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ART. I.—*The Structure of the Old Testament.*

WE propose in this article to inquire into the structure of the Old Testament. This inquiry is of course a purely elementary one, and belongs at the very threshold of Old Testament studies. It is not, however, on that account without its importance; and it is hoped that even the present imperfect attempt at its presentation may not be altogether devoid of interest.

Two extreme and opposite errors must be avoided at the outset, either of which tends to the denial of the existence of any such structure as our inquiry presupposes, and so to make all investigation in this direction unmeaning and superfluous.

The first springs from too exclusive a view of the divinity and inspiration of the sacred writings, hastily concluding thence that all must possess a uniform character, and present an even and unvaried surface; that since the Bible is everywhere the revelation of God, there must be an equal amount of disclosure everywhere. The Scriptures thus viewed become simply a capacious reservoir of heavenly truth, into which successive communications from above were poured, with no other effect than that of raising the general level; the separate value of each new revelation consisting merely in the absolute addition thereby made to the sum of the whole. Anything like a nice articulation or careful arrangement and adjustment of its

ART. V.—*Principles of Church Union, and the Reunion of the Old and New-school Presbyterians.*

THERE is an organization, having its seat in the city of New York, “to secure a greater unity of faith and feeling and of corresponding action among evangelical Christians.” It hopes to effect “*a Federal Union*” of the several evangelical denominations, “under one general church government, by the very constitution of which unity may be secured, and the rights of individual denominations, however obscure, may be protected.” The president of this organization is the Hon. Alex. W. Bradford. There are twenty-one vice-presidents already chosen, among whom we notice such familiar and honoured names as Hon. Daniel Lord, Gen. John A. Dix, Shepherd Knapp, H. E. Pierrepont, the late Wm. Curtis Noyes, Hiram Ketchum, &c. There are two secretaries, J. M. Buckingham and Rev. Henry Kimball. The chairman of the Executive Committee is the Rev. W. A. Muhlenberg, D. D. A public meeting of the friends of this movement was held in New York on the 2d and 3d of March. Similar meetings are to be held in April at Philadelphia; in June at Boston, and later in the season, in the West. It appears therefore that this movement is inaugurated under very high auspices, and is to be carried on with energy. The promotion of Christian fellowship and coöperation among all true believers is an object which commends itself to the conscience and heart of every Christian. The plan most prominent apparently in the minds of those who have formed this organization, is to attempt a Federal Union of all Evangelical Denominations. This is analogous to the plan often broached by philanthropic statesmen of a Federation of Nations. Each of the confederates was to retain its own nationality, institutions, and supreme authority within its own limits, but all to be subject to a common tribunal for the decision of questions of conflicting interests, or which concerned all the members of the federation. By this means it was hoped wars might be prevented, the necessity for the enormous expenses and other evils of standing armies be obviated, and all the interests of

Christian civilization be advanced. This, too, was a grand idea; benevolent, beneficent, and Christian; the substitution of reason for the sword, the decisions of a civil tribunal for that of the battle-field. The only objection to it was impracticability. It supposed nations and their rulers to be more reasonable and better than they really are. Let us hope that the same fatal objection may not be found to bear against the plan above mentioned for a federation of Christian churches.

In the January number of this journal, we published an article from the pen of a respected contributor, advocating the confederation of the various Presbyterian bodies in this country, of which there are at least eight or ten distinct organizations. That article presented in a clear light the serious evils which flow from this multiplicity of Presbyterian bodies. Not only the evils of sectarian jealousy and rivalry, but the enormous waste which it incurs of men, labour, and money. It did not propose an amalgamation of all these independent organizations, but suggested that while each should retain its own separate being, its order, discipline, and usages, the possession and control of its own property and institutions, all should be subject to one general synod, for the decision of matters of dispute, and the conduct of missionary and other benevolent operations, in which all Calvinistic Presbyterians can, without the sacrifice of principle, combine. The advantages of this plan are obvious, in the promotion of efficiency, in the consolidation of efforts, in the economy of men and means, and in the prevention of unseemly rivalry and interference. But we must take men and churches as they are. Those who are liberal, and, shall we say, enlightened enough, thus to coöperate, may be persuaded into such an union. But if some Presbyterians believe that it is sinful to sing Watts's hymns, and that they would be false to their "testimony" and principles even to commune with those who use such hymns in the worship of God; what can be done? We cannot force them to think otherwise, and while they retain their peculiar views they are doomed to isolation.

In the Assembly of 1863 a memorial was presented in favour of the reunion of the Old and New-school branches of the Presbyterian church, to which a respectful answer was returned by the Assembly, declaring that it was inexpedient to take at

that time any decided action on the subject; and referring to the fraternal correspondence between the two bodies then already inaugurated as the *initiative* to a better understanding, which might serve "to prepare the way for a union that shall be harmonious and permanently promotive of the interests of truth and vital godliness." As condition and preparation for such union, the Assembly urge the careful instruction of the young in "the distinctive principles of Christian doctrine and church polity as held by the Presbyterian church." In 1864 the subject was brought before the one Assembly in Dayton, and the other at Newark, by overtures from the presbyteries. The New-school Assembly adopted a paper breathing a very fraternal spirit, and expressing very sound principles, which was transmitted to our General Assembly, and responded to in a kind and respectful manner. While expressing satisfaction at the results of the plan of correspondence now in successful operation, our Assembly declare that it was not expedient at present "to propose any additional measures towards the consummation of the object contemplated by the presbyteries whose action has been submitted to their consideration;" and they express their "concurrence with the suggestions and counsels of the Assembly of 1863," in the resolution relating to instruction in the distinctive principles of Presbyterian doctrine and polity, which suggestions they recommend "to the prayerful consideration of the parties concerned." Certain friends of reunion, apparently not fully satisfied with the action of the Assembly, called a meeting in the city of Newark, at which earnest addresses were made, and measures adopted to promote the object contemplated. Since then an association or organization has been formed at Cincinnati, under the guidance of prominent and influential men belonging to both branches of the church, and a monthly periodical instituted to advocate the reunion of the two churches.

The facts above stated afford very clear evidence of a widespread movement in the public mind, not confined to Presbyterians, but embracing other denominations, in favour of a closer union among evangelical Christians. We have no doubt that this is, in great measure, a healthy movement. The object aimed at is undoubtedly right and very important, and the mo-

tives which impel to efforts for its attainment may well be assumed to be, in the general, holy motives. As the union of Christians is an obvious duty, it should be carried out as far and as completely as fidelity to the truth and righteousness will admit. When the diversity between denominational churches is clear and avowed, nothing more than a federal union, which shall leave each in the possession and avowal of its peculiar faith and order, is possible. But where, as among Presbyterians, there is the profession of the same faith and polity, the desire is natural to strive for complete amalgamation. This is especially the case as to the two branches of the American Presbyterian church, whose separation is of comparatively recent origin. This we understand to be the avowed object of the advocates of the reunion of the two bodies. Whether this reunion should be accomplished in the present state of things, is a question not to be decided upon the general ground, that Christian union, internal and external, is commanded in the word of God; nor on the ground of sentiment or feeling; nor on considerations of expediency, but on the ground of principle. Believers are commanded to be one body in external organization as well as in heart, but other things also are commanded which are not to be sacrificed to anything merely external and formal. God prefers mercy to sacrifice.

All Protestants agree that the church in heaven and on earth is one. There is one fold, one kingdom, one family, one body. They all agree that Christ is the centre of this unity. Believers are one body in Christ Jesus; that is, in virtue of their union with him. The bond of this union between Christ and his people, apart from the eternal federal union constituted before the foundation of the world, is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. By one Spirit we are baptized into or constituted one body. That Spirit working faith in us, does thereby unite us to Christ in our effectual calling.

It follows from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit being the principle of unity, or the bond which unites all believers to each other, and all to Christ, that all the legitimate manifestations of this unity must be referable to the Spirit's presence. That is, they must be his fruits, produced by his influence on the hearts of his people. As the Holy Spirit is a teacher—as

he dwells in believers as an unction from the Holy One, which, as the apostle says, (1 John ii. 27), teaches them all things, so that they need not that any man teach them, it follows that all true Christians agree in faith. They have one faith, as they have one Lord and one baptism. If they were perfect, that is, if they perfectly submitted to the guidance of the Spirit by his word and by his inward influence, this agreement in matters of faith would be perfect. But as this is not the case, as imperfection attaches to everything human in this life, the unity of faith among believers is also imperfect. Nevertheless it is real. It is far greater than would be inferred from the contentions of theologians, and it includes everything essential to Christianity. That there is one God; that the Godhead subsists in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that the Eternal Son of God assumed our nature, was born of a woman, and suffered and died for our salvation; that He is the only Saviour of men; that it is through his merit and grace men are delivered from the condemnation and power of sin; that all men being sinners, need this salvation; that it is only through the power of the Holy Ghost sinners are made partakers of the redemption of Christ; that those who experience this renewing of the Holy Ghost and are united to Christ, and they only, are made partakers of eternal life—these are doctrines which enter into the faith of all Christian churches, and of all true believers. As it is not for us to say what is the lowest degree of knowledge necessary to salvation, so it is not for us to determine, with precision and confidence, what degree of aberration from the common faith of Christians forfeits the communion of saints. We know indeed that those who deny the Son, deny the Father also, and that if any man believe that Jesus is the Son of God, he is born of God.

2. The Holy Spirit is not only a teacher but a sanctifier. All those in whom he dwells are more or less renewed after the image of God, and consequently they all agree in their religious experience. The Spirit convinces all of sin, *i. e.*, of guilt, moral pollution, and helplessness. He reveals to all the righteousness of Christ; *i. e.*, the righteousness of his claims to be received, loved, worshipped, and obeyed, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. He excites in all in whom he dwells the

same holy affections, in greater or less degrees of strength and constancy. True Christians, therefore, of all ages and in all parts of the world, are one in their inward spiritual life, in its principles and its characteristic exercises. The prayers, the hymns, the confessions and thanksgivings, which express the yearning desires and outgoings of soul of one, suit all others. This is a bond of fellowship which unites in mystic union the hearts of all the people of God, and makes them one family or household.

3. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of love, and love is one of the fruits of his presence. The command of Christ to his disciples, so often repeated by him and his apostles, is written on the heart by the Spirit, and becomes a controlling law in all his people. This is not mere benevolence, nor philanthropy, nor friendship, nor any form of natural affection. It is a love of the brethren because they are brethren. It is a love founded on their character and on their relation to Christ. It extends therefore to all Christians without distinction of nation, or culture, or ecclesiastical association. It leads not only to acts of kindness, but to religious fellowship. It expresses itself in the open and cordial recognition of every Christian as a Christian, and treating him accordingly. We confess Christ when we confess his followers to be our brethren; and it is one form of denying Christ to refuse to acknowledge his disciples as such. Inasmuch as ye did it unto them, ye did it unto me, are very comprehensive, as well as very solemn words.

It is thus that all believers as individuals are one spiritual body. But the union of believers extends much further than this. Man is a social being, and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the people of God is an organizing principle. As men, in virtue of their natural constitution, form themselves into families, tribes, and nations, united not only by community of nature and of interests, but by external organic laws and institutions; so believers in Christ, in virtue of their spiritual nature, or under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the principle of spiritual life, form themselves into societies for the propagation and culture of their spiritual nature.

This leads 1, to their uniting for the purposes of Christian worship, and the celebration of the Christian ordinances. 2. To

the institution of church government, in order to carry out the injunctions of the word of God, and the exercise of mutual watch and care, or for the exercise of discipline. It arises out of the nature of Christianity, in other words, it arises out of the state of mind produced in believers by the indwelling of the Spirit, that they should, under the guidance of the written word, adopt means of deciding on the admission of members to the church, and upon the exclusion of the unworthy, as well as for the selection or appointment of the officers necessary for their edification. Thus individual or separate congregations are formed. The natural principle of association of such individual churches is proximity. Those believers who reside sufficiently near each to make it possible or convenient for them to meet from Sabbath to Sabbath, would naturally unite for the purposes above indicated.

3d. The unity of the church, however, continues. These separate congregations constitute one church. First, because they have the same faith, and the same Lord. Secondly, because they are associated on the same terms; so that a member admitted to one, becomes a member of the church universal; and a member excluded from one congregation is thereby excluded from the fellowship of all. It would indeed be an anomaly, if the man whom Paul required the Corinthians to excommunicate, could by removing to Philippi be restored to the communion of the saints. Thirdly, because every single congregation is subject to the body of other churches. Believers are required by the word, and impelled by the indwelling of the Spirit, to be subject to their brethren in the Lord. The ground of this subjection is not the fact that they are neighbours, and therefore is not confined to those with whom they are united in daily or weekly acts of worship. Nor does it rest on any contract or mutual covenant, so as to be limited to those to whom we may agree to obey. It is founded on the fact that they are brethren; that the Spirit of God dwells in them, and therefore extends to all the brethren. The doctrine that a church is formed by mutual covenant, and that its authority is limited to those who agree together for mutual watch and care, is as inconsistent with the nature of Christianity and the word of God, as that parental authority is

founded on a covenant between the parent and the children. Children are required to obey their parents, because they are parents, and not because they have covenanted to obey them. In like manner we are required to obey our brethren, because they are brethren; just as we are bound to obey the wise and good, because they are what they are; or as we are bound to obey reason and conscience, because they are reason and conscience; or God, because he is God. Mutual covenants as the ground and limitation of church authority, and the "social compact" as the ground of civil government, are alike anti-scriptural. The church therefore remains one body, not only spiritually, but outwardly. Each individual congregation is a member of an organic whole, as the several members of the human body are united not only by the inward principle of life common to them all, but in external relation and mutual dependence. The eye cannot say to the ear, nor the hand to the foot, "thou art not of the body."

It follows from what has been said, that the church in any one town or city would be subject to those in its immediate vicinity, and those again to the churches in a larger circle, and these to the church universal. Thus by an inward law, provincial and national churches, or ecclesiastical organizations, would be formed, all inwardly and outwardly connected, and all subject to the church as a whole. The representative principle which pervades the Bible, and which has its foundation in the nature of man, is also founded in the nature of the church, and is necessarily involved in her organization. As it is physically impossible that all the people should assemble for the administration of government and discipline, it is a matter of necessity that the power of the church should be exercised through its properly appointed representatives—so that this organic outward union of the church, as the expression of its inward spiritual unity, becomes feasible, and has to a large extent been actual.

It can hardly be denied that such is the normal or ideal state of the church. This is the form which it would in fact have assumed, if it had not been for disturbing influences. A tree planted under favourable circumstances of soil and climate, and with free scope on every side, assumes its normal shape

and proportions, and stands forth the realization of its idea. But if the soil or climate be uncongenial, or if the tree be hedged in, it grows indeed, but in a distorted shape, and with cramped and crooked limbs. This has been the actual history of the church. The full and free development of its inward life has been so hindered by the imperfection of that life itself, and by adverse external influences, that instead of filling the earth with its branches, or standing one and symmetrical, as a cedar of Lebanon, or an oak of Bashan, it is rent and divided, and her members twisted out of their natural shape and proportions.

These adverse influences, although partly external, (geographical and political,) have been principally from within. As external union is the product and expression of spiritual unity; if the latter be defective, the former must be imperfect. Christians have not been so united in their views of Christian doctrine and order as to render it possible for them all to be joined in one organized external body. Romanists (especially of the genuine ultramontane school) assume that Christ constituted his church in the form of an absolute monarchy, and appointed the bishop of Rome its head, and invested him with absolute power to decide all questions of doctrine and morals, and with universal authority to exercise discipline; making him, in short, his vicar, with plenary power upon earth; and that the church can exist under no other form, so that to deny the authority of the pope is to secede from the church. As no man can be a member of the Russian empire and enjoy its privileges, who does not acknowledge the authority of the Czar, so no one can be a member of the Romish Church who does not acknowledge the authority of the pope. This theory of the nature and organization of the church, and of the condition of membership therein, of necessity separates those who adopt it from all other Christians. If they are right, all who protest and refuse to acknowledge the Bishop of Rome as their sovereign lord, are schismatics. If they are wrong, then the crime of schism rests on them. In either case, however, the church is divided.

Prelatists, on the other hand, hold to the perpetuity of the apostleship, and assume that bishops are the official successors

of the apostles, and ought to be accepted and obeyed as such. The class of those who adopt this theory teach that the being of the church depends on this principle. As in the early church those only were recognized as members who received the doctrines and submitted to the authority of the apostles, so now those only are in the church who yield like subjection to the prelates having apostolic succession. Another class, while they do not go to this extreme, still hold that it is the duty of all Christians to adopt and submit to the episcopal organization of the church, and to render canonical obedience to its prelates.

Presbyterians are fully persuaded, from their interpretation of the Scriptures, that the office of the apostles was temporary; that they have no official successors, and that presbyters are the highest permanent officers of the church, according to its original design and institution. They therefore cannot conscientiously submit to the claims either of papal or prelatical authority, and are necessitated to organize an external church for themselves; or rather, as they believe, to maintain and perpetuate the original and divinely appointed mode of organization.

Independents believe that a church is a company of believers united by mutual covenant for the purposes of Christian worship and discipline, and is complete in itself, subject to no ecclesiastical authority but that of its own members. Holding these views they cannot submit to pope, prelates, or presbyteries. Thus we have the external church of necessity divided into three independent, antagonistic bodies. The evil, however, has not stopped here.

Baptists assume that immersion is essential to baptism; that baptism is necessary to membership in the visible church; and that adult believers are the only proper subjects of that Christian ordinance. Hence they cannot recognize any persons as members of the church who were either baptized in infancy, or to whom the rite was administered otherwise than by immersion. They are thus separated (at least externally) from the great body of Christians. Less diversities of opinion than any of the above have led to the multiplication of sects. Some Presbyterians, believing that the civil magistrate is clothed with

the power to maintain the purity of the church, will not recognize the authority of any magistrate who has not bound himself by covenant to exercise his power to sustain the church according to their views of gospel doctrine and order. These Covenanters, therefore, separate from other Presbyterians who do not agree with them in this fundamental principle. Otherwise they would be unfaithful, as they believe, to the testimony for the truth which they are bound to bear.

Others again believe that the Book of Psalms was divinely appointed to be used in public worship, and that the use of hymns written by uninspired men in the service of God is a violation of his commands. With such a belief they cannot unite in worship or communion with those who differ from them in this matter. Thus the evil has gone on increasing until the church is split into sects and independent communions almost without number. Nevertheless, the existence of such divisions is the less of two evils. When men differ, it is better to avow their diversity of opinion or faith, than to pretend to agree, or to force discordant elements in a formal uncongenial union.

It is clear from the history of the church, that diversity as to forms of church government, or matters connected with worship and discipline, more than differences about doctrine, has been the cause of existing divisions of the church. Many Romanists, Episcopalians, and all Presbyterians (with few exceptions) have been, and are, Augustinian in doctrine. In the Romish Church, during all the middle ages, Augustinians, Pelagians, and Semi-Pelagians were included in her communion. The same diversity notoriously exists in the Church of England, and in the episcopal churches of this country at the present day. These churches are one, not in doctrine, but in virtue of their external organization, and subjection to one and the same governing body. In the Romish Church the principle or centre of union is the pope; in the Church of England the king in council; in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, the General Convention. The Presbyterians of Scotland, subject to the same General Assembly, constitute one church; those subject to another Assembly constitute another. And so it is in the United States. Churches therefore may agree in their standards of doctrine, in their form of govern-

ment, and mode of worship, and yet be separate, independent bodies.

The existence of denominational churches being unavoidable in the present imperfect state of inward spiritual unity among Christians, it becomes important to determine their relative duties. In the first place, it is their duty to combine or unite in one body (so far as geographical and political considerations will permit), wherever and whenever the grounds of their separation are inadequate and unscriptural. They are not bound to unite when the differences between them are such as to prevent harmonious action; but where the points in which they differ are either such as the Scriptures do not determine, or which are of minor importance, it is obviously wrong that all the evils arising from the multiplication of sects should for the sake of these subordinate matters be continued. It is clearly impossible that Romanists and Protestants should be united in the same ecclesiastical organization. It is no less impossible that anything more than a federal union, such as may exist between independent nations, can be formed between Prelatists and Presbyterians, between Baptists and Pædobaptists, between Congregationalists and any other denomination recognizing the authority of church courts. The principles conscientiously adopted by these different bodies are not only different, but antagonistic and incompatible. Those who hold them can no more form one church than despotism and democracy can be united in the constitution of the same state. If by divine right all authority vests in the king, it cannot vest in the people. The advocates of these opposite theories therefore cannot unite in one form of government. It is no less obvious that if ecclesiastical power vests in one man—the bishop—it cannot vest in a presbytery. Episcopalians and Presbyterians therefore cannot unite. The latter deny the right of the bishop to the prerogatives which he claims; and the former deny the authority of the presbytery which it assumes. The same thing is equally plain of Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The former regard themselves as bound by the decisions of sessions and presbyteries; the latter refuse to recognize the right of church courts to exercise discipline or government. So long, therefore, as such differences exist

among Christians, it is plain that Romanists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, must form separate and independent bodies.

Differences as to doctrine do not form such insuperable barriers to church union as diversity of opinion respecting ecclesiastical government. The creed of a church may be so general, embracing only the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, such as can be professed with a good conscience by all true Christians, and thus ministers and members who differ widely within those limits may unite in one ecclesiastical organization. It is notorious that great differences of doctrine prevail in all large churches, as in the Church of England, and the Church of Scotland, and in this country in the Episcopal church, and in a less degree, perhaps, among Presbyterians. Much as to this point depends on the standards of the church. Those standards may be so strict and so extended as to exclude all but Calvinists, or all but Arminians, as is the case with the Wesleyans. It is a question of delicacy and difficulty how minute a confession of faith for an extended organization should be made. It may be too concise and latitudinarian, or it may be too minute and extended, requiring a degree of unanimity greater than is necessary, and greater than is attainable. Fidelity and harmony, however, both demand that the requirements of the standards, whatever they may be, should be sincerely adopted and enforced so far as every thing essential to their integrity is concerned.

But secondly, when union between different denominations is impracticable or undesirable, they have very important duties resting upon them in relation to each other. 1. The first and most comprehensive of these duties is mutual recognition. By this is meant the acknowledgment of their members as Christian brethren, and of the denominations or bodies themselves as Christian churches. It is a great offence against Christian charity, and a direct violation of the command of Christ, to refuse to receive as our brethren those whom Christ receives as his disciples. It will not avail as an excuse for such repudiation of brotherhood, to say that others do not walk with us; that they do not adopt the same form of government, are not subject to the same bishops or church courts; or that they do

not unite with us in the same testimony as to non-essential matters; or do not agree with us in the same mode of worship. We might as well refuse to recognize a man as a fellow-creature because he was a monarchist and not a republican, a European and not an American, or an African and not a Caucasian. This is no small matter. Those who refuse to recognize Christians as Christians, sin against Christ and commit an offence which is severely denounced in the word of God. The same principle applies to churches. To refuse to recognize as a church of Christ any body of associated believers united for the purposes of worship and discipline, can be justified only on the ground that some particular form of organization has by Divine authority been made essential to the existence of the church. And if essential to the existence of the church, it must be essential to the existence of piety and to the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit. *Ubi Spiritus Sanctus ibi Ecclesia* is a principle founded upon the Scriptures, and held sacred by evangelical Christians in all ages. It was the legend on the banner which they raised in all their conflicts with Papists and High Churchmen from the beginning. A body of Christians therefore, professing the true faith, and united for the purpose of worship and discipline, no matter how externally organized, is a church which other Christians are bound to recognize as such, unless it can be proved that a particular mode of organization is in fact, and by Divine command, essential to the existence of the church.

2. It is included in the acknowledgment that a body of Christians is a church of Christ, that we should commune with its members in public worship and in the sacraments, and allow them to commune with us. This follows from the spiritual unity of the church; from its having the same faith and the same Lord and God, and from the conditions of church membership being the same for all churches. A member of the church at Jerusalem was entitled to the privileges of the church of Antioch. If he was a Christian in one place, he was no less a Christian in another, and the rights of a Christian belonged to him wherever he went. It is obvious that this principle, although true in itself, is limited in its practical application. There may be something in the mode of conducting public

worship or in the administration of the sacraments which hurts the consciences of other Christians, and prevents this freedom of communion in church ordinances. If a church requires all who partake of the Lord's Supper to receive the elements upon their knees, should any man conscientiously believe that this posture implies the worship of the consecrated bread, he cannot join in the service; or if a church is so unfaithful as to admit to its fellowship those whom the law of Christ requires should be excluded, other churches are not bound to receive them into fellowship. These and similar limitations do not invalidate the principle. It remains the plain duty of all Christian churches to recognize each other as churches, and hold intercourse one with another as such. And it is also their duty to make nothing essential either to the existence of the church or to church fellowship, which the word of God does not declare to be essential.

3. A third duty resting on different churches or denominations, is to recognize the validity of each other's acts of discipline. If the church, notwithstanding its division into sects, is still one; if the legitimate terms of membership are the same in all; and if the lawful grounds of exclusion are also the same, then it follows that a man excluded from one church should be excluded from all other churches. The meaning of the act of suspension or excommunication is, that the subject of censure is unworthy of Christian fellowship. If this be true in one place, it is true in every place. Civil tribunals act upon this principle. Not only do the courts of the same state respect the decisions of co-ordinate courts; but the judicial decisions of one state are held valid in other states, until just reason can be shown to the contrary. The rule is the same with regard to acts of church discipline. The right to exercise discipline is to be acknowledged. The propriety and justice of the particular acts of discipline are to be presumed and acted upon. If clear evidence be afforded that those acts were unauthorized by the law of Christ, or manifestly unjust, other churches, in consistency with courtesy and Christian fellowship, may disregard them. If a Baptist church should excommunicate a member because he had his children baptized, no pædobaptist church could, on that ground, refuse to receive him. Or if one

Presbyterian church should subject a member to discipline because he joined in acts of worship in which hymns written by uninspired men were sung, other Presbyterians would be free to disregard such censures.

4. The same remarks apply to cases of ordination. If we are bound to recognize a given body as a Christian church, we are bound to admit that it has a right to all the privileges and prerogatives belonging to a church. Among those necessary prerogatives is the right to perpetuate and extend itself, and to appoint men to all scriptural offices necessary to that purpose. The ministry is a divine institution. It is appointed for the edification of saints and for the ingathering of those who are without. It is necessary, therefore, that a church should have ministers; and therefore it is necessary that she should have the right to ordain. If the Presbyterians, Methodists, or Congregationalists are to be recognized as Christian churches, their right to ordain ministers cannot be legitimately denied. It is one thing, however, to admit the right and another to admit the propriety of the mode in which it is exercised. If Presbyterians believe that the presbytery is the organ by which the church signifies her conviction that a man is called by the Spirit to the work of the ministry, they may consistently refuse to receive as ministers of their own body those who have not been presbyterially ordained. Or if one presbytery should exercise its admitted right of ordination in contravention either of the laws of Christ, or of the rules of the Presbyterian church, other presbyteries would not be bound to receive such minister as a member. The Bishop of Oxford ordained a man whom the Bishop of Chester refused to allow to officiate in his diocese. This was not schismatical. It was not a denial of the right of the Bishop of Oxford to ordain; it was only a denial that he had properly exercised that right in a given case. It is not necessary therefore that one denomination should concern itself how other denominational churches exercise the right of appointing men to the ministry, provided it admits that they possess the right of appointment; and recognize those thus appointed as ministers of Christ. It can preserve the purity of its own ministry and churches without incurring the charge of discourtesy or schism. Presbyterians

may recognize Methodist preachers as ministers of the gospel, and welcome them to their pulpits, but they cannot be expected to receive them into their own body or make them pastors of their own churches. The same of course may be said of Methodists in regard to Presbyterians.

5. Another important duty which rests upon denominations recognizing each other as Christian churches, is that of non-interference. When one church has planted itself in a field which it is abundantly able to cultivate, it is a breach of the principles of unity for another denomination to contend for joint-occupation. This is a great evil, and one of constant occurrence. It often happens that one denomination organizes a church in a village the population of which is barely sufficient for one church, when another starts a rival church, which can succeed only by drawing support from the other. When the field is the world, and so much land remains unoccupied, it is a great wrong thus to embarrass the operations of our fellow-Christians, and to burden the people with the support of two, three, or more churches, where one would do more good than many.

6. Finally, it is obviously the duty of different denominations to cultivate peace. They should avoid all the causes of alienation and ill-feeling, and do everything in their power to promote Christian love and fellowship. It is their duty, indeed, to maintain what they believe to be the truth, and endeavour to promote unity of faith; but they are bound to abstain from mere rivalry and sectarian conflicts.

How do these obvious principles apply to the case of the Old and New-school Presbyterians in this country? They now constitute two distinct organizations. They are as much separate and independent bodies as the United Presbyterians, or the Presbyterians in Canada or Scotland, are independent of each other and of us. What is the present duty of these two large, important, and influential bodies in relation to each other? It will be admitted that it is their duty to recognize each other as Christian churches, to worship and commune one with the other; to respect each other's acts of discipline; and recognize the right of each to all church privileges and prerogatives. They are under special obligation also to cultivate peace and

kind feeling; to abstain from mutual criminations and abuse, and to do all in their power to allay what may yet remain of enmity arising from past contentions. It is also specially incumbent upon them to avoid interfering one with the other. In this point both parties have hitherto grievously erred. A handful of the adherents of the one body has been organized into a rival church, when the success of the one must be the destruction of the other. As to all these matters there can be no difference of opinion. But is it the present duty of these bodies to unite and become one church, as they were before the division? This is a very grave question, involving principles and interests of vital importance. It is obvious enough that this union ought to take place if it can be effected without the sacrifice of principle, and if it can be made real and harmonious. Every one is ready to acknowledge that great evils arise from division; and great good might be expected from a righteous and cordial union of these important organizations. The only question is, can such a union be now reasonably expected? This leads to the further questions, what were the grounds of separation? and do, or do not, those grounds still continue?

It is of the last importance, in order to determine the question of duty in this matter, to bear in mind that the church was not divided by the action of the majority (the Old-school), but by the voluntary secession of the minority or New-school. This is a simple historical fact, abundantly proved by official records. In 1837 the Assembly passed certain acts, dissolving the third Presbytery of Philadelphia, and directing its members and churches to attach themselves to neighbouring presbyteries. It also declared that the Synod of the Western Reserve being largely composed of Congregational churches, should no longer be considered a constituent part of the Presbyterian church. A similar resolution was afterwards adopted in reference to the Synods of Genesee, Utica, and Geneva. The Assembly declare "that it has no intention by these resolutions to affect in any way the standing of any member of either of said synods; nor to disturb the pastoral relation in any church, nor to interfere with the duties or relations of private Christians in their respective congregations." It also directed that all churches presbyterially organized within the bounds of those synods

should apply for admission to any presbytery conveniently located in connection with our body; and that if any presbyteries within the same bounds were "strictly Presbyterian in doctrine and order," they should apply for recognition to the next General Assembly. The fact is, that under what is called the Plan of Union, many churches, numerous presbyteries, and even whole synods, had come to be composed, in a greater or less degree, of Congregationalists. The Presbytery of Lorain, for example, was reported to the Assembly as having within its bounds only one Presbyterian church, all the rest being Congregational. The Presbytery of Trumbull had twelve ministers and only one Presbyterian church. The Synod of Western Reserve included one hundred and eighteen ministers, and had only between twenty and thirty Presbyterian churches within its bounds. It was because these ecclesiastical bodies were not organized according to the constitution that the Assembly declared that they could no longer be recognized as constituent parts of the Presbyterian Church; while it made full provision for the continuance of the union of all the Presbyterian elements included within them, with the rest of the churches.

As these events happened nearly a generation ago, it is probable that a large portion of our present ministers and members know little about them. Many of them perhaps never heard of the Plan of Union, and have no idea what it was. Yet a knowledge of these events, and of the principles involved in the controversy which led to the division of the church in 1838, is absolutely essential to an intelligent understanding of the question of reunion, which is now exciting so much attention. We must be permitted, therefore, briefly to state what the facts and principles involved in that catastrophe were.

In the year 1801, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the General Association of Connecticut entered into an agreement, called the Plan of Union, in relation to "a form of government for the churches in the new settlements." This plan provided, 1. That a Presbyterian might be the pastor of a Congregational church, and a Congregationalist the pastor of a Presbyterian church. 2. That "if in the new settlements any church of the Congregational order shall settle a minister of the Presbyterian order, that church may, if they choose,

still conduct their discipline according to Congregational principles." "But if any difficulty shall exist between the minister and the church, or any member of it, it shall be referred to the presbytery to which the minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; if not, to a council, consisting of any equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties." 3. So if a Presbyterian church call a Congregationalist as pastor, the discipline may continue Presbyterian, except when the difficulty is with the pastor, and then the matter was to be referred to a mutual council. 4. If a church consists partly of Congregationalists and partly of Presbyterians, they were to choose a standing committee from the communicants to administer discipline. If a Presbyterian member be dissatisfied with the judgment of the said committee, he might appeal to the presbytery; if a Congregationalist, he had the right of appeal to the body of the male communicants of the church. 5. The Plan further provided, that the standing committee of any church might depute one of their number to attend presbytery, who should have the same right to sit and act in the presbytery as a ruling elder.

It is clear that the object aimed at in this Plan was desirable and excellent; that the motives of its authors were pure and good; that its provisions were wise and just; and that its operation, within the sphere originally intended, was likely to be salutary, so long as Congregationalists and Presbyterians were cordially agreed in matters of doctrine, and free from a sectarian spirit. But, on the other hand, it is no less clear that the contracting parties were utterly incompetent to give any authority or force to such an arrangement. The General Association of Connecticut had no jurisdiction over the churches even of that state, and they had no more right to control the action of the Congregationalists in the new settlements than they had to make laws for the Congregationalists of England. The General Assembly was not less powerless in the premises. That body acts under a written constitution; it has no more right to enact any thing in contravention of that constitution, than it has to make laws for the state. The constitution says that a church organically connected with our body must be governed by a session composed of ruling elders and the pastor;

that the elders, as well as the pastor, must adopt our standards of doctrine and order, and be regularly ordained to his office. The Plan of Union permitted churches organized and governed on the Congregational system to have the same connection with the church as a whole, as regular Presbyterian churches. The constitution says that a presbytery must consist of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each church within a given district. The Plan of Union says that a presbytery may consist of ministers and Congregational laymen, who have never adopted our standards or taken upon them the obligations of our ruling elders. That this Plan therefore was in its origin and provisions utterly at variance with the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, is a matter beyond dispute.

Besides this, the Plan had been greatly perverted and abused. Instead of being, as originally intended, a temporary arrangement for the "new settlements," it was made a permanent institution, spread over large regions of country, thickly settled and far advanced in wealth and resources; so that many hundreds of irregularly organized or Congregational churches came to be included in the Presbyterian body. At first, it was required that the Congregational churches should appoint a standing committee (an approach, at least, to a Presbyterian session) for the administration of discipline. But in a multitude of cases this was neglected, and the whole church was regarded as the committee. The Plan contemplated Congregational laymen being allowed to sit and vote only in the presbytery which had jurisdiction over the territory to which the churches which they represented belonged. But in fact they were sent to the synods, and delegated as "ruling elders" to the General Assembly. They were so designated in their commissions, and so enrolled on the minutes of those bodies. Thus Congregationalists, who had not adopted our standards, and who were opposed in principle to our form of government, were made constituent members of our church courts, and administered a discipline over Presbyterians, to which they themselves refused subjection. This was as though Canadians, Mexicans, and Cubans, citizens of foreign nations, should be allowed seats in the Congress of the United States, and in our courts of jus-

tice,—should participate in making and administering laws which they were not called upon to obey.

This state of things had grown up gradually and without the knowledge of the church at large. There was no way by which these facts could be officially known. Presbyterian, mixed, and Congregational churches were reported by the presbytery in the same way. From all that appeared in their reports, all those churches were Presbyterian—they were so designated. And the delegates from them were enrolled as ruling elders. It filled the church therefore with astonishment, when it came to be discovered that to so large an extent Presbyterians were governed by Congregationalists.

This subject was brought before the Assembly of 1837, by a convention of (Old-school) ministers and elders, which met in the spring of that year in Philadelphia. The memorial of that convention was presented to the Assembly and referred to a committee, consisting of Drs. Alexander, Green, and Baxter, and Messrs. Plumer, Laurie, and Lenox. That committee reported, “In regard to the relation existing between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, the committee recommend the following resolutions, viz.

“1. That between these two branches of the American church, there ought, in the judgment of this Assembly, to be maintained sentiments of mutual respect and esteem; and for that purpose no reasonable efforts should be omitted to preserve a perfectly good understanding between these branches of the church of Christ.

“2. That it is expedient to continue the plan of friendly intercourse between this church and the Congregational churches of New England, as it now exists.

“3. But as the ‘Plan of Union’ adopted for the new settlements, in 1801, was originally an unconstitutional act on the part of that Assembly, these important standing rules never having been submitted to the Presbyteries, and as they were totally destitute of authority as proceeding from the General Association of Connecticut, which is invested with no power to legislate in such cases, and especially to regulate churches not within her limits, and as much confusion and irregularity have arisen from this unnatural and unconstitutional system of union,

therefore, it is resolved, that the act of the Assembly of 1801, entitled a 'Plan of Union,' be, and the same is hereby, abrogated.

"4. That our delegates to the bodies representing the Congregational churches, be instructed to explain the reasonable and even the necessity of the foregoing measure."

After a protracted and earnest debate, this report was adopted by a vote of 143 *yeas* to 110 *nays*. The question then presented itself, What was to be said and done in reference to those congregations, presbyteries, and synods, which were constituted on the Plan of Union now abrogated? It was proposed that such judicatories as were known or reported to be irregularly constituted, should be cited before the bar of the next Assembly. This resolution after a long debate was carried; *yeas* 128, *nays* 122. By this time the contending parties had come to the conclusion that it was better that they should separate and constitute two independent churches. A committee of ten—five from each side of the house—was appointed, to agree upon the terms of separation. While that committee was absent, Dr. Cuyler presented a preamble, and a series of resolutions, of which the following was the most important, viz., "*Resolved*, That no church, which is not duly organized according to the provisions of our constitution, shall henceforth form a constituent part of any of our presbyteries, or be represented in any of our judicatories, unless they shall conform to our constitution, when they shall be cheerfully received." After some debate, this matter was laid aside to await the report of the committee "on an amicable division." That committee reported that they agreed as to the propriety of a separation, as to the division of the funds, as to the names of the two bodies, as to the records of the church, as to its boards and constitutions, but could not agree as to the question whether the division should be made at once or referred to the presbyteries, and as to whether the present Presbyterian Church should be dissolved and two new bodies formed, of which neither should be the successor of the one now existing. The whole matter was then laid on the table by the vote—*yeas* 139, *nays* 107. Every effort to adjust the difficulty having failed, the resolutions above referred to, declaring that the abrogation of the Plan of Union effected the disconnection of the churches and judicatories

formed under it with the Presbyterian Church; and therefore, that the Synods of Western Reserve, and those of Geneva, Genesee, and Utica, were declared to be "out of the ecclesiastical connection of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America."

The convention above mentioned included in their memorial addressed to the Assembly a testimony against certain errors, in reference to which they requested an expression of the judgment of the church. Those errors were specified as follows: 1. "That God would have prevented the existence of sin in our world, but was unable, without destroying the moral agency of man: or, that for aught that appears in the Bible to the contrary, sin is incidental to any wise moral system. 2. That election to eternal life is founded on a foresight of faith and obedience. 3. That we have no more to do with the first sin of Adam than with the sins of any other parent. 4. That infants come into the world as free from moral defilement as was Adam when he was created. 5. That infants sustain the same relation to the moral government of God in this world as brute animals, and that their sufferings and death are to be accounted for on the same principles as those of brutes, and not by any means to be considered as penal. 6. That there is no other original sin than the fact that all the posterity of Adam, though by nature innocent, or possessed of no moral character, will always begin to sin when they begin to exercise moral agency; that original sin does not include a sinful bias of the human mind, and a just exposure to penal suffering; and that there is no evidence in Scripture, that infants, in order to salvation, do need redemption by the blood of Christ and regeneration by the Holy Ghost. 7. That the doctrine of imputation, whether of the guilt of Adam's sin, or of the righteousness of Christ, has no foundation in the word of God, and is both unjust and absurd. 8. That the sufferings and death of Christ were not truly vicarious and penal, but symbolical, governmental, and instructive only. 9. That the impenitent sinner is by nature, and independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, in full possession of all the ability necessary to a full compliance with all the commands of God. 10. That Christ does not intercede for the elect until after their regeneration. 11. That saving faith

is not an effect of the special operation of the Holy Spirit, but a mere rational belief of the truth, or assent to the word of God. 12. That regeneration is the act of the sinner himself, and that it consists in a change of his governing purpose, which he himself must produce, and which is the result, not of any direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, but chiefly of a persuasive exhibition of the truth, analogous to the influence which one man exerts over the mind of another; or that regeneration is not an instantaneous act, but a progressive work. 13. That God has done all that *he can do* for the salvation of all men, and that man himself must do the rest. 14. That God cannot exert such influence on the minds of men, as shall make it certain that they will choose and act in a particular manner without impairing their moral agency. 15. That the righteousness of Christ is not the sole ground of the sinner's acceptance with God, and that in no sense does the righteousness of Christ become ours. 16. That the reason why some differ from others in regard to their acceptance of the gospel is, that they make themselves to differ."

The committee to whom this memorial was referred, recommended, 1. That the Assembly bear its solemn testimony against these and the other errors specified, whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever taught. 2. That the inferior judicatories be enjoined to adopt all suitable measures to keep their members pure from opinions so dangerous, and especially "to guard with great care the door of entrance into the sacred office. Nor can," it is added, "the Assembly regard as consistent with ministerial ordination vows, an unwillingness to discipline according to the rules of the word of God and of our standards, any person already a teacher, who may give currency to the foregoing errors."

The consideration of this part of the report of the committee was, after some discussion, deferred until after the action of the Assembly in reference to the Plan of Union. It was subsequently taken up and adopted.

From this narrative it appears that the two great points, and the only ones prominently before the Assembly, as to which the parties differed, were doctrine and order. As to the latter, as we have seen, the Old-school insisted that all churches and

judicatories in connection with our church should be presbyterially organized agreeably to the constitution. The New-school insisted that Congregational churches should be included in our body and represented by lay delegates, with all the rights of ruling elders, in all our church courts. As to doctrine, the difference was not that all the Old-school were orthodox and all the New-school heterodox; nor that errors which a large part of the New-school party rejected did in fact more or less prevail among our ministers and churches; but the great and vital difference was, whether these errors should be a bar to ministerial communion. The one party would refuse to license or ordain any one who avowed the opinions above referred to. The other would and did ordain them without hesitation. The one party called for their condemnation by the church, the other resisted the utterance of such testimony. The one endeavoured to exercise discipline on those who avowed the errors in question in their writings, the other earnestly opposed all such exercise of discipline.

It was these doctrinal differences, far more than questions relating to church organization, which had profoundly agitated the church for years before the disruption. Indeed, the reason why so much feeling was excited when it was found that Congregationalists were, to so large an extent, incorporated in our judicatories, was that these Congregationalists, although not subject to our standards, were almost without exception found among either the abettors or protectors of false doctrine. And the main ground of opposition to the American Home Missionary Society was the conviction that it was extensively used to promote doctrinal errors.

No one doubts that at the time of the disruption there were, as there are now, many excellent ministers in the New-school body sound in the faith, who would be an honour and blessing to any church. But it is as little open to doubt that there were among them many who openly avowed and taught the doctrines against which the Assembly felt called upon to bear their solemn testimony. And what is perhaps of still more importance, the party, as a party, strenuously resisted making the holding of those errors a bar to ministerial communion. This is plain, 1. Not only from the resistance offered to the

reception and adoption of the report in which those errors were condemned; and to the resolution which enjoined it upon the lower judicatories not to admit to the ministerial office in our church those who taught them; and to subject to discipline those already teachers among us by whom they were advocated. 2. From the fact that in every instance in which, before the disruption, the Old-school attempted to make those errors the ground of discipline, they were resisted to the utmost by the New-school party. 3. In the first published address made to the churches after the division, by the New-school Assembly, they express the hope that “the *shades* of opinion” which separate New Haven and East Windsor may soon be obliterated. They thus speak of doctrines which the Old-school Assembly solemnly testified against as “dangerous” errors, inconsistent with an honest adoption of our standards, as mere *shades* of opinion; themselves (or their officers) italicising the word, to diminish as much as possible its force. 4. In no case known to the public has any minister ever been subjected to discipline for avowing the errors in question; nor has any candidate for the ministry been refused ordination because he adopted them. 5. It is notorious that the two parties adopted different views as to the sense in which ministers professed to receive the Westminster Confession as containing the “system of doctrine” contained in the sacred Scriptures. The one maintained that it required the cordial adoption of all the doctrines which enter into the Calvinistic system, and which are essential to its integrity. The other said, (at least it was said by some of their leaders and was practically acted upon by the party,) that it meant only the adoption of “the essential and necessary doctrines” of religion. Reference was made to the Adopting Act of 1729, by the original synod of the church, which was interpreted in the same way by President Dickinson and by other Presbyterian ministers of that day.

Such then were the grounds of difference between the two parties as presented in official documents. The Old-school required, 1. That all congregations and judicatories connected with the Presbyterian Church should be presbyterially organized according to the constitution. 2. That the doctrinal standards of the church should be so enforced as to prevent the admission

of any man into its ministry, or his continuance in the exercise of his office over its churches, who held doctrines inconsistent with the Calvinistic system in its integrity. To these requirements the New-school as a party refused to submit, and voluntarily seceded from the church and set up a new organization for themselves, in which Congregationalism and greater latitude of doctrinal opinion would be tolerated.

That this is historically true will appear from the following facts: 1. The Assembly of 1837 having abrogated the Plan of Union, and declared that churches and judicatories constituted on that plan could no longer remain in our connection, directed all the synods in which such organizations existed to take measures for their being either conformed to the constitution or excluded from our body. 2. The Synod of New Jersey, in obedience to this requisition of the Assembly, directed the Presbytery of Montrose "to take such order as soon as it can conveniently be done, to bring all churches within its bounds to an entire conformity with our standards, and to inform such churches that they can retain their connection with the presbytery on no other terms." 3. The same course was opened to the other synods affected by the repeal of the Plan of Union. Not a single presbytery however belonging to them, so far as known, consented to separate from the Congregational churches within their bounds, and in a convention of delegates from those presbyteries, held at Auburn, August 17, 1837, it was unanimously resolved that such separation should not take place. 4. Having thus resolved to adhere to their union with Congregationalists, delegates from all these presbyteries appeared at the Assembly of 1838 and claimed to be enrolled as members. 5. It was among the standing rules of the Assembly that the Moderator of the last Assembly should preside until a new moderator was chosen, and that the stated and permanent clerks should be a standing committee for receiving the commissions of delegates and forming the roll. The first business in order therefore, after the Moderator had taken the chair, was the report of that committee. Those delegates whose commissions were unquestioned were placed on the roll; those commissions the regularity or validity of which was called in question were to be reported to the house for its decision.

The clerks having omitted from the roll the names of the delegates from the presbyteries affected by the abrogation of the Plan of Union, the only regular course was to bring up the question of their claim to seats in the Assembly after the house was duly constituted. Without waiting for any decision of the Assembly, a member called another man than the legal Moderator to the chair, and the forms of constituting the house were rapidly gone through by a minority of the members, and they then withdrew to meet in another place; and claimed to be the true General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. This claim was finally disallowed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania sitting in banc.

From this statement of the facts in the case, it is plain that the New-school body voluntarily seceded from the Presbyterian Church and set up a new organization. A large part of those who withdrew, if not the majority, were delegates from presbyteries unaffected by the action of the Assembly of 1837, and whose seats in the Assembly of 1838 were uncontested.

We are not disposed to question the legal right of these brethren to withdraw. The moral right to divide the church, for the reasons which controlled their action, is a matter for them to determine. No man or set of men can properly secede from a church of Christ, unless he is called upon to profess or to do something which his conscience forbids; or is forbidden to profess or do something which his conscience and the word of God enjoin. This is the generally received doctrine as to schism or separation of churches. If the consciences of our New-school brethren forbid them to separate from the Congregationalists; or to require conformity in doctrine to the standards of the church as the condition of ministerial communion, then they were right in their secession; or at least that secession was unavoidable. The question of reunion is of necessity a question of the return of the New-school body to the Presbyterian Church. Whether they can with a good conscience return, depends (from our point of view) on the question whether they are willing that all congregations and judicatories included in our church, shall be constituted and organized according to the standards of that church; and, whether they are willing to endeavour to secure, by the proper

exercise of discipline, that the candidates for ordination and ordained ministers shall embrace the Calvinistic system of doctrine, as presented in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, in its integrity. If they are willing to do this, we can see no conscientious objection to their return; and there can, as it seems to us, be no valid reason on the part of the Old-school to complete a cordial union. But if they are unwilling to adopt the principles above stated, and to act upon them, we see not how either party can with a good conscience consent to a reunion.

Both parties had grounds which appeared to them valid for the course which they adopted. The New-school denied, 1. The constitutional right of the General Assembly to abrogate the Plan of Union. 2. That admitting they had the right to set it aside for the future, they had no authority to exclude the churches and judicatories already formed on that Plan, and which had been for years in unquestioned union with our church. The Old-school, on the other hand, maintained, 1. That the Plan was unconstitutional and void *ab initio*. 2. That as it was adopted by a mere vote of the Assembly, it could be abrogated by a vote of that body. 3. That necessarily the effect of that abrogation was to deny to all churches and judicatories formed under it, the right to be represented in our church courts, or to form constituent elements of those courts. The Plan was not of the nature of a contract. It conferred certain privileges, so long as it continued in force; but those privileges ceased so soon as the consent of the Assembly to their continued enjoyment was withdrawn. For a number of years, by a vote of the Assembly, the delegates from the bodies in correspondence with us, (the General Associations of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, &c.) were allowed not only to sit and deliberate in the General Assembly, but also to vote on all questions which came before the body. This was clearly unconstitutional. But it conveyed a privilege which, when the Assembly saw fit to deny, the Associations in question did not dream they had a right to demand on the ground of usage and precedent. If the Congress of the United States had allowed delegates from every nation in Europe to sit and vote in our national councils, would such

an unconstitutional stretch of power be held to bind the country for ever? 4. The Old-school moreover insisted that they were bound by their allegiance to the constitution, to see that it was conformed to by all the churches and judicatories under their care. And therefore that they could not in conscience recognize Congregational churches as constituent parts of the Presbyterian Church, or allow their delegates to sit as members with full powers in our church courts. 5. That such a course was not only unconstitutional, but unreasonable and unjust. If it is preposterous that French and English citizens, not amenable to our government, should sit as members of our state and national councils, it is no less preposterous that Congregationalists, who have never adopted our standards, and who are not subject to our laws, should administer the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church. This is a thing to which Presbyterians with their eyes open never would have submitted, and to which they cannot be expected again voluntarily to subject themselves. Supposing therefore the New-School to adhere to the ground openly and unanimously taken by them in 1837 and 1838, in refusing to recognize the abrogation of the Plan of Union, and to separate from Congregationalists, there is an obvious and insuperable barrier to a reunion of the two churches. That they do adhere to that ground, we fear, admits of no doubt. They have never renounced it, or rescinded their action in relation to it. They have never required, so far as we know, Congregational churches to be presbyterially organized, in order to a connection with their presbyteries, nor do they refuse, to the best of our information, to allow lay delegates from Congregational churches to sit in their courts as ruling elders. Many of their presbyteries, we are informed, embrace Congregational churches, and in some they still constitute, we are told, almost the entire body. This is not a matter of passion or feeling. It is simply a matter of principle and conscience. Can any Old-school man with a good conscience, and a proper sense of his obligation to the constitution, consent to a reunion which shall allow Congregationalists who do not adopt our standards either of doctrine or discipline to be constituent members of our church courts. We do not think that this is a matter that admits of debate.

We do not doubt that many of our New-school brethren disapprove of this amalgamation of two inconsistent elements in their judicatories, that they regard it as wrong in principle and injurious in its practical operation, and are desirous that it should be brought to an end. We suppose also that from the increased denominational zeal of Congregationalists that they are becoming more and more averse to be tacked on as an appendage to the great Presbyterian Church, and are disposed to act by and for themselves. The difficulty from this source to a reunion of the two Presbyterian churches is likely therefore soon to pass away, provided the reunion be not prematurely urged. Any attempt at reunion before the way is properly prepared, will only aggravate existing evils, and drive the two bodies further apart than they are at present.

The other great cause of the division of the church in 1838 was the difference of doctrinal views between the two parties of which the church was constituted. As to this we wish to say nothing which will not command the assent of all candid and well-informed men, whether Old-school or New school. We presume it will be universally admitted, 1. That such differences did to a greater or less extent prevail. This fact is asserted by the Assembly of 1837, and is proved by the writings, the controversies, and other avowals which rendered the fact notorious. 2. It will also be conceded that inasmuch as the division was effected, in a large measure, by other causes than these differences about doctrine, many who agreed in doctrine were found on both sides of the dividing line. 3. As to the extent to which doctrinal errors prevailed in the New-school body, there was not then, and there is not now, any means of determining the matter. We are surprised, however, to find that Mr. Gillett (*History of the Presbyterian Church*) refers to the fact that the resolution condemning doctrinal errors was passed "by an overwhelming majority," as proof that few were opposed to the adoption of that resolution. The vote in favour of the resolution was only 109, although the Old-school vote on other questions had reached 143. This proves how much the Assembly had been depleted by ordinary causes before the resolution about doctrines was acted upon, which was not until toward the close of the sessions. Besides, all the delegates from the

presbyteries within the four synods of Western Reserve, Genesee, Utica, and Geneva, had before this left the house. The New-school party therefore was reduced at that time to a mere handful of voters. That only six therefore voted against the resolution is no proof of the state of opinion in the house as originally constituted. The number of the advocates and abettors of errors, however, is not the point to be decided. That was a tolerable, because a controllable, evil. 4. The main difficulty was that the two parties differed in principle. They differed as to the nature of the obligation assumed in the adoption of the Westminster Confession. The fact of such difference was avowed. It was a matter of public discussion what was the true meaning of the phrase "system of doctrine" which every minister or elder of our church used when he said he received the Confession of Faith as the confession of his faith. Three interpretations were given of its meaning. Some went to the extreme of saying it involved the adoption of every proposition contained in the Confession and Catechisms. Others went to the opposite extreme, and maintained that it meant only the adoption of those articles which were "essential and necessary to religion," by which they doubtless intended evangelical religion. The great majority of the church from the beginning held and taught that the phrase in question means the adoption of all the doctrines essential to the Calvinistic system as taught in the symbols of the Reformed churches.

That this is the true interpretation is evident, 1. From the signification of the words as established by usage, which cannot be arbitrarily altered. The "system of doctrine" contained in the Racovian Catechism is the Socinian system, and he who adopts that catechism before God and man professes himself to be a Socinian. The "system of doctrine" contained in the "Form of Concord" is the Lutheran system; that contained in the Apology for the Remonstrance is the Arminian system; and by parity of reasoning the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession is the Calvinistic system. No man therefore can honestly adopt that confession who is not a Calvinist; and no man can honestly profess to be a Calvinist who does not adopt all the "essential and necessary articles" of Calvinism, as a known and historical form of faith. More than

this the words do not signify. More than this no church court has the right to demand. And less than this no such court is authorized to accept. 2. This has been the interpretation put upon the formula in question from the beginning. No man has ever been subjected to discipline in our church for the denial of anything in our standards, which did not include the rejection either of some doctrine held in common by Calvinists and all other evangelical churches, (such as the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, etc., etc.), or of some article of faith regarded as essential to the integrity of the Calvinistic system. 3. To demand more than this would be destructive to the unity of the church. There never was a period in our history in which all our ministers agreed in adopting every proposition contained in the Confession and Catechisms. It is notorious that such agreement does not now exist. On the other hand, to demand less than the adoption of the Calvinistic system in its integrity, would destroy the purity and harmony of the church.

That the New-school party, as a party, did adopt a different principle, and contend that those who rejected more or less of the essential doctrines of the Calvinistic system could properly be received or retained as ministers of our church, is plain, 1. From the fact, which we presume no one will deny, that they as freely receive and ordain candidates for the ministry, educated in the Theological Seminary at New Haven, and holding the distinctive doctrines of that school, as they did candidates from East Windsor, Princeton, Danville, or Allegheny. 2. From the fact that the New-school Assembly designated the differences between New Haven and East Windsor as mere shades of opinion. 3. Because in every instance in which the attempt was made to enforce the discipline of the church on those who professed the errors condemned by the Assembly of 1837, it was resisted with an energy and feeling which convulsed the church to its foundation. 4. Because it is a fact, patent and undeniable, that no New-school presbytery has to this day ventured to subject to censure the avowed advocates of the errors specified in the paper adopted in 1837. 5. It is well known that at the time of the disruption, and in the previous discussions, appeal was made by leading men, to the "Adopting Act," as it is called of the original synod of our

church. It was contended that the Presbyterian Church in this country was constituted on a liberal basis, which allowed great diversity of opinion in doctrinal matters. President Dickinson, one of the most distinguished ministers of our body in that day, as above stated, was opposed to all human creeds. He said that "a joint acknowledgment of our Lord Jesus Christ as our common head, of the sacred Scriptures for our common standard both in faith and practice, with a joint agreement in the same essential and necessary articles of Christianity, and in the same methods of worship and discipline, are a sufficient bond of union for the being and well-being of any church under heaven." In this sense he understood the Adopting Act, in which the synod professed to receive the Westminster Confession in all its "fundamental and necessary articles." This he understood to mean, articles necessary to Christianity, and not such as were necessary to Calvinism. This is plain, because he refers to the Adopting Act in proof that Presbyterians in this country acted on the principle "that we should admit all to the exercise of the ministry among us, that we suppose qualified for the work, according to the instructions which Christ has given us in the gospel, and capable of doing service in the church of Christ, in that important character, how different soever in opinion from us."*

It is to be remarked that what we call the "Adopting Act," the synod call their "preliminary act," passed on the morning of September 19th, 1729. The Adopting Act itself, as the synod regarded it, was passed in the afternoon of that day, wherein they say that after full comparison of views, they unanimously agreed (excepting Rev. Mr. Elmer, who afterwards acceded) "in declaring the Westminster Confession and Catechisms to be the confession of their faith, *excepting only* certain clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters." Those clauses, which related to the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, are no longer in the Confession as adopted by our church. President Dickinson was a sound Calvinist, and would have no difficulty in joining in the declaration (as he actually did) that he adopted the Westminster Confession with

* Hodge's History of the Presbyterian Church, vol. i. ch. 3.

the single exception above mentioned. He evidently however was in principle opposed to making its adoption in that sense a term for ministerial communion, and interpreted the "preliminary act" as requiring of "intrants" only the profession of faith in the "fundamental and necessary articles of Christianity." That act gave some ground for his interpretation of it, and when published to the churches, was by many in fact so understood. That such however was not the true intent and meaning of the synod is plain, 1. From the avowed design of the act. It is stated in the overture which was the occasion of its adoption, that it was the prevalence of "Arminianism, Socinianism, Deism, Freethinking," &c., in the Reformed churches abroad, which created the necessity for the act. The author of the overture, after its adoption, expresses his satisfaction in the measure, inasmuch as he had been greatly anxious "lest we should be corrupted with the new schemes of doctrine which for some time had prevailed in the north of Ireland, that being the part whence we expected to be, in a great measure, supplied with new hands to fill our vacancies in the ministry within the bounds of the synod." It was no jealousy on the part of the Scotch and Irish members against those from England and New England, but fear of the corrupting influence of the Irish ministers which gave rise to this measure. This was a rational fear. There was the prospect of a large accession of Irish members, which actually soon took place; and the defection from the truth among Irish Presbyterians, which afterwards culminated in the Arian apostasy, had already begun to manifest itself. If however the avowed design of the Adopting Act was to guard against the introduction of Arminianism, as well as against Socinianism, then it of necessity implied and meant more than adherence to "the fundamental articles of Christianity." Arminians have never been accused of not being Christians. 2. As however the language of the preliminary act gave some ground for the suspicion that the synod intended to require of "intrants" nothing but a profession of the essential articles of Christianity, it became necessary that the true intent of their act should be more distinctly stated. Accordingly at the very next meeting of the synod in 1730, it was unanimously declared, "That they understand those clauses

that respect the admission of intrants in such a sense as to oblige them to receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms at their admission, in the same manner and as fully as the members of the synod that were then present." Again, in 1736, a similar declaration was made in still stronger terms, and the declaration put on record that, as they say, "This was our meaning and true intent in our first adopting of the said Confession, which may particularly appear by our adopting act, which is as follows." They then recite the act passed on the afternoon of September 19, 1729.* From all this it appears that our church from its organization was, and ever professed and intended to be, a Calvinistic church. No man could at any time rightfully enter its ministry, who did not profess to hold the Calvinistic system in its integrity. This is the fundamental and constitutional basis of the church, to which

* Mr. Gillett allows himself (see *History of the Presbyterian Church*, vol. i. p. 58), to say in reference to the above-cited minute, "As a matter of fact this was not true, and as a matter of right it was a gross injustice to attempt to change the constitutional basis upon which the synod had deliberately, and with full notice of its intention, placed itself. In spite of this action the Adopting Act still stood as the fundamental and constitutional basis of the synod, and no possible *Interpretation* could supersede it." This is a very serious charge against the members of the synod. They assert that in a certain act, their true intent and meaning were so and so. Mr. Gillett says that assertion is not true, such were not their intent and meaning. We know not how such a statement can be justified. The assertion of the synod was to the letter true. They actually did in 1729, what they declared in 1736 they then intended to do. They adopted the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, with the single exception of certain clauses relating to the power of the civil magistrate. They made no distinction between doctrines essential to religion and those not essential. Not less extraordinary is the denial of the authority of the synod to interpret their own act. A body which passes an act may certainly declare its meaning. If Congress enacts a law, which is of doubtful interpretation, they may authoritatively declare what its true meaning is. Besides, Mr. Gillett seems to regard the Old Synod as a body analogous to our modern synods. This is far from being the true light in which it is to be viewed. Our modern synods act under a written constitution greatly restricting their powers. They represent only a part of the church. The Old Synod was the convention of the whole church. It had the plenary powers which belong to a State, or National Convention. It could abolish the Adopting Act, modify or explain it, as it saw fit. There is therefore not the slightest authority for declining to recognize the binding force of the acts of 1730 and 1736, as in any degree less than that of 1729. The last named was no more "fundamental and constitutional" than the others.

it is bound by every consideration of duty and honour to adhere.

Now if, as we cannot but think is too plain to admit of denial, our New-school brethren, as a party, have never been willing and are not now willing to adopt and act on that principle, then there is a second insuperable barrier to the union of the two churches. It is insuperable, because it is a matter not of prejudice, or consistency, but of principle and conscience.

The two insuperable difficulties then which, as it seems to us, forbid at present the union of the two branches of the Presbyterian church, are therefore, first, the fact that the New-school body still admit Congregational churches to be represented in their church courts, and to constitute equally with Presbyterian congregations an element in their organization; and, secondly, that they theoretically and practically adopt a different rule from that on which the Old-school feel bound to act as to ministerial communion. The great advantages likely to arise from the union of these two influential bodies, are so obvious and so great, that both parties would doubtless rejoice in its consummation, provided the union could be a real and harmonious one. We see nothing in the way of such a union, which might not be surmounted, except the two difficulties above-mentioned. If our New-school brethren would require all churches in organic connection with their body to be presbyterially organized according to the constitution, and refuse to ordain or to admit to the ministry, or retain in it, any man who was not a sincere Calvinist, then we believe the way would be open for a harmonious and lasting union.

But it may be asked, What is Calvinism? What are the doctrines essential to that system? Both churches profess "sincerely to receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." If they do not agree as to the nature of the profession thus made, how can they be expected to agree as to what is Calvinism? One may say the Westminster Confession contains all the doctrines taught in the Apostles', the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, and therefore any man, though a Papist, Lutheran, or Arminian, may say he receives the Confession as containing the great catholic system common to all

Christian churches. The Confession contains also the Protestant, as opposed to the Romish system; and in that sense a man may say he receives the Confession as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. So far as the mere *signification* of the words is concerned, such persons may make the profession required in the ordination service, as well as he who receives the Confession as containing the Calvinistic system. The meaning of the formula is not determined by the mere signification of the words, but by established usage, and especially by the *animus imponentis*. In what sense does the church understand the words in question? and what is the profession which she requires of those whom she receives to the exercise of the ministry within her pale? As to this point, as we have seen, there can be no rational doubt. But admitting that it is the Calvinistic system which every minister is required to profess, who is to determine what is Calvinism? In answer to that question, it is to be remarked, that Calvinism is an historical form of doctrine, and admits of being as certainly and definitely determined as Romanism, Lutheranism, or Arminianism. And it must not be arbitrarily determined. No man has the right to say that Calvinism is just what he chooses to make it; that this and that doctrine may be omitted, and yet "the system" be retained. This would not be honest. If any man in the time of the Pelagian controversy professed to adopt the Augustinian system, and yet denied the doctrine of original sin, or of innate, hereditary, sinful corruption of nature; or the doctrine of the sinner's inability to repent and believe, without the supernatural aid of the Spirit; or the sovereignty of God in election; he would have been considered by all men as contradicting himself. If we cannot determine for ourselves what Calvinism is, then any half dozen intelligent disinterested men can determine for us. It is a question as easily and certainly answered as any other connected with the history of doctrine. Any text book can furnish the answer. Or it might be agreed to take those points as necessarily included in the Calvinistic system, in which all the symbols of the Reformed churches agree. Would not that be fair? Or, we might draw up for ourselves, not a new confession, but a statement of doctrines which should be

admitted, as essential to the system which Presbyterian ministers are to be required to adopt. The Old-school church would no doubt agree to adopt the list of errors condemned by the Assembly of 1837, as incompatible with an honest adoption of the Westminster Confession. Mr. Gillett in his History published by the committee of the New-school Assembly, says that with slight modifications the condemnation of those errors would have been unanimously assented to by the New-school party. If so, then let that be officially and authoritatively declared, and a common understanding be attained as to what doctrines are, and what are not to be tolerated in the Presbyterian churches. We confess however that we have no hope of agreement at present on this point, and without this it is obvious that reunion is impossible, without the sacrifice of principle and of the vital interests of the church. It would obviously be a sacrifice of principle on the part of the Old-school to agree to a union with any body of men who will not consent first, to require that all our churches shall be presbyterially organized; and secondly, who will not agree that all our ministers and elders shall be required to adopt the Westminster Confession and Catechism as containing not merely the catholic system of doctrine (*i. e.* the system held in common by the Greek, Latin, and Protestant churches); not merely the system held in common by all Protestants, whether Lutheran, Arminians, or Reformed; but the distinctive system of the Reformed churches. For this they have uniformly contended, and to this they are conscientiously pledged. In the second place, it would be a palpable breach of faith to consent to a reunion on any other terms. The Old-school church has received large benefactions, constituting almost the entire, if not the entire, endowments of all its theological seminaries and colleges, which were made on the faith of its being and continuing a Presbyterian and a Calvinistic body. For that church therefore to unite itself with any body of ministers and churches which are either not Presbyterian or not Calvinistic, or who, if themselves Calvinistic, are not willing to make the sincere and honest profession of the Calvinistic system in its integrity a condition of ministerial communion, would be a breach of faith, and would justly work a forfeiture of those endowments. In the third

place, a union on any other terms would lead inevitably to a revival of all the conflicts, jealousy, and bitterness which afflicted and disgraced the church before its disruption. Such a union instead of being a blessing, would be a curse.

We are therefore satisfied that the time has not yet come for the reunion of the Old and New-school branches of our church. They are doubtless becoming year by year more and more agreed on the vital points on which they differed. This approximation, if not hindered by premature and injudicious attempts at union, will, it is to be hoped, continue, until both parties are so far of one heart and one mind that outward union will be a natural and necessary consequence of their inward unity.

P. S. Since the above article was written, our attention has been turned to the Pastoral Letter addressed to the churches by the New-school Assembly of 1838. We are much gratified to find that the Assembly take the same view of the points of difference which led to the division of the church as that we have presented. Those points were, first the union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians in our church courts; or the validity and force of the Plan of Union; and, second, the import of the terms of subscription to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms. As to the former, the Assembly say, "When the tide of population began to roll westward, and the territories of our church were fast filling up with pious emigrants from the east, a proposal was made by the General Assembly of our church to the Association of Connecticut, to permit the union of Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new settlements, for the greater facility of extending and supporting the institutions of religion. This union, so congenial to the spirit of the gospel, exerted for a long time an auspicious influence in the extension of Presbyterian churches from the Hudson to the Mississippi. But at length, in the mysterious providence of God, it came to pass that the very causes of our prosperity became the occasions of disaster. For, in the rapid multiplication of new states and Presbyterian churches, it soon became apparent that native American Presbyterians must unavoidably become a majority of the church; and though the

slight variations of doctrine and policy created no alarm while the helm of power was supposed to be safe, the prospect of its passing into other hands created a strong sensation."

We are not concerned with the theory which underlies this paragraph, viz., that the New-school is a "Native American Presbyterian" party, and of course the Old-school a foreign American Presbyterian party, and that the whole contest was a struggle for power. The only point on which we are now interested, is the admission of the fact that the union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians in our church was one great source of the division. One party proposed the abrogation of that Plan of Union, the other resisted it; one voted for it, the other voted against it; and when passed, entered their solemn protest against the abrogation on the minutes.

As to the "terms of subscription" this document quotes what the Old Synod called their act preliminary to the Adopting Act, to show that any man, otherwise competent, should be admitted to the ministry in our church, who did not depart from the Westminster Confession of Faith in any article "essential or necessary in doctrine, worship, or discipline," or, as they are elsewhere called, "essential and necessary articles of faith." In process of time, however, it is said, efforts were made to change these terms, and "the slight shades of doctrinal differences always known and permitted to exist in the church, before and since the Adopting Act, and recognized in every form as consistent with the Confession of Faith and the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, became the occasions of alarm, and whisperings, and accusations, and at length of ecclesiastical trials for heresy."

Now as no trials for heresy were instituted by Old-school men, except for the avowal of the peculiar doctrines of New Havenism, and as the first public avowal of those doctrines by the New Haven divines was made in 1829, they can hardly be said to have existed and to have been allowed in the church "before and since the Adopting Act" of 1729. And as those doctrines in the judgment of Unitarians, of Orthodox New England divines, (such as Dr. Woods, Dr. Tyler, Dr. Nettleton, Dr. Hall, etc., etc.), as well as of Old-school Presbyterians, are utterly inconsistent with Calvinism, it is as clear as day where

the trouble lies. It is no less clear from the whole tenor of this Pastoral Letter, as well as of "The Declaration of the (N. S.) Assembly" in 1839, that there can be no reunion of the two branches of the Presbyterian Church, which does not rest, 1. On a clear and distinct agreement as to whether Congregationalists are to be allowed to sit and act in our church courts, and congregationally organized churches be recognized as constituent parts of our body; and 2. On an equally clear agreement as to the terms of subscription to the Confession of Faith. Experience has taught us that it is not sufficient to agree to adopt that Confession as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. It does contain the general system of Christianity, in which all Christians agree; but it contains also the distinctive system of doctrine known as Augustianism or Calvinism. There must be an agreement as to which of these two senses is the one in which the system of doctrine contained in the Confession is to be adopted. And further, it would seem also to be necessary to come to an understanding as to what is, and what is not essential to an honest adoption of the Calvinistic system. Any union which leaves these several points undetermined would be a violation of principle, a breach of faith, and the occasion either of corruption or of conflict in the church.