

Mr. Whitcomb, the first member of the new order, was preparing for the ministry in the General Theological Seminary, New York, when he became convinced that he would be more useful as a Lay worker. His vows must be renewed yearly.

UNITY—A TERM MISUNDERSTOOD.

[From Convention Address of Bishop Sessums, Louisiana.]

The symposium held by many of our Bishops under the bland and impartial ægis of the *Independent*, touching ministerial reciprocity in the matter of preaching, does not appear very profoundly to have welcomed the suggestion that other schools of prophets should take up their burden from our pulpits. Without assuming to attempt what others have not achieved, and hoping to avoid the extreme of either sentimentalism or ecclesiasticism, one might adventure a few observations on the fact that there is a misunderstanding touching the term unity; an observation by no means original, yet a fact which is still yawning and waiting to be bridged. One view declares unity to be fraternal toleration, to be exercised between Christians as each soul and each system works an independent way to salvation; a unity, so-called, of spirit, purpose, feeling; an inward unity and an outward variety.

The other view declares that it is an outward organization working toward a social salvation; constituting a visible unity in a world of discord; uniting men in actual work and effort to construct a kingdom of love in this world, while leaving to them widest liberties of theory and speculation; insuring a social expression of the brotherhood that is reared upon the Fatherhood of God. It is the difference between philosophy and sociology. The world's want is not theoretical sentiment, or a unity which permits any amount of belief that another soul may be eternally lost in the hereafter, and any amount of indifference to it here; but that practical unity which includes mankind in common fate here and hereafter.

The description of Christian unity by the term "organic" tends to be misleading, especially when "organic" is identified with spiritual. The implication is that vague invisible agreements are alone of essential value; while body, form, organization are of necessity mechanical and worthless. This conception is as inadequate in religion as in philosophy. The human body binds man to inevitable duties, however far the vagaries of his soul may bear him. Formal law yokes the soul to its destined ideal till growth shall enable its realization. Throughout the universe the visible expression is both sign and means of the invisible fact. Formal, co-operative unity in the Church of Christ is the educational means as well as the practical goal of spiritual unity, and this temporal co-operation is only to be secured by a unity of ministry.

The Christian Church was organized as an army, a society, a kingdom, to achieve a certain work; a work to be protected from friction, division and failure, by a unity of organization which would display no outward variations save those of language. When it is declared that this one ministry should be the "Apostolic," that assertion justifies itself, not merely on the ground of literal obedience to history, nor on that of extreme ecclesiastical theories, but by its meaning and reasonableness.

That ministry best illustrates the ideal and duty of the Christian body as a society true to Christ, by descending from the founder instead of ascending from the system; best adjusts the freedom of Christians to the responsibility of a Mission; best attests the nature of the religion,

not only as an evolution, but as a revelation; not only as an operation of man's dependence, but also of God's independence; best witnesses to the purpose of the Gospel, as the delivery of the hope of universal redemption, based on God's love touching men actually through Christ and through Christians; best protects the Gospel from degradation into an individual or tribal salvation.

Ministerial reciprocity can only do harm if it be taken to mean that a visible difference of faith and work is identical with unity; that schools of philosophy are the same as an organized community of love; that the Church signifies innumerable bodies seeking some intangible, future ultimate greater than unity, instead of a present and progressive social state whose very end and blessedness consist in a unity which does not contradict itself within or without.

Without discussing the probabilities as to whether other Christian ministers would accept such invitations from our communion, or whether they would reciprocate them, the function of preaching need not be made to exhaust the meaning of the ministry, and it might be possible to reserve ministers to a fundamental truth, and still open a way to such interchange. But the probabilities would be against any helpful result; as it is likely that such superficial contacts would be taken for the millennium; that real differences would be increasingly sunk from view, and a united devotion to a real essence in Christianity be the longer postponed. If Christian ministers could by any influence, be brought into touch in order to understand their actual divergencies, instead of to minimize their own platforms and felicitate one another upon generalities of concord it might truly be possible to approximate nearer to unity. If Christian teachers could be constrained to probe into one another, apart from their congregations, until the whole ground of division was laid bare, reconstruction would be inevitable, recognitions universal and reunion not long delayed.

METHODISM IN IRELAND.

[From the Southern Cross Port Elizabeth, South Africa.]

An Act was passed on July 13th, 1871, to regulate the Primitive Methodists of Ireland. The schedule of principles referred to in this Act was signed on behalf of the Irish Conference in 1870 by its duly qualified representatives, and it appears in a Blue Book presented to the Imperial Parliament in 1883. We give some extracts from this Blue Book which show that the Irish Methodists have officially determined to maintain and uphold the principles of John Wesley which the English and American Methodists have officially thrown over.

The Irish Methodists do not call their society a church, nor do they allow their preachers to administer Sacraments. They represent the original tradition of Wesleyan Methodism as a religious society auxiliary to the Church of England and in no way separated from it. The extracts we quote from the Blue Book are doubly valuable, as shewing that the true traditions left by John Wesley are not only acceptable and acted upon, but legally recognised in the Act of Parliament dealing with the property of the Irish Conference. We hope the *South African Methodist* will note these extracts and measure the vast difference between the true and loyal Wesleyanism of the Irish Conference and the spurious and modern organisation of English Methodism, which has no moral right to use the name or traditions of Wesleyanism at all.

Blue Book C. 3760, of 1883, pages, 241 and 242.

Q. 2. What is the design of the Methodist Society?

A. It is thus expressed by Mr. Wesley: "A body of people who, being of no sect or party, are friends to all parties and endeavour to forward all in heart religion in the knowledge and love of God and man."

Q. 3. In what point of view, then, does the Methodist Society consider itself?

A. Not as an independent church, nor its preachers as independent ministers; preachers and people conjointly constitute a purely religious society to build each other up; to enjoy the blessings of Christian fellowship, and to promote, by precept and example, the knowledge and practice of vital godliness.

Q. 4. Does this imply a distinct and separate communion in celebrating the two Christian Ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

A. By no means; as the members of the Methodist Society may belong to external visible churches established under different forms, each member is left at perfect liberty to partake of those ordinances in the communion to which he or she respectively belongs.

Q. 5. Does not the Methodist Society profess to belong to the Church of England?

A. Yes, as a body; for they originally emanated from the Church of England and the Rev. John Wesley, the venerable founder of the Connection, made a declaration of similar import within less than a year preceding his decease, viz.: "I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it."

Q. 19. Did Mr. Wesley establish a Conference?

A. He did; a conference of preachers directed by himself, received and sent out according to the principles maintained by him in his exposition of Heb. v., 4.

Q. 20. Why do we separate from the majority of the Conference, claiming to be the successors of that established by Mr. Wesley?

A. Because they have changed the discipline established by Mr. Wesley. Not content with the honourable office of being preachers of the gospel simply, they have assumed to themselves the priestly office, by administering the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, without appointment or ordination, against Mr. Wesley's express opinion on the subject.

Q. 21. Has it not been urged that Mr. Wesley himself ordained some teachers to administer the ordinances, and has not this been resorted to as an apology by the preachers for their late innovation?

A. Supposing it to be true that Mr. Wesley was prevailed upon to select for such an appointment, it is the fullest confirmation that his decided opinion was against the administration of the ordinances by the preachers generally; therefore this attempt to shelter themselves under the sanction of Mr. Wesley's authority is perfectly nugatory, and carries its own refutation.

Q. 22. In consequence of the loose principles of discipline set afloat in supporting the late innovation, the very great irregularity has been maintained by some of the right of a private celebration of the ordinances amongst themselves; what is our opinion of such practices?

A. We consider the principle as calculated to produce confusion in the Church of God, and the practice to bring the ordinances into contempt; we therefore judge that persons concerned in such irregular administration shall be excluded from our society.

This document was signed by Adam Averill, of Dublin, and Samuel Moorhead, of Clones, as the official representatives of the Conference. It is extremely valuable as shewing that Irish Methodism in 1870 was true to Mr. Wesley's ideas, and as a landmark to shew how far English Methodism has drifted away in its organisation and principles from the principles of its founder.