

rian General Assembly. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the movement toward unity took the form of union revival work, and, a little later, that of union temperance work. Between 1820 and 1845, the people of American blood, in the northern states, were converted from a nation of drinkers to a nation of abstainers, and in the next ten years, most of these states eagerly passed prohibitory laws; and among the methods by which these results were accomplished, union meetings of the Protestant churches were prominent. Early in the century, moreover, the instinct for unity manifested itself in the permanent interdenominational societies that were formed. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society were originally interdenominational. Of the union organizations of that period there yet survive, besides others less well known, the American Bible Society, the Tract Societies, the American Sunday School Union. During the third and fourth decades of the century, interdenominational Sunday School lessons were widely used. In the second half of the century, the movements of the Sanitary Commission, the Christian Commission, the Y. M. C. A., the Evangelical Alliance, the Y. P. S. C. E., the Chautauqua circles, and other similar movements, have been or are widely influential. The plan for local evangelization now worked by the Alliance, comes very near to being a form of official federation among the churches. Meanwhile a large number of instances of denominational consolidation have occurred, particularly in Canada, and among the Presbyterians of the United States. Movements of the same sort are now on foot in several foreign mission fields. Probably the movement toward unity follows a law of accelerated velocity, but not to the extent that many suppose. There is less controversial preaching now than formerly; but this is partly due to the fact that there is less theological preaching, and not entirely to the advancing sentiment for union. Controversy is less harsh than it used to be, but this is to be partly accounted for by our advance in polished manners. In any case, the problem of possible federation is simply the present phase of a movement that has been in progress in every generation since Protestantism began. The instinct for greater unity is always manifesting itself. Its forms of manifestation change, old methods going out, and new methods coming in, but the movement itself is continuous. Any supposable attempt at federation must put itself in relations of continuity with the whole movement, or it will result in divisions rather than in union.

III. Facts like these have their bearing on the question: What sort of federation, if any, is desirable? Let us continue to bear in mind that we are discussing only this preliminary question, and not the question whether federation itself is desirable.

If we are to have federation, it must be such as can be secured