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ARTICLE I.

Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiæ Universalis. The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes. By PHILIP SCHAFF, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Biblical Literature in the Union Theological Seminary, N. Y. In three Volumes. New York: Harper & Bros. 1877.

A short notice of this voluminous work appeared in our last number, together with a promise of a more extended examination. This promise we now propose to redeem, according to the measure of our ability.

Dr. Schaff's design is a grand one. He proposes to set before us, in these volumes, not the results of the thinking of individual minds, not what the most illustrious doctors of the Church have thought upon questions no less awful than the being of God and the eternal destiny of man; but the products of the mind of the Church itself, of that vast community which professes to be the witness of God and of his Christ in the midst of a world full of darkness, pollution, and shame.

These creeds are not the expressions of *opinion* upon problems which have engaged and confounded the inquiries of philosophers. They are confessions of *faith* in the solutions of those problems by him who is the source of all truth, as he is the source of all being; solutions contained in a book divinely inspired, divinely authenticated, and divinely interpreted. The Church, in these creeds, declares that faith for which her members are willing to die and for which hundreds of thousands of her members have

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ARTICLE IX.

LAY EVANGELISM AND THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS.

In the spring of 1859, it was the writer's privilege to spend a Sabbath with one of the churches in the city of Cincinnati. The good elder, at whose house he was a guest, invoked his opinion of a movement which had recently been inaugurated at the West, of sending out pious laymen, two by two, to hold religious meetings and exhort, supplementing thus the labors of the regular ministry by an agency which, it was hoped, would reach a class of hearers not likely to be otherwise overtaken by the gospel.

The answer was promptly given in these words: Within six months your Presbyteries will be driven to crush the movement beneath the weight of their authority as an unmitigated evil. A judgment so adverse to the prevailing sentiment could not pass unchallenged; which led naturally to a more extended statement of his views, on the part of the critic now in his turn assailed.

Every Christian has the undoubted right to speak for his Master, of which he cannot be dispossessed by any court in Christendom. So long as he does this upon his individual responsibility, drawing from the stores of his religious experience, and within the circle where he is personally known, there is little danger of injury, and there may be much profit, to the general cause. Even though he should not always speak wisely, there is a limit to the evil threatened, in the fact that his testimony is only occasional, and is delivered to those whose knowledge of his character will enable them to attach no greater value to it than is deserved; and especially in the fact, that his utterances carry no official authority, as formal expositions of divine truth. But when the same man is sent forth under the sanction of a *quasi* appointment, to make a set address before audiences assembled expressly to hear him, it is not in the nature of things that he will restrict himself to that style of exhortation to which his simple experience might render him competent. The pressure of each occasion will force him from this narrower range to the

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exposition of Scripture and to the elucidation of some doctrinal system. Just here lurks the peril. It requires the comparison of Scripture with Scripture to construct the science of theology, and to preserve throughout what the Apostle denominates "the proportion of faith." Without this, there is danger of understating some truths, and of overstating others. The logical connexion, which binds all the parts of a harmonious system, is overlooked. The whole scheme of grace becomes disjointed in their unskilful hands. Heresies inevitably arise from this disregard of the relations which one truth sustains to another. The result will be, that under the teachings of men who have no other desire than to build up the Redeemer's kingdom, errors will be sown broad-cast which it will require years of patient and painful labor to eradicate. Such was the ground of the judgment uttered by the writer nineteen years ago, which fell upon the ear of this pious elder as little short of blasphemy; but which proved to be a prediction so near fulfilment, that almost before the author of it could reach his home, the eye was greeted with announcements, in the Western journals, of *pro re nata* meetings held for the suppression of a religious crusade which had already begun to blight the peace and purity of the Church.

"*Tempora mutantur.*" A great civil war has shaken society from its poise since then. In all directions men have cut loose from their old convictions, and are now adrift upon the wild sea of speculation and experiment. The Church, so far as her destiny was committed to human care, could scarcely be expected to escape the general disaster. The melancholy spectacle has been witnessed of a false liberalism dismantling the fortresses in which the truth was intrenched; one hour of passionate impulse undoing a work of reform which it had taken a whole generation to achieve. This relaxation of principle is perhaps most conspicuous in the renewal of those measures which came so suddenly to grief nearly twenty years ago. The evil, which was then arrested in its inception, has in our time been allowed to expand and to mature its fruit. Pious laymen, endowed with affluence of speech, uniting with them others equally gifted with the power of song, roam as gospellers through the land. So far from invoking the

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sanction of the ecclesiastical courts, it is their peculiar distinction to ignore their very existence. Self constituted, or else under the appointment of the Young Men's Christian Association—a body obtrusively non-ecclesiastical in its character—these lay evangelists subordinate to themselves the pastors and congregations wherever they go, imposing their measures and assuming the entire control so long as their labors are continued.

There are elements of success in such a movement at all times, and especially in the wake of a mighty revolution through which the country has just passed. All history shows the favor with which, in every upheaval of society, the insurrection against prerogative is greeted by the masses. In this case, many were attracted by the dash which did not scruple to set aside all the prescription and authority of the Church, and to exalt untrained mechanics above the heads which wore the mitre. To an appetite satiated with the sensations which it still morbidly craved, there was a stimulus in the novelty of this inverted cone, standing upon its apex and flourishing its broad base in the air. Let us not deny that there was also much presentation of the truth, spoken with simplicity and tenderness, and accompanied, as it will always be, with the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. With all these elements of success combined, the movement once begun was driven forward by its own momentum. Its influence spread with its tidal wave across the sea, and broke in upon the staid monotony of European customs. It then swung back with increased vibration upon its native shore, and took the country captive under its magic spell.

Not a few, however, "through the loop-holes of retreat," looked upon this movement with suspicion and fear. The glamor of present success did not blind their eyes to the remote evils which must arise from the disregard of order and law. The history of the Church was too full of pregnant examples, showing how error of doctrine creeps in through breaches of government and discipline. The self-sufficiency evinced in the contempt of authority, will not long brook the restraint of a creed—the logical connexion between the two certainly entailing the one as the consequent of the other. Cautions were given as to the impending danger,

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only to be disregarded. Nothing remained but to await the issue, when the Church should be called too late to mourn over the tares mingled with the wheat in her field. That hour may possibly have now come. The fruits of this policy have at least begun to ripen, in a degree which should challenge attention. The reaction cannot be far distant, which many have anxiously awaited; and to hasten which the suggestions that follow are respectfully submitted.

The argument most powerful in removing the scruples of many, and inducing a general acquiescence in this form of evangelism, is the seal of the divine blessing which is claimed to have uniformly rested upon it. Crowds are seen surging to the place of assembly wherever these ministrations are enjoyed, embracing multitudes who never before were drawn to any house of worship. Under the sweet influence of Christian song, tears flow from eyes unused to weeping, and stain the cheeks which are bronzed by exposure and toil. And, as the final result, a long list of converts is held up to view, who by this agency have been brought to bow before the cross of Jesus. A plea of this kind is the more irresistible, since it forestalls investigation as something profane; and the pious conscience shrinks with alarm from even the appearance of fighting against God. Those who daily offer the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." cannot but rejoice in the report of these wholesale conversions. If the agency should seem irregular by which it is accomplished, it is accepted as an example of that gracious sovereignty which "divideth to every man severally as it will," and worketh by what instruments it pleaseth. If there be one peril from which the Christian recoils with more dread than any other, it is that of being out of sympathy with what is manifestly the work of the Holy Ghost. In every case of doubt, the prudence of Gamaliel is called to remembrance: "If this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." This language accurately describes the attitude of many who could neither become the advocates nor the opponents of lay evangelism, but have simply awaited the issue which should reveal its true relation to the divine will.

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The facts, however, must at length be sifted; and though the task of criticism is never pleasant, it may as well be undertaken now as later. Probably no revivalists ever understood before so perfectly the art of advertising themselves. In the large cities, the announcement of their coming is made months beforehand. Churches and pastors of every denomination are summoned to the work of spiritual preparation, and the expected arrival is made the topic of public discourse and of united prayer. No building or gymnasium can be found large enough to accommodate the crowds which are anticipated. Some immense structure must be erected, or else rearranged at the cost of thousands of dollars; and the resounding hammers of the carpenter send forth a daily proclamation of the wonders which are shortly to be seen. An excitable populace is thus kept in feverish expectation, until the doors are thrown open to the admiring rush. The spectacle within piques curiosity the more. Upon a large platform, just upon the level of a sea of heads, are seated the ministers of the local churches, lending the sanction of their presence, and bringing their vast personal influence to sustain the chief actors in the drama. An imposing orchestra, improvised by judicious selection from many church choirs, rolls up the grand symphonies, yielding at times to the fascination of some sweet Christian ballad exquisitely rendered by a single voice of uncommon richness. The exhortation which follows is marked by a quaint simplicity, denoting the earnestness which disclaims the arts of rhetoric, but which is nearly the perfection of colloquial discourse. The effect is not marred by an occasional trip in grammar, or a little falseness of pronunciation—both being evidence that success, if attained, must be ascribed to a higher inspiration than of earthly scholarship. Then comes the dexterous manipulation of the practised tactician, by which the masses are sorted into groups and thrown into the most dramatic positions. With the reserved force of acknowledged divines at command, the distribution is easily made. Established Christians are sent into chambers on one side, to invoke the interposition of heaven; inquiring souls are ostentatiously disposed of elsewhere, to be counselled and directed as they may require; whilst the large remainder abides under

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the stimulus of preaching and of song, with all the reaction of a powerful sympathy, to recruit the ranks of the awakened and anxious. Who that knows anything of the contagion of feeling in a crowded assembly, drawn together by any common sentiment, will wonder at the impression produced by these measures—deepening in intensity with every circuit of the electric current between the poles of such a battery?

It is not doubted by us that sinners have been truly converted to God in connexion with most, if not with all, these efforts. We recognise with joy the fact that, by whomsoever proclaimed, the truth will never be wholly destitute of power. We believe, too, the predominant motive in all these labors to be a sincere desire to glorify God in the salvation of men. But the admixture of earthly elements has always seemed to us disproportionally great; and it has prepared us for the results disproportionally small as compared with "the pomp and circumstance" accompanying it all. We refer more particularly to the absence of permanent results which are distinctly appreciable. This may be accepted as the criterion of a true revival, whether it be upon a large or a small scale. It leaves the Church invigorated, its membership increased, the tone of general piety elevated. Sometimes a feeble church is lifted from the dust and sent forward upon a career of large prosperity; and in some instances we have known small communities so pervaded by the gracious influence, as to be openly purged of many vices by which they were once deformed.

The grand mistake of this lay evangelism is the one-sided idea, that Christianity can be propagated as a pure spirit without a body. Its effort is confined to the matter of simple conversion, and the neophyte is cast loose upon the world to take care of himself. This business is left, it is said, to the Church; which must come afterward and pick up these poor waifs and give them food and shelter. Ignoring the Church in all its labors, except to use it as a stool to stand upon in the first instance—nay, carrying this distrust and reserve to the point of carefully concealing to what body of Christians the evangelists themselves belong—it is not strange that as soon as the meetings are discon-

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tinued, the whole movement collapses before the fruit can be gathered. The converts with few exceptions disappear, before the Church can mark them as belonging to her fold. Hence the want of fixed and tangible results; of which, it will be remembered, Mr. Spurgeon complained as to the work in London. In one of our own towns, where the revival was reported to be proportionally as great as that which challenged the attention of the world in the city of New York, we were told by one in sympathy with the movement, that every trace of it had disappeared within a week. It was said to be a spectacle for a life-time to see a large building filled with men who knew nothing of churchly usages, and to behold the fountains of feeling unlocked in bosoms seldom swayed by gentle moods; but the emotions proved to be born only of natural pathos, superficial and transient as the snow-flakes melting upon the warm earth. A testimony scarcely less remarkable was delivered to us, about a year ago, in reference to the New York revival itself, by a prominent divine of that city, to wit: that the general estimate now put upon that movement was, that it was simply a substitute for a whole season's work on the part of all the churches engaged in it. As soon as the tension was relaxed, a corresponding reaction set in; and it was impossible to gather up the spent forces and to put them into effective operation again. It is, of course, out of human power to strike the balance between these two agencies, and decide upon which the gain would lie. But few would consent to purchase the one at the expense of the other, except it may be the fanatics who would be willing to blot out of existence the visible Church forever. The sum of the whole matter is, that a large abatement of these extravagant pretensions must be made, and that the residuum of good does not exceed what would probably have been accomplished by the Church in her orderly and constant work. The only difference is, that by this ostentatious cry of "lo, here!" and "lo, there!" an occasional conversion takes place of one lying beyond the sphere of Church influence, but not beyond the reach of evangelistic effort, to which the Church herself is equally competent.

This analysis of the actual results may serve to ease the pain of

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those who find themselves obliged, by an instinctive conservatism, to hold aloof from a movement which shelters itself under the claim of the divine approbation. Waiving, however, all this criticism, and accepting as real all the good that appears upon the surface, we are not prepared to render the favorable verdict which is challenged. A correct judgment of no policy can be formed which does not take into account the remote, as well as the proximate, results. A scheme may originate in the purest of motives and be advocated by the best of men, which is proved in the end to be neither wise nor beneficent. Hence expediency can never become the rule of human conduct. Finite wisdom is unable to see the end from the beginning: and unless the entire line be covered by our vision, it is impossible to foretell the disasters which may flow from measures the most approved. Fruits of promise may hang out as tempting to the eye as the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, which shall ripen at last into the apples of Sodom filled only with bitter dust. Unfortunately, the purest intention affords no protection against this miscarriage. Indeed, hazardous as the paradox may seem, we are not sure but that more lasting evils proceed from the errors of the good than from the machinations of the bad. There is John Howard, for example, in his visits of pity to the hospitals and prisons of Europe, until his name is consecrated as the synonym of benevolence. Yet out of this sprang that "rose-water philanthropy" which has well-nigh driven a robust justice from the earth. In fact, if the world could hang together a single year without its stern protection, it would long since have been expelled; as men are to-day striving, in the desperation of guilt, to banish it from the government of the universe and of God. A more familiar illustration may be cited in what goes under the name of the Temperance Reform; a movement, projected by conservative and well-balanced minds, for the purpose of extirpating the most prevalent and desolating of all vices. How soon was it lifted from its original foundation and rested upon principles which could not receive the sanction of those who acknowledge the inspiration and authority of the Sacred Scriptures. All this needs only a passing allusion here. But now, after the

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lapse of half a century, we are still confronted by intemperance in its orginal deformity—the agent in its removal having succeeded only in flooding the land with an amount of irreligious scepticism more than an offset to the reformation which it vainly sought to achieve. In view of such gigantic failures, would that good men might be impressed with the responsibility of adhering, in all moral questions, to the principles and methods laid down in the word of God! And in view of this incompetency of human wisdom, we have a thousand times blessed God for having shut out all human devices in the constitution and laws, the officers and discipline, which He has given to his Church.

Just here is found the core of our objection to this whole system of lay evangelism, that it tampers with the order and organisation of that Church which is the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth. It required, therefore, no spirit of prophecy to anticipate the evils which must sooner or later be developed. Fortunately, the demonstration has come early enough to prevent their continuance and spread, if attention be aroused to their significance. We have, for example, already referred to the partial and one-sided presentation of truth, which must of necessity characterise the teachings of undisciplined and unfurnished minds.

A half-truth is always a whole lie. Taken out of the system to which it belongs, and where it is qualified and checked by other truths with which it is coördinated, and then magnified out of its due proportion by the enthusiasm which rides it as a hobby, it becomes the more pernicious falsehood from the trace of truth which it yet retains. We have unwittingly paraphrased one of Pascal's brilliant utterances, when he says, "Il y en a plusieurs qui errent d'autant plus dangereusement, qu'ils prennent une vérité pour le principe de leur erreur. Leur faute n'est pas de suivre une fausseté, mais de suivre une vérité á l'exclusion d'une autre."* By the force of natural logic the single error gathers other errors to its support, crystallising at length into a system which is harmonious and complete. In this manner we imagine the doctrine of the Plymouth Brethren to have grown up through its distortions and exaggerations of truth, importing

*Pensées de Pascal, Seconde Partie, Art. XVII., Sec. XIII.

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into the Church the most subtle antinomianisms the world has ever known.*

Starting from the same mistake of confounding the visible with the invisible Church, and of expecting Christianity to be diffused and maintained without external embodiment and form, we are not surprised to find our lay evangelists charged with expressions† which, if they do not directly teach, must eventuate in, the errors of the Plymouth school. The reserve and caution, so natural in the outset of their career, yield to greater boldness as they advance; and, of necessity, their language will become tinged with their secret doctrinal sympathies. Already has theological criticism been challenged to their loose expositions of

*In the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, January, 1872, may be found a thorough criticism of the Plymouth Theology. A briefer summary of its errors we clip from a religious weekly just at hand: "Of all the dangers to which the Church is exposed at the present time, we believe there is none so great or so imminent as that belonging to the system of the so-called Plymouth Brethren. . . . . Under the pretence of being more spiritual, and indeed of being exclusively devoted to spiritual principles, to the entire exclusion of everything else, it veils an entire repudiation of the main features of the gospel as given by Christ himself, and as most strenuously contended for by the Primitive Apostles. It may present variations in different parts of England and America, but as we have met with it, its one question appears to be, 'Are you saved;' and the one and only article of its creed to be that involved in an affirmative answer. . . . . They disregard the Lord's Day, and deny that the law of God is our rule of life. They teach that none of the Old Testament saints have any part in the future glory. They deny the great doctrine of substitution in the sufferings of Christ; and teach that believers are not to confess their sins, even to God. They reject a great deal of the New Testament, terming it Jewish, as the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, etc. They say St. Paul's teaching was of a higher order than that of the other apostles, whose teaching was 'Jewish,' and not intended for us. They contend that part of the time Christ was on the cross, he was not there as our representative. They ignore repentance as necessary to salvation; and say they are forgiven and saved, so that they have no need to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." Other developments of their system are of a character corresponding with these, making the whole of their religion consist of an internal persuasion of the mind, and of a total denial of most of the outward ordinances, especially that of the Christian ministry."—*Dominion Churchman.*

† See SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, April, 1876.

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Christian truth; which, if unchecked, must soon take the shape of definite heresies. And. if this result accrues at the very initiation of this policy, what shall the fruit be when it has outgrown the timidity of its youth, and time has gathered a full harvest from the fatal seeds that are sown? These equivocal teachings must awaken alarm as to a form of evangelism which, whilst it lives by the sufferance of the Church, refuses her jurisdiction and acknowledges no responsibility for the doctrines it proclaims.

Practice, too, involves principle. Indeed, it is the most emphatic expression of it, as being its appropriate and necessary fruit. The Christian public was not long since startled by the announcement that the leading lay evangelist in this country had not scrupled to adminster the Lord's Supper to such as were willing to receive it at his hands. Yet what reason existed for surprise, except that one step should so soon follow another in this career of usurpation? He who could assume the *rôle* of a public teacher, without first authenticating his call before the Church, need scarcely hesitate to intrude into the mysteries of the sanctuary, and lift the veil which a pious veneration has always thrown over the sacraments. It may be alleged that, intrinsically, no greater sanctity attaches to these than to the preaching of the Word, since they both "represent Christ to us, and the benefits of the New Covenant." We will not stop to argue this point. Suffice it that a traditional reverence has always guarded with peculiar jealousy the ark containing the seals of the covenant. It required, therefore, a greater degree of assurance to invade this prerogative of the sacred office than the other; and the determination to assume both, was an open declaration against the necessity of an ordained ministry.

We do not care to discuss in this article the grounds upon which these various usurpations are defended. This would be only to repeat what has been sufficiently said in a previous number of this REVIEW, referred to in a foot-note on a preceding page. Our purpose is accomplished in simply drawing attention to the disorganising tendency of this whole movement, which can legitimately end in nothing short of the extinction of the minis-

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terial office. If any private Christian may lawfully discharge all its duties, why should a particular order be set apart to the same? Should the Christian public be finally content to accept the lay preacher as a substitute for an ordained ministry, how can the Church effectually provide for the perpetuation of the latter? With what expectation of success can she require her candidates to accomplish, at large expense, a ten years' course of study, as well as to undergo a number of critical examinations, when they have only to step to the front and exercise any function of the ministry under the claim of a private call and the convictions of their individual conscience? With what propriety can she hedge in her ministers with the restraints of an articulate creed, and subject their work to constant episcopal supervision, when all control is escaped and every responsibility is evaded by a schismatical independence of authority? How long must this lay evangelism be worked successfully before these questions shall begin to be practically put, and find their answer in a gradual disintegration of the Church as a corporate society? We press these interrogatories. We are not going to offer any apology, at this late day, for the existence of such an order as the gospel ministry. This we will assume to have been adjudicated long ago by the authority of the Master in the Sacred Scriptures. The reader of these pages will agree with us in refusing to entertain this as an open question; and our end will be achieved if he is led with us to see that the real issue now is whether the Church shall have a ministry consecrated to the work of evangelising the world. Nay, rather, the issue is whether there shall be such an organisation as the Church on earth, to which shall be committed the oracles of God. The question is not whether these lay evangelists do more or less good, but whether the whole religious world shall be reduced to a state of chaos, in which darkness and light shall mingle again in strange confusion. When this issue comes to be fairly understood, the decision will be soon rendered which will restore order and law to their supremacy once more.

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These grave irregularities could scarcely have sprung up, except from a soil previously prepared. Because of the historical and logical connexion between the two, we have coupled, in the title of this article, the subject of Lay Evangelism with that of the Young Men's Christian Associations. To the consideration of the latter we will devote the remainder of these pages. It is worthy of note that these Associations, when first formed, about twenty-five years ago, encountered no opposition from any quarter. Those who were the most jealous for the prerogatives of the Church as a divine institute, greeted the new organisation with the most cordial favor, and were behind none in the support rendered to its schemes. The explanation is to be found in the modesty and singleness of the end it originally proposed to accomplish. This was to throw a shield of protection around young men exposed in our cities and larger towns to unusual temptations. For this purpose the organisation was admirably contrived. It approached a young man fresh from the parental roof with the proffer of society and friendship, in the first experience of the heart-sickness which creeps upon us all in our first exile from home. It took him to well-lighted and cheerful halls, where he found himself surrounded with papers, magazines, and books; and what was more grateful still, where he is welcomed by companions of his own age and class, who wish him well. If unemployed, he is aided in the search for a situation, by an arrangement which is spread like a net-work over the whole city. He is guided to a boarding place where he will be associated with the good, and enjoy the largest degree of comfort which his means may allow. Last, but not least, a kindly influence persuades him to attach himself to some house of worship, in the Church of his fathers or in any other that he may prefer, where his character will be moulded under the gentle ministrations of the gospel. Evidently a broad field for Christian effort was opened just here; and the class to be profited could be most successfully reached by an agency which should be secular in its organisation, whilst it was mainly religious in its composition.

Of course, no association of young men could be formed upon a moral or philanthropic basis, without danger of degenerating

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under worldly and sinful influences, and perhaps aggravating the very evils it was intended to relieve. The provision against this peril presents altogether the most peculiar feature in its constitution—that which places the government entirely in the hands of a particular class of members, who are required to be actual communicants in some branch of the Christian Church. Such were supposed to be not only fixed in their principles and habits, but to be under the control of the highest and purest motives which can direct human conduct. A more curious illustration of the shortness of human foresight cannot be found than in the history of this institution. Who could have dreamed, twenty years ago, that the perversion would occur upon the side exactly opposite to that which was so carefully guarded? Yet so it proved to be. The danger lay in what was contrived for its defence, and the defection arose from the piety which was meant to be its protection. Yet "vain man would be wise" enough to become the "Lord's counsellor," and improve upon his methods of providence and grace! The Young Men's Christian Association found itself good enough to become the universal agent for regenerating the world. Through the excess of its virtue, it fell from the purpose for which it was organised, and undertook precisely the work for which it had pleased God to institute his Church. We say that it has abandoned the object for which it was originally created; for if attended to at all, it is in the most perfunctory way, and is scarcely mentioned in any reports of its proceedings. Instead of this, we learn of gospel meetings established, Bible readings instituted, Sabbath-schools organised, city tabernacles erected, mission services conducted, and itinerant laymen sent forth to evangelise the country. Not content with the quiet assumption of these churchly functions, it undertakes in some instances to supervise the operations of the very rival whom it supersedes. A circular was once placed in the hands of the writer, as in the hands of all his co-presbyters, requesting a report of all church Sabbath-school work to be rendered to the Association; and that, too, in face of the fact that just such reports were required to be regularly made to the higher church courts. It was mentioned, to the praise of the Association in

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Chicago, some two or three years ago, that it prepared the lessons for all the Sabbath-schools in that city! and that a mammoth class of all the teachers was instructed every Saturday afternoon in the rooms and under the auspices of the same Association. It is hard to see what functions are left to the Church, when these have been absorbed by another agency. When the penitent apostle was restored to his office, we remember that it was indicated in the double injunction, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." But when the whole business of carrying the gospel to them that are without is assumed, together with the whole business of training them who are within—when the very lambs are to be taken out of the care of the Church, in whose bosom they are born—it is hard to see what excuse the latter has to live.

We are aware that this antagonism to the Church is warmly denied. It is not necessary to the present argument to charge upon these Associations the purpose to array themselves in a declared opposition. On the contrary, we accept as perfectly sincere their professions of respect, and of desire to aid the Church in the accomplishment of her sacred mission. Nevertheless we are compelled to charge that the collision actually exists; and that as two bodies cannot occupy the same space, one or the other must give way. What we allege is the *tendency* of these Associations, even though undesigned and unforeseen, to supplant the Church of God. Why, here is an order as compact in its structure as that of Masonry itself, ramifying throughout the world, with its local Associations in all our cities and towns, with its Constitution and laws, with its District Conferences and Annual Conventions, both National and Œcumenic—whose object is simply to convey the gospel to every class in society, and to bring the world to Christ. The ambition is a noble one; and we cannot withhold our sympathy from its aims, however we may dissent from its plans. But when it is considered that the Redeemer has established his Church upon earth for no other end but this, one cannot refrain from asking why all this religious zeal cannot find an outlet through her agency, rather than create another, which can do nothing more in its highest success except to occupy her place in the world. This question is the

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more pertinent, and the surprise is the greater, when it is remembered that those who control these Associations are all of them members of the Christian Church, and are bound by earlier and holier vows to the service of the sanctuary. The argument from prescription is certainly in favor of the Church, as the first in existence, and as having the sanction of the divine appointment. It is incumbent, therefore, upon the advocates of the new institute to show cause why it should supersede the old; or if this be not designed, in what respects it supplies its defects as the better agency of the two.

The strongest defence of these Associations which we have met, is that they are necessary to reach the perishing masses in our cities who are not gathered into the regular churches. We are glad to be able to present the argument in the language of one who advocates the new agency distinctively upon this ground. The Chicago *Interior*, in its issue of January 10th, quotes with approbation the following testimony from Mr. Cook, the Boston lecturer:

"So far as my knowledge extends, the most important advances that have been made in America in reaching the unchurched masses in large towns have been effected through the Young Men's Christian Associations and city tabernacles."

It then proceeds from this text to discourse as follows:

"It seems to us that Mr. Cook has here struck upon the very facts which constitute the prime necessity, or *raison d' etre*, for the existence of the Young Men's Christian Association, and of those special evangelistic and aggressive agencies of which it is the nucleus. It is precisely the institution which is called for by all the exigencies of the restless, rushing, and largely irreligious masses that crowd our great cities. As a matter of history, it was this state of the case which first called such associations into being twenty years ago. And it is this unaltered necessity still existing in every American city which to-day demands their continuance and demonstrates their overwhelming importance. . . . What is to reach and save the multitudes of wanderers who never enter our elegant church edifices? Clearly nothing can do it, thus far nothing has ever done it, except those direct, persistent, concerted, and aggressive efforts which take as their inspiration the Saviour's own command, Go ye into the streets and lanes of the city, and compel them to come. This is the work, the watch-word, the design, the evangel, of the Young Men's Christian Association. It is aiming to carry the gospel of Jesus

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Christ to the heathen tribes at our own doors, to the perishing heathen of our great cities. What it does the Church does, for the Church is only working through it as her instrument. Its constituent members are all members of the Churches. Nor can we see that there is one single movement which the Church of our day is making—not even that of sending the gospel to India or Japan—which is more in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Scriptures than this effort which the Young Men's Christian Association is making to save our cities."

The statement in the above extract, that these Associations were called into being in order to discharge this evangelistic function, only shows how completely their original object has been dropped out of sight. The new dispensation inaugurated very early after their organisation, is here mistaken by a respectable journalist for the period of birth. We do not wonder. The Old Testament career was very short, in the haste to reach the gospel of the New. Nor can we accept the proposition that "what the Association does the Church does, the Church working through it as her instrument." We had supposed this loose doctrine exploded forty years ago, when it pleased God to deliver the Presbyterian Church from Egyptian bondage, under this fatal principle, to the National Voluntary Societies. One of the great issues in the Reform of 1837 was that of "ecclesiastical responsibility"—that "the Church was to do her own work *in her organised capacity, through her courts* and *her own executive agencies.*"

As we have quoted the language of Dr. Thornwell, we may be allowed another luminous statement of the principle from the same pen:

"She (the Church) has no right to intrust her own peculiar functions to any agent, no matter how closely connected with herself. The duties of the Church are duties which rest upon her by the authority of God. He has given her the organisation which she possesses, for the purpose of discharging these duties. She can therefore no more throw them off upon others, than a man can delegate to his neighbor the care of his own family, and abandon himself to idleness and ease. If our Form of Church Government is such as God prescribes, it is adequate for all emergencies; if our Church courts are based upon the platform of the Bible, God requires from *them* the discharge of their pecular duties, and not from *another.*"*

*Thornwell's Collected Writings, Vol. IV., pp. 160, 161, 222.

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This grave assertion, that "what the Association does the Church does," is a melancholy proof how far the Church has drifted from her ancient testimonies. It only shows how the same great battle has to be fought over again for the principles of Church order, which are now being as faithlessly betrayed as they were not long since gloriously won. It might happen that all the members of the Church are also members of a Free Mason's Lodge. Would it follow that what the Lodge does the Church does? We ourselves do not belong to that secret fraternity, but we have never doubted that its objects are philanthropic and benevolent—indeed so full of kindness and charity, that many are willing to accept it as a good enough religion for them. So far as this goes, why not agree that the Church shall work through the Lodge as her instrument? Will it be replied that the case is not parallel, since the Young Men's Christian Association proposes to itself exactly the same ends with the Church? Then we have a human institute lying over against a Divine, its counterpart in every particular, and therefore its *substitute.* What shall be thought of the audacity of the proposition? Nay, as will presently appear, it is a substitute more effective than the original, which is displaced because it has proved a failure.

It is one thing to acknowledge the shortcomings of the visible Church as consisting of members in whom the work of grace is but imperfectly developed, and altogether another thing to propose to supersede her under the allegation of incompetency. Let us read the language in which this indictment is flung against her. In the same journal from which we have already quoted, the following "incontrovertible propositions" of Mr. Cook are repeated with warm commendation:

"That the American Church, as organised under the voluntary system, is not reaching the unchurched masses in our large cities, with due effectiveness; that the unchurched masses, or unseated parishioners in great towns, have often, in many cities of Great Britain and the United States, been reached effectively when addressed earnestly, in tabernacles and free halls for evangelistic services, by Young Men's Christian Associations, or by the union of Churches."

It is a sad truth that there are so many thousands, not only in

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our cities, but throughout the land, who live without reference either to God or the soul, as though there was neither a judgment nor an eternity to come. But we must protest *in limine* against the use of terms which imply that they are in any sense excluded from the gospel, except by their own wicked choice. The expressions, so often repeated in the above extract, of "unchurched masses" and "unseated parishioners," are offensive, because of the implication that by some process they have been turned away by the Church, or deprived of rights and privileges which they were disposed to claim. The fact is, that they live in the light and under the sound of the gospel every day, voluntarily closing their eyes to the one and their ears to the other. The Church cannot justly be held responsible for their infidelity and irreligion, except in so far as she may fail to make the proper efforts for their reclamation. But when she has put forth all her resources, and when these boastful Associations have a thousandfold exceeded the abundance of her toil, the sad fact will remain that countless myriads will still "reject the counsel of God against themselves."

This melancholy picture is not drawn to excuse the sluggishness or apathy of the Church in seeking their salvation, but to show the necessity for discrimination in the censures which are levelled at her head. Let her not be held responsible for failure to accomplish that which no agency can achieve, but only for failure to do all that was in her province and in her power to attempt. Let it be admitted, then, that the Church has slept upon her duty in this particular—that she has been too content with simply nourishing those within her fold, instead of going into the wilderness to seek those that were lost; but what would reverence and filial piety dictate as the proper course to be pursued by the loyal and loving children to whom grace has been given, to mourn over her lethargy? What, but to approach the venerable mother with weeping expostulation, and with the entreaty that she would accept and direct the youthful energy which another agency, it is said, has wielded with such marked success? Perhaps this success is not quite as transparent to some as to others.

But we are not disposed to the invidious task of challenging

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results which are so ostentatiously proclaimed. The Church is venerable with age, and bears upon her front the scars of a thousand battles, and she can afford to smile at the enthusiasm of her youthful competitors, just "putting on the harness." A little longer experience may compel the painful admission of the German Reformer, that "old Satan was too strong for young Melanchthon." However, we do not challenge the alleged result of this new evangelism, because the admission will serve our purpose as well as the denial. "The unchurched masses," or "the unseated parishioners," "have been reached effectively by the Young Men's Christian Associations," according to the testimony of Mr. Cook. Very well: but who compose these Associations? "They are all members of the Churches," says the *Interior*. What, then, was to hinder the very same work from being done by the very same men *inside* the Church as well as *outside* the Church? There would have been a great saving of expense and of friction in simply dispensing with a new machinery. There would have been enjoyed all the prestige arising from the antiquity, experience, wisdom, and piety of the Church, all which had to be exchanged simply for the enterprise and dash of the younger rival. But then the opportunity would have been lost of "burning incense to our own drag," and of pointing out the mistake in not organising the Young Men's Christian Association two thousand years ago. To us the coolness with which the wisdom and authority of the Master are impugned in this substituting a human scheme for a Divine, is simply appalling; and should these Christian Associations accomplish a thousand-fold more apparent good than the boldest advocate dare claim in their behalf, it is more than counterbalanced by the presumption and will-worship of the whole scheme, which must work out its complete destruction in the end.

The only other argument which appears to us worthy of mention in support of these Associations, is that they afford a common platform upon which the different denominations may unite in a common evangelistic work. In this form, their claim to our support is singularly modest, challenging our respect if it does not secure our adhesion. But the peculiar glory is claimed by

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this organisation of being the only exhibition of that Christian unity so emphasised in our Lord's sacerdotal prayer, "that they all may be one—as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." With this extravagant pretension we are compelled to make issue. And we do it distinctly on the ground that the doctrine of Christian unity as expounded by these Associations is a heresy, and not the truth of God as laid down in Holy Scripture. The unity which the latter enjoins is "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"—illustrated by the apostle in words almost immediately following, "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, . . . from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 3, 13, 16.) The true unity is not that of Christians rolled up into a sort of ecclesiastical paste, but it is a union of parts coördinated together so as to form a symmetrical whole—a union of many members with different functions, constituting one body. It is the oneness of a common relation, through the operation of the same faith, to a common Saviour and Head; the oneness which springs from the possession of a common life, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; the oneness of a common affection between those having different gifts and different offices to discharge, but cheered by the same hopes and partakers of a common joy. It is therefore a unity which does not require the suppression of any convictions nor the smothering of any peculiarities, but which is only the more conspicuous as springing out of many differences, or, if you please, many contradictions. It is the unity of a thousand chords blending in the harmony of music, as contrasted with the monotony of a simple note in its endless prolongation.

The unity, however, which man would substitute for this, is the unity of mere organisation, hard, external, mechanical—to be attained by cultivating a supreme indifference to many portions

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of divine truth which are offered up in sacrifice to the one principle of being *externally together*. This is the golden image which is set up for idolatrous worship in our day; and everything must be swept out of the way that hinders the formation of those imperial organisations which are to impress the world with their massive grandeur. So far as the Young Men's Christian Association puts itself forward as the representative and champion of this false unity, it is to be resisted. And if a fatal heresy lurks in its fundamental and constitutive principles, it is far from being the agency to which the evangelisation of the race may be safely committed. That we have not exaggerated the danger in this direction, may be conclusively shown. A crusade has been openly declared against all creeds and denominational distinctions as a schismatical rending of the body of Christ. At least one organisation has been effected, under the auspices of some of the most honored names in the Northern Presbyterian Church, expressly ignoring all differences of religious belief, and comprehending all who can simply say that they are Christians. This effort, too, is put forth as tentative and typical of the general Broad Church movement, which finds many advocates—the comprehensive, mammoth, creedless Church, which is to swallow up all the existing sects, through the negative excellence of possessing no distinctive feature which can possibly offend a single taste. That this is the logical result of the influence and teachings of the Young Men's Christian Association, is perfectly obvious. And it is but a little while ago the public was electrified by the announcement that the great Broad Church, in her magnificent proportions, was about to be launched in the deep waters, under the combined auspices of the Lay Evangelists and the Young Men's Christian Association. The statement has been denied, so far as to the particular names which were associated with it. But it is highly significant that such a project should have found its way into print. It must have been lying in somebody's mind, and have found expression from somebody's lips. Can it be the dim shadow, just a little premature, of a great scheme that is yet behind the curtain?

Not insisting, however, any longer upon this fantastic unity

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of mere agglutination, let us turn to the more modest and practicable proposition that all the Churches shall combine upon the Young Men's Association as their common evangelistic agent. We have already shown that this cannot be done without a complete abdication of the trust for which the Church was herself created. It would work the forfeiture of her charter; it would be the final act of disloyalty to her great King, in which the Church formally disbands. She exists only for the discharge of certain functions; the remission of these to any other agent is simply *felo de se*. This puts an estoppel upon the transfer at once. It is not worth while to look at any of the advantages supposed to accrue, because the transfer is in itself unlawful.

If, however, we were to take up the subject under that aspect, it would be pertinent to consider whether any combination of the Churches is better than the generous rivalry by which, in their separate action, they are "provoked to love and good works." And if there are cases in which combined action would be better than separate, what is to hinder the different branches of the Church from uniting in joint action, in reference to these, in their organic and recognised character as Churches of Jesus Christ? Combining for a specific purpose in a way that is true and not fictitious, would not the effect be greater to say to the world, We come to you, not as the vicar or deputy of the Church, but as the Church herself, the *whole* Church uniting together as "ambassadors for Christ, to pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"? There would be in this case a gain, not only in the *effectiveness*, but in the *safety* of the evangelism. The whole work would be under ecclesiastical supervision, conducted under the wholesome direction and restraint of a written constitution, with its necessary balances and checks.

This article has been written under a painful sense of the displeasure with which it will be received by many whom the writer esteems and loves. But the language is unambiguous in which his convictions have been announced, because he would arouse his brethren to examine this whole subject anew, in the light the developments of the present time are throwing upon it. As surely as the earth revolves upon its axis, there is yet to be a

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great conflict for the very existence of the Church, as well as for the great doctrines of redemption and grace. The walls of Zion shall never fall; but to this end we must be careful that they are not undermined. In the portion of the Old Testament history now being studied in our Sabbath-schools, are some things full of prophetic warning to us in this day. Again and again we are told of the reformations under the pious kings of Judah, with this pathetic parenthesis thrown in: "nevertheless, the high places were not taken away." The heathen altars were destroyed upon every high hill, and the groves were cut down under whose dark shadows the licentious orgies of idolatrous worship were celebrated; but no pious zeal could arrest the irregular worship of Jehovah upon the high places where it had been conducted in the days of the patriarchs. We can easily supply the pleadings through which they were spared. Were not Bethel and Hebron and Carmel sacred in the associations of a blessed and hoary past? Did not Jehovah here and elsewhere reveal himself to the pious fathers of the Hebrew Church? Were they not convenient to many worshippers, whilst Jerusalem was distant? Nevertheless, it contravened the divine authority which had appointed a common worship on Mount Zion; and the mournful defeat in every reformation is pointed out in the continuance of a worship which was irregular, and under which the idolatrous worship of false gods found a shelter and a sanction. May there not be "high places" which need to be taken away in the Christian as as well as the Jewish Church? May not the irregular worship, however sincere, lead to idolatry and rûin in the one case as well as in the other? If Uzziah is struck with leprosy as he offers incense in the temple of the Lord, may it not be a warning to those who undertake to be "stewards of the mysteries of God," not being "called of God as was Aaron"? If the long-suffering of Jehovah be conspicuous in not overtaking the trespass with immediate judgment, what if the sorer calamity should befall of allowing the sin to work out its own results? God grant that none of us may be left to "eat of the fruit of our own way, and be filled with our own devices"!

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