

CHURCH UNION.

For the Review.

BY THE BISHOP OF NOVA SCOTIA.

I. Whether it is desirable that there should be a union of the various Protestant denominations of Canada.

1. If "the various Protestant denominations of Canada" are Christian bodies organized for the purpose of carrying on the work which they believe is committed to them by the Lord Jesus Christ; and,

2. If they expect the prayer of their Master for His disciples ("that they all may be one") to be answered; and,

3. If they are looking for the conversion of the world in this way ("that the world may believe that thou hast sent me")—

Then there can be but one answer to the propositions, viz.: it is desirable that there should be a union of the various Protestant denominations of Canada.

II. Whether a basis of union fairly acceptable to the leading churches could be devised.

1. If "the various Protestant denominations in Canada" are agreed that their present separate (and not even federated) existence is not advantageous to carrying on the work which they believe is committed to them; and,

2. That the prayer of their Master that His disciples "may all be one" cannot be answered except by their union; and,

3. That the work of the conversion of the world is hindered by their present condition, and would be furthered by their union and,

4. If they are willing to put aside all considerations which are merely personal to themselves as organized bodies of Christian people, and to regard nothing but the perfecting of the Kingdom of God, and the promotion of the best interests of mankind by making it co-extensive with the world; then

There is every reason for expecting that a basis of union fairly acceptable to the leading churches could be devised.

III. To what extent and in what direction the Church of England in Canada would be justified in making concessions for the sake of such a union.

1. "The Church of England in Canada" has already, in the first session of her General Synod, adopted and set forth what she considers may form a basis for negotiations with any bodies of separated Christian brethren, with a view of union, viz.:

(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(b) The Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by him.

(d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adopted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

2. The concessions which would seem to be involved in specifying these articles only are, that,

(a) While retaining the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion as the standard to which subscription is required from her own clergy, she concedes to all bodies with which she is in communion the right to adopt Articles of religion otherwise worded.

(b) While continuing to require the exclusive use by her own ministers of the forms contained in "the Book of Common Prayer, etc." (unless so far as ordered by lawful authority) she concedes to all bodies with which she is in communion the right to adopt and use other forms of worship, or even to be without a set form altogether.

(c) All doctrinal questions, except those involved in Articles (1) and (2), to be regarded as open, in the sense of being looked at from different points, and stated in varied phrasology.

(d) All ceremonies to be looked upon as non-essential save those specified in Article (3).

(e) All theories respecting Apostolic Succession and the nature of the Christian Ministry to be recognized as subjects for discussion and mutual agreement, the fact that the Episcopate is Historic being admitted, and its adoption secured.

1. For a number of years past the question of the union of "the churches" has been "in the air" and in England the "Society for Home Reunion" has done much to prepare men's minds for a thoughtful consideration of the question, which the setting forth

of the above specified "Articles," by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and their adoption by the Pan-Anglican (Lambert) Conference in 1888, and the subsequent discussion, still going on and intensifying in interest, has stirred many to consider seriously what tremendous possibilities for good are involved in its accomplishment, and to estimate better the nature of the many and great difficulties which are in the way and must be grappled with and overcome before it can be brought about.

2. It would seem that a plan advocated by some, of federating the existing organized bodies of Protestant Christians would not be productive of much good, even if it could be effected, chiefly for the reason that it does not appear to offer any remedy for the present condition of affairs. And that this is so appears to be indicated by the failure of the Evangelical Alliance, which brings many separated brethren together for its united meetings, during which they enjoy much pleasant and profitable spiritual communion with one another. And yet now after the many years of its existence, the various bodies are yearning for something, which, their very yearning after it testifies, they have not yet found. That "something" is union not federation. Hide it from ourselves as we may, by pleasant platitudes about "the many and important points on which we all agree," and "the few and unimportant on which we differ," these latter are the things which have caused our separation from one another, and keep us still apart. If we are ever to secure union, we must discuss our differences, not with the object of magnifying them and insisting upon their importance, but of endeavoring to see how unworthy they are to be made causes for disunion. The first thing that is necessary is the condition of mind which makes a denomination, *as such*, willing to face fairly the points upon which it originally succeeded from some other Christian body, and enquire whether or not it cannot concede to the conscience of the Christian Commonwealth, that these very points do not constitute now a justification for separating, but are rather subjects for differing *within* the one Household of Faith. This would be, indeed, to start from the other end from that which is the starting point of the "Articles" set forth by the Churches of England and the United States of America, but with a view to meeting midway; for, if the one insists upon as few Articles as it possibly can, as forming a basis for negotiations, and the others endeavor honestly to ascertain how it can cease to insist upon differences as justifying separations, the result *must* be that *the two* will meet; and *when* they meet, with these opposite matters settled beforehand in their own minds, how shall they fail of achieving union?

But, some one may ask whether discussion is an evil. We all believe in the kingdoms of this world being opposed to the Kingdom of God, and that the former are ruled by the prince of this world, whose motto has always been, "Divide et impare." Are we engaged in the same enterprise; is our cause but one? Then to be disunited is to retard its accomplishment, and to make ourselves weak, where, if united, we should be strong. We may see the resultant evils, or some of them, plainly enough, if we look either around us or abroad. What have we around us? In every considerable town, and some quite small villages, rival congregations, ministered to by men who profess to be brethren, but who, as denominationalists, are opponents. The result is rivalry on the part of the people, not in good works but in justification of their existence in a state of separation from one another.

Again, we are all crying out for the best and godliest young men to enter the ministry, and human nature being what it is, even with the grace of God, how can we expect to get them, when we have to offer them only a few souls to shepherd and a miserably small and often doubtful income on which to support themselves, to say nothing of their families. It is a wonder that under existing conditions we get as many and as good men as we do; but it is manifest that we should be able to offer a larger field and better income if such a union could be brought about as would let one minister and one large church building do the work of two or more. And then there is the ruinous expense attached to keeping these separate congregations going, which allows of little, and in not a few cases nothing, being contributed for the extension of the Kingdom in heathen lands. And when we look abroad it is enough to specify the one evil of the scandal in the eyes of the non-Christian, and the shame to the soul of the Christian, presented by rival bodies, each eager to make converts, and, when made, carefully instructing them in those things which are supposed to justify and tend to keep in separation, those who profess to be disciples