

the people. What is past is past. Our present duty is to bring peace, industry, intelligence, high ideals and spiritual living to our new country men. This is a work to fill all the hands and hearts of all the churches and perhaps in a common task, each may learn to understand and regard each other who have one Lord, one hope, one heaven. In short I am not so anxious for nor do I see so much need for corporate unity as there is real need for a united spirit and proper methods for accomplishing what is the wish uppermost in the hearts and minds of all God's people, viz., the Salvation of the world. "When the church of God is in reality a powerful and hard working body of sincere, honest, and loving people, the world will soon be saved."

Rev. R. G. MacBeth, Paris.

Certain passing statements made by me on the subject of Church Union in the course of an address at the Knox College Summer School have been reported in the press. The reports were correct as far as they went but they were necessarily much condensed, and in answer to requests I venture to put these statements into more extended form. The views of one individual may not be of any special consequence, but the Church is made up of individuals, and every one of them ought to study the present situation and in some way contribute his share to the settlement of a question involving eternal concerns. No right-thinking man would care to enter a protest against a spiritually-grounded and spiritually-directed movement for union, and this contribution is not intended as such. But it is intended to raise some points which ought in the judgment of many to be considered with a view to preventing undue and disastrous human haste in this matter. It is quite apparent to any one who knows the Church and the Country in some degree and who has discussed this subject with Ministers and laymen at different points that the authorities must proceed with great caution. The people are not going to be stampeded into organic union by a few meetings of prominent men in the several denominations. Anything that looks like an effort to force the movement will assuredly defeat the end in view. There must be the utmost care as to the grounds and motives upon which union is sought as well as in regard to the methods adopted to reach it or else the last estate will be worse than the first. Inspired leadership always eventuates for the glory of God, but hasty man-made plans in this movement will produce discords, secessions and schisms, enough to make the angels weep.

1 It ought to be said at the outset that there are many earnest students of Scripture who do not believe that Christ in his intercessory prayer required what we call organic union of the denominations. If they believed that He did so require they would drop everything else till it was brought about. But many of them say to believe this from the famous passage in John is to get themselves into difficulty over the doctrine of the Trinity with its three distinct persons. Others point out further that, in Christ's answer to John, who claimed credit for stopping a man who was casting out devils, it is made clear that people may be doing the same work without being in the same company. To be doing the work is the important thing.

2 But it is quite clear from His prayer that Christ does expect unity in aim, spirit, purpose and devotion to the will of God. It is

equally clear to all observant persons that this unity is found entirely independent of outside form. One can find it in the most diverse kinds of labor organizations as they act together in federations or at particular junctures in the industrial world. It is trite to say that it is found amongst diverse kinds of military bodies but the illustration is still valuable. It fell to my lot to be in active service where infantry, cavalry, artillery, scouts and cowboys were in one brigade. We scarcely knew each other and had little intercommunication, but throughout the campaign, which needed the work of all, we acted unitedly as one man under the command of the General. The followers of Knox, Wesley and Booth may seem to be quite separate bodies, but they are all soldiers of God's brigade under the generalship of Christ, who seems to need and who certainly uses them all in His campaign to recover a lost world.

3 It is evident that this deeper unity of aim and purpose and spirit not only exists amongst people who are in different bodies, as just stated, but it is equally evident that it does not always exist amongst people in the same body. Everyone has known instances in which greater unity of spirit and purpose existed between churches of different denominations in reaching the unsaved and in cleaning a community than existed between churches of the same denomination which secured members from each other and sometimes belittled each other's work. There is a better effect produced on the outside world by the sight of churches of different denominations uniting to do common work in co-operation than by the sight of disunion in a single congregation or between churches that bear the same name. This, some one says, should not be the alternative, but we have to deal with facts as they are where humanity has not reached the ideal. Our Central India field is a case in point. All parties are in earnest about missionary work, but active co-operation between different churches in fields at home or abroad would be a much more edifying spectacle even to the heathen than the present unhappy division between brethren of the one denomination.

4 There are many who think that because God has not made all men in the same mould as to constitution, temperament, methods of thought, etc., it is hard to hold them all together in one outside hoop even though it could be made of iron. There seems to be a certain constitutional and temperamental difference between the people now in different churches which it is well to recognize, although this may not be so evident in some cases. Many would rather have the cordial unity of aim and spirit now existing than the explosive quality of the nondescript body which would result from forced and hasty organic union.

5 There is a distinct doctrinal difference between some of the denominations. Each one stands for some truth which is made prominent in its creed. What would be the creed of the United Church? It may be said that the difference is not so great when the churches properly understand each other. That, at least, is an argument in favor of a gradual rather than a sudden movement. Some there are who draw attention to the fact that there is more infidelity to-day in countries which one cast iron church organization tries to control than in the countries where men find their doctrinal affinities in a freer way. This may be an argument worth considering in favor of a federation or "league offensive and defensive" with denominational freedom.

6 Many feel that the financial aspect of the union question has been made far too prominent. This is simply carrying modern business methods of combination into religious work. But, without discussing the rightness or wrongness of these methods, we can say that the church is not supposed to pay dividends like a joint stock company, nor to run as a going concern without constant calls upon its members. It is a means of grace to people to give. They thrive spiritually when they do not give self-sacrificingly. Instances are not infrequent where two churches of the same denomination united, and the united church gave little if anything more than the two separately. In such cases spiritual life languishes. The windows of Heaven's blessing are closed when men are robbing God. This is the teaching of the Spirit in Malachi, and every one has seen it in practical operation. There is such a thing as the separate Churches properly provoking one another to love and to good works. There should be no quarter given to, nor any use made of, the idea that people would not have to contribute so much in the united Church.

7 The West has been quoted freely as needing and asking for organic union. As a matter of fact the people of the West did not begin the movement, and if any part needs it the East requires union more than the West. In the East population is more congested, and one man can overtake more work than in the larger distances of the West. The odds against the Church are greater in the West and more work has to be done outside the Congregations—hence more men are required in proportion to the population. I have not met any Missionary Superintendent in the West who considers that organic union would materially help the work there, where the people demand their own services perhaps more than in the East. After living in the West since pre-confederation days, I feel quite sure that no one Church could have done the work that all together accomplished in providing ordinances and in building the seats of learning that have done so much for the country. The University of Manitoba became possible because each church had its college, and each church had its college because it appealed to different elements in the population.

8 This matter of organic union has not as yet touched the consciousness of the people in the several churches, and it is the people we have to deal with ultimately. They do not lightly give up their inheritance, nor easily abandon great and inspiring traditions. They do not readily let go their hold on what they consider to be Scriptural possessions in doctrine or policy. We honor this feeling because history has been made by people who had convictions and dared maintain them. Hence the grounds and the motives for seeking organic union must be made clear to the people who need to be shown that they will not be asked to enter outward alliances at the cost of giving up essentials in their Faith. Let the good work go on, but let it be steadily advanced upon sound principles and not rushed under the epidemic influences of human expediency.

When one needs more theology to get into a church than he does into heaven, either the gate below is too narrow or the one above too wide.