

THE CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN THE

Committee on Church Unity of the General
Assembly of the Presbyterian
Church in the U. S. A.

AND THE

Commission on Christian Unity of the General
Convention of the Protestant Epis-
copal Church in the U. S.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

PHILADELPHIA :
BY THE STATED CLERK.
1896.

PREFACE.

The General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A., convened in the city of Chicago, October 27, 1886, appointed a Commission consisting of fifteen clerical and lay persons, to communicate with other Christian Churches in the U. S. A., with a view to the restoration of the organic unity of the Church. The Declaration of the Convention upon the subject of Christian Unity was communicated to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., in session at Omaha, Neb., in May, 1887, by the Commission above referred to, and as a consequence the Assembly appointed a Committee on Church Unity. The work of conference between the representatives of the two Christian Churches was begun promptly, and the resulting correspondence, in complete form, with explanatory statements connected with the three conferences held between the Commission and the Committee respectively, will be found in the following pages.

This Correspondence was presented by the Committee to the General Assembly of 1896, and one thousand copies, accompanied by the Report of the Committee to that Assembly, were ordered "printed as a permanent record."

The names of the members of the Committee of the General Assembly will be found on page 9 of this publication, with the exception of that of the Rev. James S. Riggs, D.D., who was appointed to succeed the Rev. Ransom B. Welch, D.D., who died in 1890.

The General Assembly of 1896, in connection with the discharge of the Committee, adopted the following resolution :

Resolved, That in relieving the Committee on Church Unity from further service, the General Assembly expresses its high appreciation of the long-continued and zealous labors of the Committee, and especially of the Chairman, the Rev. Joseph T. Smith, D.D., LL.D.

WM. HENRY ROBERTS,
Stated Clerk.

PHILADELPHIA :
PRESS OF MACCALLA & COMPANY INC.
237-9 DOCK STREET.

CORRESPONDENCE.

1. LETTER SENT IN TRANSMITTING THE DECLARATION OF THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS.

ALEXANDRIA, LA., May 3, 1887.

To the Secretary of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Neb.:

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:—I am instructed, as Secretary of the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to transmit to your General Assembly the enclosed papers. They consist of a Declaration put forth by our House of Bishops on the subject of Christian Unity, and the action of our General Convention in the appointment of our Commission, and the vesting in it certain authority. Acting under that authority, the Commission does now by these presents communicate to your General Assembly the aforesaid Declaration, and announces its readiness to enter into brotherly conference with you, trusting that you may be numbered among those Christian bodies that are seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church.

It only remains for me to add, that the hand of Death having removed from the scene of his earthly labors our honored Chairman, we would request that any reply you may make be transmitted through our Secretary.

With all Christian greetings and the earnest hope that you will see proper to unite with us in labor for the fulfillment of the Master's prayer,

Very truly and fraternally,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN, *Secretary.*

2. DECLARATION OF THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ADOPTED OCTOBER 20, 1886.

WHEREAS, in the year 1853, in response to a Memorial signed by many of the Presbyters of this Church, praying that steps might be taken to heal the unhappy divisions of Christendom, and to more fully develop the catholic idea of the Church of Christ, the Bishops of this Church, in Council assembled, did appoint a Commission of Bishops empowered to confer with the several Christian bodies in our land who were desirous of promoting godly union and concord among all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; and,

WHEREAS, This Commission, in conformity with the terms of its appointment, did formally set forth and advocate sundry suggestions and recommendations intended to accomplish the great end in view; and,

WHEREAS, In the year 1880, the Bishops of the American Church, assembled in Council, moved by the appeals from Christians in foreign countries, who were struggling to free themselves from the usurpations of the Bishop of Rome, set forth a Declaration to the effect that in virtue of the solidarity of the Catholic Episcopate in which we have part, it was the right and duty of the Episcopates of all national Churches, holding the primitive Faith and Order, and of the several Bishops of the same, to protect in the holding of that Faith and the recovering of that Order those who have been wrongfully deprived of both, and this without demanding a rigid uniformity or the sacrifice of their national traditions of worship and discipline, or of their rightful autonomy; and,

WHEREAS, Many of the faithful in Christ Jesus among us are praying with renewed and increasing earnestness that some measures may be adopted at this time for the reunion of the sundered parts of Christendom:

Now, therefore, In pursuance of the action taken in 1853 for the healing of the divisions among Christians in our own land, and in 1880 for the protection and encouragement of those who had withdrawn from the Roman Obedience; we, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled, as Bishops in the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow-Christians of the different Communions in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

1. Our earnest desire that the Saviour's prayer "that we all may be one" may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled.

2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.

3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own.

4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communions, but rather coöperating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

But, furthermore, We do hereby affirm that the Christian unity, now so earnestly desired by the memorialists, can be restored only by the return of all Christian Communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during

the first ages of its existence, which principles we believe to be the substantial Deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and His Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its Stewards and Trustees, for the common and equal benefit of all men.

As inherent parts of this sacred Deposit, and, therefore, as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

I. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Revealed Word of God;

II. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith;

III. The Two Sacraments—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him;

IV. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Furthermore, Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which afflict the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.

A true and official copy.

Attest:

HERMAN C. DUNCAN,
Secretary of Commission.

3. ACTION OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1886.

Resolution as adopted by the concurrent action of the House of Bishops and of the House of Deputies of the General Convention, convened in the city of Chicago, October 27, 1886:

"Resolved, That a Commission consisting of five Bishops, five Clerical and five Lay Deputies be appointed, who shall, at their discretion, communicate to the organized Christian bodies of our country the declaration set forth by the Bishops, on the twentieth day of October, and shall hold themselves ready to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church; and that this Commission be requested to make a report of its action to the General Convention of 1889."

Under this resolution the following appointments were made:

The Rt. Rev. Alfred Lee, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Delaware.

The Rt. Rev. John Williams, S.T.D., LL.D., Bishop of Connecticut.

The Rt. Rev. Richard Hooker Wilmer, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Alabama.

The Rt. Rev. Abram Newkirk Littlejohn, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Long Island.

The Rt. Rev. Mark Antony De Wolfe Howe, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Central Pennsylvania.

The Rev. George Morgan Hills, D.D., Burlington, N. J.

The Rev. Stephen Moylen Bird, Galveston, Tex.

The Rev. Kinloch Nelson, D.D., Theological Seminary, Virginia.

The Rev. Herman Cope Duncan, Alexandria, La.

The Rev. Arthur Wilde Little, Portland, Me.

George C. Shattuck, M.D., Boston, Mass.

William Cornwall, Louisville, Ky.

James Murdock Smith, LL.D., Buffalo, N. Y.

Henry P. Baldwin, Detroit, Mich.

John H. Stotsenburg, New Albany, Ind.

The Commission is organized with the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Delaware as Chairman, and the Rev. Herman C. Duncan as Recording and Corresponding Secretary.

4. ACTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A., 1887.

[*Minutes*, pp. 133, 134.]

The Assembly resolved in the matter of the Declaration of the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

"1. That the statement of principles* embodied in the Report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures be published in the Appendix to the *Minutes* of this Assembly, as a clear presentation of the position of the Presbyterian Church on Church union and unity.

"2. That in response to the fraternal request of the Commission of our Protestant Episcopal brethren, a Committee of eight ministers and seven ruling elders be appointed to enter into brotherly conference with the Commission, and with any similar commissions or committees that may be appointed by other Christian bodies, with a view to the earnest study of the relations of the different Churches, and of the way in which the answer to the Redeemer's prayer, 'that they all may be one,' may be realized and manifested; said Committee to report to the next General Assembly.

"3. That the following letter be adopted by the General Assembly, signed by the Moderator and Stated Clerk, and forwarded to the Secretary of the Protestant Episcopal Commission."

A true copy.

WILLIAM HENRY ROBERTS, *Stated Clerk*.

* See p. 10.

5. RESPONSE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A., 1887.

To the Commission on Christian Unity of the House of Bishops and of the House of Deputies of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, convened in the City of Chicago, October 27, 1886:

DEAR BRETHREN:—The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, now in session at Omaha, Neb., have received with sincere gratification the "Declaration" of your House of Bishops, and your request, under it, for a brotherly conference with us and other branches of the Church of Christ, "seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass."

The General Assembly are in cordial sympathy with the growing desire among the Evangelical Christian Churches for practical unity and coöperation in the work of spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout all the earth, and they respond to your invitation with the sincere desire that the conference asked for may lead, if not to a formal oneness of organization, yet to such a vital and essential unity of faith and spirit and coöperation as shall bring all the followers of our common Lord into hearty fellowship, and to mutual recognition and affection, and to ministerial reciprocity, in the branches of the one visible Church of Christ, working together with Him in advancing His kingdom upon earth.

Without entering here into consideration of any of the principles which your House of Bishops lay down "as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom," but leaving the consideration of them to the conference which you request, the General Assembly have appointed, *Ministers*—Joseph T. Smith, D.D., Robert M. Patterson, D.D., David C. Marquis, D.D., William Henry Green, D.D., LL.D., Samuel J. Niccolls, D.D., William H. Roberts, D.D., Francis Brown, D.D., Ransom B. Welch, D.D., with *Ruling Elders*—Hon. James A. Beaver, Hon. Cyrus L. Pershing, Hon. Robert N. Willson, William E. Dodge, Hon. Samuel M. Breckinridge, Dr. William C. Gray and E. R. Monfort, LL.D., a committee to confer with you and with any similar commissions, or committees that may be appointed by any other Christian Churches for conference, with instructions to report to the next General Assembly the results of their deliberations.

Very truly and fraternally yours,

JOSEPH T. SMITH, *Moderator*.

WILLIAM H. ROBERTS, *Stated Clerk*.

6. GENERAL ASSEMBLY. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, 1887.

[See Resolution No. 1, p. 8.]

"We recommend that the General Assembly express its cordial sympathy with the growing desire among Evangelical Christian Churches for practical unity and coöperation in the work of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout all the earth.

"We also recommend that the General Assembly proclaim to the Christian world their statement of the principles whereby, in its judgment, practical Church unity can be realized and maintained.

"1. All believers in Christ constitute one body; mystical, yet real, and destined to grow into the fullness of Him who filleth all in all.

"2. The Universal Visible Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children.

"3. Mutual recognition and reciprocity between the different bodies who profess the true religion, is the first and essential step toward practical Church unity."

A true copy.

WILLIAM HENRY ROBERTS, *Stated Clerk.*

7. RESPONSE OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1888.

To the Committee on Christian Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America:

DEAR BRETHREN:—Your letter has given us much joy and has encouraged us to look with renewed hope for the unity of all who love the blessed Master.

It has been carefully considered by our Commission, and we have deemed it best to ask that for the time being our conferences may be conducted in writing. There would be danger during an oral conference, just at the present time, of the intrusion of a debate that might seriously interfere with the accomplishment of the object we both of us, it is hoped, have at heart. We cannot hide from ourselves that important differences now separate us, but we suggest that a consideration of these may properly be postponed until we have found a basis of substantial agreement, and then, peradventure, we shall discover that these differences are not of such a character as to prevent our union.

Let us bear in mind, brethren, that the Master prayed that His followers might be one even as He and the Father are one. A unity that does not fully reflect the unity of the indivisible Trinity does not fulfill the prayer of the Master. Such unity may in this age seem to some but a dream, yet may we not trust that if we are but faithful in our labors to that end an Almighty power will bring it to pass. If the work were ours we should faint, but it is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do in answer to our united efforts.

Only let us grasp the idea of unity that is the Master's conception of unity. Let us labor until the consummation is attained.

We note in your communication that your Committee is empowered to consider with us the principles "essential to a restoration of unity." We, therefore, suggest as a primary proposition that there are certain principles that are essential for the preservation of the Faith and Order of God's Kingdom, and that all else may be held, or rejected, by the private judgment of each. There are things very dear to us that are not named among the principles enumerated in the Declaration of our Bishops. These we have not treated as matters indifferent, yet as those we do not deem essential and which in the united Church we should be willing to leave open to be decided by local authorities.

We hold ourselves ready, however, to surrender everything that may conflict with those principles that we shall determine to be essentially necessary to unity.

We take notice that your General Assembly expressly left the consideration of the principles laid down by our House of Bishops to a conference between us. We, therefore, earnestly invite you to recommend to your General Assembly the acceptance of these matters as principles of unity and the appointment of yourselves, or others, as commissioners to negotiate the further details of a union.

If you are not prepared to do this, will you not kindly open your minds to us that we may confer together and find, peradventure, a proper solution of the difficulty.

Our proposition then is that the visible Church of Christ, or Kingdom of God on earth, must hold the Faith divinely revealed, and that of the body of the revelation certain truths are essentially necessary to be held to attain unto eternal life, and that these are enumerated in the symbol of faith enunciated by the undivided Church, that is to say, the Creed commonly called the Nicene; the two Sacraments of Christ's ordination duly ministered; together with such polity as is necessary for the ordering of the Kingdom, and this polity that which held in the undivided Church, modified, in its application, but not in its original organism, according to changes required by differences of age and circumstances of times.

Very truly and fraternally,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN,
Secretary of the Commission.

ALEXANDRIA, LA., March 27, 1888.

8. LETTER FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1888.

To the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

DEAR BRETHREN:—We have read with care the letter of your Commission. We recognize the admirable spirit of the paper, and its genuine Christian courtesy throughout, and are equally sincere and earnest in our desire that such a unity may be brought

about among the different branches of the Church of Christ, as shall perfectly accord with the mind of the blessed Redeemer, and in the hope that the correspondence in which we are now engaged may by His grace be made to conduce to this most desirable end.

We understand you to present as proposed terms of unity, the four propositions which were stated by your House of Bishops.

We can accept as principles of unity the first three of these, as follows:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the revealed Word of God.

2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith; understanding by this that it is such a statement of the essential truths of Christianity as may form a proper bond of church fellowship among all who adhere to it, but not that it embraces all that we hold to be precious and important, nor that in accepting it we should be understood to give up our attachment to and use of the Westminster Confession of Faith as an ampler exhibition of what we believe to be taught in Holy Scripture.

3. The two Sacraments, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, ministered with unfailling use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

We can with equal readiness accept the fourth proposition according to our understanding of its terms. It is as follows: "The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church." The Presbyterian Church holds, and always has held firmly, to what we believe to be the genuinely historic Episcopate as this is set forth in the New Testament and in the practice of the early Church, so far as it did not swerve from apostolic models and directions. It finds the Presbyter-Bishop in all ages of the Church, in unbroken succession until the present day. At the same time we are not disposed to constrain others to adopt our interpretation in this matter. We shall feel no difficulty in uniting with those who interpret the Bishops of the New Testament and of the primitive Church differently from ourselves, provided our own liberty of interpretation is not infringed. We can unite with those who think Bishops to be a superior order of the clergy, provided we ourselves are not asked to abandon our own conscientious conviction that Bishops as instituted by the Apostles are not of superior rank, but that all who are ordained to the ministry by the laying on of hands of the Presbytery and are entrusted with the care and oversight of souls are Bishops. May we not assume that you will accord to us all the liberty in interpreting this term which has been enjoyed by your own ministry, and by that of the Anglican Church in this and earlier generations? If we are correct in our understanding of this fourth proposition, and it is intended to embrace the historic Episcopate in the various forms in which it prevails in different countries and in different branches of the

Church of Christ, we yield to it our cordial assent and are prepared to recommend to our General Assembly to conduct further negotiations with reference to a union on the basis of the four propositions of your House of Bishops.

In this connection, dear brethren, as you request us to open our minds freely to you, permit us to emphasize a point which we think essential to have understood.

The General Assembly which appointed us affirmed this "statement of the principles whereby, in its judgment, practical Church unity can be realized and maintained:

"1. All believers in Christ constitute one body: mystical, yet real, and destined to grow into the fullness of Him who filleth all in all.

"2. The universal visible Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children.

"3. Mutual recognition and reciprocity between the different bodies who profess the true religion, is the first and essential step toward practical Church unity."—(*Minutes*, 1887, p. 156.)

Permit us to express the hope that you will find nothing in this statement of principles which you cannot approve.

The Presbyterian Church recognizes all bodies professing the true religion as branches of the visible Church of Christ, and it recognizes the validity of their ministry and sacraments. Differences of view in relation to ecclesiastical polity need be no bar to mutual recognition and reciprocity. It seems to us that that should be confessed to be a true Church of Christ, in which His Spirit manifests His saving and sanctifying power, in which His truth is professed, His Word preached and His ordinances dispensed; and it may be so confessed even by those who hold a theory of Church polity according to which its organization is imperfect and irregular. And the same applies to ordination and the administration of the sacraments; they may be confessed to be valid even by those who esteem them to be irregular.

Allow us, brethren, to add—and in this we trust we are in full accord with you—that in our judgment organic unity does not imply absolute uniformity, but the reverse. The one indivisible life is not only consistent with, but requires for its proper unfolding diverse operations and manifestations. The historic Churches of Christendom, under the guidance of God's good Spirit, in the course of their manifold experiences, have each contributed to unfold the Christian life in some one particular form or mode, though with defects and excrescences, no doubt, which ought to be corrected and removed. Yet with all due allowance for errors and imperfections, each body has conserved something, or developed something, which it will be for the general good to retain. If the best results are to be accomplished by the union of Christendom, it will not necessarily be by the obliteration of existing bodies, but may be by including them in a larger unity.

We hope to receive a response to our communication which

may be a token for good. And awaiting this, we will ask our General Assembly to continue our Committee. If, as we hope, the views herein expressed prove acceptable to your Commission, will you not lay them before the body which appointed you, and ask their concurrence and authority to devise measures in conjunction with Committees from our own and other Churches for carrying them into effect?

JOSEPH T. SMITH, *Chairman*.
FRANCIS BROWN, *Secretary*.

PHILADELPHIA, PA., May 24, 1888.

9. RESPONSE OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1889.

To the Committee on Christian Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church:

NEW YORK, October 9, 1889.

DEAR BRETHREN!—We have received and read with much pleasure your letter of May 24, 1888; delayed in its transmission by failure of the mails. Your communication has rejoiced our hearts, inspired our expectations and confirmed our confidence in your wisdom, piety and Christian brotherhood, which originated our movement in this charitable work.

We have been searching to find a basis on which negotiations for Christian Unity might be secured. On three of the four principles of such foundation we are happily agreed. On the fourth we may say in reply to you that the only authoritative deliverance in respect to the threefold character of the orders of the sacred ministry that our Church hath put forth is found in the preface to our Ordinal, wherein it is declared "that it is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons." This we believe to have been placed in that position as the statement of what is historic, what is evident unto all and not at all as a dogmatic article of faith. It is placed there as a declaration of ecclesiastical polity, as this Church hath inherited the same.

This reply we presume will meet your declaration and, therefore, receive your cordial assent. We, therefore, respectfully suggest that you "recommend to your General Assembly to conduct further negotiations with reference to a union on the basis of the four propositions of our House of Bishops," and we shall take pleasure in asking like authority for ourselves.

With respect to the other matters contained in your letter, mutual recognition and reciprocity, we have to say that our authority at present extends only to a search for the basis of unity. A recognition of the manifold workings of God's Holy Spirit within your communion, bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, is but to give expression to what is evident unto all, and could not be withheld, were there any disposition, which there is not, so to do.

The question of reciprocity is one that will probably be for consideration as a tentative measure in the course of our further negotiations. We think it must necessarily be delayed in its consideration until after we shall have received information of the action of your General Assembly on the proposition that you will, as we understand, lay before them. We believe further, that the great end of our endeavors will be promoted by such delay.

Our Commission is now in this city, and we should be much pleased to receive you to an oral* conference at an early day. We have had the pleasure of greeting several of your members and the benefits of acquaintance and personal intercourse we have experienced, and we feel that the great object for which we are laboring would be greatly advanced by such conference.

Believe me, dear brethren, yours very truly and fraternally,
HERMAN C. DUNCAN,

Secretary of the Commission on Christian Unity of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

10. CONFERENCE AT NEW YORK, 1889.

The Conference asked for in the letter of the Episcopal Commission, dated New York, October 9, 1889, was held in the city of New York, October 23, 1889. With reference to this conference, the Assembly's Committee reported as follows:

"In view of the request for a personal conference with the members of your Committee, a meeting of the Committee was called at the Mission House, New York, October 23, 1889. The letter from the Episcopal Commission was considered, and their invitation to meet them in an oral conference was accepted. The Committee were received as their guests, on the evening of the same day, at the house of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, where they were entertained with the utmost hospitality. We communed together, and prayed together, as Christian brethren, forgetful for the time of everything except our oneness in Christ. The memory of that evening of delightful fraternal fellowship will be forever cherished by all who shared it."—[*Minutes*, 1890, p. 98.]

11. LETTER FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1890.

To the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

SARATOGA, N. Y., May 14, 1890.

DEAR BRETHREN!—We have received your courteous reply to our communication, and are gratified by the expression of your belief that the only authoritative deliverance of your Church in relation to three orders of the ministry is not at all a dogmatic article of faith, but a declaration of ecclesiastical polity as your

* See No. 10, p. 15.

Church hath inherited the same ; and that it is simply a statement of what in your view is historic and evident to all. While respectfully, but earnestly, recalling your attention to the action of our General Assembly, as reported in our former letter, and to our remarks in connection with it, we may now say that, understanding that our concurrence is not demanded in the statement prefixed to your Ordinal affirming the history and the evidence of three orders of the ministry, we are prepared to recommend to our General Assembly to conduct further negotiations with reference to a union on the basis of the four propositions of your House of Bishops.

Meanwhile we will fervently pray that the Lord would incline the hearts of all His people more to the things which make for peace and the things whereby they may edify one another, that He would graciously remove all grounds of offense and all hindrances to a perfect union out of the way, and that He would enable those who truly love Him and who bear His image to love one another with a pure heart fervently, giving due prominence to those great essential matters of our holy religion in which they agree, and attaching less importance to matters of minor consequence in which they differ, until with advancing light and clearer apprehensions these differences shall finally disappear, or shall, at least, cease to separate those who are one body in Christ Jesus.

We shall carry with us delightful remembrances of the pleasant fraternal intercourse, which we have been permitted to have with the members of your Commission personally; and we invoke upon you and upon that honored branch of the Church which you represent, the richest blessings of divine grace. We shall rejoice in your prosperity and enlargement and more abundant usefulness; and we shall know no rivalry but that of being stirred up by your example to increased zeal and devotion in the cause of our blessed Master.

And now, brethren, may the God of love and peace be with you, Amen.

JOSEPH T. SMITH, *Chairman*.

FRANCIS BROWN, *Secretary*.

For the Committee on Church Unity of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

12. LETTER FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1891.

BALTIMORE, Md., April 23, 1891.

To the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

DEAR BRETHREN:—We had the honor of addressing a communication to you under date of May 14, 1890, to which as yet we have received no reply.

In accordance with your suggestion, we recommended to our General Assembly "to conduct further negotiations with refer-

ence to a union on the basis of the four propositions of our (your) House of Bishops." The recommendation was cordially adopted by the Assembly, and a copy of its action, together with our entire Report, was immediately furnished you.

We have as yet received no intimation as to your wishes or purposes with reference to the continuance of our negotiations happily commenced, and conducted thus far on your part in such a kind and fraternal spirit. We have no doubt there are valid reasons for the delay, and we do not here speak of it in the way of complaint, but only to explain the reasons which have led us to anticipate your reply by the present communication, inasmuch as we are instructed to report to our next Assembly.

As to the first three of the four principles proposed as a basis of union, we are, as you say, "happily agreed." As to the fourth, you assure us that the only authoritative deliverance made by your Church in respect to the threefold Orders of the Ministry, is regarded by you "as a statement of what is historic, a declaration of ecclesiastical polity, as this Church hath inherited the same, and not at all as a dogmatic Article of Faith." We were greatly gratified at receiving this assurance, and it seemed to us to leave the way fairly open for the continuance of our negotiations with reference to the only principle on which we are not yet in full accord.

We will hold ourselves in readiness to receive and carefully consider any communication with which you may honor us, hoping and praying that on the basis proposed and with the understanding now reached, we may approach more nearly, if we do not at once attain, the great end so cordially desired.

With Christian salutations to the members of your Commission and earnest prayers for their continued and enlarged prosperity, we are,

Yours, in the bonds of Christian fellowship,
JOSEPH T. SMITH, *Chairman*.

D. C. MARQUIS, *Secretary*.

13. REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1892.

The Committee on Church Unity reported to the General Assembly of 1892, *inter alia*, stating that it had received a letter from the Secretary of the Protestant Episcopal Commission, dated Alexandria, La., May 14, 1891. The Committee also reported that: "In this letter it was stated that, in the judgment of the Commission, the point had now been reached in our negotiations where some more detailed and definite basis of union ought to be submitted, and that the Commission were engaged in preparing for submission to us 'A complete draft of a proposed concordat embracing the future polity, standards of faith, regulations for worship, etc., of the American Church.' We were further informed that, owing to the great importance of the subject and the wide dispersion of the members of their Commission, considerable time would necessarily be required for the completion of their work. To this communication your

Committee replied, expressing their gratification at the announcement made, their readiness to receive and carefully consider the proposed plan, and their hope that we shall soon hear again from the Commission." [*Minutes, G. A., 1892, p. 37.*]

14. CONFERENCE IN BALTIMORE, 1892.

a. LETTERS PROPOSING AND ACCEPTING THE CONFERENCE.

BALTIMORE, MD., Oct. 12, 1892.

To the Committee on Christian [Church] Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church:

DEAR BRETHREN:—I am instructed by the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church to invite you to meet us in oral conference this evening at the rectory of Emmanuel Church, 910 St. Paul Street.

Very truly and fraternally,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN, *Secretary.*

[The General Convention was at this time sitting in Baltimore, and the Committee on Church Unity was holding a meeting in the same city. A verbal invitation had preceded this letter.]

BALTIMORE, MD., Oct. 12, 1892.

To the Committee on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

DEAR BRETHREN:—I am instructed by the Committee on Church Unity of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to acknowledge with sincere thanks your invitation to an oral conference this evening, and to inform you that the Committee takes pleasure in accepting the invitation.

Very truly and fraternally yours,

FRANCIS BROWN,

Secretary of the Committee on Church Unity.

[This conference was held as proposed.]

b. REPORT OF THE ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE ON THE CONFERENCE.

The Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Convention and the Committee of the General Assembly met in joint conference, as above arranged, at Baltimore, Md., October 12, 1892. The Assembly's Committee in its report to the General Assembly of 1893 made the following statement with reference to said conference:

"The meeting in Baltimore was called for the special purpose of having a personal conference with members of the Episcopal Commission in attendance upon their triennial General Convention. In our report to the last Assembly it was stated that the Commission were engaged in the preparation of a concordat, embracing a definite plan of union, which we expected shortly to revise. When the two bodies met in conference there was a full and frank interchange of views, especially with reference to the

unhappy attitude in which the members of the two churches now stand toward each other: their almost entire isolation; the almost utter absence of that personal intercourse and mutual recognition and Christian fellowship and hearty coöperation which ought to obtain between them as brethren in Christ. Christian unity—the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace—is in itself and for its own sake, apart altogether from its relation to Church unity, a duty of first and most imperative obligation. An external unity, even were it practicable, were worse than worthless if not the outgrowth and manifestation of a real internal spiritual union. In view of this, the suggestion was made by a member of your Committee to hold in abeyance for the present the question of external union and seek, first, as a necessary prerequisite to it, and as a present and imperative duty, a larger measure and manifestation of Christian unity. The proposal was unanimously and heartily accepted, and it was determined that, instead of discussing our differences and trying by mutual concessions and compromises to frame a plan of external union, we should labor together earnestly and persistently to bring about a better understanding and a closer fellowship, and a more cordial recognition of each other's gifts and graces.

"Accordingly the following communication was addressed to your Committee." [See letter next given, numbered 15.]

15. RESPONSE OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1892.

To the Committee on Christian Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church:

ALEXANDRIA, LA., Nov. 18, 1892.

DEAR BRETHREN:—Your communication notifying us that your General Assembly had adopted a resolution authorizing and instructing you to proceed to continued conference with us in the matter of Christian Unity, on the basis of the four points esteemed by us as essential thereto, has been received.

We gather from your letters and from your expressions in oral conferences we have enjoyed with you, that there are many essential matters in which we are agreed. Suffer us briefly to rehearse these. In days gone by it was the habit of men to glorify divisions; now the great evil of them is generally conceded and the sin of them acknowledged and deplored.

We are agreed also that the ultimate aim of those who seek the unity of the Divine Master's Kingdom is and must be a corporate union, as that alone can reflect the union that is between the Father and the Son—the only unity that can be esteemed responsive to the prayer of the Lord Christ.

It is evident, however, that we have not yet reached an agreement respecting the meaning and significance of some of the terms used in the Declaration of the component parts of the very basis on which our conferences are to be conducted.

We are convinced that we have not yet reached a stage of

proximate unity, which, when it may be reached, will necessarily require a free and fraternal discussion of what are considered the crucial difficulties in the way of ultimate agreement and loving concord. May we not leave these matters to the influences of the Holy Spirit, who may, in His own good time, lead us to surprising evidences of His power to remove mountains, when the triumphs of His grace and truth are the sole objects of His faithful people in their labors and prayers?

First of all, let us learn to understand and love one another? Let us promote every convenient form of social and godly intercourse. Let us impress upon Christians who differ from us where we, Presbyterians and Anglicans, are agreed, that we recognize great Christian principles on which we are entirely united; that we cherish each other's character and reputations as fellow-Christians; that we rejoice in the points in which there are advantages on either side, which are examples to both; that we are striving together, in many ways, for the triumph of the Gospel and the glory of Christ. To quote the words of one who is honored alike by both of us: "It is of the utmost importance to allay groundless suspicion; to do away with jealousy and rivalry, and to bring about a conciliatory state of mind. Episcopalians and Presbyterians are too far apart; they contemplate each other at a distance, hence they do not understand each other. They have much in common; they agree in doctrine, they love the same precious truths, they serve the same Lord; they desire above all things the advancement of His Kingdom and glory; their inward spiritual experience is substantially the same; they are struggling to realize in their heart and life the image of Christ; they are laboring alike to do good to the bodies and souls of those around them, and to bring this lost world to God and to salvation. But they dwell in separate camps; they never confer together about matters of common interest; they do not look into each other's eyes, nor open their hearts to each other. If personal intercourse could in some way be promoted, however informal, if they could be brought together for the promotion of common ends; if the spiritual unity which already exists could find some practical expression; if they could be enlisted together in some common cause, they would appreciate each other better and would yearn for a closer union, not merely as a matter of duty to Christ, but from a strong and growing attachment. Assimilation would then be easy, because they would love each other too much to remain longer apart. But the attempt to combine them before either party is ready for it would, in my opinion, not be wise."

For the present, we think the next three years may be most profitably spent in acting on these suggestions. It is our hope that we may be permitted to meet as a commission at the time and in the city in which your General Assembly will next convene, at which time we should be glad to have opportunity for further oral conference with a view to reaching a better and complete understanding of the meaning of the terms used in the

Declaration of those things agreed on as essential elements of the basis of Christian unity.

As a matter of probable interest to you we have to communicate to you that our House of Deputies of the General Convention, recently in session, adopted as its own the Declaration on Christian Unity of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion assembled at Lambeth, England, in July, 1888, and which was substantially the same as the Declaration of our House of Bishops adopted in 1886 and already transmitted to you.

Believe me, dear brethren, to be yours very truly and affectionately,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN,

Secretary of the Commission on Christian Unity.

16. LETTER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1893.

To the Episcopal Commission on Christian Unity:

NEW YORK, March 2, 1893.

DEAR BRETHREN:—We have read your letter with great satisfaction and hope that we may be permitted to see in it the prospect of some advance toward the object which we all have so much at heart. There are, no doubt, serious points of difference between us, which it would not be profitable now to discuss, but there are also important matters in which we cordially agree.

The four propositions of your House of Bishops, reaffirmed at Lambeth, and adopted by your House of Deputies, we regard as a definite proposal looking toward the reunion of Christendom, and embodying your views of the proper basis of such a union. We have explained in a former communication how far it is possible for us, with our present light, to assent to this basis. We recognize with you that we have not yet reached an agreement respecting the meaning and signification of some of the terms used in the propositions above referred to. And we shall be glad to have an opportunity, as you suggest, for further oral conference with a view to reach a better and complete understanding on these points at the time of the meeting of our General Assembly in Washington. And we cordially appreciate your courtesy in proposing to meet with us at that time.

Meanwhile we find in the suggestions of your letter a gleam of hope that there may be a better way of composing our differences. If we shall fix our thoughts upon those things in which as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are at one, rather than upon those in which we thus far fail to agree, the magnitude of the former may grow in our esteem, and we may thus be ultimately prepared to come into closer accord in the latter.

While we are not yet prepared for a perfect union, such as is greatly to be desired among the true people of God, and such as the promises of Scripture lead us to anticipate in the future; while we are not even prepared to formulate the terms upon which such a union may hereafter be effected, can we not

at least take a step in that direction, trusting that the Lord will open the way for another and another, until the goal that we seek shall at last be reached? If we cannot at once accomplish all that we wish, let us at least do all that we can without sacrifice of principle or surrender of what we honestly believe to be the sacred deposit of Christian truth. Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things, cherishing the hope, in regard to all that is still obscure, that God will reveal even this unto us.

Inasmuch as the way has not yet been made clear to effect church unity by formal agreement to definite propositions, we heartily assent to your proposal that we should seek to work our way towards it by proposing mutual love and kindly fraternal intercourse and combining together for the accomplishment of common ends. No external unity is worthy of the name which is not the manifestation and expression of a genuine inward spiritual unity. If we cannot as yet unite as Churches, can we not come together as Christians, lovers of the same Lord, partakers of the same blessed hope, animated by the same Divine Spirit dwelling alike in all our hearts and striving after the one grand aim of the glory of Christ in the recovery of lost men from sin and from all the woes into which sin has plunged them?

Cannot some practical mode of coöperation be devised by which, for the present, the members of our two Communions can be brought together in the assemblies, possibly even in the same organizations? In endeavoring to do the work of Christ in our respective churches, and to spread His Gospel among them that are without, we encounter the same problems, we meet similar difficulties and we employ our various methods of solving and removing them. Might we not with mutual advantage come together to confer about these things, and get the benefit of each other's experience and counsel, and encourage our hearts and strengthen our hands by association with fellow-workers in the same field?

Cannot some measures be devised by which we shall stand together on questions of moral reform and by which we shall present a united front in antagonizing the evils which we alike oppose, and let the public see and feel that there is no division between Episcopalians and Presbyterians here, but that they are joined in one with one heart and one soul in stemming the floods of vice and iniquity and rescuing the fallen from the grasp of the destroyer? There are great social questions in which we are alike interested—the care of the poor, the delicate and often disturbed relations of labor and capital, the infusion of Gospel principles into all the affairs of ordinary life, into business and legislation and the general intercourse of men. Cannot Episcopalians and Presbyterians profitably combine in the study of these questions and in giving effect to the conclusions at which they arrive?

Cannot something be done towards creating a sentiment of mutual respect and friendly regard in our general church work,

especially in mission fields both at home and abroad? Cannot something be done even here, if not in the way of positive coöperation, yet to discourage and discountenance mutual interference, needless collision, or the unwise duplication of laborers in sparsely populated districts?

We have ventured to offer suggestions rather than to outline any distinctly formulated plan. But if Episcopalians and Presbyterians can personally be brought into closer mutual relations, can be associated together in some public manner in common enterprises, can plan, consult, and work together for the attainment of common ends; if that measure of isolation which now keeps them apart can be succeeded by active, friendly intercourse, and this can be so managed that no antagonisms shall be awakened and all our differences shall for the time be kept out of sight, and only that be suffered which will tend to promote harmony and fraternal feeling, we shall feel that a decided step has been taken in the direction of Christian Unity. If mutual love and true fellowship of the spirit shall thus be assiduously cultivated, we may cherish the hope that we shall yet come to see eye to eye even in the matters that now appear to divide us beyond remedy.

We remain, dear brethren, most truly and fraternally yours,
JOSEPH T. SMITH, *Chairman*,
FRANCIS BROWN, *Secretary*,

For the Committee on Church Unity of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. of A.

17. CONFERENCE AT WASHINGTON, D. C., 1893.

In accordance with the request contained in the letter of the Protestant Episcopal Commission, dated Alexandria, La., April 18, 1892 [being No. 14 in this collection], a conference was held in the city of Washington, D. C., on May 17, 1893. The letters preliminary to the conference were as follows:

NEW YORK, March 3, 1893.

To the Commission on Church [Christian] Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

DEAR BRETHREN:—In behalf of the Committee on Church Unity of the Presbyterian General Assembly, I write to express to you the sincere gratification with which the desire for further personal conference, so kindly made known in your letter of November 18, 1892, has been received. We especially appreciate the courtesy of your adjournment to meet at the time and place of the next meeting of our General Assembly. The Assembly will convene in Washington, D. C., on the 18th of May next, and we beg now to extend to you a cordial invitation to meet us for an oral conference in that city on Wednesday, May 17, at 3.30 P. M. It is our hope, also, that you will consent to be our guests on the evening of the same day, and that we shall

thus have the opportunity of social and fraternal intercourse, which may promote our better understanding of one another's position and the attainment of the end which you and we most earnestly desire. We will inform you as soon as possible of the exact place of meeting.

In the meantime we beg you to accept the assurance of our respect and affectionate regard.

FRANCIS BROWN,
*Secretary of the Committee on Church Unity of the
General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.*

[Copy of a letter sent to each member of the Episcopal
Commission.]

NEW YORK, April 13, 1893.

[REV. AND] DEAR SIR:—As a member of the Commission on Church Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church you are cordially invited to meet the Committee of the Presbyterian General Assembly for a Conference on Unity, *Wednesday, May 17, 1893, at 3.30 P.M., in the city of Washington, D. C.* We hope to have the opportunity of a second meeting with your Committee on the evening of the same day.

We are informed of the courteous action of your Commission in adjourning to meet at the time and place of the next meeting of our General Assembly. The Assembly will convene in Washington, May 18. We hope, therefore, that the time suggested may suit your convenience, and it will give us great pleasure to be assured that we may expect you.

Very truly and fraternally yours,

FRANCIS BROWN,
Secretary of the Presbyterian Committee on Church Unity.

N. B.—The meeting on Wednesday afternoon at 3.30 will be held at the Church of the Covenant, entrance on N Street, near Connecticut Avenue. The Metropolitan line of street cars known as the F Street line passes the church.

[The conference was held as appointed, and as a result the two letters immediately following were written, being Nos. 18 and 19 of this collection.]

18. LETTER OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1893.

*To the Committee on Christian Unity of the General Assembly
of the Presbyterian Church:*

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 18, 1893.

DEAR BRETHREN:—We acknowledge with great pleasure the receipt of your letter of March 2 last, and we desire to thank you for the many kindly courtesies extended to us heretofore, but more especially those that we enjoyed upon yesterday.

The freedom of speech employed in our oral conferences has,

in our opinion, been most helpful. The opening of your minds to us has the better enabled us to speak freely to you, and has greatly conduced, in our opinion, to mutual understanding, thereby fitting us the better to comprehend and master the great and important problems with which we have to deal.

It has been suggested to us that there exists some lack of clearness of understanding with respect to some phrases used in the Declaration of 1886, which stands as the basis of our conferences. It may be profitable to submit to you the interpretation that we place upon one of these—the “local adaptation” of the Historic Episcopate in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

We take the phrase to carry the idea of constitutional government. The authority vested in the Episcopate, the manner and mode of its preservation and extension, are to be regulated by law, and this law, while fundamental or constitutional in nature, yet is to be subject to alteration or amendment on grave occasions when the exigencies of the times shall demonstrate the necessity for such change or alteration. Among ourselves we have differing methods for the choice of those who are to be invested with the authority of the Episcopate. In the autonomous Diocese the elders and brethren, the clergy and laity, choose whom they will and present him to the Bishops of the land for the confirmation of their choice. In the Missions the process is reversed; the House of Bishops nominates or elects a qualified person and presents him for the suffrages of the chosen representatives of the clergy and laity, not of the Mission, but of the whole land. Again, the ordination of presbyters and deacons, the manner in which the authority given them and that given to their Bishops shall be mutually exercised—the relationship of those respective authorities—in a word, all matters of administration are with us regulated by law. The Bishops do not perform the executive functions of their office in any arbitrary manner, but ever under and by law. These regulations, as now enacted, are satisfactory to us, yet we desire to say that, appreciating the urgent necessity of Church Unity, and endeavoring to fulfill the law of sacrifice entailed and necessitated by the constraining power of love, we are ready to modify, if necessary, many things esteemed most highly by us, if by such sacrifice only the goal may be attained. To others, which we are prepared to sacrifice, we are ready to add these also, and to alter and amend the law governing the Episcopate in such particulars as may be apparent as necessary in the adaptation to the changed conditions which a union of American Christians might present.

For the further and better understanding of our own conceptions of the place of the presbyter or elder, or as termed in the Scriptures, the Episcopo-presbyter, we desire to say further that in all of our legislative bodies and in many of the executive boards and committees, the Presbyterate is endowed with full and coördinate powers. All of our local legislative councils are

composed of the clergy of the District or Diocese involved and of lay representatives of the several congregations, the Bishop being the presiding officer. Legislation is originated by both clergymen and laymen and enacted under the usual forms of procedure. In the General Convention, which is the legislative body for the whole Church, there are two houses, the one of the Bishops, the other of the clergy and lay deputies, chosen by the respective Diocesan Councils. No canon, or law, is, or can be, enacted without the concurrence of the House of Deputies. In every Diocese, the Bishop being absent or incapacitated from the performance of the functions of his office for any cause, the Standing Committee, composed in two or three Dioceses of presbyters exclusively, but generally of both presbyters and laymen, is the Ecclesiastical Authority of that Diocese for the time being with the power to administer the same.

Briefly to sum it up, according to our understanding, our Church in America to-day stands with the authority of the Presbyterate fully recognized, and with it standing in its relative position of control of legislation, precisely as the English Presbyterians of 1660 asked that it might stand in the Church of England, when they professed that they would be content with the Anglican Episcopate, provided such place and such authority were secured to the body of the Presbyterate.

Replying now more specifically to your letter of March 2, we desire to say that we recognize the propriety, nay, the necessity, of coöperation in all humanitarian labor, whether that endeavor be in the resistance to evils which afflict society, be those evils of a social or political sort or perhaps working to the enslavement and the spiritual bondage of the consciences of men to any yoke of tyranny, or be the endeavor for the rescue from physical or moral sloughs of women or of men, or for the healing of the wounds and distempers of the suffering; for the caring for the afflicted, the lame, the halt, the blind, or for the advancement, the development, the elevation in any true way of mankind.

We are prepared to advise and recommend such coöperation as you ask wherever and whenever our influence extends.

We desire further to suggest as a measure eminently conducive to a better acquaintance between ourselves; to the growth of mutual understanding, and its concomitant love of one another; to the drawing together; to the final and ultimate attainment of corporate unity, the goal never to be lost to sight, or in any way obscured to our vision; the holding of public meetings within our borders in the interest of Christian Unity, to be addressed, whenever practicable, by speakers representing both of our Churches. Further, that our peoples be urged to private as well as public prayer for the healing of our unhappy divisions, to the end that there may come to be one fold under the one Shepherd.

We respectfully ask that you unite with us in the setting forth of the necessity for the reorganization of American Christianity, to the end that the waste of force now so sadly dissipated, and

lost because dissipated, may be estopped; the moral power so ineffectual, because divided, given its inherent usefulness; to the end, above all, that the good pleasure of the blessed Lord may be accomplished in the unity of His servants, that so this American people—aye, the world—may be made to believe that the Son did indeed come into the world for the healing of every wound of the nations and kindreds and tribes.

It will be understood, of course, that while these expressions voice the unanimous opinion of our Commission as here represented, they do not spring from any instruction that we have received, our General Convention not having been in session.

We continue, brethren beloved, your friends and fellow-servants of our one and common Lord and Saviour.

For the Commission,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN, *Secretary*.

19. RESPONSE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1893.

To the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 19, 1893.

DEAR BRETHREN:—Your communication of May 18, has been carefully considered by our Committee, and we desire to say in reply that it has given us special gratification. The statement which you make with reference to the polity of your Church, the emphasis which you place upon principles of Church government common to us both, the fact that you have recognized the authority of the Presbyterate insisted upon by some of the English Presbyterians in A.D. 1660, and the generous avowal on your part that you are "ready to modify, if necessary, many things most highly esteemed by you, if by such sacrifice only the goal may be attained," lead us to hope that a nearer approach and closer coöperation between the bodies we represent is possible in the near future.

We also avow our readiness to make the same sacrifice in order to the securing of Christian Unity. In common with yourselves we have traditions, laws and usages which, while they do not embody essential truth, are still profitable and dear to us. These we would be ready to abandon and substitute for them other forms, not unscriptural, if thereby we could promote the healing of divisions among Christian Churches, and secure the fulfillment of our Lord's Prayer, that we all may be one.

We thank you for your cordial response to our desire for coöperation in that you say you are ready to engage with us in all humanitarian work. We also heartily approve of the measures suggested by you for the promoting of better acquaintance between the bodies represented by us, namely: the holding of public meetings within our borders in the interest of Christian Unity, to be addressed, when practicable, by speakers representing both our Churches; and that our people be urged to private

as well as public prayer for the healing of our unhappy divisions. We will take pleasure in asking our Assembly to approve the measures which you have suggested.

Permit us also, in this connection, to ask your earnest attention to another means which we believe would tend to a better understanding between our respective bodies and greatly aid the cause of Christian Unity. It is a custom largely prevailing among the various branches of the Protestant Church for pastors occasionally to exchange pulpits in the preaching of the Word. Experience has shown that this custom has been one of the most powerful factors in leading to a better understanding and a closer fellowship between the Churches among whom it has prevailed. We believe that the establishment of this same practice under proper regulations between the great historic Churches represented by us would greatly promote the cause of unity which we both desire. We recognize the right and duty of each Church to protect its pulpits from the intrusion of all unauthorized or self-appointed preachers of the Word, and to take such measures as shall best secure the teaching of pure doctrine. Also, this custom, if established between us, should not be in unregulated liberty, but under such rules and limitations as the Episcopal authority of both bodies may agree upon.

We respectfully ask your consideration of this matter, and, as we have already assented to three of the propositions advanced by you, we are not without hope that through a better acquaintance by means of some of the measures proposed, and especially under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, we may be able to reach a satisfactory solution of the fourth proposition.

We can assure you that our General Assembly will take pleasure in coöperating with the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in all wise and Scriptural measures for the reorganization of the American Church, so as to prevent the waste of means and to secure the greatest efficiency in our common work.

Yours in Christian fellowship,
J. T. SMITH, *Chairman*,
FRANCIS BROWN, *Secretary*.

20. LETTER OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1894.

To the Committee on Christian [Church] Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church:

BALTIMORE, April 16, 1894.

BRETHREN, BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:—We gratefully acknowledge your most courteous and truly Christian reply to our communication of May 18, 1893. It was the prelude of informal conferences between eminent Presbyterians and ourselves, which have been steadily maintained ever since, with many happy results. By such conferences, and the growing correspondence between members of our two bodies, with brotherly inquiries and mutual explanations, a new state of things has been

begun, from which, even if immediate results are not apparent, the deeper root may be given to principles already recognized as furnishing the basis of ultimate restoration.

You have the advantage of us, in your annual councils; and we are embarrassed by the fact that, as our Triennial Council meets not again until the autumn of 1895, we can only answer by an expression of our personal sentiments, not yet submitted to the body to which we are responsible. We can do no more than assure you of the high appreciation with which your communications will be received. We hope to present your letter, with any further correspondence with which you may honor us, to the two Houses of our Great Legislature which will convene (D. V.) in October of the next year.

In the meantime, may our united prayers continually ascend to the Great Head of the Church, that He would take the cause into His own Hand, and in the ways of His Providence so order all things in behalf of His whole flock in all the world, that there may be an end of our "unhappy divisions." May He increase our faith and enable each one of us, with fervent charity to live and labor for the "restoration of all things," and "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." Is it too much to believe that He who has awakened in so many godly souls a yearning for the oneness He has commended, is able to answer their patient prayers for the practical obedience of all believers to the precept which was once exemplified by the disciples, as a perpetual example? Not in vain, we suppose, is the inspired record given us, "like the pattern in the Mount" of the old Law: "They that gladly received His word were baptized . . . and they continued steadfastly in (1) the Apostles' doctrine, and (2) fellowship, (3) in the breaking of bread, and (4) the prayers."

May grace, mercy and peace be multiplied unto you, in all your counsels and efforts for the glory of God, and for the good of our common country, now suffering from such undisciplined and distracting conceptions of the way of God, and of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Your friends and fellow-servants in the work of the Gospel,
A. CLEVELAND COXE, *Chairman*,
HERMAN C. DUNCAN, *Secretary*.
For the Commission on Christian Unity.

21. ACTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1894.

The Committee of the General Assembly on Church Unity, reported to the Assembly of 1894, that they had made repeated effort to secure, from the Commission on Christian Unity of the Protestant Episcopal Church, a satisfactory answer to the question whether said Commission would recognize as a principle in the relations of the two Churches, the declaration of the General Assembly of 1887, viz.: "Mutual recognition and reciprocity between the different bodies professing the true religion is the first and essential step towards practical Church unity."

The response, given by the Commission, after several years' delay, reminded the Committee that the General Convention met triennially, and that the Commission could "do no more than assure you of the high appreciation with which your communications will be received." [See Letter No. 20.] In view of this unsatisfactory condition of affairs, the Committee recommended to the General Assembly the following action, which was adopted and *duly forwarded* by the Stated Clerk of the Assembly to the Chairman of the Episcopal Commission. The action of the Assembly was as follows:

1. The General Assembly reaffirms the declaration of the General Assembly of 1887 as follows, viz.: "The General Assembly are in cordial sympathy with the growing desire among the evangelical Christian Churches for practical unity and co-operation in the work of spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout all the earth."

2. It reaffirms the further declaration of the same Assembly, viz.:

[a] All believers in Christ constitute one body, mystical, yet real, and destined to grow into the fullness of Him who filleth all in all.

[b] The universal visible Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children.

[c] Mutual recognition and reciprocity between the different bodies who profess the true religion is the first and essential step towards practical Church unity.

3. The General Assembly approves of the way in which its Committee of Conference with the Protestant Episcopal Commission on Church Unity has conducted its negotiations.

4. The General Assembly, on the request of its Committee, directs it to suspend further correspondence with the Protestant Episcopal Commission, until that Commission secures from its General Convention instructions to accept and act upon the doctrine of mutual recognition and reciprocity.

22. LETTER FROM THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1895.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:—Your fraternal communications heretofore acknowledged, seem to require of us some further communications, such as your Committee may present, if thought proper, in their report to your approaching General Assembly.

Once more we labor under the difficulty of being unable to say anything definite, because our Councils meet triennially, while your Assembly meets annually. We can only announce our purpose (D. V.) to report to our "General Convention," in October next, somewhat to the following effect, which you will please accept as a draught of our views and purposes, viz.: In the papers we present herewith, our Presbyterian brethren have conveyed to us an expression of their views, equivalent to a desire on their part to suspend negotiations for the present. While acquiescing

in their proposal, we by no means consider such suspension as indicative of a hopeless future. In full assurance, rather, that the divine precept will eventually be obeyed, and that all things in the religious condition of our country appeal to Christian consciences, with irresistible force, in favor of healing existing divisions, we await a future not remote, in the spirit of prayer and supplication. With calm reliance upon the Great Head of the Church, who is ready to correct all the evils of disobedience, "when our obedience is fulfilled" (2 Cor. x. 6), may we do our part and leave the rest to Him.

From our point of view, a great advance has been practically made in the line of what is called "reciprocity." Temperate discussion, in an earnest, fraternal spirit, has already succeeded to controversy, more or less embittered, and Christian conferences established between the great bodies we respectively represent have produced a new period in our mutual relations. It strikes us that the more developed stages of "reciprocity" are only to be looked for, and under divine blessing, as the logical product of such conferences, and that to make the ends we have in view conditions precedent to the use of means for the ultimate attainment of those ends would involve a *hysteron proteron* such as both parties would hardly insist upon at this time.

While acquiescing, therefore, in the judgment of the reverend and honorable Assembly, we entertain cheering hopes that what we have heretofore enjoyed in our conferences will soon be renewed under more favorable conditions. We have taken sweet counsels together, and in prayers and intercessions, as well as in conferences, have found reason to believe that God is with us of a truth, and is working for great results which we are not as yet able to predict. Let us often renew the prayer of the first disciples, "Lord, increase our faith."

On behalf of the Commission let me remain, reverend and dear sir, with distinguished consideration, and with sincere Christian and fraternal love, your faithful friend and servant,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN, *Secretary, etc.*

BALTIMORE, April 25, 1895.

To the Rev. W. H. Roberts, D.D., LL.D., etc., Clerk (*pro tem.*), of the Committee of the General Assembly, etc.

23. LETTER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE, 1895.

PHILADELPHIA, PA., September 25, 1895.

The Rt. Rev. A. Cleveland Coxe, D.D., Bishop of Western New York, Chairman of the Commission on Christian Unity of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church:

RT. REV. AND DEAR BROTHER:—Your letter of April 25, 1895, acknowledging the receipt of our communication containing the action of our General Assembly touching mutual recognition and reciprocity, has been received. We greatly regret to learn from it that you and your brethren on the Commission

regard the action of our Assembly as equivalent to the expression of a desire on its part that all negotiations between us should cease. Such we can authoritatively say was not the intention. The Assembly desires that the negotiations should continue, and result, if not in an organization of the two Churches, at least in closer relations, hearty coöperation in the work of the Lord, and even a federation for that work, and will regret exceedingly if there should be a failure in reaching these highly desirable ends. But the Assembly believes that the mutual recognition and reciprocity which now prevail between the great majority of the Evangelical Churches of Christendom, should be explicitly accepted also by your Church. At the time of our appointment in 1887, our General Assembly affirmed that such mutual recognition and reciprocity was "the first and essential step towards practical Church Unity." We so informed you in the beginning of our negotiations, but you responded in substance that you were not then authorized to consider the matter. Your language was, "our authority at present extends only to a search for the basis of unity." "The question of reciprocity is one that will probably be for consideration as a tentative measure in the course of our further negotiations." We again directed your attention to the importance of the question by a proposition for an exchange of pulpits. Receiving from the Chairman of your Commission a communication to the effect that you could not negotiate on that subject, without authority from your General Convention, our General Assembly instructed us to suspend the correspondence until your Commission should secure from your General Convention such authority. This, we repeat, was not the prompting of a desire to end the correspondence, but an expression of the importance of the doctrine of mutual recognition and reciprocity. Our General Assembly did not direct the cessation of correspondence, but only its suspension. We trust that your General Convention will take such action as will leave open the door to future correspondence—and that such correspondence will lead to the happiest results.

Personally the brotherly conferences in which we have been engaged have brought to us their own reward. We have learned to know and love each other as brethren, and to rejoice in the recognition of each other's gifts and graces, as we have taken sweet counsel together, and talked one to another of the things pertaining to the King. Our hours of communion with you, dear brethren, we will ever recall with delight, and cherish their memory as blessed preludes to that unbroken communion we hope soon to enjoy with you in the Father's house above. Allow us again to express the earnest desire that nothing which has recently occurred may interrupt our earnest and continued efforts to bring the Churches we respectively represent into closer fellowship and ultimate union with each other.

In behalf of the Committee on Church Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

WM. HENRY ROBERTS.

24. RESPONSE OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1895.

MINNEAPOLIS, October 11, 1895.

To the Rev. Dr. Roberts, etc., etc., Philadelphia :

REV. AND DEAR SIR :—In acknowledging your kind communication of September 25, the receipt of which I have already announced by private letter, I congratulate myself that, our "General Convention" being now in session, one great obstacle in our fraternal interchanges is removed. For three years we have been obliged to repeat the explanation of our difficulties, in replying to your polite letters, arising from delays on our part, while your corresponding legislature, the General Assembly, has enjoyed more frequent opportunities of giving instructions to your Venerated Committee, and of receiving your reports.

What our General Convention may resolve touching the facts we now lay before them, will be duly communicated by our Secretary, at the conclusion of the sessions. For the present, I perform the duty of presenting, at their request, the views of our Commission, as they will be embodied in our report.

We are glad to be informed officially that it was not the intention of the General Assembly to put an end to further communications between us, and we heartily respond to the desire that they may be continued with favorable results.

This assurance, however, would be of greater importance, practically, were it not somewhat modified when you add the words : "But the Assembly believes that the mutual recognition and reciprocity which now prevail between the great majority of Evangelical Churches of Christendom should be explicitly accepted also by your Church."

Our authority, as we have previously stated, extends only at present to the furthering of a search for a basis of unity under the four conditions recognized in the "Lambeth Quadrilateral" (so called). The definition of "reciprocity" thus emphatically made gives grave significance, in our opinion, to two paragraphs which state the action of your General Assembly upon your reports to that Reverend and Honorable Body. We quote them as follows :

I.

"In view of this history thus briefly sketched, your Committee believes that the correspondence with the Protestant Episcopal Commission should be suspended until action is taken upon our proposition concerning reciprocity by the General Convention. We recommend, therefore, the following action :"

II.

"The General Assembly on the request of its Committee directs it to suspend further correspondence with the Protestant

Episcopal Commission until that Commission secures from its General Convention instructions to accept and act upon the doctrine of mutual recognition and reciprocity.”*

It thus appears that this positive action of the Assembly was taken “on the request of its Committee.” In your present polite letter you express the trust that our General Convention “will take such action as will leave open the door to future correspondence.” In other words, this door is effectually closed until we comply with the demand which seems to us to substitute for the fourth Lambeth proposition an entirely new condition, one which, in the present stage of our conferences, is a condition not only inconsistent with, but in fact subversive of, its purpose and its spirit.

Its spirit, let me remind our Christian brethren of the Committee, is the enforcement of our Lord’s own conception of unity among His followers expressed in His grand Mediatorial Intercession, on the night before He suffered. His followers were to be one, not in a social or sentimental unity like the friendships between good men, but in a unity like that in which He could say “I and My Father are One.” Such unity He made the prerequisite of Universal Evangelization. Our belief, therefore, is that modern Missions to the heathen will be comparatively unfruitful till the unhappy divisions of true disciples of Christ are effectually healed. Not until then, it follows from the Master’s language, will the world believe in the divine mission of the Incarnate Word.

Such being the spirit of the Lambeth propositions, our purpose was to reanimate true Christians to renewed efforts for the restoration of primitive unity as described in Holy Scripture, a unity of common Sacraments and Prayers, the Common Creed and the Apostolic Fellowship. We did not make any demand for unity with us as a local church; we called attention to the importance of conformity to the standards of “first faith,” “first love” and “first works” prescribed by our Lord Himself to the Churches of Asia. We recognize many things to be amended in ourselves, and much to be admired and imitated in others; but it is by converging lines directed to this common point, from which we have all more or less departed, that we may meet at last. Were we striving for our own aggrandizement, or for principles peculiar to ourselves, we could expect no blessing upon our endeavors. We stated nothing of the kind; we have cited only the Scriptural prescription of the Christian Church, once universally accepted. He who will not “hear the Church” makes himself as a heathen man and a publican. We aim for ourselves to escape this condemnation by conformity to the great principles, in which true believers once confronted a hostile world in one communion and fellowship.

With brethren so greatly honored as those whom we now address through your Committee, it would be an impertinence to speak ambiguously on interests so sacred, involving the pro-

*Minutes of the General Assembly, 1894, p. 25. Ibid., p. 29.

pagation of the Gospel to millions of unevangelized men. To conceal in any respect our convictions of truth would be unworthy of ourselves. We do not write as diplomatists; we would be slow to imagine ourselves affronted, and we are most anxious not to give offense; but we cannot accept what is specified *in limine* as the “open door” to further negotiations. Instead of the Historic Episcopate you would substitute “the mutual recognition and reciprocity which now prevail between the great majority of Evangelical Churches of Christendom.” Of this sort of unity “an exchange of pulpits” is suggested to us as the outward and visible sign. We must frankly confess that this is the unreal and delusive idea of unity which permits divisions to be multiplied without end, and which we had supposed both your Committee and our Commission were fraternally endeavoring to correct.

Great have been our hopes that Presbyterian brethren were awakening to the fact that we and they were originally one family in the reformed Church of England; that the history of the Anglo-Saxon race is our common history, and that all things in our existing circumstances and relations to our beloved country invite us to set an example of restored unity and of united effort for the propagation of the blessed Gospel among our own countrymen and in all the world. In three points of the “Lambeth Quadrilateral” (so called) we are supposed to coincide; it is the fourth which we are now called upon to surrender if our communications are to be continued.

Have our Presbyterian brethren forgotten that they themselves, so long ago as in A.D. 1660, pronounced the reformed Episcopate, as we have done, to be the most practical step towards a reunion of Christendom, if ever such a blessing might be regained. They then declared that Presbyterian principles do not conflict with such an Episcopate as that of the Anglican Church, but only require the admission of Presbyters and Laymen to a share in Synodical legislation. Was it not reasonable in us to expect the Presbyterians would be the first among American Christians to join us in support of a principle to which they are themselves historically committed? Can anything be conceived of as more likely to make the Gospel in all its practical influences triumphant throughout this land, than such an example of healing a breach, and “restoring paths to dwell in.” Our Commission is united in the conviction that for the present, and until Providence sets before us an “open door” for a resumption of our conferences, it is proper for us to accept the action of the Assembly (made “on the request of its Committee”) that such conferences should be suspended, but only for the present.

We know that you will join us in prayers to God for a speedy renewal of our fraternal relations. On our part, we shall pray for forgiveness, if by any fault of our own the proposals of Richard Baxter and his brethren in 1660, were relegated to a suspension, which for two centuries has perpetuated a melan-

choly division amongst Christians who are so truly described in the Scriptural phrase, "Sirs, ye are brethren."

"Brethren" we are, whose united forces might have accomplished more glorious results for mankind, whose discords have brought reproach upon the Gospel of Christ.

Believe me, reverend and dear brother, that our Commission returns this reply with no feelings of diminished Christian regard for your Committee; and I am personally your obliged friend and brother in Christ,

A. CLEVELAND COXE,
Chairman, etc.

25. LETTER FROM THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL COMMISSION, 1896.

ALEXANDRIA, LA., February 21, 1896.

To the [Secretary of the] Committee on Christian Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church:

DEAR BROTHER:—In the letter of our Chairman of the 11th of October last you were informed that the Secretary of our Commission would at a later date communicate whatever action might be taken by our General Convention.

The proceedings of the General Convention are just now published, and I have the pleasure, therefore, of communicating its action to you in authentic form. It was embodied in this resolution, adopted by both Houses, to wit:

"*Resolved*, That the Commission on Christian Unity be continued under its previous instructions, to hold itself ready for conference with any and all similar Commissions or Committees, appointed by Bodies of Christians seeking the Unity of the Church, the basis of such conferences to be the principles enunciated throughout the Declaration of the House of Bishops made at Chicago, in 1886, and as reaffirmed by the Lambeth Conference of 1888."

Under the resolution the Commission has been reconstituted, and awaits opportunity for the conferences suggested.

Very truly and fraternally,

HERMAN C. DUNCAN,
Secretary of the Commission.

26. ACTION OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1895.

The Rev. Dr. Duncan, from the Commission on Christian Unity, presented the following report, the resolutions appended to which were, on motion, adopted:

The Commission on Christian Unity respectfully submits herewith its entire correspondence. [See Appendix XI.]

It has also had under consideration the Memorial from the Diocese of Indiana, praying that your Commission be instructed to issue again circular letters inviting the assembly of a general

conference to consider the questions connected with Christian Unity. Said Conference to have for the basis of its considerations the Declaration of the House of Bishops of 1886.

Your Commission is of the opinion that the agitation of the questions connected with Christian Unity has done untold good in attracting the thought of the age to the evil and the sin of schism, and in arousing discussion concerning methods to put an end to strife and division amongst men who profess to follow the Prince of Peace, He who hath taught us that the Church is His one Body.

Your Commission does not deem it necessary that it should repeat at this time what has already been done in calling men everywhere to return to the primitive Faith and Order of the Church, as exhibited in the age when there was no visible division, when there was one Faith, and substantial Unity in her Polity everywhere.

Your Commission does not deem it necessary to ask for any enlargement of its powers. It thinks it best to content itself with a reassertion of the fact that the existence of this Commission is a continuing declaration that the way is open, and will be kept unimpeded, for conference with any and all who seek with us the healing of the wounds of the Body of Christ, and desire brotherly conference with a view to the study of the conditions that will bring peace and unity.

If we have the unique position assigned to us by De Maistre, then our responsibilities and duties are commensurate with our faculties.

Our task is difficult and fraught with perils. But God has made this Church His instrument for moving the mind and heart of Christendom; we believe that, by His Blessed Spirit, this Church may be made His agency for vitalizing with catholicity, and bringing into organic unity all our fellow-Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and are willing to study and to follow His precepts.

Your Commission offers the following resolutions, and asks their adoption:

Resolved, The House of Bishops concurring, That the Commission on Christian Unity be continued under its previous instructions, to hold itself ready for conference with any and all similar commissions or committees appointed by Bodies of Christians, seeking the unity of the Church, the basis of such conferences to be the principles enunciated throughout the Declaration of the House of Bishops made at Chicago, in 1886, and as reaffirmed by the Lambeth Conference of 1888.

Resolved, That the Commission on Christian Unity be discharged from the further consideration of the Memorial from the Diocese of Indiana.

A. CLEVELAND COXE [and others].

27. ACTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, MAY, 1896.

The Committee on Church Unity presented its Report, on Correspondence with the Protestant Episcopal Commission, which was received, and adopted, and is as follows:

The Committee on Church Unity have to report that their correspondence with the Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church is necessarily suspended for the present. Your Committee was appointed in 1887, by the General Assembly in session at Omaha, in response to a communication from the aforesaid Commission transmitting a Declaration of their House of Bishops on the subject of Christian Unity, addressed to their "fellow-Christians of the different communions in this land." Four propositions were set forth by the House of Bishops as, in their judgment, "essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom," viz.:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
3. The two Sacraments—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and in the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

In our first letter to the Episcopal Commission we stated that we could accept the first three of these propositions, only qualifying our acceptance of the second by saying that we must not be "understood to give up our attachment to and use of the Westminster Confession of Faith as an ampler exhibition of what we believe to be taught in Holy Scripture."

We added that "we can with equal readiness accept the fourth proposition according to our understanding of its terms. The Presbyterian Church holds, and always has held firmly, to what we believe to be the genuinely historic Episcopate as this is set forth in the New Testament, and in the practice of the early Church, so far as it did not swerve from apostolic models and directions. It finds the Presbyter-Bishop in all ages of the Church in unbroken succession until the present day. At the same time we are not disposed to constrain others to adopt our interpretation in this matter. We shall feel no difficulty in uniting with those who interpret the Bishops of the New Testament and of the primitive Church differently from ourselves, provided our own liberty of interpretation is not infringed. We can unite with those who think Bishops to be a superior order of the clergy, provided we ourselves are not asked to abandon our own conscientious conviction that Bishops as instituted by the apostles are not of superior rank, but that all who are ordained to the ministry by the laying on of hands of the Presbytery, and are entrusted with the care and oversight of souls, are Bishops."

We further called their attention to mutual recognition and reciprocity as the first and essential step toward practical Church unity; and stated that "the Presbyterian Church recognizes all bodies professing the true religion as branches of the visible Church of Christ, and it recognizes the validity of their ministry and sacraments. Differences of view in relation to ecclesiastical polity need be no bar to mutual recognition and reciprocity. Ordination and the administration of the sacraments may be confessed to be valid even by those who esteem them to be irregular."

The Episcopal Commission informed us in their reply that "the only authoritative deliverance in respect to the threefold character of the orders of the sacred ministry is found in the Preface to the Ordinal;" and this they believe to have been placed in that position "not at all as a dogmatic article of faith," but "as a declaration of ecclesiastical polity, as this Church hath inherited the same." Acting upon this assurance, we laid the entire correspondence up to that time before the General Assembly at its session in Saratoga in May, 1890, with the recommendation that negotiations be continued with reference to a union on the basis of the four propositions of the House of Bishops. This was approved by the Assembly, together with the spirit and position of the Committee in its correspondence.

During the sessions of the General Episcopal Convention in Baltimore in the following autumn we were invited to an oral conference with members of their Commission, which some of us were able to attend. We there became satisfied that the interpretation which we had put upon their fourth proposition would not be accepted; and that more stress was laid by them upon their three orders of the ministry than we had supposed, from its having been represented to be simply an inherited ecclesiastical polity. Feeling that it would be of little use to discuss controverted points respecting the constitution of the ministry, which have been debated by the ablest minds on both sides for generations without settling the questions in dispute, we suggested that it would be better, and would be more promotive of the end which we had in view, to emphasize the great matters in which we agree than to dwell upon our minor differences. We also suggested that if the members of our respective churches could be brought into closer and more sympathetic contact, and instead of standing apart and out of fellowship with one another could be induced to work together and take counsel together for common ends, and thus come to know and appreciate each other better, the mutual affection and assimilation which would thence result would be a great step toward that unity which is our ultimate aim, by abating prejudices and leading to a spirit of harmony and conciliation, before which obstacles which now seem great might melt away. This was cordially assented to by the Episcopal Commission, who remarked in their next communication: "It is evident that we have not yet reached an agreement respecting the meaning and significance of some of the terms

used in the Declaration;" and they proposed to leave "crucial difficulties to the influences of the Holy Spirit, who may, in His own good time, remove mountains." And they added: "First of all, let us learn to understand and love one another. Let us promote every convenient form of social and godly intercourse. Let us impress, upon Christians who differ from us, where we, Presbyterians and Anglicans, are agreed; that we recognize great Christian principles on which we are entirely united; that we cherish each other's character and reputations as fellow-Christians; that we rejoice in the points in which there are advantages on either side, which are examples to both; that we are striving together in many ways for the triumph of the Gospel and the glory of Christ."

As a practical measure in furtherance of the policy thus agreed upon of closer Christian intercourse and fellowship, we urged upon the Episcopal Commission in our letter of May 19, 1893, the desirableness of authorizing an exchange of pulpits between the ministers of our respective bodies, under such regulations as would guard it from abuse. This they promised to lay before their General Convention at their next meeting.

Meanwhile much impatience was felt in our own Church at the apparently slow progress of our negotiations. Various reasons contributed to this result, which were either not fully understood by the general public, or which it was difficult for them duly to appreciate. The Episcopal General Convention only met at intervals of three years, which necessarily entailed considerable delay in matters requiring their approval. Some of the questions to be considered are of great delicacy, in which there is a wide diversity of judgment and much warmth of feeling; and it is better to move slowly and cautiously, where precipitate haste would provoke strife and endanger alienation. The advances made in kindly feeling, mutual respect and confidence, and in a better understanding of each other's attitude and sentiments, encouraging and hopeful as they are in themselves, and as they were felt to be by your Committee, make no figure in Reports. It is particularly difficult for Presbyterians, who are accustomed to the utmost liberality of judgment in respect to other Christian denominations, and to regard the unity of spirit in the various diversities of outward form, to understand and make due allowance for the difficulties and embarrassments of those who are accustomed to less liberal views, and who lay more stress on exact conformity to particular usages to which they are themselves habituated and attached.

Thus there was a growing impatience at what was thought to be the dilatory character of the negotiations, and, in the opinion of many, their fruitlessness so far, especially in the matter of churchly and ministerial recognition, in regard to which no decisive answer had yet been obtained. This manifested itself so strongly that your Committee, by a decided majority, and after mature consideration of the subject, came at length to the conclusion that it was indispensable to recognize its existence, and

to endeavor to allay it by an effort to quicken our pace. Accordingly we felt constrained to recommend to the General Assembly at its session in 1894 to direct us "to suspend further correspondence with the Protestant Episcopal Commission, until that Commission secures from its General Convention instructions to accept and act upon the doctrine of mutual recognition and reciprocity."

The Presbyterian Church cannot with self-respect, and a proper regard for the honor of their divine Lord, who has called them into the communion of His visible Church, negotiate on the subject of Church unity with another Christian body, except on terms of parity and unless they are explicitly acknowledged to be a Church of Christ, as they are owned by Him to be, and to possess a divinely authorized ministry, which He has both summoned to His service by the direct call of His Holy Spirit, and has sanctioned by the gifts and graces bestowed upon them, and by His abundant blessing upon their labors. In presenting this to our Episcopal brethren as a necessary preliminary to all negotiations for Church unity, we ask nothing more than they should unhesitatingly grant. If they are Christ's, so are we Christ's. If they could not with a good conscience engage in negotiations, which even seem to involve a tacit admission that they are not a true Church of Christ, nor their ministry a genuine ministry, no more can we.

Our Episcopal brethren honestly differ from us in their views as to the divinely ordained constitution of the Church and of the ministry. We think that they have departed from the Apostolic and primitive model; they think that we have done so. But the substance ought not to be confounded with the form. A Church may have unfailing marks of being a true Church, though it may be imperfectly organized. A ministry not ordained precisely in what others judge to be the primitive mode, may yet give evidence that it is approved of God. With all her conscious weaknesses and imperfections, the Presbyterian Church, in no spirit of boasting or self-exaltation, but with humble, grateful loyalty to her divine Head, must insist that she is entitled to the name and the prerogatives of a true Church of Christ, and that her ministry and her ordinances are entitled to be regarded as genuine and valid.

When the action of the Assembly of 1894 was transmitted to the Episcopal Commission, it was understood by them to be equivalent to a desire on our part to suspend negotiations for the present. We endeavored to disabuse their minds of this false impression, and assured them that what the Assembly desired was not suspension of negotiations, but that recognition which is due from one branch of the Church of Christ to another, and which is a necessary preliminary to any effective negotiation looking to the union of Churches.

We regret to say that no favorable action was taken upon the subject by the Episcopal General Convention at its late meeting in Minneapolis; and that prior to any report to that body the

Commission informed us through its Chairman, that this "demand seems to them to substitute for the fourth Lambeth proposition an entirely new condition, one which in the present stage of our conference is a condition not only inconsistent with, but in fact subversive of its purpose and its spirit." If it be indeed true that such a recognition of the Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian ministry is at any stage of such conferences inconsistent with the fourth Lambeth proposition, and even subversive of its purpose and spirit, then it must be said that this proposition is an effectual bar to Church unity, for it precludes those who endorse it from recognizing that to be a true Church of Christ, in which His Spirit manifestly dwells, and by which His truth is professed, and preached, and exemplified in devout and holy lives, and in fruitful labors for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom and glory.

Our brethren of the Episcopal Commission appear to understand that we are desirous of substituting "mutual recognition and reciprocity" for that Church unity which they hope may be effected by the Lambeth propositions. In this they are mistaken. We regard it as the necessary preliminary to negotiations for a union, placing the contracting parties in such a relation of confidence to each other, as makes it possible for them to meet on equal terms, and covenant together as brethren in the Lord, desirous of obeying in this as in everything else His expressed will. The exchange of pulpits was not proposed by us as "the outward and visible sign" of an "unreal and delusive idea of unity." It was proposed in good faith as an obvious and helpful mode of promoting that kindly Christian intercourse between our respective Churches, which we had both agreed to foster as the best and most practicable means of preparing the way for union. Church union is the ultimate goal upon which our eyes are fixed as truly as theirs are. We hope and believe that the time is surely coming, when all the true followers of the Lord Jesus will be one in the highest sense of the word, and the Redeemer's prayer will be fulfilled to the letter. But union is not to be forced by formal agreements and external bonds and ecclesiastical authority. It is to be desired and sought only as it is the expression and outgrowth of an inward condition, a union of mind and heart and soul, a union of faith and love and loyal devotion to our common Lord. We do not place a cordial spiritual union in opposition or antagonism to Church union; on the contrary, we believe that when by the grace of God the former has been effectively wrought, the latter will follow as its legitimate fruit, and ought not to be delayed.

We here take great pleasure in bearing testimony to the uniform courtesy both in correspondence and in personal intercourse of our Episcopal brethren. We have enjoyed delightful Christian fellowship with them, and we have learned to regard them as brethren beloved in the Lord. We also recognize the fact that the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches in this country have much in common. The same faith substantially is repre-

sented in the standards of the two Churches. Both have an effective constitutional government, removed alike from the exercise of arbitrary power on one hand, and from unregulated license on the other. Differences undoubtedly exist in the mode of administering this government, in forms of worship, and in various usages of the two bodies; but if a measure of liberty was allowed in these matters, each Church might perhaps profitably learn from the other, and some assimilation might take place with advantage to both.

We have been officially informed that the following action was taken by the late Episcopal General Convention:

Resolved, That the Commission on Christian Unity be continued under its previous instructions to hold itself ready for conference with any, and all, similar Commissions or Committees, appointed by bodies of Christians, seeking the unity of the Church, the basis of such conferences to be the principles enunciated through the Declaration of the House of Bishops made at Chicago in 1886, and as reaffirmed by the Lambeth conference of 1888."

We regret that we cannot recommend a renewal of correspondence with the Episcopal Commission under this resolution. For while we are in agreement upon three of the propositions contained in the so-called Lambeth articles, the interpretation of the fourth proposition by the Episcopal Commission, viz., that having reference to the historic Episcopate, which interpretation is now impliedly sanctioned by the General Convention, is, that it is "not only inconsistent with, but in fact subversive of, its purpose and spirit" to accept and act upon the doctrine of "mutual recognition and reciprocity."

In view of all the circumstances we recommend the following action:

Resolved, 1. That the Committee on Church Unity be, and hereby is, discharged from further conference with the Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church on this subject.

Resolved, 2. That one thousand copies of the correspondence with the Commission, accompanied by the Report of the Committee to this Assembly, be printed as a permanent record.

Resolved, 3. That the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America desires a closer affiliation with other evangelical Churches, and expresses the hope that the time may soon come when the suspended correspondence with the Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church may be reopened by the acceptance by that Church of the doctrine of "mutual recognition and reciprocity."

28. LETTER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE,
MAY, 1896.

To the Rev. A. Cleveland Coxe, D.D., Chairman, and Rev. Herman C. Duncan, D.D., Secretary, of the Protestant Episcopal Commission on Christian Unity:

DEAR BRETHREN:—Your respective favors of October 11, 1895, and February 21, 1896, have been received.

In the first of these you inform us that, in your judgment, it would be "not only inconsistent with, but in fact subversive of, the spirit and purpose of" the fourth Lambeth proposition (concerning the Historic Episcopate) to accept and act upon the doctrine of "mutual recognition and reciprocity."

The second of the letters received seems to invite a continuance, or reopening, of the correspondence on the basis of the Declaration of your House of Bishops as thus interpreted—that is, with refusal on your part to recognize our Church and other evangelical Churches as branches of the Church of Christ, and our and their ordination as valid.

We cannot, under the instructions of our General Assembly, reopen the correspondence. We have been instructed to suspend all correspondence until you accept and act upon the doctrine of recognition and reciprocity.

One statement made by you cannot be permitted to pass without notice. You say:

"Have our Presbyterian brethren forgotten that they themselves, so long ago as in A.D. 1660, pronounced the Reformed Episcopate, as we have done, to be the most practical step towards a reunion of Christendom, if ever such a blessing might be regained? They then declared that Presbyterian principles do not conflict with such an Episcopate as that of the Anglican Church, but only require the admission of Presbyters and laymen to a share in Synodical legislation. Was it not reasonable in us to expect the Presbyterians would be the first among American Christians to join us in support of a principle to which they are themselves historically committed?"

We do not understand that there is any ground for this assertion. We know of no Presbyterian Church or organization that ever took the position alleged. No branch of the Presbyterian Church is committed to such a principle. We believe there is nothing in our history to justify you in expecting that we would join you in support of it. In days of civil commotion two centuries ago, and under impending dangers from a threatening Papacy, some individual Presbyterians in England may have been willing to yield more than we can. We would remind you, however, in this connection, of the fraternal recognition extended by English Reformers and by honored leaders of the English Church to the other Reformed Churches in Great Britain and on the Continent, a recognition similar to that which you now refuse,

and in so doing abandon the position taken by some of your ecclesiastical ancestors.

We regret, dear brethren, that the course you and your Convention have taken has apparently closed the door to a continuance of our correspondence.

Trusting that it may be only a suspension, and not a cessation, and that you may, ere long, see your way clear to reopen it, I am, with Christian regards, in behalf of the Committee on Church Unity of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, fraternally yours,

WM. HENRY ROBERTS, *Secretary*.