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ARTICLE I.

DR. BLEDSOE'S PHILOSOPHY OF VOLITION.

PART SECOND.

We now approach the second part of our undertaking—the more articulate discussion of Dr. Bledsoe's special theory of free agency. He charges us with a delinquency in not discussing it formally in our number of October last; where we did not propose nor undertake to do it. We shall now repair that omission; but in a manner which, we surmise, will contribute very little to his contentment. Other inducements to this discussion exist in the fundamental importance of the doctrine of free agency, and in the relation between Dr. Bledsoe's theory of it and all his other theological lucubrations. He seems to suppose that we evaded the task of arguing for our view, under the pretext of such discussions being superfluous for Presbyterian readers; when in fact we knew that his mighty logic (in the Examination of Edwards) had already demolished all the Calvinistic arguments. The reader shall see. The method we propose is, to define carefully our theory of free agency, and then to prove it. We shall then be prepared to entertain Dr. Bledsoe's rival theory, and weigh its contents—if there be any.

First then, the question between us is not whether man is a real free agent, or whether consciousness testifies that we are, or

ARTICLE VII.

THE LATE GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL
AT EDINBURGH.

The papers of our Church with one accord have fully set forth all the sayings and doings at the General Presbyterian Council, and it may be fairly presumed that Southern Presbyterians are all tolerably well informed of what took place at its first meeting in St. Giles—the church where Jennie Geddes threw her stool at the dean's head, and where John Knox used to thunder and lighten in his pulpit,—and at its subsequent meetings for seven or eight days at the Free Church Assembly Hall in Edinburgh. The constitutionality of our taking part as a Church in this Council, and the propriety and expediency of our Church's having any representatives there, were discussed as abstract questions at Savannah. The question of the Council now comes back to us on the report of its proceedings as an actual and practical one. And in this new aspect of the case, it is proposed in this article to offer some observations upon what took place in the Council, and what seem likely to be the practical manifestations and tendencies of this movement. It would be strange if this summing up should point to no commendable features of so imposing an assemblage. And if, on the other hand, any of its aspects should appear to demand criticism, it ought surely to be offered in a spirit not less fair than frank.

One must suppose, of course, that the claims of the Council to the approbation of all good men, for what it said and what it did, could hardly be set forth in more fitting terms than were employed by Dr. Blaikie at its last meeting, when this eminent minister of the Free Church, who had acted so prominent a part in getting up the Council, spoke of its bringing together “a multitude of brethren, members of the same family, who had never seen each other's faces in the flesh,” and then added that it had “indicated the real unity of that great body of which Christ is the Head,” and “in some measure fulfilled the prayer of our blessed Lord the night before he died.” The “multitude

of brethren, members of the same family," were, of course, Presbyterians coming together at the Council, which was a plain fact. The "great body of which Christ is the Head," and which he prayed might all be one, is, of course, the visible Church catholic, and Dr. Blaikie considered that in some measure its real unity was indicated and secured in the unity of the Presbyterians at this Council.

Alongside of these very Christian expressions may be placed what Dr. J. Oswald Dykes of London, of the English Presbyterian Church, a prominent member of the Council, said in the concluding address:

"Our alliance . . . must repose upon the basis, not of ecclesiastical polity alone, but of Christian life and Christian love. . . . We have been occupied to some extent with matters which were of necessity denominational, but much more with such as are of universal concern to Christian men. If we gave one day to Presbyterian questions, we have given the rest to wider ones, such as the work of the ministry, the extension of the gospel, and the defence of the faith. In discussing even these, it is perhaps inevitable that we view them from a more or less denominational standpoint; but it is not inevitable, and it would be fatal, that we should treat them in a denominational spirit."

And so with these estimates of the character and influence of the General Presbyterian Council, made by two of its most eminent members across the water, let the following be considered, which the distinguished Northern Presbyterian, Dr. Howard Crosby, of New York, has published in *The Christian Union*:

"Now, if you ask what good has the Council done, I answer, that it has (1) brought into actual contact all the Presbyterians of the world, and thus created a true sympathy; (2) prepared the way of help for the weaker bodies from the stronger; (3) made Presbyterians to see that a letting up in non-essentials will not harm their orthodoxy; (4) agitated among Presbyterians the idea of universal Christian unity; and (5) enlarged the outlook of all the members."

Now, this is the very same Dr. Crosby whose "Life of Christ" this REVIEW once pronounced heretical, and the reader will perhaps not be surprised at the slack tone of this utterance from him. Dr. Crosby glories in the Council because of its "letting up" as to orthodoxy, and its "universal" notions of Church unity. Well, this is just Dr. Crosby,—and let it pass. But as to what

fell from Drs. Blaikie and Dykes, is there not room to ask what is the significance of it? What is the tendency of a Presbyterian Council where apology has to be made for one day spent in considering Presbyterian questions? and where condemnation falls upon denominational zeal on the part of Presbyterians? and where praise is meted out only to Christian zeal and Christian love, but discussion in a denominational spirit is condemned as a fatal thing? "We have been occupied to some extent," says Dr. Dykes, "with matters which were of necessity denominational, but much more with such as are of universal concern to Christian men." Now, was it expected in assembling representatives of so many Presbyterian Churches, that Presbyterian questions were to be barely tolerated, or even scouted as unworthy to be considered, while only missions, and temperance, and Sunday-schools, and other matters of universal concern to Christian men, were strictly proper to be introduced? Certainly no such view of the proposed Council was presented at New Orleans, or urged at Savannah, to induce our Church to go into this alliance. Those General Assemblies verily thought it was a conference of committees from real and true, not *quasi*, Presbyterian Churches, which they were invited to meet by a committee of our own, and that this conference was not to be ashamed to confer freely and fully about Presbyterian matters.

When it was proposed in the Council to publish the opening sermon of Professor Flint, of the Established Church of Scotland, Dr. McCosh said emphatically, that he did not agree with all the statements made in the sermon. This was a little hard on the Professor, who must be well aware what a misfortune it is for any man to have the Doctor disagree with him. Notwithstanding this censure pronounced in Scotland, it may be ventured away off here in the bosom of the Southern Presbyterian Church to declare that the Inaugural was a most admirable discourse. Our "back country elder" has compared Professor Flint, in person, manner, and style of composition, (but not in his reading his sermon instead of preaching it,) to Dr. Thornwell. It is a high compliment to the living theologian, and a careful reading of the discourse must fill one with a strong desire to hear more from the

Professor. On this occasion he took his text from John xvii. 20, 21, and his theme was *Christian Unity*—the gift which Christ asked for his people—the “very best gift he could ask for them.” But there is “a false as well as a true unity in every sphere of thought and of life.” And “no where have erroneous notions of unity been so injurious as in religion.” “In the name of Christian unity men have been asked (said Professor Flint) to sacrifice the most sacred rights of reason, conscience, and affection: Independence of judgment, honesty, brotherly love, and every quality which gives to human nature worth and dignity, have been treated as incompatible with it.” “The unity our Saviour prayed that his followers might enjoy has been widely confounded with kinds of unity which have no necessary connexion either with Christian peace or love, and which may be, and often have been, the occasions of most unchristian discord and hatred.” The preacher then proceeds to tell what true unity is: (1.) It is a unity of supernatural origin. (2.) It is a unity which has not only its foundation but its standard or model in heaven. (3.) It is a unity which exists already just so far as Christianity exists; and it does not require different denominations to surrender their differences. (4.) It is a unity underlying all the differences which distinguish the denominations from one another, and is not to be identified with any such secondary unities as identity of doctrine, or uniformity of ritual, or oneness of government.

Now it seems very manifest that this discourse does not favor the sentiments expressed by Dr. Dykes, although Dr. Dykes refers to it as if in accordance with them. He says, “God’s servant told us how our alliance, if it is to be an instance of genuine Christian unity, and not of that which is mechanical or secular, must repose upon the basis, not of ecclesiastical polity alone, but of Christian life and Christian love.” But, surely, no such language and no such idea as this is to be found in Professor Flint’s sermon. *There*, it is distinctly pointed out that genuine Christian unity is one thing, and denominational unity quite another thing, and that the former does by no means require the latter to be disparaged as something “mechanical or secular,”

while the latter does by no means stand in the way of the former, or form any hindrance to it. It is just possible that Dr. Dykes and Dr. McCosh neither of them heard perfectly what the preacher said, or that in the flow of his exquisitely fine thought and language they did not precisely catch his meaning. The attentive reader will find no such difficulty. The Professor distinguishes Presbyterian unity from Christian unity, (as well he might, and as Dr. Dykes in a most important aspect failed to do,) but the Professor does not, like Dr. Dykes, disparage Presbyterian unity or denominational spirit. He warns the Council, and very properly, against the "undue exaltation" of what distinguishes Presbyterians from their Christian brethren of other denominations. He speaks of Church Government as an "outward form," (which it certainly is,) and he refers to some other Churches as separated from the Presbyterian "by so thin a partition wall as a mode of ecclesiastical government," but these are perhaps the only expressions used by him in the whole discourse which the most thorough-going Presbyterian would be disposed to criticise, and in the connexion where they are employed he would probably not criticise them at all. Professor Flint said, "We have come together as Presbyterians, but with the wish to promote Christian unity." But he says he knows "scarcely any truth about Christianity which we are more apt to forget, and which we more need to remember, than just this, that Christian unity already exists as far as Christianity itself does. . . . The great duty of Christians in this matter, some seem to think, is to ignore their differences, or to conceal them, or to get rid of them any how; they appear to find it difficult to understand how there can be a unity coëxisting with and underlying differences, and wholly distinct from the uniformity which can only be gained by the surrender or the suppression of differences. This is a very superficial view, for it represents Christian unity not as a living and spiritual thing at all, but as a mere dead outward form of doctrine or policy." He also said, "Christian unity does not require us to undervalue any particular truth, or to surrender any denominational principle; . . . it merely requires that we do not allow our denominational differences to

prevent us from tracing and admiring the operations of the Spirit of grace through the most dissimilar channels. There may be Christian oneness where there are also differences which no man can rationally count of slight moment."

He added, "As to the differences between these denominations, they might surely exist and yet prove merely the means of exercising and strengthening Christian unity. If we can only be at one in spirit with those who agree with us in opinion, there can be but little depth or sincerity in such oneness. The love which vanishes before a difference of views and sentiments must be of a very superficial and worthless nature." And he proceeded to show that it is not differences of principle between denominations which ever do violate Christian unity, but it is evil and unchristian passions gathering round these differences.

This admirable sermon goes on to show that "a true union between Churches must be rather grown into than directly striven for." And Professor Flint sets forth that such is the only ecclesiastical union which we are to value. He says:

"There are not a few who hold that the Church, as the body of Christ, must become externally, visibly, organically one. This is the sort of unity which the Church of Rome has ever maintained to be an essential characteristic of the true Church. . . . It is a unity, I am persuaded, which would be pernicious if it could be attained, but which fortunately cannot be attained; an ideal which is a dream—a grandiose dream, and also a diseased dream—an ambition which is foolish if not guilty. The notion of a universal Church in this sense is precisely the same delusion in religion as the notion of a universal monarchy or a universal republic in politics, and in fact implies that that Utopia is a truth which can be, and will be, realised. . . . A universal Church would be as surely a misgoverned Church as a universal empire would be a misgoverned empire."

Thus Professor Flint; yet Dr. Crosby sighs after the ideal of "universal Christian unity" agitated at the Council, and to be brought about by "letting up" in orthodoxy; and Dr. McCosh does "not agree with all the Professor's statements,"—especially, perhaps, the statement about its being a mere "grandiose dream, a diseased dream, and a foolish, if not guilty, ambition" for any man to cherish and undertake to realise the delusion of any universal Christian unity in this present dispensation.

Recurring to the very catholic spirit and utterances of some leading men at the Council, the reader will remember that our own Dr. W. Brown has publicly declared in emphatic terms that there were no Broad Church views in the Council, or none except very cautiously expressed. It is not intended to be affirmed, as to what has been quoted from Drs. Blaikie and Dykes, that they expressed any Broad Church views, either cautiously or incautiously. Because that term signifies, as commonly understood, the widening out of Presbyterian doctrine and creed, so as to embrace in our particular connexion those who hold the very opposite ideas. Now, Drs. Blaikie and Dykes were not talking at all of that thing. The point which they held up to the Council's admiration was not the ecclesiastical identification of other Churches with the Presbyterian on any terms whatever. They were not guilty at all of so broadening our Presbyterian platform, as to recommend it to the adoption of others. Not at all. But what they did was possibly quite as much to be condemned. The fault to be found with these leaders of the Council was that of so narrowing and straitening and belittling all purely Presbyterian matters as to make them out contemptible and unworthy of consideration, while they magnified the things that are of "universal concern to Christian men." It is not Broad Church views, nor Large Church views, nor High Church views they are to be charged with, but with the representation of the whole Presbyterian Church as little and mean, and its peculiar affairs not to be discussed except with apologies for so occupying the general Presbyterian Council! These leaders glorified universal Christian unity, but Presbyterian life and vigor and zeal were made of no value.

If there were then no Broad Church views at Edinburgh, there seems to have been there some little of a Presbyterianism which had no self-respect, or rather which lacked reverence for the Divine right justly claimed for the system. Not as the representatives of universal Church unity, but of Presbyterian Churches they came together, and they should not have sought to pass themselves off for anything wider or more liberal. To meet as Presbyterians and then talk of the "denominational

spirit" as improper or "fatal," was utterly unworthy of the Council. And now the logic of the position of these leaders requires that at the meeting in 1880, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and all other Christian bodies, should be invited to be present and take an equal part. There, in the city of "brotherly love" (so called) let universal Church unity appear and manifest itself.

Our Dr. William Brown is, of course, as competent a witness as could be desired touching the question on which he has testified as to there being any Broad Church views in the General Presbyterian Council. And yet, competent as Dr. Brown is, it may be doubted whether, being present and catching the spirit of brotherly love and of large and liberal Christian affections, which undoubtedly pervaded the body, (very much to their honor,) Dr. Brown might not become a little blind to what the reader of the speeches can see as he sits coolly and calmly down to examine what was said and done. It is generally wrong to make a man an offender for a word, and yet it is right to watch, with the keenness of an eagle's eye, any, even the slightest, indications of a tendency in a body constituted like this Council, towards latitudinarian views. In such an age as ours there is danger all the time of drifting away from safe anchorage. If there was at Edinburgh any squinting towards a consolidation of Churches based on the surrender of principle, it deserves to be exposed and condemned, because not for any such purpose did the Council profess to assemble. And it must be confessed that there were some inklings of opinion touching the merging of differences amongst Presbyterians, and indeed amongst all Christians, which will not bear the closest examination. For example, at the first public meeting the Rev. Mr. Henderson, from Australia, had over and over again the loud plaudits of the Council when he described the union formed there in 1858, under which the various kinds of Presbyterians "forgot all their differences," and not only so, but Congregationalists, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Presbyterians were practically merged into one, freely occupying one another's pulpits, and knowing no separating peculiarities. Mr. Henderson closed his speech with an expression of the

confident belief, that "before he died, or at least in his children's time, or if not then, yet in the time of his children's children, it would be in Scotland as it is already in Victoria," and loud applause greeted the sentiment. Now, then, if it ought to be and is to be thus in Scotland, why not in the United States and everywhere else? Mr. Henderson said the people "forced all the various Presbyterian ministers in Australia to be one;" and so they might as well force, one would suppose, Baptists, Methodists, and all to be one. Now, was there not a little, just a very little, squinting towards Broad Church in this much applauded speech? And so Professor Brummelkamp, of the Reformed Free Church of the Netherlands "rejoiced in the spirit of unifying," and at "this idea taking root in the hearts of Christians all round. They could become one because they were one. . . . Everything was united to bring them together; there was only one voice against it, and that was the voice of Satan, who was always pushing forward everywhere little differences and fixing their eyes on them." And so the Rev. Dr. D. Fraser, of the English Presbyterian Church at London, "did not believe in the communion of Presbyterianism. He loved it, but only as a part of the great communion of saints."

These are just a few specimens of the kind of liberality that was rife in the Council, and was *sure to be applauded*. How would such declarations be received in any General Assembly of our Church? What should we say to any minister or elder in our highest court at home, all whose favor was for other Churches of Christ, and who had no preference and almost no charity for his own individual denomination? And what is likely to be the effect upon our delegates to the General Presbyterian Council in its triennial meetings, should we continue to send delegates, if they are always to hear these liberal expressions welcomed with shouts of praise, while no encouragement is given to the firm and manly profession and maintenance of principles honestly and conscientiously and intelligently entertained?

Indeed, how is it conceivable that forty-nine Presbyterian bodies, assembling by delegates at Edinburgh, which cherish tenaciously widely conflicting differences in dogma, from the

straitest lines of the Old School in this country down to the broadest latitudinarianism, should earnestly confer together without either too much complaisance for honesty, or else a downright contention? There are Presbyterians who hold Unitarian ideas, and there are Presbyterians who deny the inspiration of the word, and there are Presbyterians who accept the union of Church and State; and when a conglomerate body of different doctrinal views like these gets fairly at work counselling together, there must come either an open rupture amongst them, or else, as Dr. Crosby elegantly expressed it, some "letting up of orthodoxy," and even some denouncing by good men like Dr. Dykes, of "the denominational spirit" as a "fatal" one. Accordingly, it will be observed that at the first public meeting, the Reformed Confessions, in all their grand Calvinistic theology, were the theme of the Council's praises, but that after days of "gush" about "universal Christian unity," the same Council, in its breaking up, is persuaded by some of its best leaders to frown on denominationalism, and even the stern and usually uncompromising Dr. Begg, of the Free Church, so far relaxes as to follow Dr. Dykes's speech with praises of "the firm tone pervading the addresses."

And yet, whoever will sharply scan the address of Dr. Schaff on that first day, upon the consensus of the Reformed Churches, will find in it not only statements confirmatory of the representations now made as to the strong divergencies of doctrine existing amongst the Reformed Churches of this day, but also expressions dropping from Dr. Schaff himself, which indicate the *broadness* of views of that eminent leader of the Council. Notice the statement, that "in the middle of the last century a theological revolution, such as never swept before over the Christian Church, swept over the Reformed Churches," by which "the symbolical books were dethroned on the continent, and in almost every country in Europe lost their former authority," and that "in the present century the authority of the symbolical books is [only] on the increase." Then notice the statement, that "the faith [of those Reformed Churches] is the same as that of the Reformation, but the theology is different, not in substance, but in form and

the relative importance of topics." Read still further: "Every age must produce its own theology, adapted to its peculiar condition and wants." Then notice the statement of differences "between the modern and the old theology of the Reformed Churches:" one is a difference with respect "to the mode of inspiration, but not the *fact* of inspiration, nor the authority of the Bible;" another, the old "was intensely polemical, confessional, and exclusive, while modern evangelical theology is catholic." And finally observe that Dr. Schaff wants "a new Œcumenical Reformed Confession," that is, the consensus of the old "freely reproduced and adapted to the present state of the Church." "The preparation of such a Confession would afford an excellent opportunity to simplify and popularise the Reformed system of doctrine." "But the expediency of such a work at the present time is, to say the least, very doubtful. The pear may be ripening, but it is not ripe yet. . . . Our theology is in a transition state, and has not yet reached such clear and definite results as could be embodied in a form of sound words. It would be impossible to unite all the Reformed Churches under an elaborate Confession. . . . The Anglo-American Churches would require a *maximum* of orthodoxy, the Continental Churches would be content with a *minimum*. The recent Confessions framed by the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud, 1847, the Free Church of Geneva, 1848, the General Synod of the Reformed Church of France in 1872, of the Free Church of Neuchatel in 1874, of the Evangelical Church Association of Switzerland in 1871, and of the Free Church of Italy in 1872, are very brief, and leave room for a great variety of views. So are the nine articles of the Evangelical Alliance. At all events, I am quite satisfied that the present Council would not be competent in the short time of a week to mature such an important document, but would have to leave the whole subject in the hands of an able committee to report to the next triennial meeting."

Thus Dr. Schaff tested the Council at its first meeting as to a new Confession of Faith, (advocating the measure very cautiously,) but found the pear not ripe. Too many were present who, like Dr. Begg, were disposed to question the position, that "every

age must produce its own theology," and to maintain, on the contrary, that "theology has been the same since the days of Eden," that there have been really no "discoveries in theology, though the frequent resurrection of old errors," and that as to the idea of a new theology, "he just wished it to be understood that they did not mean to swallow that." And so that "able committee," to "adapt and popularise the old Confessions," and report "the theology for this period," to the Council at Philadelphia (of all places in the world) in 1880, was not appointed. And yet the Council decided that the proper place for its next meeting was Philadelphia, and that (as appeared from the speeches of Dr. Blaikie and others who advocated the choice) mainly because *there* had taken place the *glorious union consummated betwixt the Old and the New School!* And our eight and twenty representatives, whether they approved or disapproved of this as the ground of the choice, seem to have felt that it would not be the proper thing for them to make objection. Diametrical as our Church considers to be the opposition between Old and New School Presbyterianism, it was felt at Edinburgh that it would not be decent to say anything against that argument for holding the Council at the city of brotherly love. It would have been too positively hostile to the general *animus* of the body in favor of "universal Christian unity."

The reader who has candidly considered what has been said, has no doubt already begun to think it not so very certain that there were no Broad Church views in the Council. Of course there will be many, even in our Church, of the "high pious" order, ready to denounce this article as exhibiting "a very bad spirit;" for where there was so much harmony and brotherly love, and so many prayers offered, and so much discussion about missions and Sunday-schools, with so many affecting anecdotes thrown in, and so many touching appeals made, and so many moving exhortations delivered, must it not be a *very bad spirit* that would lead any one to find any fault at all with the proceedings of so venerable, learned, excellent, and holy an assembly? Especially, must it not be very wicked to assail any of the good men there gathered, as not sound Calvinists and Presbyterians?

Was it not *the General Presbyterian Council*, occupying, as far as it was possible, the œcumenical position and character, and entitled to many times more reverence than any General Assembly? Let this point, therefore, of Broad Church views in the Council be dismissed as having been sufficiently presented in such a bad spirit, after reference has been made to only one more circumstance, confirming all that has been said; that circumstance is the presence and the prominence in the Council of Principal Tulloch of the Established Church of Scotland. And who is Principal Tulloch? Read Dr. William Cunningham's review of Principal Tulloch's book on the "Leaders of the Reformation," and see that work charged by Dr. Cunningham (whose authority our Church regards so high) with "unsound and dangerous," with "loose, dangerous views," and with "giving up the theology of the Reformation as untenable and unsatisfactory." Dr. C. does not hesitate to say that Dr. Tulloch is a "latitudinarian, to whom the *jus divinum* of Presbyterian Church Government is very offensive." And surely nothing in this article will compare with the following: "When Dr. Tulloch intimates his approbation of '*the idea of a free faith holding to very different dogmatic views, and yet equally Christian,*' we presume he just means, in plain English, to tell us that Calvinism, Arminianism, and Socinianism, are all equally Christian." (Cunningham's *Reformers and Theology of the Reformation*, p. 51.)

Steuart of Purdivan tell us (see Book I., Title XVIII.,) that in 1581, in the Book of Policy, the Kirk agreed that "besides the General Assembly, there might by an Universal Assembly of the Church of Christ in the world, commonly called an œcumenical Council, representing the universal Church, which is the body of Christ." The idea then was, that the Protestant Princes and commonwealths should concert as to the time and place and means and security of such a council, and that the National or Provincial Assemblies should each delegate one minister and one elder to attend for each province consisting of an hundred parishes: "Most of the churches being already bound and obliged to own and maintain that Confession of Faith which they have

by their canons authorised and approved; and there being an universal harmony in the doctrine contained in all the Confessions of the Reformed Churches, the work of a General Council as to matters of Faith, would in all probability be sweet and easy; and if in what relates to the worship, discipline, or government of the Church, there should be some misunderstandings, God would reveal even this unto them." The plan of those times was that the Council should meet every seven years, and one from different churches be chosen to the chair at every new Council. To prepare the way for such a catholic meeting, correspondence was to be had amongst the various Churches. And the devout language of our forefathers on this subject was: "When it shall please the Lord to make ready and dispose the nations for a General Council, then shall beauty and strength appear more remarkably in the whole catholic Church, which is the body of Christ."

But in 1552, Archbishop Cranmer, writing to Calvin, proposed a "godly synod for the refutation of error, and for restoring and propagating the truth." It was not so much a *general* or *universal council* the Archbishop had in mind, as that "learned and godly men, eminent for erudition and judgment, might meet together, and, comparing their respective opinions, might handle all the heads of ecclesiastical doctrine, and hand down to posterity, under the weight of their authority, some work not only upon the subjects themselves, but upon the forms of expressing them." Calvin, replying, expresses the judgment that, "in the present disordered condition of the Church, no remedy can be devised more suitable than if a general meeting were held of the devout and the prudent, of those properly exercised in the school of God, and of those confessedly at one on the doctrine of holiness." "Would that it were attainable," he says, "to bring together into some place, from various churches, men eminent for their learning; and that after having carefully discussed the main points of belief, one by one, they should, from their united judgments, hand down to posterity the true doctrine of Scripture. This other thing, also, is to be ranked among the chief evils of our time, viz., that the Churches are so divided that human fellow-

ship is scarcely now in any repute amongst us, far less that Christian intercourse, which all make a profession of, but few practise. . . . Thus it is, that the members of the Church being severed, the body lies bleeding. So much does this concern me," he adds, "that could I be of any service, I would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were, on account of it." In a subsequent letter to Cranmer, Calvin speaks of the proposed meeting (which he intimates could not be had,) as to have been "an assembly of the most eminent men of learning from all the various Churches which have embraced the pure doctrine of the gospel;" and that they were to have "discussed, separately, the controverted topics of the day," and transmitted "to posterity, out of the pure word of God, a true and distinct Confession."

Now, the Council contemplated in the Book of Policy, and described by Steuart of Purdivan, was to be an authoritative body representing national or provincial assemblies, united together; and all these Assemblies, and the Churches they governed, were united "in a universal harmony of doctrine." Any work they might undertake, "as to matters of faith, would," therefore, "in all probability, be sweet and easy." It could only be in reference to worship, discipline, or Church government, there could be "misunderstanding." But the late Council at Edinburgh was not an authoritative body; it was not, strictly speaking, a body of representatives; the Churches they belonged to were not harmonious as to either doctrine or order, nor could any work of theirs, as to matters of faith, have been "sweet and easy." On the contrary, it must have been full both of difficulty and of bitterness. And so it has to be confessed, that it did not please the Lord in those days, and has not pleased him since those days, down to our time, "to make ready and dispose the nations" for such a General Council as Steuart described. To this day the nations are not ready for such a Council, nor the Churches either.

As to the Council so earnestly described by Calvin thirty years before the Book of Policy, that also was to have been "from all the various Churches which have embraced the pure doctrine of the gospel," and which were "confessedly at one on the doctrine of holiness." But did Calvin contemplate such a Coun-

cil as practicable? All his expressions indicate the contrary. He says, "Would that it were attainable;" and he implores Cranmer to "increase" his "exertions until something at least shall be accomplished, if not all that we could desire." Why, Calvin had experienced to the full the difficulty of bringing separated doctors and divergent Churches together, having labored incessantly for years, and in vain, to reconcile Luther to the Swiss. He desired the conference and the Confession proposed by Cranmer, and wished to have Churches which "had embraced the pure doctrine of the gospel, and were confessedly at one on the doctrine of holiness," brought to agree, if possible, on the still "controverted topics of the day." But he tells Cranmer of the "present disordered condition of the Church," and "how licentiousness is here and there breaking forth and ungodliness spreading abroad, so that religion is become a mere mockery," and that "in the ranks of the pastors, also, the malady is now gaining ground." He also complains of the "divided Churches," where "human fellowship is scarcely in any repute, far less Christian intercourse." And so in his second letter to Cranmer, he speaks of the Council as that which is "most of all to be desired," but "least likely to be attained." It is in such a condition of things when, her members severed, the Church of Christ lay bleeding, and there was no prospect of the separated parts being brought together, that Calvin is heard saying to the Archbishop, "So much does this concern me, that could I be of any service, I would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were, on account of it." But feeling (the truly modest and magnanimous, and so the really great man that he was,) his own "insignificance," he begs "to be passed by," and that "Mr. Philip and Mr. Bullinger" might undertake the difficult task if they would.

Now Calvin's desire for the union of all the Reformed, and his willingness to cross ten seas to accomplish it, if it were attainable by such means, were frequently referred to in the late Council; but Calvin's sense of the actual unattainableness of such an end was never mentioned once. It is to be questioned if the body in general, and even if some of its most forward and self-confident leaders, had any full sense of the difficulties Calvin perceived

so clearly. Where men see not the true nature of an arduous and perhaps impossible enterprise, they can be very brave in undertaking it. One of the great doctors at Edinburgh said Calvin had the will, but *he* had done the deed for the Council's establishment; Calvin was ready to cross "he knew not what ocean," but "I" have thrice actually crossed the Atlantic to accomplish the object. But has the object been attained? Have the separated Churches got nearer by any actual step? Granted that they know a little more than formerly about each other, have they come any nearer to agreeing with one another respecting the "controverted topics of the day?" There was great harmony in all the discussions at Edinburgh; but what were the subjects of discussion? Missions and Sunday-schools, and other matters of "universal concern to Christian men." Was it found that "work by the General Council in matters of faith was sweet and easy?" So far from this, they dared not discuss any matters of faith in the Council itself but only missions and such subjects of general interest. They dared not submit to Dr. Schaff's "able Committee" the enterprise of a new Œcumenical Reformed Confession; nay, they strictly forbade the Committee appointed to gather information, from accompanying their report with any "comparative estimate of the various Confessions, or any remarks on their respective value." Mr. Taylor Innes, whose studies and writings had made him familiar with the subject, gave the Council some very wise advice when he said they "should be very cautious in the whole matter of dealing with this complicated and very delicate and difficult question of creeds," and the Council had the wisdom to take Mr. Taylor Innes's good advice. They knew that to have discussed matters of faith, or undertaken the new Œcumenical Confession, would just have blown their Council to the four winds. There was not harmony enough for such an undertaking in the Council itself, and there is not harmony enough in the Reformed Churches. They are not sufficiently at one for such a Confession. Yet Dr. Schaff (whose thorough scholarship and sincere piety is to be most highly appreciated,) could venture, encouraged, doubtless, by some of the other leaders, to feel the pulse of the Council as to such a project. But

where is the "able Committee," if even Dr. Schaff had been made its chairman, that could have commanded the confidence of the Reformed Churches, while it attempted so delicate a task? The noble Calvin ardently desired the unity of all the Reformed, but his eye could see that it was not attainable in his day; and surely the difficulties are far greater in the way of it now. Few and feeble, and under persecution, as those Churches were then, and having a very few acknowledged leaders in whom the utmost confidence was reposed, the thing could not be, and so it was not; and how can any observing and reflecting man have the least hope of it in the circumstances of the present? Is it not rather to be concluded (looking observantly at the past, and considering well the present, and going to Scripture for our expectations for the future) that our blessed Master no more intended that his visible Church on the earth in this present dispensation should be organically one, than he intended that it, or any part of it, or its officers, members, or ordinances, should be pure and perfect?

No, it is all a dream—"a grandiose dream, a diseased dream, a foolish if not a guilty ambition." That sort of unity is what Rome believes, but the Scriptures do not teach it. And the Reformed Churches have never held forth such a doctrine as that the catholic visible Church is or can be organically one. How preposterous the pretension, when at the late Council itself, they could not all even sit down together at the Lord's table. A proposition to commune together was suddenly sprung upon the body, and the danger of exploding it into fragments became immediately so apparent, that it was as suddenly hurried out again. It had to be suppressed in the Council, and managed outside, by that wise and prudent Business Committee. It was arranged that Saturday should be a *dies non* for the body, and that all who *could* and who *would*, might on that day acknowledge each other as brethren at the table of the Lord. An organic union of all the Reformed Churches, and an Œcumenical Council representing them all, indeed! And yet in Edinburgh, a small fraction of them could not and would not sit together at the Sacramental board! Nor could they understand each other when

even a few of their many various languages were spoken. But what possibility is there that they could get on together in an orderly or edifying way when the Chinese, and the Hindoo, and the Japanese and the Birman, and the African, and the Australian, native Presbyterians should come to join in a true World's Presbyterian Assembly? What house could ever hold them, what chairman ever moderate the meeting, what time be found sufficient to give the multitude of eager speakers any opportunity to express their sentiments?

This leads to the remark that there is a tendency, perhaps inevitable, in such a meeting as the late Council, to a good deal of worthless, vapid, stale, flat, unprofitable speaking. If all debatable points of doctrine and order are necessarily ruled out, can there be any valuable or useful discussions, albeit the whole proceedings be very "harmonious?" What is the "harmony" worth which cannot endure the strain of a frank and manly discussion of the disagreements which really obstruct the actual and honest, the real and truthful harmony of the Reformed Churches? This single circumstance seems to show that the whole conception of a Council such as that was and must have been, is a mistake. Nothing valuable can be evolved, nothing important or useful established in an assembly constituted on the principle of excluding all subjects of discussion where any difference of ideas existed. Let any such rule be acted on in any of our General Assemblies at home, and how completely all vigor of thought, all earnestness of spirit, would be quenched.

But there was another rule of the Council which must necessarily have cramped the spirit of their speakers—the rule of confining all written papers to twenty minutes, and all speeches to fifteen and to ten minutes. How was it possible that there could be any earnest deliverances under such a rule as that? And how was it possible that the mixture of a few bites of so many different sorts of mental and spiritual food in the course of a single *sederunt*, should fail to constitute in the soul of every hearer what the Edinburgh *Daily Review* said that it became, and that was a most *indigestible melange*?

And yet why not just such a rule, if nobody was to propound anything but what everybody else present believed and accepted? And how dispense with such a gag law when there were present so many distinguished men who must be all heard, if only for a little while? But let Brother Jonathan alone for managing John Bull. When three Americans are to introduce "Missions in the United States and other countries"—Drs. Paxton, Dickson, and Van Dyke, of the Northern Church—the rule is changed for that occasion, and then the eagle spread his wings indeed; and when those three had finished, the audience had had enough, and began to disperse, so that there was no chance for other speakers, or other countries, or other Churches. Then it was that Dr. Stillman's report, touching the Tuscaloosa Institute for colored Presbyterian ministers, could not be heard, nor Dr. Plumer, who was to have presented it.

In the second place, just let it be considered how the men who went to this great gathering of Presbyterians from Europe and America, (and what would it have been if all Asia and Africa and the thousand islands of the sea had been represented there?) how these men were all jaded by the inevitable and unmeasurable dissipation of constant dinings, (and perhaps winings,) and teaings, and sight-seeings; and above all, with that most wearisome and exhausting labor of listening to speeches lacking the advantage of that interest which collision of opinions alone can excite.

Now, it is perfectly well known that there were numbers of very able and learned and eloquent men in that Council. Certain it is that the Southern Church sent some of her foremost men, whose genius and whose power of speech are well known to all the land. But what opportunity was afforded in the circumstances and under the rules of that body, for any of them to say anything worthy of their reputation in our own Church and country? In some off-hand address at some little country church in the Blue Grass region of Kentucky, in some crisis of debate in the Synod of Virginia, or in the Assembly at Savannah or New Orleans, our delegates to Edinburgh would doubtless have employed and manifested incomparably greater force and genius than in the

great General Council with all its glory and splendor, and that because in Kentucky and Virginia, at Savannah and New Orleans, there was the soul of earnest men poured out before other men as deeply in earnest as themselves. But at Edinburgh (excepting a few of the written papers, which were worthy of the highest praise, such as Dr. Patton's, and Dr. Cairns's, and Dr. A. A. Hodge's, and Dr. Stuart Robinson's,) it might almost be said that nobody said anything, or not anything worth crossing the ocean to say. Think of men who can speak almost with angelic tongues, addressing, in and through that Council, the whole Presbyterian world, and then ask how much thought and power ought to have been put into their utterances! But how could the most truly accomplished speaker say anything worth saying, where everybody agreed with everybody about everything, and where there was really no need to say anything, because no man's soul was on fire respecting anything at all!

And then remember the demoralising and unmanly influence of the uniform principle which rules at such great gatherings of eminent and distinguished men—especially when they take place in our mother country. A convocation in England, whether political, or literary, or scientific, or religious, is nothing, if compliments and flattery be wanting. The rule is, "You tickle me, and I will tickle you." In ecclesiastical meetings, as much as in any other, it is humiliating and disgusting, the sycophantic spirit which is expected to prevail. And then, alongside of it there will usually appear the spirit also of self-laudation and of bragging about one's country or one's Church. Let any one observe the remarks of Principal Brown of the Free Church College of Aberdeen, after Dr. Schaff and Professor Godet of Neuchatel had spoken of the consensus of the Reformed Confessions at the first day's public meeting. The *Edinburgh Daily Review* says, "he confined himself almost entirely to well-deserved compliment of the previous speakers—a duty which he discharged with pleasing grace." Think of that; the *duty* of one good man to compliment other good men for their Christian or Presbyterian addresses to the Council! It is even so—the Church is educated downwards to a style of praising men to their faces, which is

degrading and nauseous to all worldly men of good and true taste. Dr. Brown spoke of their "esteemed friend, Dr. Schaff," and their beloved friend, Professor Godet;" "the former was the right man in the right place, when treating of the harmony of the Confessions; he had written much, and it might be said, voluminously, upon it, and he had so spoken to-day as to convince every one that he had a comprehensive grasp of the entire subject." "The latter it was a treat to see present. Combining in himself a high spiritual tone, a living faith, an exegetical instinct, and a severe spirit of criticism, he was doing a great work in rolling back the tide," etc. Or, take what Dr. McGregor of Edinburgh said after the speech of Dr. Fraser of London: "He was sure he expressed the feeling of every gentleman in the house when he said how thankful they were that the able discussion which had taken place that day had been closed with the very liberal, catholic, and able speech which they had just heard from Dr. Fraser." Now, was not this a tolerably flattering speech for a Presbyterian preacher to make in the presence of the man whom he so bepraised? And then the way they followed, (so common in all Dissenters' meetings in England, who have not many noblemen and gentry at their call,) of having some one rise, just as certainly as a titled Lord happened to preside at the Council, and move a vote of thanks to his Lordship for his kindness in coming down to preside at their meeting! Lords Moncreiff and Polwarth, and Earl Kintore, all of them were good enough to gladden and to ornament the Council by presiding over its deliberations, and to honor it with a brief speech, and accordingly to each of them, but, so far as observed, to no others who presided, the Council must needs return thanks by special vote! But what shall be said of one of our own Southern Presbyterian delegates who actually told Lord Moncreiff, sitting there before him in the chair, that the Presbyterian cause was safe so long as defended by men of the lineage and name of Moncreiff?

And this leads to another criticism. The Rev. Dr. Goold, who is Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, presided on the afternoon of the Council's first public day, on the fourth day

of July. In his opening prayer he touchingly referred to the day being "Independence day." "This," says the *Edinburgh Daily Review*, "so moved the patriotic spirit of Dr. Irenæus Prime, (of the *New York Observer*,) that in his very capacity as representing the Business Committee, he made his first appearance by a flagrant breach of order, which was readily forgiven on account of the ardent feeling with which he expressed the depth to which the expression of Dr. Goold's sympathy had touched his nature." Dr. Prime, it is generally supposed in this country, does not very often or very easily *boil over*; but when about to engage in such an extraordinarily lofty duty as the making his official report (as joint convener with Dr. Calderwood of the Business Committee,) to the great Council, his ears caught the sound of the chairman's voice, alluding in sympathising tones to his country's natal day, and the chords of Dr. Prime's heart, high-strung already by reason of the exalted work before him, could not but vibrate uncontrollably under the affecting allusions, and so, forgetting the dictates of cold propriety, he felt that he must make some response, "if it killed him." An American convener of such an illustrious assemblage in Edinburgh, under British rule, on the 4th July, and a British subject acknowledging in those solemn circumstances, American Independence! Why, such a conjuncture might never happen again in the world's whole history, and Dr. Prime had to violate propriety and speak his patriotic sentiments. He therefore pauses (official report in hand,) and publicly renders thanks (compelled thereto by his overpowering emotions) to Dr. Goold, "for the kind and tender and fraternal reference to his country (applause) in connexion with the 4th July. (Applause.)" But these thankful words did not sufficiently relieve the patriot's heart. He therefore added this glowing sentence: "In no part of the world did he ever before listen to a prayer that came more touchingly than to-day in that house from Dr. Goold when leading his brethren and theirs in that prayer to a recognition before God of American Independence, in that hearty petition for their prosperity." Upon this statement it is to be remarked that Dr. Prime rather *listened to* than *joined in* that touching prayer, and that the main aspect

in which it seems to have presented itself to his mind as he listened, was how completely, on British soil, an audience largely British had been led in Dr. Goold's prayer to acknowledge before God that the United States were independent of Great Britain!

Now who can deny the smartness of this turn? And yet it must have been far more offensive to the British gentlemen present than even the very offensive spread-eagle speeches which some of the Northern Presbyterian delegates, when they got the opportunity, inflicted on the Council. And even if there had been no offensive smartness of trickery in the remark of Dr. Prime, yet, what propriety was there in any such political allusion? What was it to the Council whether American Independence was acknowledged or not, and what to them, *as a Presbyterian Council*, was the 4th of July more than any other day?

Of course, there was a counterpart to this, which, however, of course, had not the peculiar quality we have ascribed to Dr. Prime's violation of order. The Business Committee propose an address to the Queen, and the Council agree to it. Three eminent ministers are appointed to draft it,—viz., Dr. Adams, the Rev. Sir Henry Moncreiff, and Dr. Phin,—the chairman being a distinguished American of New York. The Address expressed the unfeigned respect of forty-nine Presbyterian Churches, having in all 19,040 ministers and 21,443 congregations in twenty-five different countries, for Her Majesty's throne and government. It referred to the liberty enjoyed under her majesty's constitutional government for the proclamation of the gospel, and acknowledged her majesty's recognition of Presbyterianism whenever in Scotland; and it assured the Queen of the Council's prayers for her temporal and spiritual welfare, and expressed its strong desires that Britain and America might join the continental states in the interest of peace.

Now, no Christian of intelligence in this country or the world but must honor Queen Victoria, and certainly this Address was in itself as perfectly suitable as any such address by the Council could possibly have been. But it may well be questioned whether

it was proper for those assembled Churches to unite in any address whatever to Her Majesty. We are commanded to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, to pay honor to whom honor is due, and to honor the king. But these commands are not *to the Church* nor to *her representatives*, but to individuals. The reader will be apt to think the Church, as represented at Edinburgh, did not put itself into the right position by this address so ceremoniously moved and prepared, and adopted and signed by the three hundred and thirty-three members, when he reads the very unceremonious and apparently haughty reply of Her Majesty, addressed to Dr. Blaikie by one of the Queen's Secretaries, as follows:

"WHITEHALL, July 21.

"SIR: I have had the honor to lay before the Queen the address forwarded by your ministers and elders representing forty-nine Presbyterian Churches, severally in twenty-five separate countries, expressing their good wishes toward Her Majesty and the Government of this country; and I have to inform you that Her Majesty was pleased to receive the address very graciously.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

R. ASSHETON CROSS.

All these Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, *as such*, laying their homage at the feet of an earthly monarch, and she condescending to reply that she has very graciously received it! That may do for Presbyterians connected with national establishments, but how can any free Church tolerate such profane obsequiousness to a mortal? Surely, to say the least of it, the Council adopted in that Address a precedent which may prove very inconvenient hereafter! Is it England's monarch only who is to have the opportunity of slighting such homage? Or is every Republican President in the United States, or France, or Geneva, and every German Emperor or Prince, to be complimented similarly?

More at length than was anticipated, but not more so than the immense importance of the occasion demands, these grounds of objection to some of the proceedings of the General Presbyterian Council have thus been detailed. And now after so much criticism of certain features of the case, which it has not been an

agreeable task to offer, let it be said in all sincerity that no other company of three hundred and thirty-three Presbyterian ministers and elders, which could have been selected, would probably have done any better, possibly none so well, as the very body with some of whose sayings and doings there has been fault found very frankly in this paper.

And let it be also acknowledged, to the credit of the Council, that contrary to what was expected by some, it allowed no one to appear as a member without a commission, which took away from it the objection that it was a mere voluntary society or gathering of individuals without any sort of authority.

Let it also be noted, that to no one man was given the distinction of presiding over the body.

Still further, let it be granted that some good may come from the display of the strength of Presbyterianism in numbers and learning and wealth and zeal; and that great importance is to be attached to the mutual advances made towards coöperation amongst Presbyterians in the work of foreign missions; and to the *impetus* given to historical researches, necessary in order to the more perfect vindication of Presbyterianism; and to the encouragement afforded to remote Churches of our order, especially on the continent of Europe.

Still further and finally, let it be very freely and cordially admitted, that there is something attractive and grand in the central idea of this great gathering of Presbyterians. The true Calvinists of the world, that is to say, all the men who really accept and maintain the inspired theology of Paul the Apostle, (alas, that there should be Presbyterians so called who do not hold fast these truths,) ought, if it were possible, to be united in one. And, indeed, it must be admitted that the Presbyterian system is incomplete without the Œcumenical Council. But, then, all that can be said touching such Council is what the great Genevese said: "Would that it were attainable!" It does not seem to be attainable. The ages, the races, the nationalities, the languages, the oceans, and the continents divide, and have divided, and must divide, the visible Church. Evidently this is the Lord's plan. Yet it is very desirable that these Calvinists and

Presbyterians should, as far as it is possible, somehow meet one another face to face. Let them come together to worship their Lord and have communion with each other, and, as at Edinburgh, confer about missions and Sunday-schools and temperance and Presbyterian literature and history, but (as they did not at Edinburgh) let them also earnestly and without reserve consider all their Presbyterian affairs, and freely, fully, and frankly exchange their views upon matters where they have not been at one. This is the very thing Calvin would have crossed ten seas to attend, if he had believed it practicable and would avail—a Council where, from various Churches of pure doctrine, eminent men, *after carefully discussing the main points of belief one by one*, and especially the *controverted topics of the day*, might draw up for them all a true and distinct Confession. But in Calvin's day such a thing was not attainable. And in our day the Œcumenical Council is not attainable; nor will it ever be attainable, in all human probability, in our dispensation. Yet there are Presbyterian Churches, and a good many of them, which ought to be able to meet and confer about their differences, which are few and small compared with the points wherein they agree. Let them meet as our Synods and Assemblies meet, to debate and discuss and determine matters whereupon they are not agreed. Any other sort of conference must be tame and comparatively useless. That such a conference could have peaceably been had in the Council at Edinburgh is doubtful. Perhaps the report on the actual Confessions may make such discussion possible with good results hereafter. If needful, let the gate of entrance be made straiter. Away with every Broad Church idea. Let all such Presbyterians as deny the Trinity, the true and proper divinity of our Lord, the full and plenary inspiration of the Word, and its sole and sufficient authority, all or either of the five points of Calvinistic theology, the divine right of Presbyterian Church Government, or the Church's absolute independence of the State, be excluded from the Council. To reduce the numbers, but elevate the qualifications of the component members of this ecclesiastical alliance, will not hurt but help and benefit the union. It never advances the prosperity of a particular Church

to lower its standards; and to Churches united together by proper bonds, it can be no advantage to widen too much their distance from each other. In every battle it is necessary to close up the ranks and let the touch of the elbows of his comrades be felt by every man. A truly and really united, an earnest and harmonious, a compact and vigorous Presbyterianism, is infinitely better every way than a slack, diluted, over-liberal latitudinarianism, offspring of human wisdom, and a piety better than the Bible, trustful in numbers, flattering to men, treacherous to God and to truth.

CRITICAL NOTICES.

Origin and Doctrines of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.
In two Parts. By E. B. CRISMAN, D. D. St. Louis, Mo.:
Perrin & Smith, Steam Book and Job Printers. 1877.

This book has amused, provoked, and instructed us. We have been amused to watch the author in one part weaving a net for the Calvinist, and then in another part vainly endeavoring to extricate himself from the meshes of the same. We have been provoked to witness his repeated and persistent misrepresentation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. We have been instructed, once at least, (on page 17, folio 20,) by finding that the doctrines we have ever delighted to preach were not Calvinistic but Cumberland! This champion puts "one in mind of a landless laird straddling the line-fence between two farms. He is always found standing upon that leg which is the other side of the fence."

Some politicians for popularity's sake assume the position which is well denominated "on the fence." This book bids fair to be popular in the same way. We do not remember ever to have read anything which is likely to be more popular with all classes: it contains the very cream of Arminianism, some fine