

THE
Church Review

FOUNDED 1848

EDITED BY THE REV. HENRY MASON BAUM

VOLUME LVII

APRIL, 1890

PUBLISHED IN

JANUARY * APRIL * JULY * OCTOBER

New York

THE CHURCH REVIEW CO.

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THE
Church Review

VOLUME LVII. ✻ APRIL, 1890

Christian Reunion.

On the Basis Proposed by the Lambeth Conference.

WE thought it would be, not only a courteous act, but that it was due to representative men of the chief Christian Communions in this country, to offer them an opportunity to say in the pages of the CHURCH REVIEW how far they were willing to accept the basis for Christian Reunion proposed by the Lambeth Conference. Invitations to write were sent out to several leading clergymen of each Communion here represented, and we are glad to state that they were accepted, with but three or four exceptions.

Before entering upon the discussion of the basis proposed for Christian Reunion, we give so much of the Report of the Lambeth Conference of 1888 as relates to the subject.

Representative bishops and priests of the English and American Churches will reply, in our July issue, to these distinguished contributors to the great subject now under fraternal consideration. The replies will be written for the purpose of giving more definite information upon the points raised in these articles and not for the sake of controversy.

EDITOR.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER.

TO THE FAITHFUL IN CHRIST JESUS, GREETING:—

WE, Archbishops, Bishops Metropolitan, and other Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church, in full communion with the Church of England, one hundred and forty-five in number, all having superintendence over Dioceses or lawfully commissioned to exercise Episcopal functions therein, assembled from divers parts

mend that conferences be held, "such as that which has already been proposed by the Church in the United States of America, with the representatives of other chief Christian Communions in the English-speaking races." Are we to infer that you do not recognize these brethren whom you approach with proffers of love as true Churches in JESUS CHRIST? Must we presume you not to be aware that a proffer of union coming to us in this guise must necessarily be offensive? Let me assure you, then, that we believe our Churchly standing to be good and sufficient in the presence of Him who is head over all things. We say, then, in the language of your bishops, "We cannot desert *our* position either as to Faith or Discipline. That concord would, in our judgment, be neither true nor desirable which should be produced by such a surrender."¹

Thanking you for the invitation to speak on this subject in the pages of the CHURCH REVIEW, believe me,

Yours most sincerely,

GEORGE R. CROOKS.

The Unity of the Visible Church.

THE REV. HENRY J. VAN DYKE, D.D. [PRESBYTERIAN],
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

THE day for eulogizing the division of the Church of CHRIST into "denominations," has gone by. Thoughtful and earnest Christians are coming more and more to recognize and mourn over it as evil, in its origin and its results. We get the most vivid impression of the evil when we lay aside all abstract theories and look at the concrete facts as they exist before our eyes. We cannot embrace the Christian world in our view; but we can consider a part as the type of the whole. Here is a town, not a hundred miles from any of us, consisting of a thousand inhabitants, or about two hundred families, — just enough to make one parish or pastoral charge, able to sustain the ordinances of the Gospel for itself, and to contribute to the evangelizing of the world; but instead of one self-supporting

¹ *Proceedings, etc.*, p. 16.

Church, this town has five sickly organizations, two or three of which are sustained by some Missionary Board. One of these Churches has a steeple surmounted with the cross, the common symbol of Christianity; the others, if they have steeples at all, have crowned them with a weather-cock. All these Churches claim to be Christian; but they all bear denominational names, and each is a rival of the others. Now, the evil of this state of things does not consist only nor chiefly in its waste of Christian resources; but the chief evil is its demoralizing effect upon religious experience and Christian character. It narrows men's souls by concentrating on a sect the sympathies and affections which ought to expand upon the whole Body of CHRIST; and this effect is the most shrivelling when men succeed in deluding themselves into the belief that their sect *is* the Body of CHRIST. It creates false tests and standards of personal piety. It mars the symmetrical growth of the soul in the knowledge of CHRIST by magnifying certain doctrines to the neglect or denial of others. The notion that it is the mission of different denominations to bear witness to *particular phases* of Divine truth, might be well enough if the people to whom this witness is borne were brought under the influence of all the witnesses. But to subject one Christian to the teaching of Divine Sovereignty, and another to the insistence upon human freedom, cultivates two different types of character, neither of which is according to the truth. The idea of a "witness-bearing Church," — that is, a body of Christians with a special Divine commission to bear testimony against other *bodies of Christians*, — while it is pleaded in defence of denominationalism, is in fact one of the worst fruits of the system.

The effect of the system upon the Sacraments is no less to be deplored. It obscures the true meaning of these holy ordinances by contracting the Table of the LORD to the close communion of a party in this Church, and by making baptism the badge of a sect; so that one says, "I was baptized an *Episcopalian*," and another, "I was baptized a *Presbyterian*," and another, "I was baptized a *Baptist*." The effect of denominationalism upon the ministry is no less deplorable. It too often degrades the servant and ambassador of CHRIST into the hired man of a voluntary association, and suspends his reputation and influence upon his success in making proselytes from other "societies." That minister must be a strong man, who, in adjusting his work

to such conditions, does not lose somewhat of the spirit of his high commission, and shrivel his own mind to the dimensions of a *Gossip*.¹

These evils are greatly aggravated by their complication with social distinctions and family pride. Denominational lines, in such communities as we have described, are very apt to follow the lines of class distinctions, and to deepen them with "the Gospel plough." Religious societies become social clubs, and get rid of the question about seating the poor man in vile raiment by making it practically certain that he will not come into the same assembly with the man in goodly apparel and a gold ring. "The Salvation Army," or any other outside effort, is good enough for him. And so we look with complacency upon the spasmodic movements of zeal without knowledge, and even patronize them from a distance, as a salve to our conscience, not perceiving that the plea for their necessity, and indeed fact of their existence, is a standing reproach to the Church.

What wonder, if in this state of things one half of our settled ministers in all denominations are unsettled in their minds, and waiting for "a call"! What wonder if the doors of vacant Churches are besieged by an army of candidates, composed not only of young men who are openly looking for their first charge, but largely of old soldiers, some of whom by unworthy devices conceal the fact of their candidacy? Surely if we need a civil-service reform in the State, there is no less need of a pastoral-service reform in the Church. And this reform, to be effective, must begin at the denominationalism which fills the land with feeble Churches and half-supported ministers, and wastes in sectarian rivalries what ought to go to the evangelizing of the world.

The first and most important step toward the correction of any evil is to see and acknowledge its existence; and the second is like unto it, — an earnest desire for a better state of things. The unity of Christendom — a unity that the world can see, and be convinced by it that the Father has sent His only begotten Son — is to-day a longing in the heart and a prayer on the lips of multitudes of Christians. We hail every expression of such desire as a prophecy of its fulfilment, according to

¹ *Gossip* is an ecclesiastical term, — a corruption of *Godsid*. It was first applied to sponsors in baptism, and its development into its present popular use is not without historic significance. See Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

others the same sincerity we claim for ourselves. We do not sympathize with those who view with squint suspicion the proposals for reunion by the American Episcopal Church indorsed by the Lambeth Conference; and while we cannot accept the terms proposed in their present form as sufficient and practicable, we do heartily embrace and respond to their spirit. The reunion of Christendom is a sublime idea, an inspiring hope. It is not necessary to the indulgence of this hope to forecast the precise form of its fulfilment; and therefore we need not exclude from its embrace any of those throughout the world who profess the true religion. The best things in the world are not *made*; they *grow*. The unification of Christendom, as a whole, or in part, cannot be accomplished by bargains and contracts between rival sects; neither can it be effected by the absorption of one denomination under the distinctive forms of another. The *Romanist* may cry, "Lay aside your private judgment, and submit to the infallible Pope." The *Episcopalian* may say, "Come and be ordained by our bishops;" the *Baptist* may say, "Come and be immersed;" the *Presbyterian* may say, "We acknowledge the validity of your orders and sacraments; only accept our Calvinism, and we will be one;" and the *Methodist* may respond, "Give up your Calvinism and accept our doctrine of free grace;" but what do all these invitations amount to? They cannot be accepted. Men cannot and ought not to renounce their personal convictions of truth. If you should dissolve all Christian denominations to-day, it would create not union, but anarchy. If you should renounce all creeds, the result would be, not a broader faith, but a confusion of tongues. Is there, then, no practicable way in which we may work toward the fulfilment of our hopes? Yes, certainly. We can hold to our distinctive forms, whether of discipline or of worship; but we can hold the form in subordination to the substance. We can hold our distinctive creeds until the time comes when they can be safely laid aside, meanwhile recognizing CHRIST, the incarnate Word, as above all written words, human and Divine, the confession of faith in Him as above all creed-subscriptions, and the Catholic Church, which is His Body, as above all Christian denominations. If these principles are accepted, not in word only, but in power, their dominance will show itself. There are three directions in which they may work themselves out gradually but mightily,

like the dawning of the day, — Recognition, Co-operation, and Federation.

1. *Recognition.* The Church of Rome is the only Christian denomination which officially claims to be *the* Church in any exclusive sense; and this claim, coupled with her denial of any distinction between the Church as visible and invisible, necessarily precludes the Church standing, the Christian character, and the salvation of all who do not acknowledge her authority and participate in her sacraments. In this she is terribly logical and consistent. But what is to hinder any and all Protestant denominations from acknowledging one another individually and collectively as belonging to the Church of CHRIST, and treating one another accordingly? Theoretically, and aside from the sectarian spirit of which we are all more or less guilty, there are only two obstacles in the way, — the mode of *baptism*, and the mode of *ordination* to the ministry. But that these are not insuperable obstacles to mutual recognition is evident; because upon the supposition that the validity of the sacraments depends upon the specific mode of their administration, and the authority of the ministry to administer them, and their consequent efficacy, depend upon a particular mode of ordination to the ministry, it is not credible that CHRIST and His Apostles should fail to leave on record specific instructions which would prevent the possibility of mistake upon the subject. It may not be possible even for GOD to state an *abstract doctrine* in human language so that all human minds will apprehend it alike; but there is no such difficulty in the way of describing an act to be performed by human hands. If CHRIST was immersed Himself and meant all His disciples to follow His example in this respect, and if immersion is essential to the validity of baptism, why did He not say so? Why is it not so written in explicit terms? If any one answers, "He *did* say so, and it *is* so written," we respond, "We cannot see it." And the fact that millions of the holiest and wisest men in all the Christian ages, whose candor and love of truth are beyond question, have not been able to see it, is proof conclusive that it is not there. The same observations apply to ordination to the ministry. If Paul and the other Apostles believed that no ordination is valid unless it be performed by the hands of a Diocesan bishop, distinct from and superior in office to ordinary ministers, and that the succession of such ordinations is essential to the existence of the

visible Church and to the efficacy of her Sacraments, why did they not say so, and record the doctrine in explicit terms for the instruction of all ages? The fact that men equally learned and honest differ on the subject, is proof conclusive that there is no such record. When our Episcopal brethren in their overture for reunion insist upon "the *Historic*, meaning the *Diocesan*, Episcopate" as equally essential with the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Sacraments, we remind them that there is a *Prehistoric* Episcopate which is not *Diocesan*, and that by their own acknowledgment what they call the *Historic* Episcopate is not explicitly enjoined in the Scriptures, which "contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the rule and ultimate standard of Faith." Oh, is it not pitiful in the sight of GOD and angels that the mere mode of administering two outward ordinances, concerning which CHRIST has given no explicit instructions, should be magnified into partition walls between His disciples, for whom He prays that they all may be one? And the pity becomes more profound when we consider the fact that these two obstacles have not always and everywhere been regarded as insurmountable. It is only in this country that the Baptist denomination makes its mode of baptism a warrant for "close communion." It is only since the days of Charles I. and his prime minister, Archbishop Laud, that the Episcopal denomination has refused to recognize the validity of other ordinations beside its own.

We shall be reminded that now and here these partition walls are not so high as to prevent the different denominations from looking *over them* and mutually recognizing one another as Christians. We admit this, and rejoice in the growing spirit of inter-denominational comity, which is so characteristic of our times. But it is the unity of the visible *Church* that we are contending for. We long for *Church* recognition as the only legitimate and permanent embodiment of Christian fellowship. Mutual recognition aside from the organic life and work of the Churches, performed as a holiday parade, and upon platforms erected for that special purpose, is little more than a confession of the evils of denominationalism. It does not apply any practical remedy; sweet and pleasant in itself, it is only a sentiment, and unless it is embodied in deeds, it will evaporate in the words that express it. If it goes no farther, its practical effect is to disparage the Church, and to alienate thinking men from her.

life and her work. What we need is such a mutual recognition as will lead to co-operation.

2. And this *Co-operation* must be within and not outside of the visible Church. We do not undertake to forecast its methods; but we have a very distinct prevision of its results. *First* of all, it will prevent the needless multiplication of Churches, and the waste of Christian means and energies in particular localities. *Secondly*, it will elevate the ministry, and cultivate a nobler type of Christian character, by laying aside petty rivalries and strifes about words and forms of worship, whose only effect is the perversion of the hearers, and by insisting upon the great central facts and doctrines of Christianity. *Thirdly*, it will add immense resources and give a new impulse to the missionary work of the Church, which is the chief object of her existence; and it will give new efficacy to that work, by presenting a united front and lifting up high above all sectarian colors the common banner of Christianity before the heathen world.

3. As both an expression and a practical means of promoting this recognition and co-operation, we are heartily in favor of *Federation* between any and all denominations of Christians.

One thing seems clear, — that the unification of the Church cannot be accomplished by one denomination working upon another from without. Proselytism, whether by argument or persuasion, is a waste of time and strength. The converts made by such means are far-fetched and of little worth; neither, again, can the denominations be unified by any power separate from and above them all. The wrecks of that experiment are scattered along the whole path of history. The time for world empires, whether of the Church or the State, is past. The unity of the Church can be effected only by a vital power dwelling in every part and common to all. That power can be none other than the HOLY SPIRIT. But the SPIRIT OF GOD, in Nature and in grace, works by means. Cosmos, "the beautiful order," was not imposed upon, but evolved out of Chaos. The SPIRIT

With mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like, sat brooding on the vast abyss
And made *it* pregnant.

The earth and the waters brought forth abundantly.

The unification of Christian denominations must be attained by bringing out into clearer recognition and adjusting to new relations that which is already in them. The first stage in the process is the practical acknowledgment that the things in which they agree, whether in doctrine, discipline, or worship, are not only more important in their bearing, but more and greater in themselves, than the things in which they differ. The conviction of this truth comes home to every candid mind in the careful study of the creeds of Christendom. But the thought of theologians and scholars needs to be embodied in a visible form in order to be apprehended by the popular mind. What more simple or safe embodiment of the idea can be invented than the Federation of Christian denominations? The possibilities of such Federation are unlimited. It does not involve the surrender of sectarian peculiarities, but simply the subordination of them for a time to that which is confessedly higher and more important. Under any plan which may be adopted, it will have this great advantage, that practice will go hand in hand with theory, and the experiment reach no farther than experience shall warrant. Beginning on a small scale, and embracing at first only the subdivisions of sects holding the same system of doctrine and order, and separated by distinctions as small as the difference between a psalm and a hymn, or between the sound of a pitch-pipe and the swell of an organ, who shall say that it will not enlarge its circumference and intensify its assimilating power until it embraces the Christian world in its circumference? It is easy to sit in the seat of the polemic, surmising difficulties and predicting failure; but it is far nobler to hope for and hasten unto the blessed time when out of many folds there shall be one flock and one Shepherd. The greatest living poet sang in his youth of a poetical millennium, —

When the war-drums throb no longer, and the battle-flags are furled
In the parliament of men, the federation of the world.

And though the vision has not yet come to pass, who will say there has been no progress toward its fulfilment? Behind and above all the kingdoms of the world is the Kingdom of our LORD and His CHRIST. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. Who shall say how near may be the time when the isles which wait for His law shall hail the light of His coming, and the troubled sea moaning on every

shore shall hear and be hushed at the stillness of His voice? And above all, who will refuse to do what he can to prepare the way of the LORD, to exalt every valley, to make low every mountain, to gather out the stones and make smooth the rough places in the highway of our GOD? I am a Presbyterian, not only by birth, but by conviction, and yield to no man in loyalty to the denomination in whose service my life has been spent, and in whose bosom I hope to die; but I do not expect to be a Presbyterian nor anything of the kind in heaven. And as my sun grows larger and more mellow toward its setting, I would gladly exchange everything that is not essentially Christian for a few of the days of heaven on earth, in the unity and peace of the Church of GOD, which He hath purchased with His own blood.

HENRY J. VAN DYKE.

Brooklyn.

THE REV. THOMAS ARMITAGE, D.D. [BAPTIST], NEW YORK CITY.

EDITOR OF THE CHURCH REVIEW, SIR:

YOU ask how far the Basis of Christian Reunion, made by the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, and the Lambeth Conference in England, is likely to commend itself to the approbation of the various Christian Communions?

There is great room for fear that its influence for practical benefit will be very limited; and chiefly because it makes no attempt to remove the radical differences which exist between the Communions, and to which they severally cling with all the tenacity which the human conscience can command. No subject is worthy of more patient thought than that submitted by these two bodies of learned and venerable men. They breathe the spirit of the age in striving for a higher unity than has been yet attained, and express a strong conviction that the present fragmentary state of things is unsatisfactory, and so far, their loving aim at oneness must bring the several Communions into that closer relationship which follows a better knowledge of one another. No broad and catholic meeting-plan can be found for them, where the truest mutual respect is not cultivated, where