerusalem does not exist. An illustration of a proceeding pursuant to the direction “tell it unto the Church” is given in the history of the visible local Church at Corinth. Such is Bengel’s interpretation; the power of the keys is the independent act of the local Church to bind or excommunicate and loose or absolve the offender.

Scripture does not say that the Catholic Church is visible, nor can I find an expression which, upon a natural construction, indicates that this Church is visible; therefore the argument fails which professes to put the word visible into the Creed upon the authority of Scripture. On the contrary Scripture does contain expressions which indicate that the Catholic Church is invisible. St. Paul refers to the Catholic Church as the body of Christ; but the body of Christ is not visible, save to those who see Him in the form of a morsel of bread on a Roman altar. All visible Churches, like the seven of Asia, contain unfaithful men; but such is not the Catholic Church, the glorious Church, the Bride, which Christ will present to Himself, “not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” “but holy and without blemish.” This is the Catholic Church, and it is invisible. I do not understand how the descriptive words, “The general assembly and Church of the firstborn” can be applied to a visible body, but the Church of the firstborn is the Catholic Church.

Canon Hammond, of Truro, writes:¹ “There is a *soul* of the Church as well as the *body* of Christ’s Church. The soul of the Church consists of those devout believers who are known to God alone”; and this is what men *mean* when they talk

¹ “What does the Bible say about the Church?”

of the invisible Church. I agree, if the blessed dead are included. Again the Canon writes: "It has been affirmed that the Church consists, not of the christened, but of the Christlike; yes, the Church which we evolve out of our own consciousness, but not that of the Bible." What! will the holy Church, which Christ shall present unto Himself without spot or blemish, consist of the Christlike alone, or of the mere christened? Does not the Church of the firstborn consist of the Christlike? Does the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, mean a visible physical institution or an invisible soul; the visible physical Church cannot include the blessed saints who are part of the Catholic Church. The invisible Church, for which Canon Hammond has invented the name "soul," includes all quick and dead who are disciples indeed. Who is the Bride of Christ of whom Canon Hammond speaks—a blemished Church?

It seems strange that a Canon of the Church of England, writing on such a subject, should prefer Mr. Gladstone as an authority to the documents of our Churches. Seven quotations from Mr. Gladstone are cited because the enemy of our Churches is "so much trusted by Nonconformists." The Canon, indeed, says, "Perhaps you will listen to the *Prayer-Book itself*;" but what is the document which he thus describes? It is not *the* Prayer-Book; it is *the first* Prayer-Book of Edward VI., rejected by our Churches. I do not think this reference is an improvement, even on quotations from Mr. Gladstone.

I, as a loyal Churchman, prefer to quote the very documents of our Church.

Do our Churches teach that the Catholic Church is visible? I cannot discover any such doctrine, but I find, on the contrary, indications and descriptions applicable to an invisible Church, not proper for a visible Church. Refer to the collect for All Saints' Day: "Thine elect"—"Knit together" by God "in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ"—and compare this with the prayer of oblation—"that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Thy Son, *which is the blessed company of all faithful people.*" All faithful people, quick and dead, and none but faithful people, "disciples indeed," are very members incorporate of Christ's body, of "His body, which is the Church."

I shall cite Hooker and Ussher, two great lights of our Churches, not as authority (I only recognise the authority of Scripture and our Church, outside, these *nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*), but to show that I am not singular in my opinions—they are not novelties. "That Church of Christ," says Hooker, "which we properly term His body

mystical, can be but one, neither can that one be *sensibly* discerned by any man, inasmuch as the parts thereof are some in heaven already with Christ, and the rest that are on earth (albeit, their natural persons be visible) we do not discover under this property whereby they are truly and infallibly of that body—a body mystical—whatsoever we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and the saving mercy which God showeth towards His Church, the only subject thereof is *this Church*.”

This is the Catholic Church, for this is the only Church which comprehends all the members of Christ's body. A visible Church cannot be universal, for it cannot include the blessed saints. Hooker proceeds to speak of the visible Church as distinguished from the mystical Church. He says “It is a sensibly, known company, and this visible company in like sort, is but one, the unity of which visible body and Church of Christ consisteth in that uniformity which all several persons thereunto belonging have, by reason of that *one Lord*, whose servants they all profess themselves; that *one faith*, which they all acknowledge; and that *one baptism*, wherewith they are all initiated.” Hooker afterwards speaks of “all the Churches of the world,” the visible components of the one visible Church, one in ideal, of which he has given the essential notes of its oneness. But this, as we have seen, is not the Universal Church. So, also, our Church speaks of the visible Church, meaning the sum of visible Churches, and gives the notes essential to the character of a visible Church of Christ thus:

1. A (a=every) congregation of faithful men, *i.e.*, who acknowledge Hooker's one Lord and one faith. 2. In the which the pure Word of God is preached; and 3. “The Sacraments” (Hooker only mentions the sacrament of baptism) “be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all things that of necessity are requisite to the service.”¹

Ussher writes, “The Church, that is, God's assembly, or congregation, which in the Scripture is likened to the spouse of Christ, and which *in the Creed* we profess to believe under the title of the Holy Catholic Church—and we say we believe that there is a Catholic Church, because that the Church of God cannot be always seen with the eyes of men—God in all places and of all sorts of men, had from the beginning, hath now, and ever will have, a holy Church, which, therefore, is called the Catholic Church, because it comprehendeth the whole multitude of those that have, do, or shall believe unto the world's end. And the whole number of believers and

Cf. Notes of a true Church; Homily Whit-Sunday; Catechism Edw. VI.; Noel's Catechism: Discipline ignoring Episcopacy

saints by calling make one body; the head thereof is Christ Jesus."

3. I descend from Scripture, the Creed, and our Church to the light of reason and the evidence of the senses.

If the Catholic Church include the blessed saints, is not the notion of visibility excluded by these tests?

If the Catholic Church be visible, it must be material. I cannot see it, nor can I hear its voice. Where is the material Church? Rome replies, "I am the Catholic Church; behold me and hear the infallible voice of my Popes—all outsiders are schismatics and heretics." Perhaps we Anglicans are schismatics, or the children of schismatics, but we neither admit that the Roman is the Catholic Church, nor yet claim for ourselves, or even for the whole Anglican Communion, to be the one Catholic Church.

Is not reason entitled to demand an answer to the question, If there be a visible Catholic Church—a Church whose voice is sometimes said to be equal or superior to that of God's Word—how shall I hear or read the spoken or written utterances of that voice?

It has been said that St. Paul and St. John speak of *visible* separation as schism, and that St. Paul describes the *visible* organization of the Church and the conduct of members towards one another as the action of the limbs, etc., of a body of which Christ is the head, and thence it is argued that the Catholic Church is visible. The metaphor does not prove that the mystical body of Christ is visible, and I do not agree that St. Paul or St. John speak of visible separation as schism, or refer to separation. Schism has in theology and other subjects two senses: (1) separation, (2) division or disunion. The Greek word *σχίσμα* in St. Matthew is translated twice "rent," a tear in a garment; in St. John three times "division"; in 1 Cor. i. xi. "divisions." Division always meaning "*discedia animorum*" (Bengel), "divisions arising from diversity of sentiments and persuasion." "These divisions did not involve separations from the Church, but were dissensions that existed *within it*." Ellicott has "contentions." In 1 Cor. xii. only the word is translated "schism," or "disunion," as Ellicott says. The Apostle writes to the Corinthians that they should not make a schism in the body of Christ. If this meant the local organization of the Church of Christ at Corinth, schism did not denote physical separation, but want of union, or, rather, co-operation. Ellicott remarks, "The *τὸ αὐτό*, as its position implies, is emphatic." There should be no disunion in the body, but, *on the contrary*, the members should have common care one for another, as distinguished from the want of care (v. 21). The reference, indeed, may be

to the *mystical body* of Christ, and I may quote Bishop Ellicott's note: "ὁ χριστος is here probably used in its more mystical sense, as He in Whom all believers are united—the unifying personality. Compare Bishop Hall ('Christ Mystical'). The faithful are regarded as united with, and members of, Christ (v. 27), and as forming by that union one body, viz., His body, the Church." And when we know that at the times the New Testament was written there had not been a visible separation from Churches, nor any attempt to set up a separated Church, no Dissenters or Nonconformists, it is difficult to connect the word used by the Apostles with physical separation. There is no reason to suppose that the Church at Corinth, or even the Seven Churches of Asia, infested as they were with evil men, and worried as they were with unchristian disunion, were not still visible Churches of Christ, possessing all the notes of such, as they are to be found in Hooker—the Articles and Holy Scripture, with some of the additions made by the wisdom of good men.

So much on the question whether the Catholic Church is visible or invisible.

The subject of schism is, however, itself interesting and important. "Schismatic" is a term of reproach applied by many to those who have separated, or are separated, from that part of the visible Church which enjoys Episcopal government. I deplore the separation; but as we Episcopalians are not likely to abandon our Episcopacy, and as Nonconformists are not likely to accept it, inasmuch as it cannot be proved to be an essential to a Church of Christ, I think our hopes must be limited at present to candid recognition and Christian communion.

Those worthy objects cannot be realized so long as we upbraid Nonconformists as schismatics, and impute to them the *sin* of schism. Is it not mischievous mockery to speak of Christian love and personal respect for Ulster Presbyterians and members of the Established and orthodox Free Churches of Scotland, and in the same breath to stigmatize them as schismatics, guilty in their continual life of the sin of schism condemned by Scripture? Very respectable men, but still schismatics!

As regards the invisible Catholic Church, I suppose there can be no physical separation. Men are separated from this Church by heresy and idolatry, taking idolatry in a sense which includes with adoration of false gods and images the worship of the world, the flesh, and the devil. This view is, I think, consistent with Scripture and the documents of our Churches.

Well, as to schism and *the* visible Church, or the several

visible Churches, the sum total of which some call the visible Church, a physical schism is committed in a real and ecclesiastical sense by any person who separates himself from a congregation of faithful men where the Gospel is preached and the sacraments duly administered; *e.g.*, I am a schismatic because I have separated from my parish church. I do not think that I have committed in this the *sin* of schism; if not, physical separation, albeit schism, is not necessarily sinful schism.

When, then, is physical schism sinful? It is sinful when a man, *in opposition* to the voice of his conscience declaring to him the expedient and right, abandons any unit of the congregations which make up a visible Church of Christ, and resorts to another of those units. It is sinful when a man leaves a congregation, which is indeed such a unit, and joins a body which does not possess the marks and essential qualifications of a true Church of Christ. It is not sinful when a man, in obedience to the voice of his judgment and conscience, leaves one unit and joins another unit (both being visible Churches of Christ), being well persuaded that the latter provides for him a more excellent way for serving God in love, humility, and faith. Still less is it sinful when a man, member of an ecclesia which does not possess the notes of a visible Church of Christ, leaves that so-called Church, taking refuge in an assembly (*coetus*) to which the marks of a true Church are attached.

To illustrate these propositions, take the Reformation in Germany. Rome had ceased to be a visible Church of Christ, not because of the personal corruption of popes, bishops, monks, nuns, or laymen, but because the constitution of the Church itself was evil and untrue. The pure Word of God was not preached by her, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not duly ministered. Were the men who conscientiously, at the risk of their lives, separated themselves from her, guilty of the *sin* of schism? I think not.

I then take the case of Newman, Manning, and the host of men of cultivated intellect, with Bibles in their libraries, who first called themselves Anglican priests, and then separated from the visible Church of England, and submitted themselves to Rome and the Pope. Were not they indeed schismatics?

Were the Lollards of England evil schismatics?

Suppose a member of the Church of Scotland searched the Scriptures and found that Episcopacy was approved by Apostles, and then joined the Church of England, would he be an evil schismatic? and *vice versa*, if a member of the Episcopal Church in Scotland came to the conclusion that for Scotland Episcopacy was not the best form of Church govern-

ment in A.D. 1894, and for that reason and the sake of unity joined the Established Church of Scotland—ought such a man to be deemed an evil schismatic? I assume that the Church of Scotland is a congregation of faithful men, to whom the pure Word is preached and the sacraments duly administered. What right have we English or Irish Churchmen to put Episcopacy into Article XIX.? As loyal Churchmen we cherish Episcopacy. Let us as loyal Churchmen stand by our creeds as they are, and *our Articles as they are.*

Canon Hammond puts schism thus: The Church, the ancient Church, the Church of the country—the worse it is the more we must remain! That is, he says, so long as it is a Church, you must not leave *the historic Church of the place* as long as God has not left it. Whatever may be the corruptions of the Church, we are on no account to separate from it!

These are rather startling exaggerations. Note the implied admission of a plurality of Churches in the expression “the historic Church of the place.” But he confuses the corruption and sins of members of a Church with corruption of the Church itself. A Church is *itself* corrupt, and has no right any longer to call itself a Church of Christ, when it substitutes for the doctrine of the Word of God blasphemous fables, and when it does not duly minister the Lord’s Supper according to Christ’s ordinance; and, as Mr. Hammond knows, the cup ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike according to His ordinance. Such a Church, in Canon Hammond’s words, becomes no Church at all. Who are the offenders when men are driven out of such a body? Canon Hammond says that the strifes which do not lead to an open rupture are less evil than the factions which do. Suppose so, but the greater sin is that of the evil factions which drive their brethren into separation.

But passing to schism in the sense of disunion and divisions within a Church. These, as we have seen, were condemned by St. Paul, and I think it is against these that our Church prays both in the Litany and the prayer for unity. The prayer is against “*our unhappy divisions,*” not against dissent or dissenters.

Ah, these are the sad schisms which disgrace our Church! Every novelty introduced into our Church is an occasion of such schism, especially when these novelties are acts of disloyal rebellion and evasion of the laws of our Church; and what shall I say when these novelties are imported from Rome? Altars, incense, lights, vestures, prostrations, auricular confessions, crossings, lately condemned when practised by the Bishop of Lincoln, etc.

I find no just reason why I should withhold from the Church

of Scotland, and the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Churches of England and Ireland, the title of visible Churches of Christ as defined by the Churches of England and Ireland, or why I should dare to call their members schismatics.

It is not theologically true.

It is not ethically just.

It is not politically prudent thus to reproach them.

Locke, on toleration, writes :

“He that denies not anything that the Holy Scriptures teach in express words, nor makes a separation upon occasion of anything that is not manifestly contained in the sacred text, however he may be nicknamed by any sect of Christians, and declared by some or all of them to be utterly void of true Christianity, yet in deed and in truth this man cannot be either a heretick or schismatick.”

The editor of the *Guardian*, October 11, 1893, gives this note of warning to Churchmen :

“Churchmen should bear in mind that although unhappily there are schisms in abundance, it is possible, and even probable, that there are no schismatics. The guilt of schism, as of other sins, lies in the intention. It must be consciously committed. It is not committed where a man honestly believes that in belonging to such and such a religious body he is following the will of God and the mind of Christ. A Dissenter who became a Churchman to improve his professional or social position would be really a schismatic, whereas a Dissenter who remains where he is because in his judgment God means him to stay there is nothing of the kind. For every man the right place is that which his conscience tells him is the right place, and however strange it may seem to us that it should tell him so, we have only to acknowledge, not grudgingly or regretfully, but frankly and gladly, that in obeying his conscience he is doing his plain duty. When this is recognised we shall be very chary of throwing about hard words or of seeking moral explanations for what are really intellectual errors.”

I commend the suggestion as to *hard words* to Episcopalians who sincerely desire to cherish kind feelings and live in charity with Christian men, baptized Churchmen, albeit not Episcopalians.

ROBERT R. WARREN.

