

# BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

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## ARTICLE I.

### CHRISTIAN UNION IN PROBLEM AND PRACTICE.

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IN a Middle-Western town a church, in the name of "church federation," tried to form a union with a neighboring church and to appropriate the edifice and invested funds belonging to the second church. Those societies were of widely different denominations. That was not an attempt at church federation: it was a pure case of church graft.

A church in one small New England village where, in response to pressing needs, radical readjustments were under consideration, passed formal resolutions against "church federation." This action was seemingly due to sectarian zeal, which naturally opposes the federation idea. Those resolutions were passed in the presence of the fact that the churches concerned had already been "federated" for many years.

Such is the humorous folly of human action under the influence of greed, ignorance, and prejudice. And thus is seen, in the great field in which constructive church federation is bound to play a leading part, the need of careful instruction and definition. If the general public thought that all a surgeon could do was to operate for appendicitis, it would have as clear an idea of surgery as many people have at the present time of the practical mission of church federation.

The whole movement being yet in its infancy, we are too apt to judge of it from a partial knowledge of a few isolated instances viewed from a wrong standpoint.

There is confusion in the minds of many people as to the meaning, even in its most general relations, of the term "church federation." It is the special purpose of this study, therefore, not only to remove confusion from the largest subject, but to lend incentive to the earnest study and practice of the central principles of federal church union.

The person who does not favor church federation because he believes it to be the massing of unrelated elements is aside from the point. Federation is partnership for efficiency. It is always the organized combination of purposeful forces on the principle of coördination and leadership. Neither is the federation of churches the formation of a new church or of a new denomination. It is a constructive method which is at the service of the missionary spirit of the churches. It is a form of remedial hospital treatment for existing disadvantages and evils. It is of the churches, by the churches, and for the churches. It is the churches in concerted action, each toward its own true goal, and all marshaled into one mighty army to realize the world's culmination of righteousness.

Should a denomination choose to take a special hand in the federating or uniting of churches, the only consistent thing it could do would be to disband, so that its members could promptly enter the remaining denominations — to bear their part in continuing the process until all the denominations should reach organized uniformity. Should an independent movement which especially seeks the organized union of all Christians adopt a creed to set forth its distinctive purpose, it would thereby become a denomination, and, however broad

and inclusive the denomination might be, it would enhance the problem which it undertook to solve. In the history of churches anti-denominationalism has, more than once, been denominationalized. In view of some of these considerations, we conclude that the principles of church federation may best be propagated largely through channels already organized. Church federation sets forth the churches as enjoying a certain state of being, as holding a particular attitude toward other churches and the world, as making a particular specialized but broadly important missionary investment of their resources. Federation is a relationship between the churches which involves a principle of efficiency. It is the "churches federated." It is the movement, local or general in application, which seeks to secure coöperation in the purposive work of the churches, while each is free to fashion its own life in its own way.

If one should go to a large public library in which the materials on religious subjects are in any wise representative, or to the library of a theological seminary, for the purpose of studying the subject of Church Federation, he would find the information he wishes listed under the general title of "Christian Unity," "Christian Union," or "Church Unity." Any of these terms seems to be inclusive in this department of knowledge.

Let us at this point take our bearings. Our primary purpose is to consider in a practical way the subject of Church Federation. We have already introduced new terms. We have, on the one hand, found that Church Federation is actual, organized coöperation between churches of different denominations, which are thereby not only purposively but experimentally securing their greatest efficiency in society. It is not a mere academic or theoretical matter. Viewing the church

life of America as we would watch the objective processes in some great laboratory, we see living federations of churches here and there vitally performing their functions. On the other hand, we are confronted with terms and considerations which seem to be less practical or wholly adapted to purposes of speculation.

After months of thought upon this subject, I wish to present a chart of interrelated terms which will serve, I trust, to guide us in an unbiased and satisfying survey of the subject in hand.

A. *Terms with Various Largely Academic Applications.*

- I. Church Unity.
- II. Christian Union.
- III. Christian Unity.
- IV. Ecclesiastical Church Union.
- V. Inter-Church Comity.

B. *Terms with Definite Practical Applications.*

- VI. Dogmatic Church Union or Ecclesiastical Uniformity.
- VII. Theoretical Church and Christian Union.
- VIII. Church Federation.
  1. National Inter-Church Federation.
  2. State Inter-Church Federation.
  3. Local Inter-Church Federation in Cities, Counties, Towns, and Villages.

## IX. Practical Church Union.

1. At the Top — organic union of total denominations.
2. At the Middle — union in Church work principally to accomplish other than ecclesiastical ends.
3. At the Bottom — community and parish relationships of comity, coöperation, federation, and organic union.

## X. Administrative and Creedal Affiliation of Local Churches to form denominations.

## XI. Associational Christian Union.

1. Associations composed and supported by unclassified individuals many of whom are members of churches.
2. Undenominational associations of particular classes largely church members.
3. Interdenominational but not inter-church associations of auxiliary departments of church work.

We are now prepared to pursue a clear course of definition and exposition. We begin with those five terms which have, for the most part, academic or idealistic applications.

## I.

What, then, we may ask, is church unity? Church unity is not a relation between churches: it is, instead, the spirit which underlies cordial relations between churches. Church unity is not a method of inter-church relationship: it is the friendly temper which makes possible methods of church coöperation. The world is full of church unity in the same way that it is full of optimism. We can neither see nor

organize optimism: the same may be said of church unity. But the results of both of these are present as underlying all successful inter-church associations and organizations. Church unity is very general, ærial, and inoffensive. It is so broad in its application that its sharpest focus in any one place can hardly be felt. Because of some measure of church unity, therefore, certain otherwise mutually exclusive and exceedingly intolerant religious organizations are found within the same nation, the same city, and sometimes within the same small neighborhood. The term may well be used as indicating a very large department of knowledge.

## II.

Christian union does not differ in all respects from church unity. It is a similar general term. Christian union is a cordial state or relationship between Christian individuals or churches. Christian unity is the cordial spirit which lies back of such union. Christian union is the common feeling and mutual condition between individuals, they being members of the same church; between different churches, which brings them into the same denominational affiliation; and between churches of differing denominations, to bring them into various fellowships of service. Christian union is expressed by every example of true church federation. But not all Christian union is church federation. All church union that honors the kingdom of Jesus Christ is also Christian union, but not all Christian union is church union. There can be no church unity without Christian union, but not all Christian union is church unity. Christian union, we trust, characterizes all of the great Christian voluntary associations of our day; while none of these agencies can be classed as examples of church union or as directly expressive of church unity.

## III.

One no sooner entertains the thoughts of church unity and Christian union than he finds that their intimate ancestor, ~~Christian~~ unity, is also his guest. Christian unity is related to church unity in the same way that the spirit which enters into Christian relationships between churches is related to the same spirit which actuates the relationships between both individuals and churches. It is the same spirit in all relationships that we first noticed in inter-church relationships.

In the next place, Christian unity is related to Christian union as a spirit is related to the method or process which expresses it. We did not begin our present discussion with that of Christian unity, for the same reason that the person who wishes to discuss municipal or civic conditions would hardly begin by defining the universe. Christian unity is at the same time the most comprehensive and the least concrete entity within range of our present survey. Nevertheless, it is the most abused and most longed-for friend of the entire church world. It is as essential to Christian progress as is the very presence of Christ, and to wound it is to wound the body of God's Son. To organize for its realization is to tune our harps for eschatological anthems before the germs of Christ's militant church have hardly become an embryo.

## IV.

Ecclesiastical church union is any form of Christian union in which churches as ecclesiastical bodies are in any wise directly involved. Two reasons lead us to speak of ecclesiastical church union at this point.

In the first place, we wish to emphasize the general and essentially academic character of the term. Reference to our chart shows that the term includes all forms of inter-church

federation and practical church union and, as well, dogmatic church union and the creedal affiliation of local churches to form denominations. We cannot speak of ecclesiastical church union in contrast to organic and federal church union. The organic and federal types of church union are two particular forms of ecclesiastical church union. There is a sharp contrast, however, between associational Christian union and ecclesiastical church union. In the field of experience we are not apt to find any organized agency the purpose of which is the promotion of ecclesiastical church union. Should we find it, we would have to ask, Which of the numerous diverse and often mutually destructive forms of ecclesiastical church union is it seeking? Consequently, we find the term more at home in the study than in the workshop.

We wish especially, in the second place, to call attention to the fact that the term "ecclesiastical church union" cannot be confined to the meaning which we later place under the terms "dogmatic church union" or "ecclesiastical uniformity."

#### V.

What is church comity? The word "comity" bears the same general meaning locally applied as when used in reference to whole denominations. It means courtesy, politeness, good will, mutual credit. For churches, when three or four of them stand together on the same village square, to have their bells on Sabbath morning rung in harmonious succession is an expression of comity. The friendliness of ministers and members of different but neighboring churches is comity. Comity implies that each church shall give its neighbors the "square deal." The church worker who, in

failing to get a newcomer to the parish to attend his church, prejudices him against another church, certainly violates the spirit of Christian comity.

But comity means something more. Each Christian denomination should credit others of the same general class with the ability to present in a given community the essential Christian gospel. Each such denomination has the right to such credit, limited only by the evident law of supply and demand.

The need of comity is fundamental. If comity might be practiced in full Christian integrity, what else would be needed? Comity is preventive as well as remedial; it is a condition of all successful denominational Christian effort. It is the pledge, not only of respect for the good in other religious bodies, but of self-respect and of Christian quality in the body which exercises it. Comity is the voice crying in the wilderness of sectarian division that no church need exist which cannot express in an individual field all that Christianity needs to mean in that field.

We cannot dismiss even our general treatment of this much-professed and greatly-needed but, on the other hand, little-practiced and little-understood inter-church comity without answering the question of its relation to church unity. There is the same difference between church unity and church comity as between humility and a humble person. Church unity is ideal: church comity is an ideal objectively expressed. Church unity is a spirit: church comity is an embodied spirit. Unity is a matter of motive: comity is a matter of conduct. If a person may be prosecuted for a breach of honesty or for theft, he may also be prosecuted for a breach of comity. What comity is in international relations, it should also be in interdenominational relations. The churches may well organize

to realize comity, which is the highest pledge of their integrity and of their power.

The United States of America is the most wonderful laboratory or experiment station in which to observe the workings of practical forms of inter-church relations that the world has ever known. Having devoted ourselves thus far to five terms in our special vocabulary which relate especially to the theoretical and academic phases of the subject, let us step into the field of active operations, to discover and to define the various types of practical undertakings.

## VI.

By dogmatic church union is meant that kind of union which is sought by a religious denomination or a church whose members teach, as they try to believe, that they alone represent essential Christianity; that they are right while others are wrong; that, at least, they possess the larger truth, and others only part truths; and that, when the end of the race is reached, they will be the all-inclusive religious body. Church unity, or union, like that may be called the "rabbit-anaconda" type of unity. It is union in which the anaconda swallows the rabbit. It is a sad fact that so many of the Christian denominations of organized religious life and work in the United States to-day hold this dogmatic point of view, seeking to realize their desired end. Christ's rebuke to the spirit of "I am holier than thou" ought to be effective in this social age, if never before. Whether they are entire denominations or local churches, those who possess the dogmatic spirit concerning inclusive church union are in danger of a position which is absurdly tragic, like that of an enthusiast who continues to fight long after his recognized defeat.

## VII.

Church and Christian union which exists only in the minds of students or on paper, which is not the product of experience, which forms no part of the working assets of militant Christianity in its brave struggle against the destructive forces of a needy world, and which is not calculated to stimulate to visible results may well be called "theoretical." Every true art has its science, and all well-ordered conduct proceeds according to a philosophy. It is about time, however, that those who think in the important world of church unity should advance beyond the mists of mere speculation, get to the field of experiment, and produce evidence that will afford wise guidance.

At one time I had a bibliography of four hundred representative references under the general subject of "Christian unity." Most of the literature to which this bibliography was an index were books and magazine articles produced within the last fifty years. This literature was all the material which I could find, within the time at my disposal, upon this subject, in the public libraries of Chicago, Newark (N. J.), Cleveland, and St. Louis; in the general libraries of the University of Chicago and the University of Vermont; and in the more specialized libraries of Drew Theological Seminary and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. By a careful examination of all this literature, I found that about forty per cent of it was written to advocate the dogmatic type of inclusive church union. The percentage in this case was calculated upon the number of references. Fifty, or more, per cent of the whole number of references, which, of course, covered again a part of the references to dogmatic expressions, were of purely speculative or theoretical writings. Only about twenty per cent of the references

were to writings which had definitely practical bearings and value.

The period of practical church unity is only just begun. The number of workers in this field is increasing. But the literature upon the subject is very meager indeed.

### VIII.

The old New England township empire was one in which the single community church was the religious aspect of the village. The pendulum has swung far enough out from this social solidarity toward diversity and variety. Sectarian contention and the dissipation and waste of religious forces have resulted. The period of unification is dawning. It is reaching to the institutions of religion, as well as to those of industry, commerce, politics, and education.

One of our early paragraphs uses the term "the federation idea." Definition is easy to the one who first has the idea. The United States of America is the world's greatest federation, a federation of States. The federation idea has long held sway in organized politics, commerce, and industry, among the brotherhoods of labor, social enjoyment, and moral reform. "The United Churches of the United States" is more than a dream. The idea stands for the invincible power of democracy—each for all, and all for some supreme attainment. In the church world the idea is the same when used of the greatest inter-church federation, as realized in the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, or of lesser federations, as of the churches of states, cities, counties, towns, or villages. There are many applications of the uniform idea of church federation, and all of them conform to the same definition.

A federation of churches is the organized coöperation of two or more churches of different denominations in any given community or geographical unit for the purpose of realizing their own greatest strength as churches and their maximum direct service in behalf of society.

In thinking of national, state, and local federations of churches, we will note a characterization of them made by the Rev. E. Tallmadge Root at the first meeting of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, held at Philadelphia, in 1908. He said:—

“The National Federation of Churches kindles enthusiasm by the vastness of its conception and constituency; but it lacks the definiteness which local tasks alone can give. Local federations — county, city, village, or township organizations — face tasks concrete and definite; but they are not large enough to command great enthusiasm or to enable them to escape dangerous fluctuations of interest through change of personnel. In contrast with both, the state federation, on the one hand, has a scope and field not too large to be defined and grasped; and, on the other, magnitude enough to fire the imagination and eliminate the fluctuations caused by the ever changing personnel of pastors and church leaders.”<sup>1</sup>

The National Federation of Churches, which, since the Philadelphia conference in December, 1908, just referred to, has been the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, was formed in 1901, following, in point of time, the Maine Interdenominational Commission and the Federation of Churches of New York City. The State federations of churches seek to win the churches of their respective States to the Christian, the missionary, or the community point of view, and thus to assist them to overcome their overlooking,

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, p. 187.

and overlapping, and, by developing the churches as such to their maximum Christian status, to Christianize the States which they serve. At the present time, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Arizona have State Federations of their churches. Utah has an inter-church committee which does the work of a Comity Commission. Maine and New Hampshire have Interdenominational Commissions. These two New England Commissions are practical inter-church federations which especially seek to secure courteous relations among the churches and their consequent greatest efficiency. Home Missions Councils are in process of formation in Colorado and other Western States. The present progress of inter-church federation organization is so rapid that the only means of keeping fully abreast of it is to keep in constant touch with the national headquarters of the Federal Council of Churches at New York.

The local types of federated church work will be considered in later paragraphs.

## IX.

The Rev. Josiah Strong was among the first to analyze practical Christian union into its three leading forms. We now commonly speak of church union at the top, at the middle, and at the bottom. In another connection I once defined these terms in the following sentences: "There is the constitutional uniting of religious bodies when two or more total denominations unite to form one denomination. Then there is the moral union or federation of churches when they stand together to support special measures of social or re-

ligious betterment. In the third place, there is the uniting of local churches, that is, practical church union at the bottom, so that the churches of any particular city, town or rural parish, if not actually decreased as to their number, are increased in efficiency by the coöperation, federation, or organic union of two or more of them."

Leading examples of practical church union *at the top* have been the formation of one denomination of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America in our own country, and the union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany. In Canada the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches—each already the product of a reunion—are rapidly and, to all appearances, effectively drawing together. A very fortunate reunion is taking place between the Baptists and the Free Baptists in the United States. Such great undertakings in constitutional church union, which are not so practically advisable as the popular mind might indicate, should be entered into with great care. Such work when it applies to the estranged children of the same families of denominations, when these denominations are fully alive with the missionary spirit and when local education and readjustment may follow close with popular enthusiasm, is of infinite importance. There are not many higher expressions of true church union than this.

We do not commonly think of practical church union at the top as a form of church federation. Yet it is such. When two or more denominations undertake measures for securing their organic oneness, they enter the federal relationship with this distinct and direct ecclesiastical end in view. The Congregational, the Presbyterian, and the Wesleyan churches in Canada, for instance, are realizing organic church union by a

process of inter-church federation. Those churches or ecclesiastical bodies that seek the reunion of Christendom, by asking other churches to surrender to them or by the wholesale proselytism of church members will realize their efforts to be entirely futile. The organic reunion of Christendom is the worst thing in the world to be dogmatic about. If such reunion is ever realized, it will come by means of Christian processes.

We are about to note another fact to show that hard and fast lines cannot be drawn between the interrelated types, forms, and forces in the great world of Christian unity.

Practical church union at the middle (that is, union in church work, the objective of which lies largely outside of the churches in philanthropic and ethical service to society) is inseparable from ecclesiastical results. Churches cannot serve society without a good measure of reflex development; and, furthermore, churches cannot work together without, to some degree, growing together. There is no radical distinction to be drawn between practical church union at the middle and the leading forms of church federation. Church federation, therefore, is evidently one of the forms of ecclesiastical church union.

The only difference between practical church union at the top and at the middle is one of emphasis. The former type of organized work seeks chiefly to attain ecclesiastical ends, while the latter seeks first for results in society outside of the churches. It is an illuminating fact that the organized efforts which are accomplishing most toward organic union, both in local parishes and total denominations, is work which falls within the federal class.

Let us note a few leading examples of effective church union at the middle.

When churches of several denominations in New York State stood with Governor Hughes in the campaign of 1908, against race-track gambling, they presented an example of practical church union at the middle. The South Dakota Federation was successful in removing from the statute books of that State a pernicious divorce law. When the churches of a city, a large district, or a state definitely organize to work together in evangelism, as in the Torrey, the Sunday, or the Chapman campaigns, they also practice church union at the middle. When churches thus cooperate, their organic identity remains unchanged; but their corporate efficiency is not only greatly multiplied, but thereby raised to its maximum. Such forms of work have long since passed the experimental and fully entered the historical stage. A strong chain of cities extending across the continent from Portland, Maine, to Los Angeles, California, have produced results which challenge the Christian forces of all other cities to their like maximum and only acceptable Christian service.

A leading purpose in this discussion is to distinguish the local forms of church union and to focus interest in them. All forms of work in country parishes conform, at least indirectly, to the federal type. In practical church union *at the bottom*, which is inclusive of all local work, we find a culmination of the two series, church federation and practical church union. Every country parish is a universe in embryo. Where can we find a more favorable field, in this age of interrelated democracy and monarchy, for both the study and the practice of church union? The great reason why church union at the top has so often miserably failed, and why the more general federative movements have not been more productive of good, is because the work has not been sufficiently emphasized at the vital centers. These, beyond question, are

in individual churches and communities. Dr. Josiah Strong is correct in saying that the greatest present need of the church federation movement is a demonstration of the principles of union in hamlets, villages, and towns.

Of organized forms of church union in hamlets, villages, and towns there are four leading types which have already been named.

I like to think of the romance of the coming together of local churches. (To most people, I fear, there is more comedy and tragedy in such operations than there is of Christian love.) Churches and people are very much alike. Two persons may be courteous to each other in everyday relations: they fully respect each other's rights and feelings. That is comity. They may engage with the same employer, and choose to share advantages; they help each other to enjoy and do what would be impossible to either alone. That is coöperation. As friends they may associate as companions, and in economic partnership they may seek to realize common ends; they not only share but exchange advantages. That is federation. By marriage one name is finally adopted and one new home formed. That is the climax in union. What marriage is to persons, organic union is to local churches.

Let us notice more in detail the four leading forms of local church union.

Inter-church comity is crystallized toleration. It is friendship between churches expressed in the terms of "Thou shalt not." From the point where belligerency between churches ceases, to the grand climacteric in the church triumphant, we shall never lose sight of inter-church comity — the ever-present police force of the developing city of God. We have already characterized church comity as a general

and academic consideration. It is also a tremendously practical reality. At one time I made a catalogue of more than thirty-five distinct expressions of it in local country church relationships alone. It is as indispensable to every other condition of church union as sunlight is to the day.

The oneness of the churches for which Jesus prayed, "that the world may believe," may be expressed locally by the method of organized coöperation. As with comity and one-minister federations, this would not change the names or the identity of societies. Some have objected that such effort would be "much ado about nothing." Then Christ's prayer for oneness was "much ado about nothing." If it is not worth while for churches to coöperate, is it worth while for them to exist? Had they not better immediately disband or else proceed to organic union with neighboring churches? It would seem that "the hardness of the dogma was the measure of the sterility" of the church which refuses to respond to such a plea for community service.

I would recommend that every city, town, village, or rural point which has more than one church, that is, if there is a real mission for each church and a closer union cannot be realized, should come to organized coöperation. A central organization of the churches might be formed by the coming together of fellowship committees or authorized representatives elected by each church. Thus would be formed a body (1) to manifest the essential unity of the churches, (2) to promote the systematic evangelization of the entire community, (3) to express the dominant Christian sentiment of the people with regard to moral issues, (4) to coördinate benevolent and charitable efforts in behalf of all needy classes, (5) to secure the systematic direction of the amusement and educational life of the people, and (6) to further the

organic union of churches when the interests of the Kingdom of God evidently demand it.

At this point we must carefully discriminate. There are two specialized forms or methods of union practiced by two or more churches which exist side by side in the same country villages. The first of these forms we have thus far called "coöperation." The second we have indicated as "federation."

At Saxton's River, Vermont, for instance, a Baptist and a Congregational church, each self-supporting and with a minister of its own, at one time entered into a mutual agreement because they believed that they could realize thereby for each other and for the parish many things that would not be realized by separation. Such an arrangement we have called "coöperation." The chief characteristic of this plan, however, is the motive and the undertaking to perform the maximum Christian service of these churches in behalf of society.

In a rural New York parish, in the second place, a Christian and a Presbyterian church, neither of which was self-supporting, and neither of which could alone secure a pastor of the desired grade, have federated. They maintain their former denominational affiliations and identity as churches while they work and worship federally under the leadership of one minister. This arrangement we have called "federation." The distinguishing mark of the plan, however, is the employment and leadership of the one minister.

From the facts that examples like that at Saxton's River are as truly "federation" as instances like that in New York, and that the latter is as truly "coöperation" as the former, the more natural nomenclature is adopted. In speaking henceforth of the leading country types of church union, we will speak of maximum-service federations of country

churches and one-minister federations of country churches. This distinction need not be made with other than country church federations.

The definition which we have already given for church federation in general applies with great fitness to the maximum-service federations of country churches.

A one-minister federation of country churches is a federation in which country churches of different denominations in the same community cooperate in common worship and in the support and under the leadership of one minister.

It is not correct to call two or more churches which come together federally "the federated church." They are, instead, "the federated churches." A "federated church" in such an instance would be any one of the two or more churches thus federated.

The term "federated church," we need to say, is coming to be applied to a distinct form of organization. A federated church is a church of one denomination which accepts, as affiliated members, persons who are at the same time members of non-local churches of other denominations. The "federated church" in this sense is neither an independent union church, nor a church made up of so many unrelated factors that the parish is thereby robbed of unified pastoral leadership.

The one-minister plan of church federation has been tried in numerous places during the past twenty years. More than thirty of them are at the present time in successful operation in various parts of the United States. Maine, Vermont, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and New York have the leading examples. This type of work — when the one minister who is thereby made the community pastor is truly a community leader — though it is a great step in advance in

the missionary solution of the problem of the seemingly over-churched community, should never be considered as a permanent arrangement. Ten examples of it in one State have been observed to give each of the formerly decadent and struggling parishes strong and well-paid pastors, and, at the same time, to release ten ministers for more needy fields.

It is unquestionably true that in thousands of small communities throughout the United States the organic union of churches is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The difficulty is, that dead and anæmic societies which are set on promoting trivial sectarian distinctions are in no condition for such a resurrection. Churches that have never breathed the life of fundamental Christianity are hardly worth federating, to say nothing of organic union. It is not a question of organic union being worth while for the churches, but of the churches being worth while for organic union. Students of this question are absolutely agreed, from both reason and experience, that the community of one church which represents any fair degree of Christianity under even average ministerial leadership is usually a prosperous church. It is a condition to make angels weep, for it puts so low a price upon the Christianity of too many professed Christians, that local church union, if it come at all, must so often come through the contentious survival of the fittest. One of the greatest encouragements of to-day, however, is that so many churches are getting the Christian point of view. Less is being expended, we trust, in the mere service of dogmas and social cults, and more to make living truth serve men and society. The vision of the community cathedral church with its one minister for vital inspiration and expert administration and his corps of assistants, each a specialist in his branch of work, is coming to be realized.

## X.

Our study has so nearly covered the field of church union that the mere naming of further forms of organized work is almost sufficient to distinguish them. This is especially so of the administrative and creedal affiliation of local churches to form denominations.

A denomination is church life and work organized for efficiency. Denominational brotherhoods or bodies of congregationally governed churches are really church federations. They are federations along lines of specialized religious, ethical, æsthetic, social, and emotional stimulus and response. Interdenominational federations stand for the united action of all Christian churches in comprehensive social uplift.

The following definition may define alike ecclesiastical affiliations of the Baptist, Disciple, or Congregational persuasions and the Inter-Church Federation of Chicago, West Virginia, Arizona, or Philadelphia.

An Inter-Church Federation is an association of two or more churches in any given territory constitutionally grouped together for the purpose of promoting the Christian betterment of society.

In its denominational sense a federation of churches is the organized coöperation of churches which observe like forms of church government, modes of religious worship, ethical and social standards, religious beliefs, or methods of administration and service to the end that they may thereby live and work in ways which best serve their chosen ideals.

## XI.

No question of organized Christian unity is more important than that which concerns associational Christian union.

By associational Christian union we mean the voluntary organization of altruistic people and of members, particular classes of members, or the auxiliary departments of the work of Christian churches into associations other than churches for the purpose of securing specialized ends in the amelioration or betterment of human conditions.

There are two points of view from which the voluntary associations may be considered. The first is that of the churches in their highly organized capacity. The second is that of society as a whole, with its demand for the immediate righting of outstanding wrongs and its pressure toward a higher Christian social order. We define them first from the church point of view.

By a voluntary association we mean those secondary, derived, and dependent organizations which perform functions outside of or in coöperation with the churches which may normally be performed by the churches more directly without duplication of organization, and consequent double taxation of both the personal and financial resources of the church, and which, if performed by the churches, will hasten its development and the more effective propagation of church standards in society.

The great advantage of the voluntary associations is that they respond quickly to strong leadership in focusing great moral force upon any issue, actually accomplishing immediate results. Great voluntary associations are never found in uncivilized societies. They cannot exist where the individual is the passive subject of an ecclesiastical system. We are now in the day of the great voluntary movements. Never before has the individual been possessed of sufficient moral fiber and independent wealth to make such agencies either possible or useful.

We can consider the question of associational Christian union only so far as it will aid us to know church federation in its relations. One chief object of church federation is to realize vital and true church union. Associational Christian union is not church union. That many voluntary associations have helped to advance church union is beyond question. The formation of some new denominations has had the same effect. On the other hand, we believe that the associational movement in many instances is making both church union and Christian unity impossible. It has too often worked against union.

Let us notice something of the prevalence of voluntary associations. We may thus apprehend a leading task of church federation. Our chart has placed them in three groups.

A few leading examples of voluntary associations composed of unclassified individuals of interdenominational and undenominational relationships are the independent union churches, the Salvation Army, the American Sunday School Union, the American Bible Society, unattached rescue and gospel missions, the International Reform Bureau, the Religious Education Association, the Charity Organization Societies, the Anti-Saloon League, the Sabbath Protective Association, and many others of local and national importance.

The Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Knights of King Arthur, the Boy Scouts of America, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the Ministerial Insurance Associations and the local ministerial unions may be classed as undenominational associations composed of particular classes largely of church members. Union Theological Seminary and the Christian but undenominational colleges may be placed in this group.

The Federations of Church Men's Clubs, the International Sunday School Association, the Young People's Missionary Union, the Christian Endeavor Union, and some others are interdenominational but not inter-church voluntary associations of auxiliary departments of church work.

We have in this catalogue a suggestion of the associations which look to the churches or to the sources from which the churches are supported, for their maintenance, in order that they may perform functions of leadership and service of which the churches, as such, are quite capable. In some instances this amounts to the exploitation of the churches. If community life needs protection against excessive denominationalism, much more so against what may often be the dogmatic ravages of associationalism. The associations too often get the cream and leave to the churches diluted opportunity and contested leadership. By an investigation made in 1910 it was found that, in one American city, more than \$330,000 a year were gathered and appropriated locally by ten voluntary associations alone, while the churches, as such, in that place, could speak and be heard upon no issue of commanding importance. And all this for the reason that church members did not use the church as their forum and medium of expression and power.

I have made no previous mention of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, the Federation of Churches and Christian Organizations of New York City, and of the National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers of the United States. This last-named association, however, as should sometimes be the case with every association, has ceased, having accomplished its end in producing in 1908 a true national example of church union—the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

I may also place in the category of temporary associations — if they are not federations of churches as such and of churches only — the Federation of Churches and Christian Workers of other states and cities, and say that these all represent associational union rather than church union.

When will the churches profess with business-like consistency, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"? When will they cease their practice of duplication, misdirection, and waste of Christian opportunity, and rise to realize and honor the united churches of their birthright, and speak and work with the spirit which will win the world to believe her Lord?