

within themselves and to their weaker neighbor, the question presses, "What can be done at once—this year?"

The weak country churches—those that are not entirely dead and gone—might be distributed among their natural helpers—the stronger neighboring churches, by the Home Missionary Society, (it will have to adopt the word "Home" now, to distinguish itself from the Foreign M. S.), and make those churches assume the dreary responsibility of refusing to help the weak; or else do what they ought to have done long ago.

It ought to be a source of gratulation to a city or town church, that it is carrying on a work for the Master in some neighboring village, and developing self-help in *two* churches by the same effort. The brethren would do well to think the matter over, with prayer for divine guidance, and come to the Union gathering with some clear ideas as to ways and means, and agencies. Let it be known that we are going to do something, and the initial difficulty is overcome.

## Correspondence.

### CHURCH UNION.

*Dear Mr. Editor,*—I read with much interest in your last issue, my good brother Allworth's letter on Organic Union, and mark with pleasure its frank and kindly tone. Nor will it mar our mutual regard, if I still remain unconvinced that organic union promises nothing for purity, zeal, and Christian activity. By the way, the adjective "organic," has not been used by those moving in the direction alluded to by my friend. However, that may pass; division is not justified by any N. T. principle, and I must still hold that the unity whose manifestation is destined to cause the world to know that Jesus has been sent, and for which that same Jesus prayed, is to be sought for, and to be worked out by those who call Him Master, and who would stand fast in His liberty from vain conversations received by tradition from the fathers. So I still would work as I would pray, that yet we all may be one.

Nor, dear editor and brother, have your "foundation principles" shaken my conviction that the New Testament has nowhere marked out an ex-

clusive form of church polity. The church is only an assembly; the Christian church a Christian assembly; the old patristic motto is ever true, *Ubi spiritus, ibi ecclesia*. "Where is the spirit, there is the church." Of course an assembly must organize, but organization must be adapted to the work that has to be overtaken. To predicate a divine command for a particular form, is to emulate the exclusiveness of our Baptist brethren, who make an ordinance a test of obedience to Christ. It is quite manifest that union is impossible upon any assumption of infallibility or unchangeableness on the part of a denomination. *Semper eadem* is the proud boast of the Vatican, and of all who have made up their mind that they are indeed the people, and all wisdom will with them die. We have a better heritage; we can learn, and are free if fresh light comes to change.

Since the little pamphlet, "An Endeavor for Christian Unity," has been circulated, questions have been asked regarding the conferences held by the brethren of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. It is, or ought to be, well understood that at these conferences no one on either side assumed to speak for anyone but for himself. At the same time opinions were expressed that led all the brethren to take hopefully a further step, and their opinions, personal expressions, may be without breach of confidence summarized. There is, as to doctrine, an evangelical faith common to both the Westminster Confession and the Declaration adopted by our Union. Should further and more general conferences be held, the question will be—not the division of either—but is there enough common ground in them on which unitedly the two orders can stand? That is one of the questions that ought to be frankly met and answered. If sufficient for both parties, honestly held, doctrine should not separate, and as neither are inspired, the future may be left to take care of itself. Practically the declaration is a fairer presentation of the teaching of the Congregational pulpits than is the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterian.

As to polity, congregations in the Presbyterian church are really left in all matters pertaining to themselves, practically to manage their own affairs, and Congregational churches could retain, without