

Messenger and Visitor

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Editor

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH UNION.

The subject of Church Union which came up for consideration at the recent meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada is one not only of special interest to the Assembly and to the Church which it represents but also of much general interest to the other Christian denominations.

The subject came before the Assembly in connection with the report of the committee on correspondence with other churches, presented by Dr. R. H. Warden. Dr. Warden gave some account of the history of the movement toward union between the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian bodies in Canada up to the present, showing that at a meeting of committees previously appointed on the subject by the three denominations, held in Toronto on the 21st of March last, the principle of organic union had been unanimously and cordially endorsed as both desirable and practicable and the whole subject had been commended to the sympathetic and favorable consideration of the chief assemblies of the churches concerned for such further action as they might deem wise and expedient. In concluding Dr. Warden moved that the Assembly approve the resolution adopted by the General Conference of the Methodist church of Canada on the question, and also moved a resolution which, after thanking the General Conference for its courtesy and expressing the sympathy of the Assembly with the Conference in its desire to promote organic union among the evangelical churches, continued as follows:

"The Assembly is gratified by the fact that the question of union between the Methodist church of Canada, the Congregational church in Canada and the Presbyterian church in Canada is receiving consideration by many in the membership of these churches and especially that the General Conference of the Methodist church should have adopted a deliverance breathing the truly Christian spirit of the resolution which has been transmitted to the Assembly.

"The General Assembly in response, appoints a committee on union with instructions to confer with the similar committees of the Methodist, Congregational and other churches to report to the next General Assembly.

"The Assembly prays that the spirit of truth, wisdom and love may rest upon the committees of these churches in all conferences which they may hold upon the very important subject which they are appointed to consider.

The discussion which followed indicated that while there were in the Assembly some very enthusiastic advocates of union and a very general sentiment in favor of the principle of union, there were a few at least who questioned the wisdom of endeavoring to unite the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches of Canada, and a still larger number who questioned the practicability of such a union. Those who think chiefly of the importance of unity in Christian fellowship and those who think of the economies in men and money to be effected by uniting the denominational forces are enthusiastic for union. But there are those before whose eyes the difficulty of reconciling the doctrines of the Westminster Confession with the Arminianism of John Wesley assumes large proportions. There are some who doubt whether the union of Methodists and Presbyterians would produce as high a type of Christian character as that which Presbyterianism produces, and there are some whose minds dwell upon the difficulties that must be encountered in adjusting details in reference to educational institutions, mission fields and the various schemes of the Church. From the whole range of the discussion it may be concluded that, while there was in the Assembly a pretty general disposition to favor the principle of union and to regard the proposal with a measure of hopefulness, there was also on the part of many leading spirits a very serious appreciation of the difficulties which must be encountered in the endeavor to carry the proposal for organic union into effect, and it was felt that in this matter it was necessary for the Assembly to go slowly and feel its way with great caution and deliberation.

The motion printed above, moved by Dr. Warden and seconded by Dr. Patrick of Winnipeg, was finally adopted by an unanimous vote, but with an amendment (moved by Dr. McLaren of Knox College) which, though brief is of much significance, since it defines the duty of the committee appointed by the Assembly as being to confer

with committees from the other bodies with the purpose of considering "the propriety and practicability of such union." Accordingly, the General Assembly has endorsed the proposal for organic union with the Methodist and Congregationalist bodies on principle, and has intimated its willingness to regard with favor similar proposals from other churches; the Assembly has also appointed a committee to confer with the other ecclesiastical bodies indicated on the subject of union, but it has not either assumed or asserted the propriety or the practicability of union under existing conditions. This is a matter upon which the Assembly reserves judgment and upon which it is to be informed by its committee after discussion with the committees from other bodies.

No doubt there were many members of the Presbyterian Church as well as of the other bodies interested, who wished and expected that the General Assembly would make a more confident pronouncement in favor of union. It is probable however that in the position it has taken the Assembly pretty correctly represents the general sentiment of the denomination. The wiser heads of the church, however much they may desire to see the proposed union consummated, understand very well that there are serious difficulties in the way and that this is a case in which haste must be made slowly. To attempt to force matters would be to court disaster. We hope that the union proposed may come to pass, and a still larger union by and by, but we are of the opinion that Presbyterianism and Methodism in Canada are not quite yet at the point of coalescence. Several General Assemblies will have time to meet—perhaps several General Conferences—before they twain shall be one.

Editorial Notes.

—The Journal and Messenger of Cincinnati says: "The Negro Baptists of the South have established a Printing and Publishing House at Nashville, Tenn., and it has prospered for several years until it is now said that it did a business of \$90,000 last year. In the last quarter it booked over \$16,000 orders. It employs about one hundred workmen. Every morning from 9.30 to 10 o'clock the manager stops all machinery and summons every hand to go to the chapel for a half hour's exercises. They have a chapel in their printing plant."

—A remarkable case of casting bread upon the waters and finding it after many days, is that of a poor woman of Dunfermline, Scotland, who, when the parents of Andrew Carnegie were about to emigrate to the United States, lent the mother of the present multi-millionaire the sum of eleven shillings to help defray the expenses of the undertaking. The loan, if it was considered such, was never repaid in the lifetime of the woman who supplied the eleven shillings. Put Mr. Carnegie is said to have sought out the two daughters of his mother's friend, whom he found living in comparatively humble circumstances, and has settled upon them annuities which will insure their comfort for life.

—The name of Dr. Wilkie appeared quite prominently in connection with the reports of the proceedings of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Dr. Wilkie had spent some time in China as a missionary in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, but owing to friction between himself and his brother missionaries, had returned to this country. The Committee, after careful examination into the facts of the case, reported to the Assembly that in their judgment it would not be best that Dr. Wilkie should return to China. There were some who quite vigorously dissented from this view, but the Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee. Happily there was nothing involving any reflection upon the moral character of Dr. Wilkie. The trouble consisted in his being unable to work in harmony with the other missionaries. It is said that his friends will likely send him out to resume mission work in the East. But if so the undertaking will be quite independent of the regular F. M. work of the Church.

—The Presbyterian Church in Canada has expended in Foreign Mission work during the past year nearly \$193,000. F. M. Committee of the Church reported to the General Assembly that in all the mission fields, peace, progress and prosperity had prevailed throughout the year. The work in North Formosa is enlarging, the formation of a new presbytery is recommended, and the work in China was never more encouraging. The Missions have recovered from the shock of the boxer uprising and all the present indications are favorable. Reports of the growth of the spirit of union and co-operation come from the foreign field. The union of all the Presbyterian bodies in Japan into the "Church of Christ in Japan" has proved eminently satisfactory. All of the twelve different Presbyterian Churches working in India have merged their interests into the "Presbyterian Church of Christ in India." Movements of a like character are on foot at Amoy, Corea and Formosa.

—The daily papers have reported the death of Rev. S. D. Irvine at Hemet, California, on the 28th of May. This announcement, through perhaps not altogether unexpected, will be received with sincere regret by many readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. Mr. Irvine was a native of New

Brunswick. We believe that Andover was his birth place. He was ordained in 1888, and while his health permitted preached the gospel with much acceptance and success. His health which for several years previously had been delicate became so seriously impaired that he had to relinquish the work of the pastorate, and a few years ago he went to reside in Southern California. The change perhaps was not made soon enough. At any rate there was no permanent improvement in health, and now the intelligence comes that the Lord's servant has been called home. Brother Irvine was a man of admirable qualities and of truly Christian spirit. His ministry was a blessing to the churches he served, he was instrumental in leading many into the truth and he was held in affectionate esteem by his brethren in the ministry. While we regret that so useful a life should be cut short in its prime, we rejoice in the thought of its grace and fruitfulness. To the bereaved family and friends we extend Christian sympathy. A suitable sketch of our deceased brother's life and work will appear in another issue.

The Assumption of Inerrancy.

INTRODUCTORY.

Let it be kept in mind that it was Dr. Saunders who began this controversy in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. I was perfectly willing without any controversy whatever to let my two articles be compared with the Doctor's ten. Despite the way he began it, I believe good will result. Attention is being called to the method of Bible study for which I stand and to Dr. Saunders' method of opposition. Publicity, I believe, will increase the use of the former and will lessen the effect of the latter—a consummation devoutly to be wished."

DR. SAUNDERS' METHOD AGAIN.

Though he still continues to use it the Dr. does not want me to "bother with the Saundersian Method." I am not surprised. A Baptist leader writes: "A fragment of truth taken out of its place may be virtually a falsehood." I felt I owed it to myself and to the method of Bible study that I represent, to go to the bother of trying to put some of the Dr.'s fragments of truth each in its place. It is not for me to say that the falseness of the impressions left by these fragments was intentional. On the contrary I remember that the Dr. has a reputation as an ardent politician; and I can understand how a man, good at heart but with a strong partisan spirit, in advocating what he believes to be for the glory of God, may unconsciously omit and even fail to see what is in his opponent's favor. I have neither space nor time to again consider in detail Dr. Saunders' method.

THAT CONVENTION SERMON.

It was first given to my own church. When it was over, the deacons were asked to remain. They were told that I was thinking of preaching it as the Convention sermon and were asked their opinion. They told me to preach it. I did. What an effect!—according to Dr. Saunders. I am sorry if he were in such distress. I recall, however, the recent utterance of a Bishop, who, in speaking against the assumption of the Bible's inerrancy, said: "Some people need wounding before they will waken and take a proper view of the Bible."

Let me tell you an open secret. As those who heard the sermon will remember, it was practically the same as the "Summary" and "Why We Should Study the Bible," if these be taken together and in the order named. If any more of you would like to have them, drop me a postal card and I will send you that "hour of agony" free.

Last year I read in the "Expository Times": "There is no joy in the Christian ministry now. Men dare not preach what they believe; there is no joy in that; or they take care not to believe what they dare not preach; and there is no joy in that." I have been, and am, and purpose, having a joyous Christian ministry.

THAT BIBLE CLASS.

We decided in the class not to adopt the lecture method of the large institutions of learning. I plainly stated that my method was not to tell but to teach by helping the class to think out the questions for itself. In this my model was the peerless Dr. Sawyer. Dr. Saunders gives a question that was asked near the end of the hour. It was the Dr. himself who asked it. It was the Dr. himself who answered it and according to my method. The Dr. was upon his feet face to face with the question. It was put in the form: "Who is to decide and how is the decision to be reached?" He acted as one trying to evade it. He read some quotations from others. The eyes of the large class were upon him. He was held to the question. At last he answered it. It was what I wanted. It was a treat. My method of teaching was carried on through the very one who tried to break through it. It was then that the class asked the Dr. (if he thus agreed with the pastor) why he insinuated against him in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. It was then that the Dr. said that no one could say that this "hitting" was "necessarily" so.

A number of the members of the class took down at my dictation in the class (and some still have) much more than the definition that Dr. Saunders sent around to my brother ministers. I had and have much reason to find fault not only with the Dr.'s course in getting these quotations from