

## THIRTY THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED FROM LAST WEEK

### Debate on Church Union.

On the court resuming, Rev. Dr. Duval conveyed to the assembly the cordial greetings of the city of Winnipeg. He had a formal motion to make, to the effect that the meeting of the assembly in 1908 be held in Knox church, Winnipeg, and that a date be suggested for the meeting.

Rev. Dr. Robert Campbell, the moderator, suggested the first Wednesday in June, his motion being seconded and carried.

Rev. Principal Patrick then rose and ran through the earlier phases of the movement tending towards union, pointing out that the project had originated with the Presbyterians, who were followed by the Methodists. In 1899 the Presbyterians, recognizing the waste of men and money entailed by present divisions, had approached the Methodists with a view to union.

After sketching the proceedings which had led to the appointment of five committees and to the apportionment of their work, Rev. Principal Patrick stated that the results of their labors had been submitted in a report to the presbyteries and congregations. This brought the negotiations to the close of the last assembly.

During the last year the scope of negotiations had been widened and the Anglican Church and the Baptists had been invited to co-operate in the movement for the formation of a united Protestant Church in Canada.

Principal Patrick spoke of the friendly spirit which existed between the negotiating churches and of the letters which had been sent to the leading prelates of the Church of England and to the Baptist churches. This letter had put in the foreground the scheme of a United Evangelical Protestant Church in Canada. The recipients of the letters sent cordial replies. The brethren of the Baptist Union in the Maritime Provinces stated to the committee on union that the time for organic union had not arrived, but they were willing that a committee should deliberate on the question of federal union, which might lead to organic union. A committee had been appointed in compliance with the request of the Baptists.

### Anglican Church Attitude.

As regards the Anglican Church, the position was thus: The attitude of the bishops was friendly and an endeavor had been made that delegates of the Anglican Church should meet the union committee last September. It was found to be impossible, owing to the constitution of the Anglican Church, which holds its synods once in three years, and will next meet in the autumn of 1908. Regrets at the impossibility of a meeting had been expressed by, among others, the Bishop of Quebec, the official head of the Anglican committee on church union, and by the Huron Synod.

Rev. Principal Patrick then referred to a paper on church union by Bishop Carmichael, whose purpose, said the Principal, had been to make plain the points of agreement and disagreement between the churches. He had shown that there were seven points on which the divided churches were practically at one. Nine other points were mentioned on which opinions differed, but which admitted of possible reconciliation.

Rev. Principal Patrick then dwelt on the report of the sub-committee on doctrine, which showed that the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational

churches are united on nineteen important points. In the preface to the report the belief of the three churches is stated in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary source and ultimate standard of Christian faith and life. Yet, five years ago, said Principal Patrick, if anyone had stated that the Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists could agree on doctrines, he would have been thought a utopian dreamer. The unexpected had come to pass. There nineteen articles included the essential verities of the Catholic faith. Passing from a defence of creed as a vital component of life and morality, Rev. Principal Patrick remarked that the greatest weakness of the Presbyterian system was its lack of executive. The powers of the presiding officer had yet to come. "If union take place," said Rev. Principal Patrick, "it will not bring violent change. The local usage of churches will remain." The principle of the eldership had been accepted by the Methodists and Congregationalists. The presbytery would be unchanged, except that ordination would be referred to a higher court. With regard to the general assembly it was proposed that they should meet once in two years.

### Financial Results of Union.

In regard to the report on administration, Rev. Principal Patrick declared that union leading to an amalgamation of congregations, would render possible a minimum salary of \$1,000 a year for pastors. It would have far-reaching results on the mission fields.

Rev. Principal Gordon, of Queen's, then declared that though difference of opinion might exist in the assembly as to what Christ said of unity there could be no doubt as to Paul's words in reference to "not dividing the body of Christ." Paul was dealing with cleavages which were greater than the differences of to-day. Yet the apostle pleaded that the idea of church union should be so comprehensive as to merge these differences. Principal Gordon referred with gratification to the fact that Principal Patrick's report made it clear that during the last few years Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists had been drawn closer together. The process of assimilation and approximation taking place had been such that when the union committee met they had found the mutual resemblances much greater than they had expected. And the cause? "Is it not the case that we have all been seeking a wider truth? The Calvinist of to-day recognizes that in Arminianism there is a great truth, which he must embody in his own doctrine, while the follower of Arminius equally recognized that there were tenets of Calvinism which he must accept. The Calvinist of old days whispered of free will and put the trumpet to his lips when he spoke of the sovereignty of God." From the Congregationalists had come a whole some spirit of liberty. The meeting of the joint committee on union had resulted in increased approximations.

### Briefer Creed Required.

"The Presbyterian Church in Canada," continued Principal Gordon, "desires a revised and briefer statement of her creed. It will not be long before we shall be called to place before the people a briefer statement than the

Confession of Faith. We should be rejoiced if the Anglican Church and the Baptists join us in union. There is so much to gain both for us and them, and, through our mutual union, for the whole country. Some people have spoken of what we Presbyterians have to lose by union, claiming that we have a higher standard of ministry and a higher type of membership. I will not challenge their assertion that the Presbyterian Church in Canada has had a highly educated clergy. But what a price we have paid for it by the privilege. It has been bought at the price of missing extensive evangelization. We have had a high type of membership, and we have paid for it by failure to go down to the levels of the poor and uneducated. When I think of the work the Salvation Army is doing today I do not feel inclined to be proud of our Presbyterian respectability. (Applause). The Church of Christ is not a mutual admiration society, but a hospital for sinners, following the example of her Master, who was the friend of publicans and sinners. There is laid on our hand an opportunity for which the Church should be grateful. We are the highway between the old and new world and the nations of the East. They are marking our progress. What are we doing ecclesiastically? What is our message to the world? Can it be that Canada before any other nation will have the glory of presenting that approximation to a united Christendom which the present movement seems to offer." (Applause).

### The Other Side Speaks Out.

Rev. John Mackay, of Crescent street church, then rose with an amendment to the adoption of the union committee's report. The union committee, he remarked, appeared to be acting under the impression that the whole Presbyterian Church in Canada was behind it. That assumption was untrue. There were many opposed to the project. The first necessary factor in the promotion of such union was the people's cordial wish for its accomplishment. "I went across to Great Britain last year and read an account to the effect that the Presbyterian Church in Canada had expressed itself in favor of such union. It has done nothing of the kind."

Taking issue with the Queen's Principal, Rev. Mr. Mackay declared that there was, even in the earliest days of Christianity, no one type of church. The idea came with the Church of Rome, and it was the survival of the sacerdotal spirit that raised this bogey of union. Rev. Mr. Mackay deprecated the whole discussion on union as a waste of time, bound to prove fruitless. Our Lord left no definite statement as to the form His Church should take. But He gave men common sense and reason and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and sent them forth into the world to preach, not a church, but a Person. And they succeeded. "The weight of ecclesiasticism is fatal to the spiritual life. The Church demands diversified expression. Germany, in her colonizing schemes had endeavored to plant a little Germany in every colony, and had failed. Great Britain, on the other hand, had followed a policy which made her colonies free nations, each expressing itself in its own peculiar way. What is the bond of union? Not uniformity. Our Lord Himself came into the world to found an empire in which there should be the fullest liberty of expression." The Presbyterian Church had stood forth in alienable right for individual judgment. Every man throughout the Church should be encouraged to express his convictions. "I believe we are going to lose much if we force on this question of union in the next few years. If the Presbyterian and Methodist bodies keep their iden-