

us, or its desirability or practicability. To bring back any of these questions it will be necessary to move re-consideration and enact much expunging and obliteration. The simple question is

THE ADVISABILITY OF ADOPTING THIS BASIS OF UNION.

And it will be clear to every mind, since we are upon a line of negotiations with other parties, that it is not a question of modifications, amendments, additions, or diminutions, but simply of accepting or declining this Basis of Union. Whatever may be in the future this is the issue first and now.

A temptation may arise for this General Conference to hand the provisions of the Basis on to the constituencies, Quarterly Conferences, or Societies under the directions of Discipline or otherwise without itself declaring decidedly as to acceptance or rejection, and thus placing the responsibility wholly over upon other bodies. All these bodies and all parties concerned must have the opportunity of full and fair discussion, and must in their own place and time do their own work and bear their own responsibility: but from the very constitution of our Church and the line of action of our General Conferences, the primal responsibility rests upon this General Conference. To send on the Basis for the adoption or rejection of the Quarterly Conferences without clearly making known its own mind with regard to it would, it seems to me, be unworthy of this General Conference. Who so capable of weighing its merits as this General Conference? Who entitled to settle the legal and constitutional questions, but this General Conference? Who empowered to arrange our relations to other Churches but this General Conference? Who should so well understand or so carefully guard our interests, honor and rights; who has such authority and influence with our people as this General Conference? I am persuaded that this Conference will weigh carefully all the interests and issues, and will recommend to our beloved people a clear and decisive course of action. While we would not fetter or prejudice the constituencies that must declare upon this all-important question, we must bear in mind that the primal responsibility is upon us, and here, and to-day. By our constitution we are put in this place of authority and responsibility, and we must do our duty. In a good sense leaders and rulers of the people, we are accountable to God for our care of His Church. If the whole aspects of the Union question have changed since their presentation by former General Conferences, or since the former session of this Conference in Hamilton, it is for us to say so. If we have been ourselves deceived, or have been deceiving others; if we have ourselves been misunderstood or have misunderstood others; if we have misjudged in the premises or have changed our mind and intent, let us now declare it. It is for this body to pronounce first, and do what it can to quiet agitation in the Societies. We can hardly suppose that in the present state of feeling and action in the various Churches we shall reverse our long declared policy on the Union Question. So, unless we repudiate the decisions of former General Conferences as to the desirability and practicability of Methodist Union—which would be at once dishonorable to ourselves and dishonest to the other Churches, and therefore not for a moment to be thought of by any one—there is before us a well defined route of proceedings.

It will devolve upon us first to determine whether we accept or decline Union upon this Basis; that is, whether we think sufficiently well of the Basis to send the proper provisions on to the Quarterly Conferences. If we reject the Basis, there would seem to be little else to do. If we accept it so far as we as a Conference are concerned, then it is necessary that we determine what matters shall under discipline go on to the Quarterly Meeting Conferences, and how and when they shall be presented. And herein arises at once an important question which this General Conference must determine. If any of the articles of the Basis of Union infringe any of the five main limitations and restrictions upon the powers of the General Conference