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ART. I.—THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

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To the theory of sacramental grace which is supposed to underlie the "Order of Worship" now provisionally before the German Reformed Church, some have opposed the fathers of the same Church in the sixteenth century, maintaining that their writings are in the interest of a system quite different if not directly contrary. Others, while assuming this, have gone farther, and openly proclaimed in way of challenge that such a theory finds no proper countenance from the fathers of the third, fourth and fifth centuries, and that those who pretend this only manifest the vain prattle of men too ignorant forsooth to grasp the real theological thought of the period.\*

Both parties agree in finding in the baptismal formula of the "Order of Worship" the most distinct articulation of the sacramental theory or system against which they thus array both the Reformation and the primitive Church. It is involved, they assert, in the address to parents or sponsors, which is as

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\* "See Proceedings of the Convention of ministers and laymen held at Myers-town," pp. 19 and 22.

## ART. V.—PRESBYTERIAN UNION CONVENTION.

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BY J. W. NEVIN, D.D.  
—PART FIRST.  
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No one, who has come to feel any interest in the *Church Question*, can regard with indifference the movements which are made in favor of union among the different Presbyterian bodies of the country at this time. Whatever may come of them in the end, they form a significant protest against the general wrong of our sectarian Christianity, and show a wholesome uneasiness under the sense of it, which may be taken as a tendency at least in the direction of what is needed to bring the evil to an end. The negotiations which are in progress for uniting again the Old and New School Presbyterians, are in this view of much consequence and account for our American Protestantism generally; but still more worthy of fixed attention, we may say, is the movement brought into view lately for the promotion of unity among all parts and branches of the great Presbyterian communion in the United States, through an overture made for the purpose by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church at its meeting in May last. That the overture should have proceeded from this body in particular, the smallest of any consequence, and, in common estimation, the most stiff of all in its opinions, was of itself remarkable; but that only serves to make more wonderful the responsive echo it has met with from other quarters, as we find full expression given to it in the memorable Union Meeting, which was held a short time since in Dr. Wylie's (First Reformed Presbyterian) Church, Philadelphia. We cannot do better here, perhaps, than to introduce the meeting to the attention of our readers

through the following notice of it by the "New York Observer" the week after it took place.

"One of the most remarkable religious assemblies ever convened in this country was held in Philadelphia last week. It was remarkable, not so much in the object and circumstances of its gathering, as in its pentecostal character, the manifestly overshadowing and pervading influences of the Holy Spirit, and the unanimity to which those who composed it—men of greatly diversified views and feelings—were brought by its deliberations, and by united prayer. We have never before witnessed any general convocation of the officers of the Church upon which a spirit of grace and of supplication was so manifestly poured out, or in which, in answer to prayer, more important results were reached. We cannot but hope that it will exert a great influence in bringing together several portions of the divided Church of Christ.

"The steps which have been taken to effect a reunion of the Old and New School branches of the Presbyterian Church are well known to our readers. The almost entire unanimity in regard to the terms of union to which the two large Committees of the General Assemblies were brought, in their deliberations in this city in April last, was very unexpected, and it greatly encouraged the friends of the measure to hope that the union would soon be consummated. This hope has, during the last few months, been in a measure repressed by the opposition which has sprung up in both branches of the Church, more especially in the Old School, since the meetings of the Assemblies in May; and, although the meeting of the Convention now just held in Philadelphia was anticipated with much interest, it was awaited with no little fear that there would be such a development of opposition from the various branches of the Presbyterian family as to postpone indefinitely the desired union. This led the friends of the measure in all parts of the land to make it the subject of special prayer, and when the delegation to the Convention came together, it was soon manifest that the Spirit of God, which is the spirit of concord, was present."

"The Convention assembled at 11 o'clock on Wednesday,

Nov. 6th. Geo. H. Stuart, Esq., was appointed Temporary Chairman, and was afterward, by acclamation, chosen Permanent Presiding Officer. On taking the chair he called upon the Rev. Mr. Blair, of Pennsylvania, the oldest member of the Convention, and eighty years of age, to lead in prayer. Mr. Stuart then read the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians:

‘ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all, &c.’

He gave out the 100th Psalm, Scotch version:

‘ All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, &c.’;

and addressed the Convention, sounding the key-note to its subsequent character in an address of rare and elevated Christian eloquence. He welcomed the members to this mount of privilege, and to the homes and hearts of the people of the city of Brotherly Love. He spoke of the aims and objects of the gathering as those of peace, of fraternal love. They had not come to promote any selfish or sectarian objects, but to endeavor to unite the scattered members of the Presbyterian family in one, that together they might wage a successful war against the powers of darkness. He referred, in words which melted all hearts, to the union which prevailed among those engaged in the service of the Christian Commission during our late national struggle, when, as they ministered to the dying, and to those who were in perishing need of a Saviour, no one could tell whether his companion was a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian, a Baptist or a Methodist. This was the spirit which should animate the ministers and elders of the various Presbyterian Churches. There was nothing that should hinder them from standing side by side in meeting the enemies of our common Christianity, and in laboring to bring the world to Christ. He

said in conclusion: A voice comes to us to-day from the graves of Thomas Brainerd and John M. Krebs, the Chairmen of the Committees on Union of the Old School and New School Assemblies. If we could but hear their voices, we would be greatly encouraged in this good work. My own words in its behalf are poor and feeble when compared with the words of the Apostle:

‘That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.’”

After the regular organization of the Convention, it was found to be composed of 180 delegates from the Old School body, 78 from the New School, 26 from the United Presbyterian, 20 from the Reformed, 5 from the Cumberland, and 4 from the Reformed Dutch; *three hundred and thirteen* in all; a most respectable assembly, certainly, as regards numbers, which appears to have been no less respectable, also, in the general character of its members.

“In the afternoon of Wednesday was heard the only discordant note that was struck during all the sessions of the Convention. One of the oldest members, who had been prominent in carrying out the measures which effected the division of the Presbyterian Church in 1837, and who had come to this Convention with the evident purpose to oppose all measures for healing that division, began a course of remark personal and offensive to some of the most esteemed members on the floor of the house. When called to order by the President for his personal reflections, he assumed the attitude of a pugilist, and defied all present, saying that he was responsible for what he said, and that if any one did not like it he would know where to find him. Every one in the house was deeply saddened by the occurrence of such a scene, and for a time it seemed as if the harmony of the meeting was hopelessly broken; and, occurring at the very opening of the business, it was regarded as almost

ominous of a thwarting of the object of the assemblage. But the impression soon passed away—the same voice was not heard again in the Convention, and, until the close, not another note of discord disturbed its harmony.”

The voice, which fell thus inharmoniously on the opening spirit of the meeting, as we learn from the regular report of its proceedings, was that of the venerable Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge, famous alike in the political world, and in the ecclesiastical. The spirit of the meeting, however, soon recovered itself from the rude shock to which it was thus exposed, and only went forward the more triumphantly afterward, as it might seem, in its own direction, gathering strength, indeed, to go beyond all that was originally proposed in the movement. For, whereas the original overture of the Covenanter Synod appeared to contemplate simply a meeting for prayer and conference, with the view of promoting Christian fellowship and harmonious action between the several bodies that should join in it, hardly had the Convention got properly to work before it became apparent that no such idea of mere federal unity could satisfy its earnest aspirations. It must address itself at once to the task of preparing the way for an organic union. It was, indeed, a proposition to this effect, which had drawn out Dr. Breckinridge's jarring speech. No sooner was that offence got fairly out of the way, therefore, than the whole interest of the Convention was found concentrating itself more and more on the question of union in full form; and a committee was appointed, accordingly, to “prepare and report a basis for the organic union of the Presbyterian Churches.”

“The evening was spent in a free expression of the views of the members on the desirableness of union, and as to what the basis should be. It was universally acknowledged, that there must be a spirit of concession in order to secure the important end, and the conference indicated that the subject of Psalmody would prove the most difficult point, many of the members of the United Presbyterian and Reformed Presbyterian Churches adhering rigidly to the position that nothing should be used in

the praise of God but inspired Psalms, or literal versions of some portions of the inspired Scriptures.

“In the course of this conference the President read a letter which he had just received from Rev. Dr. Guthrie, of Scotland, warmly advocating the union of the Presbyterian Churches, and a similar letter from Rev. Dr. Duff was subsequently announced.

“On Thursday the conference was continued, the divine influence which pervaded the assembly becoming more and more apparent. Frequent pauses were made in the proceedings, at the call of the President, for the Convention to unite in silent prayer, the stillness of the crowded house being such that no one whose eyes were closed could be conscious of the presence of another person; and often during the discussions and other proceedings, the President called upon different members to lead in prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Much earnest and affecting oratory on the subject of church union took place in this conference, which tended, continually, to swell the tide of emotion, now running all in one and the same direction. To those acquainted at all with his past ecclesiastical history, the remarks of one worthy gentleman in particular, who figured along with Dr. Breckenridge in the rending of the Presbyterian Church thirty years ago, must be felt to carry with them a special interest. “The Rev. Dr. Musgrave,” we are told, “who was well-known as prominent on the Old School side at the time of the division, said this was not the first Convention which he had attended, as he was a member of the Convention of 1837. He spoke often, and earnestly and eloquently in favor of a speedy union. He said he believed that the Convention was as competent now to settle this question practically as it will be in five or ten years hence. He could not see why the whole Church cannot be united, as we all profess to believe in the same thing, and agree as to government. If the Committee present us a sound basis for union, such as will secure a united and Permanent Church, I will be in favor of it. I believe we are all prepared for it. [Applause.] The speaker said he had never felt so happy in his life as during the sessions of the Convention. He would thank God if the Committee would bring us a sound basis on

which we could unite. Such would be its moral influence, that all the Churches would be led to adopt it. He was not so sanguine that every individual would believe in such an organic basis of the union. They might stand out together in the cold for a time; but they would soon be glad to come in, and we would be as glad to receive them. We will keep the doors open. [Applause.] If they do stay out, they will do it on their own responsibility."

The report of the Committee on the Basis of Union, was presented on Thursday afternoon, and became then, of course, the proper subject of business for the Convention, during the remainder of its sessions. On the day following, however, there was an interruption of the regular business (a sort of wheel within wheel), which threatened, for a time, in the way of episode, to absorb the interest of the main action in its own superior enthusiasm. This was the memorable feat of fraternization, which was enacted between this Presbyterian Convention, and a certain other Episcopal Convention that happened to be holding its sessions in Philadelphia at the same time; altogether, a most dramatic scene, in which the interest of the whole occasion was wrought to its highest pitch, and all were made to feel that Friday was, of a truth, not only "the last day, but also the great day of the feast."

What led to this, was the friendly advance made from the Presbyterian side on Wednesday evening; when, having learned that "a large body of *Evangelical* clergymen and laymen of the Episcopal Church were in session in the city, deliberating on matters affecting the common interests of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," the Union Meeting adopted, unanimously, the following resolution:

"*Resolved*, That this Convention send its cordial salutation to our Episcopal brethren now assembled in Convention in this city, praying that grace, mercy, and peace, may rest upon them from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

A special committee had been appointed to bear the salutation to the Episcopal Convention, which received it so favorably, that, on motion of Mr. Tyng, it was determined to respond



to it personally by another committee; and it was the appearance of this deputation now, in the main aisle of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, with Bishops McIlvaine and Lee at its head, and more than a hundred Episcopal clergymen in its train, which became at once the signal for the grand outburst of brotherly love that followed, exceeding in theatrical effect all that was ever exhibited of the sort, on May platforms or anywhere else, in the history of the country before.

The Convention rose to receive its guests. Then there was prayer, led by the Rev. Dr. Newton, rector of the Church of the Epiphany, Philadelphia. Then the whole congregation, standing, rang out the lines:

Behold how good a thing it is,  
And how becoming well,  
Together such as brethren are  
In unity to dwell!

This done, the deputation, having ascended the platform, were formally introduced to the house by the Rev. Dr. H. B. Smith, of New York, Chairman of the Presbyterian committee of salutation; whereupon the President of the Convention, Mr. G. H. Stuart, advancing to Bishop McIlvaine, said: "*Brother*—I shall not call you *Bishop* now, for we are brothers in Christ Jesus. I, on behalf of the Presbyterian Convention, welcome you and your colleagues." The Bishop replied, that he was glad to find his old friend, Mr. Stuart, presiding over this august body; and then, stepping to the front of the platform, addressed the Convention as follows:

"Dearly beloved brethren! We reciprocate your prayers on our behalf. Those prayers have been answered, not directly, but more auspiciously than most of us could have anticipated. God has answered them in the spirit of love. The entrance of your deputation was a grateful surprise, and every heart was opened at once. We are here to-day for the purpose of expressing our love and our desires in response. It may seem to you a remarkable indication of Providence when I tell you, that when the Episcopal General Convention was assembled in this city in 1856, the matter of promoting co-operation with other

Churches [in measures for the bringing about a better understanding was brought before the House of Bishops. A committee of five was appointed to take advantage of any opportunity that God in His providence might devise in promoting a nearer union. It is remarkable that I am the only surviving member of that committee. The rest have all gone to the blessed union above. I am rejoiced to think it is reserved for me to stand in this place to discharge the duty which I believe to be of the sort contemplated by the House of Bishops. The right hand of fellowship was extended to us yesterday in prayer, and now in this manner. I greet you in the name of the House of Bishops, and I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. [Applause.] These are times when, instead of there being a desire to magnify our differences, we should aim to bring about such measures as will unite us in the advancement of the Church of Christ. The foundation which the Church builds upon is a sure one, and we stand here to testify to our common standing upon that foundation. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ. Let us be careful, however, how we build thereon. We live in a most solemn age of the world, and we have serious evils to face; we have to war against infidelity; we have to war against the power which has stood against the Church—a power which at this day has its eyes upon this country and that on the other side of the water. It becomes us, therefore, to unite our endeavors to further every right effort to advance the truth. May God bless us in our endeavors in this great work.

“The President, then taking Bishop Lee by the hand, introduced him to the Convention, saying: The last time that Bishop McIlvaine, Bishop Lee, and I met, we were at the gates of Richmond, asking Jefferson Davis to allow us to enter Richmond and minister to the starving Union soldiers who had been battling for our beloved country. Now that we have one united country, may we not hope that soon we will have one united Church?

“Bishop Lee said the deputation had come to reciprocate the courteous and Christian greeting that had been extended to

their body. He felt, in common with the one who had preceded him, that this interchange of fellowship and Christian love was unprecedented and unexpected. This certainly cannot be attributed to the will or wisdom of man, but to God our Father. As the deputation entered this house the first words that greeted their ears were those uttered in the prayer that was offered, 'Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.' We come to acknowledge each other as belonging to this royal priesthood. He felt that it was a privilege to be permitted here to speak of the feelings of love which we entertain for all the family of Christ. He expressed his sympathy with the members of this Convention as members of the household of faith, and as engaged in the same great and blessed work, and we all wish that mutual sympathy may prevail among us. We call to remembrance that the truths of the Reformation have been maintained by your communion. We rejoice that you are preparing to stand unitedly against the powers of darkness. In that great day, when we shall be assembled before the throne of God, how insignificant will appear the differences which have here distracted us as members of the Church. He concluded by thanking the Convention for the warm and fraternal reception which had been given to him and his colleagues.

"Prof. Smith then led in reciting the Apostles' Creed—all present repeating—after which the hymn,

'Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love,'

was sung by the entire assembly with deep emotion.

"Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, Jr., and Messrs. Conyngham and Brunot, made brief addresses, when Mr. Stuart replied: Right Reverend Fathers, and dearly beloved brethren, we thank you, in the name of this Convention, for the words of cordial greeting and Christian sympathy which you have been permitted, as the representatives of one of the great religious bodies of this country, to express. Your trials are ours. We have the same battles to fight, we have the same doctrines of Jesus Christ to

proclaim to the world, and we rejoice that there are fields in which we can work together. He then alluded to the scenes in which he had labored, in connection with Bishop McIlvaine, in behalf of dying men on the battle field, and in hospitals, and wherever dying men could be found. He did not believe, that this honored father was ever engaged in more truly apostolic work than when, as he once saw him, he was preaching Christ from the saddle to 1,200 prisoners of war; or when, as he saw him on another occasion, he was kneeling on the bar-room floor of the Planters' Hotel at Fredericksburg by the side of a dying Indian, who had served in the army of the Union, pointing him to a crucified Saviour, and commending his soul in prayer to God. He depicted other scenes deeply affecting to all present.

The President then called upon the Rev. Charles Hodge, of Princeton Theological Seminary, who addressed the deputation as follows:

"I am called upon to speak a word of welcome in behalf of the brethren of the Presbyterian Church, a denomination that is represented by about five thousand ministers, an equal number of churches, and over a million of souls who have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. I am for the moment the mouth-piece of this body, and allow me to present to you our cordial and affectionate Christian salutation. We wish to assure you, that your names are just as familiar to our people as to your own, and that we appreciate your services in the cause of our common Master, as highly as the people of your own denomination. We rejoice with them in all the good that has been accomplished through your instrumentality. I hope this audience will pardon a reference to what might seem personal under any other circumstances than the present. You, Bishop McIlvaine, and Bishop Johns, whom I had hoped to see on this occasion, and I, were boys together in Princeton College, fifty odd years ago. Evening after evening have we knelt together in prayer. We were baptized in spirit together in the great revival of 1815, in that institution; we sat together year after year in the same class-room, and we were instructed by

the same venerable theological teachers. You have gone your way, and I mine, but I will venture to say, in the presence of this audience, that I do not believe that in all that time you have preached any one sermon, which I would not have rejoiced to have delivered. I feel the same confidence in saying, that I never preached a sermon, which you would not have fully and cordially endorsed. Here we now stand gray-headed, side by side, after more than fifty years, the representatives of these two great bodies, feeling for each other the same intimate and cordial love, looking not backwards, not downwards at the grave at our very feet, but onward to the coming glory. Brethren, pardon these personal allusions, but is there not something that may be regarded as symbolical on this occasion? Sir, were not your Church and ours rocked in the same cradle? Have they not passed through the same Red Sea of trial? Did we not receive the same baptism of the Spirit? Do they not bear the same testimony to Christ and the Apostles? What difference is there between the 39 articles and our Confession, greater than the difference between the different parts of one great cathedral anthem that rises to the skies? Does it not seem to you that these great Churches are coming together? We stand here to declare to the whole world, that we are one in faith, one in baptism, one in hope, and one in allegiance to your Lord and our Lord."

During the delivery of Dr. Hodge's address, tears were falling from almost every eye, and it would be impossible with the pen to convey any adequate impression of the solemnity of the scene.

Rev. Dr. Stearns, of Newark, addressing the delegation, said: "The emotions and impressions of this scene are as strange as they are joyful. We seem now to catch a glimpse of that one United Church, whose beauty the King greatly desireth. It was not from us that the impulse for this interchange of Christian fellowship came. It was from God. Dr. S. referred to the steps which had been taken to unite the two largest of the Presbyterian Churches and subsequently to unite the whole Presbyterian family, and said that in this we did not

dream of hearing such voices from other sources, and of having such sympathy expressed as we have heard on this occasion. We love the Episcopal Church. We love it for her defence of the Faith once delivered to the saints, for her rich and varied Christian literature, and for the names which she has furnished for the noble army of the martyrs. We shall love you more than ever. We are no more strangers and foreigners to each other, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the one household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. He expressed the belief that the day was not far distant when all the Churches of Christ would be found side by side in the great battle for the Truth."

After these addresses, we are told, the assembly spent some moments in silent prayer. Then Bishop McIlvaine led in supplicating God's blessing on this Presbyterian Convention; the Rev. Dr. John Hall, of New York (late of Dublin), followed with like supplication for the Episcopal Church in this country and throughout the world; Bishop Lee offered the Lord's Prayer, the vast assemblage joining; Mr. Stuart, addressing Bishop McIlvaine, repeated the Mosaic blessing, from the closing verses of the sixth chapter of Numbers; the congregation joined in singing the long metre Christian doxology; and finally all was closed with the Apostolic Benediction, solemnly pronounced by Bishop McIlvaine.

Such was the beginning, middle, and end of this highly sensational scene, "in which," says the New York Observer, "every one felt that he had come as near to the communion and spirit of the heavenly world, as it is ever permitted to attain here below."

One can hardly help feeling a certain amount of bathos, in descending from such exaltation to the subsequent work of the Convention, as we find it wholly taken up with settling a Basis of Union for the different sections and segments of the Presbyterian Church. It seems to be a mockery of that nearness to the "communion and spirit of the heavenly world," which had gone before. The work, however, in its way, came to what

was considered to be a triumphant and glorious conclusion. Terms of agreement were settled, and we have them now actually before the world as a *bona fide* Basis of Union, on which all Presbyterian denominations are invited to come together as one Church. The platform embraces four suitably guarded articles, as follows:

“*First*, An acknowledgment of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God and only infallible rule of Faith and Practice.

“*Second*, In the United Church the Westminster Confession of Faith shall be received and adopted as containing the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scripture, it being understood that this Confession is received in its proper historical, that is, its Calvinistic or Reformed sense.

“Whilst the Committee recommend the foregoing basis of doctrine, they wish to be understood as recognizing the orthodoxy of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort.

“*Third*, The United Church shall receive and adopt the Presbyterian Form of Church Government.

“*Fourth*, The Book of Psalms, which is of divine inspiration, is well adapted to the state of the Church in all ages and circumstances, and should be used in the worship of God. Therefore we recommend that a new and faithful version of the Book of Psalms be provided as soon as practicable. But, in as much as various collections of the Psalmody are used in the different Churches, a change in this respect should not be required.”

The Convention, after the parturition of this paper, adjourned late on Friday night, well pleased with its own work. Altogether it was unquestionably a most extraordinary occasion; and it is not strange, that it should be spoken of with enthusiasm afterwards by those, who were made to feel in any way the afflatus of its spirit.

“All who attended the meeting,” according to the *New York Observer*, “not only those who came as delegates, but the vast congregation which filled the spacious church day after day

and night after night, felt that God in very deed was there by the power of His Holy Spirit, subduing all hearts and minds, melting them into one, and guiding and controlling the action of this large body of more than three hundred ministers and elders of six branches of the Presbyterian Church. The result to which it came was the more remarkable, inasmuch as when the Convention came together there was no concerted plan of action; no one seemed to know what was to be, or what could be done; but while all hearts were lifted up in prayer for guidance from on high, the answer was given in the spirit of brotherly love and mutual concession and fraternal confidence, which characterized the remarks and proceedings, and in the final result. Many who came to the Convention strongly opposed to the Union of the Churches, regarding it as impracticable and undesirable at present, were convinced that God was in the movement: they expressed themselves as amazed at the divine influence which so evidently pervaded the assembly, and giving up all opposition declared themselves ready for the consummation.

Even the *Presbyterian* falls into a sort of frigid rapture in discoursing of the wonders of the occasion.

“The Convention,” it tells us, “was certainly a remarkable body, and has done a remarkable work. It was composed of representative men from the various bodies which sent them up; and of these men, some were among the very foremost men of their respective Churches—conspicuous in their own communions for wisdom, moderation, learning, and attachment to the Churches in which they have ministered or ruled, and ready at all times to defend the principles which they represented. They came together—many of them wondering for what they had been summoned from their homes—some utterly skeptical touching any good results to be reached by these meetings, and others waiting with much curiosity to see what the singular assembly might bring forth. As we looked at them on the evening previous to the regular opening of the Convention, we judged them to be as little likely to be swept away by any gust of enthusiasm, or the soft words of sentimentalism, as any body of men we have



ever chanced to see. Yet it was manifest to any one who watched the Convention, that enthusiasm was its special characteristic, and that the tide of feeling steadily rose from the commencement to the close of its sessions. The most obvious objection, indeed, to the Convention, was that it rapidly changed its character from that of a body calmly and soberly settling the principles upon which a great movement is to be conducted, to that of a mass meeting, manipulated by hands skillful in the management of such enthusiastic gatherings. Men wept, laughed, grasped each other's hands, and disturbed the echoes of the old Covenanter Church with rounds of hearty applause. We heard of one good brother who, in the excess of his joy, shouted, 'Glory, hallelujah,' and did this with genuine Methodist earnestness and emphasis. Those who were not present cannot conceive of the feeling which pervaded the Assembly, and the vast audiences which looked down upon it; and we advise any one who is fond of strong sensations, and was not present, that he has missed the fairest opportunity for indulgence in this kind of excitement, which will be presented to him for many long years." "The prevalent enthusiasm was, of course, greatly intensified by the appearance of the Episcopalians in the Convention. It was with some surprise that the Presbyterians heard that a delegation, with two Bishops at its head, had been appointed to bear the salutations of the Evangelical Episcopalians; but when the body from which this delegation came, marched in, and joined in one of the old Psalms, and then, when the whole company, led by Dr. Richard Newton, joined in prayer to God for the 'precious, elected, justified, and sanctified Church of God,' it was felt by all that we were truly one in Christ Jesus, and that one good Spirit dwelt in all hearts. The services of that morning will surely never be forgotten by any one who was within the walls of that church. The recitation of the Apostles' Creed, as the expression of the unity of all in the one faith of the Church, and the union of all voices in the Lord's Prayer, as the expression of the oneness of all in their wants and desires, were grateful to all hearts; and when Dr. Hodge stepped forth upon the platform, as the representative of the

Presbyterian Church, to greet Bishop McIlvaine, as the representative of his Church, to speak of the years of their boyhood—of their baptism by the Spirit of God—of their years of study at the feet of Dr. Alexander—of the grave, at the margin of which they stood, and of the glowing hopes which lit up the future as they looked beyond the grave, the heart of the great assembly melted, and tears flowed freely from many eyes. It was good to feel, while striving to perfect our Presbyterian unity, that there was a higher unity, in which Christian hearts are bound together by invisible links, and it was with inexpressible joy that great congregation took up the words of the hymn,

‘Blest be the tie that binds,’

and sang it with uplifted voices and swelling hearts. The speeches made on the occasion were imbued with the Spirit of Christ, and none could witness the scene without feeling that ‘one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,’ stand at the foundation of this blessed union of hearts. The effect was, at the time, most happy, and we must hope it will continue to be happy, and the two Churches, although they must still stand apart in their organizations, will be stimulated to ‘love as brethren.’”—How much may have been accomplished by the Convention for the union of the Presbyterian Churches, is acknowledged to be not yet entirely clear; but there is room for hope. The immense moral influence of the occasion, we are told, must be all in the line of increased unity of spirit, which will most infallibly work out, in time, a complete organic unity. “Meanwhile (the Presbyterian goes on to say) we think it is well that all the propositions submitted to the Churches by this Convention, are to be considered in Synods and Assemblies, where every word and sentence will be carefully and calmly weighed, and where, we may be sure, the interests of truth and righteousness will be jealously guarded, and the ancient Presbyterian faith and order maintained and re-asserted. How the Basis of Union will pass through the ordeals before it, we cannot presume to foretell; but thousands of hearts will be bitterly disappointed if, out of the movement thus happily inaugurated, there shall not come a

union of the now divided Churches, of the Presbyterian faith, sufficient to establish in this land a National Presbyterian Church, co-extensive in its limits with the nation, and blessing the whole nation by its earnest efforts to build up within its bosom the glorious kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—If, however, this blessed vision is still to tarry, and the dikes which have stood so long, are to stand in the future as hinderances to the general mingling of the waters, the Convention which has just been dissolved, must still be considered as a gathering altogether remarkable and unique, and one well worthy of a place in history. It would be noteworthy if it had been only a meeting of the various branches of the Presbyterian family, gathered together in one, and all finding themselves very much at home. But when the men who belonged to the Church of Cranmer and Hooker came in to mingle with the men of the Church of Calvin and Knox, and the two bodies stood up to repeat the Creed, which has come to us from the early ages of the Church, and bears the Apostles' name, and then lifted up their voices to pray in words taught them by the Redeemer of the world, the scene rose far out of ordinary scenes, and the meeting, with its precious experiences, will be fixed, we believe, in the history of the Church, as one which all true lovers of Christ's Church will not willingly let die. Nor will it be forgotten, we think, in the General Assembly and Church of the first-born."

PART SECOND.

We have thought it well to give a somewhat extended account of this Union Convention; not simply because of its highly interesting character in itself considered, but with the view also of making use of it as an occasion for some practical reflections on the general subject of Church unity, the cause in whose service the meeting was held.

I. All must honor the Convention, as one of the most interesting and significant movements of the time in favor of Christian union.

That the church should be one in some way, may be regarded as one of the first principles of Christianity. It lies, indeed, in the very conception of the Church, as an object of faith, that it should be one, holy, and catholic, according to the Creed; and those who try to conceive of it in any other way, convict themselves, at once, of not being in harmony with this old *regula fidei* in their general view of the Gospel. For the true Christian spirit, then, the existing divisions of the Protestant Church can never fail to be a cause of lamentation and grief.

It will not do to say, that they amount to nothing, as being of outward character only, and not interfering at all with what is called the free unity of the Spirit; and that the unity of Protestantism, therefore, is as little broken really by these denominational distinctions, as is the unity of our nation by its different state governments, or its rival political parties. The two orders of life differ *toto cælo*; and it is little better than treason to the true idea of the kingdom of heaven, to take the measure of it in such sort from the kingdoms of this world. Even this low way of looking at the subject is constrained at once, indeed, to reach beyond its own stand-point again, and to grasp after the notion of some visible unity, as necessary to eke out the felt insufficiency of its invisible abstraction; so powerful here is the instinct of Christianity, even where most wronged; but it is only so as to take up, after all, with the poor inagination of an external confederacy of sect (far short thus of our National Government), agreeing to work together to a certain extent for common ends. To give visible expression to the actual inward unity of Protestant Christendom in such style, we are told, is the grand and glorious mission of the *Evangelical Alliance*; and with this, it seems to be assumed, our craving for the "communion of saints" may afford to be satisfied, at least, for the present, as we are not likely to have anything better before the millennium.

In the end, however, no such low ecclesiasticism can prove generally satisfactory. Never, certainly, for the deeper religious life of Protestantism. The true Christian spirit yearns after *organic* oneness, as the only proper form of Christ's body,

and cannot be put off with the wretched *succedaneum* of an outward world-alliance, however respectable, pompously paraded in its place.

Of this we have abundant evidence, throughout the Protestant world, at the present time. The miseries of our reigning sect system, staring us in the face as they do from all sides, have come to be universally felt and acknowledged. Men are tired of divisions, which seem in most cases to have outlived their original meaning; which weaken so palpably the strength of the Church; and which tend steadily, as all may see, to its universal disintegration. And now there is at work every where, unmistakably, what may be called a deep reactionary tide of feeling and thought, in all the better part of the Protestant world, toward the ideal of the old Christian Creeds—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism," answering to the Pontifical Prayer: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." All the best theology of the age—whatever there is of theology, indeed, at this time, which is living, and not "twice dead, plucked up by the roots"—looks in this direction, revolves around this problem, "groans and travails in pain," we may say, toward this magnificent end. It is Christological, and, for those, who can understand it, moves throughout in the bosom of the Church Question. There are felt wants, at the same time, in the liturgical life of Protestantism every where, sensibilities of public devotion, that press with strong force in the same general direction. Then we have any amount of platform declamation on the theme of ecclesiastical catholicity and brotherhood, going to show, that the theme is popular, and sure to strike a responsive chord in all religious assemblies. To crown all, we have all sorts of overtures, more particularly of late, toward the outward actualization, in some way, of what is felt to be, in such view, the proper law of the Christian life, and the only true order of the Christian Church. These generally terminate, it is true, in the notion of mere outward leagues, or of very partial amalgamations at the best; but they are none the less worthy

of attention for this, as testimonies in favor of Christian union ; while the interest with which they are received is, at the same time, specially significant, as showing how deep-seated and wide-spread the feeling is, that our religious divisions are wrong, and sadly at war with the true Spirit of Christ.

Among all movements of this sort, now, the Presbyterian Union Convention, held lately in Philadelphia, is entitled to special consideration. It may be regarded, indeed, as the most extraordinary demonstration in favor of Protestant Church unity, which has occurred in our time. It challenges pious admiration, through its spontaneous, apparently self-impelling character ; starting as it did from so small a religious body (and out of the large soul, probably, of a single layman, Mr. George H. Stuart) ; coming before the world with so little observation ; and yet meeting such favorable response, and gathering into itself, at last, such an amount of respectability and force as we find to have been comprehended in it in fact. Then the meeting seemed to go beyond itself again in the whole scope of its proceedings ; as though it had been apprehended by a spirit greater than its own, which it must afterward try to apprehend as the great object of its coming together. Speaking in behalf of the Old School delegation generally, Dr. Hodge is quoted as saying : " We thought it probable that some plan of federal union, which would allow each member of the confederation to retain its own peculiarities, and to revolve in its own sphere, might be proposed and recommended. But we did not expect that any plan of organic union, embracing all the Presbyterian Churches in our land, would be for a moment thought of." From the first hour of their coming together, however, with the solitary exception of what was spoken by Dr. Breckinridge, every speech and prayer had looked to this end only, as though the Convention had met for no other purpose. " Such being the case," he adds, " I have taken no part in your deliberations, but have sat in silence, waiting to see what God, by His providence and Spirit, would bring to pass." It really seemed as if God had taken the meeting into His own hands, and made it to mean more than any of those concerned in it had originally designed.

Most of all might this appear to have been the case, in the coming in of that strange interlude, which took place on the last day of the meeting, when the Episcopal delegation made its appearance in the crowded Covenanter Church; a scene which was, in the fullest sense, providential, and for which no place, of course, was by any one so much as dreamed of in the programme of the occasion previously. Not only, indeed, did this scene go beyond the original purpose of the Convention; it was felt, for the time, fairly to overshadow it, causing the joyful hope of Presbyterian unity, for the moment, to forget itself in the far more glorious vision of that catholic Christian unity, which the two Churches, Presbyterian and Episcopalian, were drawn to anticipate delightfully in the common recitation of the Apostles' Creed. And it is not to be wondered at, then, if on coming down from that mount of evanescent transfiguration, the Presbyterian disciples, left again to themselves, may have found it, as we have intimated before, a somewhat tame business, to go on settling afterwards the terms of their own much narrower fellowship on the basis of the Westminster Confession. Was there something providential also in this? Was it intended to work as a sacred irony upon the catholic spirit of the Convention, by forcing upon it the glimpse of a still higher catholicity, in whose presence its own became relatively poor and mean?

However that may be, we have no hesitation in allowing the Convention to have been worthy of all admiration and praise. It met for a noble object; was composed of honorable and good men; breathed throughout a most excellent spirit; and did, in its way, true service to the cause of Christianity, which deserves thankful remembrance. This is our first and most immediate reflection on the occasion. We consider it highly important as a protest against the divisions of Presbyterianism, and, in spite of itself, a protest also against the divisions of Protestantism generally; and honor it as one of the most striking testimonies of the time to the necessity, not simply of union among Christians in the low Christian alliance sense, but of organic, catholic unity, in the old sense of the Apostles' Creed, as that without which the true idea of the Church never can be complete.

II. But we find a second reflection forced home upon us, by this Presbyterian congress, which is of a less pleasing and cheering character; a reflection which goes far, in fact, to make us think of it only with sadness, as being in itself one of the most sorrowful exemplifications of the misery of our prevailing sect system, as well as of its helpless, hopeless insufficiency for working out successfully its own cure. We see in the movement strikingly, how radically wrong and absurd our denominational divisions are in their nature, and how fatally in themselves, at the same time, they defy all attempts to bring them back to Church unity. The very law of their existence is divisive. They are constitutionally unchurchly, and under the ban, thus, of perpetual separation.

What more painful evidence could we have of the evil that is comprehended in our sect system, than the fact that there are so many branches of the Presbyterian Church among us, and that it has been felt necessary for a Convention to come together in this way, after so long a time, for the purpose of considering, solemnly and carefully, the possibility of their being joined together as a single Church?

There are distinctions in the history of Christianity, which have a deep principle, and in this way a certain justification, in the wholeness of the Christian life itself. Such was the difference between Jewish and Gentile Christianity in the beginning of the Gospel; such, in some measure, the difference between the Greek Church and the Latin; such the positive faith of Protestantism over against that of Romanism; and such, finally, the original divergency of the two great root Confessions of Protestantism itself in the sixteenth century, which have their proper title still as Lutheran and Reformed. Even these cases of principal division, as it may be called, in which different sides of one and the same organic totality find a certain amount of legitimate expression, are required to come together in the deeper unity of Christ; who is our peace, says St. Paul; the profoundest and most comprehensive sense of our human life; the reconciliation and harmony of all its otherwise necessary antagonisms, where there is neither circumcision nor un-



circumcision, Jew, nor Greek, nor Scythian, male nor female, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all. No such relative justification, however, can possibly apply to the divisions of the Presbyterian Church. We will say nothing of the right of Presbyterianism itself, in its general Scotch form, to narrow the conception of the Reformed Church to its own provincial phase of church discipline and faith; but what *organic* reason can any sound Christian mind possibly pretend to see, in the subsequent divisions of this Scotch Church in Scotland, down to the present time, or, still worse if possible, in the continuance of these divisions, and the origination of new ones, here in America? How many separate Presbyterian bodies (of the Scotch order) there are now in this country, we will not venture to say positively. Eight or ten, certainly—they may amount now, for all we know, to as many as twelve or fifteen. And all these stand not only on the common platform of the Bible, but also on the basis of a common separate phase of the Reformed faith, as we have it drawn out at large in the Westminster Confession! Then they are not ignorant and fanatical sects. They represent, largely, the intelligence, learning, and piety of the land. Yet there they are, holding on to their separate platforms as if the life of the world depended on it; when yet, in fact, it is not too much to say, that neither they themselves, nor the world, have any clear idea whatever of what their several platforms actually mean. We, at all events, have always found it a perfect bore to keep in our mind the run of these Scotch and Scotch-American Presbyterian denominations, with anything like ecclesiastical accuracy, or theological precision. The truth is, there is neither sense nor religion in the subject. It is bewildering confusion from beginning to end.

It is a sad commentary, thus, on the unchurchly character of our Christianity, which the divisions of the Presbyterian Church bring into view; and we cannot help regarding it as a melancholy spectacle, when we find the work of Christian Union, in the case of this Philadelphia Convention, compelled as it were to start with so poor a business as the bringing together in the first place simply of the religious bodies that agree already in

being Presbyterians sworn to the Westminster Confession. It is humiliating to the last degree, that there should be any occasion to begin in this poor way; that divisions so little principal and rational, should not have healed themselves long ago spontaneously; that the subject of their reconciliation should need to be approached with so much caution and trembling apprehension; that so much account should be made of even the remote prospect of their being brought to an end on the basis of union here laboriously produced, as the result of three days' prayerful consultation for the purpose. What an irony, the world may well exclaim, was not the whole work of this Presbyterian Convention in such view, on the cause of Protestant catholicity generally? If it be so hard a business to bring together the broken ranks of a single wing of this vast scattered army, where it would seem to be most of all easy to do so, what must be thought of the prospect for rallying the army at large around any common standard, or into any common organization?

No wonder that these Presbyterian divisions are a matter of perplexing amazement to foreign Churches. "Some two months ago," says Dr. Thomas Guthrie of Edinburgh in his letter read at the Convention, "I attended the sittings of the Evangelical Alliance at Amsterdam. Would that all good men in your country, and in mine, saw things with the eyes of the distinguished representatives of the foreign Evangelical Churches whom I met there! With what astonishment did they hear of any opposition to the proposed union of our Presbyterian Churches! How little, in the eyes of these distinguished men, these impartial and unprejudiced judges, seemed the points on which the opponents of union stood!" Only think of the grand confessional and theological issues of the sixteenth century being made to bend to the question of singing Rouse's Psalms!

But if it be humbling to think of the occasion for such a meeting, it is more humiliating still to find it coming to such small positive result for the accomplishment of its own object. There was much fine talk in the Convention, and much fine

feeling. It was good, all felt, to be there. We wish not to disparage in any way the earnestness of its zeal or the wisdom of its counsels. It did the best it could do, probably, in the circumstances. But this only makes the matter worse. That such a body, convened for such an object, and so borne aloft on what was felt to be the more than human inspiration of the occasion, should after all have been able to bring to pass no more than the tautological basis of union in which all its labors ended, is just what sets the impotence of such a conclusion in its most glaring light. For what better is it than the poorest tautology in fact to say, "Let us come together as Presbyterians on the basis of the Bible and the Westminster Confession;" when that is the very ground on which, as Presbyterians, they have been professedly standing, every sect of them, all along? One can hardly help smiling indeed, to see the account that has been made of this wonderful *form of concord*, as though it were to be a full panacea for the wounds of Joseph, and a talisman that should cause to cease forever the mutual vexings of Ephraim and Judah; while it is not difficult, however, to discern through all, at the same time, an undertone of calculating doubt, that serves to qualify very materially the enthusiasm of so pleasing a thought. Dr. Hodge after waiting in silence "to see what God, by His providence and Spirit, would bring to pass," seems impressed at last with the sense of a direct interposition of heaven in the plan submitted for uniting the Churches. "When the committee appointed to bring in a basis for the organic union of all these Churches," he says, "reported a unanimous agreement, I was greatly surprised; there was nothing in the report, as it seemed to me, to which any old school man could object. The ground of union proposed, was that on which we as a Church had always stood." Of course, it was; and no doubt the other delegations were no less astonished, to find that they too, after waiting to see what would come to pass, were allowed by the proposed union to stand just where they had been standing all along before. The only marvel is that it should have been felt necessary, in so plain a case, to go on afterwards debating and discussing such

terms of consolidation, as if any thing could come out of the discussion more than the self-evident truism with which it started. A grand thing, truly, for a congress of Westminsterian Churches to tell the world, and one another, that they acknowledge the Scriptures to be God's Word, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice; that they subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith; that they hold to the Presbyterian form of Church Government; that they consider the Book of Psalms proper to be used in the worship of God; and that they see no good reason, therefore, why they, and all Presbyterian bodies, should not form themselves into a grand United Church now on this basis. All the world knew the whole of that before. Was it necessary to have it theatrically proclaimed again through this National Presbyterian Convention? And now that the Convention has done and said all it could, in the circumstances, is there any reason at all to expect, that the dream of One, Holy, Catholic Presbyterian Church is ever likely to be realized as the fruit of its labors?

We fear not. Our faith may be weak, our enthusiasm poor; but so it is, we have no power to take in any such joyous prospect. We cannot help thinking that Dr. Breckinridge was more than half right, in trying to throw cold water on the idea of organic union at the beginning of the meeting; though it was well, perhaps, that he was stopped off at the time, and was hindered by sickness from having any thing to do with the business of the body afterwards. It would carry us too far to give in detail our reasons for believing that little or nothing will come of this movement. Enough that we can easily feel a measure of distrust in it, running through the proceedings of the Convention itself. Enough that it is allowed to be only the beginning of a long series of complicated negotiations among the bodies invited to come into it, which are sure to be met with endless practical difficulties not yet touched. Enough, that all past experience is against its having any chance of success. The rule with such attempts at amalgamation heretofore, has been in general, that two bodies have become three, rather than one. It is becoming only too plain, we think, that even the Old and New School Presbyterian Churches, after all the

talk there has been on the subject, are not likely soon to be reunited. But without this, what shadow of ground can there be to look for any such union among the Presbyterian Churches of the country generally? As the Philadelphia *Basis* means nothing, so it is almost certain finally to issue in nothing, according to the old adage *ex nihilo nihil fit*.

III. This is melancholy; but not altogether so much so as on first view it might seem. We would be glad to see the different branches of Presbyterianism united into one Church. It is a reproach to our Christianity that they cannot be thus brought together, all holding the Bible as they do for their only rule of faith, and all standing alike on the Westminster Confession as their common platform of doctrine; and the fact is as painful a commentary certainly as we could well have, on the helpless misery of our sect system generally. But so far as the cause of true catholic unity is concerned, the great Christian thought that underlies all these calls for Church union, we cannot see that this Presbyterian movement means much, or that its full success would be of any very great account. Its highest object after all has not been catholic unity in any true sense, as this is made to be a point of faith in the Apostles' Creed, but only denominational unity in the case of a particular sect; which, however large and respectable, can by no possibility represent the proper wholeness of the Church.

We may be told, indeed, that the work of general Church union must begin with particular confessional unions; and that when the several Christian denominations are first fully united in themselves, the way will then be open for aiming at the higher object of forming them all at last into one Church. Some fancy of this sort seems in fact to have been more or less in the mind of the Union Convention in Dr. Wylie's Church, while busily engaged with its dream of catholic Presbyterianism. Through that dream there was the dim, but still warmly glowing vision all along of a higher catholicity lying beyond, to which it was hoped that first step might ultimately lead. We have seen how powerfully this feeling prevailed, especially in the scene with the Episcopalians. "The heart of the great assembly melted," we are told, "and tears flowed freely from

many eyes. It was good to feel, while striving to perfect our Presbyterian unity, that there was a higher unity, in which Christian hearts are bound together by invisible links; and it was with inexpressible joy that great congregation took up the words of the hymn, *Blest be the tie that binds*, and sang it with uplifted voices and swelling hearts." All very beautiful and affecting. But all, we must reiterate, going only to stultify the whole business of that Presbyterian Council, which was assembled there for the purpose solely of consolidating a powerful exclusivism, on the basis of a very narrow and partial confession, that should stand then as a high tower of defence and opposition over against the whole idea of Christian catholicity under any broader view. Can we believe that there was any real affinity between such sectarianism and those deep yearnings after "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," which we find forcing themselves into view so remarkably through the whole occasion, and giving to it in fact its main interest? We, for our part, believe nothing of the sort. The yearnings were there as pent up fires, in spite of the sectarian restraint. There was no real approximation whatever in the sectarianism itself, as such, to the true idea of Church unity; and it will be found a vain imagination forever, we are fully persuaded, to think of coming to such union ultimately through any such process of preliminary sect unions. Sectarianism is by its very conception the opposite of catholicity, and it can never be made to promote of itself the consummation of our Lord's last prayer: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee!" If the sense of that prayer is ever to be actualized among our lamentable Protestant divisions, it must be through some other order of thought, some wholly different form of Church sentiment and Church life.

If ever the Apostolic idea of Church unity is to be restored practically among our denominations, it must work itself into felt force first as an idea starting from itself, and not as a generalization merely derived from these sects. There must be awakened and quickened among us, in some way, a sense for the proper wholeness of the Church, that shall go before, and

not simply come after our sense for the Christianity of our several sects. Full earnest must be made with the article of the Creed: "*I believe* in the Holy Catholic Church." This need not imply indifference to our denominational confessions, as they now stand; but it must require the subjection of our interest in these particular confessions to our interest in the wholeness of the Christian faith and life, as something more than an abstraction; as itself the power of a confession deeper and more comprehensive than all denominational confessions, the necessary beginning thus of the Christian faith, on the basis of which, then, all such particular confessions must stand, to be entitled to any confidence or regard whatever. Where there is a due sense of this necessary relation of the partial to the whole, the different Christian confessions may assert their differences without wrong or damage to the whole; their polemics become in fact irenics, antithesis with a view to ultimate synthesis; and it is easy to see how, in that case, such union movements as we are here considering, though meant primarily only for a single denomination, might yet look, and actually work, also, toward the unity of the Church in a broader and wider view. But can this be considered the character, really, of what is proposed in the Presbyterian movement now before us? We fear not. It is, on the contrary, we think, such an assertion of denominational particularism, as neither seeks nor tends toward true catholicity in any way; and for this reason, if for no other, its failure or success is not a matter that need concern much those who care for the unity of the Church as a whole, and not simply for the unity of the Presbyterian Church as a sect.

All confessionalism, all denominational symbolism, to be of a truly catholic, and not merely sectarian character, must refer itself ultimately to the Apostles' Creed, as the primary basis of the universal Christian faith. So much we feel at liberty to assume here as a first truth in historical theology. Deny the necessity of starting with the Creed, the necessity of being rooted and grounded in the first principles of Christianity, as we have them set forth in this archetypal symbol, and all religious thinking is at sea. So the Church has witnessed through all ages.

Protestantism, by its own original confession, has no right to exist except in the bosom of the Creed. And so, then, its divergent types or schemes of confessional belief, also, as far as they can be considered to have any historical justification, any true organic position (in distinction from mere upstart sects) in its general movement, must continue organically bound to the same root. Sundered from this, their symbolism can deserve no respect. Here Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, and New England Puritanism, are required to meet on common ground, back of their other platforms of faith; and these platforms must plant themselves on this common ground to carry with them any legitimate force as separate confessions. Without this they cease to be historical, and lose all harmonious relation to the proper unity and wholeness of the Church. All true catholicity, unquestionably, must begin with the cordial, *ex animo* acknowledgment of the Apostles' Creed.

Is it not now, however, something very significant that the schemes of Christian union, of which we hear so much in our time, all seem to take it for granted, that if it is to be reached at all, or to be of any account when reached, it must be based on other articles and terms of agreement than those contained in the Creed—this old, fundamental symbol being either ignored entirely in the case, or, at best, acknowledged only in a secondary and outside way? Congregational Churches have their terms of particular church fellowship in this way, their "Covenants," as they are sometimes called, to which all must subscribe who come into their communion. But who ever heard of one of them making use of the Apostles' Creed for this purpose? Some years ago some New England Missionaries undertook to manufacture a system of Evangelical faith for the new Protestant Armenian Church they had organized in Constantinople. There was no recognition in it whatever of the Creed. So, it will be remembered, the great religious World Convention in London, some twenty years ago, in undertaking to construct an oecumenical platform for the union of all *evangelical* sects, found it necessary to omit all mention of the Creed, and devised a new set of articles altogether as better suited for the purpose;



and the same course has been pursued by every Evangelical Alliance meeting we have had since. The Creed of Universal Christendom has been counted too poor a bond for holding together these Protestant Unions, and they have been fain always to proclaim the strength of their common Christianity in some different way. And thus it is with our union religious associations and movements generally. They abound in sentimental declamation, and please themselves with the notion of a Christianity that is common to all sects. But their catholicity, base itself where it may, is sure never to fall back on the Apostles' Creed.

We are sorry to say, now, that the late Presbyterian Union Convention formed no exception to this bad rule; and that fact is enough of itself to destroy confidence in its work. It is easy to see, at once, that a basis of Christian union which is not itself based upon the Creed, can be of no account—must, indeed, be worse than of no account—for the cause of catholic unity properly so called. But we may go farther and say, that Presbyterianism itself can never be united with any vigorous church life on any such baseless basis. Presbyterian Christianity without the Creed, will prove as little able to stand in the end, whether united or divided, as Christianity without the Creed under any other form.

But was not the Apostles' Creed duly honored and magnified on this occasion, when that stirring scene went forward on Friday morning, in which Presbyterians and Episcopalians, led off by Prof. H. B. Smith, joined with one voice in solemnly repeating the œcumenical symbol, as the expression of their common faith? It is pleasant, certainly, to hear what was thus done in honor of the Creed. It reads well; and it is curious to see how the thing has been held up for rhetorical effect, even in quarters where all real sympathy with the genuine sense of the Creed is notoriously wanting. The truth is, it was an involuntary homage to catholicity, which was forced upon the assembly by what might be called the objective spirit of the occasion; a power that, for the moment, carried the Convention beyond

itself, and lifted it out of its own sphere; as all inspiration, indeed, causes men to speak, or it may be sing, with new tongues.

In this view the fact is highly interesting, as showing how near in reality, for our deepest religious consciousness, the Creed lies to the foundations of all true Christian faith; but farther than this it cannot be taken as of much significance or account. It was a flash of enthusiasm that came and went with its occasion, without leaving behind it any practical result in the actual working of the Convention.

It may be questioned, indeed, whether even this public acknowledgment of the Creed amounted, in the circumstances, to as much as it might appear to mean at first view. We call to mind other occasions of late, on which the same thing has been done in religious meetings, as one evidence of their Christian union; where it was plain enough, however, that it was done for mere stage effect, and without any general hearty acceptance of the symbol whatever. It is an easy thing for our different sects to fall in with the recitation of the Creed, if they are allowed to put into it severally their own meaning. But in this case, the recitation becomes, of course, an empty, if not absolutely hypocritical compliment. And that it must be so with our sects generally at this time, is placed beyond all doubt by the known fact that they make no use of the Creed in their ordinary religion, but have, on the contrary, a certain feeling of strangeness toward it wherever it comes in their way. New England Puritanism, by its own confession, has lost the sense of all harmony with the Creed, honoring it, at best, as a dead "fossil relic," simply, of "by-gone times;" and our sects commonly, there is no doubt, regard it quietly in the same way. Nor is the feeling one of mere indifference; it amounts to positive aversion. For after all that may be said of its loose and vague meaning, making it easy for all to mouth it, in a sense to suit themselves, it is certain not only that the symbol has a determinate historical sense of its own, but also that this, its only proper sense, is so wrought into its whole structure, that it cannot fairly be got out of it except by breaking it to pieces; and it is always the instinctive consciousness of opposition to

what is felt to be thus the true life and spirit of the Creed, therefore, that makes it unpalatable to the Christian sects with whom it has fallen into neglect. They do not use the Creed simply because they do not like it, are in no sympathy with it, feel it to be, at bottom, a witness against them, and not for them. Only so can we account for the strange fact, that these sects should own the fundamental authority of the old formula, and yet allow it no place, practically, in their families, or in their schools, or in their churches. Where their difficulty with it really lies, may, at the same time, be easily understood. They are unhistorical, therefore unchurchly, and for this reason, again, unsacramental; whereas the Creed is historical, makes the Church an object of faith, and throws a sacramental character round the mystery of godliness throughout; all so effectually, that its whole theory of Christianity is felt, by these sects themselves, to be different from the scheme in which they stand. And hence it is that they feel toward it always very much as Ahab felt in another case of old, when he said to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah: "There is yet one man, Micahiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Exactly so; the Apostles' Creed is a perpetual prophecy of evil against our modern evangelical sects; and therefore they will not allow its voice to be heard in their teaching or worship. If they did, it would soon bring their whole craft into danger of being set at nought. This is the secret of their dislike to it.

We see at once what a farce it must be, when such utterly unhistorical religions may pretend, at times, to recite the Creed, in token of their own unanimity, and as an argument of their general agreement with the faith of past Christian ages. It is all hollow mummery of the worst sort. In the case of the Presbyterian Convention now before us, we would hope there was something better than this. But it is hard to believe, that the use of the Creed on that occasion amounted to a full *ex animo* assent and consent to all its articles in their true historical sense. We know it ought to have done so; for both

Churches, the Presbyterian no less than the Episcopalian, are bound by their denominational confessions to own the symbolical authority of the old *regula fidei*, as we have it handed down to us in this formulary; and to be owned at all honestly as being of such force, it must be owned as being so in the character of a rule fundamental to all other confessional rules—and so here, of course, a rule fundamental and anterior in particular to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Such being the case, it should be an easy thing for Presbyterians and Episcopalians to join, at any time, as they did in Dr. Wylie's Church, in repeating the Apostles' Creed. But, somehow, we cannot help feeling that it is a great matter to say the Creed *ex animo*. The feeling grows upon us, too, the more we look into the subject; and we cannot avoid asking: Did these different divisions of the Presbyterian camp (to say nothing now of their Low Church Episcopalian guests), know fully, and mean really, what they were outwardly doing, when they thus fell back with common confession on the original faith of the universal Christian world? We will not now press the question any farther. But we must say that if they did do so, we despair of being able to understand at all how it is, that there should be no use of the Creed, so far as we know, in the ordinary worship of Presbyterian churches of every sort at other times, beyond and outside of this grand "act and testimony" in Philadelphia; and how it is, also, that the same act and testimony was not able to secure a place for itself in the *Basis of Union*, which it was the great object of the meeting to establish for the consolidation of Presbyterianism into a single Church.

A basis of faith for such purpose, in which you have the Westminster Confession, with some recognition even of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Articles of Dordrecht, and yet no mention of the Apostles' Creed (the first and most fundamental of all symbols), any more than if it had never been heard of, or had never had anything to do with Presbyterianism whatever! Is it not ominously strange? Even as a mere oversight, it would tell powerfully against the reigning animus of the occasion. For, how could the Creed be forgotten, where all was

suitied to call it to mind, if there had been there any hearty sympathy with the Creed, any full confidence in the Creed, But we know that its omission in the basis of union was no mere oversight. It was made to figure too prominently in the fraternizing scene with the Episcopalians, to admit any thought of that sort; and no doubt there were those in the Convention, who would have been glad if the catholic chord then struck could have furnished the key-note for the confessional work of the body afterwards. But it was soon, alas, lost again in the skies. Another noticeable reminder of what was due here to the occasion, we have in a paper offered to the meeting by the Rev. Dr. Beattie, of Steubenville, Ohio, in which, among other propositions submitted for consideration as terms of church fellowship, we find the following explicit acknowledgement of the authority of the Creed, as coming confessionally *before* all later symbols: "We affirm our belief in that summary of Christian doctrine which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, which we receive as setting forth, in brief, most important doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." This itself carries in it, we can easily feel, a somewhat poor and cold sound. It lacks the tone of full catholic sympathy with what the Creed is in its own place. But, as it was, it proved too high for the low church temperature of the Convention; never getting so far, indeed as to be even noticed by the Committee which reported the basis of union. We are thus shut up painfully to the conclusion that in framing a platform of faith for the union of the different Presbyterian bodies in the United States, this Philadelphia Convention, with all its catholic sensibilities, did not dare to believe that these bodies could be brought to unite in the common adoption of the Apostles' Creed, as the only true and right beginning of all sound Christian belief and profession; and so, deliberately and of purpose, the Apostles' Creed was excluded from the platform altogether! Such we feel to be the meaning of the whole case. We can make of it nothing more nor less than this.

The conclusion to which we are thus brought, speaks for itself. The occasion we have been reviewing is of no signifi-

cance, we believe, for the interests of Presbyterianism itself. There can be no solidly United Church, even in that partial form, that shall refuse to plant itself, confessionally, on the original Christian Creeds, as all our evangelical Protestantism professed to do in the beginning. Of still less account then can any such movement prove to be for the interests of Christianity at large, or for the actualization of any such millennial vision of Catholic unity as seems to have floated at times before the mind of this venerable and highly respectable Church Council. If anything in the world is certain, we think it is, that no such Catholic unity, whether in theology, or in worship, or in Church life, can ever be reached except on the basis of the old Creeds, taken in their old, only true historical sense; and that the first, and most necessary of all conditions, therefore, for any effectual movement toward this end, is the resuscitation of interest in these Creeds; while all that works the opposite way in our modern religious life, tends wholly and inevitably toward disintegration only, and ultimate chaos.

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ART. VI.—CHRISTIAN NURTURE.

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The fact of the total and universal depravity of our race is clearly set forth in the Bible and confirmed by all experience. The confession of David, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me," and the declaration of God that the "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," may be justly applied to every human being. And this is in virtue of our relation to our first parent. As descended from him by natural generation we are not only like him in outward form and inward spirit but we participate with him truly and properly in his very nature. We are as much the partakers of his sinful nature as we are of his blood. The whole human family was originally contained potentially in the loins of Adam, and all who have sprung from him are necessa-