

LET THE
CHURCH
BE THE
CHURCH

*A Study of the Church
Based on the Hymn
The Church's One Foundation
By Samuel J. Stone*

Doug Stelzig

The Church's One Foundation

Text: Samuel J. Stone; Tune: AURELIA 7. 6. 7. 6. D. Samuel S. Wesley

1 The church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

2 Elect from ev'ry nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With ev'ry grace endued.

3 Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

4 The church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
to guide, sustain, and cherish,
is with her to the end;
though there be those that hate her,
and false sons in her pale,
against both foe and traitor
she ever shall prevail.

5 'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
'Til with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

6 Yet she on earth hath union
With the God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee.

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Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. What speaks to you in this verse?

2. Are there any parts that you do not understand?

DIGGING DEEPER

3. What does it mean to be the church's one foundation? What is the purpose of a foundation?

Read Matthew 7: 24-27

Didn't Jesus say *Peter* was the rock/foundation on which he was going to build his church? *Read Matthew 16:15-18*

Read Ephesians 2:19-20. What might it mean that the foundation of God's household is the apostles and prophets? What is their special role? What is a cornerstone, and what is its relation to the foundation?

What other things, humanly speaking, are we tempted to make the foundation of our church? Why are we tempted to do this?

4. The catholic (that is, universal) church, which is invisible, consists of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ its head. This church is his bride, his body, and the fullness of him who fills all in all.

—*Westminster Confession of Faith xxv.1*

In what sense is the church Jesus' own special creation?

In what sense is the church a new creation? If it consists of every elect person from every age, how is it a new creation?

In what sense is Pentecost, Acts 2, the birth of the church?

The visible church, which is also catholic (that is, universal) under the gospel (that is, not confined to one nation, as it was before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.--
Westminster Confession of Faith xxv.2

What is the significance of "water and the word"?

What role does the Spirit play?

3. Notice that the hymn says that Jesus came and sought, not *all*, but *her*, that is the church, and that he died not for *all*, but for the *church*. Is the hymn writer being biblical?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:22-23; see also Romans 5:6-21; Ephesians 1:3-14

What emotions or feelings to the word "bride and groom" evoke? What are some things that ought to characterise the marriage relationship? *Read Ephesians 5:25-33*

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What then is the church based on the first verse of the hymn?

Given your description, what can you do to make your church be what you have described?

2

Elect from ev'ry nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With ev'ry grace endued.

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1. What speaks to you in this verse?

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3. What word is repeated over and over again in this verse?

Based on that repetition, use "one" word to summarise what this verse is about.

What is the contrast being drawn between lines 1 and 2?

The catholic (that is, universal) church, which is invisible, consists of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ its head. This church is his bride, his body, and the fullness of him who fills all in all.

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Read Revelation 5:9-10. What does the *universal* church look like? Can you think of an organization whose members come from "every tribe, language, people, and nation?"

charter

- *n.* A document *issued by a sovereign, legislature, or other authority, creating a public or private corporation, such as a city, college, or bank, and defining its privileges and purposes.*
- *n.* A *written grant from the sovereign power of a country conferring certain rights and privileges on a person, a corporation, or the people.*
- *n.* A document outlining the *principles, functions, and organization of a corporate body; a constitution.*—*American Heritage Dictionary, s.v.*

3. Given the definition of "charter" above, what are some significant aspects of the church's "charter of salvation"?

Who gave it, and what is his relationship to the church's salvation?

What are the church's *rights* pertaining to salvation?

Her *privileges*?

Her *purpose*?

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

The charter of salvation is to bring about _____ in
the _____.

What is the basis for that unity (vv 4-6)?

The hymn says "one Lord, one faith, one *birth*," while v 5 says, "one Lord, one faith, one *baptism*." What is the relationship between the new birth and baptism?

5. The theme of unity goes on in the hymn: "One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food, . . ." Why is this important?

What about the idea of "one hope?" What is our common hope? See *Philippians 4:12-14*.

Read *1 Corinthians 12:4-11*. What does it mean that the church is "endued" or *clothed* with "ev'ry grace?" Does every individual church member possess every grace?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What then should characterse the church based on this second verse of the hymn?

Given your description, what can you do to make your church be what you have described?

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Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
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3. Think of some ways the world scorns the church. Why does Stone describe it as scornful *wonder*?

In America we are somewhat insulated from oppression. Name some parts of the world where oppression is a real issue. Name some religions or ideologies that are inherently hostile to the church.

Name some ways in which oppression of the church in America might be just over the horizon.

4. Does oppression only come from outside? According to lines 3 and 4, what are some of the dangers to the church from within?

What is a modern expression to describe schism.

What are heresies? Name some heresies that you know of.

5. According to lines 5 and 6, what gives hope to the church when she is oppressed, hurt, or deceived?

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The church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
to guide, sustain, and cherish,
is with her to the end;
though there be those that hate her,
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