

THE  
LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER

BY

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"John Calvin and Genevan Reformation," Etc.*



RICHMOND, VA.  
PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION

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J. E. MAGILL, *Secretary*  
1906



PRINTED BY  
THE CUMBERLAND PRESS  
NASHVILLE, TENN.

for the establishment of "official correspondence" between the two churches. Nor was he at pains to conceal his sentiments; as the Augusta Assembly of 1886, before which he delivered a great speech on "The Church a Spiritual Kingdom," learned, in the course of that address; and as numerous proofs make manifest; e. g., this letter to the Rev. A. C. Hopkins, D.D., of Charlestown, W. Va.:

"NEW ORLEANS, LA., June 16, 1886.

"MY DEAR DR. HOPKINS: Your welcome letter of the first awaited my return from the Commencement at Clarksville, Tenn., and was a great refreshment to my spirit. 'Fraternal relations' were not established in the clean way, by the Atlanta Assembly; so that I have never felt since that we stood on solid ground. It was, therefore, under some oppression of heart I spoke at Augusta—not only upon that point, but also upon the matter of Lay-Evangelism. I was greatly relieved on both points by the number of the younger members of the Assembly, who came to me with the assurance that they stood squarely and firmly upon the principles I announced. It has given me more hope for our future than I had dared to cherish. Many thanks to you for the cordial endorsement of your letter: and still more for the personal consideration which prompted you to give me this drop of comfort. If we could only have a let-up from the ceaseless agitation of all manner of subjects; less tinkering at our Book of Order—less discussion of revolutionary measures of Church organization—and a total stop of this importation of scientific theories into our theology. But we must abide in our lot, and push the Master's work on, as best we can under these hindrances.

"Permit me to close, dear brother, with the expression of the wish that we could have the rich pleasure of a visit from you some day. The chamber is always ready for you, and the pulpit.

"Yours in Christian love,

"B. M. PALMER."

The question of "Fraternal Relations" once settled, the party in the Church that had been agitating for closer relations began to agitate for "Organic Union" with the Northern Church. This Dr. Palmer deprecated for still more imperative reasons than obtained in the case of "Fraternal Relations." The Assembly of 1887 was asked, through certain overtures, to institute measures looking to the establishment of "closer relations." Dr. Palmer was a member of that Assembly and made, perhaps, the most telling speech in opposition to every device to loosen the Church from her moorings. Like many great men, he found himself, when the vote was taken, in the

minority. That minority was, however, not done fighting. They got together and appointed a committee to prepare an open letter to the Church at large. Dr. Palmer was made the chairman of that very able committee. The points of the open letter are the points of his speech put into written style and more carefully substantiated. Here is the letter :

*“To the Members of the Southern Presbyterian Church :*

“At the recent meeting of the Southern General Assembly held in St. Louis, overtures were presented from the Synods of Missouri, Arkansas, Alabama, and the Presbyteries of St. John, Upper Missouri, Chesapeake, Missouri, Holston, Indian, East Alabama, and Dallas, favoring closer relations with the Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church. These overtures were immediately referred to a special committee, composed of members drawn from all the Synods, which resulted in the return of two conflicting reports for the consideration of the Assembly. The majority report, signed by sixteen names, is in these words :

“*Whereas*, The Synods of Missouri, Arkansas and Alabama, embracing fifteen Presbyteries, have taken action favoring reunion of some kind between the two Churches; and

“*WHEREAS*, Subsequent thereto eight Presbyteries, to-wit: St. John, Upper Missouri, Chesapeake, Missouri, Holston, Indian, East Alabama and Dallas, have manifested special interest in the matter by overtures or resolutions, favoring closer relations between the two Churches; while from only five Presbyteries have come any expressions of dissent and that chiefly against organic union; therefore,

“Your committee recommend that a committee of five ministers and five ruling elders, with the Moderator of this Assembly added thereto as ex-officio chairman, be appointed by the present Moderator of this Assembly to confer with any like committee that the other Assembly may appoint, concerning the whole subject of organic union, co-operative union, and any other relation between the two Assemblies, and said committee be directed to report the result of the joint conference to the General Assembly at its meeting in May, 1888, for approval or disapproval. And that the committee be instructed to take and maintain the following positions :

“1. The mere acceptance of the common Standards of our Church, Confession of Faith, Shorter and Larger Catechisms, does not in our minds form a sufficient basis of union; but the acceptance of that peculiar interpretation of our Standards which affirms and emphasizes the purely spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom and forbids her legislating upon political and civil matters, is the only true basis of union.

“2. And further, we insist that the colored brethren within our

bounds shall be organized into separate congregations, Presbyteries and Synods.'

"The Minority Report, signed by nine of the committee, reads as follows:

"The undersigned members of your Special Committee appointed to examine and report upon the papers and overtures submitted to the General Assembly on the question of organic and co-operative union with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, are of the opinion that the difficulties in the way are so numerous, and of so serious a nature, that they cannot be removed.

"They arise mainly out of the fact that the two Churches are not agreed in matters of either *principle* or *polity*. The plea that the two have the same "Confession of Faith," may be fully met by the simple statement that all Evangelical Denominations have the same Protestant Bible. But the difference in the one case, as in the other, arises out of the interpretation of the teaching of the two Books. So the separate existence of the Southern Church is as much demanded because of the widely different interpretation of the language of that Confession of Faith in matters both of *doctrine* and *government*, as the separate existence of other denominations of Christians is demanded, because they are not sufficiently agreed in their essential tenets to constitute one organic body.

"No suggestion has been made, or, in the opinion of those signing this paper, can be made, for the removal of this most serious obstacle which meets us at the very opening of this question.

"To unite, or attempt to unite, the two Churches on any compromise of these fundamental differences, or upon any general statements, such as the reception of the Standards "pure and simple," would "serve only to bring together those who could not act in harmony, and would perpetuate strife and alienation."

"These conclusions have been reached by us after a full and careful examination of the whole question in the light of all the papers submitted for our consideration. The discussion of the question for some time past, both North and South, has made it equally manifest that the further agitation of this question would hinder the progress, weaken the efficiency, and endanger the unity of our Church.'

"The two papers were jointly considered in the discussion which followed, all the points involved in either being handled without restriction. The wide range of this debate brought the whole subject of union between the two Churches under review, to be discussed upon its merits simply and without being entangled with minor issues. At a later stage a substitute was offered for both reports, and was adopted by a vote of eighty against fifty-seven. We give the text of this substitute:

"WHEREAS, A number of overtures in reference to closer relations

to the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America have come up to this Assembly; and

“WHEREAS, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America has just adopted the deliverance of the two Synods of Missouri on the spirituality of the Church; and

“WHEREAS, The two Assemblies ought to labor together for the accomplishment of the great object they have in view, if they are sufficiently agreed in their principles to make them more efficient for their work united than they now are divided; and

“WHEREAS, The recent action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, apparently different from their former action, as to the spirituality of the Church, makes the impression on the minds of many of our people that one obstacle to closer relations to that Church has been, or soon may be, removed; therefore,

“Resolved, That a committee of four ministers and four ruling elders, together with the Moderator, be appointed to meet with a similar committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, if such a committee shall be appointed, for the sole purpose of inquiring into and ascertaining the facts as to the point above mentioned, and as to the position that Assembly proposes to maintain as to colored churches, ecclesiastical boards, and any other subjects now regarded as obstacles in the way of united effort for the propagation of the Gospel, and report these facts to the next General Assembly for such action as they may warrant.’

“Their names being on the record of ayes and noes, the minority do not care to enter a formal protest against the policy pursued; but in a conference held by some fifty of their number it was resolved to set forth the grounds of their opposition in an open letter to the Churches, in which there should be a calm restatement of all the issues involved in this controversy. This delicate task was assigned to a committee of eight, as follows: B. M. Palmer, R. L. Dabney, R. K. Smoot, J. L. Girardeau, C. R. Vaughan, ministers; and C. F. Collier, Judge Armstrong, W. L. T. Prince, elders. This brief history forms a proper introduction to the statement, which follows, of the reasons why so large a portion of the Church, as represented in the late Assembly, stands unalterably opposed to the fusion of the two bodies and to all steps leading in that direction.

“1. We allege the original ground of separation existing still in full force, which in 1861 compelled the withdrawal of the Southern Synods and the formation of another Assembly, to-wit: the right claimed and exercised by the Northern Church to intermeddle with questions of State policy lying outside of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In sustaining this charge, it is not necessary to cite all the political deliverances of the Northern Assembly during the four years of the

late Civil War, from 1861 to 1865. For the sake of brevity, we sink all these in the first—known as the famous ‘Spring Resolution’—adopted in 1861 by a vote of one hundred and fifty-four against sixty-six. It reads as follows: [See page 240 of this volume for these resolutions.]

“Here, then, is an interpretation of our Civil Constitution, as formal and precise as though it had emanated from the Supreme Court of the United States. Not only so, it undertakes to decide a question left open by the framers of the Constitution, and upon which the statesmen of this country have been divided ever since the foundation of the Republic. It is of no consequence, in this controversy, whether this is a true decision or not. Our contention is that an Ecclesiastical Court was incompetent to entertain the subject, especially in view of the fact that the Church is defined in our Standards as ‘a government in the hands of Church officers, distinct from the Civil Magistrate.’ (Conf. 30: 1.) Still more expressly is it declared, ‘these Assemblies (Congregational, Presbyterian and Synodical) ought not to possess any civil jurisdiction, nor inflict any civil penalties. Their power is wholly moral or spiritual, and that only ministerial and declarative’ (Form of Government, Chapter 8: 2). As though the Church was not sufficiently separated in her spiritual jurisdiction from the State, she is sternly restrained within her appropriate sphere, in this language of inhibition: ‘Synods and Councils are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical, and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the Commonwealth’ (Conf., Ch. 31: 4). In the face, however, of these explicit statements rigidly defining the nature and functions of the Church, the Northern Assembly in 1861 undertook to determine the vexed question, the fearful legacy left through the indecision of our forefathers, whether the allegiance of the citizen was primarily due to the State or to the Central authority. Against this palpable invasion of the province of the State a protest, signed by the venerable Dr. Chas. Hodge and forty-five others, testifies in the following nervous style: ‘The General Assembly in thus deciding a political question, and in making that decision practically a condition of membership of the Church, has, in our judgment, violated the Constitution of the Church, and usurped the prerogative of its Divine Master.’

“Of course, all this political legislation by the Northern Church is now obsolete, the occasion which called it forth having passed away. But the principle remains, upon which it was based; and upon which we are as necessarily separated from their communion, as when we were forcibly ejected in 1861. Northern Presbyterians by no means deny the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom, as an abstract doctrine. They will subscribe the declarations of our common Standards upon that point, as readily as ever they did. If necessary, they would not

hesitate to renew their testimony in as many fresh deliverances as the exigency may demand—which was actually done, it will be remembered, by their late Assembly at Omaha. The difference between them and ourselves lies not in subscribing opposing Standards of faith, but in interpreting the same Standards. It is not for an instant to be suggested that intelligent Christian men would deliberately fly in the face of the solemn covenant by which they are held together, with the avowed purpose of tramping their professed convictions beneath their feet. It is claimed and honestly believed by our brethren at the North that, in the great crisis then upon the country, the Church was imperatively summoned to the defense and support of the State. A higher law suspended the operation of the lower, rendering consistent with the spirit of the Standards the political legislation which trampled upon the letter. Not only during that period of intense excitement, but in the afterthought of five and twenty years which have since elapsed, this interference in matters of State policy has been defended as just and proper; and these political utterances have been, and still are, enshrined in her archives as precious testimonies of that 'spirit of Christian patriotism which the Scriptures enjoin, and which have always characterized this Church.' There is no partisan exaggeration in the statement that the right to utter these pronouncements is still maintained in the Northern Church. In all the conferences between the two bodies since 1870, there has been no recession from their original position; and as late as 1882, when 'Fraternal Relations' were formally declared between the two Assemblies, it was openly proclaimed that only the charges of heresy, blasphemy, etc., were withdrawn; while all the fulminations of the Presbyterian Vatican are still hurled against what they are still pleased to denounce as the 'Rebellion.'

'We wish it to be clearly seen that the Southern Church is separated from the Northern by no lingering resentment of the war; but by a principle for which, in the providence of God, she was solemnly appointed as the witness. Her testimony has been silently delivered, simply through her separate existence; and this renewed agitation may be divinely ordered, to recall her attention to the sacred function which she must continue to discharge. We at the South understand the Church to be restrained by her organic law from intermeddling with the affairs of Caesar's household—that when she is defined in the Scriptures as 'the kingdom not of this world,' she has other and higher functions than those assigned to the State—that as a non-secular and non-political body, the line is to be clearly drawn between herself and the Commonwealth, which no sophistry shall be allowed to obscure. They at the North, on the other hand, accept the general truth as to the spiritual nature and functions of the Church with a wide margin of interpretation; so that whenever politics shall rise into the sphere

of morals, it is brought fairly within her jurisdiction. It does not seem to occur to them that every question which touches man in his social relations has necessarily a moral side; and that the principle avowed by them obliterates every line of demarcation, and sweeps everything into the domain of the Church. This then is the first barrier to union between the two bodies. The instant it is accomplished, we surrender the testimony we have been called to bear as to the true nature of Christ's kingdom upon earth; we concede the right claimed by the Northern Church to determine our political relations; we abandon a principle hitherto held sacred by our people. As a mere fraction of the body into which we have been absorbed, our feeble protests will be unavailing to arrest the tide of political legislation upon which the Church must necessarily embark; until a new secession shall disturb the peace, and liberate our conscience from a bondage too oppressive to be endured. If any should regard this danger as imaginary, under the impression that public sentiment at the North has undergone a wholesome change in this respect, it will not be difficult to adduce a chain of political decisions running through recent years, and terminating with the action of the last Assembly at Omaha in committing the Church to Prohibition as a political measure to be grafted upon the Civil Constitution. This action taken by the very Assembly which was protesting its belief in the spiritual character of the Church shows conspicuously how easy it is through the moral side of politics to interpret away the salutary restrictions of the Standards. What resistance could we make to reckless legislation of this sort, in a minority of one to five in the united body? And how long would the Christian conscience of our people be able to abide this constant evasion of our organic law, before declaring their freedom in a new exile from the house of their fathers?

"2. It should not be overlooked that the body into which we are desired to fuse is not the same from which we were separated five and twenty years ago. The incorporation of the New School wing, effected in 1869 and 1870, has not only doubled its size, but has introduced elements so different as to render it prudent to enquire into the doctrinal basis upon which we will be expected to stand. Lest this language should seem to betray an unworthy suspicion, it will be necessary to recall somewhat the history of the past.

"It is sad to reflect how often the truth of God has been betrayed by those especially set for its defense. The pride of human speculation has overborne the reverent study of the Word and obscured, if not perverted, its teachings. Seasons of defection, sometimes of open apostasy, occur at different epochs and in different portions of the Church, in which the truth has again and again suffered a partial or a total eclipse. In the early part of the present century, a protracted struggle took place in the Presbyterian Church for the preservation of

the doctrines of grace which were being undermined through a subtle method of interpretation. The principles of Church order and government were also contravened; and the Church was so overlaid by agencies foreign to her system, that in her organized form she was in great danger of being throttled in the unnatural embrace. This conflict, it need scarcely be said, terminated in the disruption of the Church in 1837-8. One week before the meeting of the General Assembly in the former of these two years, a Convention of Old School men was held in the city of Philadelphia, presided over by the Rev. Dr. Baxter, of Virginia. A memorial went up from this Convention to the General Assembly, and was adopted by them, in which testimony was borne against certain doctrinal errors declared to be then rife in the Presbyterian Church. To this solemn indictment in sixteen distinct specifications, the New School members of the body felt called upon to make reply in order to purge themselves of participation in the same. The replication was, however, so unsatisfactory on many of the points, that on motion of the Rev. Dr. Plumer their protest was admitted to record without answer, among other reasons, because 'the character of the paper rendered another disposition of it proper and necessary.' This was followed by a resolution, 'that duly certified copies of this paper be sent to the respective Presbyteries to which the signers of the Protest belonged, calling their attention to the developments of theological views contained in it, and enjoining on them to enquire into the soundness of the faith of those who have ventured to make so strange avowals as some of these are.' Our narrow limits will not allow the incorporation of the original documents, which are lengthy on both sides; but they are of easy access in the published Minutes of the General Assembly of 1837, and may also be found fully engrossed in the revised edition of Baird's 'Digest'—which we happen to have at hand, and is upon the shelf of almost every minister's library in the land. This general reference is sufficient for our purpose, which is to show that serious doctrinal differences existed between the Old School and New School, which could not be adjusted; and which caused the Church, in that eventful year, to be rent asunder, the two sections walking apart during a period of thirty years.

"If it be asked how such a flood of errors should be let loose in the Presbyterian Church, whose doctrinal symbols are so full and so exact as apparently to leave no room for ambiguity anywhere, the answer is ready. It had become fashionable in those days of lax theology to subscribe these sacred symbols 'for substance' only. Instead of the hearty acceptance of them in their plain English meaning, there was a 'paltering in a double sense.' The slippery phrase, 'for substance of doctrine,' like 'the moral side of politics' in our time, enabled those who so desired to play fast and loose with the Standards of faith—introducing a metaphysical jugglery by which, whilst remain-

ing in outward seeming, they vanish into airy nothingness without sense or sound. Delphic oracles, which echoed on the secret wish of those by whom they were consulted, had no power to utter God's truth with which they were no longer inspired.

"But what have these troubles of fifty years ago to do with our fusion into the Northern Church of 1887? Why, just this: That if we find the Old School and the New School now together, who were separated by doctrinal differences fifty years ago, it is natural to inquire how they came together: especially if, as a party to the same union, we are to stand upon the basis of doctrine which they have established. Unfortunately, just here our perplexity begins. The core of the controversy in 1837 was the sense in which the Standards of Faith were to be received. Obviously if all parties subscribed the Confession *ex animo*, in the obvious meaning of the language employed, there could be no difference between them: they would be in perfect agreement upon the terms in which they understand the truth to be delivered in the sacred Scriptures. But the difficulty was that the Old School demanded reception of the formulas of faith in the precise terms in which they were rendered; whilst the New School demanded liberty, so that under a general adherence to these venerated symbols a wide latitude should be allowed in their explication. In this state of case, there could be no settlement of the issues between them, because there was no umpire to whom they could be referred. Of course, nothing remained for them but to part as Abraham and Lot did, one going to the right and the other to the left. Now so far as we can see it is precisely upon the same lax subscription of the Standards the two parties have agreed to come together—delivering both over to a loose and uncertain theology, and laying the foundation for another schism in the future; or, what is worse, creating a sort of 'Broad Church' with its 'liberal Christianity' admitting every shade of opinion, and surrendering the truth to be slaughtered by all her foes.

"The negotiation between the parties was opened in 1866, by the Old School Assembly expressing its 'desire for reunion with the other branch of the Presbyterian Church at the earliest time consistent with agreement in doctrine, order and polity, on the basis of our common Standards.' Accordingly committees of Conference were appointed by both, who continued their labors through 1867 and 1868, striving to find a sense in which they can agree to accept the Westminster Standards. In both these years they send up reports to their respective Assemblies, which were, however, unacceptable on the one side or the other. At first, the sense defined was to be 'the fair historical sense, as it is accepted by the two bodies in opposition to Antinomianism and Fatalism on the one hand, and to Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other.' Then, the 'Confession is to be received in its proper historical

—that is, the Calvinistic or Reformed—sense;’ whilst the ‘various methods of viewing, stating, explaining and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession, which do not impair the integrity of the Reformed or the Calvinistic system, are to be as freely allowed in the United Church, as they have hitherto been allowed in the separate Churches.’ In all these conferences the strange absurdity does not seem to have struck the contending parties, of accepting Standards which are not a final authority; nor the still stranger absurdity of setting the Church adrift upon the wide sea of ecclesiastical history, to find in Calvinistic or Reformed utterances a standard for the Standards. One would suppose it far easier to get directly at the meaning of an outspoken instrument, like the Confession of Faith, with its terse dogmatic statements, than to gather up the voices scattered through all the centuries.

“When compromise had failed to adjust its scales to the nicety of expression required in the case, nothing was left but to accept the Standards *simpliciter*, without any sense upon which the contestants could agree. What can this mean, after two years’ haggling over the matter, but that the point is waived; and that both parties shall go their way, and fix the sense exactly as it pleases either? But this precisely was what each did before the disruption; and the Northern Church stands to-day, in the matter of subscription to the Standards, just where she stood in 1837 when the Old and New Schools parted from each other in bitter strife.

“The sad story is not yet completely rehearsed. The doctrinal basis was accompanied with a number of ‘Concurrent Declarations,’ to be adopted by both the parties, settling certain details of the Covenant between them. We pass over several which invite our criticism, in order to fix attention upon two especially germane to the point now before us. They are as follows:

“‘The publications of the Board of Publication (O. S.) and of the Publication Committee (N. S.) should continue to be issued as at present; leaving it to the Board of Publication of the United Church to revise these issues, and perfect a catalogue of the United Church, so as to exclude invidious references to past controversies.’ Again: ‘And no rule or precedent which does not stand approved by both the bodies should be of any authority, until re-established in the united body; except in so far as such rule or precedent may affect the rights of property founded thereon.’

“We group together these expunging ‘Declarations,’ because they sweep the field of the past clean to the very horizon. What becomes of all the acts and testimonies of the Old School body in the great semi-Pelagian controversy of 1837? Under the first, every book and tract issued by the board in defense or explanation of Old School positions, as a witness for the doctrines of grace, must be expurgated so as to exclude anything which might be construed as offensive to

the other party. And if the last 'Declaration' be pressed to its ultimate reach, it surely cuts through even to the 'excising acts' themselves, and to the famous 'Act and Testimony;' and potentially repeals every deliverance of the Old School Church up to the genesis of the schism. What is this but a neat surgical operation, by which three and thirty years are cut out from the history and life of the Church, bringing the two edges of the wound together for adhesion? The obvious design is to place the United Church of 1869 in immediate connection with the United Church of 1836, dropping out the intervening period with all the various and solemn transactions with which it is filled. Are we prepared for the surrender of all these testimonies of those venerable councils in which we ourselves sat more than thirty years ago, when a disguised Pelagianism sought to root out the cross of Christ from the earth? For this reason alone, if for no other, the Presbyterian Church of the South must refuse to enter into an alliance which exposes her, in the future, to all the perils of a loose theology creeping in through an uncertain subscription of the Standards of Faith.

"It may be asked whether our own Church is not involved in the same condemnation, through her previous union in 1864 with 'the New School Synod of the South.' There are several points of difference between the two cases: (1) The 'Synod of the South' was never suspected of doctrinal unsoundness, except as to one or two of its members. These alleged errors prevailed rather in the Northern section of our country, and had scarcely invaded the Southern. The 'Synod of the South' was led into connection with the New School party chiefly through opposition to the 'excising acts' of 1837 as being, in their judgment, unconstitutional; and was forced eventually to separate itself, and form an independent organization. (2) A single conference between them and us was sufficient to evince an entire agreement upon points of doctrine. (3) The union was effected at once upon an *ex animo* reception of the Standards, without any antecedent effort to find a 'sense' in which the two could agree. We incline to think that this element in our body will be as slow as any other to consent to fusion with the now united Northern Church.

"III. It is necessary to remind our brethren of a matter which may perhaps have slipped somewhat from their memory: to-wit. the solemn covenant made with the Synod of Kentucky, in relation to their 'Declaration and Testimony' when it entered into union with the Southern Church. This may require to be illuminated a little from the history of the past.

"It was not possible for the Northern Church so fatally to complicate herself with the State, without earnest opposition from many who still prize her spirituality and independence, as one of the doctrines of their ancient faith. The vigorous protest of Dr. Chas. Hodge and

others in 1861 died away in decreasing echoes, as the war spirit became more rampant; until the proscriptive edicts of the Pittsburg Assembly in 1865 aroused the slumbering dissent to utter its remonstrances in tones that could no longer be smothered. A solemn 'Declaration and Testimony' was drawn up against the entire political action of the five Assemblies from 1861 to 1865 inclusive. In fourteen specifications they recapitulate the errors into which the Church had fallen; testifying against the same (1) 'because they are contrary to the Word of God, and subversive of its inspiration and authority;' (2) 'because they are contrary to the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church, as taught in her Confession, Catechisms and Constitutions;' (3) 'because they tend to obliterate all the lines of separation between the civil and ecclesiastical powers—to confound their jurisdiction—to identify them with each other, and so destroy the freedom of both;' (4) 'because they have brought the ministry, and ordinances of religion, and the authority of the Church, into public disrepute;' (5) 'because they tend to keep up strife and alienation among brethren of a common faith;' (6) 'because they are schismatical.'

"We cite the language thus far, in order to show the spirit of a famous document which, covering twenty pages of print, is too lengthy to be here engrossed. This appeal to the conscience of the Church, instead of bringing her back to the old paths, irritated the Assembly of 1866 to the adoption of retaliatory measures. We cannot pause to enumerate the various and grievous usurpations of authority by this misguided Assembly, in which they trampled not only the Constitution of the Church in the dust, but violated every principle of justice and law as between man and man. The older ministers in our body are familiar with the facts to which we here allude; the younger may find the record in the published minutes of the body in which they were enacted. It may amaze them to discover how the foundations of representative governments were removed, in the displacement of Commissioners whose title was clear and undisputed as that of any other member of the body; how the forms of judicial progress were overridden by undertaking to manage an essentially judicial case by purely legislative methods; how ministers and elders were enjoined the exercise of the necessary functions of their office, whilst without trial they were recognized as presbyters in the Church; how the authority of the Assembly was stretched over persons and subjects not within its jurisdiction; and how finally Presbyteries were dissolved *ipso facto* by a contingent legislation, which by a self-acting power makes the unfortunate court guilty of *felo de se*. The result of this passionate legislation was to rend the two Synods of Missouri and Kentucky, each into two parts, creating thus another schism in the house of God.

"We are brought now to the point where all this bears upon ourselves. In 1867 this excluded portion of the Synod of Kentucky ap-

peared through its commissioners before the Southern Assembly in Nashville, presenting a letter covering fifteen printed pages in the Appendix to our Minutes of that year. It is a historical document of great value, setting forth the doctrines and principles which the Declaration and Testimony party in Kentucky—and we may add, in Missouri—had so vigorously and righteously maintained through these years of conflict. This full statement of fundamental principles was prepared by the Synod and sent to us, ‘to stand as their testimony for the truth and order of Christ’s house, and to be substantially the basis of a covenant upon which the Synod of Kentucky may form an organic union with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.’ Their object will be more clearly seen in the following quotations from that important instrument:

“We deem it scarcely necessary, fathers and brethren, . . . to assure you that it is not because of any distrust of your faithfulness to those doctrines and principles that we have thought of this method of forming an organic union with you on the basis of a solemn covenant agreement to maintain the doctrines and constitutional principles set forth in this paper. . . . We deem it but a proper attestation of our earnestness and sincerity in bearing this testimony, to claim for it a record and acknowledgment as a part of the acts and monuments whereby, historically, the Church interprets its Standards. Nor do we doubt for a moment that on solemn consideration of the signs of the times, and of the Erastian tendencies of our Presbyterianism both in the United States and in Great Britain, you will gladly embrace the opportunity by so peculiar an occasion to join with us, should a union be formed, in a solemn covenanted testimonial to the truths for which in common we have been “contending earnestly as the faith once delivered to the saints” and to erect in the historical records of the Church a monument which shall at once declare to those that come after us our appreciation of the inestimable value of these principles as the bulwark of the Christian liberty wherewith Christ sets his people free.’

“The closing sentence of the letter is in these words:

“The Synod feels unwilling to enter into organic union with any large and powerful organization again without some such guarantee to its churches and people against troubles in future, similar to those just passed through.’

“Our Assembly responded to this overture in the following terms:

“‘The Assembly feels free solemnly to assure the Synod of Kentucky not only of our cordial approval of, and sincere concurrence substantially in, the Synod’s statement of doctrine and constitutional principles, as contained under the four heads of the third division of their letter, but of our sincere joy to find our brethren of Kentucky so ready to unite with us in solemn covenant, with a view, among other things, to

the advancement and maintenance of these doctrines as against the apparent Erastian tendencies of our American Protestantism.'

"Then follows a resolution:

"That the letter of the Synod of Kentucky be admitted to record, as they suggest, as a part of the historical acts and monuments of the Church, by publishing it in the Appendix to the Minutes of the Assembly.'

"The argument from these premises will be alike brief and pointed. Here is a portion of our constituency which exactly twenty years ago entered into union with us, on the basis of a solemn contract. The Synod of Kentucky made it a condition precedent of this union that we should covenant to maintain the doctrines and principles of their Declaration and Testimony, and admit it to record as being identical with those for which we ourselves had been contending—and thus it should be acknowledged as a part of the acts and monuments whereby, historically, the Church interprets its Standards. They demand this as a guarantee of their own safety, that they might not in the future be delivered over to the perils from which they had just escaped. This guarantee we gave; and so far endorsed their principles as to adopt them in our records as our own. If now it be proposed to transfer this Synod—and we may add the Synod of Missouri, which came into union with us shortly after—to the very body from which they had been expelled, it becomes us to examine critically that we may not be guilty of a breach of covenant. Has then the Northern Church, during the one and twenty years which have elapsed since these indignities were put upon our Kentucky and Missouri brethren, given any evidence of regret for the same? Have they taken a single step towards repairing the breach made by themselves in their own Constitution? When in 1864, in the State of Missouri, the celebrated 'Rosecrans Order,' placed a sentinel at the door of that Synod to administer a civil oath to its members as a qualification for admission, has the Northern Assembly ever put forth any declaration of the supremacy of the Church within her own jurisdiction; thus repairing any dislocation of their system through the rudeness of war? If not, how can we now transfer to that body these Synods, who came to us demanding a guarantee that they would never be betrayed into the sorrows and conflicts through which they had just passed?

"Even though these Synods should, in the lapse of time, grow indifferent to these afflictive memories and so consent to the transfer in question, have not we solemnly pledged ourselves to the maintenance of the principles of the 'Declaration and Testimony,' by incorporating it among our own 'acts and monuments?' Can we, under the obligations of this covenant with the Synod of Kentucky, ourselves unite with the Northern Church, until they have made matters straight with that Synod by repudiating the usurpation under which it has been

wronged? In a word, do the advocates of fusion, as a measure of peace between us and the Northern branch, perceive the old wounds they are ripping open and the endless controversies into which they are plunging the very parties whom they seek to reconcile?

"IV. An insuperable barrier to union with the Northern Church is the race problem, which the presence of the Negro in such numbers at the South forces us to consider. Let us examine it, uninfluenced by sentiment upon the one hand or by prejudice on the other. It cannot be denied that God has divided the human race into several distinct groups, for the sake of keeping them apart. When the promise was given to Noah that the world should not be again destroyed with a flood, it became necessary to restrain the wickedness of man that it should not rise to the same height as in the ante-Diluvian period. Hence the unity of human speech was broken, and 'so the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth.' Now co-ordinate with this 'confusion of tongues,' we find these groups distinguished by certain physical characteristics—and that, too, as far back as history carries us. We are not warranted in affirming that this differentiation through color and otherwise was accomplished at the same time, and as part of the same process, with the 'confusion of tongues;' but since the distinction exists from a period in the past of which history takes no note, and since science fails to trace the natural causes by which it could be produced, the inference is justified which regards it as fixed by the hand of Jehovah himself. At any rate, all the attempts to restore the original unity of the race by the amalgamation of these severed parts have been providentially and signally rebuked. In all instances where the Caucasian stock has crossed with the others—as when the Latin families, with a feebler instinct of race, have intermingled with the people whom they found in Mexico and in portions of South America—the result has been the production of a stock inferior in quality to both the factors which sunk their superior virtues in an emasculated progeny. Largely to this cause is due the failure of these Latin families to hold the colonies which they have established in different parts of the world; and which have, one by one, slipped from their hands into the possession of others. The Anglo-Saxon stock, on the contrary, through all time jealous of its purity of blood and refusing to debase it by intermingling with inferior races, has preserved its power and to this day dominates vast empires in which it has planted its banners. These are stubborn facts lying upon the face of history, open to the inspection of all who will studiously consider their import.

"Upon no point are the Southern people more sensitive, to no danger are they more alive, than this of the amalgamation of the two races thrown so closely together and threatening the deterioration of both. This is the peril which confronts us in the proposal to re-integrate in

the Northern Church as being one of the early steps leading surely to that final result. The North is not embarrassed with this negro problem; so few of this race are found in any of their communities, that they may be assumed into social relations without disturbance of society at large. The infusion of two or three drops of ink into a tumbler of water will not discolor it; and in Northern circles, the Negro is an inappreciable factor. He may appear here and there, an occasional Presbyterian in their ecclesiastical courts, and be found now and then a commissioner in their General Assembly, but he is practically lost in the large body of the other race, and shorn of importance except where a sentimental and purely fictitious distinction lifts him into momentary prominence. There is no danger that the Church at large will be ruled by a Negro majority, fastening their crude superstitions and fantastic usages upon those so far superior to them in intelligence and virtue. With us at the South, the conditions are different: the Negroes exist side by side with us in almost equal numbers, and the relation to obtain between us becomes a vital question. A policy which would be safe at the North, would be ruinous at the South. A Negro Presbyterian associated with us, here and there, would be as inappreciable in a Southern as in a Northern Presbytery. But it is easy to see how, with a view to ecclesiastical subjugation, Negro churches could be multiplied of infinitesimal proportions, packing our courts with Presbyters of that race to whom the entire Church would be in hopeless subjection. In addition to this ecclesiastical peril, there is another which is social. How can the two races be brought together in nearly equal numbers in those confidential and sacred relations which belong to the ministry of the Word, without entailing that personal intimacy between ministers and people which must end in the general amalgamation of discordant races? We simply hint at evils which we do not desire to discuss in detail: the mere suggestion of them will put the readers of this paper upon their own line of reflection, filling out the argument to its due proportion.

“Nor can we think of any device by which we may be preserved from these dangers, in the bosom of the Northern Church. If we fall upon the expedient of Provincial Assemblies ascending to a national Assembly representing them all, this last must be a true court of the Church and have final jurisdiction over the courts below it. All questions, therefore, arising out of our connection with this race will be brought under the review and control of our Northern brethren; so that the autonomy of the Provincial Assembly, which was expected to exempt us from their supervision, will be found unavailing; unless we throw such restrictions around that highest court as shall deprive it of all its true nature as a court and make it a mere excrescence upon our system.

“It will doubtless be asked if we cannot confide in the Christian

character of our brethren at the North, who surely possess intelligence enough to see these perils as clearly as ourselves, and whose piety will insure a due sympathy in the same. To this challenge we reply with perfect candor. There are thousands of beloved and honored brethren in the Northern Church, in whose considerate piety we can confide to the last degree. If we had to deal only with them, all these troubles had long since been adjusted upon principles of righteousness and truth. Unfortunately, however, behind these wise and safe men there is a wild and unmanageable constituency, which sleeps in calm repose until an occasion suddenly calls out all their fanaticism and fury. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that on the subject of the Negro the mass of the Northern people has been going wild for half a century; and, therefore, to-day, when the Negro is in a position to be more an element of disturbance than ever, this is the one subject which we cannot trust the Northern Church to discuss for us, or to legislate upon. Simple prudence advises us to keep this matter in our own hands, under a sense of responsibility only to Him before whose throne we bow with adoring and yet loving awe. We know the Negro, and he knows us. There is not one of that race who does not confide in the unswerving truthfulness with which we have always dealt with him; and to-day the word of a Southern man goes further with him than the word of any other man. He knows that the Christian people of the South wish him well in the attitude in which he stands before the world. We desire his advance in sound education, and in the knowledge of all those arts and industries by which he can be rendered happy and prosperous in this life. Above all, he knows that we desire his spiritual welfare. At the first, we hoped to hold him in connection with us in our churches, as in the old-time we were accustomed to worship together in the House of God. We were slow in coming to this ground when, under the race instinct, he demanded a church and ministry of his own; and now, there is no sacrifice of toil or of means which the Southern Presbyterian Church will not gladly make, to bring the race to which he belongs to be 'joint heirs with us' among the sons of God. And we are convinced that the policy of a separate Church organization, which the Negro was the first to demand, is the only policy which is practical or possible in the relation which the two races now hold to each other.

"There are numerous other objections to union with the Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church, which we had intended to group under a distinct head: such as the use of 'Boards' which we have cast aside, and thus got rid of a tedious and most unprofitable controversy; the different view of the eldership prevailing in the two bodies, rotary in the one and permanent in the other, admitted to the Moderator's office in the one and excluded in the other; the different Books of Church Order, under which the two bodies are administered;

the disposition at the North to multiply guilds within the Church, and leagues without, for the accomplishment of special ends which are all within the scope of the Church's own agency; the woman's rights crusade which disturbs the repose of the North and from which we are comparatively free: these, with others which might be named, will present to many minds practical difficulties rendering the union in question a doubtful blessing, even if it could be obtained. The length, however, which this letter has already reached, debars the prosecution of these topics. We are willing to rest our opposition to the proposed fusion upon the four grounds already elaborated in this paper. They present difficulties, not of mere policy, but of enduring principles—of principles which outlive the mere historic occasion which first called for their outward expression, and which demand a new advocacy in those moments when they are most in danger of being forgotten.

"These views we present respectfully to our brethren, in the hope that they will avail among other influences in preventing either the disintegration or the disruption of our beloved Church."

Dr. Palmer believed that he was simply doing a plain duty in thus opposing "closer relations" with the Presbyterian Church, North.

There was another movement<sup>9</sup> which he in like manner unsuccessfully opposed; but opposed on principle. The grounds of his opposition he brought out in a speech against the movement, in the Assembly at St. Louis in 1875. The speech as reported in the *Southwestern Presbyterian*, June 24, 1875, is, the preliminary remarks omitted:

"Moderator, the Presbyterian Church in this country has always suffered whenever she has departed by the breadth of a hair from her recognized principles. She never has entered into compromises with Congregationalism, or gone into the support of voluntary associations of any sort, without suffering in the end. Here, then, is the first objection which I raise—that you are creating a power, as Colonel Ogden has so eloquently stated, and which, therefore, I need not repeat. *You are creating a power.* It may content itself with recommendation; but still it will stand up as the apex of the great Presbyterian cone. The decisions and utterances of that body will be regarded as the enunciation of the Presbyterian sentiment of the world, and its utterances will be *pro tanto* decisions. They will, in the force which they will gather around them, overbear the opinions, judgments and utterances of the particular Presbyterian Assemblies of the particular countries where they are held. The very argument used in this As-

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<sup>9</sup>That which resulted in the foundation of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance.