

REV. W. McINTOSH'S ADDRESS,

AS CHAIRMAN, TO THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION AT KESWICK RIDGE, ON THE 3RD JULY.

Beloved Brethren,—It is with gratitude that I embrace the privilege of giving the chairman's address at this the 39th annual meeting of this union. It was a double honor you conferred upon me in electing me to this position. Having but recently found a home among you, I took your course of passing by others on whom the honor would have been more fitting, not as a compliment to fitness, or the opposite, but as expressing a hearty welcome to one who finds the fellowship of the maritime churches a constant and growing pleasure.

39th meeting! A generation. Doubtless few meet with us to-day who took active part in that first meeting, and who among us to-day will transact the affairs of the meeting 39 years hence. Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets no more continue for ever than in the days of Chaldean exile. 'Tis well it is so—a busy life and useful—even if it be short, and then the life that knows no ending, the service ne'er followed by weariness, the light that knows no shading.

"Where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths have no end."

Be it our's to be faithful, worthy, following the illustrious line of ancestors, doing, daring, suffering, if need be, for the truth.

I offer no apology for our existence. That would be a mockery to the world that in its crying need demands the principles for which we have lived and yet do live, and yet such is the tendency of human nature that we need to iterate and reiterate these principles of civil and religious liberty which have the origin in a profound sense of individual responsibility in view of personal accountability to God, in opposition to priestly intervention and prelatical tyranny. The history of the past, the exigencies of the present, are sufficient reasons for our life and work. What is it?

Growth is not life—not always the evidence of life. There may be growth by accretion without the first elements of true development. It may be that in these days of statistical comparison we lose sight of this truth, the sad truth, that churches too often are strengthened in the inverse ratio to the numbers added. Our much loved and justly lauded church polity is not safe in the hands of indiscriminate numbers. A thousand times better is it to give some men the old sword and spear than to put into their hands Winchester repeaters, or place them in charge of Gatling guns. So I contend the freedom of our system, with all its involved responsibility, is not an unmixed blessing to

those whose lives are not wholly under the power of the truth.

Ergo, *Measure not life by numbers.*—Life is defined by Mr. Herbert Spencer, quoted by Prof. Drummond, as "the continuous adjustment of the internal relations to the external relations"—*continuous adjustment*. If this be true in the natural world, and it is, it is as true in regard to our church life in the kingdom of Christ on earth. We are surrounded by change. Times change, customs change, manners of life change, modes of thought change; development implies change, indeed, is only another word for the same thing. So if our church life and church polity be such as are adapted to the changes through which we pass, ready to resist successively every new attack from every new quarter—to meet and supply every new need arising out of the complex nature of man—in a word—if there is the power of "*continuous adjustment*," then may we claim to have life. Not infrequently statements and definitions of principles are given, which confound principles with their practical application. Let us beware of this—a principle is a beginning—(Aristotle) and yet something above which you cannot rise, a truth of consciousness to those who hold it, an axiom, a self evident truth, about which we raise no questions. Its practical application varies according to the exigencies of the age, the vicissitudes of human life. As we look at the other branches of the Christian church we see them adopting our principles, from year to year; not one annual gathering takes place, at which we do not see more and more the ascendancy of these practices for which our fathers and we have contended. The doctrines of voluntary support of religion, equality of all in regard to civil status, individual responsibility, spiritual experience, the condition of church membership; and nearer and nearer comes the complete autonomy of the individual church. Who has watched the workings of our respected brethren of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches and failed to see these doctrines, some of them once ignored, and others strenuously opposed, gaining in prominence year by year? Not one of the ecclesiastical unions consummated within the last quarter of a century has been brought about without the recognition of these truths. It is utterly impossible to effect such unions without conceding more or less to each congregation or assembly the right of private judgment. The laity in communions other than our own, are now sturdily maintaining their God given right to legislate for themselves, and in this we recognize the death knell of clericalism and priestcraft.

As we see this practical application of our principles borrowed by other churches, and that without losing their distinctive names or even character, we