

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 19.—JANUARY, 1892.

I. THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC PRINCIPLE OF THEOLOGY.¹

THE work to which special reference is here made is the product of an able and distinguished scholar, who is a theological professor in the Reformed (German) Church. He is the author of an article in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia* which clearly foreshadowed the distinctive principle of the work before us, and the moulding influence of that principle, as a constructive one, upon the whole system of theology. This assists us, in view of the fact that only the first volume of the "Institutes" has as yet been issued, in estimating the comprehensive sweep and the modifying effect of Dr. Gerhart's fundamental assumption, in relation to his theology as a whole.

It is not intended in these remarks to attempt an articulate examination of the doctrines maintained in the author's theological system, but to devote particular attention to its constructive principle. The whole system is based upon what is denominated the

¹INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. *By Emanuel V. Gerhart, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, Lancaster, Pa.* With an Introduction by Philip Schaff, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 51 East Tenth street, near Broadway. 1891. 8vo., pp. 754.

but not Calvinism. Pure Pelagianism is all form, all ritual; and teaches that salvation depends upon the form. Calvinism teaches that form is useful, must be simple, scriptural, and optional, but we are obliged to have some forms. We already have a number—the benediction, the doxology, the baptismal formula, etc., and almost every minister has his own form of service for marriages and funerals. It is only proposed to provide good ones for funerals and marriages, that all pastors may have at hand, that the services on these occasions may be conducted with solemn dignity and propriety, to the good of souls, and to the glory of God. There is a form for marriage in the old Directory, but it is not distinctly given nor fully elaborated. There is no direction given for any funeral service except that “the minister *if present*, may exhort them to consider the frailty of life and the importance of being prepared for death and eternity.”

If the Revised Directory be adopted by the Presbyteries it will be an immense gain for our church. A distinguished minister of the Northern Church said last summer to the writer, that the Book of Church Order and the Revised Directory, both of which he had read, put our church far ahead, in its administration of government and worship, of its sister north of the Potomac, and we believe he was right.

ROBERT P. KERR.

Richmond, Va.

THE GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

The Fifth Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system will be held at Toronto, Canada, in September next. The supreme courts of the various churches which constitute the Alliance have either already appointed their allotted number of delegates or will make these appointments at their approaching meetings. The Western Section of the Executive Commission, of which the Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D. D.,* is chairman, has recently been in session at Toronto, to arrange for the Council, and it is given out that present indications point to a large and representative attendance, to a cordial reception on the part of the Toronto Presbyterians, and to substantial benefits to follow greatly in advance of those hitherto realized.

In view of this, it has been thought not out of place that some ac-

*It was erroneously stated at the last Assembly that Dr. Philip Schaff held this position.

count of the present status of the Alliance and of the specific results which have come out of its previous meetings should be given in these pages. This is the more timely because it is no secret that at our last Assembly it was proposed that our Church withdraw from the Alliance. The proposition was received with surprise and the reasons assigned showed so slight an acquaintance with the history of the Alliance that the Assembly with fuller information before it voted them insufficient, and expressed its joy that so much had been done by the Alliance, appointing at the same time a committee to report to the next Assembly the names of our quota of delegates to the Toronto Council.

The present writer was able to sympathize with the hesitation of the minority, as to continuing our relations with the Alliance, for he has at times entertained grave doubts on the subject; and in connection with the Rev. Dr. R. McIlwaine, the Rev. Dr. P. H. Hoge, the Rev. S. H. Chester, he was privileged to lay before the Assembly the information which had removed his doubts. The views herein presented therefore are based not on any uncompromising advocacy of the Alliance, but upon a more or less careful examination of the "Proceedings" of the four Councils—Edinburgh, 1877; Philadelphia, 1880; Belfast, 1884; London, 1888—with the purpose of weighing accurately the criticisms so frequently made upon the actions, and also the inaction, of the Alliance, and of discovering what advantages, if any, have accrued from these sixteen years of effort. To the readers of the *QUARTERLY* outside of our own Church, it is needful to say that these views are not in any sense official, but that if the writer may judge from assurances given him, both in public and in private, on previous occasions, an appreciable number of his brethren will be found to approve them.

The first impression one receives from these "Proceedings," whatever his ultimate conclusion may be, is a sense of the great achievement it is to have held together under one constitution and with a certain measure, even a growing measure, of coöperation, sixty-six distinct churches, some large and some small, some rich and some poor, separated from one another by thousands of miles over land and sea, by hopeless differences of language, by wide varieties of ancestry, by diversities of historical traditions and by ignorance of the conditions and opportunities, each of the other. The consensus that can overcome such a dissensus must be very real and potential, even though it be undefined, and it must be conceded to be an effective bond of unity, whether for good or for ill.

I.

The criticisms made upon the Alliance proceed, for the most part, from a failure to recognize, or, if recognized, to approve of the peculiar basis on which it stands. It is an assembly, not of individuals, but of churches, through representatives elected by their supreme courts. This carried out logically would invest it with the authority of the courts composing it, but the logical sequence is overruled by practical considerations, and, instead of supreme authority, the Council has no authority, either of legislation or coercion. Its influence is moral and advisory only, even while its membership is official. Hence it is neither an Ecumenical Council, in the strict ecclesiastical sense, nor an Evangelical Alliance, for its lack of authority separates it from the former, and its official basis of membership from the latter. It is, therefore, obviously open to criticism from two opposite directions: it comes short of what an Ecumenical Council should be, and it exceeds, in a large measure, what an Evangelical Alliance should be, and those who would make it either of these are alike disappointed. To one who declines to see that between these two there is ample room for such an organization, the Alliance is and must continue to be an ecclesiastical non-descript.

This unique basis must be distinctly recognized to estimate aright the various particular criticisms passed upon the Alliance. These are by no means shallow, on any other basis they would be fatal; but on this they lose much, if not all, the force they would otherwise have.

1. The latitude of utterance on the floor of the Council has excited apprehension. Expression has from time to time been given there to opinions which seem hardly consistent with a clear and thoroughgoing devotion to the body of truth held in common by Presbyterians throughout the world. At each meeting some such instance has occurred, the most notable being of course the paper of Dr. Marcus Dods, on "How far is the Church responsible for present skepticism?" which drew forth the protest of many members of Council, and, afterwards, in connection with a certain sermon of his, led to the movement to vacate his chair in the Free Church College, Glasgow, which movement, however, failed. Such utterances are felt to convey a wrong impression as to the state of opinion in the churches represented in the Alliance, and to impair very largely the value of the meetings of the Council.

Yet, on the basis of the Alliance, utterances like these cannot be excluded, for the reason that the Council has no choice as to its members, and so only very slight control of their utterances. They sit

the official representatives of the churches that appoint them, and with these churches, rather than with the Alliance, lies the responsibility of what they say. The Council cannot exercise judicial functions. It is composed of those delegates which the various churches choose, and if the churches are satisfied the Council must in the nature of the case be satisfied also. However individual utterances may be deprecated, the Council cannot refuse recognition to the accredited representative of any church holding membership in the Alliance. Dr. Caven expressed the true view when, speaking on this subject, he said at London:—

“I have no charge of unsoundness against any man of this Alliance, or against any brother sitting here. The Council would entirely go beyond its province if it assumed to sit in judgment in that way upon any one taking part in its proceedings. At the same time, it becomes our duty to speak out distinctly our sentiments in regard to the great topics before us.”

Whatever danger may attend this latitude of expression is, to a great extent, overcome by the readiness of the great body of delegates to “speak out distinctly.” The paper of Dr. Dods drew forth the emphatic dissent of members from Ireland, Scotland, China, and America, and the Rev. John McEwan, of Edinburgh, representing the Free Church, said,

“He would like the Council distinctly to understand that the paper to which they had listened, so far as his knowledge went—and it was a pretty extensive knowledge of the Free Church—did not touch any sympathetic chord in any large number of the people of that church in Scotland.”

Dr. Bannerman, of Perth, frankly admitted that his friend, Dr. Dods, had spoken unguardedly, and had laid himself open to misconstruction, claiming that he had spoken only from the standpoint of practical apologetics. Such vigorous disavowals and such careful apologies go very far to break the force of utterances that are out of harmony with the general belief of Presbyterian churches.

At the same time, it ought to be very frankly stated that the committee charged with the selection of speakers can, to a great extent, relieve this difficulty by confining appointments to those men who most adequately represent the views prevailing in their respective churches. The area of selection is large; the number to be selected is comparatively small, and it is quite unnecessary to single out men whose claim to distinction is that they are not in sympathy with the views prevailing in their churches. This would be no infringement of personal rights, would save apologies, explanations and repudia-

tions, and would give to the formal papers a comparatively representative character.

2. The degrees of doctrinal development represented in the Council are various. The constitution declares that any church organized on Presbyterian principles, which holds the supreme authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in matters of faith and morals, and whose creed is in harmony with the consensus of the Reformed Confessions, shall be eligible for admission into the Alliance. These Reformed Confessions are: the Gallican, 1559; the Belgic, 1561; the Heidelberg, 1563; the second Helvetic, 1566; the Canons of Dort, 1619; the Westminster, 1647; the Waldensian, 1655; the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, 1823; the Free Evangelical Church of the Canton de Vaud, 1847; the Union of the Evangelical Churches of France, 1849; the Free Christian Church in Italy, 1870; the Spanish Christian Church, 1872; the Free Church of Neuchâtel, 1874; the National Church of the Canton de Vaud, 1874; the Cumberland Presbyterian, 1883; the Evangelical Syrian, 1862. The Westminster Standards are represented in thirty-six of the sixty-six churches of the Alliance, and these constitute its real strength, yet no one symbol is definitively adopted. The consensus of them all is the basis of the Alliance, and even this is modified by the differences existing in the mode of subscription; some churches, like the Evangelical Reformed of Paris, requiring applicants for membership to declare, in the presence of two members of presbytery and one member of the church, their adherence to the Confession, and others requiring this only of ministers and office-bearers.

The doctrinal basis of the Alliance, therefore, is not that symmetrical system with which we are familiar; if it had been, nearly one-half of the churches would have been excluded. It is perhaps an open question whether a Westminster-Belgic-Helvetic-Dort basis would not yield in some particulars more satisfactory results, but it is quite certain that such a basis would have made other desirable results unattainable; and, choosing the latter rather than the former, the fact is that the Alliance is not constituted on this ample basis. We must therefore not expect to find even general concurrence in the conclusion to which our system, so thoroughly wrought out, has led us, and we must be careful to distinguish between the corollaries which to us are clearly demonstrated and the first principles in which alone we may look for unanimity. On the other hand, as the differences among these Confessions are differences only of the degree in which the one system is developed, we may reasonably expect that views which cannot be reconciled with

the system shall be excluded altogether, or else tolerated as the crudities of one who in spite of them is making progress towards the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. On a consensus less than this, we could not properly exclude Methodists, or Episcopalians, or Lutherans, and would cover the ground so well occupied by the Evangelical Alliance; on a consensus larger than this we could not include some of the churches which feel most keenly the need of the Alliance. We sacrifice nothing of our precious heritage in indicating the extent in which others share it, while they gain much by fraternal contact with the larger and fuller faith we hold.

This is very aptly expressed by Dr. Mathews in a recent address before the Irish General Assembly, in which he said:

“He did not know how many colors or shades of color artists had discovered in the natural world, but he knew that in the Presbyterian world, while blue was the one distinctive color, there were some eighty different shades. Of course some of these shades were deep as the blue of that banner which had waved at Drumclog, while others there might look as if, though guaranteed to be fast color, they had been in the wash-tub, and were considerably the worse for the wetting. Still they were all blue—all Presbyterian—all recognized as brethren in the faith. Now, of course, it might be that some of those deeper shades could stand a little toning down, and some of the paler ones would be the better for a toning up, but the Alliance did not hold itself charged with effecting any such mixing. That was left to each church to do for itself.”

It is on this basis that various continental churches are eligible to membership in the Council. Although several of them are descended historically from churches prominent in the Reformation era, their present symbols lack the fulness which we might expect them to show, and hardly go beyond the merely evangelical basis. Thus the Independent Evangelical Church of Neuchâtel utters its Confession of Faith in the following words:

“Faithful to the holy truth which the apostles preached and the reformers have restored to light, the Evangelical Church of Neuchâtel acknowledges as the only source and rule of its faith the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament, and proclaims with all Christian churches, the great truths of salvation contained in the creed called the Apostles’ Creed: ‘We believe in God the Father, who has saved us by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our only Lord, and who regenerates us by the Holy Spirit; and we confess this faith by the use of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper, in obedience to the commandments of the Lord.’”

Compared with the Westminster Confession this is a very meagre outline, yet it is enough to bring it within the consensus of the Reformed confessions and with its Presbyterian system to secure it a place in the

Alliance. It is sufficient to form a common standing-ground, while the eagerness with which some of these continental churches embrace the opportunity to enter the Alliance shows that they instinctively recognize their affinity with us, and that they are in an open frame of mind to receive whatever of development, of sympathy and of practical assistance we can give them. What that is will appear hereafter in considering the positive results of the Alliance.

Further, it is on this basis that churches which either have revised or are in process of revising their symbols continue within the Alliance. If their revision does not impair their harmony with the consensus of the Reformed confessions, the Alliance as such is not thereby disturbed. Indeed the right of any church to revise its standards is implied in the Reformed conception of creeds and confessions. These are held to be the human expressions of the truth of Scripture, and like all things human, to be liable to error and open to improvement. The charge of symbolatry is never brought against the Reformed Churches as such by any open-minded and well-informed opponent, however vigorously he may dissent from the system of doctrine; and in any process of revision the question is conceded by all competent disputants to be not whether a revision is theoretically possible, but whether it is practically desirable. The proposition to revise standards, however venerable, cannot of itself be construed as involving defection from the truth, for on that principle the Church would never have proceeded beyond the Apostles' Creed; and conversely a refusal to revise cannot be held to indicate indifference to modern thought or insensibility to the demands of the historic creeds upon modern consciences, but rather a genuine satisfaction with these as expressions of our conception of divine truth, however mysterious that truth may be. Upon this mutual understanding churches may retain or revise their standards without altering their relations to one another in the Alliance, provided always that the limits of the consensus are observed.

Once more, it is on this basis that, after nine years of waiting, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was at last admitted to the Alliance at Belfast in 1884. Its form of government is Presbyterian, but its creed is a revision of the Westminster standards, of which during the debate at Belfast, Dr. Charteris, of Edinburgh, said:

“The presentation of the doctrine of God's government in the Cumberland document seems to me to be a failure in definition. The intention to avoid fatalism is obvious, and excellent; but it is impossible that any logical mind can be satisfied with the attempted compromise between the doctrines of divine sovereignty and

human responsibility. It is not Arminianism, but neither is it Calvinism, and yet it involves all the difficulties of both."

The Cumberland Church was admitted, because it adopted the constitution of the Alliance and made formal application for admission. It was held that as the Alliance had no judicial functions, the responsibility of deciding whether the Cumberland Confession was in harmony with the Reformed consensus must rest with the applicant. This was admirably stated by Dr. John S. Moore, of Texas:

"The responsibility is upon them, as in the case of an individual applying for admission to the Church. That is the only ground upon which I support them. And now, let me indicate the reason why I can vote upon this ground. This Council, instead of using its moral influence, its mighty intellectual and spiritual power, for depressing doctrine, becomes a mighty intellectual and moral power for elevating the standard of doctrine and bringing these Cumberland Presbyterians into harmony with the consensus of the Reformed Churches."

And as if to make the ground of admission the more distinct, the report of the committee, which qualified the recommendation with the words "without pronouncing any judgment on the church's revision of the Westminster Confession and of the Shorter Catechism," was, on motion of Dr. Chambers, of the Reformed Church, amended by substituting for these words the very emphatic phrase "without approving of the church's revision of the Westminster Confession," etc.

It is, therefore, to be regretted that at the last meeting of the Cumberland General Assembly, in answer to a proposition of the General Assembly of the North to formulate a consensus creed, the following resolution was adopted:

'1. That, while the Cumberland Presbyterian Church holds the 'Presbyterian system,' it does not accept the 'Westminster Confession' as its creed.'

This is followed by other resolutions, appointing a committee to enter into correspondence with a view to the consideration and preparation of a short creed, to be used as the common creed of the Reformed Churches throughout the world, etc., . . . provided that nothing in the creed to be thus prepared shall conflict with the Confession of Faith of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

It is to be hoped that this disavowal of the Westminster Confession indicates no lessening sympathy with the consensus of the Reformed Churches. Of that consensus the Westminster Standards are a thorough and a necessary development, and it will be a difficult task to maintain with sincerity the one while with equal sincerity disavow-

ing the other. It is to be hoped that our Cumberland brethren have not mistaken the necessary implications of the consensus.

The recognition by the Alliance of the various degrees of development in the Reformed theology represented by the different creeds will doubtless prove a great blessing, unless, with a desire to please certain churches, the doctrines likely to call forth their dissent are excluded from discussion. If papers like Dr. Stuart Robinson's, at Edinburgh, on "The Churchliness of Calvinism," or like that of Dr. Cairns and Dr. Hodge at Philadelphia, on "The Vicarious Sacrifice of Christ," are hereafter barred, the result of extending the privileges of the Alliance will be disastrous, and it will soon become theologically colorless, for its vitality lies in its strong and emphatic presentation of the distinctive Reformed theology.

3. The question of a consensus creed very naturally took first place in the programmes of the Councils until the very definite conclusion reached at Belfast made further consideration needless.

At Edinburgh Dr. Schaff read a paper on the general subject, in which he said:

"The desirability of a common doctrinal bond of union among the Reformed Churches is likewise apparent. But the expediency of such a work at the present time is, to say the least, doubtful."

Dr. W. Krafft, of Bonn, submitted an outline in thirty-one articles, supporting each article by references to one or more of the Reformed Confessions, and after discussion, Mr. Taylor Innes offered a resolution, which was adopted, raising a committee to report to the next Council "what are the existing creeds and confessions represented in the Alliance; what are the existing formulas of subscription; how far individual adherence to these has been required from ministers, office-bearers and private members; and the Council enjoined the committee in submitting their report not to accompany it either with any comparative estimate of these creeds and regulations, or with any critical remarks upon their respective value, expediency or efficiency." This report, extending over one hundred and fifty pages, was laid before the Philadelphia Council, and a new committee was appointed, with Dr. Cairns as chairman, to consider the desirableness of defining the consensus of the Reformed confessions. At Belfast this committee reported:

I. It is not indispensable to the Alliance, as an organization, that the consensus should, at present, be further defined.

II. The committee fully grants that there are advantages which the defining of

the consensus would secure, as working out the ends for which the organization exists.

III. The advantages which might arise from a satisfactory definition of the consensus seem to the committee, for the present, outweighed by its risks and difficulties."

And the motion of Principal Caven was adopted, viz:

"That without committing itself to all the reasonings by which the report reaches its conclusions, the Council adopt as its finding the conclusion to which it comes, viz.: That it is inexpedient at present to attempt a definition of the consensus of the Reformed Churches."

This conclusion was so generally approved that an explanatory motion, offered by Dr. Calderwood, that the Council should declare its conviction that a formal statement of the consensus of the Reformed creeds would render a great service to the cause of Christian truth, was voted down, the Council declining to commit itself even to this position. At London the subject was not opened at all, and among the various types of opinion in the Alliance to-day, there is substantial agreement that the consensus must, for the present, be left undefined.

This is the more particularly adverted to because at our last Assembly it was asserted that the Alliance had undertaken to formulate the consensus, and that our Church would ere long find herself confronted with a double creed. The assertion was so unexpected that it was not possible to produce at once the documentary evidence to show its groundlessness: the foregoing is perhaps sufficient for the purpose.

The only excuse for an assertion so wide of the truth lay in the invitation of the General Assembly of the Northern Church to the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system, to prepare a short creed containing the essential articles of the Westminster Confession, to be used as the common creed of these churches, not as a substitute for the creed of any particular denomination.¹ The Alliance, however, is not to be held chargeable with the actions of any one or more of the

¹The letter addressed to our Assembly and the supreme courts of other Reformed Churches, contained the following explicit paragraph:

"Into the question of the advisability of a consensus creed, the Committee of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, do not feel called upon to enter, but prefer to leave its consideration to the several churches interested, or to the representative committee which they may respectively appoint. It is understood, however, that the creed which may be formulated by the labors of the joint consensus committee will have no binding force in any of the Presbyterian or Reformed Churches, except as first submitted to and approved by the judicatory or judicatories in whom such power of approval is vested by the laws of these churches respectively."

churches which compose it, and for our Church the matter ended when our Assembly announced that we are not prepared to unite in forming a consensus creed.

These instances are sufficient to illustrate the statement made in the outset, that it is no inconsiderable achievement to have held together the various churches represented in the Alliance for as many as sixteen years. Delicate relations like these are easily disarranged. It would not require a Boanerges to wreck the usefulness of the Alliance; and with the most generous forbearance in non-essentials, and the most judicious solution of the various difficulties as they arise the Alliance must for some time yet continue to lead a precarious existence.

II.

The results of these sixteen years of united effort, are, if estimated aright, enough in themselves to lead the churches to whatever of care and sacrifice are necessary to promote the future efficiency of the Alliance. Passing by the general and, if one may so say, the sentimental considerations, the following definite and substantial results are traceable to the Alliance:

1 An estimate approximately correct of the strength and prevalence of Presbyterianism. Our churches, though one in faith and order, have lived hitherto in provincial ignorance of each other and of the power and influence that was latent within them. The writer readily recalls the eagerness with which in his early ministry he sought in vain for some information concerning ecumenic Presbyterianism. That search need no longer be in vain. The matter of statistics engaged the attention of each Council, until at London Dr. Mathews presented a report, covering two hundred and fifty pages, and dealing with the statistics of churches, of contributions, of creeds, of collegiate institutions, of theological faculties, of mission fields and agencies, of philanthropic effort and of literary publications. It is doubtful if ever a document of greater value was laid before any Council. Its figures and lists and columns are eloquent, and the results it summarizes are massive. It shows that of presbyteries there are in the United Kingdom, 284; in Europe, 383; in America, 653; of pastoral charges in the United Kingdom, 5,181; in Europe, 4,844; in America, 14,839; of separate congregations in the United Kingdom, 5,768; in Europe, 4,284; in America, 13,379; of ministers in the United Kingdom, 4,783; in Europe, 5,527; in America, 11,906; of licentiates and students in the United Kingdom, 1,548; in Europe, 574; in America, 3,040; of

communicants in the United Kingdom, 1,394,476; in Europe, 533,934; in America, 1,561,640; of Sabbath-school attendance in the United Kingdom, 951,774; in Europe, 375,482; in America, 1,413,890. Adding to these the figures for Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the western islands, the totals are: Churches, 81; presbyteries, 1,406; pastoral charges, 25,787; separate congregations, 25,601; ministers, 23,077; licentiates and students, 5,426; communicants, 3,886,680; Sabbath-school attendance, 2,846,517. A supplementary estimate by Rev. W. H. Roberts, D. D., places the total of Presbyterian adherents at 20,198,500.

The contributions, though the returns are more incomplete, show for congregational expenses, including ministers' salaries, \$20,455,800; for (what we would call) the Invalid Fund, \$531,245; for Home Missions, \$949,210; for Church and Manse Erection, \$1,111,755; for Publication and Education, \$880,810; for Foreign Missions, \$2,160,950—a total of \$29,550,980.

This report is published in separate form, and is well worth careful study. It is an effective reply to the charge that Presbyterianism is insular or provincial, and a healthy rebuke to that spirit which sees within its own ecclesiastical boundaries the one and only Presbyterian Church. Dr. Mathews has laid all the churches under very deep obligations for his unremitting labors in this direction.

2. New life and hope to the churches on the European continent. Those were pathetic words spoken at London by Dr. Tollin, of the French Reformed Church at Magdeburg:

“We are dying out, though, because we have no accessions. The French are becoming German; the Reformed, Lutheran. We felt it an earnest need of our hearts to shake hands with the twenty millions of Reformed, and to cry to you, *Morturi te solutamus*. In death we are still one with you; one living, loving, believing, hoping, triumphing church of the Saviour who died for us and rose again. Amen.”

This is an extreme case, but it emphasizes the difficulties under which our brethren in Europe are struggling. From nearly every one come words of discouragement. The lands which tourists visit in curiosity and for information present, in spiritual things, a dark picture. The ever-present influence of Romanism, the chill of Rationalism, the want of a well-kept Sabbath, the interference of the various governments, the backwardness of the people in Christian effort, the want of a Christian literature, all conspire to make the work of the Reformed Churches a task which we can hardly appreciate. To the help

of these churches—weak in numbers, weak in resources and often weak in faith—we who are strong are called. It is sustentation work on an ecumenical scale. It is especially a providential opening for those who cannot endorse Foreign Missions, for these are not heathen to be converted, but brethren of like precious faith, to be upheld as they struggle against tremendous odds for Christ and for his church.

The Alliance has responded to this call. It has admitted on an equal footing with churches numbering hundreds of thousands of members, continental churches, such as the Free Evangelical of Geneva, with 478 members; the Free Evangelical of Germany, with 440; the Greek Evangelical, with 40 members; it has recognized *bounds* in Germany where it could not recognize synods and presbyteries; it has admitted from East Friesland the “coetus” of Emden, founded by Lasco in 1544; it has raised \$67,000 to supplement the meagre salaries of the Waldensian pastors, and \$25,000 for the Home Mission, Church Erection and Publication work of the churches in Bohemia and Moravia; and it has appointed a committee in two sections to take in charge this work on the European Continent and devise measures for its extension.

3. The new policy of coöperation in Foreign Missions. The statistics show that our churches have in the foreign field 512 foreign and 346 native ministers, with 280 licentiates, 572 other foreign and 3,669 native agents; 283,054 baptized persons and adherents, 55,610 communicants; 1042 churches and congregations; 1728 schools with 54,000 pupils; 84 high schools, colleges and seminaries with 6,603 students.

But under independent action the work is often duplicated and the effort is wasted. India is an illustration of this, for thirteen or fourteen different Presbyterian agencies are at work there, making of course as many different native Hindu churches, while these united would form a church with 229 congregations, 11,503 native communicants and 53 native pastors.

It is not surprising therefore that the first Council at once took up the question of coöperation on the foreign field. The steps by which it was reached during successive meetings cannot be recited here, further than to note that the plan outlined by our honored secretaries, Drs. J. Leighton Wilson and M. H. Houston, was ultimately adopted. At London the following was unanimously adopted:

“WHEREAS, previous meetings of this Council have approved of the general principle of the organic union and independence of the church in the mission-

field; and whereas four propositions embodying this general principle have been submitted to the supreme courts of the allied churches,¹ and have been approved of by them; resolved, that this Council rejoices that this great principle may be considered as unanimously accepted, and that it only remains for the allied churches to carry out the principle in the management of their various missions."

What relief this will afford to discord, to rivalry and to the waste of men, money and labor; what harmony of plans in the selection of locations, in the appointment of men, in the use of the press, will ensue; what recognition it will give to the inalienable rights of native churches and to their national characteristics, we at home may perhaps but dimly appreciate, but to the missionaries in the foreign field the Alliance will have proven its right to a place in history if it accomplishes nothing more. This policy—coöperation, confederation, incorporation—has already been more or less successfully adopted in work in Brazil, Japan, South Africa, China, Trinidad and the New Hebrides.

4. The realization of the scriptural unity of the church. This can only be briefly adverted to, for its proper treatment is a separate undertaking. The Master prayed that his own might all be one, and yet there is no word of his more sadly perverted, none made to sanction more ruthless sacrifices of principle and of priceless history, none used to justify more heartless combinations of men in various external unions, each of which aspires to be known as *the church*.

Union is not unity. Scriptural unity is not found in a human organization which for the sake of numbers tolerates within its fold all varieties of belief, of misbelief, and of unbelief, and which seeks to

¹ The American form of these notable propositions is as follows:

"1. It is in the highest degree desirable that mission churches should be encouraged to become independent of the home churches; *i. e.*, self-supporting and self-governing.

"2. It is desirable that churches organized under Presbyterian order, and holding the Reformed faith, should be placed under a Presbytery within territorial boundaries, suitable for effective government, and that such Presbytery, wherever constituted, should, as far as practicable, include all the Presbyterian churches within the bounds, by whatever branches of the European or American churches originated.

"3. In the infancy of the native church, it is most desirable that the foreign missionaries should be associated with the Presbytery, either as advisers only, or in some closer relation.

"4. It is undesirable that the Presbyteries of native churches should be represented in supreme courts at home, the development and full organization of independent churches being what is to be arrived at, whether these are founded by a single foreign church or by two or more such churches."

compensate for this hollowness by dignifying with apostolic functions its ministry and imposing a rigidly uniform worship on its adherents. Scriptural unity is the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, and is therefore a doctrinal unity, based on what men believe in common concerning Jesus and his salvation. It is attained as men leave behind the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to perfection, and as they realize one body, one Spirit, one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. It is never fully realized amid the infirmities of this present world, but it can be approximately realized; and as the Reformed symbols mark perhaps the highest reach of man in his progress towards the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, they offer the scriptural basis on which that unity may be begun—but begun only, for only in the unseen and eternal beyond will the church of God attain to this its true unity.

W. S. PLUMER BRYAN.

Asheville, N. C.