

*Collected Writings*

and in Ephesians and Colossians, on the other. The headship of Christ is not enunciated in the former, whereas this is the leading emphasis in the latter. We must keep both perspectives in view in this topic of unity.

There are numerous passages which expressly appeal to the oneness of the body, but it is not necessary to discuss them in detail (cf. Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 6:16; 10:17; 12:12, 13, 20; Eph. 2:15; 4:4; Col. 3:15). We should bear in mind what we have already found to be the concept of the church, and we may not attempt to escape from the implications of this oneness, and the obligation incident to it, by taking refuge in the notion of the invisible church. When Paul says to the church at Rome, 'we, the many, are one body in Christ, and members one of another', he is thinking most concretely, and enforcing the exhortation that each member in the church is to think soberly as God has distributed to each a measure of faith, and that each is to exercise his gift or gifts in the practical, day-to-day life of the community of believers. Or again, when to the church at Corinth Paul says, 'we the many are one body', he is directing this truth to the schismatic discrimination practised at Corinth in the celebration of the Lord's supper, and to the correction of the same. Although in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 the accent falls on the harmony and order to be maintained in the exercise of the various gifts, in recognition of the truth set forth in Romans 12:3-6 that all of these gifts are exercised by the one Holy Spirit, yet we cannot dissociate this emphasis upon oneness from the divisive attitudes and practices so severely condemned in the first chapter (1 Cor. 1:10-17). It should be noted that here the situation was one of schism and strife (vv. 10, 11). The contradiction of this disunity is exposed by the questions: 'Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' (v. 13). In a word, the unity of the body of Christ, is not a tenet that may be relegated to the transcendental realm of invisible, spiritual relationship, but a truth that governs, regulates, and conditions the behaviour of the people of God in that communal, covenant relationship which they sustain to Christ in the institute of the church.

But this same unity pertains to the church in its most inclusive and universal denotation. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the catholicity of the church comes to its fullest expression and, as we found, there is the eschatological outreach (2:7; 3:21). Hence, to maintain that the unity

*The Nature and Unity of the Church*

belonging to the church does not entail ecumenical embodiment, is to deny the catholicity of the church of Christ. If the church is catholic, then unity is catholic.

It is well to bear in mind what is the undergirding truth. Why is the church one? First of all, it is that Christ is one. 'Is Christ divided?' is Paul's protestation. And he adds later: 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body, even so is Christ' (1 Cor. 12:12). Here, I take it, Paul in this brief clause, 'even so is Christ', brings together the church and Christ, and says in effect 'Christ is one, and so the church is one'.

It is not only the oneness of Christ, but also the oneness of the Spirit, from whom all the grace by which the church is constituted and equipped proceeds. 'In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body . . . and were all made to drink one Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:13). The intimate dependence of the preceding clause on this one should be noted. The church is one, 'for in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body' (cf. 1 Cor. 12:9, 11; also 6:17).

But this undergirding truth is to be given a further extension; it embraces the Godhead. 'There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism: one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all' (Eph. 4:4-6). It is, in a word, the oneness of the Godhead in the particularity of prerogative, function and relation of each person in the economy of salvation that undergirds the oneness of the church, whether the church be viewed in its most restricted denotation as two or three gathered in Jesus' name, or in its most catholic dimensions as comprising all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

When we think thus we are inevitably reminded of Jesus' intercessory prayer, and of the astounding analogy by which he impresses upon us the intimacy of union with himself, as well as enforces the sanction by which the oneness of the church is to be sought: 'Not for these only do I ask, but also for those who believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, in order that they also may be in us, in order that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, in order that they may be one, as we are one. I in them