

A HISTORICAL STUDY
OF
THE DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH
AS RELATED TO
TWENTIETH CENTURY MOVEMENTS TOWARD CHURCH UNITY

BIBLICAL SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY LIBRARY
HATFIELD, PA. ~~1956~~

18567

TH
m 365

A HISTORICAL STUDY
OF
THE DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH
AS RELATED TO
TWENTIETH CENTURY MOVEMENTS TOWARD CHURCH UNITY

by
Walter Burton Martin
A.B., Greenville College

A THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of
the Requirements for the Degree of
BACHELOR OF SACRED THEOLOGY
in
the Biblical Seminary in New York.

New York, N. Y.

1940

BIBLICAL SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY LIBRARY

HATFIELD, PA.

18567

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER I:</u>	INTRODUCTION	Page 3
A.	The Statement of the Subject	3
B.	Justification of the Study	5
C.	Delimitation of the Subject	6
D.	Method of Procedure	7
E.	Sources of Data	7
<u>CHAPTER II:</u>	THE ECCLESIA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	9
A.	The Use of 'Εκκλησία in the Old Testament	9
B.	The Use of 'Εκκλησία in the New Testament	11
	1. The Synoptics, 12	
	2. The Fourth Gospel, 18	
	3. The Acts of the Apostles, 25	
	4. The Epistles, 31	
C.	Conclusion	34
<u>CHAPTER III:</u>	THE REFORMERS' DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH	38
A.	The Development of the Idea of the Church to Augustine	38
B.	The Idea of the Church from Augustine to Huss	44
	1. Development Within the Catholic Church	45
	2. The Contribution of Wyclif and Huss	47
C.	The Reformation Views of the Church	48
	1. Luther's Doctrine of the Church	49
	2. Calvin's Doctrine of the Church	53
	3. The Anglican Doctrine of the Church	55
	4. The Separatist Doctrine of the Church	57
D.	Conclusion	58

Oct. 5, 1940

Gift of the author

22/48

**CHAPTER IV: TWENTIETH CENTURY DOCTRINES OF
THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH AND THEIR
RELATION TO THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM** Page 62

A. Present-Day Denominational Doctrines of	
the Nature of the Church	63
1. The Roman Catholic Church,	63
2. The Eastern Orthodox Church	66
3. The Anglican Church	67
4. The Lutheran Churches	69
5. The Reformed Churches	71
6. The Congregational Churches	72
7. The Baptist Churches	73
8. The Methodist Churches	75
9. The Separatist Churches	76
10. Summary	78
B. Church Unions Achieved in the Twentieth	
Century as they Relate to the Doctrine	
of the Nature of the Church	82
1. Types of Divisions and Union	82
a. Types of Divisions	82
b. Types of Union	83
2. Church Unions of Related Denominations	84
3. Church Unions of Unrelated Denominations	
within Types	88
4. Church Unions between Denominations of	
Unrelated Types	88
a. Unions Rejected	91
b. Unions Still under Consideration	91
c. Unions Achieved	94
(1) The United Church of Canada	94
(2) The Church of Christ in China	98
5. Summary	101
C. The Contribution of the Ecumenical Conferences	
to a Definition of the Doctrine of	
the Nature of the Church	102
1. The Universal Council for Life and Work	102
2. The World Conference on Faith and Order	104
a. The First Conference—Lausanne, 1927	104
b. The Second Conference—Edinburgh, 1937	107
3. Summary	110
D. Conclusion	110

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION 114

BIBLIOGRAPHY 124

T A B L E S

I.	Unions Achieved Between Related Denominations	85
II.	Unions Under Consideration between Related Denominations	87
III.	Unions Rejected between Related Denominations	87
IV.	Unions Achieved between Unrelated Denomina- tions within Types	89
V.	Unions Under Consideration between Unrelated Denominations within Types	89
VI.	Unions Rejected between Unrelated Denomina- tions within Types	90
VII.	Unions Rejected between Denominations of Unrelated Types	90
VIII.	Unions under Consideration between Denomina- tions of Unrelated Types	92
IX.	Unions Achieved Between Denominations of Unrelated Types	95
X.	Summary of Tables I-IX	95

A HISTORICAL STUDY
OF
THE DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH
AS RELATED TO
TWENTIETH CENTURY MOVEMENTS
TOWARD
CHURCH UNITY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A HISTORICAL STUDY
OF
THE DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH
AS RELATED TO
TWENTIETH CENTURY MOVEMENTS
TOWARD CHURCH UNITY

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. The Statement of the Subject

The twentieth century will perhaps be known as the great century of Christian union. The Church is face to face with a new paganism which threatens the basic elements of all communions. So long as the conflicts were within the Church, disunion and separatism were the accepted and seemingly desired condition of the churches. But when the conflict is with forces without the Church, as in this century, the Church seeks to realize and to emphasize her unity. It was for this purpose that the Edinburgh Conference on Faith and Order, the Oxford Conference on Life and Work, the International Missionary Conference at Tambaram, and others, were held.

In his foreword to "The Church and Its Function in Society" Visser 't Hooft states:

During the process of common thought and study which has been in progress through the last few years on the relation between church, community and state, it has become increasingly obvious that at the heart of the whole discussion of these issues is a question of fundamental importance: What is the nature and mission of the church with whose attitude toward social and political problems we are concerned? Unless there is an understanding in regard to that basic question, the whole discussion must be involved in confusion, and those who participate in it must find themselves at cross-purposes.

It is not our specific task to consider that question with a view to the ultimate reunion of the churches. That is the special responsibility of the Edinburgh Conference on Faith and Order. But there are two reasons why we must face the problem of the church. One is that the real differences between the various conceptions of the church must be brought into the open, so that the misunderstandings may be avoided which would inevitably arise if it were taken for granted that all use the word 'church' in the same sense. The other one is that it must be made clear what the Oxford Conference itself means when it speaks of the church.¹

It is the purpose of this study to view the doctrine of the nature of the church as it is found in the New Testament, the Reformation era, and the present day, and to ascertain the importance of this problem to the twentieth century movements toward church union.

.

1. W. A. Visser 't Hooft and J. H. Oldham: The Church and Its Function in Society, p. 7

B. Justification of the Study

The importance of this problem is well stated by R. Newton Flew:

For some years now I have been occupied, both in private study and in public lectures, with the subject of 'The Idea of the Ecclesia in Christian Theology.' It had become clear that there was only one great Christian doctrine, that of the nature of the Church, which really divided the different communions from one another. . . . I believe that it is a mistake to set the divisive subject of the Christian ministry in the central arena of debate, unless the prior question has first been faced: What is the nature of that Body to which the various ministries belong, and which its ministers serve? How is the Ecclesia constituted, and what makes it one, in spite of all severances?"¹

Writing in Christendom, Flew states:

We may remind ourselves that on the other doctrines of the Christian church there is no division of opinion which should be a barrier to union. Only on the subject of the church, its ministers and its sacraments, are we deeply divided still. It is our hope that by proceeding on our present unity in Christ we may reach such agreement about the church, which is his body, that we may be able to see our differences as to ministry and sacraments in a new light.²

Why should this subject be studied when there are such monumental works on the Ecclesia as those of Hort, Flew, and others? This study is an attempt to relate the Ecclesia of the New Testament, the Reformation ideas, and the present-day views to one another and to the problem of church unity. These have been considered and treated

.

1. R. Newton Flew: Jesus and His Church, pp. 9-10
2. R. Newton Flew: "Our Next Task"; Christendom, Winter, 1939, p. 63

separately but have seldom been viewed as developing ideas with a definite relationship to one another.

C. Delimitation of the Subject

This is not a comprehensive and thorough study of twenty centuries of thought on the nature of the church. This is primarily a historical study. It is only incidentally an exegetical study in that the meaning and use of the term ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ must be considered. The relation of the "Israel of God" to the "Church of God," the Old to the New, will be mentioned but briefly.

This study will not concern itself with the relationship of the "Kingdom of God" to the Church. Of this Hort says:

We may speak of the Ecclesia as the visible representative of the Kingdom of God, or as the primary instrument of its sway, or under other analogous forms of language. But we are not justified in identifying the one with the other, so as to be able to apply directly the Ecclesia whatever is said in the Gospels about the Kingdom of Heaven or of God.¹

This study will center in three periods: the New Testament, the Reformation, and the twentieth century. It will be concerned with the doctrine of the nature of the Church and not with the doctrine of the ministry or the sacraments which are so closely associated to the

.

1. Fenton John Anthony Hort: The Christian Ecclesia, p. 19

study of ecclesiology.

In most English works on the subject the ministry is given more attention than the Ecclesia itself. There are historical reasons in the Christianity of Great Britain for this singular disproportion. Since the various communions are divided from one another by varying convictions of the ministry, it is assumed that discussion must be concentrated on questions of the origin and nature of the ministry of the Church. But the New Testament shows us a better way. It is surely more important, both for the attainment of historical truth and for the discovery of the way of reconciliation that attention should first be concentrated on the essential nature of the Church which the ministry serves, and only after that, on the relation of the ministry to the Church.¹

D. Method of Procedure

In the second chapter a survey of the New Testament usage of the Greek term for "church" will be made under four divisions: the Synoptics, the Fourth Gospel, the Acts, and the Epistles. These, then, will be combined to give a total view of the New Testament Church. Chapter Three will have the Reformation period as focal, showing the beginnings of the divisions of thought as expressions of the Reformation temper, with particular reference to the Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and separatist thought. Chapter Four will relate the twentieth century doctrines of the nature of the Church as expressed by denominations and the ecumenical conferences and as exhibited in already

.

1. Flew, op. cit., p. 180

achieved church unions, to the problem of church unity.

E. Sources of Data

The chief sources of this study are the New Testament, the creeds and confessions which have been formulated through the centuries, denominational statements concerning the nature of the Church, and official reports of the Lausanne and Edinburgh Conferences; with statements in systematic theologies and histories of theology, commentaries, ecumenical journals, and recent books and articles on church unity. A complete list of these will be found in the Bibliography at the close of this thesis.

CHAPTER II

THE ECCLESIA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER II

THE ECCLESIA IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

All communions claim to derive their doctrines of the nature of the Church from the Scriptures. Because of this, there is a renewed emphasis in this decade upon a re-study of the Bible in an effort to arrive at a truly Biblical interpretation. Van Dusen, having stressed the need for a study of the Bible among the younger churches, adds:

But for us, likewise, a recovery of the Bible is a strategic necessity for the church's thought. The objective of our next great advance is not an indigenous theology but an ecumenical theology. And a truly ecumenical theology can never be developed primarily from the thought of the Reformers, or Aquinas, or Augustine, far less any of the moderns. The only promising seed-plot is within the thought of the Bible where all the diverse branches and traditions claim their origin and seek their authority. Ecumenical theology, if not strictly Biblical theology, must grow out of the soil of the faith of the Bible. Its precondition is a united re-study of Biblical faith.¹

A. The Use of 'Εκκλησία in the Old Testament

Two Hebrew words are used in the Old Testament as meaning an assembly of people, qāhāl and 'ēdhāh. Hort

.

1. Henry Pitt Van Dusen: "Madras and Christian Thought"; Christendom, Spring, 1939, pp. 212-3

finds that in the Septuagint ἐκκλησία is used from Deuteronomy onward as the usual rendering of qāhāl and that συναγωγή is the almost universal rendering of 'ēdhāh, and of qāhāl in the earlier books of the Pentateuch.¹

'ēdhāh (derived from a root y'dh used in the Niphal in the sense of gathering together, specially gathering together by appointment or agreement) is properly, when applied to Israel, a society itself, formed by the children of Israel or their representative heads; whether assembled or not assembled.

On the other hand qahal is properly their actual meeting together . . . The special interest of this distinction lies in its accounting for the choice of the rendering ἐκκλησία: qahal is derived from an obsolete root meaning to call or summon, and the resemblance to the Greek καλέω naturally suggested to the LXX. translators the word ἐκκλησία, derived from καλέω (or rather ἐκκαλέω in precisely the same sense.²

.

1. Cf. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, pp. 3-4
2. Ibid., pp. 4-5. Hort continues: "There is no foundation for the widely spread notion that ἐκκλησία means a people or a number of individual men called out of the world or mankind. In itself the idea is of course entirely Scriptural, and moreover it is associated with the word and idea 'called,' 'calling,' 'call.' But the compound verb ἐκκαλέω is never so used, and ἐκκλησία never occurs in a context which suggests this supposed sense to have been present to the writer's mind. Again, it would not have been unnatural if this sense of calling out from a larger body had been as it were put into the word in later times, when it acquired religious associations. But as a matter of fact we do not find that it was so. The original calling out is simply the calling of the citizens of a Greek town out of their homes by the herald's trumpet to summon them to the assembly and Numb. x. shews that the summons to the Jewish assembly was made in the same way. In the actual usage of both qāhāl and ἐκκλησία this primary idea of summoning is hardly to be felt. They mean simply an assembly of the people; and accordingly in the Revised Version of the Old Testament 'assembly' is the predominant rendering of qāhāl."

That this distinction between ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή is not always applied by the Septuagint translators is illustrated in Judges xx.1, ἐξεκκλησιάσθη ἡ συναγωγή, and Joel ii.16, συναγάγετε ἐκκλησίαν. In both these phrases the substantive is qāhāl, but the verbs are different.¹

B. The Use of 'Εκκλησία in the New Testament

The New Testament writers rejected the term συναγωγή and adopted the word ἐκκλησία. Perhaps this was due to the current use of the former word and disuse of the latter.

Dulles designates two uses of the word:

The Church is, in the universal and ideal sense, nothing other than the total number of disciples or Christians, who are also the heirs to God's salvation. In its secondary sense, both in the singular and in the plural, it designates a particular company, larger or smaller, of God's children who come together in the fellowship of Christian faith, hope and love.²

Bannerman classifies all New Testament uses under three heads, the church catholic invisible, the church catholic visible, and the local church.³ This is identical with the classification given by Van Dyke.⁴ Hort gives eleven

.

1. Cf. Thomas Alexander Lacey: The One Body and the One Spirit, p. 230
2. Allen Macy Dulles: The True Church, p. 81
3. Cf. D. Douglas Bannerman: The Scripture Doctrine of the Church, pp. 571-4
4. Cf. Henry J. Van Dyke: The Church—Her Ministry and Sacraments, pp. 3-4

shades of meaning.¹

Thayer, in tracing the meaning of the word from the classical to the New Testament usage, gives the following:²

1. Among the Greeks from Thucydides down, an assembly of people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating.

2. In the Septuagint often equivalent to gahal, the assembly of the Israelites . . . esp., when gathered for sacred purposes.

3. Any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance or tumultuously.

4. In the Christian sense:

a. An assembly of Christians gathered for worship.

b. A company of Christians, or those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs according to regulations for the body for order's sake;

aa. Those who anywhere, in city or village, constitute such a company and are united into one body.

bb. The whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth; collectively, all who worship and honor God and Christ in whatever place they may be.

cc. The name is transferred to the assembly of the faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven.

1. The Synoptics

The word ἐκκλησία appears in only two passages in the gospels, Matthew xvi.18 and xviii.17. This infrequen-

.

1. Cf. Hort, op. cit., pp. 116-8

2. Joseph Henry Thayer; A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, pp. 195-6

cy of use has led certain critics to reject these two passages as unauthentic, holding that they were put into the text in the second century in order to give greater authority to the church. There is no textual evidence to support the rejection of these two passages as forming a part of the original document. Albert Schweitzer, in discussing the eschatological nature of Jesus' teaching, concludes that these passages must be accepted as authentic and as being definitely Messianic.¹ Hort, having considered the objections to the authenticity of these passages, states: "These doubts however seem to me to be in reality unfounded."²

A study of these passages in their contexts will reveal something of the nature of the ecclesia as in the mind of Jesus. Both passages occur in the latter period of His ministry, the period in which He gave Himself intensively to the training of the twelve. It was in the region of Cesarea Philippi that Jesus, aware that "he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed" (Matt. xvi.21), sought to determine the insight of His disciples into the nature of His work. The disciples having been asked by Christ, "Who say you that I am?"

.

1. Cf. Albert Schweitzer: The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, pp. 103-4
2. Hort, op. cit., p. 8

Peter, as the spokesman for the twelve, declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied to Peter with a beatitude and three declarations. The beatitude was:

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

The three declarations follows:

1. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

2. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

3. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Some theologians have attempted to draw a distinction between πέτρος and πέτρα in this passage, concluding that the latter term refers to Peter's confession rather than to Peter. "This view cannot be sustained by the linguistic evidence. There is only one word in Aramaic, and except when it is used as a man's name, it is always feminine."¹ In the Septuagint πέτρα is used ninety-six times but πέτρος not at all. In the New Testament the masculine is used only when designating a man. It is scarcely valid to erect any theory on the interchange of gender in this passage. Christ is saying that upon Peter

.

1. Flew: Jesus and His Church, pp. 128-9

He will build His Church.

The significance of this is to be found in the nature of the experience. Peter had received a special revelation from God, causing him to have insight into the Messianic nature of Jesus, and it was upon Peter as recipient of this revelation that the Church was to be built. Other apostles and prophets might accordingly become the foundation (Eph. ii.20) as they too received this revelation from God of the Messiahship of Jesus. Other "living stones" would be added from time to time, altogether forming the builded Church. But Peter was the first member of this Church. His was a primacy of time and not of authority.

It is on Peter only as thus believing and confessing, and as doing so in the name and as the spokesman of the other apostles and of the disciples generally, that the Church is to be built. It is to him only as the representative of such faith and such a confession that the blessing and the promise of Christ are given.¹

Nor does the second declaration, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," assign any special authority to Peter in the church. The kingdom of heaven is not to be considered synonymous with the church. The meaning of this promise must be found as applying outside the realm of the church. Flew, interpreting the passage in the light of Luke xi.52 and Matthew

.

1. Bannerman, op. cit., p. 171

xxiii.13,¹ sees the key as a knowledge acquired by revelation which makes entrance into the kingdom possible.

The key is the spiritual insight which will enable Peter to lead others in through the door of revelation through which he has passed himself. It is the true understanding of the open secret, the mystery which has been hidden from the wise and understanding, and is now revealed unto babes. The power is not in its essence governmental authority. . . . And this key is not the exclusive possession of Peter, though on the day of Pentecost by common consent he was the first to use it. It belongs to every confessor of the Son of God.²

Other commentators combine the promise of the keys with that concerning binding and loosing. Nor is this latter promise made to Peter alone. In the context of the other Matthean passage in which ἐκκλησία is found, it is stated:

Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (xviii.18)

On this occasion it is spoken to all the disciples.

The terms "binding" and "loosing" were familiar to the disciples as meaning "forbidding" and "allowing."³ These words were in current use in the Jewish synagogues.

.

1. Luke xi.52, "Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." Matt.xxiii.13, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter."
2. Flew, op. cit., pp. 132-3
3. Cf. ibid., p. 134; Bannerman, op. cit., p. 177

To Peter and to the disciples was given the power to forbid or to allow, to decide what was to be in the "congregation" and their decision was to be regarded as authoritative in heaven, or in the dwelling place of God. The context of the latter passage (Matt. xviii.17) indicates that the decisions are not according to human wisdom alone but that persons meeting in Christ's name will be led of Him. Thus to the disciples as the first Christian ecclesia is given the power to apply the principles of Christ to the community.

In Matthew xvi.17 Christ speaks of the Church in no local sense. The disciples must have been reminded of the congregation of God as they heard the word come from His lips. His ecclesia was not entirely new; it had its roots in the congregation of God in the Old Testament. It becomes Christ's church because He has bought it, ransomed it with His own blood. (Acts xx.28) In this sense it is His Church.

The latter passage (Matt. xviii.17) refers to a local congregation. Some have attempted to apply this passage to a local Jewish synagogue. However, it is scarcely possible that Matthew xviii.19-21 could have been spoken of the synagogue.¹ Rather it would seem that Jesus is here speaking in anticipation and is visualizing

.

1. Cf. John A. Broadus: Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, p. 388

a local ecclesia, "congregation," a portion of the general ecclesia mentioned in Matthew xvi.17.

In conclusion, in these two passages Jesus has clearly indicated that He has purposed to build a Church, a congregation, the foundation of which is Peter and other apostles who have received the revelation from God concerning Christ, and which is to be governed by the decision of those persons signified by the disciples in these passages. That the disciples are seen as representing the Christian ecclesia rather than an apostolic order within the ecclesia is inferred in the institution of the Lord's Supper. Hort states:

Of whom then in after times were the Twelve the representatives that evening? If they represented an apostolic order within the Ecclesia then the Holy Communion must have been intended only for members of that order, and the rest of the Ecclesia had no part in it. But if, as the men of the Apostolic age and subsequent ages believed without hesitation, the Holy Communion was meant for the Ecclesia at large, then the Twelve sat that evening as representatives of the Ecclesia at large; they were disciples more than they were Apostles.¹

2. The Fourth Gospel

Though the word ἐκκλησία is never used in the Fourth Gospel, there is much material of import to a study of the nature of the Church as in the mind of Jesus.

.

1. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, p. 30

Professor E. F. Scott views it as having been written with definite ecclesiastical aims, and as being one of the most important documents for tracing the development of the idea of the Church.¹ Two of the five great metaphors applied to the Church are found in this Gospel, that of the Shepherd (Ch. x) and that of the Vine (Ch. xv). These two passages together with the Lord's final prayer in Chapter xvii and His post-resurrection appearance to those who sat behind closed doors in Chapter xx constitute the chief interest in this document for present study.

Lange and Meyer see two parables in Chapter x, that of the Door (x.1-9) and that of the Good Shepherd (x.10-18).² The first relates to the ministry and the second to Christ. In the former is given the necessity of the shepherd minister to approach his flock through Christ, the Door. In the latter Christ is portrayed as the Good Shepherd after whom the shepherds are to pattern their lives. Two main objections which may be urged against this interpretation are the break between verses 5 and 7, and the problem of applying verse 9 to the ministry.

Godet has better interpreted the passage by finding in it three parables, that of the Shepherd (1-5),

.

1. Cf. E. F. Scott: The Fourth Gospel (2d ed.) p. 104
2. Cf. John Peter Lange: The Gospel According to John, pp. 317-25; Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer: Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, pp. 317-26

the Door (7-10), and the Good Shepherd (11-18).¹ The first parable describes the manner in which the Messianic flock is formed as contrasted with the manner of false messiahs. It is a picture of Christ, through the Holy Spirit (porter), calling to Himself His sheep and then leading them forth from the fold of Judaism. It is a morning scene. The next parable, a mid-day scene, describes the life of the flock when formed and led by the Messiah.² Salvation, safety, and abundance are to be found in Christ who is the Door. The contrast again is between Christ and false saviors. The third picture is that of the Good Shepherd as contrasted with him who serves only for gain, the hireling. Christ lays down His own life for His sheep. He gives His life not for the Jewish flock (church) alone but also for another flock, the Gentiles. The former flock had already been formed and consisted of the disciples to whom He was speaking. The Gentiles too would hear His voice and they together with the Jews would become one flock, one Church, having one Shepherd, One Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage presents the method by which the Church is secured, the way in which persons enter the Church, and the universality of the Church. The Church is secured or purchased by Christ entering the sheep-fold and

.

1. Cf. Frédéric Louis Godet: Commentary on the Gospel of John, Vol. II, pp. 140-154
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 145

calling it out. Persons enter the Church through Christ as the Door and in so doing are saved and have their abode in Him. The Church which is called by Christ and abides in Him is to extend beyond the Jewish race and bring together both Jew and Gentile into one fellowship.

The second passage in the Fourth Gospel is that of the vine (xv.1-8). In this the union of Christ and the church is set forth in the metaphor of the vine and the branches.

The Church is not a mere structure rising only by additions from without, but a living tree growing and bearing fruit by its own inherent vitality, each twig growing out of an earlier branch and drawing nourishment and growth through other branches from the root.¹

The writer of this Gospel was interested in showing the close union of Christ and His disciples and has recorded this discourse of Jesus for that purpose. It is a spiritual view of the unity and relationship of Christ and the Church, giving to God the power to exclude dead branches from the fellowship.

The final prayer of our Lord, after the Last Supper, is the third passage in which Jesus reveals something of His thought concerning the Church. Having prayed for the disciples, the then-existing Church, He prayed for those who would believe, the future Church, that they all might be one. Others were to believe through the word of

.

1. Joseph Agar Beet: A Manual of Theology, p. 344

the disciples and through the unity of these believers the world would know the nature of the mission of Christ. The goal was not the union of the believers with one another alone, but the union of all believers as one in Christ, and through Christ, one with God. Here again is pictured the unity and relationship of Christ and the Church.

The last passage is the occasion, after the resurrection, when Jesus appeared to the group which had locked itself within a room. He breathed on them the Holy Spirit and bestowed on them the power to forgive and retain sins (xx.19-23). "The disciples" were gathered together, or, as Luke puts it, "the eleven, and they that were with them." Weiss and Meyer hold that only the ten disciples were present. Plummer, Godet, Bannerman, and Westcott, among others, hold that there is nothing in the context to indicate that the group was limited to ten but that there were others present.

It was to this larger group, the disciples and others, that He gave the commission, the Holy Spirit, and the power to forgive and retain sins. Westcott states:

There is nothing to limit the pronoun to 'the ten.' It appears from Luke xxiv.33, that there was a general gathering of the believers in Jerusalem . .1

And again:

.

1. B. F. Westcott: Commentary on St. John's Gospel, p. 294

There is nothing in the context, as has been seen, to shew that the gift was confined to any particular group (as the apostles) among the whole company present. The commission therefore must be regarded properly as the commission of the Christian society and not as that of the Christian ministry. . . . The great mystery of the world, absolutely insoluble by thought, is that of sin; the mission of Christ was to bring salvation from sin, and the work of His Church is to apply to all that which He has gained.¹

Plummer adds that

the power being conferred on the community and never revoked, the power continues so long as the community continues. While the Christian church lasts it has the power of remitting and retaining along with the power of spiritual discernment which is part of the gift of the Spirit. That is, it has the power to declare the conditions on which forgiveness is granted and the fact that it has or has not been granted.²

This passage bears a striking similarity to the two references to "binding" and "loosing" in Matthew. The first of these confers the power on Peter as having received the revelation of God enabling him to become the first confessed member of the Christian ecclesia. The second confers it upon the disciples as constituting the Christian ecclesia. This passage in John confers it upon the eleven and the other disciples, the persons constituting the Christian ecclesia.

.

1. Westcott, op. cit., p. 295

2. A Plummer: The Gospel According to St. John, p. 363

3. Summary

The concept of the Church in the mind of Jesus may then be said to include the following:

1. It is a structure of living stones which He will build, the foundation stone, or the first living stone in the standpoint of time, being Peter.

2. This structure or Church is a universal Church embracing all those who have received a revelation like unto that received by Peter as to the Messiahship of Jesus.

3. This Church will be composed of many local congregations or churches, whose existence in no way impairs the unity of the whole.

4. The Church is secured by an act of Christ through which there is given Him both Jews and Gentiles. Both become one Church with one Lord.

5. Individuals enter the Church through Christ and, having entered, have their place of abode in Him.

6. The Church stands in union with Christ as revealed in His progressively referring to the Church as the flock of which He is the Good Shepherd, as the branches of which He is the Stem-vine, and as being One with Him and with His Father.

7. To this Church under the Spirit of God is given power to direct and manage its material affairs of discipline, membership restrictions, standards, etc.

8. This Church is inclusive of all who believe in Christ, not as manifest in outward ceremonies and rituals, but as revealed by God.

3. The Acts of the Apostles

The Acts is of interest in this study chiefly from a historical point of view. In it is found the unity of the Church in the midst of growth and extension. With this growth there is a corresponding development to meet the evolving needs.

'Εκκλησία is used twenty-three times in this Lukan document. Three of these occur in the story of the mob in Ephesus (Acts xix.32, 39, 40). It is used by Stephen as referring to the "congregation in the wilderness" (vii.38). Of the remaining nineteen usages, two refer to the whole Church and seventeen to local churches such as the church at Jerusalem. From this classification it is evident that the Acts is concerned primarily with local churches, in a practical manner, rather than with theories concerning the nature of the Church. Its chief contribution, therefore, is historical and practical.

In the first two chapters of this narrative there is pictured the life of the church at the time of Pentecost. Having fulfilled the command of the Lord to return to Jerusalem and remain in prayer, they received the promised Holy Spirit. Thereupon, Peter preached and three

thousand were added to the church, having signified their belief in Christ by baptism. Luke gives, in this second chapter, eight characteristics of this early church:

1. It was characterized by the presence of the Holy Spirit on each member.

2. It was entered by repentance and baptism in the name of Christ.

3. The public teaching was that of the apostles.

4. They continued in fellowship,

conduct expressive of and resulting from the strong sense of fellowship with the other members of the brotherhood, probably public acts by which the rich bore some of the burdens of the poor.¹

5. They continued in the breaking of bread, the observance of common evening meals (Luke xxiv.30), which, after the manner of the last meal of Jesus, they concluded with the Lord's Supper.²

6. They continued in prayers, probably spontaneous Christian prayers together with certain of the Messianic psalms and prayers of the synagogue.

7. They had all things in common.

8. They continued in attendance in the temple.

Certain of these practices are obviously discarded in the later development of the Christian ecclesia.

The relation of the church at Antioch and the church at Jerusalem forms the crucial point in the preser-

.

1. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, p. 44

2. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer: Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles, p. 68

vation of the unity of the Church. The Antioch church came into being through the activity of no apostle. It owed its beginnings to the dispersions of the Christians which came after the death of Stephen. It was to this church that Barnabas went at the appointment of the church in Jerusalem, Paul later joining him. The import of the Antioch church is seen in the Antiochian mission. The Antioch church, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, with the laying on of hands, sent forth Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. This project was launched without the authority or commission of the Jerusalem church.

Through all this there was developing a second center of church interest, Antioch. The Judaizing tendencies of certain ones in Judea inevitably found their way to Antioch, involving the question of the authority of the Jerusalem church. The Antioch church sent Paul and Barnabas and others to Jerusalem for consultation. They were well received by the ecclesia at Jerusalem, the apostles and the elders. The decision of this council preserved the unity of the Church. Hort says of it:

It is enough to say that on the two points at issue, circumcision and the bindingness of the Jewish law, they give no support to the demands of the Judaizers.¹

.

1. Hort, op. cit., pp. 70-71

A letter was sent to the congregation at Antioch which was gratefully received. The Church remained a unity not because of an organization effected but because of a frank recognition of the distinct sphere of operation of each of the two centers and a realization of their oneness in the Christian mission.

In the Acts there is an increasing organization in local churches to meet the needs of the group. This is illustrated by the appointment of the seven and the elders.

The multiplication of the duties of the Twelve, in direct proportion to the growth of the church, made it necessary that helpers be appointed. The Grecian Jews were complaining that their widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations. The Twelve, therefore, called together the ecclesia and suggested the group select

seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (vi.3).

The suggestion found favor with all the multitude. They chose out seven, including a proselyte from Antioch, and set them before the Apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. It is impossible not to connect this act with the laying of the contributions at the Apostles' feet. As being thus constituted stewards of the bounty of the community they were in a manner responsible for the distribution of the charitable fund. But the task had outgrown their powers, unless it was to be allowed to encroach on their higher Divinely appointed functions. They proposed therefore to entrust this special part of the work to other men, having the prerequisites of devoutness and wisdom, to be chosen by the Ecclesia at large.¹

.

1. Hort, op. cit., p. 51

Elders are said to have functioned in Jerusalem, Ephesus, and the churches of Paul's first missionary journey. Those of Jerusalem are first mentioned in Acts xi. 30 where they are said to have received the gift from the Antioch brethren. They are associated with the apostles in the affairs of the Jerusalem council. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (xiv. 23). Barnes says of χειροτονήσαντες (appointed):

The word occurs but in one other place in the New Testament, 2 Cor. 8:19, where it is applied to Luke, and translated, 'who was also chosen of the church (i.e. appointed by suffrage by the churches), to travel with us' etc. The verb properly denotes to stretch out the hand; and as it was customary to elect to office, or to vote, by stretching out or elevating the hand, so the word simply means to elect, appoint, or designate to any office. The word here refers simply to an election or appointment of the elders. It is said indeed that Paul and Barnabas did this. But probably all that is meant by it is, that they presided in the assembly when the choice was made.¹

This interpretation is supported by Lange, Meyer, and Alexander.² These elders were after the manner of those

.

1. Albert Barnes: Notes Explanatory and Practical on the Acts of the Apostles, p. 211
2. Cf. John Peter Lange (ed.): The Acts of the Apostles, p. 272; Meyer, op. cit. (Acts), p. 275; Joseph Addison Alexander: The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II, p. 65. E. H. Plumptre states (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 230): "It is interesting here to note (1) that Paul and Barnabas, by virtue of the authority which as Apostles they had received, primarily from the Church of Antioch (chap. xiii.3), exercised the right of appointing, or, in later phrase, ordaining, elders. (2) They plant among the Churches of the Gentiles the organization which we have found in that of Jerusalem, and which was itself based on that of the Synagogue, not on that

in Jerusalem, though they were appointed under the direction of Paul and Barnabas who had received their commission not from Jerusalem but from Antioch.

The term "bishops" or "overseers" is used only once in the Acts. In that instance it is applied by Paul to the elders of Ephesus as they were assembled at Miletus (xx.28). From this passage Flew concludes:

From this and the other New Testament passages, we see, first, that the presbyters are all bishops, episkopoi. The first title denotes their office, and the second their function. . . . Second, there are several bishops in each local church, and there is no distinction of rank between them. Third, their appointment is ascribed to the Spirit of God. They may have been commissioned by an apostle, perhaps by Paul himself, or elected by the Church. But the decisive act is the divine working of the Spirit. . . . Fourth, the Church for which they are to care has been constituted by the redemptive work of Christ upon the Cross. The ministry of the Word is supreme for the Ecclesia.¹

In the midst of this increasing organization we are still aware that the Christian ecclesia is still a unique unit in which each member, having received the Holy Spirit, is a witness to the Word, an evangelist of the Way. The Master had taught the "inasmuch" of ministering and His standard of service and witnessing was

.

of the Temple. (3) As this appears as the first appointment, it would seem to follow that the disciples had in the meantime met, and taught, and baptised, and broken bread without elders. Organisation of this kind was, i.e., important for the permanence of the life of the Church as such, but not essential to its being, or to the spiritual growth of individual members."

1. Flew, Jesus and His Church, p. 197

kept alive in the Church.

From this brief survey of Acts the rapid growth of the Church as manifested by the establishing of many local churches and the increasing organization has been noted. The Church, faced with a great problem which might have brought disunion, realized that each local church was a portion of the Church and preserved that unity for which Christ had prayed.

4. The Epistles

A. B. Bruce sums up Paul's conception of the Church as follows:

It is a society of men united by a common faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour, and a common devotion to Him as their Lord, gathered together from all classes, conditions, and races of men.¹

Paul uses ἐκκλησία to denote an individual church or churches and to denote the universal Church. The latter usage is found only in Ephesians, Colossians, and two passages in I Corinthians.

On only one occasion does Paul use the phrase "churches of Christ" (Rom. xvi.16), but in several instances he refers to the "Church of God." This may be attributed to his desire to associate the Church with the "congregation of Israel" which too was the "Church (con-

.

1. Alexander Balmain Bruce; St. Paul's Conception of Christianity, p. 368

gregation) of God."

Paul's conception of the Church is embodied chiefly in five important metaphors. The Church is the temple of God, the body of Christ, and the bride of Christ. The Kingdom of God is once spoken of as an olive tree. And in a reported address of Paul the Church is called a flock.¹

It is the figure of the Church as the body of Christ which is the great contribution of Paul to the doctrine of the nature of the Church. This he proclaims in I Corinthians xii.22 from the practical viewpoint, and in Ephesians as a doctrinal interest in regard to the exaltation of Christ. It appears also in Romans xii.3-5 and Colossians i.18. Stevens says of it:

In Ephesians the headship of Christ over the Church as his body is yet more explicitly asserted in contrast to modes of thought which degraded Christ from his preeminent position, and which had become rife in the churches in Asia Minor, although the Apostle does not here draw out the practical lessons regarding the function of each member of the body which are so fully developed in I Cor. xii.12-31. Here it is a doctrinal interest regarding the nature and dignity of Christ's person, while there it was a practical concern for the harmony and peace of the Corinthian Church, which determined the course of his thought. It is the Divine purpose "to sum up all things in Christ"; that is, to unite all things under one head (*ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*), in union with Christ (Eph. i.10). Christ is the unifying bond of all saving powers and processes. . . . It results from Christ's position and work that mankind, who were before divided into Jews and Gentiles, are now united into one body by the reconciliation which Christ has accomplished by his death (ii.16). It follows that it is the duty of the Christian man to

.

1. Joseph Agar Beet: A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and to Philemon (2d ed.), p. 388

fulfil the function of a member of Christ, and so to promote the strong and healthy growth of the body (iv.16; Col. ii.19), or, disregarding the figure, to grow in likeness to Christ, to approach ever nearer to the standard of his perfectness (Eph. iv.13,15).¹

Beet adds:

This metaphor is the fullest and richest picture of the Church in the New Testament. And it affords the noblest ideal of the Christian life. In a healthy body every member is active, moved and controlled by one spirit, each member putting forth its powers in harmony with all the others, for the good of the whole. Everything in us contrary to this ideal is spiritual disease tending to death.²

Thus in the writings of Paul there is the presentation of the universal Church in her union with Christ and the individual churches as expression of the universal Church. His early epistles abound in references to individual churches, his prison epistles are rich in doctrinal statements concerning the Church, his later epistles deal largely with the oversight of the churches. The characteristics of the members of these churches are summarized by Hort:

The universal Ecclesia and the partial Ecclesiae alike were wholly made up of men who had each for himself believed, whose baptism was for each the outward expression of what was involved in his belief, for his past and for his future; and who had a right to look on the fact that they had been permitted to be the subjects of this marvellous change, as evidence that they had each been the object of God's electing love before the foundations of the world were laid.³

.

1. George B. Stevens: The Pauline Theology, pp.322-3
2. Beet, op. cit. (Commentary), p. 390
3. Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, pp. 169-70

There is little additional material in the epistles regarding the organization of the churches. There are still deacons and elders, or bishops. Titus and Timothy are given the power to appoint elders but the power is temporary. Lightfoot says:

It is the conception of a later age which represents Timothy as bishop of Ephesus and Titus as bishop of Crete. St. Paul's own language implies that the position they held was temporary.¹

In Titus i the terms "elder" and "bishop" are used interchangeably, and the qualifications for this office correspond with those given for "overseers" in I Timothy where again the two terms are used interchangeably. Though the number of churches was increasing, Paul was using the same organization as in his earlier churches.

C. Conclusion

It was the problem of this chapter to study the use of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament in an effort to determine the teaching of the New Testament on the nature of the Church.

The ecclesia or congregation or church is not a concept peculiar to the New Testament but is found in the Septuagint. In the New Testament it is seen to be a structure of living stones, composed of all those who have

.

1. J. B. Lightfoot: Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philip-
pians, p. 199

received the revelation of the Messiahship of Jesus. It is secured by an act of Christ. The several congregations, are expressions of the one universal congregation, a unity expressed metaphorically as the flock, the branches of a vine, a temple, and the body of Christ. The Church is a unity. Paul adds nothing which Christ has not already expressed or implied concerning the nature of the Church. The epistle are but the unfolding of that which had been taught by Christ.

There is increasing organization to meet the needs of the growing community. The apostles are accorded a certain supremacy by virtue of their having seen Christ and witnessed the resurrection, a supremacy which could not be and was not passed on to any successors. There were elders and deacons in the churches, these persons elected, at least in most instances, by the congregations. This organization is nowhere set forth as a pattern for the church of subsequent centuries. The permanent principle which may be derived is that organization be made to meet the need which calls it forth.

The Church of the New Testament is an organism giving its full allegiance to Christ and living His life in the world. It is

essentially the embodiment of an idea based on God's final revelation of His purpose for mankind, an idea which combines the principle of leadership and the principle of sharing, the idea of a divine authority

and the idea of freedom for the individual to do
the will of God in the service of all mankind.¹

.

1. Flew, Jesus and His Church, p. 13

CHAPTER III

THE REFORMERS' DOCTRINE

OF

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER III

THE REFORMERS' DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The simplicity of the New Testament church, as set forth in the previous chapter, stands in bold contrast to the Holy Catholic Church at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Once it had been the communion of the saved, now it had become the sole agent of salvation. A tradition of apostolic succession, a well-defined hierarchy, and other highly organized forms became the essential character of the Church. The Church was a visible organization to which had been given all spiritual power. It is the primary problem of this chapter to consider the views of the Reformers concerning the nature of the Church. The secondary problem is to indicate the historical process by which the Christian community of the first century developed into the hierarchy of the sixteenth century.

A. The Development of the Idea of the Church to Augustine

Harnack states:

The essential character of Christendom in its first period was a new holy life and a sure hope, both based on repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ and brought about by the Holy Spirit. Christ and the Church, that is, the Holy Spirit and the holy Church, were inseparably connected. The

Church, or, in other words, the community of all believers, attains her unity through the Holy Spirit. This unity manifested itself in brotherly love and in the common relation to a common ideal and a common hope. . . . There was as yet no empirical universal Church possessing an outward legal title that could, so to speak, be detached from the personal Christianity of the individual Christian.¹

Schaff gives further indication of the early thought concerning the Church, stating:

In both the ecumenical symbols, as even in the more indefinite creeds of the second and third centuries, on which those symbols are based, the church appears as an article of faith, presupposing and necessarily following faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and as a holy fellowship, within which the various benefits of grace, from the forgiveness of sins to the life everlasting, are enjoyed.

Nor is any distinction made here between a visible and an invisible church. All catholic antiquity thought of none but the actual, historical church, and without hesitation applied to this, while yet in the eyes of the world a small persecuted sect, those four predicates of unity, holiness, universality, and apostolicity, to which were afterwards added exclusiveness, infallibility, and indestructibility.²

The old catholic doctrine of the Church gradually developed through the works of Ignatius, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Cyprian. Ignatius emphasized primarily the unity of the Church, which unity centers in the episcopate. Irenaeus goes further than Ignatius, calling the Church

the haven of rescue, the way of salvation, the entrance to life, the paradise in this world, of whose

.

1. Adolph Harnack: History of Dogma, Vol. II, pp. 72-3
2. Philip Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, pp. 169

trees, to wit, the holy Scriptures, we may eat, excepting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which he takes as a type of heresy.¹

Tertullian, though himself a schismatic, compared the Church to the ark of Noah, out of which there was no salvation.

"Cyprian starts from the unity of the church: and this is not a spiritual unity of faith and hope in its ever-living Head, but the visible unity of a visible society."² He believed the catholic church to be founded upon Peter, not because Peter was greater than the other apostles but in order that unity might be preserved. This concept of unity was not spiritual but organizational and visible, out of which there was no salvation. The episcopal succession assures the preservation of this unity. Schaff says of this view:

It blindly identified the spiritual unity of the church with the unity of organization, insisted on outward uniformity at the expense of free development, and confounded the faulty empirical church, or a temporary phase of the development of Christianity, with the ideal and eternal kingdom of Christ . . . The Scriptural principle: 'Out of Christ there is no salvation,' was contracted and restricted to the Cyprianic principle: 'Out of the (visible) church there is no salvation;' and from this there was only one step to the fundamental error of Romanism; 'Out of the Roman Church there is no salvation.'³

This concept that out of the visible church

.

1. Schaff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 171
2. Henry Melvill Gwatkin: Early Church History to A.D. 313, Vol. II, p. 280
3. Schaff, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 174

there is no salvation gave to the church a greater power.

If she is the institution which, according to Cyprian, is the indispensable preliminary condition of salvation, she can no longer be a sure communion of the saved . . .¹

The visible church became the medium of salvation, the sole agency through which redemption may be secured. Instead of being a communion of the redeemed the visible church became the agency of redemption.

This absolute identity of the visible church with the Church universal could not long be accepted by the entire church. The Donatist controversy, which called forth the opposition of Augustine, was specifically directed at this concept of the church. The issue in the controversy is most clearly set forth by Schaff:

The Donatist controversy was a conflict between separatism and catholicism; between ecclesiastical purism and ecclesiastical eclectism; between the idea of the church as an exclusive community of regenerate saints and the idea of the church as the general Christendom of state and people. It revolved around the doctrine of the essence of the Christian church, and, in particular, of the predicate of holiness. It resulted in the completion by Augustine of the catholic dogma of the church, which had been partly developed by Cyprian in his conflict with a similar schism.²

The Donatists subordinated the efficacy of the sacraments to the holiness of the one administering them and the holiness of the church to the individual holiness of its members. They held a spiritual view of the church.

.

1. Harnack, op. cit. p. 113

2. Schaff, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 365

The church was a communion of saints and was not to be perfectly realized in this present world. This struck at the center of the Cyprianic concept of the church.

Augustine, as a defender of the church, further defined the position of the Catholic Church. The seven characteristics which Augustine assigns to the church are, according to Harnack,¹ unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity, infallibility, indispensableness, and permanence. Love exists only in and is basic to the unity of the church and without this love, therefore without the church, there is no redemption.

Salvation is not to be found outside the Church, for since love is confined to the visible Church, even heroic acts of faith, and faith itself, are destitute of the saving stamp, which exists through love alone.²

The holiness of the church is derived from its union with Christ rather than from the holiness of its members. The church is, moreover, a mixed body. The unholy are members of the church though they do not stand at its center. They are in the church and may become spiritual but they do not constitute the soul of the church. Augustine did not go further in defining this "mixed body." It is certain that he identified the entire body with the visible Catholic Church. However, in his idea of the "mixed body" is seen the forerunner of the Protestant

.

1. Cf. Harnack, op. cit., Vol. V, pp. 143-68
2. Ibid., p. 146

distinction between the visible and invisible Church.¹

The catholicity of the church is a proof of its truth. Augustine argued that the Donatists could not be considered as a church because they were confined to Africa and, therefore, did not have catholicity. The true church could exist only by union with Rome.

The possession of the writings of the apostles and the ability to trace its descent from the apostolic communities gave to the Catholic Church the element of apostolicity. The Bishop of Rome held the chair of Peter and, in consequence, held first place in the church, though Augustine was not entirely clear on the relation of the episcopate to the councils.

The remaining three elements, infallibility, indispensableness, and permanence did not occupy a major role in his thinking because he was never called upon to defend them.

.

1. Cf. Schaff, op. cit., pp. 369-70. He notes: "With some modification we may find here the germ of the subsequent Protestant distinction of the visible and invisible church; which regards the invisible, not as another church, but as the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (or *ecclesiis*), as the smaller communion of true believers among the professors, and thus as the true substance of the visible church, and as contained within its limits, like the soul in the body, or the kernel in the shell. Here the moderate Donatist and the scholarly theologian, Tyconius, approached Augustine; calling the church a two-fold body of Christ, of which the one part embraces the true Christians, the other the apparent. . . . But neither he nor Augustine pursued this distinction to any clearer development. Both were involved, at bottom, in the confusion of Christianity with the church, and of the church with a particular outward organization."

The church, in the mind of Augustine, was always to be regarded as the visible Catholic Church, One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, outside of which there was no salvation. The episcopacy, with the Bishop of Rome in the place of first rank, was the very center of the church. The sacraments, though administered by unholy clergy, had efficacy for the recipient so long as they were administered by those of the apostolic tradition. This view of the church was the bulwark of the Roman hierarchy.

But there was another emphasis in the teaching of Augustine. Though he repeatedly identified the Church with the Roman church, yet he could not fail to believe that the Church was spiritual. His doctrine of grace implied that the Church was the number of the elect both past, present, and future, and that in this regard the church was spiritual. However, he did not coordinate his doctrine of grace with his doctrine of the nature of the Church and these spiritual elements were subordinated, in his writings, to the visible Catholic Church.

B. The Idea of the Church from Augustine to Huss

Between Augustine and Huss two trends are noteworthy. First, there was a strengthening and enlarging of the hierarchical concept of the church and, second,

there was a pre-Reformation emphasis upon the spiritual Church.

1. Development within the Catholic Church

As early as the fifth century there began a dividing of the "one church." The Montanists, Novatians, and Donatists had been separatist groups not claiming to be the "one church." But the fifth century saw the beginning of the existence of rival catholic churches. Gradually there became three divisions, those of the Germano-Roman West (Rome), those about the Egean Sea (Constantinople), and those of the East split into Nestorianism and Monophysitism.¹

In the ninth century the visible Catholic Church was divided into two rival Catholic churches, —the patriarchal church in the East, and the papal church in the West. The former denied the papal claim of universal jurisdiction and headship, as an anti-Christian usurpation; the latter identified the Church Catholic with the dominion of the papacy, and condemned the Greek Church as schismatical. Hereafter, in Western Christendom, the Holy Catholic Church came to mean the Holy Roman Church.²

During this period the Augustinian view of the Church continued to be held, but there was an ever-increasing acceptance of the hierarchy of the church with the Bishop of Rome as the supreme authority. Harnack notes

.

1. Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol. III, pp. 238-9

2. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI, p. 524

four leading thoughts in this development:¹

(1). The hierarchical organization is essential to the Church, and in all respects the Christianity of the laity is dependent on the mediation of the priests ('properly ordained'), who alone can perform ecclesiastical acts.

(2). The sacramental and judicial powers of the priests are independent of their personal worthiness.

(3). The Church is a visible community with a constitution given to it by Christ (even as such it is the body of Christ (*corpus Christi*)); as a visible, constituted community it has a double power, namely, the *potestas spiritualis* and the *potestas temporalis* (spiritual and temporal power). Through both is it, as it shall endure till the end of the world, superior to the transitory states which are subordinate to it. To it, therefore, must all states and all individuals be obedient *de necessitate salutis* (as a necessary condition of salvation); nay, the power of the Church extends itself even to heretics and heathen.

(4). To the Church has been given, by Christ, a strictly monarchical constitution in His representative, the successor of Peter, the Roman Bishop. Not only is all that is valid with regard to the hierarchy valid in the first instance of the Pope, but to him all powers are committed, and the other members of the hierarchy are only chosen in *partem sollicitudines* (for purposes of oversight). He is the *episcopus universalis* (universal bishop); to him belong, therefore, both swords, and as every Christian can attain salvation only in the Church, as the Church, however, is the hierarchy, and the hierarchy the Pope, it follows that *de necessitate salutis* all the world must be subject to the Pope.

This hierarchical church in which the New Testament church is so scarcely discernible was the heritage of the Reformers. It had developed not along theological lines but out of practical events. Whatever of theological

.

1. Harnack, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 119-22

bases there were, they were supplied preeminently by Cyprian, Augustine, and Aquinas.

2. The Contribution of Wyclif and Huss

The Reformers had another heritage, that from Wyclif and Huss. Wyclif revived the Augustinian idea of the church as a "mixed body" and differentiated between the visible and invisible Church. "He defined the true church to be the congregation of the predestinated, or elect, who will ultimately be saved."¹ Christ is the sole head of this church out of which there is no salvation. The Pope is head of only one part of the church and that only if he follows the commandments of Christ.

Wyclif held that the Scriptures were to be accepted in preference to tradition. He objected to the forms of worship which had developed, the system of indulgences, and the high view of the papacy. Much stress was laid on the law of Christ but little on faith.

Huss adopted the views of Wyclif and made them known through his book, De ecclesia. In it he says:

The unity of the catholic church consists in the unity of predestination, inasmuch as her separate members are one by predestination and in the unity of blessedness, and inasmuch as her separate sons are finally united in bliss.²

.

1. Schaff, loc. cit.

2. John Huss: The Church, p. 14

Schaff, in his introduction to his translation of De ecclesia, lists the following effects of Huss' definition of the church upon the accepted views of the Catholic Church:¹

(1). The pope and the cardinals do not constitute the Church.

(2). The church is not confined to the body over which the apostolic see has jurisdiction.

(3). The Church is not inerrant.

(4). Pope and prelates are not necessarily in authority by reason of appointment or election to office.

The chief contribution of this Hussite movement was to call into question the hierarchical church. Though it did not work the reform which was necessary, it prepared the way for those Reformers who were to follow.

C. Reformation Views of the Church

The rigid hierarchy of the Catholic Church had been challenged by the spiritual view of the Church propounded by Wyclif and Huss. It remained for Luther and Calvin to develop and extend the spiritual view to the point of separation from the Catholic Church.

.

1. Huss, op. cit., pp. xiii-xiv

1. Luther's Doctrine of the Church

Huss had questioned the validity of the hierarchy but only to the extent that the hierarchy failed to follow after the commandments of Christ. That is, he did not denounce the papacy as such but denied that the incumbent of the papal chair was any more righteous by virtue of his position. Luther called into question and openly attacked the very fundamentals of the Catholic Church.

His idea of the Church is positively stated in seven marks which he set forth in his The Councils and the Church published in 1539.¹

First, the Church is known by its possession of God's Word though some persons may have the truth of it to a greater degree than others. This is the orally preached Word left to the Church by Christ.

Wherever, therefore, you hear or see this Word preached, believed, confessed, and acted on, there do not doubt that there must be a true ecclesia sancta catholica.²

Second, the Church is known by the sacrament of baptism when rightly administered, believed, and used. The efficacy of the baptism is not dependent upon the one administering it, for it belongs to the person who is receiving baptism and not to the baptizer.

Third, the Church is known by the sacrament of

.

1. Cf. Works of Martin Luther, Vol. V, pp. 270-287

2. Ibid., p. 271

the Lord's Supper when it is rightly administered, believed, and received. Here again the value of the sacrament is not dependent upon the one administering it but upon the one receiving it.

Fourth, the Church is known by its use of the keys, public and private. This use of the keys is in regard to discipline within the fellowship.

The keys belong, not to the pope, as he lyingly says, but to the Church, that is, to Christ's people, God's people, the holy Christian people throughout the world, or wherever there are Christians. . . . As Baptism, the Sacrament, and God's Word do not belong to the pope but to the Church, so with the keys, they are *claves ecclesiae*, not *claves papae*.¹

Fifth, the Church is known outwardly by its ministry. He rejects the gradations of the ministry developed by the Roman Church, particularly the papacy.

Sixth, the Church is known by prayer, thanksgiving, and praise. The praying of the Lord's Prayer, the use of psalms and spiritual songs, the repetition of the Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Catechism—all these are outward marks of the Church.

Seventh, the Church is known by its possession of the holy cross. This is the possession of suffering, the experiencing of persecution for the sake of Christ. Through this suffering, bearing the cross, the Church becomes increasingly holy.

.

1. Works of Martin Luther, p. 275

The Church is the communion of saints,¹ a company of Christlike men and women,² in which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments rightly administered, believed, and received. In his Brief Explanation of the Creed, he states:

I believe that there is on earth, through the whole wide world, no more than one holy, common, Christian Church, which is nothing else than the congregation, or assembly of the saints, i.e. the pious, believing men on earth, which is gathered, preserved, and ruled by the Holy Ghost, and daily increased by means of the sacraments and the Word of God.

I believe that no one can be saved who is not found in this congregation, holding with it to one faith, word, sacraments, hope and love . .³

Luther, as indicated above, stressed the unity of the invisible Church, the true Church. This unity is not organizational but spiritual. In his An Argument in Defence of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull, published in 1521, he writes:

John Hus does not deny that the pope is sovereign in all the world; he only says that a wicked pope is not a member of the holy Church, . . . he must either be holy or become holy. But I say that if St Peter himself sat in Rome today, I would still deny that he was pope and over all other bishops by divine right. The papacy is a human invention of which God knows nothing. All churches are equal, and their unity consists not in this one sovereignty, but as St. Paul says, in Ephesians iv, in one faith, one baptism, one Lord, even Christ, and these things are all the com-

.

1. Cf. Works of Martin Luther, Vol. II, p. 372
2. Cf. Thomas M. Lindsay: A History of the Reformation, Vol. I, p. 485
3. Luther, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 373

mon and equal property of all the parishes in the world.¹

Luther did not identify this One Church with the external church. He differentiated between them, calling one the spiritual, inner Christendom, and the other the bodily, external Christendom. Membership in this external Christendom does not insure salvation for there are always the true and false Christians in it. The true Christians from all the various external churches make up the spiritual inner Church. They are the soul of the body.

The bodily, external church is not identified solely with the Roman Church, but exists wherever the afore-named seven outward characteristic marks of the Church are found, and especially the preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

His doctrine of the Church was incorporated in the Augsburg Confession, Articles vii and viii:

Article vii. Of the Church. Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. But the Church is the congregation of saints (the assembly of all believers), in which the Gospel is rightly taught (purely preached) and the Sacraments rightly administered (according to the Gospel).

And unto the true unity of the Church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men should be alike everywhere, as, St. Paul saith: 'There is one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.'

.

1. Works of Martin Luther, Vol. III, p. 98

Article viii. What the Church Is. Though the Church is properly the congregation of the saints and true believers, yet seeing that in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled with it, it is lawful to use the Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the voice of Christ (Matt. xxiii.2): 'the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat,' and the words following. And the Sacraments and the Word are effectual, by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, though they be delivered by evil men.

They condemn the Donatists and such like, who denied that it was lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and held that the ministry of evil men is useless and without effect.¹

2. Calvin's Doctrine of the Church

Calvin made the same distinction as Luther between the visible and invisible Church. The true Church, that is, the spiritual, invisible Church, is known only to God since it is made up of the elect and only God knows the elect.² This company of the elect, past, present, and future, forms the body of Christ.

The visible church is composed of the multitudes throughout the world who have professed to believe in Christ, have been baptized, partake of the Lord's supper, consent to the Word of God, and support the ministry. In this church there are many hypocrites who remain in it either due to a laxity of discipline or because they cannot be legitimately convicted. He writes:

.

1. Philip Schaff: The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, pp. 11-13
2. Cf. John Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, p. 222

Hence the visible Church rises conspicuous to our view. For wherever we find the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a Church of God . .¹

He gives four steps in order to have a clear understanding of the subject:

That the universal Church is the whole multitude, collected from all nations, who, though dispersed in countries widely distant from each other, nevertheless consent to the same truth of Divine doctrine and are united by the bond of the same religion; that in this universal Church are comprehended particular churches, distributed according to human necessity in various towns and villages; and that each of these respectively is justly distinguished by the name and authority of a church; and that individuals, who, on a profession of piety, are enrolled among Churches of the same description, though they are really strangers to any particular Church, do nevertheless in some respect belong to it,² till they are expelled from it by a public decision.

Calvin did not deny that the Roman Church was one of the expressions of this universal Church³ but assails the anti-Christian character of the papacy.⁴ He never considered himself a schismatic. He condemned schism, such as that of the Anabaptists, upon the criminality of separating from a church in which the Word was preached and the sacraments administered even though corruption and sin be prevalent among its members.⁵

.

1. Calvin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 230

2. Ibid., p. 231

3. Cf. George Park Fisher: History of Christian Doctrine, p. 304

4. Cf. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. VI, p. 532

5. Cf. Fisher, loc. cit.

Calvin stressed the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, making the visible church known through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments and the invisible Church known only to God.

3. The Anglican Doctrine of the Church

The English Reformation, in its beginning, was so decidedly political that there was little doctrinal controversy with the Roman Church. Lindsay notes that the separation from Rome was essentially in the matter of control, giving to the Kings of England a complete control over the church. He says:

Nor was there at first any change in definition of doctrines. The Church of England remained what it had been in every respect, with the exception that the Bishop of Rome was no longer recognized as the *Episcopus Universalis*, and that, if appeals were necessary from the highest ecclesiastical courts in England, they were not to be taken as formerly to Rome, but were to be settled in the King's courts within the land of England.¹

The English church retained the episcopate, put the English Bible into the hands of the people, gave to the people the Book of Common Prayer, and substituted the authority of the Crown for the authority of the pope.²

During the progress of the Reformation there was

.

1. Lindsay, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 332

2. Cf. George Kennedy Allen Bell: A Brief Sketch of the Church of England, p. 56

an increasing fellowship with the Protestant churches on the continent. The issue of the episcopacy was not of importance among the Reformers. The Protestant doctrine of the Church so influenced the English divines that the definition in the Thirty-nine Articles is essentially similar to the Protestant definition. It is as follows:

The visible Church of Christe, is a congregation of faythfull men in which the pure worde of God is preached, and the Sacramentes be duely ministred, according to Christes ordinaunce in all those thynges that of necessitie are requisite to the same.

As the Church of Hierusalem, Alexandria, and Antioche haue erred: so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their liuing and maner of ceremonies, but also in matters of fayth.¹

This later view of the Church, expressed in the Thirty-nine Articles, has existed side by side with the view held earlier in the English Reformation. That is, the Church of England retained within it persons who held the doctrine of the Roman Church and others accepting the doctrine of the Protestant churches. Those holding the doctrine of the Roman Church identified the continuity of the church with the episcopacy rather than the papacy. The Anglican Church retained the episcopate and the claim to apostolic succession. It supposedly occupied a position midway between Catholicism and Protestantism, a position which it feels renders it qualified to bring about the reunion of Christendom.

.

1. Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III, p. 499

4. The Separatist Doctrine of the Church

Through the centuries there had arisen small groups of believers who contended that the visible church should be pure, composed only of the regenerate. The Novatians, Montanists, Donatists, and Waldensians were in this tradition. During the Reformation this view was advanced and defended by the several Anabaptist groups, often at the cost of human life.

They insisted that an Evangelical Church must differ from the Roman Church in this among other things, that it should consist of members who had made a personal profession of faith in their Saviour, and who had vowed to live in obedience to Jesus Christ their Hauptmann.¹

They did not speak of the visible and invisible Church. Their desire was to make the visible church a pure and holy church. The invisible Church was of little importance. They resembled the Roman Church in that each stressed the visibility of the Church, though for the former the visibility was dependent upon the personal holiness of the believers and for the latter it was independent of this personal holiness which need not, in fact, be a characteristic of believers.

The church and state were to be separated. They could accept neither the universal Roman Church nor the state Protestant churches.

.

1. Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, Vol. II, pp. 445-6

This separatist idea of the Church was a reaction against the worldliness of the church and has lived in various groups all through the history of the Christian Church.

D. Conclusion

In this chapter the development of the doctrine of the nature of the Church has been considered down to the end of the sixteenth century. The conclusions may be summarized under three fundamental concepts of the Church which are existent at the close of that century.

First, the Roman Church continued to stress the universal, visible church of which Rome was the center and the Roman pontiff the head. Out of this Roman Church there was no salvation. This, then, defined the church as the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Roman Church.

Second, the state or Reformation churches, in England and on the continent, made the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, contending that the invisible Church is known only to God and the visible church is known to men by the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. They were united in making the marks of the church to consist in the preaching of the Word and the use of the sacraments. The differences between them were practical and national more than doctrinal.

Third, the separatist churches believed that the visible church should consist only of the regenerate. There was no place in the church for the unregenerate, the unholy. The church must be kept as pure and holy as is possible by human discipline. Separation from the state was necessary to separation from the world.

CHAPTER IV

TWENTIETH CENTURY DOCTRINES

OF THE

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

AND

THEIR RELATION TO THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM

A Prayer for Unity

O God, the Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace;
Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great
dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take
away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else
may hinder us from godly Union and Concord: that, as
there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope
of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,
one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth
be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one
holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity,
and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

CHAPTER IV
TWENTIETH CENTURY DOCTRINES
OF THE
NATURE OF THE CHURCH
AND
THEIR RELATION TO THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM

The twentieth century is outstandingly a century of ecumenics. Denominations are, in many instances, re-thinking their doctrine of the nature of the Church as it relates to church unity. Movements which had their origins in the nineteenth century have, in this century, developed into the Christian Council for Life and Work, the World Conference on Faith and Order, and the International Missionary Conference with their meetings at Constance (1914), Geneva (1920), Stockholm (1925), Lausanne (1927), Edinburgh and Oxford (1937), and Madras (1938).¹ Church unions have been achieved, such as the United Church in Canada, the Church of Christ in China, and the Methodist Church in the United States.

The above trends lead to a study of the doctrines of the nature of the Church as held by denominations today, as formulated and acted upon in the church unions

.

1. Cf. Charles S. Macfarland: Steps Toward the World Council, pp. 12-28

which already have been achieved, and as stated by the ecumenical conferences. In this is found the relation of this study concerning the doctrine of the nature of the Church to the reunion of Christendom.

A. Present-Day Denominational Doctrines of the Nature of the Church

The doctrines of the nature of the Church current today are, for the most part, developments from those of the Reformation. The catholic and protestant distinction has continued. The distinction between the visible church and the invisible Church continues. Modern denominations might be classified under the three types mentioned in the summary of Chapter Three of this thesis. However, it is of import to consider the differing views to discover the continuity with the past, to become familiar with the general lines of division in the present, and to determine their relation to church unity.

1. The Roman Catholic Church

The desire of the ecumenical movements of our century is that there might be the ultimate reunion of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches.¹ This

.

1. Cf. Macfarland, op. cit., pp. 72-4; Leonard Hodgson (ed.): The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, p. 196

desire has been expressed by the Roman Church,¹ though her bases for union are distinctly different from those cherished by the leaders in the ecumenical movement.

William Adams Brown summarizes the Roman Catholic view of the Church as follows:

According to Catholic theory, the channel through which the influence of Christ is mediated to the world is the organization rather than the personalities who compose it. The ethical and spiritual marks of the church, while insisted on, are subordinated to those which are external. The proof of the true church is not primarily the Christlike character of its members, but direct descent from the apostles, and the possession of an unchanging ecclesiastical tradition. Hence the first condition both of knowledge and of salvation is submission to ecclesiastical authority.²

This ecclesiastical authority is, of course, centered in the hierarchy of the church.

The Church of God received from Christ a special form and constitution. Besides a more ample revelation, the Church obtained from Christ, as its Author, the perfect organization of a supernatural society, viz., a hierarchy by which it was to be ruled and taught, and the sacraments by which it was to be sanctified. Henceforth men would adhere to Christ as their Head just in so far as they were united to and subject to the hierarchy instituted by Him. . . . As the form given to the Church by Christ is a necessary mode of the Church of Christ, it remains clear that after the time of Christ, the true Church could not continue to exist without the form given by Christ. Therefore, no one can belong to the true Church of God, who is outside the Church of Christ.³

.

1. Cf. Charles H. Brent (ed.): Can the Churches United? pp. 66-82
2. W. A. Brown: Christian Theology in Outline, pp. 65-6
3. Conde B. Pallen and John J. Wynne (edd.): The New Catholic Dictionary, p. 214

As regards the visibility of the Church, the same source continues:

The question of the visibility of the Church of Christ lies at the root of all the controversies between the Catholic Church and Protestantism. For if we retain the Catholic notion of the visible Church, it follows that the whole defection of the 16th century, and all the sects which have arisen from that time on, are nothing more nor less than revolts against the definitely visible Church of Christ. . . . Against these errors, the Catholic Church teaches that the Church, as instituted by Christ, is essentially visible. . . . The Catholic doctrine refers not only to the material visibility of the Church, but also to its formal visibility. That is to say, not only can men see those things which go to make up the Church (such as the persons involved, the rites used, the ministry ruling, etc.); but they can also see and know that these persons, rites, and this ministry are the very Church of Christ.¹

The Roman Catholic Church is then the only one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church² and is identified absolutely with the Church of God.³ Outside this Church there can be no salvation.

The Reverend Martin J. Scott, S. J., in a preparation book for the World Conference on Faith and Order, explains the aloofness of the Roman Church to the ecumenical conferences in this way:

For the simple reason that Christian unity must be according to Christ's plan of unity; and, since she is convinced that His plan of unity postulates the acceptance of all that He taught and as He taught it, she can take no step that implies compromise on His teaching or concession to any doctrine opposed to it.⁴

.

1. Pallen and Wynne, op. cit., pp. 1006-7
2. Cf. 'T Hooft and Oldham: The Church and Its Function in Society, p. 19
3. Cf. David S. Schaff: Our Fathers' Faith and Ours, p. 203
4. Brent, op. cit., p. 67

He continues:

Believing as she does that she has the whole truth of Christ, and nothing but the truth, the Catholic Church is not narrow nor bigoted nor at all inconsiderate or unfriendly in declining to make doctrinal concessions with a view to Christian unity.¹

One of the central doctrines of which this representative of the Catholic Church writes, and which the Roman Church refuses to submit to conference, is her doctrine of the nature of the Church with the hierarchy at its center, identified absolutely with the Church of God, the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church outside of which there can be no salvation.

2. The Eastern Orthodox Church

The Eastern Orthodox Church lays great stress on the episcopal office as held in apostolic succession.² It accepts tradition as an organ of divine revelation.

The Church is the mystical and sacramental unity of all believers, past, present and future, with one another and with the only Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.³

The continuity of the hierarchy, apostolicity as evidenced by the possession of apostolic tradition, catholicity in that the church belongs to all times—these are the marks of the Church.

.

1. Brent, op. cit., p. 79

2. Cf. Henry C. Sheldon: *System of Christian Doctrine*, p. 500

3. Cf. 'T Hooft, op. cit., p. 22

The attitude of the Orthodox Church toward other churches is characterized by a combination of two convictions. On the one hand, the Orthodox Church is the true church, the only holy catholic and apostolic church which is confessed in the creed. On the other hand, it recognizes other churches as real though imperfect parts of the body of Christ.¹

The Orthodox Church has cooperated fully in the ecumenical conferences though it has insisted on its position as the true church. They have stated that "no reunion could be achieved except on the basis of the common faith of the undivided church of the seven ecumenical councils."²

3. The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church today includes both catholic and protestant elements and generally considers itself to be the meeting ground upon which, ultimately, Christendom will unite. Though the Thirty-nine Articles express the Reformation doctrine of the Church, yet the Anglican Church views Catholic and Protestant Churches alike as deflections from the true Church. Its position is described by George Hodges as follows:

The Roman Catholic Church continues (like the Russian and other eastern churches) in the ancient Christian society, to whose order it has added the pope and various objectionable doctrines. The Protestant Churches are modern Christian societies, separated from the ancient order by their subtraction of the

.

1. 'T Hooft, op. cit., p. 24
2. Loc. cit.

bishop. The Episcopal Church is Catholic in organization, continuing in the ancient order; it is Protestant in spirit, believing in the independence of the individual, as well as in the value of the institution, and exalting the freedom of the truth over submission to authority.¹

Though the Anglican Church retains a creedal definition of the Church which is similar to that of the Reformed churches, she differs from them in her insistence upon the historic episcopate. The church is essentially visible and one of its most important marks is the episcopacy. Through this the church has continuity with the Church founded by Jesus and the apostles. In this respect the Anglican Church is more truly classified as one of the catholic churches (together with the Russian and eastern churches) rather than with the Protestant churches. The claim to exclusiveness as evidenced in a continuous organization is the common claim of all catholic churches.

This catholic affinity is indicated in the type of church unions in which the Anglican Church has successfully participated. From the splendid work of H. Paul Douglass² it is discovered that the Anglican Church has been unsuccessful in her endeavors toward church union in all instances in which the plan included non-episcopal churches. She has been successful in establishing inter-communion in two out of three attempts with catholic churches.³

.

1. George Hodges: The Episcopal Church, pp. 158-9
2. H. Paul Douglass: A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, 1927-1936
3. These successes of the Anglican Church have been in

She did not participate in any one of the four great unions of unrelated types of denominations which have been achieved.¹

The Anglican Church, in practice, follows the standard of the catholic element of the sixteenth century, stressing the visible organization and identifying the continuity of that organization with the historic episcopate, the safeguard of tradition.

4. The Lutheran Churches

The Lutheran concept of the Church today is practically identical with that of the Reformation period, having been formulated in the Augsburg Confession. The indisputable marks of the Church are the possession of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.

Lutheranism starting again from the Word of God makes it the creative power in the founding and continuation of the Church. The Church is not conceived of as an organization, or a visible community. It becomes visible wherever the Word is preached and the sacraments are celebrated. Through these audible and visible media the Church can be recognized. In its real essence it exists in the hearts of those who believe in Christ.²

.

establishing inter-communion between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Churches, and the Church of England and the Eastern Orthodox Church. For further details, see H. Paul Douglass: A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, pp. 122-3.

1. The Church of England is attempting to negotiate with the Church of Christ in China, the churches of Japan, the United Church of Canada, and the South India United Church.
2. Vergilius Ferm: What is Lutheranism? p. 180

There is no particular emphasis upon the organization and polity of the Church.

With Lutherans, as with Luther, the organization and polity of the Church are not matters of divine revelation. They are secondary matters and are to be determined in each case by practical considerations. . . .

Lutheranism, therefore, distinguishes between the Church and the Churches, between Christian unity and Church union, between denominations and sects, between the communion of the saints and the corporation of the saints. Lutherans do not believe that external Church union is required by the Word of God, or by the logic of history, or by the modern necessity of co-operation among Christians against a common enemy. . . . Accordingly, Lutherans do not try to devise a visible corporation of believers, but prefer to recognize Gospel Christians as their brethren in Christ, no matter under what roof they dwell or by what name they are known.¹

Lutherans are willing to recognize all church forms but stress the necessity of confessions of faith which must always be tested by the Word of God. They continue to emphasize, fundamentally, justification by faith alone. This may be taken as definitive of the possession of the Word. Therefore, whereas episcopacy forms an obstacle to union on the part of the Anglicans, the confessions are an obstacle for the Lutherans. They do recognize "that the true church is also present in other particular churches."² "Wherever, in any of the other churches, Christ is present, there the church is."³

.

1. Ferm: op. cit., pp. 97-8

2. 'T Hooft, The Church and its Function in Society, p. 32

3. Loc. cit.

Church unity movements in the United States among the Lutherans have been confined to those internal to Lutheranism. They have actively participated in the ecumenical conferences.

5. The Reformed Churches

The Reformed Churches, though many in number, are in substantial agreement as regards the nature of the Church. They follow closely the doctrine of Calvin, stressing the distinction between the visible church and the invisible Church. "The visible church consists of all those who profess the true religion together with their children."¹ In this visible church there are, of course, hypocrites and unregenerate. Special emphasis, as indicated by Hodge, is made of the proposition that the children of believers are members of the visible church.² However, the invisible Church is composed of the elect, past, present, and future. It is the true Church, transcending all denominational and temporal bounds and including all the elect of God.

Ecclesiastical tradition is the object of mistrust and not only is that rejected which seems to be in contradiction to Scripture but also that which is human

.

1. Charles Hodge; Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 545
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 545-58

addition to Scripture.¹ At this point, including, as it does, a rejection of the episcopacy, they stand in marked contrast to the Anglican Church.

The Reformed churches have achieved unity in several instances among their own several denominations. There have been three outstanding mergers of Presbyterian bodies. The Reformed Church in the United States achieved a union with the Hungarian Reformed Church in America in 1924 and with the Evangelical Synod of North America in 1934. About two-thirds of the Presbyterians in Canada united with the Methodists and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada in 1925. The remaining third became continuing Presbyterians.

6. The Congregational Churches

A large proportion of the membership of the Protestant groups is in churches which, to a large extent, adopt the Calvinist theology but are influenced by the Anabaptist view of the Church. Examples of these are the Congregational and Baptist Churches.

Congregationalists believe that any local association of Christians forms a church and that each such church is independent of other churches. It is the "gathered" concept of the church defined by Harris Franklin

.

1. Cf. 't Hooft, op. cit., p. 36

Rall as follows:

The Church is for them no mere association of well-intentioned people. . . . It is the fellowship of those that have heard the Word and are united with those who hold this faith and bear the Witness and follow this way. They are not averse to other associations in common effort for ends related to human welfare, but these are not the Christian church.¹

The Congregationalists, while interested in church unity, do not see it as essential to the unity of the body of Christ. The personal experience of the believer is the standard of membership in the church rather than the confession of a creed.

This attitude is based on the conviction that the church is essentially a community of believers rather than a community of belief, that is, of corporate faith.²

The church is not an institution but a community.

The merger of the Congregationalist and Christian churches is their most important achievement toward church unity. They are interested in unity from the practical standpoint and, particularly, on a non-creedal basis.

7. The Baptist Churches

The Baptists are congregational in polity but are more creedal than the Congregational churches. In

.

1. Harris Franklin Rall: "The Church: Given or Gathered?" Christendom, Spring, 1939, p. 172
2. 'T Hooft, op. cit., p. 42

them, again, are observed the Calvinist and Anabaptist influences. The Church is a divinely appointed institution, and, at the same time, a voluntary association.

They only can properly be members of the local church, who have previously become members of the church universal,—or, in other words, have become regenerate persons.¹

The creedal element is found in the strict interpretation of New Testament teaching. The importance of this as relates to church unity is seen in the proceedings relative to uniting with the United Church of Canada. Having concluded that they held distinctive emphases which union would compromise, the denomination in Ontario and Quebec split into a number of groups resulting from controversies in attempting to define the distinctive emphases.² The only serious attempt of the Baptists in the United States to unite with an unrelated denomination was unsuccessful.³ The one successful union was that of the Northern Baptist Convention and the Free Baptist Church, achieved in 1911, and now known as the Northern Baptist Convention. A barrier to unity with other denominations is the demand of the Baptists that baptism be by immersion.

.

1. Augustus Hopkins Strong: Systematic Theology, p. 897
2. Cf. Claris Edwin Silcox: Church Union in Canada, pp. 131-2
3. Cf. H. Paul Douglass: Church Unity Movements in the United States, p. 54

8. The Methodist Churches

The Methodist churches, though descendants of the Anglican Church, cannot be classed as either Anglican, Reformed, or Congregational in their doctrine of the Church. This is defined in the Articles of Religion as follows:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.¹

Methodism is Reformed in its emphasis upon the visible and invisible but congregational in its stress upon personal experience as a prerequisite for church membership. It is Anglican in its retention of three orders of the ministry, reformed in its belief in the universal priesthood of all believers, and congregational in its rejection of any priestly virtue inherent in the office of the ministry. Its primary emphasis is upon personal experience as the one condition of church membership. This is clearly set forth in the Historical Statement of the Methodist Episcopal Church.²

Though Methodism has been divided into many communions, much progress has been made toward internal reunion. This is illustrated by the union of the Methodists

.

1. Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1932, p. 14. (See note 1, page 76.)

2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 10

in Australia in 1907, in England in 1933, and in the United States in 1939.

9. The Separatist Churches

Each period in the history of the church has had small groups, often known as the sect type, who have stressed holiness of life in separation from the world. This has involved separation from the larger churches, which are usually considered, by these sects, to be churches of the world rather than of God. These bodies make a personal religious experience basic to membership in the church, as do the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists, but insist that this personal religious experience must be followed by a type of life radically different from that of the world. To this group belong the numerous Mennonite, Dunkard, and Holiness churches, the latter alone having a membership of approximately one and a half million persons.² Though they are seldom included

.

1. "The Methodist Episcopal Church has always believed that the only infallible proof of the legitimacy of any branch of the Christian Church is its ability to seek and to save the lost, and to disseminate the Pentecostal spirit and life. The chief stress has ever been laid, not upon the forms but upon the essentials of religion. It holds that true Churches of Christ may differ widely in ceremonies, ministerial orders, and government. Its members are allowed freedom of choice among the debated modes of Baptism. If any member has scruples against receiving the Lord's Supper kneeling, he may receive it standing or sitting."
2. Based on the statistics of the Yearbook of American Churches (1937 edition), H. C. Weber, editor.

in the ecumenical movements, they are Christian churches and are of importance in the reunion of Christendom. If corporate union of all Christendom is essential to the fulfilling of our Lord's prayer "that they all may be one," any church, whether its membership be five thousand or five million, will, in remaining out of this corporate union, continue to divide the body of Christ. The minority church cannot be relegated to a place of unimportance merely by calling it a sect type.

For these groups the church is the communion of redeemed persons who are living a life separated from the world. This separated life may be expressed in manner of dress, abstinence from certain amusements, or in other ways. The central element is the personal experience with Christ. It is granted that true Christians are found in all the churches of Christendom, but it is believed that the majority churches do not exhibit the holiness of life becoming to the Church of Christ. For them the holiness of the church is not dependent solely upon the holiness of the Head but also upon the holiness of the membership.

The attitude of these groups toward the ecumenical movement is indicated by the pronouncement of one of the larger groups.

To the ecumenical movement, Free Methodism opposes a clear-cut denominationalism. Free Methodism is not sectarian since it freely accords fellowship to every sincere Christian group, but it is denominational in its insistence that its distinctive contribution

to the Christian testimony can be made only by means of its denominational implements, and that its effectiveness would be blunted by surrender of its denominational standards to the leveling processes of the ecumenical movement.¹

The differences of interpretation of what constitutes the holy life have led to many divisions within this group. They are only only in their protest against the worldliness of the majority church and in their desire to make the church visible conform to as great a degree as possible to the Church invisible.

10. Summary

This brief statement of the doctrines of the nature of the Church which are current in Christendom reveals four main divisions, the catholic, the reformed, the congregational, and the separatist.

The catholic type includes the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, Old Catholic Churches, and the Anglican Church. This type is characterized by the belief, held by each church in the group, that it is the true historic church of Christ and that the continuity of this church is in organization rather than faith. It is preserved by the continuity of the apostolic succession, the retention of the historic episcopate. Though

.

1. "Our Church in This Age" (The 1939 Pastoral Address of the Bishops of the Free Methodist Church), p. 12

the Anglican Church retains a Reformed statement of the nature of the Church in the Thirty-nine Articles, in practice she is catholic, seeking the reunion of Christendom by bringing all other societies into the historic church by way of the Anglican Church.

Despite many differences among the catholic churches, they all agree in conceiving the living church as the locus of the saving relation between God and man.¹

The reformed type includes those churches which retain in theory and, to a great degree, in practice, the Reformation doctrine of the nature of the Church. This group includes the Reformed churches, Presbyterian churches, and Lutheran churches. Though the Reformed and Presbyterian churches are one with the Lutheran churches in the theoretical definition of the Church, they are, to some degree, divided as regards the definitions within that major definition, particularly as regards the sacrament of the Lord's supper. They are all of one type in their emphasis upon the visible church and the invisible Church, and in defining the marks of the visible church to consist in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. The visible church is composed of all those who have made a profession of Christ and have received the sacraments, though among these there are always some who

.

1. Charles Clayton Morrison: "The Church, Catholic and Protestant"; Christendom, Spring, 1937, pp. 274-5

are unregenerate, not numbered with the elect. The visible church is made to include believers and their families. The invisible Church is composed of the elect of all ages. They reject ecclesiastical tradition and the episcopate, holding to the universal priesthood of all believers. They believe that the church is both given and gathered but that it is not given in an ecclesiastical and hierarchical sense but as an object of faith.

The Congregational type includes the Congregational churches, the Baptist churches, and, as regards the nature of the Church, the Methodist churches. They combine the reformed definition of the nature of the Church with the separatist emphasis upon personal religious experience as the requirement for church membership. For them the church is more gathered than given, it is the communion of those who have had an experience with Christ. It is composed not of believers and their children but of believers only. 'T Hooft, having written concerning the three churches as a group, says:

It is typical of the denominations described in this section that in their attitude toward other churches they demand first of all genuine Christian experience, and second the largest possible liberty of interpretation of the meaning of creeds, sacraments and ministry, rather than uniformity of order or the adoption of the same confessions. This attitude is based on the conviction that the church is essentially a community of believers rather than a community of belief, that is, of corporate faith. In the language of Troeltsch, they are not so much churches as "sects," a point which does not mean that they are more 'sectarian' than other Christian groups,

but that the voluntary element in their structure is stronger than the institutional one.¹

The separatist type, while maintaining the congregational emphasis upon personal experience, require that this experience be followed by holiness of life. differences as to what constitutes this separated life are responsible for many of the divisions in this type. One example of this multiplicity of divisions may be seen in the Mennonites in the United States. There are fourteen Mennonite denominations having a total membership of 110,000 persons, nine of these divisions having less than four thousand members each.² Of the 62,678,177 church members in the United States in 1937, 1,465,179 are members of 159 denominations, each one having less than 50,000 members. In contrast, 61,212,998 persons are members of 49 denominations.³ The majority of the smaller groups are separatist churches.

In Christendom today is seen a division of the visible church into four major types, the catholic, reformed, congregational, and separatist.

.

1. 'T Hooft, The Church and Its Function in Society, p. 42
2. Cf. Weber, Yearbook of the American Churches, 1937 edition, p. 10
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 6-12

B. Church Unions Achieved in the Twentieth Century
as They Relate to

The Doctrine of the Nature of the Church

1. Types of Divisions and Union

There have been at least twenty-nine important church unions already in the twentieth century. These achievements are of significance to the further reunion of Christendom.

a. Types of Divisions

In the foregoing section four major groupings were discovered as relates to the nature of the Church, the catholic, reformed, congregational, and separatist. Within each of these types there is a wide latitude of opinion such as the differences between the Anglican and Roman Churches regarding the pope, the Presbyterians and the Lutherans concerning the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the Congregationalists and Baptists in relation to baptism, and both of these and the Methodists as to church government, and, finally, the multitude of differences among the separatist churches. However, basically, the four types are distinguishable.

Other distinctions have been made such as the Catholic versus Protestant, Church versus sect, objective versus subjective, corporate versus individualistic, natural versus voluntary, given versus gathered.¹ The

application of each of these to the previous section is readily seen. Each expresses the extremes of catholic versus separatist. The four-fold classification suggested sees the Protestant group divided into three lesser groups, the reformed, congregational, and separatist. In some way, if complete organic unity is to be achieved, all these differences must be made a part of one comprehensive doctrine of the nature of the Church. It is the purpose of this section to determine the contribution of the church unions which have been already achieved to this problem.

b. Types of Union

Three types of union are generally recognized today: "(1) the Unity of Co-operative Action, (2) the Unity of Mutual Recognition, and (3) Corporate Union."² The unity of co-operative action is a unity in work and service in which doctrinal differences are not considered. Unity of mutual recognition takes into account the differences and likenesses and then, having recognized one another as substantially identical, intercommunion is established. Corporate union means that two or more denominations unite into one ecclesiastical body. The unions of the second and third type are considered in this thesis.

.

1. Cf. Rall, "The Church: Given or Gathered?" Christendom, Spring, 1939, p. 165
2. Douglass, A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, p. xv.

The unions will be considered under three classifications: (1) those involving related denominations, (2) those including unrelated denominations within one of the four types designated in the previous section, and (3) those involving churches of unrelated types.¹

2. Church Unions of Related Denominations

The negotiations for union between related denominations² comprise forty-six per cent of the total proposals. However, unions between related denominations comprise seventy-two per cent of the total successes. Only eleven per cent of the total number of rejected proposals were between related denominations. Eighty-one percent of such unions attempted were successfully achieved.

In these mergers there was no problem as to the nature of the Church. Not only was the definition of the Church agreed upon, but the definitions within that definition were held in common. The nature of the ministry which serves the Church and the sacraments which are the marks of the Church was agreed upon before the proceed-

.

1. Data for this section and for the TABLES are taken largely from—H. Paul Douglass: Church Unity Movements in the United States, and A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity; Gaius Jackson Slosser: Christian Unity; and the Yearbook of the American Churches (H. C. Weber, ed.).
2. See TABLES I, II, III

TABLE I: UNIONS ACHIEVED BETWEEN RELATED DENOMINATIONS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>	<u>Present Name</u>
1900	Scotland	Free Church, Scotland United Presbyterian Church	United Free Church
1906	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Cumberland Presbyterian	Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
1906	Canada	Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec	The Congregational Union of Canada
1907	Canada	Ontario Conference of the United Brethren in Christ The Congregational Union of Canada	The Congregational Union of Canada
1907	Austra-	Primitive Methodist Church Wesleyan Methodist Church Methodist Free Church	The Methodist Church of Australia
1911	U. S.	Northern Baptist Convention Free Baptist Churches	Northern Baptist Convention
1917	U. S.	Hague's Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod Synod of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America	Norwegian Lutheran of America
1918	U. S.	General Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church, U.S.A. General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South	United Lutheran Church
1920	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Welsh Calvinistic Methodist	Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
1922	U. S.	Evangelical Association United Evangelical	Evangelical Church

<u>Year</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>	<u>Present Name</u>
1924	U. S.	Reformed Church in the U. S. Hungarian Reformed in Amer.	Reformed Ch. in the U. S.
1924	U. S.	Congregational Evangelical Protestant	Congregational
1926	Korea	Korean M. E. Church Korean M. E. Church, South	Korean Meth- odist Church
1927	U. S.	Independent Baptist Scandinavian Free Bapt. Soc.	Independent Baptist Ch.
1929	Scotland	Church of Scotland United Free Church of Scotland	The Church of Scotland
1930	U. S.	American Lutheran Church Augustana Synod Norwegian Lutheran Church Lutheran Free Church United Danish Ev. Luth. Ch.	American Lutheran Conference
1930	U. S.	Lutheran Synod of Buffalo Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and other states Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and other states	American Lutheran Church
1930	Mexico	M. E. Church (Mexico) M. E. Church, South (Mexico)	The Methodist Church of Mexico
1932	England	Wesleyan Methodist Church Primitive Methodist Church United Methodist Church	Methodist Church of England
1932	U. S.	Orthodox Friends Hicksite Friends	Religious Soci- ety of the Friends
1939	U. S.	Methodist Episcopal Church Methodist Episcopal Church, South Methodist Protestant Church	The Methodist Church

TABLE II: UNIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION BETWEEN RELATED DENOMINATIONS

<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>
1907	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. United Presbyterian Church of N. A.
1927	U. S.	African Methodist Episcopal Church African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
1932	France	Reformed Church Reformed Evangelical Church
1935	China	English Methodist Churches in China

TABLE III: UNIONS REJECTED BETWEEN RELATED DENOMINATIONS

<u>Negotia-</u> <u>tions</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>
1904- 1905	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Presbyterian Church, U. S.

ings began. The historic episcopate was not involved in any of these mergers.

3. Church Unions of Unrelated Denominations within Types

Proposals for church unions involving unrelated denominations within certain types¹ comprised twenty-eight per cent of the total proposals, fourteen per cent of the total successes, and sixty-six per cent of the total failures. Of the four successful church unions in this classification, the congregational type contributed three and the reformed type one, while of the rejected unions the congregational had two and the reformed had four.

In these, again, there were not outstanding differences as to the nature of the Church.

4. Church Unions between Denominations of Unrelated Types

Proposed church unions between unrelated types comprised twenty-six per cent of the total proposals, fourteen per cent of the total successes, and twenty-two per cent of the total failures. Of the fifteen unions proposed between denominations of unrelated types, twenty-seven per cent were achieved, thirty-three per cent failed, and forty per cent are still under consideration.

Church unions in this classification are of

.

1. See TABLES IV, V, VI

TABLE IV: UNIONS ACHIEVED BETWEEN UNRELATED DENOMINATIONS WITHIN TYPES

<u>Year</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>	<u>Present Name</u>
1924	U. S.	Congregational Evangelical Protestant	Congregational
1931	U. S.	Congregational Christian (General Convention)	Congregational and Christian
1931	Puerto Rico	Congregational (P.R.) Christian (P.R.) United Brethren (P.R.)	Iglesia Evangelica de Puerto Rico
1934	U. S.	Evangelical Synod of North America Reformed Church in the United States	Evangelical and Reformed

TABLE V: UNIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION BETWEEN UNRELATED DENOMINATIONS WITHIN TYPES

<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>
1928	Bulgaria	Methodist Episcopal Church Congregational Church
1930	Europe	Anglican Church Church of Finland
1930	Europe	Anglican Church Eastern Orthodox Church
1931	India	Methodist Episcopal Church United Church of North India
1933	Austra- lia	Methodist Church Congregational Church
1935	U. S.	Evangelical Church Church of the United Brethren in Christ

TABLE VI: UNIONS REJECTED BETWEEN UNRELATED DENOMINATIONS WITHIN TYPES

<u>Negotiations</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>
1903- 1931	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Presbyterian Church, U. S. United Presbyterian Church Reformed Church in America
1904- 1934	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U. S. Associate Presbyterian Reformed Synod
1925- 1933	U. S.	Universalist Unitarian
1928- 1929	U. S.	Northern Baptist Convention Disciples of Christ
1928- 1931	U. S.	Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Reformed Church in America
1933--	Germany	Lutheran Church Reformed Church (Proposed by Hitler--rejected by churches.)

TABLE VII: UNIONS REJECTED BETWEEN DENOMINATIONS OF UNRELATED TYPES

<u>Negotiations</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>
1928- 1930	U. S.	Evangelical Synod of North America Church of the United Brethren in Christ Reformed Church in the United States
1932- 1934	Great Britain	Church of England Church of Scotland

chief interest in the study of the doctrine of the nature of the Church. The failures as well as the successes indicate vital principles which must be recognized in the study of the reunion of Christendom.

a. Unions Rejected

Two unions have been definitely rejected.¹ The one between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland failed due to disagreement over the question of the historic episcopate as determining the continuity of the Church.

The proposed union between the Evangelical Synod of North America, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and the Reformed Church in the United States was rejected by the vote of the Reformed Church because of the Arminian doctrine of the United Brethren in Christ. Following this rejection, negotiations were immediately begun between the Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church, denominations within a type, and resulted in a successful union.

b. Unions Still under Consideration

Of the unions which are theoretically still under consideration,² a number are progressing very slow-

.

1. See TABLE VII, p. 90

2. See TABLE VIII, p. 92

TABLE VIII: UNIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION BETWEEN DENOMINA-
TIONS OF UNRELATED TYPES

<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>
1907	South Africa	Congregational Church Methodist Church Presbyterian Church
1919	India	Anglican Church Wesleyan Methodist Church South Indian United Church
1927	Iran	Anglican Church Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.
1928	U. S.	Methodist Episcopal Church Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.
1929	U. S.	Protestant Episcopal Church Methodist Episcopal Church Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.
1930	England	Church of England English Free Church
1930	England	Church of England Moravian Church
1934	Nigeria	Anglican Church Methodist Church Presbyterian Church
1936	U. S.	Protestant Episcopal Church Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.

ly and show little hope of successful consummation, among which are those of the Church of England and the English Free Church; the Church of England and the Moravian Church in England; the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches in Nigeria; the Anglican, Wesleyan Methodist, and South India United Churches in India; and the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches in Iran. In each of these the issue upon which they seem destined to fail is the Anglican contention for the historic episcopate as essential to the Church, that the continuity of the Church is in the historic episcopate. In this is seen the controversy between the catholic concept that the continuity is material and visible and the protestant contention that the continuity is spiritual.

Negotiations concerning proposed unions between the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and the Protestant Episcopal Church, and that between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., have been neglected in recent years due to the concentration of the Methodist body on the union of the Methodist churches. Though the proposals have never been formally rejected, it is not certain what the attitude of the new Methodist Church will be toward continuing the negotiations.

c. Unions Achieved

Of the four unions achieved in this classification,¹ three are among the younger churches and one among the older. This latter, the United Church in Canada, is the only one in which a large minority refused to join.

(1) The United Church of Canada. The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 by the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches of Canada. All Presbyterians had united into the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1875, all Methodists into The Methodist Church in 1884, and all Congregationalists into the Congregational Union of Canada in 1906. In this way preparation had been made for the United Church of Canada.

The three churches comprised 29.58 per cent of the total church population in 1921. The United Church of Canada contained only 19.44 per cent of the total church population in 1931, a loss of 10.14 per cent of the total church population. This loss is largely explained by the refusal of approximately one-third of the Presbyterians to join the United Church. This group of continuing Presbyterians made a larger proportional gain of members than did the United Church with the result that, while the Presbyterians comprised 16.04 per cent of the total church

.

1. See TABLE IX, p. 95

TABLE IX: UNIONS ACHIEVED BETWEEN DENOMINATIONS OF UNRELATED TYPES

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Denominations</u>	<u>Present Name</u>
1925	Canada	The Methodist Church The Congregational Union of Canada The Presbyterian Church in Canada	The United Church of Canada
1927	China	Baptists - Congregationalists - Methodists - Presbyterians - United Brethren - United Church of Canada	The Church of Christ in China
1929	Philippines	Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Congregational Church United Brethren Church	United Evangelical Church of the Philippine Is.
1934	Siam	Siamese Presbyterian Church Chinese Presbyterian Church (Siam) Chinese Baptist Church (Siam)	Church of Christ in Siam

TABLE X: SUMMARY OF TABLES I-IX

	<u>Related Denomi- nations</u>	<u>Unrelated Denomi- nations within Types</u>	<u>Unrelated Types</u>	
Unions achieved	21	4	4	29
Unions under consideration	4	6	9	19
Unions rejected	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>
Total proposed	26	16	15	57

population in 1921, they still had 8.39 per cent of the total church population in 1931, ranking fourth in size among all churches in Canada including the catholic churches.

The Presbyterian Church is a member of the reformed type, the two others members of the congregational type. This union was, then, only partially successful in uniting two types. Before the union there were three churches representing two types. After the union there were two churches still representing two types. A union of the two types had been achieved only to a limited extent.

Silcox, in listing the various factors which kept this large minority from uniting, stresses, as a leading one, the differences between Methodism and Presbyterianism. One of these was the oft-repeated expression among Presbyterians: "Our Church is not a sect."

Here we have essentially the influence in Canadian Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland, which emerged as a church of the nation and not simply of a certain group within the nation.²

In this is found the conflict of the inclusiveness along national lines of the reformed churches in contrast to the congregational emphasis upon the voluntary association of

.

1. These statistics are taken from Silcox, Church Union in Canada.

2. Ibid., p. 205

believers.

Douglass expresses judgment concerning the doctrinal basis of the Union in much the same words as others when he says:

The doctrinal statement of the United Church of Canada represents rather a colourless compromise than any adventurous attempt at fresh thinking. Many leaders who most heartily approve of the union privately regard the statement of faith as embodying a rather low grade theology. Certainly it is no inspiring or creative restatement of the common faith and scarcely functions as an actual bond of union. It makes no strong emotional appeal and does not serve as a rallying cry.¹

The legal battles before the House of Commons and the courts,² the separation of families,³ the parting of friends, often with bitter words, the financial coercion brought by central control boards upon mission stations to vote for the union⁴—all these reveal the lack of the application of practical Christian idealism.

The United Church of Canada represents but a partially successful attempt at a union of two types of churches, was united on a weak theology, and became the cause of much division and strife even in the midst of its profession of the spirit of unity.

.

1. Douglass: A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, p. 113
2. Cf. Silcox, op. cit., pp. 243-71
3. Cf. ibid., p. 275
4. Cf. ibid., p. 211

(2) The Church of Christ in China. The Church of Christ in China, as also the smaller unions in the Philippines and Siam, represents a greater success, both in practice and spirit, than that of Canada.

Beginning with a union of mission Churches representing Presbyterian and Congregational boards in England and the United States, the Church of Christ has added additional bodies to its membership so that it now represents Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed, United Brethren, United Church of Canada and independent Chinese Churches of six English-speaking nations representing the formerly divided Chinese Churches resulting from the work of thirteen separate missionary groups.¹

This church now includes one third of the total church population in China. A strong body of liberal Congregationalists and a similar group of conservative Presbyterians refused to go into the union because of its doctrinal position. There is little possibility that the Methodists will unite with the larger church in the near future because they are now preoccupied with a proposed union of their own ranks. The Anglicans, though professing to desire union with the Church of Christ, are attempting to shift the negotiations to a consideration of sacraments and orders. It is improbable that the Church of Christ will yield to the high ecclesiasticism of the Anglican Church. The Church of Christ achieved its union lines extremely more simple and Biblical than the Anglican Church would readily accept.

.

1. Douglass: op. cit., pp. 117-8

The doctrinal bond of union consists in declaring faith in Jesus Christ as Redeemer; in accepting the Holy Scriptures as the divinely inspired Word of God, and as supreme authority in matters of duty and faith; and in the "acknowledgement of the Apostles' Creed as expressing the fundamental doctrines of our common evangelical faith."¹

The bases of union are expressed in "Let Us Unite" in a way that is the more meaningful because it is the expression of those who have achieved unity rather than wistfully desired it.

There is a great diversity within the Roman Church. It finds its unity in the primacy of the Pope and the authority of the tradition of the Church and of the Church Councils. Granted loyalty to these central principles, there is the widest scope to give expression to the individual's faith and Christian life.

. . . .

We do not believe that denominationalism is an essential, normal or wholesome expression of the Church. We dare not believe it is according to the will of God, or the purpose of Christ. We do not believe that as soon as some fresh truth or some new emphasis on old truth is revealed to a group, be it small or large, it must separate itself from the rest to form a sect or denomination of its own. . . .

The Church of Christ in China builds its unity on the Person of Christ, our divine Lord and Saviour, on the acceptance of the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, on the acceptance of the Apostles' Creed as adequately testifying to those essential beliefs and experiences held in common by us with the Church Ecumenical. Unity built on such a foundation, affords adequate freedom to express in various ways our Christian faith and life on those matters where it is not only permissible

.

1. Let Us Unite (anon.), p. 21

to differ, but concerning which our very diversity serves to enrich the life and experience of the whole body.¹

This hope of unity is expressed again in a manner which reveals the soul of the Chinese people.

A wise Christian leader of the West has remarked that Christian unity will not come by the way of balanced reasonings, a claim here and a concession there. But it will take place in obedience to some mighty and unanimous impulse in the hearts of those who find God. This unity perhaps will be achieved in consequence of some threatening from the side of the world which can be escaped only by some affirmation of faith and hope and love such as makes us one. Perhaps the Church is destined some day to find herself one, but it may be in the depth of a dark night that the Church will make that blessed discovery.

Some of us wonder if in China that dark night, the black darkness just before the dawning of Christ's hoped for, prayed for day, is not now.²

The Chinese churches were privileged in not having formed within them century-old prejudices and conceptions of the doctrine of the Nature of the Church. They readily accepted as valid the ordination of the clergy of any church coming into the union, recognized that the question of type of organization should be determined by the situation rather than by an attempt to discover a Biblical formula, realized and declared that the Church is a living structure of living persons who, like Peter, have declared Jesus to be their Lord and Redeemer, their Christ, and are living in joyous fellowship with Him.

.

1. Op. cit., p. 24

2. Ibid., p. 49

5. Summary

This brief survey¹ of the field of actual church unity movements indicates that:

1. The earliest and most successful efforts are those between related denominations. In this the Methodists have taken the lead and the congregational type has contributed fifty-seven per cent of the successes. In such unions organization rather than doctrine is the primary concern.

2. The union of denominations within one of the four types has not been so successful. Of the unions in this classification, seventy-five per cent of the successful ones were in the congregational type and sixty-six per cent of the failures were in the reformed type. This, together with the observation concerning the union of related denominations, indicates that the congregational type has contributed the majority of the successes.

3. Seventy-five per cent of the unions between unrelated types were among the younger churches. The large number of such unions under consideration is largely attributed to the Lambeth Appeal of the Anglican Church. The greatest obstacle to unions in this classification is the Anglican adherence to the historic episcopate, an expression of the catholic concept of the Church.

.

1. See TABLE X, p. 95

C. The Contribution of the Ecumenical Conferences
to a Definition of
the Doctrine of the Nature of the Church

The twentieth century has seen the rise of a new ecumenical movement which has already contributed much to the definition of the doctrine of the nature of the Church. These conferences have served to show the points of agreement between the different communions and, at the same time, have clarified the problems which yet remain. The two outstanding ecumenical groups are the World Conference on Faith and Order and the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work.

1. The Universal Council for Life and Work

The Universal Council for Life and Work had its beginnings in a conference at Constance, August 1, 1914, the very day war was declared. That conference was hurriedly concluded and plans were projected for another conference after the conclusion of the war. In 1920 there was a preparatory meeting in Geneva, and the next great conference was scheduled for Stockholm in 1925.

That the purpose of this Conference was not to discuss the nature of the Church was implied in the report of the Commission on Co-operative Movements as follows:

It is to be clearly understood at the outset that any agency that may be appointed shall not deal with questions of creed or ecclesiastical organization, but that it shall strictly limit itself to the class of subjects under consideration at the Conference, namely, the Life and Work of the Church of Christ, and in particular the assertion and application of Christian principles to those problems, international, economic, social, civic, with which the future of civilization is so vitally concerned.¹

The question of the nature of the Church was not of primary concern at Stockholm, yet it became clear that the theological differences needed to be faced. This is expressed by 't Hooft thus:

The need for a theological clarification became even more clear as the Stockholm movement found itself confronted with secular philosophies whose significance consisted precisely in the fact that they advocated, not merely a different morality, but a wholly different outlook upon life which challenged Christianity at its very foundation. At the same time, it was increasingly felt that a body representing the churches would never be able to speak with any spiritual authority if it were to continue to eliminate from its discussions the basic question of the nature and the function of the church. And so it has become inevitable that, as Dr. Oldham puts it, one of the questions of fundamental importance which are at the heart of the discussions on church, community and state, should be: What is the nature and mission of the church? ²

This was the problem which confronted the Oxford Conference in 1937. It concluded that though the churches are agreed on the fact of the Church, they are in disagreement over the nature of the Church.³ For the most part, the task of defining the nature of the Church was left to the churchmen meeting at Edinburgh.

.

1. Macfarland, Steps Toward the World Council, p. 91

2. 't Hooft, The Church and Its Function in Society, p.79

3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 83

2. The World Conference on Faith and Order

The two World Conferences on Faith and Order, Lausanne (1927) and Edinburgh (1937), have proved of significance in the ecumenical statement of the doctrine of the nature of the Church. Both conferences presented a definition and a statement of the problems involved.

a. The First Conference—Lausanne, 1927

On August 19, 1927 the following definition of the nature of the Church was received by the Conference on Faith and Order meeting at Lausanne:

God who has given us the Gospel for the salvation of the world has appointed His Church to witness by life and word to its redeeming power. The Church of the Living God is constituted by His own will, not by the will or consent or beliefs of men whether as individuals or as societies, though He uses the will of men as His instrument. Of this Church Jesus Christ is the Head, the Holy Spirit its continuing life.

The Church as the communion of believers in Christ Jesus is, according to the New Testament, the people of the New Covenant; the Body of Christ; and the Temple of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

The Church is God's chosen instrument by which Christ, through the Holy Spirit, reconciles men to God through faith, bringing their wills into subjection to His sovereignty, sanctifying them through the means of grace, and uniting them in love and service to be His witnesses and fellow-workers in the extension of His rule on earth until His Kingdom come in glory.

As there is but one Christ, and one life in Him, and one Holy Spirit who guides into all truth, so there is and can be but one Church, holy, catholic, and apostolic.¹

Cyril Charles Richardson says of this definition:

While this measure of agreement with its emphasis upon the Church as a divine creation was significant, it gave no possible criterion for the testing of opposing claims. It was the lowest common denominator of belief about the Church, and not the norm.²

The marks of the church as it exists on earth were given as the following:

1. The possession and acknowledgement of the Word of God as given in Holy Scripture and interpreted by the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the individual.
2. The profession of faith in God as He is incarnate and revealed in Christ.
3. The acceptance of Christ's commission to preach the Gospel to every creature.
4. The observance of the Sacraments.
5. A ministry for the pastoral office, the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments.
6. A fellowship in prayer, in worship, in all the means of grace, in the pursuit of holiness, and in the service of man. ³

Certain problems arose concerning the definition of some of these marks of the Church. As to the first, some held that the interpretation was given through the tradition of the Church, and others that it is given through the medium of the Holy Spirit to each believer.

.

1. H. N. Bate (ed.): Faith and Order, pp. 463-4
2. Cyril Charles Richardson: The Church through the Centuries, p. 237
3. Bate, op. cit., p. 464

There were differences concerning the significance of denominations, some believing that every division has been due to sin and others holding that the divisions were in the providence of God due to varying gifts of the Spirit.

The chief difference was concerning the nature of the church visible and the Church invisible and their relation to each other. The elements in this controversy are listed in the Conference as follows:

1. Some hold that the invisible Church is wholly in heaven; others include in it all true believers on earth, whether contained in any organisation or not.
2. Some hold that the visible expression of the Church was determined by Christ Himself and is therefore unchangeable; others that the one Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may express itself in varying forms.
3. Some hold that one or other of the existing Churches is the only true Church; others that the Church as we have described it is to be found in some or all of the existing Communion taken together.
4. Some, while recognising other Christian bodies as Churches, are persuaded that in the providence of God and by the teaching of history a particular form of ministry has been shown to be necessary to the best welfare of the Church; others hold that no one form of organisation is inherently preferable; still others, that no organisation is necessary.¹

In this report the conflict between the catholic and protestant views of the Church is clearly set forth; the former, represented at Lausanne by the Eastern Orthodox and Anglican Churches, holding that the visible ex-

.

1. Bate, op. cit., p. 465

pression of the Church was determined by Christ and that only that church which retains the historic episcopate is the true Church.

b. The Second Conference—Edinburgh, 1937

The second World Conference on Faith and Order defined the Church in this manner:

We are at one in confessing belief in the Holy Catholic Church. We acknowledge that through Jesus Christ, particularly through the fact of His resurrection, of the gathering of His disciples round their crucified, risen, and victorious Lord, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, God's almighty will constituted the Church on earth.

The Church is the people of the new covenant, fulfilling and transcending all that Israel under the old covenant foreshadowed. It is the household of God, the family in which the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is to be realised in the children of His adoption. It is the body of Christ, whose members derive their life and oneness from their one living Head; and thus it is nothing apart from Him, but is in all things dependent upon the power of salvation which God has committed to His Son.¹

The problems which the Conference recognized as barriers to Church unity not met by the above definition and as needing further study are as great as the definition is unimpressive.

1. A point to be studied is in what degree the Christian depends ultimately for his assurance that he is in vital touch with Christ upon the possession of the ministry and the sacraments, upon the Word of God in the Church, upon the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, or upon all these.²

.

1. Hodgson: The Second World Conference, pp. 347-8
2. Ibid., p. 316

2. The relation of the Kingdom of God to the Church and the extent to which the Kingdom is known in the present was of concern.

3. Different churches were found to hold differing standards of church membership, some holding that all who have been baptized are to be regarded as members and others that only those who have made a profession of Christ and are exhibiting the spirit of Christ are members.

4. The apostolicity of the church was recognized as a subject needing further study.

5. The position of the Society of the Friends as regards the sacraments was clearly seen as an almost insurmountable barrier to Church unity.

6. Apostolic succession, the historic episcopate, in fact, the entire doctrine of the nature of the ministry was admitted to be a very great problem in the way of Church unity.

In the summary of the obstacles to church unity, given in the report of Section IV of the Conference, is the following:

We find that the obstacles most difficult to overcome consist of elements of 'faith' and 'order' combined, as when some form of Church government or worship is considered a part of the faith.

But we are led to the conclusion that behind all particular statements of the problem of corporate union lie deeply divergent conceptions of the Church. For the want of any more accurate terms this divergence might be described as the contrast between 'authoritarian' and 'personal' types of Church.

We have, on the one hand, an insistence upon a divine givenness in the Scriptures, in orders, in the creeds, in worship.

We have, on the other hand, an equally strong insistence upon the individual experience of divine grace, as the ruling principle of the 'gathered' Church, in which freedom is both enjoyed as a religious right and enjoined as a religious duty.

We are aware that between these extremes many variations exist, expressed as well in doctrine as in organisation, worship and types of piety. These variations are combinations of the two contrasted types of Church to which we have referred.

We do not minimise the difficulties which these contrasted types of Church present to our movement, nor are we willing to construe them as being due mainly to misunderstandings or to sin.

It is our hope and prayer that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit they may, in God's good time, be overcome.¹

3. Summary

The World Conferences on Faith and Order may be said to have contributed to a study of the doctrine of the nature of the church by giving a truly ecumenical definition and by clearly bringing before the consciousness of the churches the issues and problems which are barriers to Church unity, particularly as they relate to the "given" and "gathered," the "catholic" and "protestant" views of the Church. "The majority of those present were able to agree—to differ."²

.

1. Hodgson, op. cit., pp. 334-5

2. Herbert Parrish: A New God for America, p. 163

D. Conclusion

The twentieth century has already seen the successful union of many churches and the progress of a great world movement toward union. In this movement the doctrine of the nature of the Church as defined by the many denominations, as related to the specific church union proposals, and as expressed by the ecumenical conferences is of great importance.

Denominations today may be classified, as regards their view of the Church, into four groups: the catholic, reformed, congregational, and separatist. The first is catholic, the other three are protestant. The first two stress the givenness of the Church, though in varying degrees, and the latter two the gatheredness of the Church.

Church unions in this century have been most successful when limited to related denominations. The churches of the congregational type have contributed a larger portion of the successful unions than all others combined. In the unions involving unrelated denominations but denominations within a certain type, the congregational type has contributed a great majority of the successes and a very small minority of the failures. The unions of unrelated types have been successful, in a large way, only among the younger churches though numerous such unions are

now under consideration. Most of those now being considered seem due to fail, chiefly because of Anglican insistence on the historic episcopate.

The world conferences of the ecumenical movement have contributed to a clarification of our common faith and our great problems. They have clearly drawn the issues which must be considered by a church unity movement, most of which are but expressions of the catholic versus the protestant, the given versus the gathered concept of the Church. The hopeful element of these conferences was that the differences were presented in a spirit of fellowship among the members of the conferences and in the midst of allegiance to Christ. The Church has come a long way on the road toward mutual understanding, if not corporate unity, when such a group of men from so many diverse communions could have such fellowship as was experienced at both Oxford and Edinburgh in 1937. In this spirit of fellowship they were recapturing something of the spirit of the New Testament Church, the Church before it was laden with organizational and political concepts of the nature of the Church. In the fellowship, the New Testament life was discernible. In the differences were seen the product of twenty centuries of thought on the doctrine of the nature of the Church.

CHAPTER V

C O N C L U S I O N

I AM THE CHURCH!

The great Creator drew the plans for me within
His heart of love;
The Great Architect gave His dearest Possession
that I might be created;
My one and only Foundation is His Son—whose body
was nailed to a tree;
My Chief Corner Stone—the Stone which the builders
rejected;
My walls—placed without hammer's sound—are built
by the martyrs of the centuries;
My steeple points ever toward that Great Architect-
Builder throughout eternity;
From my belfry rings out the call for worship
to countless multitudes of all ages;
My door swings open to all of every race and every
age—bidding them welcome;
In my sanctuary there is—
Peace for tired minds,
Rest for weary bodies,
Compassion for suffering humanity,
Forgiveness for repentant sinners,
Communion for saints,
CHRIST—for all who seek Him!

I AM THE CHURCH!

All the love of God, the great Architect,
All the sacrifice of Christ, the Great Builder,
All the dream of dauntless prophets,
All the faith of hopeful pioneers,
All the hope of countless millions,
All the joy of conquering Christians
are enclosed within my walls!

I AM THE CHURCH!

Without me, civilization must crumble!
Within me is eternity!

Beulah Hughes

From—Cynthia Pearl Maus: Christ and the Fine Arts

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The New Testament Church is a spiritual structure of living stones, a structure composed of all those persons, who, like Peter, have received the revelation of the Messiahship of Jesus and have confessed Him to be the Christ. It was secured or purchased by Christ Himself. The several local churches are but expressions of the one universal Church, this universal Church being centered in no specified form nor delegated authority but in the living Lord Jesus Christ, Head of the Church, the Great Shepherd of the Flock.

This Church retained within it, in unity, even those persons who seemed to have a distinctive contribution. The seeming difference of the mission of Peter and Paul was not taken as a basis for the formation of distinctive groups. They and the Church realized that though a difference of emphasis existed there was a unity in Christ which transcended all differences and that the differences only served to bring a greater fulness to the Body of Christ, His Church. Each person who had received this revelation of the Messiahship of Jesus had his contribution to make within the fellowship of the group.

The divisions of the visible church are largely due to the elevation of some "distinctive element" to an objective position higher than the relationship to Christ. Thus, the hierarchy becomes the objective for the Roman Catholic, the historic episcopate for the Anglican, creedal confessions for the Lutheran, Scripture for the Presbyterian and Reformed, absence of creed for the Congregationalist, baptism by immersion for the Baptist, entire sanctification according to a specified mode for the Free Methodist, a specific mode of life for the separatist, and even the total rejection of sacrament for the Friend. These become substitutes for a vital, living faith in Jesus Christ, or, at least, become the media without which this faith in Christ is judged to be impossible. They become, too often, the criteria by which a man is judged to be or not to be a Christian.

These distinctive elements are the product of history and experience, and, in the day of their beginning, did, to a great degree, contain truth. The difficulty has arisen when an element of truth, such as the need for organization, the value of creeds, the authority of Scripture, the meaning of baptism, and the like, have become the finished product of scholasticism and are elevated to a position of judgment upon all who cannot yet agree to them as absolutely true.

As regards the nature of the Church, the church is divided into two major groups, catholic and protestant. The latter group contains three types: the reformed, congregational, and separatist. The view of the church, though not always expressed, is basic to many of the other expressions which divide the visible church into many denominations.

The fundamental premise of the twentieth century ecumenical movement is that denominational divisions militate against the effectiveness of the visible church and that corporate union of all Christian groups is the only way in which the prayer of Christ for unity may be answered. It is believed that the Church for which Christ prayed is the visible church and that the union for which He prayed was organic, corporate union. The emphasis is upon catholicity, upon the real as being possible only organically as in a visible church and not ideally as in the concept of an invisible Church. Charles Clayton Morrison contends that:

Upon no realistic basis can it be claimed that protestantism has a church. In addition to the 'church invisible,' which is no church at all, but only the idea of a church, it has denominations which it calls churches. But the church catholic was left behind at the Reformation—left behind, not so much in the break with Rome as in the positive ideology of the Reformation movement. In its place, protestantism developed associations or societies of individual believers (in some cases including their children), for the expression and cultivation of the

personal graces of the gospel.¹

To the extent that the ecumenical movement identifies the visible organized church which it proposes, with the real Church of Christ it is in danger of committing the error of the Roman Church. Organization does not insure salvation.

It is believed by leaders of the ecumenical movement that a corporately united church is the only means by which Christendom can meet the threat of the twentieth century's incarnation of Caesar. Nothing short of a corporately united church can speak with a united voice. The tendency is to meet national totalitarianism with a Christian totalitarianism, the latter to be attained by the corporate union of the churches into one great church which shall have and exercise authority.

To the extent that the ecumenical movement identifies the power of the church with the existence of one great organization it is in danger of committing not only the error of the Roman Catholic Church but of the totalitarian states. Material organization does not insure spiritual power. Christianity did not conquer the Roman Empire by pronouncements or pressure groups, but by a united witness to Christ. This united witness which is the goal

.

1. Charles Clayton Morrison: "The Church, Catholic and Protestant"; Christendom, Spring, 1937, p. 281

of the ecumenical movement need not be dependent upon a corporately united church.

The ecumenical movement has contributed to the spiritual unity of the Church by making large sections of it conscious that their "distinctive elements" need not be a barrier to spiritual fellowship and that there is a spiritual unity in Christ. The affirmation adopted by the Second World Conference on Faith and Order includes:

We are one in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. We are one in allegiance to Him as the Head of the Church, and as King of kings and Lord of lords. We are one in acknowledging that this allegiance takes precedence of any other allegiance that may make claims upon us.

This unity does not consist in the agreement of our minds or the consent of our wills. It is founded in Jesus Christ Himself, who lived, died and rose again to bring us to the Father, and who through the Holy Spirit dwells in His Church. We are one because we are all the objects of the love and grace of God, and called by Him to witness in the world to His glorious gospel.¹

This is the basis of true church unity. It already exists in Christ. The realization of the fact of this unity by the church will have the immediate effect of lowering our "distinctive elements" from positions of judgment upon other Christians and the elevating of the one distinctive element of the Church which is Jesus Christ, incarnate God, our Savior, the Judge of the world and the Church. Representatives of the churches will be

.

1. Leonard Hodgson (ed.): The Second World Conference on Faith and Order (1937), p. 275

able to confer concerning their differences in the spirit of this one great unity. This was the spirit of Oxford and Edinburgh.

Such a scrutiny of differences in the spirit of our basic unity will result in the achievement of many church unions. Progress already has been made. In those unions already consummated, certain standards and trends are observed.

First, for effectual unity there must be belief. Silcox stresses this standard when he says:

To thrive, a church must believe something and act on the belief. It must worship a living God, and not even Church Union (with capital letters) is an adequate substitute for the Deity. Nor can social and economic radicalism take the place of a solid corporate philosophy of life.¹

Even Peter expressed a creed, full of meaning for a Hebrew of his age, when he said, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"²

The formulation of a creed will, to be sure, exclude some who are active in the ecumenical movement. C. J. Bleeker, representing liberal Christianity, has already expressed the belief that the *Una Sancta*, "Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour," adopted by Utrecht in 1938 as the creed for the World Council of Churches, cannot be

.

1. Claris Edwin Silcox: "Ten Years of Church Union in Canada"; Christendom, Winter, 1936, pp. 358-9
2. Matthew xvi.16

accepted by liberals.¹ It is inevitable that a creed, regardless of its simplicity, will be exclusive of some. It is as essential as it is inevitable.

Second, if church unions are to be achieved between churches having differing views of the Church as expressed in its polity and ministry, these elements must cease to be held as essentials to the nature of the Church. Edinburgh concluded that one of the great obstacles to unity is erected when matters of church government are considered a part of the faith. The principle of the New Testament that organization be determined by the need which calls it forth must be recovered. S. Arthur Devan, a Baptist, in discussing this principle as it relates to reunion, says:

So immersion is Scriptural, historic, logical, highly symbolic and spiritually effective. But—after all—just how important is it? Other times, other mores. Jesus did not command immersion; it happened to be the only mode of baptism that Jewish people knew.²

The distinction must be seen between that which is commanded in the New Testament and that which is merely the first-century method of doing a particular thing.

The church unions which have been accomplished indicate that the immediate hope for organic unity is

.

1. Cf. C. J. Bleeker: "Does Liberal Christianity Belong to the Una Sancta?"; Christendom, Spring, 1939, pp. 229-38
2. S. Arthur Devan: "A Baptist Looks at Church Union"; Christendom, Winter, 1939, p. 77

through the unity of related denominations. Only one church union; namely, the Church of Christ in China, has successfully brought into a unity denominations belonging to varying types, and in this instance the differing types were within the larger Protestant group. No unions have been achieved which involved both catholic and protestant churches. The basic differences between denominations as to their views of the Church have not faded. Though the Protestant forces unite, which is not a very immediate probability, there will yet remain the problem of bringing the two widely different emphases, Catholic and Protestant, into a unity.

Need then the Body of Christ be divided until the time of the solution of this problem? It is to be considered divided only if the true Church, the Body of Christ, is identified with one, visible, organized church formed by men. We already possess a unity in Christ; we need only to recognize it and to practice it. Denominations may continue until the consummation of the ages, but there can nevertheless be a true unity in Christ. This spiritual unity, though it has existed since the beginning of the Church, is progressively realized as denominations and men increasingly elevate the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Head of the Church, and lower their individual "distinctive elements" to a position of glory to Christ rather than judgment of men.

't Hooft, having discussed the many conceptions of the nature of the Church and the human impossibility of ever reconciling them all, concludes:

There is no way out of this situation. For every so-called way out proves in fact to be an element which complicates the situation even more. We are therefore obliged to recognize the fact of our disagreement as to the nature of the church as well as the fact of our agreement as to the reality of the church. This means, not that we should cease to work for unity, but that we should cease to try to force the issue of unity. Our present impasse is a sign that unity cannot be made by men, but can be acknowledged and received only when God actually gives it. It is with unity as with all the gifts of God: we can prepare for it, we can pray for it, we can watch for it, but we cannot bring it into being. Unity is not achieved; but it happens when men listen together to God, and when he is willing to give it to them.¹

.

1. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, The Church and Its Function in Society, pp. 82-3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, Joseph Addison: The Acts of the Apostles (2 vols.) New York: Charles Scribner, 1857
- Bannerman, D. Douglas: The Scripture Doctrine of the Church. Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1887
- Barnes, Albert: Notes Explanatory and Practical on the Acts of the Apostles (20th ed.) New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860
- Bate, H. N. (ed.): Faith and Order—Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927
- Beet, Joseph Agar: A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and to Philemon (2d ed.) London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895
- A Manual of Theology. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1906
- Bell, George Kennedy Allen: A Brief Sketch of the Church of England. Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1929
- Bleeker, C. J.: "Does Liberal Christianity Belong to the Una Sancta?" Christendom, Spring, 1939
- Brent, Charles H. (ed.): Can the Churches Unite? New York: The Century Co., 1927
- Broadus, John A.: Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886
- Brown, William Adams: Christian Theology in Outline. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914
- Bruce, Alexander Balmain: St. Paul's Conception of Christianity. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905

- Calvin, John: Institutes of the Christian Religion.
Translated from Latin and Collated with Last
French edition, by John Allen. (6th Amer. ed.).
(Two vols.) Philadelphia: The Presbyterian
Board of Publication, 1930
- Devan, S. Arthur: "A Baptist Looks at Church Union";
Christendom, Winter, 1939 (pp. 68-80)
- Douglass, H. Paul: A Decade of Objective Progress in
Church Unity, 1927-1936. New York: Harper &
Brothers, 1937
- Church Unity Movements in the United States.
New York: Institute of Social and Religious
Research, 1934
- Dulles, Allen Macy: The True Church. New York: Fleming
H. Revell Company, 1907
- Ferm, Vergilius (ed.): What is Lutheranism? New York:
The Macmillan Company, 1930
- Fisher, George Park: History of Christian Doctrine.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896
- Flew, R. Newton: Jesus and His Church. New York:
The Abingdon Press, 1938
- "Our Next Task"; Christendom, Winter, 1939
(pp. 57-67)
- Godet, Frederic Louis: Commentary on the Gospel of John.
Translated from 3d French edition by Timothy
Dweight. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886
- Gwatkin, Henry Melvill: Early Church History to A.D. 313.
(Two vols.) London: Macmillan and Co., Limited,
1927
- Harnack, Adolph: History of Dogma (2d ed., 7 vols.) Trans-
lated from 3d German edition by Neil Buchanan.
Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1896
- Hodge, Charles: Systematic Theology (Three vols.)
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917
- Hodges, George: The Episcopal Church.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932

- Hodgson, Leonard (ed.): The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938
- Hort, Fenton John Anthony: The Christian Ecclesia.
London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1898
- Huss, John: The Church. Translated by David S. Schaff.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915
- Lacey, Thomas Alexander: The One Body and the One Spirit.
New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.
- Langdale, John W. (ed.): Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.
New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1932
- Lange, John Peter: The Gospel According to John. Translated by Philip Schaff.
New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871
- Lightfoot, J. B.: Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.
London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1900
- Lindsay, Thomas M.: A History of the Reformation (Two vols.)
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928
- Luther, Martin: Works of Martin Luther (Five vols.)
II: 1916; III: 1930; V: 1931.
Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company
- Macfarland, Charles S.: Steps Toward the World Council.
New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1938
- Maus, Cynthia Pearl: Christ and the Fine Arts.
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938
- Marston, Leslie Ray, Pierce, William, and Ormston, M. D.:
"Our Church in This Age." Pastoral Address of the Bishops of the Free Methodist Church.
Winona Lake: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1939
- Meyer, Heinrich August Wilhelm: Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles. Translated from 4th German edition by William P. Dickson. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883
- Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of St. John. From 5th German edition by Wm. Urwick. Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1895

- Morrison, Charles Clayton: "The Church, Catholic and Protestant"; Christendom, Spring, 1937 (pp. 274-289)
- Pallen, Conde B., and Wynne, John J. (edd.): The New Catholic Dictionary. New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1929
- Parrish, Herbert: A New God for America. New York: The Century Co., 1928
- Plummer, A.: The Gospel According to St. John. Cambridge: The University Press, 1902
- Plumptre, E. H.: The Acts of the Apostles. New York: Cassell Peter & Galpin, 1879
- Rall, Harris Franklin: "The Church: Given or Gathered?" Christendom, Spring, 1939, pp. 164-73
- Richardson, Cyril Charles: The Church through the Centuries. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938
- Schaff, David S.: Our Fathers Faith and Ours. New York: Putnam's, 1928
- Schaff, Philip: History of the Christian Church (7 vols.) II: 1887; III: 1923; VI: 1908. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
- The Creeds of Christendom. (Three vols.) New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877
- Schweitzer, Albert: The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle. Translated by William Montgomery. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931
- Scott, E. F.: The Fourth Gospel (2d ed.) Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930
- Sheldon, Henry C.: System of Christian Doctrine New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1903
- Silcox, Claris Edwin: Church Union in Canada. New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933
- "Ten Years of Church Union in Canada"; Christendom, Winter, 1936
- Slosser, Gaius Jackson: Christian Unity New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1929

- Stevens, George B.: The Pauline Theology
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892
- Strong, Augustus Hopkins: Systematic Theology
Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1906
- 't Hooft, W. A. Visser, and Oldham, J. H.: The Church
and its Function in Society.
Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1939
- Thayer, Joseph Henry: A Greek-English Lexicon of the
New Testament. (Corrected ed.)
New York: American Book Company, 1889
- Van Dusen, Henry P.: "Madras and Christian Thought";
Christendom, Spring, 1939 (pp. 205-17)
- Van Dyke, Henry J.: The Church—Her Ministry and Sacra-
ments. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and
Company, 1890
- Weber, H. C. (ed.): Yearbook of American Churches.
New York: Association Press, 1939
- Westcott, Brooke Foss: Commentary on St. John's Gospel.
(Ed. F. C. Cook.) New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1902
- (anon.): Let Us Unite.
Shanghai: The Willow Pattern Press, 1938