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portance but for those of great and primary leadership. For these young people are the brains and the thinkers of our age. The church is not training them: the state is. Challenges abound in the church today—missions, inner city parishes, holding the rural church together, labor areas, and finally the campus. The day calls for greatness in all of us. Lord grant it in rich measure!

J. A. O. Preus

"The Future Reunited Church" and "The Ancient Undivided Church"

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1.

"I BELIEVE in the Holy Catholic Church, and sincerely regret that it does not at present exist," was a favorite saying of William Temple.¹ It makes sense in the mouth of an Anglican only. For the nineteenth article of the Articles of Religion has altered, to the great distress of many Evangelicals in the Church of England, its pattern, Art. VII of the Augsburg Confession, in a very characteristic way by speaking not of the "church" but of the "visible church": "*Ecclesia Christi visibilis est coetus fidelium, in quo verbum Dei purum praedicatur et sacramenta . . . recte administrantur.*" If the church in which we believe, the *Una Sancta*, is visible, where, then, is it today? Roman Catholics will answer: The *Una Sancta* is the church, or the churches in communion with the Apostolic See. According to the Tractarians and later Anglo-Catholics the *Una Sancta* existed in three branches, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, Rome and the Church of England. Thus they excluded all Protestant churches from the true Church of Christ. To the Anglican for whom the episcopal office with the apostolic succession belongs to the very nature of Christ's Church, but who refuses to deny the existence of the church among the Protestants, nothing is left, if he wants to be consistent, but to declare that the *Una Sancta* does not at present exist. To believe in the *Una Sancta Catholica et Apostolica*, then, means to believe that it has existed in the past and that it will exist again in the future. From the dogma of the *Una Sancta* follows for the Anglican the dogma of the "Ancient Undivided Church" and the dogma of the "Future Reunited Church." From this belief again follows the ethical duty of the Christians to work for the restoration of the lost unity of the church in a "Future Reunited Church." This dogmatic conception of the union of Christians as a reunion of Christendom corresponds to the

ecclesiastical situation in England. Already in the seventeenth century Continental observers have been wondering about the multitude² of sects that had split off from the Church of England. As England and English speaking Christendom has proved the most fertile soil of religious divisions, reunion has always been one of the most urgent problems of church life.

2.

It is distressing to see how modern Lutheranism has taken over these Anglican ideas, as they were disseminated by the ecumenical movement of our century, without examining them in the light of the doctrine of the Lutheran Confessions on the church and its unity, without asking if that understanding of the *Una Sancta* is scriptural, and without investigating the historical tenableness of the idea of the "ancient undivided church." One may well ask what deep-rooted disease of modern Lutheranism is revealed by the fact that our churches have uncritically accepted those foreign ideas and have allowed them to penetrate our congregations and especially our youth organizations as something taken for granted. All Lutherans who are interested in ecumenical questions are reading now in the Foreword to *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* by R. Rouse and S. Neill that it is their "responsibility to pray and work for the restoration of the visible unity of all Christian people" (p. xxiv). They learn about the stages of ecumenical work: "(1) cooperation between Christians belonging to different confessions and Churches, (2) cooperation between the several confessions and Churches, (3) union or reunion of separated Churches, (4) the full and final restoration of the unity of all Christendom." The author of this preface is the Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Dr. Reinold von Thadden-Trieglaff. What would his famous ancestor, that conservative Pomeranian nobleman, Adolf von Thadden-Trieglaff, who left in 1848 the Prussian Union for the Lutheran Free Church have had to say about this gigantic plan of a union for all Christendom? What Luther would have said we know. It is written in the Smalcald Articles (III, 8) where we read: "Enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world . . . and it is the source, strength and power of all heresy, including that of the papacy and Mohammedanism" (*The Book of Concord*, ed. Tappert, p. 313). Enthusiasm, as Luther describes it in this context, is that type of Christian piety which does not stick to the Word alone, but listens to other voices besides the voice of the Good Shepherd. It is that religion which finds the Holy Spirit not only in the Word and in the Sacraments, but, as many Anglicans in our day would say³ also in the tradition of the church and in the living experience of today. This enthusiasm is a danger for all churches, "Catholic" or "Protestant," "older" or "younger" churches. It has always been in a particular way a danger in English Christianity, though we must not forget how this enthusiasm in the sixteenth century was kindled by influences from the Continent—Bucer and the Anabaptists—and how readily it was

accepted by the Continental churches when the tide turned back. Pietism, Christian societies and conventicles in the eighteenth, sects from England and America since the nineteenth century, missionary societies of Pietistic character, Christian youth movements, and finally ecumenical organizations and movements: in all these manifestations of the religious life of modern Protestantism that enthusiasm asserts itself. One feature of this enthusiasm is "chiliasm," the hope for the realization of the Kingdom of God on this earth. In touching words John Mott closed the First World Missionary Conference on June 23rd, 1910: "God grant that we all of us may in these next moments solemnly resolve henceforth so to plan and so to act, so to live and so to sacrifice, that our spirit of reality may become contagious among those to whom we go: and it may be that the words of the Archbishop shall prove to be a splendid prophecy and that before many of us taste death we shall see the Kingdom of God come with power" (*Report*, Vol. IX, p. 351). He referred to the address with which Archbishop Davidson had greeted the conference at its opening session and which closed with the quotation of Mark 9:1. The great American leader of World Missions and the Archbishop of Canterbury agreed that it might be that during the lifetime of some of the delegates "here on earth, in a way we know not now," as the Archbishop said, "the Kingdom of God come with power" (*loc. cit.*, p. 150).

3.

It is this chiliastic enthusiasm which has found an expression in the modern idea of a "Future Reunited Church." To deny the idea that there will be one united church in which all present churches including Rome will be absorbed is regarded as blasphemy by those under the spell of this modern form of chiliasm, just as forty years ago when in America the "Social Gospel" began to reach its climax we Lutherans were accused of blasphemy and unbelief when we doubted that it was the task of the church to transform human society into the Kingdom of God. But is it not the will of Christ that the churches should be united? Is not the idea of a Future Reunited Church based on the promise of Christ that there will be one flock and one shepherd? Has He not prayed "that they all may be one"? Hardly any sentence is being used—and misused—more often in our days than the great *Ut omnes unum* of the Highpriestly Prayer. Is it really necessary to offer the assurance that it is neither from disregard of our duty to work for peace and unity among Christians nor, least of all, from lack of respect for the words of our Lord that we disagree with the popular understanding of that petition, which is taken for granted today? Can the repeated petition of Christ in the great prayer John 17, one of the most solemn, almost unearthly texts of the Bible, really be understood in that way that this petition would have found its fulfillment in a future reunited church in which all who call themselves Christians would be united? Those who envisage such a church understand it to be an ecclesiastical organization in which not uniformity, but

rather unity in manifoldness would prevail. It would be a church in which the peculiar gifts of each of the previously divided churches should be preserved. Their various forms of faith, order, liturgy and community life would be no longer regarded as contrasts, exclusive of one another, but rather as supplementing each other and growing, on the basis of the experiences of a common life, into an always deepening unity. The controversies between the churches would dissolve into the peace of a great harmony like the sound of the various instruments of an orchestra.

For the present we do not want to discuss the question whether it is really possible to regard the varieties as forms and fragments of one truth underlying all of them, or whether there are contradictory forms of the Christian religion that defy reconciliation in a higher unity. We cannot enter here into the question whether the conviction that it must be possible to reach, by patient and brotherly discussion, agreement on any question at issue is not the consequence of the fact that modern Protestantism has lost the concept of heresy, of church-destroying error that accompanies the history of the church from the beginning to the end, a consequence perhaps, in the last analysis, of the tragic loss of the great *charisma* "to distinguish between spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10, cf. 1 John 4:1) without which the church cannot exist. However, we must ask: Suppose that all Christians were united in such an ecumenical body, "the future reunited church," would this really mean that the prayer of Jesus Christ was fulfilled, "that they all may be one; *as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee*, that they may be one *in us*; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. And *the glory which thou gavest me I have given them*; that they may be one, *even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me*, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me?" (John 17:21ff.). Why does the world now not recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Son whom the Father has sent? Could one say: the world does not believe in Christ because it sees a divided Christendom, but this would be different as soon as a united Christendom would give a united testimony? Certainly the sins of Christendom, including the sin of unnecessary divisions and of a lack of love, are always a most serious obstacle to faith. But who would dare to say that if today a united church, instead of the many denominations, preached the Gospel the Buddhists would give up their Buddha, and the Mohammedans would abandon their prophet and confess Christ? Does anyone believe that the Communists of Russia and China and all other atheists the world over would accept Christ and that atheism and paganism would disappear? Unbelief is not caused by the sins of the Christians. "More redeemed should his disciples look if I were to believe in their Redeemer," says Nietzsche-Zarathustra. What an untruthful statement this is. Even if a man like Nietzsche would have met the greatest saints of all ages this would not have caused him to believe. He would certainly have found another excuse. Faith is always the work of the Holy Ghost. What kind of Pente-

cost would be necessary if suddenly the entire world should recognize Christ! If the Highpriestly Prayer means by "world" here not only those whom the Father has given to His Son "from the world" (cf. v. 20 with 6, 8, 9, 12), but the whole of mankind including those who thus far have rejected Christ, then the fulfillment of Christ's prayer must be understood in a strictly eschatological sense. The world cannot see the glory which the Father has given to His Son. How, then, would it see the glory which Christ has given to His church? As men in this aeon cannot see the oneness that exists between the Father and the Son, so no human eye can see the oneness "in Christ" that binds together those who believe in Him. Even to the believing Christian this oneness is an object of faith and not of observation. It is more than the human love and fellowship which we may experience. The New Testament calls it the "communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:13), a *koinonia* which the members of the church have with one another and which is at the same time "our *koinonia* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3), a communion which is connected with the communion that exists between the persons of the blessed Trinity, as it is clearly indicated in John 17:21. "*Ubi trinitas, ibi unitas*," as an old hymn says. Christ says, v. 24, when we shall see His glory: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. . . ." This glory will become manifest to the world on the Last Day. Then the *regnum Christi* which, as the Lutheran Confession (*Ap. ad C.A.* 7/8) puts it, is now *cruce tectum*, hidden under the cross, will be revealed (*revelatum*). Only at the end of time will the world know Christ. Then "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him" (Rev. 1:7), and the confession of the church will become the confession of the whole *kosmos* when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, and every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10f.). Christ's disciples must never cease to fight against the lovelessness of their own sinful human nature. They must never cease to try their best to overcome error and heresy through which the devil tries to corrupt our faith and to destroy the church. But to think that our most faithful and patient endeavours to overcome unnecessary divisions could make manifest the *Una Sancta* in this world of sin and error, would be chiliastic enthusiasm and not true Christian faith based on the Word of God. For our Lord Himself has made it unmistakably clear that this world—by the way, not the church—is that field on which not only the seed of Christ's gospel grows, but also the seed sown by the devil, until the harvest at the end of the world will separate the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:31ff.). Then with the hidden glory of the church also its true unity will become manifest, a oneness that comprises not only one generation, but all true believers of all generations of the world. Then in the consummation of all history the prayer of Christ that they all may be one will have found its final answer.

4.

The untenableness of the Anglican idea of a "future reunited church" is indirectly confirmed by the fact that its counterpart, the concept of "the ancient undivided church" is equally untenable. It is also a dogmatic idea, a conclusion from the understanding of the *Una Sancta* as *ecclesia Christi visibilis*, which does not stand the historical test. What should and could be that undivided church of the past?

With an astonishing tenacity the idea has lived on in the Anglican churches that the ancient undivided church was the church of the first five centuries. This church, therefore, should set the pattern for the restoration of the lost unity. This idea goes back to the Christian humanists whose program for a reform of the church as well as for the restoration of the unity lost in the Reformation was the return *ad fontes*, to the church of the New Testament and the early Fathers as the sources of pure Christianity. It has been cultivated in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the Latitudinarians in England, the Arminians in Holland and the Syncretists of the school of Helmstedt in Germany. It was one of the opponents of Georg Calixtus, a theologian at Strassburg, who has coined the term "*consensus quinquesaecularis*" which was never approved by G. Calixtus and expressly rejected as "nonsense" by his son Ulrich.⁴ The idea was that the basis of the reunion should be the historic dogma of the Ancient Church in which the Lutherans and the Reformed Churches agreed with Rome and even the Eastern Orthodox, the great doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ which practically amounted to the reception of the dogma up to the Chalcedonian Creed which had been reaffirmed in all confessions of the sixteenth century. Calixtus' theory was rejected as inadequate because it did not meet the issues between Rome and the Reformation. To his Lutheran opponents he was a "semi-papist" while the Jesuits of Mainz called him a "semi-Christian doctor and Supreme Pontiff of the Utopian-Oecumenical Church assembled in whatever faith you like."⁵ The historical inadequacy becomes evident in Calixtus' reluctance to define the exact date of the division of the church. If one regards the dogma of the Person of Christ as belonging to the consensus, then the Nestorians and the Monophysites must be regarded as such who have separated from the true church, the *Una, Sancta, Catholica et Apostolica Ecclesia* in the sense of Catholic and Anglican ecclesiology. Apart from the problem of the person of Nestorius who was not a real "Nestorian," as Luther already suspected and modern Catholic scholarship has shown, what must we think of the Church of Eastern Syria which represented the Christian Church to Central and East Asia for centuries? In every liturgy it commemorated the "318 Fathers" of Nicea whose faith it wanted to preserve undefiled. Certainly there is a grave theological error in its understanding of the Person of Christ. He who reads the great hymns of that church notices the deviations from the orthodox doctrine, but cannot help feeling that

this is an older type of Christology which no one would have regarded as heretical around 400 A.D. We Lutherans at least, though compelled to reject its heresy, would believe that also in this church the Church of Christ was present. The same is true of the Monophysite churches of the Armenians, the Jacobites and the Copts. The theological reasons why their fathers did not accept the Chalcedonian Creed—there were non-theological reasons, too—one can learn from their present theologians.⁶ Even Roman Catholic scholars would not deny the strong Christian element which has always remained in spite of the heresy extant in their doctrine. Thus A. Fortescue could write in *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, 1913 (pp. 449-450): "At least for one thing we must envy them, for the *glory of that martyr's crown* they have worn for over a thousand years. We can never forget that. During those dark centuries there was not a Copt nor a Jacobite, nor a Nestorian nor an Armenian who could not have bought relief, ease and comfort, by denying Christ and turning Turk. I can think of nothing else like it in the world. These poor forgotten rayas *in their pathetic schism*, for thirteen hundred years of often ghastly persecution kept their *loyalty to Christ*. And still for His name they bear patiently a servile state and the hatred of tyrants."⁷ We have stressed the words that indicate the problem of church and sect as it is seen by a Roman theology. If in such schismatic or even heretical bodies there can be the crown of true martyrdom, if true loyalty to Christ can co-exist with christological heresies, then we Lutherans must confess that also in them the true Church of Christ exists, just as we believe that the true church exists also in the Eastern Orthodox Churches and in Rome despite all errors and heresies. We believe that the *Una Sancta* is hidden in the outward organizations that claim the name "church" wherever the Gospel of Christ is still being proclaimed and His sacraments are administered. This is, indeed, a dogmatic statement. But it seems to us that it is consistent with the facts of church history. No one has so far been able to show at what time the "ancient undivided church" was divided.

5.

From the fifth century we go back to the century of the first ecumenical synods. Where was the "undivided" church during the two generations between the Council of Nicea, 325, and the council of 381 which actually was only a council of the East, but was later recognized as "ecumenical" on account of its creed which since 451 by and by replaced the old Nicene Creed of 325, so much that it has even inherited its name? For our "Nicene Creed" is actually that of the "150 Fathers" of Constantinople. One must try to imagine the situation of the Christian religion after Constantine's victory in order to understand the tragedy of a divided Christendom. Has there ever been a greater missionary opportunity than at the time when Constantine called the church out of the catacombs to become his strongest ally in building up a politically unified and morally strong empire? But the church, instead of rallying all its forces

for the great mission work, absorbed its strength for two generations in an almost suicidal *bellum omnium contra omnes*. When Constantine after his accession in the East heard of the controversy about "the interpretation of one Bible passage" (Prov. 8:22 ff.) which had arisen in Alexandria he implored both parties, Bishop Alexander and his presbyter Arius, to find a compromise as philosophers would do in a similar case. But the fight had become unavoidable. It became even worse when later emperors who had not the wisdom and patience of Constantine, tried to solve the problems of the church by mere political means. Athanasius knew why he went from exile to exile. With the *homoousios*, the dogma of the full divinity of the Savior, the Gospel itself and the existence of the Church of Christ was at stake. But how few bishops, to say nothing of the simple laity, could understand the implications of the theological terms? How few congregations were able to find their way between the ever increasing factions into which Christendom seemed to be disintegrating. They all, adherents and opponents of the "*homoousios*," the "*homoios*," "*homoios kata panta*," "*homoios kata tas graphas*," "*homoios kat' ousian*," "*homoiousios*," "*anhomoios*," claimed to be "Catholic Church." Where was the border-line between church and heresy? It happened that an orthodox congregation discovered that their bishop was a radical Arian who did not believe in the divinity of Christ, but had hidden his true convictions (Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* II, 30). Our orthodox Lutheran fathers, when dealing with the problem of heresy, have always emphasized that the condemnation of some errorists by the Council of Nicea did not mean that the entire churches from which they came, were heretical, just as the Preface to the *Book of Concord* declares that the condemnation of certain Calvinistic errors, e.g., concerning the Lord's Supper, does not imply a condemnation of entire churches within or without the Empire. If the Arians claimed to be the catholic church, one must admit that even in their churches there were not only simple Christians who did not understand the Arian heresy and were satisfied with a childlike faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, but that also among their theologians there were men to whom we must concede an earnest Christian faith. Erasmus discovered that an unfinished commentary on the Gospel of Matthew which has been preserved among the works of Chrysostom was written by an Arian of the fourth century. Bardenhewer, the famous Roman Catholic church historian, observes that "the author has deserved that protection." He praises highly his knowledge of Holy Scripture, his literary achievements, and he adds: "Behind that book there is a man of character and strong convictions, of moral strictness, an attitude and a burning zeal for the true Church of Christ, the little flock of the adherents of the 'homoios' which is in danger to be absorbed by the vast host of the heretics, i.e., the Catholics."⁸ Thus the problem of various confessions and denominations was already present in ancient Christendom. With great sympathy one must look at that ambassador of the Visigoth king of Spain to the Frankish court at Boitierr. He was seen in church

every Sunday at the Catholic mass, but he never went to Holy Communion. For there was no church fellowship between the Catholic church of Gaul and the Arian church of the Spanish Visigoths until in 589 a synod of Toledo accepted the Catholic creed. This did of course not mean that all Christians in the Visigoth church suddenly changed their religious convictions.

6.

That the "ancient undivided church" is a theological fiction becomes fully evident if we turn from the "heresies" to the great "schisms" of ancient Christendom. Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* I, 10) and Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.* I, 22) report that at the request of Constantine also Acesius, the Novatian bishop of Byzantium—soon to become Constantinople—was summoned to the Council of Nicea. It was obviously the wish of the emperor to abolish the Novatian schism as he had tried for many years to heal the split between Catholics and Donatists in Africa. When at the end of the synod the bishop was asked whether he accepted the decisions concerning the "homoousios" and the date of Easter, he replied in the affirmative because these decisions affirmed only the old faith and practice. To the question: "Why, then, Acesius, do you keep aloof from communion with others, if you are of one mind with them?" he replied by stating the reasons for the Novatian schism. To them it was not permissible to re-admit to Holy Communion persons "who, after baptism, had fallen into those sins which the Scriptures declare to be unto death." For such sins only God can forgive in the Last Judgment. "O Acesius, take a ladder and ascend alone to heaven," was the reply of the emperor. The Novatians have always been, as the Meletians in Egypt whose schism was based on constitutional questions, staunch defenders of the orthodox faith. They differed from the "Catholics" in that they had preserved a principle concerning church discipline which once had been recognized by the entire church. If we are inclined to criticize their rigorism as irreconcilable with the Gospel, we should not forget that also the more lenient Catholic church knew only of a *paenitentia secunda*, a second penance after the great penance at baptism. Did this disagreement over the question whether after baptism in the case of such sins no penance or one penance only was permissible really constitute a sufficient reason for a schism that since the middle of the third century lasted for some hundreds of years? Socrates relates (*Hist. eccl.* V, 14) of Honorius around 400 A.D.: "The emperor's veneration for religion led him not only to honor the bishops of his own communion, but to treat with consideration those of the Novatians also, who embraced the 'homoousion' creed: to gratify therefore Leontius, the bishop of the Novatians at Rome, who interceded in behalf of Symmachus, he graciously pardoned him for that crime." If the pagan consul who is accused before the Catholic emperor of high treason enlisted the support of the Novatian bishop of Rome, Leontius, the latter must have been a man of influence. For until the fifth century Novatians are mentioned not only in Italy,

but also in Gaul (Rouen). In the East they merged with the Montanists and must have formed a by no means insignificant church, comparable to the Donatists in Africa who claim that not the congregations, but at least the clergy must be free of mortal sinners. All attempts to heal this schism in Africa, initiated by Constantine as soon as he became ruler of the West, failed. Shortly after Constantine's death the Donatists, who regarded themselves as the Catholic Church and denied the validity of the sacraments in the church which for Augustine was the *communio catholica*, could muster 270 bishops at a synod which met at Carthage for two weeks. In many places they have been the majority. In such a state of an incurable division Christendom existed in the Latin provinces of Africa until it was wiped out by the Arabic conquerors.

So we could go on reviewing the state of Christendom in the various parts of the ancient world. Everywhere we would find a divided Christendom. This is true also for the first centuries. Celsus, who about 180 wrote the first great polemical work against the Christians from the standpoint of a pagan philosopher, has this to say: "In the beginning they were a little company and were of one mind. But since they have become a widely spread multitude, parties and factions are arising, each claiming followers. They separate from each other and condemn each other. Thus, so to speak, there is one thing only which they still have in common, the mere name which they are ashamed of abandoning. Otherwise each group goes its own way." Origen in his reply does not deny the fact of these divisions. He explains them by comparing them with the various schools of philosophy and medicine: "Since many of the Greek scholars saw in Christianity something venerable, sects (*haireseis*) were bound to arise, not because they liked splits and controversies, but because many scholars (*philologoi*) were eager to understand Christianity. Consequently the books which by all were recognized as divine (*theious logous*) were understood in different ways. Thus sects (*haireseis*) arose which were named after those men who, though admiring the origin of the doctrine, for various reasons arrived at varying results" (Origenes, *Contra Celsum*, III, 12; ed. Koetschau, pp. 210 ff.). Whatever one may think about Origen's rather apologetic explanation, the quotation shows that both Christians and pagans knew of the fact of the divisions of Christendom. Schisms like that between Callistos and Hippolytus, between Victor and the Church of Asia, the division caused by the Montanist movement and, worst of all, the great Gnostic sects and the counter-church of the Marcionites made Christendom in the second century a chaos. What we would call "orthodox" Christendom, the church that existed amidst the great Gnostic movements and later rallied around the "rule of faith," the canon of the New Testament and the episcopal office, was in the middle of that century probably a minority. A pagan who wanted to join the church in Rome about 150 A.D. was in a situation very similar to that of a prospective convert in one of the big cities in India or Japan today. He has

to make up his mind which of the denominations that claim to be the Church of Christ he should join. One has to read only the last epistles of Paul or the epistles of John in order to know that already the apostles died in a divided Christendom. And this goes back even into the beginning of the apostolic mission at the time when Peter in Antioch did not know exactly in which church he could and should participate in Holy Communion and Paul called him a hypocrite because he withdrew from the communion with the Christians of Gentile origin when Judaists from Jerusalem arrived.

7.

"By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed": This has been the situation of Christendom at all times. There has never been a visible "ancient undivided church." We must never forget that the scarcity of our sources makes it impossible to write a full history of Christendom in the ancient world. One of the reasons for the lack of source material is the fact that the writings of heretics and schismatics have been delivered to the *damnatio memoriae*. We have almost nothing except quotations from their adversaries. The great works written against the Gnostics and Marcion (mainly Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus) and the comprehensive works against all heresies by later writers like Epiphanius provide us with a lot of material. What we can know on the basis of their quotations is quite astonishing, as Harnack's masterly book on Marcion shows which tries to give also a picture of the church of Marcion, the history of which, unknown in details, accompanies the entire history of the church. But such material does not allow the writing of a full history of Christendom even in the apostolic and post-apostolic age. How close Gnostic communities could be to what we call the early Catholic Church, how difficult it often was to draw a borderline between "church" and "heresy" appears from the few fragments of direct Gnostic origin we possess. Was Clement of Alexandria much more than a Gnostic? We have mentioned that Arian commentary on Matthew which seemed to be so valuable that it has been attributed to Chrysostom. Still more regrettable is the lack of sources in the case of the great schismatic churches. Some writings by Novatian have been preserved, as *e.g.*, the famous book on the Trinity and even some letters in Cyprian's correspondence. But the later literature of the church of the "*katharoi*" has completely disappeared just as the literature of the Donatists. What we have are quotations and some fragments (Ticonius). We cannot simply apply the "*Damnant Donatists*" of *Conf. Aug.* 14 to all those Christians which once belonged to that large African church in which an older form of African Christianity survived. Where was in those centuries in Africa the true Church of Christ? We cannot identify it with either group. We can only say, as we have pointed out when speaking of the divisions of the East, that the *Una Sancta* was hidden in these church bodies as it is hidden in, with and under the earthly churches wherever Christ is still present in the proclamation of the Gospel and in His sacraments. It is interesting how in

the Donatist controversies for the first time the question was debated whether and how far the Church of Christ can exist also in a schismatic church body. The Donatists were consistent when they simply denied that the "*communio catholica*" Augustines could claim the name "church" and "catholic." They appealed to Cyprian's "*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" with which the great African Father had rejected the validity of any baptism performed outside the "catholic" church. Over against them Augustine developed his doctrine of the sacraments which are valid, even if not effective, in a separated body. In his encyclical "*At Petri Cathedrum*" John XXIII addressed, in connection with the announcement of the Second Vatican Council, those who are separated from Rome as "separated brothers" ("*fratres sejuncti*"): "We address you, then, as brothers, even though you are separated from Us"—this means from the *Cathedra Petri*, and consequently from the true church—"For as St. Augustine said: 'Whether they like it or not, they are our brothers. They will only cease to be our brothers when they cease to say: Our Father.'" The quotation is from Augustine's *Enarratio* in Psalm 32 (Migne, PL 36, 299). The whole chapter 29 of that exposition of the psalm (our Ps. 33) is an admonition to exercise Christian charity towards all men, not only the fellow church members, but also towards those "outside" ("*foris*"), "whether they are still pagans, not yet believing in Christ, or whether they are divided from us, confessing with us the head, but separated from the body (*nobiscum caput confitentis et a corpore separati*)." Augustine has taken over this idea from Optatus of Mileve who insisted on calling the Donatist bishop Parmenianus his brother and justified that elaborately in his *De Schismate Donatistarum* (IV, 2; Migne PL 11, 1029 f.). He, too, uses the "Our Father" which is prayed on either side as an argument and emphasizes that both pray the Fifth Petition. The Donatists, of course, refused to reciprocate since to them the "*catholica communio*"⁹ does not belong to the church. But it is certainly significant that the rejection of Donatism by all churches, Catholic and Protestant, means not only the rejection of that particular error concerning the validity of sacraments administered by a sinful priest, but also the condemnation of any concept of the church which limits the validity of the means of grace to one particular denomination.

8.

If our observations are correct, what must be the practical conclusion for the ecumenical work of the churches today? This question has become even more urgent since Rome at the Second Vatican Council entered the ecumenical movement. The Roman Catholic Church, too, knows the undivided church of the past. It claims to be *the* church from which all the other churches and sects are supposed to have separated, not only the heretical churches of the East, but also the Eastern Orthodox Church, to say nothing of the great divisions of the sixteenth century. Rome is hoping and working for "reunion". The great vision of a future reunited church

has taken hold of the Catholic Christians the world over. The amazing efforts made today by the Roman Church to pave the way for such reunion of the "separated brethren" with the "mother church" must be taken quite seriously. It would be wrong to see in them only church politics. The ecumenical enthusiasm of many Catholic Christians, including bishops and theologians (see e.g. Hans Küng, *That the World May Believe*), shows that the modern Ecumenical Movement is one of those great religious movements which, as e.g. Pietism and Rationalism did, penetrate the whole of Christendom irrespective of denominational borders. No one can say what the outcome of such movements will be. They cannot be controlled by a program made by men or by the constitutions of the ecumenical organizations. It may well be that one day the Roman idea of the undivided church of the past will be so modified that it becomes acceptable to the Christians of the East and to the Protestants. Then the way to "reunion" is open. But "reunion" built on figments is never the true unity of the church which is based on the truth of God's Word.

If we are asked what our alternative is to the enthusiastic efforts to unite Christendom on the basis of the ideas of the "ancient undivided church" and a "future reunited church," we can only answer: We have to go back from such human dreams to the reality of Christ's Church. What this reality is we must learn from Holy Scripture and from nowhere else. With our fathers in the Reformation we find the doctrine of the *Una Sancta* in the words of St. Paul who, in Eph. 4:1 ff., speaks of the unity of the church as a divine gift. "There is one body and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." The one Lord builds His church through the means of grace in which He is present. The Holy Spirit creates and preserves the unity of this body, the church, in the bond of peace. Faith and the oneness of faith are created in the souls of the believers, as in the church as a whole, by God the Holy Spirit. To this indicative, "There is one body," the one, holy church, corresponds the divine imperative, the apostolic injunction "that ye walk worthy of the vocation . . . with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But how can we keep this unity if we do not keep that by which the church is preserved, the pure doctrine of the Gospel, the sacraments as instituted by Christ? The exhortation to walk in brotherly love and in meekness cannot be separated from the duty to keep the one faith. Love we owe to all men, also to the erring brother and to the heretic. But true love requires that I warn my brother and distinguish clearly between church and heresy. How can I save my brother from the danger of heresy if I refuse to make this distinction? In the New Testament the quest for oneness and the quest for truth always belong together. It was the apostle of love who uttered the most serious warnings against heresy (1 John 4:1 ff.; 2 John). And it was

Christ Himself in whose Highpriestly prayer the two petitions, "that they all may be one" and "sanctify them in thy truth; thy word is truth," belong together. It may be that the great contribution which Roman Catholicism has to make to the ecumenical movement is that it compels the Protestant churches, many of which have lost the sense for dogmatic truth, and, therefore, think of the church of the future in terms of chiliastic dreams, to realize again what the New Testament teaches about the reality of the *Una Sancta*.

FOOTNOTES

1. See F. A. Iremonger, "William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury. His Life and Letters," Oxford, 1948, p. 387. It would be worthwhile to investigate the ecclesiology of this representative leader of modern ecumenical Anglicanism. Sometimes he was inclined to find the *Una Sancta* solely in the future, e.g., in an address at Lausanne, 1927 (H. N. Bate, *Faith and Order*, 1927, pp. 488 f.) where he points out that the divisions are "as old as the Church." Here he thinks of the split between Jews and Christians in the New Testament. "Only the truly Catholic, the truly Universal, Church can have a living grasp of the whole Christian faith. From this point of view it would be true to say that there is not in the world today a Catholic Church with many schisms around it; from this point of view it would be true to say that there exist only schisms, and that this must always be true as soon as any schism has taken place at all."
2. "*ingens numerus*," A. Calov, *Historia Syncretistica*, 2nd edition, 1685, p. 859. Many similar utterances are extant.
3. For instance, Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher in *Redeeming the Situation. Occasional Sermons*, 1927, London, 1948, p. 43: "The Church of England believes that the Holy Spirit of God, the only final authority, speaks to us in Holy Scripture, in the tradition of the Church and in the living thought and experience of today. Thus there is a threefold cord, each single strand of which, unrelated to the others, leads astray." There are, of course, many Anglicans who would protest against the idea that the *sola scriptura* should lead astray.
4. He called it "*ineptum quinquesaecularium vocabulum*." See for details and references Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, Vol. IV, 1929, pp. 400 ff.
5. "*Calixtum Semi-Christianum Doctorem optimum et Ecclesiae Utopico-Oecumenicae in fide quodlibetana congregatae Pontificem Maximum*," quoted by A. Calov, *Historia Syncretistica*, 2nd edition, 1685, p. 870.
6. See the illuminating article by Vardapet Karekin Sarkissian, "The Ecumenical problem in Eastern Christendom," *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XII (July, 1960), pp. 436-454.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 441 f.
8. O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, Vol. III, 1912, p. 597.
9. Augustine calls Optatus "*Milevitanus episcopus catholicae communionis*" (*Contra ep. Parmeniani* I, 3, 5). It is not necessary to show here that "catholic" is used since the 2nd century often to denote the "orthodox" church in a particular place or area. Thus it becomes the name of a Christian communion, a "denomination."