

Any Age a Golden Age

In small congregations that were once larger, I have observed, although not so much in my own current ones, is it a common topic of conversation how much larger the congregation used to be. I suppose it is only natural, and it is not in itself a bad thing to talk about the past. Still, although there need not be, there can be something unhealthy about the way some may look and long back to the golden days. There is the danger that those who remember the golden age might come to think of those days as "when our church was a real church" - as if she were that no longer because, in purely human terms, she is not what she once was! Some might even, consciously or unconsciously, come to embrace the sentiment that the purpose of what now happens in Church is, or should be, to revive the memory of those golden days.

To think that way is to not discern the things of God, but only the things of Man, which is an impulse to which our Lord Jesus is recorded to have responded with a "Get behind me, Satan!"

What the Church of Christ is in her nature pertains to the things of God rather than to the things of men; worship is not a social gathering, or even an occasion for likeminded individuals to share a common interest, although it may be all that they see, who discern only the things of man; rather, the Church of Christ is "His body and His fullness, who fills all in all", as the holy Apostle Paul writes it. She is where He Himself lives and works and gives Himself to His Christians with all that He is and all that is His. And His Church in any place may very well be people who have nothing in common, other than all that matters: that they seek and receive Him and His salvation in His Word and worship, because they have been overcome by His Word of love and called into a life in His love, in the Word and worship of His salvation.

The glory of the Church of Christ is the glory He shares with His Christians in the life of His Church, with His Word of His love and what His love has done and won for the salvation of sinners, His promise of rescue from eternal death and damnation and eternal life with Him in glory, with which which promise all that He promises is given to all who hear in faith. Whether many or few, His Church in any place is "His body and His fullness, who fills all in all"; and this makes any age in the life of His Church the golden age - and this even though greater days are yet to come.