

Of late years also, in the ecclesiastical world, we discover Oecumenical Councils on a grand scale, flourishing high-sounding enough titles, as witness Pan-Presbyterian, Pan-Anglican, Pan-Methodist, and Pan-Congregational Assemblies, all now become historic.

This spirit of organized fellowship I regard as eminently suggestive, and shadowing forth the secret of true success in bringing the world to Christ. The Church is an organized unity of being, in which every means is an end, and every end is a means, for "by one spirit we are all baptized into *one* body, and have all been made to drink of *one* spirit."

Closer fellowship, I am persuaded, is the *great want* of the Church generally, but particularly of our denomination in this Dominion. This spirit of extreme jealousy over the independence of the local Church is not healthful or progressive. Before we can lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes we must get the idea of the inter-dependence of the Churches to grow and regulate our intercourse. This is no new doctrine, for the fathers of our denomination understood and advocated the necessity of communion among the Churches. In that famous Westminster Assembly of Divines, the members of it known as the Dissenting Brethren repudiated the idea of complete isolation of the Churches one from the other, in such words as these:—"We could not therefore but judge it a safe and an allowed way to retain the government of our several congregations for matter of discipline within themselves, to be exercised by their own elders, whereof we had three at least in each congregation whom we are subject to, yet not claiming to ourselves an independent power in every congregation to give account or be subject to none others, but only a full and entire power complete within ourselves, until we should be challenged to err grossly—such as corporations enjoy who have the power and privilege to pass sentence for life or death within themselves, and yet are accountable to the State they live in." Such views, in theory and practice, have the endorsement of Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs and William Bridges, men of understanding in Westminster Assembly times. A closer confederation of our Churches, for advice, counsel, censure and common effort in the service of our common Master, would, I believe, supply

our missing link. From base to apex, the idea of the federation of independent governments, for a common good, that in the interests of a common life will declare its governing principle to be, "One for all, and all for each," is, and must be, an essential factor in our denominational progress.

In theory, no one of our Churches here, or in the Dominion, but will readily acknowledge obligation to recognize the duties of fellowship and counsel which the Scripture and the spiritual brotherhood of believers impose; but yet how few of them in their practice allow themselves to be so governed!

God says, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount . . . Take your journey. Behold, I have set the land before you." Then—

"Forward! be our watchword. Steps and voices joined;  
Seek the things before us, not a look behind.  
Forward, flock of Jesus, salt of all the earth,  
Till each yearning purpose spring to glorious birth.  
Forward, out of error; leave behind the night;  
Forward through the darkness; forward into light."

Then again the Church's progress is affected by another spirit which is abroad—even "a *sensuous* spirit." The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are serious obstacles in the way of spiritual prosperity and eminent godliness. At the farthest remove from the morbid and ascetic, we nevertheless perceive in the times a growing fondness for pleasure and gaiety, for dress and show, for gymnastics and æsthetics. The growing fondness, the inordinate love, the excessive and absorbing regard to pursuits in themselves perhaps legitimate, is what we deprecate as hostile to true and eminent devotedness to God.

Is there not danger that the pulpit and the religious press of to-day fight shy of rebuking this spirit, as if the mission of Christianity were not to rectify the tastes, the preferences, the desires and the love of mankind? Let our reformer, however, appear and lay his hand at the root of this evil, and, sooth to say, he will soon be compassed about as with bees, which will try to reduce him to a voice crying in the wilderness, if, indeed, he be not stung to death. It is Adams that says, so well, "There is a system of things which passes by the name of worldliness, which is understood as such by the common judgment of mankind, and there is another system of things which passes by the name of godliness, defined as such in the Scriptures; and these are contrary