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ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

CHURCH UNION.

By Dr. J. M. Harper.

Article IV.

The proposal made at the Methodist Conference lately held in Montreal, to widen the venue of the Union Question, by inviting the Anglicans and the Baptists to share in the continuing deliberations on church union among Protestant denominations which have already reached something like a common ground of agreement, will surely be looked upon by many as a false strategic step. But those who claim with the Rev. Dr. Carman that the church union that is desirable is not a movement to be developed by strategy, but by an open advocacy and conscientious maturing of a God-sanctified compromise, will hardly blame the inclusion of other bodies in the movement. The subjoined article was written previous to the meeting of the Methodist Conference, but I have not thought fit to change the specific features of the same. While the necessity for union has been accepted, there can be no serious disadvantage in counselling a momentary delay in order to give the Anglicans and the Baptists an opportunity to take part in the negotiations; though personally I am of the opinion that, not being units in themselves seeking unification with other units, these bodies are hardly in a position to share in the proposed union for the present. But more of this—anon.

In the negotiations, many years ago, for the union of the Presbyterians of Canada, which has since had such favorable results, the College Question, as it was called, loomed up pretty ominously for a time as an obstacle to a peaceable consummation of the project. Whether the after consideration of the Report on the Ministry made by the Union sub-committee on that phase of the union project at present on foot will develop a college question, pregnant with like premonitions of failure, it is hard to say. The training for the ministry and the admission of candidates for pulpit service is a detail which may safely be left to the wisdom of the new church when it is once organized. The divine who has facetiously issued the challenge quoted in a preceding article, somewhat enigmatically follows it up by asking:

"Does it not seem as if the framers of the rules referring to the relations of a minister of the United Church to the doctrines of that church, were again subconsciously sensible of the inherent absurdity of their whole method of proclaiming or guaranteeing fitness for the ministry or of protecting the fundamentals of the faith in addition to building upon the foundation other than which no man can lay?"

"The Call from the Lord" is a phrase that does not transfer all its solemnity to the phrase, "A Call to the Church," just as the "vox populi" is ever prone to mean more or less than the "vox dei." The novice in the ranks of the Salvation Army may enter upon his or her service in that organization, without much previous preparation for the work, beyond having received "A Call from the Lord." Even the ordinary "healer," under the auspices of the Rev. Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy's organization, may enter upon his or her labours without much previous training. But these examples are not for any properly organized orthodox church to adopt, however modern may be its methods of administration, or however "curiously elastic" may be its terms of subscription provided for ordination to the ministry. Even if it be difficult for the Rev. Dr. Macrae to discern the neces-

sity for imposing a lengthy series of propositions summed up at last in the final comprehensive query put to the candidate, "Do you believe the statement of doctrine of the United Church," there has to be ample provision made for the education and special training of the minister of the new church. The problem of how that training has to be provided for, involves a college question pure and simple—one very much easier of solution, as it may be, than the question of the co-ordination of collegiate prestige or the care-taking of church revenues and endowments.

The findings of the sub-committee on the Ministry are as concrete as one could wish them to be, especially on the point of the training of the ministry. They claim that the attainment of a B. A. degree is desirable before a student enters upon the study of theology. But in cases where this is unattainable, they suggest two alternative courses, constituted as follows, both starting from university matriculation (1) three years at least in Arts, followed by three years in Theology; (2) two years under the supervision of a body corresponding to a district meeting with appropriate studies, and four years of a mixed Arts and Theological course in college.

What chance, then, is there for anything like a serious college question pure and simple arising out of a proposition of the above lucidity and pertinency? What surrender of convictions or betrayal of standards is there in such a proposal? It has been said that a generation will have to pass away before anything like uniformity of training can be secured under the term of such a regulation. But could there be anything more of a common standard of qualification for the ministry than what is outlined in the above finding of the sub-committee? Is the average minister of the Presbyterian Church of a higher training and standard of intellect than the present average Methodist minister or Congregational minister? Which of them is it that will have to wait for the passing of a generation to bring the pastorate of the proposed Union Church up to a level? Is it practical that any assumed common standard of qualification is ever likely to be secured, even if it were conscientiously to be desired? As the writer of these articles has already said, there is no more of a final advantage to any one of the contracting parties in this enterprise of church union than there is to the others. It has been shown that there is neither disproportionate gain nor loss to any of the churches entering the union on the score of creed or church polity, and just as safely may it be said that in this matter of the training of the ministry there is none either. What more, therefore, would one reasonably desire in any church development along the line of compassing the spread of the gospel?

Yet in face of all this, there is a big College Question, with just as serious omens of possible division of interest in it as had the college question of former union movements. The College Question in this case is one of church property, and it is to the Rev. Dr. Campbell, of Montreal, that we are indebted for a candid defining of it. Dr. Campbell is not in love with the spirit of the age in its pleadings for creed revision and church union, but he counts it a gain in his polemic to join with the spirit of the age in its penchant for "looking after the haw-bees." Dr. Macrae says that as to the adjustment of the money resources of the uniting churches, there is legal and administrative ability in Canada equal to the task of arranging these matters to the avoiding of the pitfalls that created so

much trouble in connection with the recent union of the Presbyterians in Scotland. We do not know what faith Dr. Campbell has in the ability of Canadians to accomplish a task which others have fulfilled. He has certainly taken pains to amplify a very big College Question, indeed, if such a term may be allowed—in referring to the assimilation of the temporalities of the uniting churches in a general fund—to include in it all problems connected with the fiscal administration of the new church.

"The sustentation of the ministry is on a different footing in the three churches," says Dr. Campbell; "the minimum stipend with Presbyterians is higher than with others." Are we to retrograde in order to be on the same level with them? If not, what is the prospect that with so large a clerical force as the United Church would number, all could or would be raised to the standard we have reached after long struggling? Personal rights enter into the consideration of such matters as the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, and the Ministers' Widows and Orphans' Fund, which no legislation could be had to do anything with. A few years ago the Presbyterians raised a large Century Fund for specific objects. Would it not be a breach of faith with its donors to employ any share of that fund otherwise than for the objects for which it was contributed? . . .

Queen's University is, by Royal Charter, a Presbyterian institution, and at present it is engaged, under the direction of the church to which it belongs, in raising an additional endowment of \$500,000 of which about half is in sight. Would not the Presbyterian supporters, at least, of this movement, as well as the Presbyterians who mainly furnished the past endowments of the university, have also good cause for complaint if, just when the contributions are secured, the institution should pass from the position it occupied when they put their money in it?"

It is needless to say that Dr. Campbell gives his argument almost entirely away, when, between times, he says that the same argument applies equally to the specific funds raised by the other churches engaged in the Union negotiations, as well as to their college endowments. If the principle of give-and-take, with the philanthropic uppermost, is to be eliminated from the negotiations for union, it may as well be declared, first at last, that the Union Question has to be overwhelmed in this subsidiary big College Question—the part being made, for the moment, of more concern than the whole. One can only breathe hard in presence of Dr. Campbell's special pleading, and the alliance of his logic with the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age while inviting a co-ordination of creeds has surely as much in its pleadings as has the spirit of the age in its lower aims at the "main chance." The fact stands that there is no closing of the ear against the spirit of the times in either case. The money test has become as urgent as the moral test, though one would hardly expect a clergyman to make more of the money test than the moral test. The sub-committee on Administration, at least, have faced the music of the spirit of the age to utilize it as a missionary for good, as have the other sub-committees. They have been in presence of the difficulties which Dr. Campbell has summed up as a special pleading against union. They have taken in the whole situation. And this is what they say:

"After a minute consideration of the principles upon which the various churches manage their missionary, educational, benevolent, publishing, and other agencies, it has been decided to report that, while obstacles to the organic union of these three churches may have to be faced in connection with the questions