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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE III.

A STUDY OF THE CAUSES OF THE FAILURE OF
THE RECENT EFFORTS TO SECURE ORGANIC
CHURCH UNION IN JAPAN.

[*Concluded from Page 509.*]

IV. THE SECOND SIX MONTHS OF DISCUSSION AND COM-
MITTEE WORK.

IN this period came the turning-point of the movement. But it came so silently that it was not observed by the majority at the time, and it was hardly recognized when it did come. Even after the final decision had been reached, the true positions of the two churches were not appreciated, nor, so far as has yet appeared in print, are they even now fully appreciated either here or in the United States. How has it come about that those on both sides, once so eager for the union, now rest satisfied, each church satisfied with its own final attitude on the subject? This is the question for which we seek an answer.

A. The Kumiai Kyōkwai (Congregationalists).—The first sound to break the silence after the Osaka convention was the clear trumpet-blast of the "Irreconcilables." Two Christian newspaper editors of Tōkyō issued a circular letter to the Kumiai churches, taking a strong position in opposition to the particular constitution which had been proposed, and to union under any constitution of Presbyterian affinities; no constitution which united the local congregations into a single compact organization, with prescribed laws for the conduct of church business and especially with "church courts," would suit them. "We advocate neither Congre-

gationalism nor Presbyterianism." "We are friends of the nineteenth century civilization, and any constitution that is not in line with this, will not do." This letter made its appearance within two weeks after the close of the convention.

By the middle of December letters were sent to the churches by one of the missionaries of the American Board, Dr. D. W. Leonard, who had been, and still was, on the union committee, giving a full explanation of the proposed constitution, answering the various criticisms that had been made against it before and during the Osaka convention, and urging a careful study and final union for the sake of the spread of the gospel in Japan.

Toward the end of December, the revision committee sent invitations to all the churches, and to the American Board missionaries, asking them to send in, before the end of January, suggestions as to the changes desired in the proposed constitution. To respond to this invitation, the churches felt that they needed to give the matter more study than they had as yet given it, and that to do so they needed to get more material than had come within their reach. They needed to know more of the history of the churches of other lands; of the various kinds of polities, and their advantages and disadvantages, and their influence on church life; they needed to know especially the relations of their own system to the other systems of church government, and the differences between their own and that which they were now asked to modify or to adopt. Under the lead of Dr. Neesima, who felt more keenly perhaps than any one else the need of the churches, a large majority of them united

* These "Statements" appeared about the middle of February; the period for sending in to the revision committee suggestions of desired changes was prolonged to the end of the month. The "Statements" (a pamphlet of twenty-eight pages in English and fifty-four in Japanese) was packed full of meat. To understand its influence we must know its contents. Dr. Davis's paper dwelt on the various forms of church polity with their principles and essential differences; he then gave a fairly detailed history of Congregationalism, followed by a statement of the dangers and disadvantages of the Congregational polity; he closed with a short statement of the difficulties of organic union with the Presbyterian polity. "The one is a consolidated organism and the other is not. . . . There can be no exactly middle ground; it [the polity of a union church] must, it seems to me, be a modified Presbyterianism, or a modified Congregationalism, or simply an alliance. . . . If, after a careful and general examination of the subject, there can be a union which shall be practically unanimous on both sides, perfected on either basis, I shall rejoice. . . . I regard this [heart union] as far more important than any organic union can be." Dr. Leonard introduces his paper with "heart union as the essential thing," and considers organic union entered into heartily as "a powerful aid in establishing that complete union of heart and life for which Christ prayed." He then discusses the proposed constitution, and aims to show that the essentials of Congregationalism, "liberty in local matters, and co-operation in matters of common interest," were practically secure in it. He closes with an appeal not to suggest any changes unless it be considered that union is not very desirable.

These "Statements" were printed in large numbers and

should be in their hands by the end of February, scant time was allowed for the study of so large a pamphlet, and for decisions on the weighty matters involved. These "Statements" were in the hands of but few persons more than two weeks, and the more distant churches did not have them in hand more than one week, before they had to send in their suggestions. In one case known to the author, and there doubtless were others, those suggestions had to be sent in to the committee before the "Statements" had even been received by the church. The influence exerted by these "Statements," therefore, was not apparent, much less, realized, until the May convention in Kōbe. At that time, however, the attitude of the leaders, as well as the masses of the delegates, gave clear indications of it.

During this same month, February, there also appeared a translation of Dr. H. M. Dexter's "Hand-Book of Congregationalism." This work had been undertaken in the autumn at the suggestion of Dr. Neesima, and was carried out under the direction and revision of Mr. Kozaki, who has been called the leading Christian thinker in Japan. He was, at the time, the editor of *The Christian*, a Japanese religious weekly, as well as of the *Rikugo Zashi*, a native Christian monthly; the pastor of one of the leading churches in the capital; and the writer of several masterful defences of Christianity; he was also a member of the successive committees on union. For many years a pupil of Dr. Neesima, he had imbibed his spirit, and, like him, he wanted to "let in the light." This "hand-book" did not of course have the circulation that the "Statements" had, but it went into the hands of all the leading pastors and evangelists of the Kumiai churches. Those who have read this book will appreciate what an influence it must have had on the minds

committee in February. That became manifest in the action taken by the churches in their annual meeting in May, and was one of those, to the foreigner unseen and unknown, causes which were preparing the way for the sudden reversal of all high hopes and glowing prophecies.

The attitude of the students at the Doshisha (the collegiate and theological institution of the Kumiai churches, situated at Kyōto) also helped in the same general direction. This Doshisha church was one of the centres of the "Irreconcilables." As students were gathered here from all parts of the empire, the influence of the church was felt far and wide.

Still one more element made its appearance on the 10th of April. It was an article printed in *The Christian*, containing extracts from letters received by members of the mission from Dr. N. G. Clark, the senior foreign secretary of the American Board, with reference to the proposed union. One of the questions that had caused no little anxiety among the churches was, whether the American Board was unfavorably inclined toward the union; and, if so, whether the Board would withhold its financial help, either in whole or even in part, from the various departments of Christian work which they were carrying on largely by its help, in the event of its consummation. This financial argument had been used at the time of the Osaka convention, it having first appeared, as we have seen, in some of the papers from America. To the delegates assembled at that convention, nothing seemed so despicable as to be in bondage to foreign money. To be thwarted in doing that which seemed to be most productive of the spread of the gospel in Japan, for fear of losing foreign money, seemed most slayish and unendurable. Whatever might be the result, said they, they would not accept such a position. And yet they recognized that they could not well do without that foreign help.

Were it cut off, their power as a church in evangelistic work would be greatly crippled. The delegates had received repeated assurances from the missionaries that such a result need not be feared, which assurances had partly allayed their misgivings; but these quotations from Dr. Clark's letters quite set them at rest. He wrote: "We shall not withhold our aid, unless there be some moral reason, for example, the entire declination from Christian work and moral character; except there be some such, no difference will take place in the amount of aid."¹ This statement, with those of the missionaries to the same effect, left the churches and the convention in May quite free to judge of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed union, uncomplicated by the galling money argument, and thus contributed its share to the final result.

During this same month, April, letters from Drs. H. M. Scudder and D. W. Leonard were circulated among the churches, strongly favoring the union, and urging its acceptance by the churches.

Thus, at last, were the various elements of influence fairly at work, many of them quite unknown to those whose expectations were the highest, and prophecies the brightest.

The revision committee met early in March; and, after reviewing the suggested amendments, discussed and rejected some, approved and classified others, with the result that the list of changes to be suggested to the Presbyterians did "not so much change the character of the basis of union as make its real meaning and nature plain, and tend toward brevity."² So little, indeed, had the "*character* of the basis of union" been changed, that one of those who had most seriously questioned the wisdom of the union on the original constitution, on seeing the revised constitution, immediately said he feared that the changes had not been sufficiently radical

¹ The Pacific, June 19, 1889.

² Dr. D. W. Leonard, The Pacific, April, 1889.

to satisfy a majority of the churches,—a saying that was truly prophetic.

A deputation of the Kumiai committee then went to Tōkyō and met the Itchi committee. “The result of the conference was exceedingly satisfactory, almost every one of the suggested amendments being heartily adopted, and both sides seemed to be equally pleased.”¹ This revised constitution was printed as soon as possible, and sent to all the churches, reaching them about the middle of April. It having been agreed by the joint committees that “The Appendix contains only recommendations, and is not therefore binding on any church or bukawai unless adopted by it,”² the constitution and by-laws alone were printed and distributed to the churches. This short document contained but thirty-four pages, instead of the original ninety-nine. “It had been reduced by sickness.” During the three or four weeks preceding the convention, the churches studied this document in the light of the information they had been receiving, and sent their delegates to the convention, in Kōbe, with instructions whose nature we shall consider in the next period.

B. The Itchi Kyōkwai (Presbyterians).—During and after the November convention, held in Osaka, some of the leading members of both the Itchi and Kumiai churches, unofficially, of course, consulted together as to what further changes would probably be asked for by the Kumiai churches, and what could probably be granted by the Itchi church. By these informal conferences and discussions, it seemed clear that there could be a final agreement as to the terms of union. With this thought, the Itchi committee waited for the Kumiai committee with their authoritative list of desired changes. To their astonishment, the few that had been informally suggested at the time of the convention in November, had been greatly added to. In their strong desire to secure the union, if possible, the Itchi committee discussed and, at last, accepted

¹ The Pacific, April, 1889. ² Appendix, page 1.

nearly all the proposed changes, and thus union seemed certain. The committees had an informal understanding that the two conventions to be held in May, should be kept informed of each other's doings; and, as soon as each body had ratified the action of the committees and had accepted the constitution, each body should appoint committees for the immediate consummation of union. The committees of both bodies seemed to have been confident that at the conventions there would be but little discussion, and that the constitution would be accepted with only the slightest modification, if indeed any at all would be made. On hearing of this plan, one wrote, "I am surprised that they are so sanguine that their plan is thus to be adopted at once without debate or delay. I shall be sorry to see it rushed through in such haste as that."

Looking back from this distance, it is clear that here was one of an unfortunate series of mistakes and misunderstandings, the failure to realize the true state of the churches, which mistakes, though they may not be said to be the cause of the failure of union, yet contributed toward it, and were truly the cause of the feeling of disgust and disappointment which became marked shortly after it was apparent that union was impossible. It was a most natural mistake, perhaps unavoidable to human beings, yet none the less unfortunate and disastrous. The essential part of the mistake lay in the supposition that the Kumiai churches had had their discussion on union, and had agreed on the principles which they would insist on, together with the statement of them in constitutional language. This seems to have been assumed by the Kumiai committee itself. The committee evidently thought that the revised constitution, being compiled from the amendments suggested by the churches and the missionaries, *must* be such as would find acceptance with the majority, not only without any material changes, but possibly without any further changes. The Itchi committee as-

sumed, most naturally, that they were treating with an authoritative committee; and that if they, the Itchi committee, could come to a settlement with the Kumiai committee by accepting the changes then brought forward, the matter would be practically settled and union assured. But, as we have seen, the material on which to make a thorough study of the union question did not reach the Kumiai churches until February, too late to be of much use in making their suggestions to the revision committee. To understand the final issue, we should bear all these facts in mind.

V. The Annual Meetings.—The union movement now passed into its fifth stage with the assembling of the two annual meetings, the Kumiai Kyōkwai at Kōbe, May 22, 1889, and the Itchi Kyōkwai at Tōkyō (350 miles distant), May 23, 1889.

To understand the nature of the discussions and the final results, we should at this point consider the main outlines of the revised constitution as it came from the hands of the joint committees.

(I) Creed. The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds with the Articles of the Evangelical Alliance should be the standard creeds. The Westminster and Heidelberg Catechisms and the Plymouth Declaration should be considered as of great value, and should be held in veneration by the Nihon Rengo Kirisuto Kyōkwai (The United Christian Church of Japan), this being the name for the proposed united body.

(II) Church Government or Polity. The local church should have complete power in local matters. Certain powers were, however, to be delegated to two general bodies, called *Bukwai* and *Sōkwai*. Representation in *bukwai* (the local body) should be by pastor and one delegate from each church. The *sōkwai*, meeting annually, should be composed of delegates elected by each *bukwai*. Ministerial standing was to be in the *bukwai*, which alone could organize churches, ordain and discipline pastors and evangelists. Only matters

of discipline could be appealed from the churches to the buk-wai, and the decision of the buk-wai should be final. Likewise, only matters of discipline could be appealed from buk-wai to sōkwai. The Appendix consisted of various forms for the organization of the local churches either on a Congregational or on a Presbyterian plan; and for the organization of buk-wai. These provisions of the Appendix, however, were to be of power only when adopted by each church or buk-wai.

This revised constitution, while much shorter and simpler than the original one, did not differ in any essential principle of church government from it, as we have already seen. This should be borne in mind to understand the treatment it received at the hands of the Kumiai convention. So early even as February, a shrewd observer of the signs of the times wrote: “. . . . the more they have examined it [the original constitution as originally proposed], the more opposed have they become to it, until it seems evident that, unless it is radically changed, they will not unite on it.”¹ We are now ready to consider the action of the two bodies on the revised constitution.

A. The Kumiai (Cong.) Annual Meeting.—This met on Wednesday, May 22, 1889, and spent the rest of the week discussing the proposed constitution. There seemed to be three parties. 1. The “Irreconcilables.” Any union was to them objectionable. The amendments they proposed were of such a nature as would have destroyed any church; even Congregational church government would be impossible under their propositions.² They numbered not more than half a dozen delegates, and were easily outvoted on every motion embodying their extreme views. 2. The Mod-

best to the majority. On what may be considered the final test vote, although the proposed constitution had been considerably amended by the convention, these Moderates united with the "Irreconcilables," and numbered nine churches. 3. The Unionists. These thought union both desirable and practicable, and were in a decided majority. Yet even they were not ready to vote it, without first securing some few but important modifications in the revised constitution. This body was led by the most influential men of the denomination, persons who had been on the committees, and who had been most active in carrying on the movement for union.

The one principle which animated all of these parties was, above all things, not sectarianism, not love of Congregational polity. In the November convention in Osaka, all the speakers in most fervent terms declared their abhorrence of sectarianism, and pleaded for liberty to establish a church which should not be a sect; which should be neither Congregational nor Presbyterian, nor anything else, but simply the Church of Christ.¹ The argument that the American Board was Congregational and could not help in the support of any other denominational work had cut them to the quick. They declared that they were not Congregationalists; they would reject the very name. This was the position not only of those who desired union, but it was even more truly that of the "Irreconcilables." In their "trumpet-blast" immediately after the November convention, they directly stated that they cared for neither Congregationalism nor Presbyterianism. What then was the underlying principle which guided the actions of the three parties? It was simply the desire to secure that form of church government which seemed to them best suited to the spread of the gospel in Japan, without regard to the question, whether that form was Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episco-

¹ Rev. J. H. De Forest, *The Pacific*, March 13, 1889.

pal, or any other. "They have thought, and are now thinking for themselves, and will produce a system to suit themselves," wrote one of the missionaries not long after.¹ Without question it was this very same principle that controlled the Itchi leaders and thinkers, and that led them to their final result. To say that the fundamental principle guiding the action of either the Kumiai or Itchi churches was sectarianism, as has been said, is to manifest a lamentable ignorance of the facts.

With this principle at work, it becomes only a matter of judgment, as to what is the best form of church polity. Here, teaching, and experience with that which is familiar, are the most potent influences. Influenced by the teachings of the two previous months, and by the experience of several years in a polity essentially Congregational, though of their own development, the Kumiai churches approached the work of studying the proposed constitution to see whether it embodied their ideas as to the need of the Christian churches of Japan. The "Irreconcilables" thought not. They would abolish all provisions for discipline, but were unable to secure a single change to suit their views. The "Moderates" and "Unionists," also thinking it defective, united on the following positions, which they considered essential: 1. The churches should reserve all self-governing powers; they would entrust to bukawai and sōkwai only the "conduct" of certain matters, refusing to call them "powers."² 2. The bukawai, the local body, should consist of *two* representatives from each church within its bounds, one of these "as far as possible to be the pastor" (instead of "the pastor and one delegate," as provided for in the revised constitution). It has been said that this desired

adoption," etc.¹ This is a grave error; for the change was actually proposed by one of the strongest leaders for union, and was carried through only on mature deliberation. The vote on this point was practically unanimous, and did not run by party lines. The majority of the Unionists favored it. 3. The duties of the bukawai and sōkwai should be so defined as to allow of either Congregational or Presbyterian usage. If the local church should desire only advice, after the Congregational manner, in matters appealed or referred to a bukawai, the action of the bukawai should be considered as being only advice. On the other hand, the action of the bukawai might be considered authoritative by the church, after the manner of Presbyterian usage. In the same way, there should be equal liberty given the bukawai to accept the action of the sōkwai, in matters appealed to it, as either advisory or authoritative. There was great unanimity on this point, the vote standing 28 out of a possible 41.² 4. They did not wish to take the time to consider the rules, but would leave them to be revised in the spirit of the above changes. This was carried by a majority of 31 out of a possible 41.³ 5. As the Appendix had been agreed upon by the committees to be only "recommendations, and is therefore not binding on any church or bukawai unless adopted by it," the members of the Kumiai committee, as well as the delegates, were very much surprised when the Appendix was sent down to them, printed, and with the evident understanding of the Itchi committee and church, that it was to be acted upon by the Kumiai convention. For this reason the Appendix "was voted down most energetically,"⁴ thinking that it was entirely unnecessary for the convention to act on it, as each church and bukawai should be left free to adopt it or reject it.

¹ Dr. M. L. Gordon, *The Christian Union*, Oct. 17, 1889.

² *Minutes of the Annual Meeting*.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ Rev. J. L. Atkinson, *The Advance*, July 4, 1889.

The above five points the Kumiai churches agreed on as essential to union. How they were moving away from union, evidently none of them at the time realized. For even after the above positions had been voted, they thought union so surely before them that they appointed a committee not only to negotiate with the Itchi church, but also to make arrangements to complete the union, when the desired changes should be secured, assuming that this would not be a matter of much difficulty. The main doubt expressed by some was whether it was wise to complete the union while leaving even two or three Kumiai churches behind as independents. In order to remove the possibility of such a division it was proposed to defer the consummation of the union for three months at least, with the hope that by that time, as the churches studied the further changes in the constitution, all, without exception, would be ready to unite.

To complete the review of the action of this convention, we should notice two other changes that were desired. 6. After accepting the creeds proposed as the doctrinal basis of union, the convention thought it unnecessary to make any further reference to other creeds, and so voted unanimously to omit a paragraph referring to the Westminster and Heidelberg Catechisms and the Plymouth Declaration. The special thought in mind was to open the doctrinal position of the new church, so that even Methodist or Baptist or other evangelical churches might be free to unite. As their aim was to establish a non-sectarian church, they did not wish to have a doctrinal basis that would exclude any evangelical church. The alternative to striking out this paragraph, was to mention in the same relation the vener-

complicated rules for the conduct of discipline as the constitution provided for. As a concession to these, the "Unionists," though approving of the constitution as it stood, in that regard, agreed to ask the Itchi church, that, if possible, the chapter on discipline be dropped, and in its place to put simply Christ's instructions on the matter; ¹ if that could not be granted by the Itchi brethren, then to ask that the chapter be modified so as to make ministers members of local churches, which churches would thus become the direct guardians of the faith and moral conduct of the ministry. These two points were to be asked for, but were not to be made a condition of union. ²

When these details had been fully agreed on, an informal discussion was held upon the desirability of completing the union; an informal vote was also taken, in which twenty-two churches voted in the affirmative, on condition that the five changes named above be accepted by the Itchi church, while nine churches voted against it as the expression of their preference, though with but one or two possible exceptions, these nine churches would not stay out of the union were it completed. Thus did the annual meeting come to an end after five days' hard labor, with three long sessions a day for a part of the time. The missionaries did not take part in the discussions, not even to say a word. Indeed, but few of them attended, and they not regularly. They felt that the churches had received from them all the light they had to give, and that now the churches must make the decision for themselves. ³ Thus did the silent influences that had been at work for the previous months produce their inevitable results. Though not recognized at the

¹ Dr. Wm. Imbrie, *The Interior*, July 4, 1889.

time, those influences were none the less effective. Ever since the discussions began in October of the previous year, both the leaders and the masses of the church members were slowly but surely moving toward the positions which were finally taken in the convention. Their ideal of church government was that which they had derived from the "Acts of the Apostles, from their experience in the conduct of church affairs up to the present time, and from the spirit of liberty and individual rights now prevalent in the country."¹ It was their ideal, not because it was taught them by the missionaries, but because they had thought it out for themselves. Their ideal was not due to love of Congregationalism. The very name was an offence in their eyes. Nor was the attitude of the convention due to an "anti-clerical" spirit; nor to "suspicions of the pastorate," as some have said, though there was doubtless some of that spirit among the "Irreconcilables." But the fundamental principles of the position taken by the Kumiai churches, and to which the Presbyterians could not consent (as was afterwards learned), were those deliberately taken by the leaders of the denomination; they were chiefly pastors and evangelists, not lay-members nor theological students nor "inexperienced youths no one of whom has been a pastor a year."²

Before passing to the doings of the Itchi annual meeting, we should notice one more fact, as it had a momentous effect. In the midst of the Kumiai meeting, one of its members, who had been a member of the union committee, wrote a private letter to one of the Itchi members of the committee, who was then at Tōkyō attending their annual meeting. He gave a hasty view of the votes that had been taken in the Kumiai meeting up to the time of writing, cov-

¹ Rev. J. L. Atkinson, *The Advance*, July 4, 1889.

² *The Christian Union*, Aug. 15, 1889. See also letters of Drs. Knox and Imbrie, and editorials in *The Independent* and *The Interior*, July 4, 1889.

ering most of the points referred to in this paper. On Monday, May 27, the Kumiai convention received a telegram from the Itchi convention, asking for official information. The writer of the letter then explained to the convention what he had written. The convention at once replied by telegram making that private letter official. This was the great mistake of the Kumiai convention. As soon as it had reached its conclusions, it should have sent an official statement of them to the Itchi convention, which was waiting for them, and a committee should have at once been dispatched to Tōkyō to explain what possibly might be misunderstood. Furthermore, the Kumiai convention should have adjourned temporarily, to wait till the Itchi convention had had time to consider the changes that were proposed and to give an answer. This was the only sound business course to follow, especially in view of the fundamental changes that were being proposed by the Kumiai convention. But, instead of this, the Kumiai convention completed its work Monday, and adjourned *sine die*, without even sending to the Itchi convention a full official statement of the desired changes. Not only was this poor business management, but it was also a distinct lack of courtesy, easily to be misconstrued, and to be considered an indication that union was not desired. It paved the way for the action of the Itchi convention that followed, the ill-feeling that sprang up, and the immediate settlement of the question in the negative. For this the Kumiai convention is responsible.

B. The Itchi (Presb.) Annual Meeting.—This met on Thursday, May 23, 1889, and did not adjourn till the latter part of the following week. Owing to the lack of information from the Kumiai convention, it took no action on union till the 27th, further than to accept the constitution as presented by the joint committees, with a few minor changes. By Monday, the 27th, the private letter men-

tioned above, was received telling of the great changes that were being proposed in the Kumiai body; this letter was soon made official by telegram.

The Itchi church having been given to understand in March by the Kumiai committee on revision that the revised constitution would doubtless be acceptable to the Kumiai churches, and that it would without doubt be approved with no essential changes, it was astonished beyond measure at the fundamental nature of the changes not only desired but required by the Kumiai churches. It considered the Kumiai churches pledged by the action of its committee. These later demands, therefore, clearly repudiated all previous pledges. They came like lightning from a clear sky. No wonder, then, that the Itchi brethren felt that "further committees of reference are useless. Repeated agreements have been reached, but the only result seems to be the preparation of fresh demands."¹ The Itchi convention, feeling that the true prosperity of the church and the rapid spread of the gospel were not to be secured under the plan of church government desired by the Kumiai churches, refused to allow the changes desired. It could not think it wise for the local church to be allowed to ignore its pastor in sending delegates to the bukwei (see 2 above). Misunderstanding the purpose,² it could not agree to allow the power of the higher body to be brought into action only at the request of the lower body (see 3 above). Misunderstanding the spirit,³ it could not agree to omit all reference to the Westminster and Heidelberg Catechisms (see 6 above). It could not consider the Appendix so entirely unnecessary and unofficial that it could be ignored in the terms of union⁴ (see 5 above).

¹ Dr. Geo. W. Knox, *The Independent*, July 4th, 1889.

² See the letters of Drs. Knox and Imbrie; also one by Dr. D. C. Greene in *The Religious Herald*, Sept 19, 1889.

³ Dr. Wm. Imbrie, *The Interior*, July 4th, 1889.

⁴ Dr. Knox, *Ibid.*

Before deciding finally on the whole question, however, in order to have full information, and in order to state its own case fully to the Kumiai convention, a committee was immediately dispatched to Kōbe, a telegram being sent to the Kumiai convention asking them to await the arrival of the committee. Owing to the failure to deliver it promptly to the suitable parties, the telegram was not received till the Kumiai convention was dispersed to the four winds. The Itchi committee, on arriving in Kōbe on Wednesday, found that the Kumiai convention had adjourned two days before, without making arrangement for meeting with them, or informing the Itchi convention of their action; that the committee that had been appointed by the Kumiai convention for carrying on the further negotiations, had scattered beyond recall; and that the reports as to what the convention had really done were diverse and confusing. Returning to Tōkyō, they reported what they had learned. "The report of the Committee was received by the Synod with deep regret. It was obvious to all, however, that but one course was possible. The past furnished no encouragement to hope that further negotiations by committees would prove other than fruitless, and the common feeling was that the Synod had reached its limit in the way of concessions. Accordingly the following action was taken: The Moderator and the Clerk were directed to communicate with the committee of the General Conference; to state what amendments to the constitution the Synod had accepted; and to inform the committee of the Conference, of their authority to call a meeting of the Synod, in case the Congregational churches (*as churches*) accept definitely the constitution of the Synod." This "ultimatum" as it has appropriately been

As far as securing union was concerned, this *ultimatum* was the fatal mistake. The Kumiai Christians were, as a body, still eager for union. This *ultimatum* revealed to them that the Itchi church wanted union on essentially Presbyterian principles, or none. The possibilities of union were ended. The Kumiai churches, not realizing their own mistakes, felt that they had been struck in the face. Their committee, who now for the first time had power to state definitely the views and desires of the churches, was not even recognized by the Itchi church. Further negotiations were rejected. They must unite as individual churches. Such was the *ultimatum* sent them. This action reminded them of the arguments that some had used more than once; that Presbyterians cannot and will not unite on any basis but an essentially Presbyterian one; whoever unites with them must become essentially Presbyterian; a union that would permit the usages and principles of both Congregationalism and Presbyterianism cannot last, but one body will in time absorb the other; "the lamb will lie down inside the lion," the "weak polity" will give way to the "strong," the Congregational to the Presbyterian. These arguments now came back with force and were largely believed. A spirit of disgust spread through the churches. "We will not unite if that is the condition set us," was their attitude.

The committee of the Kumiai churches, on opening negotiations with the Itchi church, according to their instructions, were met by this *ultimatum*. They had no option left them. They made an informal report to the Kumiai churches within a few weeks, and there the matter rested for a year. At the succeeding annual meeting of the Kumiai churches, in April, 1890, the committee made its official report. It stated the action of the Itchi church that we have seen above. Although the feelings that had been aroused by this action had been largely cooled by the lapse of time, it was voted by the Kumiai annual meeting that the

matter be indefinitely postponed, and that information to that effect be sent to the Itchi church.¹ Thus the union movement ended.

Conclusion. We have now traced faithfully the rise and fall of the union movement. We have seen the bright promises of success; the first easy negotiations; the unexpected postponement; the further satisfactory negotiations; the silent influences at work; the business mistakes; the disastrous consequences; and the final *ultima*. From first to last the Itchi church moved with the precision of an army well drilled and well generalled. It knew its mind. It knew how to attend to business. It secured the necessary conferences with the supporting Presbyterian churches in the United States, and their consent to a union on certain definite principles. These principles it both understood and believed in. It understood its own forms of church government and the principles on which they stood. If it made any mistake, it was in the last vote, and that was one of judgment. If they really wanted union, that vote was a blunder. The Kumiai churches, on the other hand, showed few of these qualities. They were, at the beginning, untrained in their own polity; ignorant of the fundamental principles involved, and of their essential difference from those of the Presbyterians with whom they were treating. The leading men carried on the negotiations, expecting that the churches would follow without much personal investigation or questioning. They did not early seek the advice of the assisting Congregational churches in the United States. The leaders did not take steps to secure the education of the church members on the questions involved, till long after the time when it ought to have been finished. The leaders, and the committees also, assumed to know the mind of the churches before the churches had had an oppor-

¹ See the Annual Meeting Report for 1890.

tunity to study the question, or to form an opinion, and even before the churches had given the matter any serious study. The leaders seemed to waver. At first they were satisfied with the constitution as first proposed, and, had it been left to them to do so, it is likely that union would have been secured at once. The more they studied the matter, the less were they satisfied with the first proposition, to which they had given their approval. The final position which they and the churches took, was, in the main, such pure Congregationalism, that union became quite out of the question. They did not take that position, however, from any devotion to the denomination, but simply because they thought it embodied the true principles of church government; indeed, it seems doubtful if they realized how thoroughly in accord with Congregational principles they were, for they constantly refused to be called Congregationalists. The Itchi church could not believe in the principles considered essential by the Kumiai, nor the Kumiai, those considered essential by the Itchi. Each church made its offer, and each rejected that of the other.

This union experience but illustrates afresh the principle laid down by Dr. A. Hastings Ross in a recent article on union efforts: "Doctrines and rites have divided the church, but when these divisions cease, a deeper element still separates. Polity is the great divisive element, often ignored, but asserting itself in every attempt at union. There are four theories of the church of Christ that divide Christendom. [Papacy, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism.] Any plans which ignore these fail. No bridge can span the chasm between them." Organic union of bodies holding different polities can be had only by the triumph of one and the death of the other polities involved.¹

We thus see how insufficient were the mass of the expla-

¹ Union Efforts between Congregationalists and Presbyterians: Results and Lessons, page 2.

nations that have been given for the failure of the union, whose beginnings were hailed with such songs of triumph and glowing prophecies. These last were born of enthusiasm and nurtured on ignorance. The explanations of the failure also reflect but little appreciation of the true difficulties met. A handful of "boys" could not obstruct the mighty purpose of two strong denominations, as has been asserted.¹ It is not only untrue but absurd. No doubt there were "boys" who opposed with might and main, but the result was not due to them. Without doubt there was some "anti-clerical spirit," but it had little, if any, influence on the final result. No doubt there may have been "sectarianism," but it was not general, even if it can be properly applied to a few. If by sectarianism is meant the adherence to certain principles of church government deemed important, then both bodies were equally sectarian, for each insisted that its own principles be the fundamental ones in the united body. That explanation was the right one which represented the Kumiai convention as trying to break off the branches of the Presbyterian system. Or to put the figure more truly, the Kumiai churches wished to pull up the Presbyterian tree root and branch, and to plant the Congregational tree in its place in the constitution. This the Itchi church could not allow, hence their *ultimatum*. This is a sufficient explanation for the final failure, and it seems to us the only true one. Those who have said that this result came suddenly, without due cause, "like lightning from a clear sky,"—"It is the unexpected that happens in Japan;" but confess their ignorance. The foreigner cannot appreciate, nor indeed can he perceive, the silent influences that move the Japanese. Let him be careful how he condemns their deeds or prophesies about them.

¹ See letters from Drs. Knox and Imbrie in *The Independent and The Interior*, and also the editorials in the same; also *The Christian Union*, Aug. 15, 1889.

Dr. Briggs seeks organic unity by a synthesis of the essential elements of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism. It is a very pleasant thing to talk of in the abstract, but the real question is how to make the proposition in concrete form. The efforts of the Christians in Japan, untrammelled by traditions and denominational prejudices, to effect a concrete synthesis of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, seem to have failed from the inherent difficulties of the case. It would be interesting to know the exact forms and details of that church organism which Dr. Briggs would consider as securing at the same time the important principles of the three polities. But whatever that may be, the efforts of the Christians in Japan to solve, in part at least, "one of the chief problems of our times," do not afford a very bright prospect of the nearness or even of the possibility of the Utopian church, when there shall be but one ministry, one brotherhood, and one organization. So long as human nature remains the same as it has been through the ages, there will doubtless be some to prefer to rest on authority (even though human), preferring the Roman Catholic Church; some to prefer the strong executive church governments, in Episcopacy and Methodism; some to prefer the aristocratic church government, in Presbyterianism; and some to prefer democratic church government, in Congregationalism. When these diversities in the human mind cease, then may the Utopian church arise. That, however, was not the church for which Christ prayed.

The comparison which Dr. Knox institutes between the failure of the union and that of treaty revision (see the quotation on page 496), has more points of similarity than he seems to realize, or at least than he suggests. The comparison is not a mere comparison. It is a true analogy, for both parts of the comparison rest on the same foundation and spring from the same cause; namely, the human mind in a peculiar state of civilization, acting on the same fund-

amental principles, though with reference to very different questions. The Japanese nation is just coming to civilized self-consciousness. Change is in the air. The leaders one day are in the rear-ranks the next. To know what phase of national thought or party purpose is to be uppermost next month or even next week, is as difficult for the native as for the foreigner. Whoever presumes to act authoritatively for the people, or for a party, twenty-four hours ahead, is a rash man. So too is he who prophesies. This was what was attempted in both treaty revision and in union. That the masses of the people or of the church members should take an active interest and part in either treaty revision or union, was what the leaders did not expect. After the discussion and manifest revolt of those led, even the leaders were so far changed in their views that the earlier propositions which they at the time had been ready enough to accept, were no longer acceptable. The leaders did not wish to, nor did they dare to, nor could they, force through to completion that to which they had given their consent but a few weeks earlier.

As treaty revision failed, so union failed, and by a similar unexpected movement of the people concerned.

[NOTE.—By an unavoidable error, discovered too late for correction, D. W. Leonard has been printed in the present article for D. W. Learned. The reader will kindly make the necessary changes.—EDS.]