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I.—THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM.

The subject of this paper has been a good deal discussed and written about of late years. And yet it is not altogether new. Ever since the great schism in the eighth century between the Greek and Latin Churches repeated attempts have been made to effect a reunion. Since the Reformation several abortive attempts have been made to effect even partial reunion. One of the latest of these was the proposal set forth in the celebrated Lambeth Quadrilateral or the four propositions of the Convocation of English and American Bishops at Lambeth. The Northern Assembly appointed a very respectable committee to meet with a similar committee of the American Episcopal Church, and for two or three years they held a number of very pleasant joint meetings. But no real progress was made, and very few real Presbyterians ever expected any results of any value. None of the proposed articles were entirely satisfactory, but the insuperable difficulty was in the last one. Presbyterians would not object to the truly primitive and scriptural episcopate, which is the parochial episcopate, but it was obvious from the first that the Episcopalians meant the later diocesan or prelatical episcopate, and that is what Presbyterians will never accept, and they would cease to be Presbyterians if they did. It was, therefore, no more than might have been expected when the General Assembly at Saratoga in 1894 dismissed their committee and discontinued further fruitless negotiations.

The subject of union, however, still continues to be dis-

cussed. There is a paper published in New York, edited by a body, with the co-operation of several eminent divines, of which the union of churches is the special object. A conference is held in New York occasionally, I believe, in connection with Union Theological Seminary, on the subject of Church Union, and a volume of their papers was published a year or two ago. The reunion of Christendom was a subject very near to the heart of my friend, the late Dr. Philip Schaff. I thought he was wasting a great deal of valuable time in that way, and once, when I was urging him to let other things lie for awhile and finish his great History of the Church, and to bring it up to the time of the Pan-Presbyterian Council: "Yes," he said, "up to the Pan-Christian Council." I feared very much that he would not be spared long enough to do that.

Now, it goes without saying that the advocates of the reunion of Christendom mean a visible external organic union. And to secure this end they are willing to make large sacrifices of doctrine. In fact, the advocates of such union generally make small account of doctrine, and charge upon theology nearly all the evils of heresy and schism. By schism they mean separation from episcopal authority, and they regard that as worse than error in doctrine.

The reunion of Christendom generally means by its advocates the union of existing religious bodies, or denominations, into one visible organic body, so that there shall be but one Christian Church throughout the world. The difference between the Church as visible and invisible is overlooked or denied, and the bond of union is external. And the evils of denominationalism are often grossly exaggerated. These views, however, do not commend themselves to men of cooler and sounder judgment, and of a more practical turn of mind. It is freely conceded that there are too many denominations, and that a union of the smaller ones with the larger ones of the same faith and order is desirable. The smaller Presbyterian bodies, to mention no others, doubtless seem to themselves to have

good and sufficient reasons for remaining apart. And as long as they thus think we must respect their convictions. Further than this is useless, for no Presbyterian can be forced or coaxed into any sort of union against his convictions. But whether their reasons for maintaining a separate existence, however satisfactory to themselves, are such as will justify them in the mind of the great Head of the Church, may admit of some doubt. But the question is entirely different, whether those who are separated by important doctrinal differences, differences of church polity, nationality, language, history and usages should be combined in one visible organic union. Such a union as this we do not believe to be either desirable or possible.

If all the separate churches were combined in one huge body it would become unwieldy, an inert mass, unless under the control of some one great central power, like that of the Roman Pontiff. And we know what has been the result of that unity. With all its tyranny and infringement upon liberty, it has not answered the end proposed. Not to speak of minor divisions, there have arisen, in spite of of the Roman obedience, no less than three grand divisions of Christendom, the Oriental or Orthodox Greek Church, the Latin or Papal Church, and the Protestant Church, of which the Episcopal is only one of the separate Protestant Communion. Very few Protestants, or even Greeks or Russians, would seriously consider an invitation to return to Rome.

Nor has Episcopacy, apart from Rome, been any more successful in preserving unity of organization. The Episcopal Church has no where had more signal advantages than in England, yet even there, there has always been a large body of dissenters, and at the present time it is an open question whether they do not actually outnumber the Church of England. And in this country, in the original colonies, with the exception of New England and Pennsylvania, the Episcopal Church was favored above all others. They therefore had much the advantage at the start;

and although the Presbyterians were persecuted in some of the colonies, the Episcopalians not only failed to preserve organic union, but actually dropped behind several other churches in progress.

These statements are made not with the purpose of disparaging the excellent people of the Episcopal denomination, but to show the utter futility of any scheme of organic union based upon the diocesan episcopate.

Nor is any other scheme of organic union any more likely to be successful. The early part of this century witnessed an attempt to get rid of the alleged evils of separate denominations by the rejection of creeds, and adherence to the Bible alone. The Rev. Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander Campbell, undertook the role of reformers. Thomas Campbell was a Presbyterian minister, but had been originally a Roman Catholic, and quite likely retained a prejudice against denominations, which he brought over with him from his early associations. His son, Alexander, also a Presbyterian, was left to finish his studies in Glasgow, and there fell under the influence of the Haldanes. Upon coming to this country he found his father in a state of mind similar to his own. They first rejected infant baptism, then they adopted immersion as the only mode of baptism. But as the Presbyterians of Western Pennsylvania were not disposed to tolerate such irregularities, they went over to the Baptists. But finding themselves not at home with them they withdrew and set up for themselves. Thus their project of doing away with denominations by rejecting all creeds except the Bible, as they themselves understood it, ended in simply adding one more to the denominations already existing. That is to say, the attempt at union by the rejection of creeds proved to be an utter failure.

From very early times there has never been any such thing as an organic union of Christians. The only bond of union between them was fellowship in the same faith, and the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit. Each local church was governed by its own elders. In the apostolic Church,

and in the times following, bishop and presbyter were two words denoting the same class of persons, as even the most learned and candid Episcopal scholars themselves admit. The Apostles were a special and exceptional class of officers, and after them there were no others except elders and deacons, one of whom was recognized by reason of his qualifications or gifts, as the pastor or parochial bishop of each church. In our current Church Histories a great deal of error and confusion has arisen from a failure to discriminate between these earlier and primitive practical bishops, and the later diocesan bishops. Our object, however, is not to discuss this question, and it is only mentioned incidentally, to show that the early churches did not constitute an episcopal hierarchy, but were to a large extent independent of each other. When some question of common interest or importance arose it was referred to a Synod, made up of commissioners chosen by the people to represent them, of which the first Synod at Jerusalem may be taken as an example. And the decisions reached were not merely advice, but "decrees for to keep." These Synods were the only external bond of union known to the early church. The fact that these Synods did not meet statedly, as they do now in the Reformed Churches, is nothing to the purpose. Stated meetings are only a matter of convenience or interest. The essential thing about them is, that in them the principle of representation is recognized, and that their decisions were authoritative. In all else the local church managed its own affairs, without the supervision of a diocesan bishop. The bond of union between them was mainly internal, not external.

And when the term "Catholic" began to be applied to the church, it was not used to designate any particular organic body, but all Christians who adhered to the common faith, as ever against all heresiarchs and heretical and schismatical bodies. And even after the Episcopate had been evolved out of the presbyterate, slowly and gradually,

(*Paulatim*, as St. Jerome said)* there was no organic union of Christendom, such as the advocates of church union now seek. For a time each bishop of a diocese was supreme within his own jurisdiction. When the archbishops arose they had jurisdiction over the bishops in a limited area. And when the Patriarchates arose, each Patriarch was independent within his own jurisdiction. In process of time the Greek Church separated from the Latin Church, and since then there has not been even the semblance of organic union in Christendom.

The Western or Latin branch has, indeed, by means of the hierarchy, kept up a species of uniformity, but without real union. There are two kinds of union, that which is from within, and that which is external. A living tree, for instance, is constituted a unity by the life or vital force within, but an external unity is like that of a barrel, the parts of which are kept together by the hoops outside. This latter is the kind of unity, or uniformity, which the Roman Church has managed to keep up, and which the Episcopal Church attempted in England; while the former, a living and real union, but not organic, is what we find in the early church. We thus see that the whole scheme of organic unity, such as is advocated now in certain quarters, is chimerical and impracticable, and that no such thing has ever existed in the whole history of the church.

Nor is such an organic unity desirable. The principle denominations of Protestant Christendom enjoy their religion more, and are doing vastly more for the good of mankind, and for the coming kingdom and glory of our divine Redeemer than they would or could if bound together in one organic body. Methodists are freer, happier and more useful as Methodists than they ever could be in any other way, while staid Calvinistic Presbyterians would not feel at home among Methodists, and are vastly more useful by themselves. Pædo-baptists are not ready to give up the

*Jerome reminded the bishops of his day that they were such, not so much by the command of Christ as by the custom of the churches.

baptism of their children, nor to go under the water themselves; while our Baptist brethern could not conscientiously forego immersion, nor administer baptism to infants. And none of us are willing to submit to my lord bishop. These divergences have their ground in the diversities of human nature, and should be recognized as such. Wherever men are free to think and act these differences will exist.

And they are not necessarily an evil, but on the contrary are a source of much good. That there are sometimes unseemly denominational rivalries and controversies is fully admitted; but the remedy for these faults is not organic remedy. In that case parties would still exist, and the party strife would increase in bitterness, as is actually the case in those hierarchical churches which attempt to enforce uniformity. But the true remedy is to be found in the spread of a broader and more catholic charity, such as begins to display itself more and more as men begin to see that the things in which they agree are far more and more important than the things in which they differ.

And the ends of denominationalism are not by any means as great as they have been represented. They have been grossly exaggerated. The writer of this paper has been at the front a great deal in the course of his life and has seen a great deal of the home mission work in our country. It is on the home field that complaints have been loudest of the different denominations crowding and hindering one another. In point of fact there is very little ground of complaint. Occasionally, in a village, there may be two or three churches where one is all that can be supported at present, but in most cases these towns are growing, and soon there will be ample support for all. It is a recognized principle of Presbyterianism that the people have a right to the church of their choice, and we would rather lose our right hand than to deny the Presbyterian people of God a church organization wherever there are enough of them, with a reasonable prospect of self-support. It would be cruel and inhuman to say to such people, 'We can do

nothing for you, and you must abjure the faith and the church in which you were brought up, and go into some other,' just because it was a little smarter than we were in getting there first. Fortunately our home missionaries are not that kind of men. After an observation on the field, covering a period of more than a quarter of a century, we are glad to be able to testify that very little home missionary money has been injudiciously expended. There is room for all, and the denominations have been no appreciable hindrance, but have rather incited one another to an emulation in good works.

We may, however, be confronted with certain passages of Scripture, which, to a superficial reader, may seem to favor organic union. If such be their meaning, why, then, of course that settles the matter against all questions of expediency, denominational preferences, or even a practicability at present. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to inquire what is the real teaching of Scripture on the subject. As we make no claim, personally, to be an authority on such matters, we propose to give the expositions of some of those who are recognized as masters in exegesis.

In Christ's intercessory prayer, as recorded in the 17th chapter of John's gospel, he prays, v. ii, "that they may be one as we are," v. 21, "that they all may be one as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." We are persuaded that these words have some times been made to do duty in a way which our Lord never intended. Let us first see what an Anglican scholar, like the late Dean Alford, has to say on these passages. Following Augustine, he says, "the oneness here is by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, the gift of the covenant, and ultimately oneness of nature." Then on v. 21 he says, "The subject matter of the prayer is, that they may be kept in God's name, and sanctified in God's truth; and if this be so, their unity with the Son and the Father follows. . . . This unity has its true and only ground in faith in Christ, through the word of God as delivered by the Apostles, and

is, therefore, not mere outward uniformity, nor can such uniformity produce it. At the same time its effects are to be real and visible, such that the world may see them." The Dean's meaning evidently is, that there should be such a manifestation of faith and charity as shall exemplify their oneness in Christ, even though in minor matters they be separated by national and denominational lines.

Let us next see what a German scholar, Meyer, who is still *facile princeps* on the New Testament, has to say on these passages. We purposely leave the Greek Grammar out, as not being interesting to ordinary readers, and as savoring of pedantry to put it in. In John 17:11 he says, "the Lord prays that God would keep them in this his name in order that they, in virtue of the one common faith and confession resting on the name of God, may be one (in the spiritual fellowship, of like mind and love, comp. vs. 22, 23) in conformity with the archetype of the ethical unity of the Father and the Son."

In vs. 20-21, of the same chapter, Meyer says: "In his prayer for the disciples for their preservation and sanctification (vs. 11-19), Jesus now also includes all who (comp. Rom. 10:14) shall believe on him through the apostle's word. The purpose for which he also includes these; that all (all my believing ones, the apostles and the others,) may be one, ethically in likeness of disposition, of endeavor, of love, etc., on the ground of faith. This ethical unity of all believers, to be specifically Christian, must correspond as to its original to the reciprocal fellowship between the Father and the Son, according to which the Father lives and moves in the Son, and the Son in the Father, the object of which, in reference to believers collectively, is that in them also the Father and the Son may be the element in which they (in view of the *union mystica* brought about through the Spirit, 1 Jno. 1:3, 14-13; 1 Pet. 1:4) live and move. This ethical union of all believers in the fellowship with the Father and the Son, however, (comp. xiii:35) shall serve to the unbelieving world as an actual proof and

ground of conviction, that Christ, the grand central point and support of this unity, is none other than the sent of God."

This might be sufficient were not the temptation to offer one or two Presbyterian authorities irresistible. Dr. David Brown, in his Commentary on the Gospels, on John xvii, says: "It is not mere unity—whether in a vast external organization, or even in internal judgment and feeling about religious matters. It is oneness in the unity of the Father and the Son—that they may be one in us—in the matters of grace and salvation. Thus it is a union in spiritual life, a union in faith on a common Saviour, in love to his blessed name, in hope of his glorious appearing; a union brought about by the teaching, quickening and indwelling of the one Spirit of the Father and the Son in all alike; in virtue of which they have all one common character and interest—in freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan, in separation from this present evil world, in consecration to the service of Christ and the glory of God, in witnessing for truth and righteousness on the earth, in participation of all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." The whole passage in Dr. Brown's comment, too long for quotation here in full, will repay the reader's careful study.

In Romans 12:4, 5, is another passage referred to by the advocates of external organic union. The apostle there says, "for as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." In this passage Dr. Charles Hodge (commentary on Romans) remarks: "The apostle's design is to show that the diversities of offices and gifts among Christians, so far from being inconsistent with their union as one body in Christ, is necessary to the perfection and usefulness of that body. It would be as unreasonable for all Christians to have the same gifts as for all the members of the human frame to have the same office. This confession is peculiarly beautiful and appropriate, because it not only clearly illustrates the partic-

ular point intended, but at the same time brings into view the important truth that the real union of Christians results from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as the union of the several members of the body is the result of their all being animated and actuated by one soul. Nothing can present in a clearer light the duty of Christian fellowship, or the sinfulness of divisions and envyings among the members of Christ's body than the apostle's confession."

The Apostle Paul says in Gal. iii, vs. 27-28, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." In the first clause of these verses Meyer well remarks: "After ye have put on Christ, the distinctions of your various relations of life, apart from Christianity, have vanished; from the standpoint of this new condition they have no further validity, any more than if they were not in existence. And on the last clause, "for ye all are one," he says, "ye form a single moral person; so that now those distinctions of individuals outside of Christianity appear as non-existent, completely merged in that higher unity to which ye all are raised in virtue of your fellowship of life with Christ."

We have now examined the principal passages of scripture bearing on the question of unity. We have shown from learned expositors in England, Scotland, Germany and America that these passages do not refer to organic unity in one vast undivided body, but to our oneness in Christ, which is a union arising from the profession of the same faith in Christ and the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit, who is the bond of the only real union that there is or can be among Christians. Jesus Christ is the head, and the only head, of whom all Christians are the members, constituting the one mystical body of Christ. And this oneness in Christ does not require or imply organic union, for it can and has existed in all its fulness without it, and cannot be produced by it. In further support of these

views, see Dr. Hodges fine commentary on Ephesians iv, 3-7 inclusive, which is too long for quotation.

These things being so, it is easy to see who are the real schismatics. They are those who refuse fellowship with their Christian brethren, whether it be on account of baptism or episcopal ordination, or the Roman obedience. Such conduct cannot be other than offensive to the great Head of the Church. To cast out of the church those for whom Christ died, and who profess their faith in him, and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, is of the very essence of schism. To refuse fellowship and church privileges to any who profess their faith in Christ, and in whom the Spirit dwells who owns and blesses their labors in the cause of Christ, is not only sinful in the sight of God, but is a scandal in the eyes of men. The arrogant claim of any one branch of Christendom to be the Church, excluding all others, and among them some of the greatest and holiest of men, is a mournful exhibition of uncharitableness and bigotry. In contrast to this narrowness, the declaration of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that "the visible church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children," is catholic and noble. By the true religion is meant, not any one party of Christians, but Christianity, as over against all other forms of religion. And we are glad that our own branch of the church visible, while it has stood firmly for the truth as it is revealed in the word of God, is truly catholic and charitable in its doctrine of the church.

Instead, therefore, of seeking an undesirable, impracticable and unscriptural organic union of Christendom, in one immense and unwilling body, kept together by mere external organization, without any real spiritual unity, let us endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," realizing that there is but one faith, one baptism, one Holy Spirit and one divine spiritual life, whereof we all are partakers. We rejoice in the evidence that our different denominations are beginning to understand this more

and more, and to abate much of the party strife, bitterness and hatred that once disfigured them. This realization of their oneness has been greatly promoted by the great Catholic Societies, such as the British and American Bible Societies, the American Tract Society and the American Sunday School Union; the revision of the Bible by scholars of different English speaking churches, and more recently by the great Christian Endeavor movement.

Let the good work go on. Let all the divisions of the great sacramental host, while retaining their denominational peculiarities, feel their real oneness in Christ, and strive to promote more charitable and brotherly feeling toward one another. Let all Christians learn to receive all whom Christ receives.

“Then shall his perfect will be done
When Christians love and live as one.”

WILLIAM ALEXANDER.

San Anselmo, Cal.