

## Church Unity.

BY REV. THOMAS MATTRESS.

Though the corporate union of Christendom were effected to-morrow we would still be as far as ever from real unity. The quibblers about secondary matters would still quibble and tend to break away; the superficial would still float upon the surface looking for offence, and taking it when none is offered. Something more real than corporate union is what the hearts of good people are fixed on; something of which corporate union, when it becomes a fact, will be but the index; and that something is real unity of sympathy and purpose.

Nor are the hearts of these good people being entirely disappointed. They are not going hungry in their longing. Their fervent prayers are not unanswered quite. There is more co-operation to-day by far than there was ten years ago. Mutual regard is on the increase between Christian bodies. But we want more of the same good thing. We shall have it too, for it is a good thing, and tends to perpetuate itself. Meanwhile, before corporate union of the Church can be effected, it must first appear to the great body of Christians that we are now essentially one, like a great army marshalled for aggressive warfare, which, though it be made up of right wing and left wing, rear guard, advance column, and auxiliaries, is one.

There is nothing so fruitful of difference—and therefore also of division—as the defending of unscriptural positions, whether doctrinal or pertaining to Church government. Wherefore, let it be the aim of the Church in all her several branches to eliminate the unscriptural. When this is done (and we believe it is in progress), we shall see that beautiful thing we long for and are as yet to blind to see.

It is not reasonable to expect that men will ever think precisely alike or be willing to be fitted with exactly the same mould in matters religious, any more than in the field of literature or of science. There are differences of temperament among men, differences of mental calibre, and also of æsthetic caste. Moreover, these differences are very great sometimes, so great, indeed, that it would be difficult to conceive of an English Methodist for example, let us say of the Yorkshire type, thinking as a Scotch Presbyterian does, or conforming to the same usage. We do not hesitate to say that in our belief the different forms of Church government and shades of doctrine have, these many generations, in the providence of God, served a good purpose. But swaddling clothes are a mere accident of life and ought not to be worn beyond the time when they have served their purpose. Let us be free that we may be strong.

We have made reference to the holding of positions that are unscriptural. The word "unscriptural" seems not always to be rightly understood. That which contradicts Scripture, or which runs counter to the spirit of Scripture is unscriptural. In this case the term cannot be qualified. But the details of Church government, as practised by one branch or another of the Church, are not necessarily unscriptural because they do not find explicit authority in the Scriptures. There is room, and let us not be impatient with those who think there is good reason too, for variety in form of service and in detail of government. This variety does not in itself interfere with real unity, at least not necessarily.

On a recent Saturday afternoon and on the following Monday morning there might have been seen aboard a train on one of our Canadian roads and in the same coach three gentlemen of the cloth—a minister, a clergyman and a priest. They were going from home to neighboring parishes and returning. We could easily, and without doing violence to good neighborliness or facts, imagine them engaged in the following abbreviated conversation:

P.—"I am ordained."

C.—"I, too, have received ordination."

M.—"I also have been ordained."

P.—"But my ordination is apostolic. I do not recognize your ordination as valid."

M.—"I am sorry for you and sorry for the cause we all three represent. You do not recognize me as being in holy orders and so having authority to dispense the sacraments or pronounce the apostolic benediction. I can and do recognize the validity of your ordination and the authority of your ministry, although scholarship in New Testament Greek is against your form of Church government."

P.—"We are in full accord regarding the purity of public morals and may cooperate in effecting desirable moral reform; but, I don't regard either of you as having received valid or authoritative ordination. I have my authority from Saint Peter."

On Sunday they all three preached to strangers. They all three preached Christ crucified, the Saviour and Lord of men. They preached the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of

men in Christ. O for recognition of the unity that is Till then away with corporate union.

There might be union of certain bodies of Christians that are now entirely separate in organization, and we would be glad to see it, if it could be attained to the advantage of all. But no union can ever be permanent that is not formed on a Scriptural basis both of government and doctrine. It would doubtless be greatly beneficial to all concerned to make a very close study of Pauline teaching and methods.

The occupation of territory, as the Christian world is now constituted, if wisely regulated might easily be made a very valuable means to the coveted end. The uncharity of intruding and the sin of overcrowding communities with churches has long been one of the chief causes of denominational animosities. The Congregational Church was the first to occupy the ground in the New England States, the Methodist Church in Japan, and the English Church in British Columbia. In countries such as these, respectively, the several Churches should have precedence. In districts and localities that are already fully occupied and where peace prevails among the people in the Church, although formerly they belonged to different communions, it has over and over again proven detrimental to the cause of truth and the spirit of brotherly love that other denominations have sought a foothold. When the population has grown so that there are Presbyterians enough to form a fairly strong congregation in a locality where the Methodist Church, let us say, has been the foster Church, let it be formed if this can be done without material hurt to the Church hitherto supported. Many a thriving mission has been destroyed for years to come in localities where this Church or that found the people at the first hungry for the Gospel to be preached to them, all by the reckless intrusion of a representative of some other Church. The saddest part of the story, too, has often been that the intruder has retired after finding his cause a very weak one, leaving discord and division where he found peace and harmony. There was unity before. It is a question now whether there will be unity again for generations. Much less will 'here be union. A self-aggrandizing spirit defeats the good end in view, by blocking the way so that good can not be accomplished.

We dearly love the Church that, upon the occasion of the observance of the Lord's Supper, extends the invitation to participate to all present who have a personal, saving faith in Christ Jesus, irrespective of their denomination preference; and we think that every Church that professes to desire church union or considers that union would be a good thing should do as much, "for we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."—1 Cor. x. 17.

There will scarcely be found a church that does not sing Barry Gould's hymn "Onward Christian Soldier," in which the line occurs: "We are not divided, all one body we." Do we believe what we sing?

## CANADIAN PULPIT.

No. 68.

## The Unbridled Tongue.

SERMON PREACHED AT LUCKNOW BY REV. ANGUS MACKAY.

TEXT: "If any man among you seem to be religious and bridlcth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart this man's religion is vain."—Jas. i. 26.



REV. ANGUS MACKAY.

A person may appear to be converted, he may think that he is a true Christian, and yet he may be deceiving himself. He is certainly deceiving himself if he does not bridle his tongue, so I wish to speak to the unbridled tongue, and in doing so

I. We will first consider how the unbridled tongue manifests itself. It does so in various ways.

(1) By speaking too much, or in places where our duty is to be silent.

1 "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise." 2 "A fool uttereth all his mind," 3 "but he that hath knowledge spareth his words." Inquisitiveness often manifests an empty head and a proud conceited heart; so it is well to heed the proverb,—

"Be checked for silence but never taxed for speech," also God's word,

4 "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God

will hear the voice of the righteous, but he that is foolish will not be heard."—Ps. cxlviii. 1. 5 "The tongue of the righteous is as silver, and the lips of the righteous are as coral. The tongue of the wicked is as a thorn, and the lips of the wicked are as a thorn. The tongue of the righteous is as a thorn, and the lips of the righteous are as a thorn. The tongue of the wicked is as a thorn, and the lips of the wicked are as a thorn."—Ps. cxlviii. 1.