

As we go up to meet the Lord in the air, it will be interesting to see how quickly many of the things that divide Christians today will lose much of their significance. Among those who are taken up we probably will see some with whom, though we knew them to be true Christians, we had no fellowship on earth because of a difference on some point of doctrine or government. Perhaps the view we held was correct; perhaps we were receiving from it great help in our Christian life; perhaps they were missing a great blessing through their ignorance of this particular doctrine. Yet if they truly believed in the Lord, they and we will go up together to meet the Lord in the air. Those who truly believe in Christ have far more in common with each other than with any who do not believe in Christ.

In many of our churches it is customary to recite the Apostles' Creed, including the statement, "I believe in the holy catholic church." This statement uses the word "catholic" in its original sense. In the early centuries of the history of the Christian church, "catholic" designated those who agreed on the great essentials of Christianity and who recognized that all who are united to Christ are really one body regardless of disagreement on secondary matters.

This truth is strongly emphasized in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, where Paul calls upon us to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (v.3). He continues: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." In succeeding verses Paul describes the church as one body, and declares that all of its leadership is given for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v.12-13). Pointing out the relation of every part of the body to Christ, who is its Head, Paul says in verse 16: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."¹⁾