

Religious Intelligence.

"THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA."

The negotiations for the union of three Churches in Canada have attracted world-wide attention. Nearly all of the religious journals, and many of the secular ones, devote much space to special comment upon this theme. These comments are almost entirely congratulatory. The Toronto Globe has rendered important service by printing the expressions of opinion by men of light and leading in the three Churches in various parts of the country. It is a surprise to find how generally these are favorable expressions. Of course there are a few doubting Thomases, a few who magnify the differences and overlook the great harmonies, who advise us to be careful and go slow; but the overwhelming consensus is in favor, not of federation, but of organic union. We have received correspondence from various parts of the United States, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with reference to an account we wrote in the Christian Herald of this great movement, and all of these are of devout thanksgiving for the leading of divine providence. We quote from the Literary Digest some of the press comment on this subject:

"An extraordinary movement, in some respects, not paralleled for several centuries," is the phrase by which the New York Christian Advocate (Methodist) characterizes the movement toward union between the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist Churches in Canada. The report of the joint committee of these three denominations, just published, is described by the Toronto Globe as "the most remarkable ecclesiastical document issued in Protestant Christendom since the Reformation." All the indications seem to point to the ultimate consummation of this union, and the name tentatively chosen for the new church is "The United Church of Canada." The Interior (Presbyterian, Chicago) writes of the union planned as "the most radical and remarkable coalition of churches that has been proposed since the Reformation brought in the era of denominational divisions." Zion's Herald (Methodist), Boston, reminds us that Canada in the past has led the way in effecting denominational unions.

The Christian Advocate remarks editorially: "This experiment in each of its stages should receive the concentrated attention of the Protestantism of the world. If it succeed it will make feasible the only reasonable plan for the diminution of the number of distinct communions."

The Presbyterian (Toronto, Canada) thinks that the prospects are bright for a consummation of the proposed union. It says: "There will be no unseemly haste; in the nature of things there cannot be. It will take some little time to prepare the basis and have it pronounced upon ultimately by the body of the people. Agreement as to the things that may be given up, and the things that shall remain, will not come in a moment, but it will come. There is an organizing power of its own in a great, structural, co-ordinating movement like this."

The Presbyterian Banner (Pittsburg, Pa.) comments as follows: "We would hardly think a union of these three Churches possible in this country, but it appears to be possible only a few miles to the north of us, and it is the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes. The Spirit of the Lord, however, is not restricted by geographical boundaries and red and blue lines on the map, and what the Spirit can do there He may do here."

The Methodists in Canada number 916,659, the Presbyterians 842,016, and the Congregationalists 28,000. Thus, as The Church Standard (Protestant Episcopal, Philadelphia) points out, the new Church will enter upon its work with a membership of 1,786,676, "nearly one-third of the population of the whole of Canada."

DIVERSITY OF CHURCHES.

Those who hold that the zeal of the Churches is promoted by a diversity of denominations would find much satisfying matter upon which to ruminate, in the church statistics for 1905, as published by the Christian Advocate, New York. These statistics are for the United States only, but within its boundaries we find 134 distinct denominations, among them seventeen divisions of the Methodist Church, thirteen kinds of Baptists, and twelve varieties of Presbyterianism.