

The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, SEPT. 15, 1881.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND UNITY.

In the closing part of our Chairman's address last June, occur these words: "There have been those who have flippantly spoken of Congregationalism as a rope of sand. There is truth in this. It is a rope of sand, every grain of which should be magnetized by divine grace, and then by its own inherent property adhere to every other." There are then ropes of sand and ropes of sand, one of which Congregationalism is, the other of which it is not. Which are we?

Scientists confidently assert the existence of atoms from which matter, as presented to us, is formed. Each atom has its own distinct property, shall we say individuality, with its Atomic poles. Isolated they never would or could have formed such nebulae, but somehow or other they came together,

"Toward the centre set the starry tides
And eddied into suns, that wheeling
Cast the planets."

And the Cosmos, with its might and beauty, became a reality. Star with star, system with system, each on their own predestined way form the great universe of the Creation of God.

The individual Christian—to use the illustration—is an atom, but his individual property draws him into relation with a neighbouring atom—there are atomic affinities, in plain words. Christians within reach of each other, must be drawn together for sympathy and for work.

Let us tarry a moment upon that thought *affinity*. An *ecclesia* or congregation is an assembly, there may be a heathen *ecclesia*, a congregation for formulating rules for, and exercising in, athletic games. There are *ecclesia* for commercial purposes. Nihilism has its congregations. Manifestly then the mere fact of independent organization does not constitute the essential of Christian Congregationalism. There is Christian Congregationalism, and that very adjective defines its character. There can be no Christianity without Christ, and we can have no Christ, save as we find Him in the Scriptures. Now Christ is not the Christ of Isolation, read 1 Cor. xii; Eph. ii. 19-22; therefore there are Christian affinities, and we claim for legitimate Congregationalism, that it alone of all church systems presents the fewest hindrances to those affinities for spontaneous manifestation. From these affinities

acting we derive the Church, not from an external mould or band. In other words the life of Christ in the individual heart must be and will be the one attractive power, and we wreck our faith and polity as we depart from this fundamental.

From Toronto to Montreal along the wire, the electric pulsations run, and every instrument on the route responds to the touch of the operator's finger; any where between let a platinum thread touch the wire and lead to the ground, the connection is broken, the instruments cease to respond. It is possible for individuals and churches to break the circuit and to bear the responsibility of bringing discord in among brethren. We would add these to our practical suggestion in a former editorial as to our denominational need. Let us cultivate habits of self-examination, and seek therefrom a more earnest, thorough Evangelical life, free as far as may be from earthly tricks and ways; a life manifestly in the heavenlies even whilst its duties and its way is along the pilgrim path of earth. Let us jealously guard our pulpits and church rules. We shall then surely arrive at Congregational unity by Congregational life.

WHAT do our readers think of a distraint for tithes that took place last month at or near Sevenoaks in England? The amount of tithe claimed was 22l. 3s. 7d., and the expenses of the distraint came to 11l. 2s. 8d., more than fifty per cent. of the claim. Let us be thankful that the battle of State-Churchism has been fought and won in this country, or we know not what atrocities might have been perpetrated here. All honour to the noble men, most of them now at rest, who fought that battle.

THE death of Rev. Lachlan Taylor will be mourned by more than those in his immediate ecclesiastical circle. If he was a Methodist and loyal to his Church, he was a Christian, large-hearted and broad-souled. Few were the churches that, during his long residence in Toronto did not experience his readiness to help—his heartiness in helping. Genial, humorous, eloquent, he was always welcome wherever he spoke. Lately he has been afflicted with blindness, but that did not prevent his continuing in work—lecturing—for which he had great aptitude. In the midst of his labours he has been called to rest. We shall reverence his memory as that of a good, true, Christian man.

WHILE we are suffering from excessive drought on this side the Atlantic, and, as a result, great fears are entertained for root crops and stock, in England the trouble is again the unceasing fall of rain. Contrary to last July the weather there this year was of the finest, and raised high hopes of a somewhat compensating harvest, but harvest time has brought wet—nothing but wet, and many of the farmers are feeling as if this, the sixth or seventh year of bad harvests, is the final ounce that breaks the camel's back. We have no doubt that the result will be a great influx of the agricultural class into this country. Some will doubtless settle in our

great North-west. What are we doing to follow them there? More and more is the burden laid upon us to be up and doing.

A MONTH before the meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales to celebrate its jubilee, our Methodist brethren are holding what they term—shall we be forgiven if we say, somewhat grandiloquently—an "Ecumenical Council." However, "what's in a name," &c., and if it expresses their ideas we suppose that we have no right to find fault. The idea is to get together representatives from the various Methodist bodies throughout the world, Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian; Calvinistic and Armenian, and all the varying shades of doctrine and order, to confer together on matters which mutually concern them, to devise such means for prosecuting home and foreign work as will result in the greatest economy and efficiency; to promote fraternity, "to increase the moral and evangelical power of a common Methodism, and to secure the more speedy conversion of the world." A good idea, if it can be worked, and one from which we hope great practical results will follow. There cannot fail to be a broadening of sympathy and affection, and a more tolerant attitude towards each other. The Council may, it is thought, result in the union of some of the branches of the great Methodist family: if it does, it will have accomplished a good work, and will be amply repaid for the great labour and expense of this gathering. We shall publish some report of the meetings, and say a word or two on them in our next.

MURDER and suicide! What a terrible epidemic of these crimes appears to prevail. Scarcely a morning, as we open our daily paper, but some fresh horror is recorded. What is the cause? Can we in any way account for it? Is our unequalled system of public education, and our Sunday-school work, a failure? Is here a growing rejection of the claims of God and truth? We think not. Bad as the state of society is in some respects, we believe that it is steadily improving. May it not be that the very publicity given to these crimes tends to their growth? That a diseased hankering after being talked about is the cause. If we judge from the letters left by some suicides, and the talk of some murderers, this is not without effect. But there are two other causes which certainly contribute largely to the result. There is the habit of carrying weapons, a practice which, notwithstanding the enactment against it, does unquestionably prevail. Revolvers and knives on the person, loaded guns in houses, are the ready instruments of ungoverned passion, and many a death has arisen from the fatal facility of instruments. But there is a yet more deadly factor in this horrible work—whiskey. Maddened by drink, men rush to their own death, or slay any against whom their drunken fury is directed. We feel safe in saying that three-fourths of the murders and suicides of the past twelve months would not have taken place but for drink. What is our duty then? Plainly this, to do all in our power to drive the drink away from

the people. The professing Christian people have it in their power to put a stop to this traffic, and if it is continued it is upon them the responsibility rests. Let every one ask himself, Am I prepared to accept my share of the responsibility of one murder through drink? If I am not, my duty is clear.

THE following extract from the *Nonconformist*, interesting in itself, has a lesson for us. Our census has just been published, and as Congregationalists we must ask ourselves if we are fulfilling our responsibility as represented by the increase in our population:—

The London Congregational Union has issued an appeal setting forth "the responsibility of Congregationalists," as gathered from the figures furnished by the preliminary report of the census taken in April last. The population of Greater London, which corresponds with the Metropolitan Police area, and is the field covered by the operations of this Union, is now 4,764,312; of these 3,810,571 reside within the inner ring known as Smaller London. These figures show an increase in ten years of 878,671 in the larger and 560,311 in the smaller district. "To meet the wants of this new population," say the Committee, "Congregationalists should have provided religious accommodation during the last ten years for 63,703 persons, or some 70 chapels holding 900 each; that is one-eighth of the entire accommodation required by the new population. What they have actually done will be seen from what follows. In Inner London 7,500 additional sittings have been provided; in Outer Ring 8,885; in all for Greater London 16,385 during the last 10 years. In 14 districts, with an aggregate increase of 646,601, the accommodation provided has only been 17,265, or little more than one-third what it ought to have been—viz., 48,128. In 10 districts, representing an increase of 252,908, no provision has been made by Congregationalists. In four districts, where the increase has been 60,149, Congregational accommodation has decreased to the extent of 1,800. The foregoing facts relate only to districts in which the increase of population has been more than 10,000 during the decade. The increase in the districts north of the Thames has been 262,425, or about 12 per cent.; the increase south of the Thames, 297,886, or nearly 31 per cent. The percentage of increase in districts south of the Thames has, therefore, been nearly three times as great as for North London. The increased accommodation provided by Congregationalists has been only at the rate of 1¼ per cent for South London, and a little over 3 per cent. in the North."

Correspondence.

THE CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE OF B. N. A.

To the Editor of the Canadian Independent:

DEAR SIR,—Allow me now to lay before the churches a series of thoughts in reference to our College. Having taken pains to acquaint myself thoroughly with the facts, I will seek to be guided by them in the discussion of fundamental principles, and as in reference to our missions, so in regard to the College will strenuously avoid all personalities. Should I unintentionally mis-state any fact, the College authorities will do me a personal favour by putting me right.

First of all let me endeavour to destroy an impression, still somewhat prevalent in the West, in reference to the removal of the College from Toronto to Montreal. This event originated neither in dissatisfaction with the management of the Toronto friends, who had long and faith-