

## A GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States is moving in favour of the formation of a General Council of the Presbyterian Churches of the world.

It is not proposed, says the official address, signed by Rev. Dr. Crosby and others, to form an organic union of all the Presbyterian Churches throughout the world. It is evident that one General Assembly could not regulate with advantage, the internal economy of Churches in such widely separated countries as Switzerland, Germany, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, the United States, and Canada. Great injury might arise from any attempt to interfere with these different Churches in the management of their own affairs; for all ecclesiastical history shows that serious dangers are to be apprehended from the establishment of any central power, which would be almost sure to interfere with the liberty of local Churches and of individuals. Some Denominations, moreover, have grand historical recollections which they wish to cherish; and some regard it as their duty to bear a testimony in behalf of truths which others seem to them to overlook. In these circumstances, the Churches will not be asked to merge their separate existence in one large organization, but retaining their self-government, to meet with the other members of the Presbyterian family to consult for the good of the Church at large and for the glory of God.

In order that a Church be entitled to join this union, it should hold to the Presbyterian form of government, and have a creed in accordance with the *Consensus* of the Reformed Churches. No new creed or Formulary of any kind is contemplated.

It is urged with much force that many benefits would flow from such Council, including the following:—

1st. It would exhibit before the world the substantial unity, quite consistent with minor diversities, of the one great family of Presbyterian Churches.

2nd. It would greatly tend to hold up

and strengthen weak and struggling Churches, by showing that they are members of a large body. The Protestant Churches of the Continent of Europe, for example, feel the great need of sympathy and support from Churches more favourably situated.

3rd. It would enable Churches, which are not inclined to organic union, to manifest their belief in the unity of the Church and to fraternize with those whom they love, while they still hold to their distinctive testimony.

4th. Each Presbyterian Church would become acquainted with the constitution and work of sister Churches, and their interest in each other would be proportionately increased. Some might be led in this way to see in other Churches excellencies which they would choose to adopt.

5th. The Churches may thus be led to combine in behalf of the truth, and against prevalent errors; as, for instance, to defend the obligations of the Sabbath, to resist the insidious efforts of the Papacy, especially in the matter of education, and to withstand Infidelity in its various forms.

6th. Without interfering with the free action of the Churches, this Council might distribute judiciously the evangelical work in the great field "which is the world;" allocating a sphere to each, discouraging the planting of two congregations where one might serve, or the establishment of two missions at one place, while hundreds of other places have none. In this way the resources of the Church would be husbanded, and her energies concentrated on great enterprises.

7th. It would demonstrate to the Christian world these great facts in the working of the Presbyterian system: That, by its reasonable polity, it consists with every form of civil government; that by the simplicity of its usages, it is adapted to all the varying conditions of the Church upon the earth; and that, by its equal distance from license and arrogance, it is best prepared to recognize the kinship of all believers.

8th. It would manifest the proportions and power of the Presbyterian Churches, and thus offer effectual resistance to the