

THE REUNION  
OF THE  
OLD AND NEW-SCHOOL  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES,

BY REV. CHARLES HODGE, D.D.

*Reprinted from the Princeton Repertory for July. .*

WITH A PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR NOTICING SOME OBJECTIONS.



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## P R E F A C E .

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THE object of the following article is three-fold :

*First*—To show that the true principle of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, requires that those who profess to adopt “the system of doctrine” therein contained, should sincerely receive, in their integrity, all the doctrines essential to the Reformed (or Calvinistic) system, as set forth in that Confession.

*Second*—That this is the principle adopted and insisted upon by our Church from the beginning; and to which the Old-school body stand solemnly pledged before the Christian world.

*Thirdly*—That however numerous may be the orthodox members of the New-school Presbyterian Church, that Church, as an ecclesiastic organization, never has, and does not now adopt and act upon that principle; and, therefore, that union between the two Churches, under these circumstances, would be not only inexpedient, but morally wrong.

The objections to the article, so far as they have come under the notice of the writer, do not relate to either of the first two of the above propositions. It seems to be universally admitted, at least among ourselves, that the principle of subscription above stated is the correct one; and that we as a Church are bound to adhere to it. All the objections, so far as known to the writer, refer directly or indirectly to the third position above mentioned.

1st. It has been objected that the writer in the *Princeton Review* charges thousands of his brethren with either a willingness to commit perjury, or a readiness to sanction its commission by others. This objection is founded upon the assumption that he represents the advocates of a reunion of the Old and New-school branches of our Church as willing to admit an insincere adoption of the Confession of Faith. The Reviewer does say, that in his judgment the proposed plan of union practically sanctions a lax principle of subscription, but he expressly admits that its advocates do not so understand it. His language is, that there is no difference among Old-school men as to principles, but simply “as to a matter of fact. Those who have assented to this plan of union admit that the Old-school principle of subscription is right, and ought to be adopted in the United Church, but they say the New-school have adopted it, and therefore, and on that understanding, they are in favor of the union” (p. 36). The Reviewer, therefore, attributes no laxness of principle to his brethren.

A second objection is, that the Reviewer makes a sweeping

charge of heresy against the New-school body. The *Evangelist* says that "it is one of the main objects of the Review to show that the New-school holds views utterly at variance with the Presbyterian Confession of Faith." This is an entire mistake. The writer says, "We are not laboring to prove the prevalence of heresy in the New-school Church. We know many of its ministers whom it would be an honor to any Church to count among its members. We are willing to receive as true all that can be even plausibly said as to the general orthodoxy of our New-school brethren. Let this be admitted. It does not touch the question. That question relates to a rule of Church action, viz., the principle which is to govern the United Church in receiving and ordaining ministers of the gospel" (p. 36).

A third objection is, that in saying that the New-school as a Church adopt the lax rule of interpreting the form of adopting the Confession of Faith, we charge the members of that Church with a grave moral offence. This does not follow. No such charge was intended. It is one thing to disapprove of a principle of action for ourselves, and another to denounce as wicked those who adopt it. It is notorious that in the Episcopal Church in England, and in this country, men of the most discordant sentiments unite in subscribing the Thirty-nine Articles. Yet, who would charge all the members of that Church with conniving at perjury? Everything depends on the *animus imponentis*. In the Church of England subscription came to be regarded (especially in the case of under-graduates of the Universities), by those who required the subscription and those who gave it, as implying nothing more than, on the one hand, the renunciation of Popery, and on the other, a profession of allegiance to the Established Church. If this was the understanding, then the subscription to those Articles meant nothing more. If President Dickinson had succeeded in having engrafted into our Constitution the words that "every minister should adopt the Westminster Confession *so far as it contains the essential doctrines of Christianity*," then it is plain that men who reject the distinctive doctrines of the Reformed Church could with a good conscience adopt it. This qualification may come to be as generally implied and taken for granted, as if asserted in express terms. If the New-school see fit to adopt this rule, no man would be authorized to charge them with insincerity, much less with sanctioning perjury. But every man would have the right to say that in his judgment the principle is wrong; that it must work great evil to the Church; and above all, that it is utterly inconsistent with the principles, the pledges, and the obligations of the Old-school body. There are no aspersions or injurious imputations in the article in question. So far as the intention of the writer and the fair interpretation of his language is concerned, it does not

soil with a breath the character of any individual in the New-school Church, nor that Church itself.

A fourth objection is, that the assertion that the New-school, as an ecclesiastical organization, act upon the lax principle of adopting the Confession of Faith, is supported "by no evidence and no testimony." "It rests on the mere dictum of the Reviewer." This is a most extraordinary assertion. The review consists of nineteen pages, of which six are devoted to proving that single point. Whether the evidence adduced be sufficient, may be open to question; but that no proof is attempted, no one who reads the review can affirm. The proof consists in the following facts: 1. That in our original Synod, in 1729, the lax principle was advocated and *apparently* adopted. 2. That the chosen historiographer of the New-school Church gives it his sanction. 3. That at the time of the disruption, in 1837 and 1838, the action of the Synod in 1729 was constantly appealed to, as justifying a looser adoption of the Confession of Faith than the Old-school admitted. 4. That the New-school, as a party, before the division, always resisted the condemnation of doctrines which, in the judgment of all Old-school men, are inconsistent with Calvinism. 5. That since the separate organization of the New-school Church, it has never exercised discipline on those avowing such doctrines. 6. That men openly professing those errors are freely ordained or received into the ministry of that Church. 7. That according to the statement of Hovey Clarke, Esq., openly made on the floor of our Assembly, the New-school members of the Joint Committee strenuously resisted every effort to make the doctrinal basis so definite as to exclude the lax adoption of the Confession of Faith. 8. That a New-school body resolved that those holding the doctrines of Drs. Taylor and Parker must, in one united Church, be regarded as of unquestioned orthodoxy.

But the fifth and principal objection, and that on which all others depend, is, that it is not true, as the Reviewer asserts, that the New-school, as a Church, receive into its ministry those who deny any of the essential doctrines of Calvinism. The papers publish a letter from Dr. Hatfield, in which he asserts that their Presbyteries uniformly demand of candidates for ordination the adoption of the Calvinistic system. The *Evangelist* makes the same assertion. The only way in which these statements can be reconciled with notorious facts is, that their authors have a very different idea of Calvinism from that which Old-school men entertain. This is not a subject on which any trifling with words can be permitted. The simple truth is, that Taylorism, or the New Divinity, is, in the judgment of Old-school men, utterly inconsistent with Calvinism. The adoption of the one is the rejection of the other. The New-school Church

does admit into its ministry men who hold the distinctive features of Dr. Taylor's system. Therefore it receives men who, in the judgment of Old-school men, reject the Calvinistic system. This is the argument. How is it met? By ridiculing the account which the Reviewer gives of Taylorism. That account the *Evangelist* pronounces loose, exaggerated, and crude. He calls it a farrago. Very well. Let that be admitted. It is not Taylorism, however, as characterized by the Reviewer, but Taylorism as stated by Dr. Taylor himself, that the whole Old-school body, and such men as Dr. Nettleton, and a host of the holiest and best men in New England and out of it, pronounce inconsistent with Calvinism, and hostile to evangelical religion. We know that Dr. Taylor called himself a Calvinist. We are fully aware that his followers claim the same designation. But Old-school men none the less deny that Dr. Taylor's system is consistent with Calvinism, in the sense of the word in which it has ever been used by all theologians in Europe and America. It is no matter what men may call themselves. The simple fact is, that the New-school Church receive into the ministry men who hold doctrines which Old-school men conscientiously believe are inconsistent with that system which they are bound, before God and man, to uphold and teach. While this is the case the gulf between them is, or ought to be, impassable. All forms of error are transient and perishable. The New-school is doubtless nearer to us in doctrine than it was thirty years ago, and all good men will hope and pray that the two Churches may soon come to such an agreement in doctrines and order, that their union will not only be possible, but eminently conducive to the promotion of truth and righteousness.

However desirable may be this consummation, and however cheering the indications of its approach, all premature attempts at reunion must be injurious. At the time of the separation in 1837, the questions which divided the Church were—"Are certain forms of doctrines consistent with our standards and entitled to toleration in our Church?" and, "Are Congregationalists to be allowed to sit in our judicatories?" In these questions the New-school took the affirmative, and the Old-school the negative. The proposed plan of union takes sides with the New-School. It says these doctrines are to be tolerated, and Congregationalists are to be allowed to sit in our Sessions and Presbyteries. So, it is believed, the New-school, as a body, and multitudes of the Old-school, understand the plan. As the Old-school were conscientious in 1837, so they are conscientious now; and, therefore, to insist on these terms of reunion, must precipitate the Church into that sea of conflict out of which it was delivered, at such great cost, thirty years ago.

# REUNION

OF THE

## OLD AND NEW-SCHOOL CHURCHES.

*From the Princeton Repertory, July, 1867.*

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REV. DR. GURLEY (Moderator), from the Committee of Conference, with a similar committee from the other branch of the Presbyterian Church on the subject of a reunion of the two branches, presented the following report, embodying the terms of reunion agreed upon by the two committees:

The Joint Committee of the two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, appointed for the purpose of conferring on the desirableness and practicability of uniting these two bodies, deeply impressed with the responsibility of the work assigned them, and having earnestly sought Divine guidance, and patiently devoted themselves to the investigation of the questions involved, agree in presenting the following for the consideration, and, if they see fit, for the adoption of the two General Assemblies:

Believing that the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom would be promoted by healing our divisions; that practical union would greatly augment the efficiency of the whole Church for the accomplishment of its divinely appointed work; that the main causes producing division have either wholly passed away, or become, in a great degree, inoperative; and

that two bodies bearing the same name, adopting the same Constitution, and claiming the same corporate rights, cannot be justified by any but the most imperative reasons in maintaining separate, and, in some respects, rival organizations; and regarding it as both just and proper that a reunion should be effected by the two churches as independent bodies, and on equal terms, we propose the following terms and recommendations as suited to meet the demands of the case :

1. The reunion shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards; the Confession of Faith shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," and its fair, historical sense, as it is accepted by the two bodies, in opposition to Antinomianism and Fatalism on the one hand, and to Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other, shall be regarded as the sense in which it is received and adopted; and the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States shall continue to be approved as containing the principles and rules of our polity.

2. All the ministers and churches embraced in the two bodies shall be admitted to the same standing in the united body which they may hold in their respective connections up to the consummation of the union; and all the churches connected with the united body not thoroughly Presbyterian in their organization, shall be advised to perfect their organization as soon as is permitted by the highest interests to be consulted; no other such churches shall be received; and such persons alone shall be chosen commissioners to the General Assembly as are eligible according to the Constitution of the Church.

3. The boundaries of the several Presbyteries and Synods shall be adjusted by the General Assembly of the united Church.

4. The official records of the two branches of the Church for the period of separation shall be preserved, and held as making up the one history of the Church, and no rule or precedent, which does not stand approved by both the bodies, shall be of any authority until reëstablished in the united body.

5. The corporate rights now held by the two General Assemblies, and by their Boards and Committees, shall, as far as

practicable, be consolidated, and applied for their several objects, as defined by law.

6. There shall be one set of Committees or Boards for Home and Foreign Missions, and the other religious enterprises of the Church, which the churches shall be encouraged to sustain, though left free to cast their contributions into other channels, if they desire to do so.

7. As soon as practicable after the union shall be effected, the General Assembly shall reconstruct and consolidate the several Permanent Committees and Boards which now belong to the two Assemblies, in such a manner as to represent, as far as possible, with impartiality the views and wishes of the two bodies constituting the united Church.

8. When it shall be ascertained that the requisite number of Presbyteries of the two bodies have approved the terms of union as hereinafter provided for, the two General Assemblies shall each appoint a committee of seven, none of them having an official relation to either the Committee or Board of Publication, who shall constitute a Joint Committee, whose duty it shall be to revise the catalogues of the existing publications of the two Churches, and to make out a list from them of such books and tracts as shall be issued by the united Church, and any catalogue thus made out, in order to its adoption, shall be approved by at least five members of each committee.

9. If at any time after the union has been effected, any of the Theological Seminaries under the care and control of the General Assembly, shall desire to put themselves under Synodical control, they shall be permitted to do so at the request of their Boards of Direction; and those seminaries which are independent in their organization, shall have the privilege of putting themselves under ecclesiastical control, to the end that, if practicable, a system of ecclesiastical supervision of such institutions may ultimately prevail through the entire united Church.

10. It shall be regarded as the duty of all our judicatories, ministers, and people in the united Church, to study the things which make for peace, and to guard against all needless and offensive reference to the causes that have divided us; and in order to avoid the revival of past issues, by the continuance of



any usage in either branch of the Church that has grown out of our former conflicts, it is earnestly recommended to the lower judicatories of the Church that they conform their practice in relation to all such usages, as far as consistent with their convictions of duty, to the general custom of the Church prior to the controversies that resulted in the separation.

11. The terms of reunion shall be of binding force, if they shall be ratified by three-fourths of the Presbyteries connected with each branch of the Church, within one year after they shall have been submitted to them for approval.

12. The terms of the reunion shall be published by direction of the General Assemblies of 1867, for the deliberate examination of the churches, and the Joint Committee shall report to the General Assemblies of 1868, any modification of them they may deem desirable, in view of any new light that may have been received during the year.

13. It is recommended that the Hon. Daniel Haines and Hon. Henry W. Green, of New Jersey, Hon. George Sharswood and Hon. William Strong, of Philadelphia, and Daniel Lord, Esq., and Theodore Dwight, Esq., of New York, be appointed by the General Assemblies a committee to investigate all questions of property and of vested rights, as they may stand related to the matter of reunion, and this committee shall report to the Joint Committee as early as the 1st of January, 1868.

14. It is evident that in order to adapt our ecclesiastical system to the necessities and circumstances of the united Church, as a greatly enlarged and widely extended body, some changes in the Constitution will be required.

The Joint Committee, therefore, request the two General Assemblies to instruct them in regard to the preparation of an additional article to be reported to the Assemblies of 1868.

All which is respectfully submitted on behalf of the Joint Committee of the two General Assemblies.

C. C. BEATTY, *Chairman*,  
E. F. HATFIELD, *Secretary*.

Dr. Breed presented the report of the majority of the Committee, which is as follows :

The majority of the Committee to whom was referred the Report of the Committee on Reunion with the other branch of the Church, would respectfully recommend to the General Assembly the following resolutions :

1. *Resolved*, That this Assembly has listened with grateful and profound satisfaction to the report of the Committee on Church Reunion, and recognizes in the unanimity of the Joint Committee, the finger of God as pointing toward an early and cordial reunion of the two sister Churches now so long separated.

2. *Resolved*, That said Committee be continued and directed to coöperate with any similar Committee of the other branch in furtherance of this object, and to report thereon to the next General Assembly.

3. *Resolved*, That the Committee be empowered to fill all vacancies that may occur in their body during the coming year, whether by resignation, protracted sickness, or by death.

4. *Resolved*, That the necessary expenses incurred by this Committee in the discharge of the duties assigned them, be paid from the profits on the sale of books by the Board of Publication.

5. *Resolved*, That the Report of the Committee be published in the Appendix to the Minutes, and in our religious newspapers, and commended to the careful consideration of our whole Church, and that the Committee be directed to report to the next General Assembly any modification of the terms of reunion specified therein, which may appear desirable to the Joint Committee, in view of any further light that may have been received during the year.

6. *Resolved*, That the Hon. Daniel Haines, and the Hon. Henry W. Green, LL.D., of New Jersey, Daniel Lord, LL.D., and Theodore Dwight, LL.D., of New York, and the Hon. William Strong and the Hon. George Sharswood, LL.D., of Pennsylvania, be appointed a Committee to investigate all questions of property and of vested rights as they may stand related to the matter of reunion; and that this Committee be requested to report to the Joint Committee as early as January 1, 1868; and that our share of the necessary expenses incurred by this Committee be also paid by our Board of Publication from the profits on its book-sales.

*Resolved*, That the Joint Committee be requested to consider, and report to the next General Assembly, any specific amendments to our church constitution, which may be required in the government of a body so large as that of the reunited church.

W. P. BREED,  
 GEORGE MARSHALL,  
 C. D. MCKEE,  
 A. T. RANKIN.

The resolution referring to a change in the constitution was stricken out.

Dr. Smith then read a minority report, which recommended that the following instructions be given to the Committee of Fifteen:

1. That they endeavor, if practicable, to secure a more clear and definite statement of the doctrinal basis. It is well known that the two parties differed in their interpretation of our doctrinal standards upon points which both considered vital, while both professed to receive them as containing "the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." There is nothing in the basis as proposed in the first article to show in what sense, or in the sense of which party, or in what higher sense, which is supposed to harmonize both, our standards are to be interpreted. What is their true historical sense, is the very question to be settled. Both parties disclaim all the extremes from which they are formally distinguished: if accepted by the two bodies in the same sense, then either can define that sense for the other, and there can be no possible difficulty in the way of agreement upon a clear and definite statement as to the main points at issue, particularly the great decisive doctrines of imputation, and the atonement as to its nature and extent.

2. As on the basis proposed, committee-men, *i. e.*, unordained men, are allowed to sit in all Church courts except the General Assembly, the Committee are further instructed to secure, if possible, such an amendment or modification of the second article as will insure the speedy and thorough presbyterial organization of all the churches, and the admission of none but ordained ministers or elders to a seat in any Church court.

3. The Committee are still further instructed to obtain, if possible, a distinct and formal recognition of the right and obligation of every Presbytery to be satisfied as to the soundness of every minister it receives. With these instructions the minority concur in the recommendation that the Committee of Fifteen be continued as provided for in the report of the majority.

JOSEPH T. SMITH.

E. ANSON MORE.

The report of Dr. Smith was finally laid on the table by a vote of *ayes*, 152; *nays*, 64. On motion of Dr. J. I. Brownson, an additional resolution was unanimously adopted, in the following words:

*Resolved*, That in submitting the Report of the Committee on Reunion to the consideration of the Churches and Presbyteries, the Assembly is not called upon at this time to express either approbation or disapprobation of the terms of reunion presented by the Committee in its details, but only to afford the Church a full opportunity to examine the subject in the light of all its advantages and difficulties, so that the Committee may have the benefit of any suggestions which may be offered, before making a final report for the action of the next Assembly.

The vote in favor of laying Dr. Smith's resolution on the table is not to be taken as indicating the opinion of the Assembly as to the programme of the Committee. Many voted for that motion, not because they disapproved of Dr. Smith's report, but because they thought this Assembly was not called upon to do anything more than to send out the report of the Joint Committee for the consideration of the churches. The unanimous adoption of Dr. Brownson's resolution shows that the Old-school General Assembly was not prepared for the surrender at discretion which the report of the Joint Committee calls upon it to make. General Lee, at Appomatox Courthouse, might as reasonably have called on General Grant to lay down his arms, and concede everything to the Southern secessionists for which we had been so earnestly contending. The surrender, at any rate, has not yet, we are thankful to say,

been effected, and we greatly mistake the character of Presbyterians if the plan of the Joint Committee, when it comes to be understood, be not nearly unanimously rejected by our branch of the Church. We speak only of the programme of the Committee. The question of reunion, in proper terms, is a different matter.

The Rev. Dr. Smith, in advocating the adoption of his report, avowed himself in favor of union with our New-school brethren and with other branches of the Presbyterian Church, but was anxious that such union be on principles consistent with our doctrines and obligations, and on conditions which would produce harmony and efficiency. Of the plan of the Committee he affirmed that "this basis of union surrenders every principle for which we and our fathers have been contending these last thirty years." To prove this, he reviewed the several articles of the proposed plan. First, as to the doctrinal basis, he showed that it leaves the matter just as it was. The New-school before the disruption professed to adopt the system of doctrines contained in our Confession of Faith; and they are willing to make the same profession now. But it is to be adopted in the "sense in which it is accepted by the two bodies." But all the world knows that it was accepted by the New-school on the "broad-church" principle, which allowed of what the Old-school conscientiously believed was the rejection of that system. Then, secondly, as to the admission of churches not presbyterially organized, the plan provides that such churches may be represented in all our courts except the General Assembly. As to the latter, it proposes "that only such persons shall be chosen commissioners as are eligible according to the constitution of the Church." That is, it is proposed that the constitution shall be violated in all our courts except the highest. Honest men, who have vowed to sustain that constitution, are asked to assent to its violation. This, to say the least, is a most extraordinary proposition. Well might Dr. Smith say, "Never, never, will the Old-school Presbyterian Church give their consent to abjure all its convictions, thus to roll back the whole tide of its history, thus to renounce everything which had distinguished it as a religious body."

Another article provides for the appointment of a committee

of seven by each body to revise the catalogue of the books published by the two churches, and no book is to be retained on the catalogue of publications to be issued by the united Church, which is not approved by at least five members of each committee. Our Board of Publication have a thousand books on their catalogue; the New-school Committee have thirty on theirs. We are asked to agree that they should revise our list, and strike out every book which five of their committee may object to. Dr. Smith regards this as saying, "Brethren, whatever is not acceptable to you; whatever is not in accordance with the New-school theology, cast away."

Another article provides that the theological seminaries belonging to the Old-school shall be allowed to put themselves under the care of the Synods; and those belonging to the New-school may, should they prefer it, remain close corporations. We invite them to take part in the control of our institutions for theological training, and consent that we shall have no control over theirs.

Once more, the proposed programme declares that "all ministers and churches in the two bodies shall be admitted to the same standing in the united body which they hold in their respective bodies up to the consummation of the union." This, Dr. Smith argued, does away with the constitutional and natural right of the Presbyteries to judge of the qualifications of their own members. Every Old-school Presbytery will be bound to receive without questioning any minister of any New-school Presbytery who may present himself with clean papers.

The Rev. Dr. R. J. Breckinridge, as might be expected from his antecedents, was opposed to this whole scheme of reunion. He said he did not intend to argue the case. In his view any such union was impossible. We cannot absorb a church as a whole. The only method of union between the two bodies was that its members individually should come in through the Presbyteries, as all the rest of us had come. He insisted, also, that such an union as that proposed would work the forfeiture of all our endowments.

The Hon. S. Galloway, a member of the Joint Committee, spoke earnestly in favor of the plan. He urged the obvious practical advantages of reunion, and made very light of the

objections which had been urged against it. The New-school, he maintained, were as orthodox as the Old-school, at least in Ohio; and as to the admission of Congregationalists into our Church courts, that he regarded as a trifle.

The Rev. Mr. Marshall avowed himself opposed to the programme of the Joint Committee, but regarded all discussion of its merits as premature. It was not yet before the house. It is here only to be published to the churches. In the next Assembly the plan would come up on its merits.

Mr. H. K. Clarke, who was also a member of the Joint Committee, made a long and forcible speech against the proposed plan. He said the Committee had transcended its powers. It was appointed to ascertain whether a union with the New-school could be effected on the basis of agreement "in doctrine, polity, and order." Instead of this, the Committee propose a new basis, which provides for diversity in doctrine and order. The Old-school Committee did all they could to induce the Committee of the New-school to agree to the basis which they proposed, which intended to provide for agreement in doctrine and order. Every effort to that end was opposed, and what he regarded as the broad-church principle was insisted upon, and finally conceded. Our Committee urged that the Confession should be adopted in its "obvious, fair, historical sense." They insisted that it should be adopted "in the sense in which it was received in both Churches." It is, however notorious that the one Church has been strict in its construction of the Confession of Faith, and the other satisfied with its being adopted as to substance of doctrine. The result of the whole discussion in the Joint Committee, according to Mr. Clarke, was the adoption of the broad-church principle.

Another proposition from the Old-school Committee was, that no church, not presbyterially organized, should be represented in our Church courts. This, although admitted to be just and reasonable, was, on the grounds of expediency, stricken out. Mr. Clarke also dwelt on the unfairness of the article relating to the Board of Publication, and showed that it allowed any three men on the New-school Committee to strike from the list any book they pleased. The same inequality characterizes the proposed plan as it regards our seminaries. Our Committee

proposed that seminaries which are close corporations should be *requested* to place themselves under ecclesiastical control. Even this was denied; and it is simply said, they shall have the privilege of so doing. Mr. Clarke expressed his firm conviction that if this plan were adopted it would lead to a division of the Church, and increased contention instead of harmony.

Dr. Gurley, the Moderator, was requested to explain the action of the Joint Committee as to the points to which Mr. Clarke had referred. As to the doctrinal basis, he said that between the extremes of Antinomianism and Fatalism on the one hand, and Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other, there is a system of doctrine known as Calvinism, and on that system the plan proposes that the two Churches should unite. Anything more definite than this, he said, was unattainable and undesirable. As to the representation of Congregational churches in our courts, he admitted it to be irregular, but regarded it as only a temporary arrangement to be tolerated in order to secure a great good. In reference to the Board of Publication, he said the great mass of our books were as acceptable to our New-school brethren as ourselves. He did not believe that one in a hundred would be stricken out. As to the seminaries, their hands were tied; all they could do was to intimate a preference for ecclesiastical control. "On the subject of presbyterial examinations," he said, "we had a long conference. Many of the New-school Committee (Dr. Adams among others) acknowledged that this right is among the inherent and inalienable rights of Presbytery. The only question is as to the *expediency* of exercising it. And so we leave the matter with the Presbyteries. I have never felt that it was wise to enjoin this rule upon Presbyteries. In our Presbytery we examine simply because the rule requires it, and the matter is pretty much one of form. It seems to me the wisest and best basis is to leave the matter with Presbyteries, and let them examine, if they please—and that is just where it is left in these terms of union. It was the usage to receive brethren with clean papers, and we now propose to return to the old usage, unless convictions of duty prevent.

"The Committee is not authorized to propose changes in the Constitution. If we are coming together, the changes can be



made by the united Church. Some change in the basis of representation in the Assembly will be necessary; and this, I think, will ultimately be made."

It will be observed that Dr. Gurley did not advert to any one of the great principles involved in this question. What he said, however, virtually terminated the debate, and Dr. Smith's report was laid on the table by the vote above stated.

The importance of the question submitted to the churches by the action of the last Assembly, cannot be overestimated. It concerns our very existence. Not the existence of a Presbyterian Church, but the existence of a church professing and acting upon the principles which have always distinguished us as an ecclesiastical body. We are called upon to renounce that in which our special identity consists. It is not a mere change of name. The term "Old-school" is not simply to be dropped before the word Presbyterian in our designation; but the historical reality known and revered as the Old-school Presbyterian Church will cease to exist. Another body with different principles, as well as with a different name, will take its place. With the opponents of the proposed union it is therefore a matter of conscience. With its advocates it cannot be a matter of conscience. It is a matter of expediency, or at most of sentiment.

With regard to the great body of those who advocate the reunion of the two great branches of the Presbyterian Church in this country, the obviously controlling consideration is the advantages to be expected from the union. These are great. They are patent. They affect pressing interests in the pecuniary or business operations of the Church. Weak congregations would be able to combine. Energies worse than wasted in mutual opposition might be directed to common ends. Instead of presenting a divided front to others, and, in our view, more or less erroneous bodies, we should form an unbroken phalanx. The strength of the united body for good would be far greater than of either portion separately, or even of the whole as it now is. A great weight would be lifted from our public, and especially from our giving men. The number of shoulders added to the wheels of our system would cause them to revolve easily and rapidly. We should indeed be, in the eyes of the

world, glorious as an army with banners. These considerations have deservedly great weight. They ought to produce an effect. They are specially operative in the minds of our laymen, who cannot be expected to take into view the doctrinal and ecclesiastical principles involved in the question. They say, "The clergy made the quarrel. We have nothing to do with it. If they are ready to stop fighting, so much the better. We are for peace and coöperation."

Others are influenced by principles true in themselves, but which are not applicable to the question which we are called upon to decide. They insist that the visible church ought to be one organization, that the seamless robe of Christ ought not to be rent; that sects are a great evil and a great wrong. All this may be readily admitted. The division of the inhabitants of the earth into different and conflicting nationalities is a great evil. It would be far better if all men would dwell together as one family, under one father God, obeying his laws and promoting each other's interests. But how worse than Utopian would be any practical attempt to carry this scheme into operation! Fourierism is beautiful as a social theory; but what is it in its application in the actual state of the world? If all Christians were really one—one in faith, one in their intelligent knowledge of the Scriptures, one in spirit, then they might be, and should be, externally one. But if in order to external union, we must renounce the truth; cease to profess it, not only individually, but collectively; then we sacrifice the substance for the shadow; the reality for the semblance; a living man for a wooden image. We violate conscience for expediency. We serve man rather than God. This is a question not as to what would be right in an ideal state of the Church, but as to what is right in the actual condition of things; some men acting on one set of principles and another on the opposite; one believing that the Church should be ruled by bishops, others that prelates are usurpers of an unscriptural authority, and that God has committed the government of his Church to presbyters; and others again, that all power is of divine right in the brotherhood. It is plainly impossible that republicans and monarchists can live and act harmoniously together. It is far better in the State that those who agree should act together, and live peaceably with

others. So it is plainly impossible that Papists and Protestants, Prelatists and Independents, should form one harmonious ecclesiastical organization. If Old and New-school Presbyterian bodies agree, they should be united, but if they differ in what both conscientiously believe and feel bound to carry out into practice, then they must either sacrifice their consciences, or remain asunder.

There is another false stand-point taken by the advocates of this union. They contemplate the matter as though there were no distinct Christian churches with their peculiar creeds and constitutional rules. They speak as though they were dealing with the subject *in thesi*; and discussing the question, On what principles should the disciples of Christ be externally organized? Should it be on a broad doctrinal platform, such as the Apostles' Creed, which would allow all Christians to be merged in one ecclesiastical organization? This broadest of broad-church principles is openly advocated even by some Old-school men. They would have the absolutely essential doctrines of Christianity, and nothing more, made the doctrinal basis of church-union.

Now, admitting that this would be scriptural and wise, it is not the question we have to deal with. We are not called upon to decide what would have been the wisest course for the Church in the first centuries. We may admit that it was narrow-minded bigotry to frame a stricter creed than that of the apostles—that the determinations of the Councils of Nice, Chalcedon, and Constantinople were unnecessary theological niceties. Few indeed will be latitudinarian enough to take this ground, or will undertake to censure the Church for repudiating the followers of Pelagius, who could with good conscience repeat the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. But admitting that the Church has ever been wrong in resisting heresy, still it is not now the question what would have been right centuries ago, but what is right under the existing state of things. How are churches professing distinct and opposite systems of doctrine and order to come together in one ecclesiastical organization? The only honest answer to this question is, Let them alter their creeds—let them strike from their confessions everything distinctive, retaining only what is common to all Christians, or at

least to all Protestants. There would be honesty and fair dealing in this. But this is not what the advocates of union have ventured to propose. What is practically advocated is, that men believing one creed should profess another; or that those who do not adopt a certain system, should avow before God and man that they do adopt it. We have a distinctive system of doctrine presented in our standards, the proposal is that we should agree that all who adopt the Apostles' Creed should be allowed to say that they adopt the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession. Others do not go quite so far. They, however, insist that men should be allowed to say they adopt our system, who notoriously do not adopt it. It is not a new creed, but a latitudinarian principle of subscription which is now urged upon us. It is a revival of the doctrine of the famous Oxford Tract, No. 90, which asserted the propriety of signing a creed in a "non-natural sense."

We would not knowingly or willingly do injustice to any of our brethren. But this is actually the doctrine advocated in some of our public papers, Old-school as well as New-school; and what is more to the point, this is the very principle which constitutes the sum and substance of the Plan of Union proposed in the report of the Joint Committee of Fifteen. We are well aware that it is not so understood by many who signed that report; nor by many who advocate its adoption. Nevertheless it is its true import and spirit, and this we will endeavor as briefly as possible to demonstrate.

Every minister at his ordination is required to declare that he adopts the Westminster Confession and Catechism, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the sacred Scriptures. There are three ways in which these words have been, and still are, interpreted: First, some understand them to mean that every proposition contained in the Confession of Faith is included in the profession made at ordination. Secondly, others say that they mean just what the words import. What is adopted is the "system of doctrine." The system of the Reformed churches is a known and admitted scheme of doctrine, and that scheme, nothing more or less, we profess to adopt. The third view of the subject is, that by the system of doctrine

contained in the Confession is meant the essential doctrines of Christianity and nothing more.

As to the first of these interpretations it is enough to say, 1. That it is not the meaning of the words. There are many propositions contained in the Westminster Confession which do not belong to the integrity of the Augustinian, or Reformed system. A man may be a true Augustinian or Calviuist, and not believe that the Pope is the Antichrist predicted by St. Paul; or that the 18th chapter of Leviticus is still binding. 2. Such a rule of interpretation can never be practically carried out, without dividing the Church into innumerable fragments. It is impossible that a body of several thousand ministers and elders should think alike on all the topics embraced in such an extended and minute formula of belief. 3. Such has never been the rule adopted in our Church. Individuals have held it, but the Church as a body never has. No prosecution for doctrinal error has ever been attempted or sanctioned, except for errors which were regarded as involving the rejection, not of explanations of doctrines, but of the doctrines themselves. For example, our Confession teaches the doctrine of original sin. That doctrine is essential to the Reformed or Calvinistic system. Any man who denies that doctrine, thereby rejects the system taught in our Confession, and cannot with a good conscience say that he adopts it. Original sin, however, is one thing; the way in which it is accounted for, is another. The doctrine is, that such is the relation between Adam and his posterity, that all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, are born in a state of sin and condemnation. Any man who admits this, holds the doctrine. But there are at least three ways of accounting for this fact. The scriptural explanation as given in our standards is, that the "covenant being made with Adam not only for himself, but also for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." The fact that mankind fell into that estate of sin and misery in which they are born, is accounted for in the principle of representation. Adam was constituted our head and representative, so that his sin is the judicial ground of our condemnation and of the consequent loss of the Divine image, and of the state of spiritual death in which all

men come into the world. This, as it is the scriptural, so it is the Church view of the subject. It is the view held in the Latin and Lutheran, as well as in the Reformed Church, and therefore belongs to the church catholic. Still it is not essential to the doctrine. Realists admit the doctrine, but unsatisfied with the principle of representative responsibility, assume that humanity as a generic life acted and sinned in Adam, and, therefore, that his sin is the act, with its demerit and consequences, of every man in whom that generic life is individualized. Others, accepting neither of these solutions, assert that the fact of original sin (*i. e.*, the sinfulness and condemnation of man at birth) is to be accounted for in the general law of propagation. Like begets like. Adam became sinful, and hence all his posterity are born in a state of sin, or with a sinful nature. Although these views are not equally scriptural, or equally in harmony with our Confession, nevertheless they leave the doctrine intact, and do not work a rejection of the system of which it is an essential part.

So also of the doctrine of inability. That man is by the fall rendered utterly indisposed, opposite, and disabled to all spiritual good, is a doctrine of the Confession as well as of Scripture. And it is essential to the system of doctrine embraced by all the Reformed church. Whether men have plenary power to regenerate themselves; or can cooperate in the work of their regeneration; or can effectually resist the converting grace of God, are questions which have separated Pelagians, the later Romanists, Semi-Pelagians, Lutherans, and Arminians, from Augustinians or Calvinists. The denial of the inability of fallen man, therefore, of necessity works the rejection of Calvinism. But if the fact be admitted, it is not essential whether the inability be called natural or moral; whether it be attributed solely to the perverseness of the will, or to the blindness of the understanding. These points of difference are not unimportant; but they do not affect the essence of the doctrine.

Our Confession teaches that God foreordains whatever comes to pass; that he executes his decree in the works of creation and providence; that his providential government is holy, wise, and powerful, controlling all his creatures and all their actions; that from the fallen mass of men, he has from all eternity, of

his mere good pleasure, elected some to everlasting life; that by the incarnation and mediatorial work of his eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the effectual working of his Spirit, he has rendered the salvation of his people absolutely certain; that the reason why some are saved and others not, is not the foresight of their faith and repentance, but solely because he has elected some and not others, and that in execution of his purpose, in his own good time, he sends them the Holy Spirit, who so operates on them as to render their repentance, faith, and holy living absolutely certain. Now it is plain that men may differ as to the mode of God's providential government, or the operations of his grace, and retain the facts which constitute the essence of this doctrinal scheme. But if any one teaches that God cannot effectually control the acts of free agents without destroying their liberty; that he cannot render the repentance or faith of any man certain; that he does all he can to convert every man, it would be an insult to reason and conscience, to say that he held the system of doctrine which embraces the facts and principles above stated.

The same strain of remark might be made in reference to the other great doctrines which constitute the Augustinian system. Enough, however, has been said to illustrate the principle of interpretation for which Old-school men contend. We do not expect that our ministers should adopt every proposition contained in our standards. This they are not required to do. But they are required to adopt the system; and that system consists of certain doctrines, no one of which can be omitted without destroying its identity. Those doctrines are, the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the consequent infallibility of all their teachings;—the doctrine of the Trinity, that there is one God subsisting in three persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit, the same in substance and equal in power and glory; the doctrine of decrees and predestination as above stated; the doctrine of creation, viz., that the universe and all that it contains is not eternal, is not a necessary product of the life of God, is not an emanation from the divine substance, but owes its existence as to substance and form solely to his will;—and in reference to man that he was created in the image of God, in knowledge,

righteousness, and holiness, and not *in puris naturalibus*, without any moral character;—the doctrine of providence, or that God effectually governs all his creatures and all their actions, so that nothing comes to pass which is not in accordance with his infinitely wise, holy, and benevolent purposes;—the doctrine of the covenants; the first, or covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience; and the second, or covenant of grace, wherein God freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all who are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe;—the doctrine concerning Christ our Mediator, ordained of God to be our prophet, priest, and king, the head and Saviour of his Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world, unto whom he did, from eternity, give a people to be his seed, to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified, and that the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, took upon him man's nature, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; that this Lord Jesus Christ, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given to him;—the doctrine of free will, viz., that man was created not only a free agent, but with full ability to choose good or evil, and by that choice determine his future character and destiny; that by the fall he has lost this ability to spiritual good; that in conversion God by his Spirit enables the sinner freely to repent and believe;—the doctrine of effectual calling, or regeneration, that those, and those only whom God has predestinated unto life, he effectually calls by his word and Spirit from a state of spiritual death to a state of spiritual life, renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining their wills, thus effectually drawing them to Christ; yet so that they come most freely;—and that this effectual calling is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any



thing foreseen in man ;—the doctrine of justification, that it is a free act or act of grace on the part of God ; that it does not consist in any subjective change of state, nor simply in pardon, but includes a declaring and accepting the sinner as righteous ; that it is founded not on anything wrought in us or done by us ; not on faith or evangelical obedience, but simply on what Christ has done for us, *i. e.*, in his obedience and sufferings unto death ; this righteousness of Christ being a proper, real, and full satisfaction to the justice of God, his exact justice and rich grace are glorified in the justification of sinners ;—the doctrine of adoption, that those who are justified are received into the family of God, and made partakers of the spirit and privileges of his children ;—the doctrine of sanctification, that those once regenerated by the Spirit of God are by his power and indwelling, in the use of the appointed means of grace, rendered more and more holy, which work, although always imperfect in this life, is perfected at death ;—the doctrine of saving faith, that it is the gift of God, and work of the Holy Spirit, by which the Christian receives as true, on the authority of God, whatever is revealed in his word, the special acts of which faith are the receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life ;—the doctrine of repentance, that the sinner out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but the odiousness of sin, and apprehension of the merey of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of his own sins, turn from them unto God, with full purpose and endeavor after new obedience ;—the doctrine of good works, that they are such only as God has commanded ; that they are the fruits of faith ; such works, although not necessary as the ground of our justification, are indispensable, in the case of adults, as the uniform products of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers ;—the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, that those once effectually called and sanctified by the Spirit, can never totally or finally fall from a state of grace, because the decree of election is immutable, because Christ's merit is infinite, and his intercession constant ; because the Spirit abides with the people of God ; and because the covenant of grace secures the salvation of all who believe ;—the doctrine of assurance ; that the assurance of

salvation is desirable, possible, and obligatory, but is not of the essence of faith;—the doctrine of the law, that it is a revelation of the will of God, and a perfect rule of righteousness; that it is perpetually obligatory on justified persons as well as others, although believers are not under it as a covenant of works;—the doctrine of Christian liberty, that it includes freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemnation of the law, from a legal spirit, from the bondage of Satan and dominion of sin, from the world and ultimately from all evil, together with free access to God as his children. Since the advent of Christ, his people are freed also from the yoke of the ceremonial law. God alone is the Lord of the conscience, which he has set free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship;—the doctrines concerning worship and the Sabbath, concerning vows and oaths, of the civil magistrate, of marriage, contain nothing peculiar to our system, or which is matter of controversy among Presbyterians. The same is true as to what the Confession teaches concerning the Church, of the communion of saints, of the sacraments, and of the future state, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of the final judgment.

That such is the system of doctrine of the Reformed church is a matter of history. It is the system which, as the granite formation of the earth, underlies and sustains the whole scheme of truth as revealed in the Scriptures, and without which all the rest is as drifting sand. It has been from the beginning the life and soul of the Church, taught explicitly by our Lord himself, and more fully by his inspired servants, and always professed by a cloud of witnesses in the Church. It has moreover ever been the esoteric faith of true believers, adopted in their prayers and hymns, even when rejected from their creeds. It is this system which the Presbyterian Church is pledged to profess, to defend, and to teach; and it is a breach of faith to God and man if she fails to require a profession of this system by all those whom she receives or ordains as teachers and guides of her people. It is for the adoption of the Confession of Faith in this sense that the Old-school have always contended as a matter of conscience.

There has, however, always been a party in the Church which

adopted the third method of understanding the words "system of doctrine," in the ordination service, viz., that they mean nothing more than the essential doctrines of religion or of Christianity.

That such a party has existed is plain, 1. Because in our original Synod, President Dickinson and several other members openly took this ground. President Dickinson was opposed to all human creeds; he resisted the adoption of the Westminster Confession, and he succeeded in having it adopted with the ambiguous words, "as to all the essential principles of religion." This may mean the essential principles of Christianity, or the essential principles of the peculiar system taught in the Confession. 2. This mode of adopting the Confession gave rise to immediate and general complaint. 3. When President Davies was in England, the latitudinarian Presbyterians and other dissenters from the established church, from whom he expected encouragement and aid in his mission, objected that our Synod had adopted the Westminster Confession in its strict meaning. President Davies replied that the Synod required candidates to adopt it only as to "the articles essential to Christianity."\* 4. The Rev. Mr. Creaghead, member of the original Synod, withdrew from it on the ground of this lax rule of adoption. 5. The Rev. Mr. Harkness, when suspended from the ministry by the Synod for doctrinal errors, complained of the injustice and inconsistency of such censure, on the ground that the Synod required the adoption only of the essential doctrines of the gospel, no one of which he had called in question.

While it is thus apparent that there was a party in the Church who adopted this latitudinarian principle of subscription, the Synod itself never did adopt it. This is plain, 1. Because what we call the adopting act, and which includes the ambiguous language in question, the Synod call "their preliminary act," *i. e.*, an act preliminary to the actual adoption of the Westminster Confession. That adoption was effected in a subsequent meeting (on the afternoon of the same day), in which the Confession was adopted in all its articles, except what in the thirty-third chapter related to the power of the

\* See Gillett's History of the Presbyterian Church, vol. i., p. 130.

civil magistrate in matters of religion. This is what the Synod itself called its adopting act. 2. In 1730 the Synod unanimously declared that they required all "intrants" to adopt the Confession as fully as they themselves had done. A similar declarative act of their meaning was passed in 1736. Again, in the reply to the complaints of Messrs. Creaghead and Harkness, it was asserted that the Synod never intended that the Confession should be adopted only in those articles essential to Christianity. 3. Over and over again at different periods—in the negotiations for the union of the Synod of Philadelphia and that of New York and New Jersey, both parties declared their adherence to the whole system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession. The same thing was done in the correspondence of our Synod with that of the Dutch Reformed Church, and in their letter to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in which that body was assured that we had the same standard of doctrine as they had. 4. Finally, when in 1787 the General Assembly was organized, it was solemnly declared that the Westminster Confession of Faith, as then revised and corrected, was part of the CONSTITUTION of this church. No man has ever yet maintained that in adopting a Republican constitution, it was accepted only as embracing the general principles of government, common to monarchies, aristocracies, and democracies.\*

The Old-school have always protested against this broad-church principle, 1. Because in their view it is immoral. For a man to assert that he adopts a Calvinistic confession when he rejects the distinctive features of the Calvinistic system, and receives only the essential principles of Christianity, is to say what is not true in the legitimate and accepted meaning of the terms. It would be universally recognized as a falsehood should a Protestant declare that he adopted the canons of the Council of Trent, or the Romish Catechism, when he intended that he received them only so far as they contained the substance of the Apostles' Creed. If the Church is prepared to make the Apostles' Creed the standard of ministerial communion, let the constitution be altered; but do not let us adopt the de-

\* On these subjects see the Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church, by Charles Hodge, vol. i., chap. 3.

moralizing principle of professing ourselves, and requiring others to profess, what we do not believe.

2. A second objection to the lax rule of interpretation is that it is contrary to the very principle on which our Church was founded, and on which, as a church, it has always professed to act.

3. The Old-school has always believed that it was the duty of the Church, as a witness for the truth, to hold fast that great system of truth which in all ages has been the faith of the great body of the people of God, and on which, as they believe, the best interests of the Church and of the world depend.

4. This lax principle must work the relaxation of all discipline, destroy the purity of the Church, and introduce either perpetual conflict or death-like indifference.

5. There always has been, and still is, a body of men who feel it their duty to profess and teach the system of doctrine contained in our Confession in its integrity. These men never can consent to what they believe to be immoral and destructive, and therefore any attempt to establish this broad-church principle of subscription must tend to produce dissension and division. Either let our faith conform to our creed, or make our creed conform to our faith. Let those who are convinced that the Apostles' Creed is a broad enough basis for church organization, form a church on that principle; but do not let them attempt to persuade others to sacrifice their consciences, or advocate the adoption of a more extended formula of faith which is not to be sincerely embraced.

The next point to be established in this exposition is, That the New-school branch of the Presbyterian Church in this country have practically adopted, and still hold this lax principle against which the Old-school have always protested.

This is not a question concerning the faith of our New-school brethren as a class, but simply as to a rule of church action. We fully believe that a very large part, perhaps a great majority of those brethren, sincerely adopt the system of doctrine contained in our standards, and that they understood themselves to profess that faith at their ordination. But what we hold to be undeniably true as a matter of history, is that the New-school Church do not, and never have required the

adoption of that system as the condition of admission to their ministry. In proof of this position we appeal—1. To the fact already mentioned. It has been shown that a party existed in the original Synod who desired the doctrinal basis to be, as expressed in the adopting act (so called), “essential and necessary articles;” “essential and necessary articles of faith.” If a Presbytery deemed “the scruples or mistakes (of a candidate for reception into our ministry) to be about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government,” he was to be admitted.

This was interpreted to mean “articles or doctrines essential to Christianity.” This mode of adopting the Confession, is pronounced, by the Rev. E. H. Gillett, a compromise, in which the stricter Presbyterians yielded much to the New England, English, and Welsh members of the Synod. He says, further, that “the Synod in 1736 endeavored to put a construction on the Adopting Act which it would not bear.” That construction, in the language of the Synod of 1736, is “that they adopted the Confession of Faith and Catechism to be the confession of their faith, except only some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters,” which relate to the civil magistrate. These are precisely the words used by the Synod in their real Adopting Act in 1729. The interpretation which the Synod repudiated was that put upon the language of their preliminary act (commonly called the Adopting Act itself), by Presidents Dickinson, Davies, and others, that by “essential and necessary doctrines” are to be understood doctrines “essential to Christianity,” and not doctrines essential to the Calvinistic system. These were the two methods of interpretation about which the contention arose. The Synod gave the stricter construction, which, as we understand him, Mr. Gillett says the Act will not bear. He further says that the Adopting Act (as he interprets it), in spite of this action of the Synod, “still stood as the fundamental and constitutional basis of the Synod, and no possible *interpretation* could supersede it.” (*History of the Presbyterian Church*, vol. i., chap. 4.)\* Of

\* The Synod in 1736 say that they did at first adopt and still adhere to the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory, “without the least variation or alteration, and without any regard to said distinctions,” *i. e.*, the dis-

the two methods of adopting the Confession which disturbed the original Synod, this work of Mr. Gillett, published officially by the New-school Presbyterian Publication Committee, advocates the lax principle as the fundamental and constitutional basis of the Church. The New-school as a Church is thus committed to this broad-church principle.

2. It is well known by all familiar with the controversy attending the disruption in 1837-'38, that this was the grand point of difference between the New and Old-school parties. The one contending that the Confession was to be adopted as "to substance of doctrine" only; the other insisted upon its strict adoption, as containing "the system of doctrine" held by the Reformed churches.

3. The decisive proof, however, that the New-school, as a Church, do adopt this lax principle, is to be found in the following facts: First, before the division of the Church as a party, they uniformly and strenuously resisted the exercise of discipline in reference to doctrines notoriously inconsistent with the Calvinistic system. The Old-school, although averse to the modified Calvinism of New England, as represented by such men as the late Drs. Richards and Griffin, of Newark, New Jersey, and many others who agreed with them; and although still more averse to the hyper-Calvinism of the Hopkinsians, never desired that men adopting those views should be excluded from the ministry in our Church. It was not until the rise of Taylorism, or, as it was called in New England, the New Divinity, that it was felt that fidelity to our standards demanded the intervention of church authority.

Every one knows that the fundamental principles of the New Divinity are, 1. That ability limits obligation, and therefore, as man has power only over deliberate acts of the will, all sin

tinctions which had been complained of. This Mr. Gillett says was not true. It certainly is not true that the Synod adopted the Confession literally without "the least variation;" for they distinctly excepted parts of the twentieth and twenty-third chapters. What the Synod, however, intended by their language is true—and that is, that they did not intend to distinguish between the articles essential to Christianity and those not essential to it. This was the distinction complained of. This they repudiated. That this is their true meaning, is plain from the contemporary history of the controversy; from the explanation which they gave of the Act of 1736, by quoting the Act of 1729; and from the whole subsequent history of the Church.

consists in the deliberate violation of known law. Hence, there can be no moral character before moral action, and no moral action until there is such a development of reason and conscience as is the necessary condition of moral agency. If this be so, there can be no hereditary, sinful corruption of nature; and original sin, in the universally accepted meaning of that term, is an impossibility. Here we have, not an explanation of the doctrine that men are born in a state of sin and condemnation, but a bold denial of the doctrine itself. But the denial of that doctrine is the rejection, not only of the theology of the Reformed churches, but of that of the whole Christian church.

2. A second principle is, that a free agent can always act in opposition to any amount of influence which can be brought to bear upon him, short of that which destroys his freedom. In other words, absolute certainty is inconsistent with free agency. From this it follows, that God cannot control the acts of free agents in a moral system. If this be so, there can be no efficacious grace; and no purpose of election, because there is no power to carry that purpose into effect; regeneration becomes, and is avowed to be, not an act of God, of which the soul is the subject, but an act of the sinner himself.

It is on the ground of the principle just mentioned the New Divinity vindicates God in the permission of sin. He cannot prevent its occurrence in a moral system. He does all he can to prevent all sin, to convert all men, to save every human being. It would be a waste of time to prove that these principles are inconsistent with Calvinism. Words must lose their meaning before there can be any dispute on this point. Unless Augustine was a Pelagian, no man holding the above principles can believe the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession.

3. A third fundamental principle of the New Divinity is, that a regard to our own happiness is the ground of moral obligation. We are bound to do whatever gives us most enjoyment. Our whole allegiance is to ourselves. If serving the world, sin, or Satan, would make us happier than serving God, we should be bound to serve sin. This is the system which the eminently devoted Dr. Nettleton spent the later years of his life in denouncing and opposing.

It is an historical fact that the New-school as a party resisted the exercise of discipline in reference to these doctrines; that



they not only refused to censure those charged with holding them, on the ground that the charge was not sustained, but they refused to allow the doctrines themselves to be condemned. It is further notorious, that they freely ordained or received into their Presbyteries men who did not hesitate to avow their adhesion to these principles. It was this more than anything else which roused the Church to resist the encroachment of errors which threatened its existence; just as the Dred Scott decision and the attempt to force slavery on Kansas, roused the country to resist the encroachments of the slave power.

A second fact which proves the point in hand is, that since the separate organization of the New-school, the advocates of the New Divinity have been freely admitted and ordained. In no case has any censure been pronounced against their peculiar views, and in no case have their advocates been subjected to discipline. Yet it is undeniable, and we presume universally admitted, that these doctrines are publicly avowed and taught by not a few of their ministers.

A third fact is, as Mr. Hovey K. Clarke stated on the floor of the Assembly, the New-school Committee on Reunion strenuously resisted any such statement of the doctrinal basis as would exclude the teachers of these doctrines. Nothing would have been easier than to place this matter in a form which precluded honest misinterpretation. We know Dr. Bushnell has said that such is the chemistry of thought, that any form of words can be interpreted to mean anything; and that another distinguished man has said he could sign any creed any of his opponents could write. These, however, are moral idiosyncrasies. The great majority of good men at least act on the principles of common honesty. As it is known that the original and main dispute between the Old and New-school related to the principle of subscription, it would have been easy to stipulate, 1. Negatively, that the Confession was not to be adopted only as to the necessary or essential doctrines of religion; and 2. Affirmatively, that it was to be received in each and every article belonging to the Calvinistic or Augustinian system, as that system is set forth in the common standards of our Church. What that system is, is just as certain as what Popery or Lutheranism is. Instead of anything thus definite, the programme, as

submitted to the Assembly, proposes that the Confession should be adopted in the sense in which it is received in both branches of the Church. This refusal to be definite, and this insisting on ambiguity, is proof enough that the parties are not agreed as to the terms of subscription; or rather, that it was agreed to concede to the New-school their lax principle of interpretation.

A fourth fact bearing on this point is, that whereas before the report of the committee, strong opposition to union was manifested in the New-school body, as soon as it was seen that the Old-school had surrendered everything, the proposed plan was adopted by an unanimous vote in the New-school Assembly. What does this mean? Why it means they have sense enough to see that we have abandoned our principles and adopted theirs; and they are of course willing to receive us as repentant sinners. This has been openly proclaimed by their distinguished speakers; and one of their Presbyteries has formally resolved that it is, and must be understood, that men holding the doctrines of Dr. Taylor and Prof. Park are to be received in the united church as of undoubted orthodoxy.

We repeat what we have already said. We are not laboring to prove the prevalence of heresy in the New-school Church. We know many of their ministers whom it would be an honor to any church to count among its members. We are willing to receive as true whatever can be even plausibly said as to the general orthodoxy of our New-school brethren. Let this be admitted. It does not touch the question. That question relates to a rule of church action, viz., the principle which is to govern the united church in receiving and ordaining ministers of the gospel. Shall every man who denies any one of the great constituent elements or doctrines of the Calvinistic system be excluded from the ministry in our church? Or, shall we admit men who deny the doctrine of original sin; of inability; of sover eign election to holiness and eternal life; the perseverance of the saints; the doctrine of the atonement as a true and proper expiation for the guilt of sin and a real satisfaction to the law and justice of God, and who represent it as merely didactic, moral, or symbolical in its design and influence? This is the question, and it is one which concerns our life.