

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

ORGANIC UNION OF CHURCHES.

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Let us now ask, which of the Protestant Churches in Canada are already so closely allied, so really one in race, language, spirit, doctrine, polity, modes of worship and procedure, that they might be looked to for the initiation of a union movement. To begin with, there is nothing to keep Congregationalists and Presbyterians apart. The fact that they exist as separate Churches in this country, with distinct institutions, agencies, and missions, shows how completely we are the slaves of names and tradition. Again, if the Baptists would, as regards the mode of baptism, imitate the freedom which, according to "The Teaching of the Apostles," prevailed in the early Church, and would as regards the subjects of baptism, give liberty to Christian parents, who from their own relationship to the Lord believe that their children are "holy," to dedicate them to Him in baptism and accept His gracious promises sacramentally on their behalf, there is nothing to keep us apart. It is clear that a united Church must, with reference to disputed points, be based on liberty. It must be comprehensive. Certainly, baptism with water is a small thing, and it is almost ludicrous that a Church should be based on the notion that a hog's head rather than a handful of water is absolutely essential in administering the ordinance. Baptism by and in the Spirit is what we all need.

So far, there ought to be little difficulty, and yet it strikes me that there will be still less, when we come to the Methodist Church. Undoubtedly, it differs from us in polity and doctrine. So much the better, for thus we shall be able to test what the principle of union is worth. The Methodist polity is essentially Presbyterian, as Dr. W. B. Pope, of Didsbury College, points out in his *Compendium of Theology*, now a favourite text-book in Methodist seminaries. In consequence of the recent union in Canada, the feature of superintendency has been added—a feature congenial to our system, one that we need, and one that would bring us into line with the great Lutheran Church. We had superintendents in John Knox's day. At the meeting of the General Council at Belfast this year, one of the rising men of the Free Church gave voice to a very general feeling that had already found expression in the General Assembly, to the effect that some such officers are needed in the Scottish Churches. And if needed in Scotland, how much more in Canada! Complaints are made among us that ministers and congregations never see the face of what is called a "leading" minister, unless one comes the way to collect for College Buildings or Endowments or for a special fund of some kind. And why should they, under our system? Even "leading" ministers have work of their own to do. If the Church wishes to get other work out of them, the Church must set them apart to the service.

As to doctrine, I hold with Dr. Briggs, of Union Seminary, New York, one of the two managing editors of the *Presbyterian Review*, that a true Reformed Church must include evangelical Arminians. His words, in the April number, in an article on the question of the admission of the Cumberland Presbyterians to the Alliance, strike the right keynote.

"Arminianism," he says, "is historically one wing of the Reformed camp. In other words, the Reformed churches broke into two hostile camps, Synod of Dort Calvinism and Arminianism. In our judgment, the Alliance has no other historical and consistent policy than to recognize and admit to its fellowship the Evangelical Arminianism. This recognition has already been given to the *Continental Churches which are Evangelical Arminian*. . . . We look forward to the time when the Church of Christ shall be one. We are not willing to sacrifice the unity and hopes of ecclesiastical combinations for the sake of perpetuating schism and separation on minor issues. We believe that the Alliance is far stronger and more consistent in its policy if it raise the banner about which eventually Methodism may rally with us, and to which the Anglican Episcopal Church may come, when it abandons the unscriptural dogma of apostolic succession of diocesan bishops and ordination by them alone."

What gives point to this language is that the Alliance took the action he recommended. Dr. Briggs goes on to quote from a letter of the late distinguished Henry B. Smith, Professor of Theology in Union Seminary, to a Methodist clergyman as follows:

"What is it that keeps Methodists and Presbyterians apart? Is it anything essential to the Church or even to its well-being. For one, I do not think that it is. Your so-called Arminianism, being of *grace* and not of *nature*, is in harmony with our symbols. It is a wide outlook, which looks to an *eclesiastical* union of Methodists and Presbyterians; but I am convinced that it is vital for both, and for Protestantism and for Christianity *vs.* Romanism in this country, and it is desirable *per se*. I am also persuaded that our differences are merely intellectual (metaphysical), and not moral or spiritual; in short, formal and not material."

I do not care to add anything to those weighty words. It is becoming clearer to the Christian consciousness that the Bible includes the two sides of truth, which have been seized upon by the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches respectively. Holy Scripture asserts unmistakeably, without attempting to reconcile, man's free-will and God's sovereignty. Presbyterianism too asserts both truths, but it utters the first in a whisper and the second with a trumpet. Methodism too asserts both, but it takes the trumpet to the first truth, and gives us the second in a whisper. Christians are coming to think that the Bible way is the more excellent way.

And what of the Anglican Episcopal Church! Who can help honouring that grand historical Church, now so full of life? But until it settles whether it belongs to the Reformed camp that would give it eager welcome, or to the hierarchy that laugh its pretensions to scorn, it is useless for us to talk union to it, however willingly we may interchange courtesies or co-operate in special departments of work. One thing is very clear to me, and that is, that we have no right to upbraid it with being unwilling to unite with other Protestant Churches, until we who have accepted unreservedly the principles of the Reformation have accomplished union among ourselves. It will be time enough to think of the second step when we have taken the first.

But why, it may be asked, should we take this first step? Why? "God wills it" was once conviction potent enough to set Europe on fire, to make men, by the tens and the hundreds of thousands, madly eager to sell houses and lands, in order that with red cross on banner and shield and shoulder they might go forth, crusade after crusade, and pour out their heart's blood on the burning sands of the East, if perchance thereby they might win for Christendom Christ's grave. Why, is it asked? Because, God wills it. The doors of universal heathendom are open for the first time since Christ gave the Church its marching orders. The Macedonian cry is actually worldwide, now for the first time. Dare we say that this Providence imposes no obligation on the Church? Dare we be satisfied with use and wont in presence of this stupendous fact? Besides, modern society demands a new demonstration that Christ is living, and that His Church is able to discern the signs of the times. Social questions are pressing upon us, before which all our verbal differences sink into insignificance. Democracy has gained the victory over all its enemies so completely that its omnipotence, if not its right, is questioned by nobody. And the question now is, what will democracy do with its victory? That depends on whether Christianity can take hold of and pour its spirit into democracy or not. It can do so only by reorganizing itself, only by realizing its own ideal. Democracy will rather have the rudest realities than the most ancient and most elegant shams. It will not accept as Christianity cushioned pews and half a dozen competing sects up town, and a mean looking mission chapel with a half-starved city missionary down town. It will not accept words, however grand, nor dead issues, nor isms that have to be laboriously explained. The Church as it was in the heart and brain of Jesus Christ must be incarnated.

The most devoted men and women within the Churches are longing to bear the advance wounded. A great thought inspires men. The call to a new movement gives new life. No longer have they to lie among the pots, no longer to abide by the stuff. They hear the Master's call, and they follow Him, fearing nothing. "Bliss is it then to be alive." See what a new thought could do even for the poor "French sans *parole*" of 1893, who, roused from long death-sleep, could rush at once to the frontiers, and die fighting for an immortal Hope and Faith of deliverance for him and his! The long struggles in England, identified with the name of Wilberforce, to deliver the nation from the sins of the slave-trade and then of slavery, ennobled Englishmen.

They gave to every Englishman a wider conception of freedom and a loftier pride in the great name of England. Even the struggle to get cheap bread for the people, with which the much less heroic name of Cobden is identified, quickened the pulse of national feeling. Nothing in this century did so much for the people of the United States—so much permanent good, so much to elevate and purify their national character—as the war to preserve the Union and get rid of slavery. The enthusiasm of humanity took possession of a people who were becoming hopelessly materialized. The masses were lifted up into a higher atmosphere. A nation that in other earnest had called the dollar a "mighty" threw into a gulf apparently bottomless countless millions of dollars, and drained its dearest veins under the inspiration of a great purpose. So has it ever been with the Church. It becomes weak and palsy when "it walks in its silver slippers." When signing a solemn League and Covenant that implies the pillory and the gibbet to the signers, but that is to preserve the life of three kingdoms, it glows with Divine beauty. And so must it ever be. Such an influence on Christian character, Christian life, and Christian work would come, I verily believe, in no small measure, from a union between the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. Such a union would bring us nearer to God. It would be a step towards the formation of that regenerated society for which we pray.

How can this thing be? It must come from God, but each of us can help to prepare the way and each of us is responsible for what he is able to do. We must talk it up, write it up, preach it up. We must work for it, make sacrifices for it, pray for it. The great thought will then take possession of the heart and mind of the Church, and the Church will say that the thing must be. And when it comes to that, those who are opposed had better stand out of the way.—*From the Methodist Magazine for September.*

WHY WE HONOUR PRESBYTERIANISM.

Nothing is more foreign to my disposition and purpose than to draw invidious comparisons, or to make comments of any kind on the faith and forms of other churches. I desire only to suggest a few of the reasons why we regard our own as worthy of the warmest devotion of its sons. And the light of history has been invoked, that in that light we might more clearly trace the development of its life through ages of conflict and persecution, and that we might the better appreciate some of the characteristics which commend it to our reason and endear it to our hearts.

1. We honour it for the strict conformity of its outward organization to what we understand to be the primitive model of the church of the apostles; the parity of its ministry; its representative form of government; the minister to labour in word and doctrine; the ruling elder to co-operate with him in all that pertains to its spiritual control; the deacons to have oversight of its temporal interests; each freely working in his own appropriate sphere, all acting in union with reference to a common end, all assimilated by a common standard of doctrine and discipline, and compacted into a unity secured by a system of representative assemblies.

2. We honour it because of the spirituality of its services, and the simplicity of its forms of worship and mode of administering the divine ordinances.

3. We honour it because of its boldness and fidelity in proclaiming and defending all the doctrines of God's work—even those which have always been most uncongenial to the natural heart—doctrines which some suppress, which others qualify and which others repudiate.

4. We honour it because, in sharp contrast with those systems of faith which enchain and enfeeble the understanding by suppressing free inquiry and committing both thought and conscience to the keeping of spiritual guardians, the tendency of the Presbyterian system has been to encourage investigation, to vindicate the right of private judgment, and to stimulate and develop the intelligence of the people—the demonstration of which is to be found in the splendid literature it has created; in the contributions of its writers to mental, moral, and physical science, and above all to theology, the queen of all the sciences; so that, wherever our church has been planted, its fruits have been seen in the school, the academy, the college, and the university, the free press, the free Bible, the free pulpit, and the free people.