

shine. "An' after it begun to snow we could n't see nothin' anyhow, partic'larly when everything was all covered up."

"Well," added Mrs. Lecks in conclusion, "as we did n't see the shed, it's a comfort to think there was reasons for it, and that we are not born fools."

It was now growing dark, and but few further communications took place through the little tunnel.

"Before we get ready to go to sleep," said Mrs. Aleshine, "for, havin' no candles, I guess we won't sit up late, had n't we better rig up some kind of a little sled to put in that hole, with strings at both ends, so that we kin send in mustard-plasters and peppermint to them poor people if they happen to be sick in the night?"

This little project was not considered necessary, and after receiving assurances from the gentleman on the other side that he would be able to keep his party warm until morning, we bade each other good-night, and after hav-

ing replenished the fire, I got into the stage, where my companions had already established themselves in their corners. I slept very little, while I frequently went out to attend to the fire, and my mind was racked by the most serious apprehensions. Our food was nearly gone, and if relief did not come to us very soon I could see nothing but a slow death before us, and, so far as I could imagine, there was no more reason to expect succor on the following day than there had been on the one just passed. Where were the men to be found who could cut a road to us through those miles of snow-drifts?

Very little was said during the night by my companions, but I am sure that they felt the seriousness of our situation, and that their slumbers were broken and unrefreshing. If there had been anything to do Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine would have been cheered up by the prospect of doing it: but we all felt that there was nothing we could do.

: (To be continued.)

Frank R. Stockton.

## THE UNITED CHURCHES OF THE UNITED STATES. NO. II.

### A REVIEW OF THE CENTURY LETTERS ON CHRISTIAN UNITY.



THE readers of THE CENTURY will remember that the article published in THE CENTURY for Nov., 1885, entitled "The United Churches of the United States" was in no sense representative of denominational views, as held in any church or party, but was simply an independent survey of all Christian denominations with their existing grounds of organic unity in doctrine, polity, and worship. The essay was written with no thought whatever of the criticism which has been converged upon it in these pages by champions of the different churches. It has been under discussion for some months past, until nearly all the interested parties have been fully heard. In now offering a brief reply, I might regret the seeming odds of a battle with so many giants at once, did I not hope to stay out of the battle as much as possible, and keep to the main question, in which alone the public can be interested. A mere controversy on Christian unity would indeed be but a sorry absurdity.

As it has been strangely assumed that the essay put forth some new-made scheme of denominational union, in particular a formal coalition on the basis of the Anglican prayer-

book, I beg to recall with emphasis my introductory statement :

*"We are not yet ready for such schemes, and it would only be a waste of time to discuss them. The first lesson to be learned is that the unification of the American churches, if it is ever to come at all, cannot be precipitated by platforms, coalitions, compromises, in short by any mere external association of the different denominations, which leaves them still without internal modification and vital connection, as true and living branches of the Vine of Christ."*

In pursuance of this statement, the former paper was a mere historical sketch of the unconscious growth of leading American churches towards organic likeness and oneness, as seen especially in their liturgical communion. The plain facts presented in that sketch have not been denied by any of the distinguished respondents, and all the objections to some supposed liturgical scheme of union have, therefore, been but so many formidable javelins hurled into the air. The position taken was briefly this: Our chief historical churches have long been reacting towards the Protestant catholicism expressed in the English prayer-book. That position has not even been assailed or questioned. Here the case might rest, if the aim had been to succeed in an argument rather than to arrive at the truth.

But while the critics of the essay have seemed

somewhat to differ from it, they have much more largely agreed with it, and with one another, and have thus revealed a remarkable consensus of opinions, upon which we may now build up a constructive argument for the continued growth of church unity in the future. To this task the present paper is mainly devoted. If it shall be performed even imperfectly, the protracted discussion will not have been in vain.

We have seen that the various ecclesiastical and quasi-ecclesiastical or pseudo-ecclesiastical bodies of which our American Christianity is composed may be studied in three general groups or classes, according to the principles prevailing in their structure: The *Episcopal*, including the Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Protestant Episcopal churches; the *Presbyterial*, including the Lutheran, Reformed, and Presbyterian churches; the *Congregational*, including the Baptist, Orthodox, and Unitarian churches. Representative divines in each group have spoken through these columns on the question of Christian union or church unity, and thus furnished the materials for a full comparison of views. Let us take them in the order which we have adopted.

#### EPISCOPALIAN OPINIONS.

THE Right Rev. Bishop Dudley and the Rev. Dr. J. H. Hopkins, of the *Protestant Episcopal Church*, have treated the essay with great kindness, justice, and clearness. They both admit substantially its general conclusions—that full dogmatic agreement is still a long way off, and that the liturgical fusion, which has begun, is but a desirable first step towards true church unity. But, as to the matter of polity, they consistently hold that Episcopacy affords the only basis or form of organic oneness. Against this opinion will be urged several considerations:

*First.* That forms of doctrine and worship, as well as polity, are ecclesiastical elements affording grounds or germs of organic unity, and are much more important than any mere polity, though it were imagined to be of the most perfect Episcopal form.

*Second.* That as a matter of fact the Episcopal polity, though common to the Greek, Roman, and Anglican churches, is but little known in the Protestant churches of Europe and America.

*Third.* That Presbytery, rather than Episcopacy, is the one polity which by common consent has continued historically, from the apostles' time until the present day, in all the chief churches of Christendom, both Catholic and Protestant.

*Fourth.* That the claim to an Apostolate,

as maintained in these letters, is not allowed by other Protestant churches, nor by the Roman Catholic Church, and is practically viewed by both as involving organized schism rather than organic unity.

*Fifth.* That instead of seeking a remote alliance with the Greek and Latin churches, it were better to begin with some organic connection of the kindred English-speaking Protestant churches, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopal, and on the basis of their common Anglo-Saxon Christianity to aim at the more general unity of Christendom.

Whether these views be right or wrong, they are existing matters of opinion which must enter into the present discussion, as may appear hereafter. It is a very pleasing feature of both of these letters that they breathe an earnest Christian desire and hope of ultimate church unity.

The Rev. Dr. George R. Crooks, of the *Methodist Episcopal Church*, also writes in a union spirit and is in accord with the essay on some essential points, with differences which seem mainly verbal. Mistaking the word organic, as hitherto defined and used, he applies it to that figurative organism or mystical body of Christ in which all true Christians are joined as members, rather than to those ecclesiastical organizations or organized churches which are not one, but many, and more or less hostile to each other. Organic oneness, in the former sense of one Christian body, is indeed an established fact, and happily a fact that goes without the saying in these papers, since they would scarcely be possible but for its tacit assumption; but organic oneness, in the common sense of one church organization, is unhappily not a fact; and though such unity be not deemed vital or fundamental, yet it may be important, if not indispensable, as will hereafter be shown. Doctor Crooks also mistakes the term Catholic for "Roman Catholic," and is thereby led into a view of the relations of Protestantism and Catholicism which may be modified by one or two suggestions.

*First.* True Catholicism, if defined to be historic Christianity as freed from Roman errors, is not inconsistent with "New Testament Christianity," but is the choicest fruit of its own divine development in history. The Protestants themselves, as their name implies, did not wholly renounce it; nor can we renounce it, unless we are ready for the frightful theory that during fifteen centuries from the apostles' time until the Reformation there was no church or Providence, but only one long reign of sin and Satan.

*Second.* Such Catholic Christianity is in fact more or less fully retained by Protestant churches in their forms of doctrine, polity, and

worship, which are not to be found clearly set forth in the New Testament, but are very largely an outgrowth from it in church history under divine Providence. The Methodist Church, for example, has a modified episcopate, liturgy, and articles, which it inherited directly from the Church of England, remotely from the Church of Rome, though without other accompanying dogmas held in those churches.

*Third.* The Protestant body in its recoil from Romanism may have gone too far away from Catholicism into such extremes as sectarianism, rationalism, and revivalism; but a healthy reaction has already begun, as we have shown, in regard to the historic liturgy, and it may yet extend to the other diseases or abuses of Protestantism, until a true church unity shall have taken the place of our sectarianism, and our latest rationalism at length give way to the vindicated Catholic faith.

*Fourth.* The Roman Church and the chief Protestant churches, notwithstanding their wide differences, rest primarily upon the same Holy Scriptures and share largely the same Catholic Christianity; and it is at least conceivable that in the lapse of time, by the transmuting force of American institutions, and under the pressure of common dangers, they may be brought slowly together from their present extremes, having shed their respective errors until at last they join in the one essential faith of Protestant Catholicism as the full flower of New Testament Christianity. Professor Crooks himself argues very forcibly that the chief Roman dogma of sacerdotal supremacy is doomed to die out, both in Church and State, in the wake of political causes; and he may thus refute his own imaginary picture of an immediate crude coalition of "Romanists and Protestants in one ecclesiastical government."

*Fifth.* The English liturgy, as we have seen, affords the grounds and germs of such a gradual coalescence of Protestant with Catholic Christianity in the American churches; and when the Methodist Episcopal Church completes its reaction with the rest, the Wesleyan prayer-book, instead of lying a nullity, will serve to bring it into more visible communion and organic connection with the other great historic churches of Christendom.

Dr. Crooks, as a representative of episcopacy without apostolical succession, finds no organic bond between the Greek, Latin, and Anglican churches, but hopes for some closer union of the Protestant churches, to be reached by recognizing their essential spiritual unity as a divine fact, by acknowledging one another's churchly standing in their intercourse, and by coming into more organic coöperation for the great ends of their common Christianity.

#### PRESBYTERIAN OPINIONS.

THE two representatives of the *Presbyterian Church* have reviewed the essay from different standpoints. The late Dr. Archibald Alexander Hodge, as if with a prophetic utterance, and in an elevated Christian tone befitting the theme, discussed the doctrine of the invisible Catholic Church, and set forth in glowing terms its unbroken unity, as including not merely all true believers on earth, but the whole company of the redeemed in heaven. The surviving disputants may well recognize such doctrine as common ground, while still taking to themselves the reproach that the visible church as yet so little reflects the glorious oneness of the church invisible. Unhappily, our existing denominations cannot be viewed merely as so many harmonious groups of organized churches, or legitimate varieties of church organization, dwelling together in manifest unity. Having been largely produced by warring sects and factions, excommunicating and unchurching one another, they exhibit an apparent dismemberment of the very body of Christ, which has become the great flagrant scandal of our age and country, and has made it the plain duty as well as impulse of all Christian people to seek for more outward organic unity, as well as to hail the providential signs of its inward growth and expression. In any other view, we could only adjourn our questions of doctrine to the millennium, and wait until we may all join in the perfect liturgy of heaven. Practically, indeed, this is the course taken by some extremists who would consecrate mere denominationalism, extenuate sectarianism, and make schism itself chronic, in the face of their own false dormant ideal of an invisible Catholic Church.

In contrast with such errors, Dr. Hodge has impressively shown that the various church organizations, through the indwelling Spirit, will yet grow together toward a true organic unity, consistent with due variety, as but so many members in the one mystical body of Christ. And the latter part of his letter refers to such unity in the three organic spheres of doctrine, polity, and worship. As to the first, his hopeful view of the dogmatic consensus of Protestant Trinitarian churches is a most valuable and timely contribution to the general argument for church unity, and would be only more complete could it include, on the basis of a common American Christianity, those Unitarian churches which express the flower of Puritan culture, as well as that great Roman Catholic Church which is already in the lead on such social questions as marriage, temperance, education, and property. As to the second opinion, that unity in polity would be

more difficult than unity in dogma, I have nothing to add to the former paper, except what may be found in the sequel. As to the third, it may be said that the argument from numbers against the growth of liturgical communion, like most statistical arguments, can be used on both sides of the question, and will probably be met from the other side by such answers as the following :

*First.* That the liturgical churches of Christendom outnumber in membership the non-liturgical churches as three or four to one.

*Second.* That in this country it is the least ecclesiastical denominations, the evanescent sects, that are without liturgical tendencies, as they are also crude in their doctrine and polity; while only the historical churches, of European origin, can yield the proper data of the church problem, and these are vitally connected with the contents of the English liturgy in a ratio of forty or fifty to one. Moreover, as we have seen, they are already, knowingly or unknowingly, resuming elements and portions of that liturgy in their worship, and logically tend to it as the best devotional formulary of Catholic and Protestant Christianity.

This starts the only question in the other letter demanding attention. In meeting it, I must reluctantly forsake, for the moment, an independent position, and come down to the denominational ground which the critic has taken. The Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby, declaring himself an out-and-out Presbyterian, offers seven objections to the prayer-book as received opinions in the Presbyterian Church. With due respect, I am obliged to say that not one of them has any foundation in the recognized standards of that body. My replies must be brief.

*First.* The Directory for Public Worship (ch. v.) does not "object to the stereotyped prayer, however excellent," but does object to "mean, irregular, or extravagant effusions, as a disgrace of Divine service." Such effusions, becoming themselves stereotyped, are worse than any "open-eyed reading of prayer," and in fact sometimes open the eyes of the unhappy listeners.

*Second.* The Larger Catechism (Q. 186-188) does not object to the invocation, peroration, and well-ordered brief petitions which it finds in the Lord's Prayer as being "too artificial and tending to a mechanical mode of worship"; but it does prescribe the right use of that liturgical form and didactic model of common prayer. To repeat it at least once in each public office is not treating it "as a mere magical formula," but is keeping strictly within the scriptural rubric, When ye pray, say Our Father.

*Third.* The Shorter Catechism (Q. 99) also

enjoins the whole word of God as a rule of prayer; and if therefore any "Presbyterians object to the Litany *in toto* as putting the believer far off from God and calling on Him to spare him as a miserable sinner," they simply object with the Pharisee to the very words of the contrite Publican, as well as to the penitential prayers of priest and people weeping between the porch and the altar. If they object to its devout repetitions as "unmeaning," they must object to the like repetitions in Holy Scripture. If they could object to its solemn pleadings and tender entreaties and manifold intercessions as "having no feature suited to the child of God or joint heir with Christ," they would object to the supplications of the prophets and apostles themselves. But before they object to its scriptural petition against sudden death as "a relic of Romanism," they should consult the Roman original (*a subitanea et improvisa morte*) or the Anglo-Saxon version (*a subita et eterna morte*). They might also profitably consider the beams in their own extempore litanies, the "irreverent," the "sarcastic," the "tedious prayers," etc., of which that accomplished Presbyterian divine, Dr. Samuel Miller, speaks in his useful treatise.

*Fourth.* The Form of Government (ch. iii. v.) does not "hold that all believers are priests" in the sense of being ministers, or that "a minister is only an ordained ruler and leader of the people, with no more authority to pronounce absolution upon the penitent than any one who is not a minister"; but it does most plainly distinguish him from the mere representatives of the people as a minister of Christ and ambassador from God, declaring pardon in Christ's stead. The Confession also (ch. xxx.) names among his high functions, "power to open the kingdom of heaven unto penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require." Consistently with such teaching, the declarative Absolution, prefixed to the English daily service, is simply an authoritative proclamation of the Gospel, made solemn and direct by a special act of worship on the part both of minister and people. If any Presbyterians are thoughtless enough to object to that formula as "a remnant of the Roman Absolution," they should be informed that its very motive was as Protestant as its meaning; that it was first suggested by Calvin himself; that it was taken very largely from a Calvinistic liturgy; and that it was alternatively called the Absolution or Remission of sins, in deference to Puritan scruples against a word of Popish sound.

*Fifth.* The Confession of Faith (ch. xxviii.) does not "abhor the doctrine of baptismal regeneration" as rightly stated, but does de-

clare it a "great sin to condemn this ordinance," guards carefully against the abuse of it, and defines it as a "sign and seal of regeneration even unto infants" (Q. 177). And the Baptismal Offices merely express the substantial sense of this definition in strong liturgical terms. Any Presbyterians who abhor such doctrine may find it discreetly maintained by that saintly man, the late Dr. Archibald Alexander, in the second chapter of his work on religious experience. As to the Holy Supper, the Confession takes some higher views of the Real Presence than can anywhere be found in the English communion office. In fact, the only "remnant of transubstantiation" that appears in that office is a solemn ordinance against it as "idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians." Presbyterians who are horrified at such a rag of popery will have their horror increased on learning that the stringent rubric was first procured by that uncompromising reformer, John Knox, in 1552, and fully confirmed at the last revision in 1661, according to Mr. Procter's history of the prayer-book, "in compliance with the wishes of the Presbyterians."

*Sixth.* The chief framers of the above-named standards, though certainly "not in love with the Episcopal liturgy" as it was imposed upon them by the Act of Uniformity two centuries ago, protested that they had "not the least thought of depraving or reproaching the Book of Common Prayer," but wished only to "avoid both the extreme that would have no forms and the contrary extreme that would have nothing but forms";\* and their exceptions to the prayer-book, in matters of mere usage and taste as well as principle, like some of the objections before us, have long since been fully met by the changed conditions of American Presbyterianism, which now neither enjoins nor forbids the use of a liturgy.

*Seventh.* The Presbyterian Book of Common Prayer affords a summary refutation to Dr. Crosby's objections, all and each of them. Among the legal revisers of the English liturgy in 1661 were the very authors of the Presbyterian formularies, such as Anthony Tuckney, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, who had written nearly the whole of the Larger Catechism; John Wallis, Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford, who had been secretary to the Westminster divines, and had himself prepared the Shorter Catechism; Edward Reynolds, afterwards Bishop of Norwich and author of the General Thanksgiving, who had composed the most important parts of

the Confession of Faith; Edmund Calamy, the very leader of the Presbyterian clergy, who with Spurstow, Newcomen, and Arrowsmith had been in the Assembly's committees that framed the Directory of Worship and Church Government; to say nothing of the learned Lightfoot, the silver-tongued Bates, the saintly Baxter, and other great Presbyterian scholars and martyrs whose praise is in all the churches. The emendations and exceptions of such men, duly modified by American authorities, precedents, and usages, yield an edition† of the prayer-book to which no Presbyterian can bring any objections whatever without taking the ground from under his feet. Dr. Crosby, as an out-and-out Presbyterian, will henceforth become a valiant champion, not merely of the prayer-book, but of that church unity which is an essential principle of Presbyterian polity as well as the flower of Christian charity.

Resuming now our task, we may sum up Presbyterian opinion, according to the teaching of Dr. Hodge, as based upon the inward spiritual oneness of the churches, yet looking forward to their outward organic oneness, still to be attained through the slow ripening of their knowledge, love, and zeal, and other graces of the Holy Spirit.

#### CONGREGATIONALIST OPINIONS.

THE letters of the two learned divines representing the *Orthodox Congregational* churches, though making no allusion to the essay, admit of a logical connection with it as affording valuable opinions needed to complete this survey. President Seelye, of Amherst College, gives a profoundly spiritual view of the fellowship of saints and of churches, and likens the universal church to the universal state, as being one in its essence, though manifold in its forms, Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and as tending finally to a Christian theocracy, in which the autonomy of the particular church shall be consistent with the autocracy of the universal church.

Professor Fisher, of Yale College, in his more practical and very suggestive letter, maintains that, since the decree of Papal infallibility, Christian union is practicable only among Protestant denominations; and he finds three obstacles to such union—in the reigning dogmatic intolerance, in the prevalent ritual diversity, especially as to the rite of baptism, and in the divine-right theory of church government as held by Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists. At the same time, he admits that a mere governmental, as

\* Documents of Revision, 1661.

† The Book of Common Prayer, as amended by the Presbyterian Divines in the Royal Commission of

1661, and in agreement with the Directory for Public Worship of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. With a supplementary treatise.

distinguished from a sacerdotal Episcopacy, would not be repugnant to other Protestants, and that an optional liturgy, used alternatively with spontaneous worship, might in some cases prove an advantage.

Although both of these writers say but little of any organization beyond the limits of the local church or parish, yet it is well known that such organization exists, more or less ecclesiastical in its tendencies and without destroying the self-government of congregations, as is seen in their voluntary association for some church purposes, as well as in that practical congregationalism which prevails under presbyterial and episcopal systems.

Two eloquent divines have spoken for the *Unitarian Congregational* churches. We can all agree with the Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale, when he asserts that Christian unity exists in America now, in the sense in which he understands it. But church unity, the fusion of Christian sects into the one church, does not exist; nor can "people who want it find it by going out-of-doors," by simply mingling together in humane recreations, however good and healthful. The civilized Christian of this epoch does not always live out-of-doors. Church organizations, with creed and ritual rooted far back in history, have earned their right to be; and just now they are re-asserting that right. Dr. Hale very aptly likens them to the independent colonies before they had become compacted in the national union; and denies that "the work of the church is better done by its several sections when they keep up a strict organization among themselves, and each lets the other sections severely alone." That was once the war cry, we remember, of a large section of the United States; and now and then we hear something like it among the united churches. But if ever we get a good working constitution for them, it will harmonize the local with the general church in all forms of Christian well-doing, and, unlike that lost formula which our accomplished critic describes, it can neither be mislaid nor burned in a Boston fire.

With a generous largeness of view, Professor A. P. Peabody, of Harvard University, reveals the ground common to Unitarianism and Orthodoxy in the divine humanity of Christ; though he maintains, like other correspondents, that full agreement in the realm of metaphysical divinity is not attainable, nor desirable. His practical conclusion is that Christians should unite in recognizing heartily their common Christ-likeness, in promoting Christian righteousness, and in maintaining Christian worship so far as the common faith will allow. These are not only important grounds of Christian union, but may also be ranked

among the conditions precedent to church unity.

As an able representative of the *Baptist Congregational* churches, the Rev. Dr. R. S. MacArthur, of New York City, dwells upon the growth of union in worship by means of liturgies as well as revivals, and upon the large amount of essential unity in doctrine which already exists in default of anything like organic union. But when Dr. MacArthur so intrepidly maintains that "organic union can only be reached at the baptistery," because many scholars have admitted that immersion is a scriptural mode of baptism, he forgets what an insignificant minority have held that it is the only scriptural mode, and how prevalent infant baptism has been in the universal church. The spread of open communion in his own denomination is one of the most cheering signs of the times, and affords practical ground for the hope that pedobaptist and anabaptist congregations might yet be embraced within the same denominational or ecclesiastical system. The need of the hour is not concession, but toleration.

Of all the Congregationalist letters, Orthodox, Unitarian, Baptist, it may now be summarily remarked that not one of them has exhibited congregationalism as hostile to church unity or as wholly inconsistent with some ecclesiastical organization of congregations, which did not trench upon their local rights and privileges.

Such are the three chief sets of opinions now before us for comparison. At first sight the differences might seem to be very great; but it will be found that some of them are greater within the same denomination than between different denominations, or greater within the same group than between different groups of churches. And it will also be found that all the differences are much less vital and important than the agreements.

In the first place, there is a consensus of Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian opinions in regard to the spiritual oneness of all true Christians, however variously they may be organized in their different churches and denominations. This unity has been described with more or less clearness as a communion of saints, a universal fellowship of believers, a spiritual unity of churches, an invisible Catholic Church; but, however expressed, it is a note of essential harmony amid the apparent discord. It enables the strictest churchman, whether he be an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, or a Congregationalist, to recognize heartily the Christian character of multitudes, now attached to organized forms of Christianity, which he believes to be false and pernicious, and cannot by any official act recognize as

regular or valid ; and it affords a broad platform on which our churches may combine, more or less consciously and formally, in the confession of the same catholic creed, and largely in the use of the same historic liturgy. Underneath all existing structures of church polity ever remains this common Christianity, this united faith in Christ, as their one divine foundation.

In the second place, even as to the remaining differences in polity, the writers are agreed that such barriers are not fixed and final, but shall yet, somehow, disappear in the church of the future. The Episcopalian may hope to see the episcopate supersede all other systems, or become their unifying bond and center. The Presbyterian may look forward to some further extension of the presbyterial principle through existing church organizations. The Congregationalist may anticipate self-governing congregations even under presbytery or episcopacy, as stripped of hierarchical claims. Each may project his ideal church into a millennium, more or less distant ; may behold in that church a unity consistent with more or less diversity ; and may see that church unity at length attained through causes more or less divine or human. But all will consent to view the present sectarian condition of Christianity, especially of Protestant Christianity, as abnormal and transient, and stand ready to welcome any hopeful means of promoting greater oneness and harmony.

In the third place, the remaining differences in mere church polity admit, even now, of a theoretical adjustment. Without wandering off into a vague future, we can fancy an ecclesiastical system in which Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, and Episcopalianism, as we know them in this country, might so limit and modify each other as to co-exist without conflict, each in its own beneficent sphere of action. In such a complete polity presbytery would keep the equipoise between the centrifugal tendencies of congregationalism and the centripetal tendencies of episcopacy, ever preserving particular congregations in their due autonomy, and at the same time combining them in a true cathedral system of schools, missions, and charities. It may be the destiny of the American church thus to bring into normal connection and organic life three ecclesiastical elements, which in the Anglican establishment were forced together in false relations or driven out of it into hurtful extremes, but which in this new world have had full scope and development until now they are ready for a just coalescence. In this manner might be reached what was described in the former essay as "some comprehensive polity, which shall be at once Congregational, Presbyterial,

and Episcopal, and wherein Protestant freedom and intelligence shall appear reconciled with Catholic authority and order." By this means the very terms Presbyterial, Congregational, Episcopal would lose their polemical sense, and all sectarian titles vanish in an organization which would be in fact, even if not in name, the American Catholic Church.

In the fourth place, such an ideal adjustment of differences in church polity has long been becoming actual in the history of the American churches. As we have seen, the old issues between them are all but dead, if not ready for honorable burial. The Cavalier, the Covenanter, and the Puritan now live only in history and romance. Their hot blood has become peacefully blended in their American descendants, and we now dwell upon their virtues rather than upon their faults. He must simply fight against himself who would fight against any one of them. In other words, the unconscious assimilation of churches, after a hundred years of intermarriage and social fusion, has reached a point where they differ more in names than in things. Congregationalists have now and then an extemporized presbytery called an association, and here and there a truly episcopal divine without the title of bishop. Presbyterians in emergencies practice the most independent congregationalism, and love to speak of their pastors as parochial bishops, lacking only the excellent rite of confirmation. Episcopalianism, after having been also without that rite during the two hundred years of their colonial history, may now boast of presbyterial elements in their polity and a congregationalist freedom in their ritual. And all three are not only professing the same essential doctrines, but singing the same hymns and beginning to say the same prayers. Let such changes go on, and after awhile we may wake out of our useless strifes to find that we have only been viewing the same shield from different standpoints, the same church under different phases ; becoming Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalianism, by turns, without knowing it.

In the fifth place, this gradual fusion of such ecclesiastical differences has at length come into public consciousness as an avowed aim for concerted action. Christian people all over the land are trying to find how much they agree, rather than how much they differ. Leading minds in the various churches from their several points of view are approaching the great problem of compacting our American Christianity against the gathering foes which menace it. Union in Church as well as in State is looming high and large as the question of questions before which all others must sink into insignificance. Not union for the mere

sake of union—that is but a sectarian sneer; but union as the very heart in the body of Christ and crown of all the graces; union as a duty no less than as a sentiment; union for the maintenance of truth and religion and virtue; union to prevent so immense a waste and friction in our charities and missions; union for the preservation of Christianity itself amid dangers hitherto unknown; union against the materialism that is corrupting the life of the nation; against the socialism that is assailing property, marriage, government, law, and order; against the agnosticism that is undermining all creeds, codes, and manners; against the sectarianism that is parleying and wrangling in full view of such enemies; union, if need be, against the very disunion that would keep the churches, as it would have kept the States, discordant and dismembered, in the supreme hour of peril.

Never were the signs, as well as the needs, of such union more apparent. Never was the feeling so deep and growing that the divisions in the Christian Church must somehow come to an end. It will not be stopped by such adjectives as “sentimental,” “romantic,” “utopian.” Sectarian interests may throw obstacles in the way, a false conservatism may raise alarms, and veteran divines draw the sword to fight their battles over again,—but in vain. In this movement the people are more determined than their rulers, and the church universal will prove stronger than any sect or party. Look at the progress made since the question was opened in these columns a few months ago. The chief denominations of the country have been taking practical steps towards church unity in distinction from mere Christian union. The Congregational churches of New England have been removing the walls which separate Baptists from Pedobaptist communions. The Presbyterian churches of the Middle States have been settling the vexed question of their psalmody, while those of the South and the North are adjusting their political differences, and those of the East are in conference with the Reformed churches, Dutch and German. The Cumberland Presbyterian and Methodist churches of the West are blending Calvinism with Arminianism. The great Lutheran churches give signs of becoming more homogeneous and American. The Baptist churches have declared for union of denominations. The Episcopal Church has been inwardly moved as never before towards other Protestant churches. The Evangelical Alliance is taking the form of a national league. And as a visible presage of the new era, we have already had what might be called a provisional congress of the “United Churches of the United States.”

In the midst of these remarkable movements, the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church has sent forth a noble and far-reaching declaration seeking to embrace all branches of Christendom in the bonds of a true church unity. The four terms proposed are so large and fair that they will almost carry consent in their statement.

The *Holy Scriptures* are already the accepted basis of all Christian churches, besides affording the consensus of Christianity with Judaism, and with heathenism in the work of missions.

The *Nicene Creed* was simply the faith of the undivided early Church and still expresses the most essential consensus of nearly all modern churches, with room for their later creeds, such as the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster, Augsburg, and Heidelberg confessions.

The *Divine Sacraments*, whenever and wherever rightly administered, cannot but exhibit the communion of that Catholic visible Church which includes all baptized Christians and their children.

The *Historic Episcopate* might become an added bond among existing church systems, if viewed according to the meaning of the phrase, as a fact rather than as a doctrine, without raising the question whether it has been a development of the apostolate or of the presbyterate of the early Church.

It is this last proposal which is likely to stir the keenest debate, and all eyes are now turned towards one point as the focus of the discussion. If the unifying movement is to go forward, it is plain that it should be led and guided by those churches or systems which are historically and logically most nearly allied in doctrine, polity, and worship, as well as providentially fitted to represent the Protestant and Catholic wings of Christendom. Now these conditions are met by *Presbytery* and *Episcopacy*: by Presbytery as included in the Lutheran, Reformed, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches; and by Episcopacy as found in the Greek, Latin, Anglican and Protestant Episcopal churches—not Presbytery and Episcopacy, viewed merely as complementary institutions in an ideal polity, but also as kindred ecclesiastical elements, with the same roots in Scripture and in history, and having a true and vital affinity for each other.

Here we touch the embers of smoldering controversies, which a breath might kindle into a flame. It would be easy enough to recall old grievances and revive dying prejudices which arose in another age and country, when Presbyterians and Episcopalians made martyrs of each other by turns, in a



fierce and sectarian warfare, until, like two combatants chained apart, they were forced by the civil arm to settle down into the established churches of England and Scotland. There are those who would be in haste to import the waning castes of churchman and dissenter into a free republic, to apply the effete policy of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, and to measure the wants of a hemisphere by those of an island. But the large hearts and noble minds on both sides will resolutely keep dead issues out of sight, will rise above sects and parties to the view of general and lasting interests, and will seek to minimize their trivial differences in order to gain the maximum amount of sincere and honorable agreement.

Approaching the question in this spirit, we shall be at no loss for favorable signs and arguments. Not only do the mother-churches of England and Scotland bear an original likeness as twin daughters of the Reformation, descended from the same Catholic Church, with the same historical continuity from the apostles' time, and only different lines of succession since they parted; not only may their existing standards be correlated and blended, the Book of Common Prayer as but a liturgical expression of the Directory for Public Worship, the Confession of Faith as but a logical expansion of the Articles of Religion, and the diocesan Episcopate as but a fit complement of the synodical Presbytery,—but, besides all this, the two forms of polity, as transplanted to our shores, have developed new types of church life and culture, which would be especially valuable in combination, and have already become leading factors in our Anglo-American civilization, the one as expressive of the best Protestant, and the other of the most Catholic Christianity. Add still further: that for a hundred years past they have been unconsciously coming together, and growing like each other. At the very outset, when they became independent of the mother-churches, the American Directory was enriched with liturgical rules and suggestions, and the American Ordinal was enlarged by an alternative form of authorization. Ever since then American Presbyterianism has been steadily reacting from the narrow views of the Puritans and Covenanters towards a larger Christian culture and more liturgical mode of worship, as well as producing a pure theology and a learned ministry unsurpassed in the country; while American Episcopacy, having escaped from the Anglican establishment with its Catholic faith and noble liturgy, has been admitting presbyterial government, lay and clerical, into its dioceses and combining extempore prayers with its liturgy, until it

has surrendered the very points on which the Presbyterian party in the Church of England was defeated two centuries ago. We have lived to see Episcopalian prayer-meetings as well as Presbyterian prayer-books. The two hereditary foes have not merely met half-way, but actually crossed the lines as in friendly rivalry on the battle-fields of former generations.

Now it seems worth while to ask if the ancient family feud might not somehow be effaced and forgotten. Both churches, after long estrangement, have come back to ground where they may well recognize and respect their common lineage, their organic likeness, and their reciprocal interests. Each of them, in fact, has long since conceded enough, and more than enough, for a full and frank understanding. Had such concessions been made in the beginning, no separation could have occurred. Were such concessions now more generally known, a reunion might soon follow. Even that last barrier to reunion, the vexed question of orders, when fairly met and sifted, may but disclose a ground or link of organic connection in the one simple fact that Episcopal ordination could take nothing from, but only add something to, Presbyterian ordination, howsoever either may be viewed by either party. Presbyterians do not differ from Episcopalians more than Episcopalians differ from one another in estimating that rite. In such a state of opinion the differences are no longer worth weighing against the agreements and accruing advantages. As it might prove a great gain to American Episcopacy to be reinforced with Presbyterian orthodoxy and churchliness, so it might prove a great gain to American Presbytery to recover the Episcopal order and liturgy. The reunion would be as organic to each as the original rupture was disorganizing to both. Indeed, it could easily be shown that the chief authors of the Presbyterian standards, if now living, would find their ideal in our Protestant Episcopacy; or, in other words, that the American Episcopacy of to-day has recovered English Presbytery of a classic type, and so fully recovered it that the two systems, at fit times and places, especially in our large cities and great missions, might wisely and well be conjoined or confederated, if not at length merged in one organization.

How far such union or fusion is now feasible need not here be discussed. Whatever changes of church law or practice might be needed, the way to them could be found as soon as there is the will to find them. Presbyterian usage already concedes the validity of episcopal ordination, and the Episcopal Ordinal enjoins no polemic theory of presby-

terial ordination, but is even held to involve presbyterial coördination. Why not begin at once to act upon these facts and principles? Why should there be a so-called hypothetical ordination on the one side or a covert conditional acceptance of it on the other. Let both parties openly and generously recognize each other in concurrent ordinations or reordinations, as occasion requires. By such means all question of valid ministrations would at length die out, as in a marriage of rival houses. The most extreme Episcopalian, from his own point of view, would only be sanctioning orthodox learning, churchly aims, and evangelical labors; and the most extreme Presbyterian, from his own point of view, would only be gaining more authority or grace for a larger service; and the two together would simply be honoring both episcopacy and presbytery in the one catholic and apostolic Church of Christ.

Without claiming to speak for others, but looking at the question from a strictly undenominational point of view, I venture to hope that in any union to be devised the historic episcopate can be retained, if only as one remaining bulwark against the well-meant but lawless evangelism which is running wild in our churches and bringing all the divine institutions of the Christian religion into contempt. The great revivalists, Whitefield and Wesley, were trained clergymen and ever appeared as such, even when driven from the pulpit into the field. But our lay evangelists are pressed from the field into the pulpit, and a divine success is claimed for them on the very ground that they are not clergymen but mere laymen. When earnest and gifted preachers of the Gospel, like Mr. Moody, decline to become ordained ministers of any church, while everywhere exercising ministerial functions, with learned divines and faithful pastors sitting at their feet, and the whole order of God's house set aside, can we wonder if the popular inference should be that the ministry itself is but a human convenience, if not already a failure. Is any transient good done by them to be weighed for one moment against the lasting evil of overthrowing the most sacred ordinances and institutions, to say nothing of feverish excitements, whose track is often that of the simoon through the fairest pastures of Christ? Our chief danger in this land and age of freedom is not hierarchy. Instead of too much ecclesiasticism, there is too little. The clergy are fast losing their normal rank and influence. The time may yet come when pure presbytery and true episcopacy shall appear not only congruous but inseparable, and together essential in maintaining that "catholic visible church unto which Christ

hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God."

There is also a large and growing class of minds in all churches for whom the historic episcopate, as now associated with the prayer-book, seems practically the only guarantee of a pure scriptural worship. Time was indeed when that liturgy had been so rigorously enforced as to extinguish all other forms of devotion. No wonder Milton could then cry out against it: "To imprison and confine by force, within a pin-fold of set words, those two most unimprisonable things, our prayers and that divine spirit of utterance which moves them, is a tyranny that would want longer hands than those giants who threatened bondage to heaven." But out of that tyranny we have long since fought our way to a ruinous victory. The time has now come to distinguish liberty from license in the worship of God and to assert order and decency against confusion in the assemblies of saints. Keep for fit times and places, the free, extempore service which has been so dearly won; but keep also that historic liturgy which has come down to us from all the Christian ages. Let the people have pure English and sound doctrine at least in their devotions; let them learn the whole word of God in appointed lessons; let them offer up prayers which they can call their own; let them follow their Lord, from his cradle to his cross, through each year of his grace; let them receive holy sacraments and rites, in the meet words of apostles, saints, and martyrs; let them thus worship with angels and archangels and the whole company of the redeemed on earth and in heaven. Already, indeed, some of these things have been reclaimed for them as their just heritage, and we are beginning to find that the prayer-book can co-exist with the prayer-meeting as easily as episcopacy can concur with presbytery.

Besides these advantages, the historic episcopate might also bring a valuable conservative force into our presbyterial systems of church government. Aside from the claim of apostolical succession, it is appreciated as a scriptural and ancient institution of the Christian religion, as fitted to secure the choicest wisdom, learning, and piety of the Church in the direction of its affairs, and as demanded by new exigencies which have arisen in our time and country. Since it became detached from the English peerage and monarchy, it has grown into harmony with our republican institutions, while supplying needed checks upon their radical tendencies. Moreover, it is certain that episcopacy as well as presbytery would have a voice in any Provisional Congress or General Council of the Lutheran, Reformed, Congregational, Presbyte-

rian, Methodist and Protestant Episcopal churches which could be duly called; and should the time ever come for the federation or consolidation of these bodies, it might be found that a House of Bishops and House of Presbyters, like the Senators and Representatives in our national legislature, would support and balance each other, reconciling rival claims and interests and ever securing the new popular institutions of the American church as well as keeping it in the line of historic Christianity. He would be a bold prophet who would strike out either presbytery or episcopacy from the future Christian civilization of this continent.

The chief obstacles to a reunion of our episcopal and presbyterial systems are not so much any doctrinal differences inhering in those systems as the mere accidental influences of denominational pride, inherited prejudice, and general ignorance — an ignorance largely enveloping the clergy as well as the people. Nothing would seem plainer than that both parties left their grievances behind them three thousand miles away, two hundred years ago; and yet the memory of them so rankles in our blood that we still shudder at them as if we might encounter another Laud in some good bishop of an American diocese, or provoke some Janet Geddes to hurl her tripod in response to a Presbyterian liturgy. The political, social, and religious conditions which once kindled so fierce a strife between Presbytery and Episcopacy, and drove them asunder to so rash extremes, could not be transferred to this free land and can never arise among its free churches; but we seem often to fancy that the same battle is still raging, and fill the air with the old familiar slogans and cheer on our champions to new encounters, though all the while no lordly prelates are sitting in our legislatures, and no bloody Claverhouse is abroad pursuing our peaceful worshipers — though no psalm-singing Puritans are despoiling our new cathedrals and no outlawed Covenanters are waylaying our excellent bishops. On the one side, we are ever boasting of a church lineage which we espoused but yesterday; and, on the other side, of a line of martyrs whom we no longer follow. We forget that

those honored Anglican prelates would have dispersed our Episcopal conventions as so many rebels, schismatics, and dissenters, and those revered Scottish worthies would have made swift bonfires of our Presbyterian hymnals, organs, and service-books. And should some candid investigator expose to us, in the clear light of history, how groundless are our prejudices and how foolish our divisions, we can do nothing perhaps but accept his statements, as highly interesting but very useless, and scarcely know whether to frown or smile upon him as, by turns, he provokes admiration or indignation on both sides of the question.

The writer cannot hope to escape such influences. By some of his most respected readers this paper may be viewed as a pure speculation. It will be easy to call it the dream of a recluse or say that the time is not ripe for it. Nevertheless, the present generation might see it becoming real, if only events move forward as fast as they have moved since the former paper was written. And no prophet is needed to tell us what would be the issue. Let the day ever come for a general reunion of Presbytery and Episcopacy, either by formal agreement or by practical fusion, and it would mark the turning-point in the problem of an American Catholic Church. It would be but the forming nucleus of a wide confederation and consolidation of churches and denominations, which are already in ministerial communion and more or less organic connection. Presbytery would include the German, Dutch, French, Scotch, and English types of Protestantism; Episcopacy would involve the Greek, Latin, Anglican, and American germs of Catholicity; and all these varied elements would come into new and vital relations, correcting and molding each other. Our best American Christianity would react upon our whole American civilization against the crying evils of sectarianism, infidelity, and vice. The great vanguard churches of the land, no longer idly saying one to another in the very front of battle, "I have no need of thee," would stand compact together, and grow up in Christ the Head as his living members, and at length, it may be, lead on to one United Church of the United States.

*Charles W. Shields.*

#### TWILIGHT.

THE soft voluptuous opiate-shades,  
The sun just gone, the eager light dispelled — (I too  
will soon be gone, dispelled),  
A haze — nirvana — rest and night — oblivion.

*Walt Whitman.*