

De Ecclesia

"[B]eing it [*sc.* the Church] is an aggregation not only of many persons, but also of many congregations, the unity thereof must consist in some agreement of them all, and adhesion to something which is one. . . .

"[T]he first unity of the Church considered in itself (beside that of the Head, which is one Christ, and the life communicated from that Head, which is one Spirit) relieth upon the original of it, which is one; even as an house built upon one foundation, though consisting of many rooms, and every room of many stones, is not yet many, but one house. Now there is but one foundation upon which the Church is built, and that is Christ: *for other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And though the Apostles and the Prophets be also termed the foundation, yet even then the unity is preserved, because as they are stones in the foundation, so are they united by one Corner-stone; whereby it comes to pass that such persons as are of the Church, being *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in Whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.* This stone was laid in Zion for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: there was the first Church built, and whosoever have been, or ever shall be converted to the true Christian Faith, are and shall be added to that Church, and laid upon the same foundation, which is the unity of ~~our~~ origination. Our Saviour gave the same power to all the Apostles, which was to found the Church; but He gave that power to Peter, to shew the unity of the same Church.

"Secondly, The Church is therefore one, though the members be many, because they all agree in one faith. There is *one Lord*, and *one faith*, and that faith *once delivered to the saints*, which whosoever shall receive, embrace, and profess, must necessarily be accounted one in reference to that profession. For if a company of believers become a Church by believing, they must also become one Church by believing one truth. . . .

[T]hey which believe the same doctrine delivered by Christ to all the Apostles, delivered by all the Apostles to believers, being all professors of the same faith, must be members of the same Church. And this is the unity of faith.

"Thirdly, Many persons and Churches, howsoever distinguished by time or place, are considered as one Church because they acknowledge and receive the same Sacraments, the signs and badges of the people of God. . . . [A]ll believing persons, and all Churches congregated in the Name of Christ, washed in the same laver of regeneration, eating of the same bread, and drinking of the same cup, are united in the same cognizance, and so known to be the same Church. And this is the unity of the Sacraments.

"Fourthly, Whosoever belongeth to any Church is some way called; and all which are so *are called in one hope of their calling*: the same reward of eternal life is promised unto every person. . . . And this is the unity of hope.

"Fifthly, They which are all of one mind, whatsoever the number of their persons be, they are in reference to that mind but one; as all the members, howsoever different, yet being animated by one soul, become one body. . . . By this, said our Saviour, *shall all men know that ye are My Disciples, if ye have love one to another.* And this is the unity of charity.

"Lastly, All the Churches of God are united into one by the unity of discipline and government, by virtue whereof the same Christ ruleth in them all. . . . As . . . there is no Church where there is no order, no ministry, so where the same order and ministry is there is the same Church. And this is the unity of regiment and discipline.

"By these means and for these reasons millions of persons and multitudes of congregations are united into one body, and become one Church. And thus under the name of *Church* expressed in this Article, I understand a body, or collection of human persons, professing faith in Christ, gathered together in several places of the world for the worship of the same God, and united into the same corporation by the means aforesaid" (John Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed*, Article IX: "The Holy Catholic Church" [from *Anglicanism*, ed. Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross: 27-29]).

"[T]he Church, which our Saviour founded and the Apostles gathered, was to receive a constant and perpetual accession, and by a successive augmentation be uninterruptedly continued in an actual existence of believing persons and congregations in all ages unto the end of the world.

"Now this indeed is a proper object of faith, because it is grounded only upon the promise of God; there can be no other assurance of the perpetuity of this Church, but what we have from Him that built it. The Church is not of such a nature as would necessarily, once begun, preserve itself for ever. Many thousand persons have fallen totally and finally from the faith professed, and so apostatized from the Church. Many particular Churches have been wholly lost, many candlesticks have been removed; neither is there any particular Church which hath any power to continue itself more or longer than others; and consequently if all particulars be defectible, the universal Church must also be subject of itself unto the same defectibility.

"But though the providence of God doth suffer many particular Churches to cease, yet the promise of the same God will never permit that all of them at once shall perish" (Pearson [30]).

"[T]he Church, as it embraceth all the professors of the true faith of Christ, containeth in it not only such as do truly believe and are obedient to the Word, but those also which are hypocrites, and profane. Many profess the Faith, which have no true belief; many have some kind of faith, which live with no correspondence to the Gospel preached. Within therefore the notion of the Church are comprehended good and bad, being both externally called, and both professing the same Faith. For *the Kingdom of heaven is like unto a field in which wheat and tares grow together unto the harvest; like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered every kind; like unto a floor in which is laid up wheat and chaff; like unto a marriage-feast, in which some have on the wedding-garment, and some not. This is that ark of Noah in which was preserved beasts clean and unclean. This is that great house in which there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour. There are many called, of all which the Church consisteth, but there are few chosen of*

those which are called, and thereby within the Church. I conclude therefore, as the ancient Catholics did against the Donatists, that within the Church, in the public profession and external communion thereof, are contained persons truly good and sanctified, and hereafter saved, and together with them other persons void of all saving grace, and hereafter to be damned: and that Church containing these of both kinds may well be called *holy*, as St. Matthew called Jerusalem *the holy city*, even at that time when our Saviour did but begin to preach, when we know there was in that city a general corruptions of manners and worship" (Pearson [32 f.]).

"The Catholic Faith . . . is so called with relation to the Catholic Church, whose Faith it is, and the Catholic Church is the Universal Church, or all the true churches in the world, which are all but one whole Church, united in Christ their Head. The profession of the true Faith and Worship of Christ makes a true Church, and all true churches are the One Catholic Church, whether they be spread over all the world, or shut up in any one corner of it, as at the first preaching of the Gospel the Catholic Church was nowhere but in Judaea. Now as no Church is the Catholic Church of Christ, how far soever it has spread itself over the world, unless it profess the true Faith of Christ, no more is any Faith the Catholic Faith, how universally soever it be professed, unless it be the true Faith of Christ. Nor does the true Christian Faith cease to be Catholic, how few soever there be who sincerely profess it. . . . Were there but one true Church in the world, that were the Catholic Church, because it would be the whole Church of Christ on earth, and were the true Christian Faith professed but in one such Church it would be the Catholic Faith still, for it is the faith of the whole true Church of Christ, the sincere belief and profession of which makes a Catholic Church" (William Sherlock, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* [40]).

"[W]e say there is a visible and invisible Church, not meaning to make two distinct Churches, as our adversaries falsely and maliciously charge us, though the form of words may serve to insinuate some such thing, but to distinguish the divers considerations of the same Church; which though it be visible in respect of the profession of supernatural verities revealed in Christ, use of holy Sacraments, order of Ministry, and due obedience yielded thereunto, and they discernible that do communicate therein; yet in respect of those most precious effects, and happy benefits of saving grace, wherein only the elect do communicate, it is invisible; and they that in so happy, gracious and desirable things have communion among themselves are not discernible from others to whom this fellowship is denied, but are known only unto God. . . .

"The persons, then, of them of whom the Church consisteth are visible; their profession known even to the profane and wicked of the world; and in this sort the Church cannot be invisible, neither did any of our men teach that it is or may be. For seeing the Church is the multitude of them that shall be saved, and no man can be saved unless he make confession unto salvation (for faith hid in the heart and concealed doth not suffice), it cannot be but they that are of the true Church must by the profession of the

truth make themselves known in such sort, that by their profession and practice they may be discerned from other men.

"Notwithstanding, because the truth and excellence of the faith and profession of Christians is not discerned by the light of nature, but by faith alone, the excellency of this society of Christians above other profane companies in the world, and their happiness that are of it, is invisible, hidden and unknown to natural men, and is known only to them that are spiritual. And who they are that have fellowship among themselves, not only in the profession of heavenly verities and outward means of salvation, but also in the benefits of effectual and saving grace, is known neither to the natural nor spiritual man, but to God alone. . . .

"[T]he same Church is at the same time both visible and invisible in divers respects" (Richard Field, *Of the Church*, Book II, Ch. ii [41 f., 44]).

"Marks and notes to know the Church there are none, except we will make true profession—which is the form and essence of the Church—to be a mark. And as there are none, so it is not necessary there should be. For to what purpose should they serve? That I might go seek and find out some company to mark. This is no way necessary; for glorious things are in the Scriptures spoken of the Church. Nor that I should run up and down the world to find the persons of the professors; but that I should make myself of it. This I do by taking upon me the profession of Christianity and submitting myself to the rules of belief and practice delivered in the Gospel—though besides myself I know no other professor in the world" (John Hales, *Miscellanies*, § i: "How to Know the Church" [50]).

"Christ hath appointed [the Holy Catholic Church] as the only way unto eternal life. We read at the first, that *the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*; and what was then daily done hath been done since continually. Christ never appointed two ways to Heaven, nor did He build a Church to save some, and make another institution for other men's salvation. *There is no other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, but the Name of Jesus; and that Name is no otherwise given under Heaven than in the Church. As none were saved from the deluge but such as were within the ark of Noah, framed for their reception by the command of God; as none of the first-born of Egypt lived, but such as were within those habitations, whose door posts were sprinkled with blood by the appointment of God for their preservation; as none of the inhabitants of Jericho could escape the fire or sword, but such as were within the house of Rahab, for whose protection a covenant was made; so none shall ever escape the eternal wrath of God, which belong not to the Church of God. This is the congregation of those persons here on earth which shall hereafter meet in Heaven. These are the vessels of the tabernacle carried up and down, at last to be translated into, and fixed in, the temple" (Pearson [37]).