

The Essential Unity of All Our Connexional Work

AT each of the recent Annual Conferences of our Church, this subject was dealt with at some length, and our young people will do well to study it. This article contains the substance of the editor's address as delivered in the West and is printed here in the hope that its perusal may help all our readers, the youth especially, to see very clearly that although as a Church we have many members with different offices we are still one body.

THE SUBJECT INTERPRETED.

If we understand this subject aright, it means that in the effective constitution of the Methodist Church and for the successful execution of its mission by the diversified agencies engaged, it is imperative that we should consider and treat the whole work of the connexion as one work, one in ultimate aim and purpose, one in constraining spirit and motive, one in wise adaptation of method and plan; in short, that we live and labor together just as we slug: "We are not divided, *all one body* etc."

"Essential Unity" introduces Canadian Methodism to us as a vitally one body, rather than a merely complex mechanical organization with a plurality of parts each existing in itself, by itself, for itself, and as an end in itself,—instead of as a part and only a part of one living and complete whole.

This "Essential Unity" reminds us, therefore, that the Methodist Church is a vital organism in which many and varied parts are organically connected; that none of these parts can exist healthfully or perform its proper functions efficiently, separately, alone and apart, and that the measure of success of which the whole body is capable, is determinable only by the harmonious co-operation of every organ entering into its construction and contributing to its work.

And such a reminder will do us no harm. The spirit of vital connexional unity must ever be preserved among us and be as characteristic of Methodism in the twentieth century as it was of the first followers of John Wesley. As it inspired thousands in the former days it must be operative among us to-day. By it the hearts of the early Methodists were fused together in the white heat of Divine love; by it they lived in affectionate concord as one family with spiritual interests common to all the members; by it they were powerfully moved with one controlling purpose to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land; and under the dominant spirit of their incomparable brotherhood our fathers were constrained to their great enterprise and were enabled to perform mighty works for God. May the enthusiasm of the same glorious cause never be lacking among the sons and daughters of noble stam; may the contagion of a holy zeal constrain us to concerted labors for our Master and Lord, for ours is one work and it is His work.

OUR SUPREME PURPOSE

Space will not permit of anything like an exhaustive analysis of the work to which by the Providence of God we Methodists have been called. But we do well to remind ourselves that while the departmental agencies employed in the Church are many and varied, the ultimate end for which all are laboring is the same. That some of our connexional activities is and must ever be the *Entronement of Jesus Christ as Sovereign Lord in the hearts of all people, His Exaltation as Universal Saviour and King over all nations and kindreds of the earth.*

Before this can be accomplished, however, the most sanguine of us all will readily admit that there is much pro-

gressive work to be performed, and many intermediate steps are to be taken. This great task of saving the world has been in progress for centuries, and its completion is not yet in sight. The day of ultimate triumph for Christendom is surely some day coming, and to hasten it by every means within our power is the immediate duty that confronts us as a Church.

DEPARTMENTAL MACHINERY.

Undoubtedly we have in operation to-day more organized machinery than ever before; but we should not forget that every portion of this was brought into being and fitted into place in order to meet what came to be recognized as a real need. And I do not suppose that any of us will claim that we have by any means yet reached the ultimate form of plan, or method, or machinery.

"New occasions teach new duties," and certainly "new occasions" have arisen with surprising rapidity in the growth and development of our Church in this great land. We may have some superfluous machinery, and when it is demonstrated to be practically inefficient in actual operation for God, it will surely be superseded by that which is better adapted to accomplish the great work He has for us in the land in which we live, or in the lands across the seas. Every phase of our connexional work has come into its present place as a growth, the connexional office has not been artificially or arbitrarily created, but all has vitality developed from simple beginnings to the present comparatively complex state and condition of work.

At times we have asserted that we have too many departments of work, too many departmental officers, too much machinery, a too intricate mechanism, and that progress is not proportionate to our equipment. That may at first seem plausible, yet I think if we are wise enough to decide where the curtailment should begin, or just what agencies might be profitably dispensed with, and our opinions differ as to the measure of progress we are achieving with the passage of the years. However that may be judged, no fair-minded man will deny that in every department of our work a measure of highest efficiency is aimed at by the men in charge; and that a larger measure of success has not been achieved none regret more deeply than these very same men. Each realizes the importance of the other, and if sometimes there has seemed to be a rather disproportionate emphasis placed upon certain lines of work, it has been not because of any spirit of antagonism to any other phase of the work, but has rather been prompted by a commendable zeal to realize the utmost possible results in the actual work accomplished in that one department.

EVERY FIELD OF WORK IMPORTANT.

The "Essential Unity" we have in mind refers not only to the connexional boards in themselves or as related to one another; but to our work as it reaches out from all these centers, to the untrembling of the Church: east, west, north and south, in our own home land or away across the ocean. The unit is not in the department but in the whole connexion which includes as a vital part of its being even the remotest mission in the world, and which collectively embrace the entire great connexional field. With such a view, it is never wise to discriminate between the various classes of our circuits and missions as being great or small, rich or poor, important or unimportant, desirable or undesirable, for each contributes its share to the larger life of the whole, and all are essential to the progress and

prosperity of the body. There may seem nothing particularly attractive or influential in the places some are appointed to fill; their experiences there may be neither very bright nor happy; the work to be done may be often hard and discouraging, but each man or woman toiling anywhere for the advancement of the Kingdom of God through Methodist influence and agency, is a living member of the working force and could not be spared from his or her post without loss of efficiency and power.

And none realize more truly than do the connexional officers themselves that the very departments they represent are in the last analysis, almost wholly dependent on the men on the local field. Boards may devise great projects, they may define great policies, they may inaugurate great plans, but the actual accomplishment of the work projected must rest with the great body of godly ministers and laymen, who have to bear the burden of local responsibility and lead the local workers in the actual realization of the ends to be achieved.

This "Essential Unity of all our connexional work" is based on the indwelling spirit of brotherly love binding all hearts together in unity and accord, and needs for its assured success the hearty fellowship in service of all Methodists whether leaders or followers in every place.

NO PART INDEPENDENT OF THE REST.

Neither is it ever wise to place such undue emphasis on the work of one department that that of the others shall be unfairly minimized. It may have been thought sometimes that your representative board had been rather given to magnify their own particular offices; but we realize more and more that in the very nature of our work no part of it is independent of the other parts, that the law of *interdependence, not independence*, rules, and that we are so correlated with one another that if one member suffers, all suffer with it, and if one member rejoices all rejoice.

THE SUBJECT ILLUSTRATED.

It is hardly necessary that I should illustrate this, yet it can be easily and, I think, naturally done.

We have seen that our ultimate aim is the entronement of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all people. For this see *new preachers*, preachers who stand ready to go anywhere to make Him known. Methodism has ever had such men, and the good God, we shall have them till the end. But such preachers grow old and become worn with the arduous labors of the itinerancy, and then the Church fulfils its ministry to them as they have already fulfilled their ministry to it. For this the *Superannuation Fund* is a Godsend. By it the Church keeps faith with the men who have served her well throughout their adult and active years, the men to whom she said at the beginning of their ministry: "If you do your part in serving the Church as you may be appointed, the Church will see that you do not lack for a living wage." By it the man whose years of active public service are past. The Superannuation Fund is an integral part of Methodism, not an insurance adjunct by which men are provided for at somebody else's expense in their later life. No man covets a Superannuation Fund, but every true minister among us deserves it when the time for its payment comes.

I have said that our ultimate aim is the entronement of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all people, that for this we need devoted preachers, ready to go anywhere to preach the Gospel, but that every preacher must be sent and sustained in their