

Presbyterian General Assembly

Great Debate on Union.

FIFTH DAY.

London, June 10.—In the Assembly, this morning, Principal Patrick moved the resolution of which he had given notice, approving the report on Church union, and inviting the Anglican and Baptist Churches to take part in the subsequent negotiations. He had never for a moment wavered in the conviction that they were following the clearest indications of Divine Providence. Time, he ventured to remind them, was the essence of the question. It could not be despatched in a few months. They had been blamed by some for making less progress than was expected, but progress was to be measured by ultimate results. There was nothing final or ultimate in the report, the documents being purely provisional and having still to be scrutinized by the Joint Committee. The report on doctrine represented a substantial measure of unanimity on all the articles of the Christian faith. The Methodist committee had suggested very few changes. Both churches were evangelical and he had found as much evangelical Arminianism in the Presbyterian Church as in the Methodist. He would not say it was conscious and deliberate, but it was there. He had no hesitation in saying that from a catholic and Church point of view the new document was more in accord with the doctrine of the New Testament than the Confession of Faith, and therefore more in harmony with Christian experience. He commended also the simplicity, directness and warmth of the language used. It represented Scripture in breadth and fullness, and affirmed truth as greater than any system of philosophy or ideology. In the report the ministry, the pastorate, the training of students and the fund were dealt with. Questions to be answered at ordination were not to be repeated, one assurance from an honest man being sufficient. The clause, as he understood it, had been introduced to suit men of sensitive consciences making the declaration, and not in order to tolerate laxity of sentiment, and would be omitted if desired. In policy much was yet to be done. As to administration, the Methodists had expressed themselves in gratifying terms about the eldership and would like to retain the functions of the office, if not the name. In connection with provision for ministers he reminded them of Matthew Henry's phrase, "A scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry."

A People's Question.

Nothing in any of the reports would prevent the prosecution of the endeavor for union. But from first to last the question must be a people's question. At this stage it was their duty to inform and teach the people. They were not expecting a judgment even from the Assembly. What an incompetent committee they would be to ask judgment on results not yet passed upon. They had given the fullest press publicity to all the proceedings, so that the whole Church should know what they were doing, and the fullest opportunity for consideration would be given. They must know, in the amplest manner, the mind of the Church. He wished to say that the clause inviting Anglican and Baptist Churches to the negotiations had been framed independently the day before the visit of the Bishop of Huron. They cherished the ideal of one national Protestant Church, and behind the Methodist body was the same ideal. The Bishop's address was a noble challenge, and he wanted no great Protestant Church left out of the conference. The work of the committee was the most arduous enterprise any body of Protestants had before

it since the Reformation. The title of the spirit of union was rising steadily in all hearts. He believed that it was the spirit of God. Inquiries had come from all quarters. What could be done in Canada, it was thought, could be done in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and could not fail of influence on Scotland. Nothing, he was sure, would be said but from the most honorable motive, and nothing but the most generous interpretation would be placed on any criticism offered.

Rev. Dr. Armstrong seconded the motion. The tide of democracy had set in and the people, he said, would assert their views in the matter.

Reaction Since Last Year.

Rev. John MacKay, Montreal, moved in amendment that "the report be received with an expression of satisfaction in the fraternal and Christian spirit with which the negotiations had been conducted, but that, after consideration of the conclusions to which the committee had come, the Assembly was constrained to declare, and hereby do declare, that the proposed union would not in their judgment be in the best interest of the Presbyterian Church in particular, nor of Christian life and work in Canada in general, and, therefore, request that any further negotiations may be in the line of federal or co-operative union." No man had a right to say that the Lord's Prayer indicated that there should be one Church. The whole talk was the outgrowth and survival of the old Catholic conception. He maintained that the committee had not done what it had been appointed for, which was to gather statistics showing the extent of the evils complained of. He cared more about the production of Christian character than of a big Church, which could go to Ottawa and ask the government for all that the Roman Catholics got. It would be a supreme sacrifice, he asserted, for him to go into a Church composed of three Churches now negotiating. The great west as a whole did not want union. Competition was the best thing for them, and it was an advantage to have two or three men working in the western towns.

Rev. D. Campbell, Kamloops, seconded the amendment. So far as he knew, there was no possibility of carrying the Church unanimously for union. There had been a reaction against it since last year.

Principal Falconer spoke in strong support of Dr. Patrick's motion. Mr. MacKay's amendment, said Dr. Falconer, implied the questions: Was the union desirable? Was it feasible? The sense of the amendment was that the union was desirable. No scholar would dream of saying we must return to the conditions of the Apostolic age. Their Master had spoken of the Holy Spirit that would lead them into all truth. Co-operation meant brotherhood, and that meant love, a word created by Christianity. The use of the word in the amendment admitted the desirability of union. It was their duty to prove if union were feasible. From the commencement he had put it in the forefront that it would be utter madness to go forward to a union that did not carry the whole Church with it. It was absurd to think that the Assembly could force its will on the people. They must give the people their chance. The amendment would dictate to the people that they cannot have union, and would cast the movement out of the sphere of practical politics. Let the people know the situation and they would say whether further ac-

tion was to be taken. These young men seemed to hesitate because they could not see every step in the future. They could not tell what the Spirit of God would do with a people like those of Canada. There might be a vitality and power in the nation such as history had not yet revealed. The Spirit of Christianity took shape under different conditions than these of today. Were the conditions of the past to be stamped upon them? They were not Scotch or Irish; they were a new people. It seemed that the older peoples had such a contentment with things as they are they had no desire to do better. No one loved Presbyterianism better than he, nor with better right, but above the denomination was the living body of Christ. If they ceased in their efforts they went back to rivalry, and would be to a certain extent alien from the spirit of the Master.

Rev. W. J. Clark, of London, also thought the amendment a piece of ecclesiastical tyranny. The people were more inclined than they to be swayed by prejudice. It was their duty to educate them out of that. He had gone to the committee prejudiced against union, but as he sat and listened he saw the finger of God at work. Those who opposed it might well pause lest haply they be found to fight against God.

The hour of adjournment having been reached, the discussion will be continued in the morning, Principal MacLaren having the floor.

An Important Fund.

On resuming the aged and infirm ministers' fund report was presented by J. K. Macdonald, who expressed the hope that the committee would not rest until a pension for forty years' service of \$500 had been provided. He anticipated the breaking down of many men before the age of 70 would result from the hard work to be done in the west, and recommended that provision be made by the accumulation of a large capital fund. The report stated that all the annuities had been paid the full amount called for by the rules. Taking the eastern and western branches together, the debt had increased \$842.27, though that in the west had been reduced \$309.90. The debt against the ordinary fund was \$3,739.51. The increase in the givings, particularly in the western section, had been marked. In the west this increase had been \$3,049.02 and in the east \$115.98. Interest on \$1,400.17 over last year, and there had also been an increase of \$1,010.23 in the ministers' rates, indicating that ministers were seeking connection with the fund. In the west the disbursements had amounted to \$31,825.23 and in the east \$7,670.93.

The capital account for assets amounted to \$29,355.50. The agent for the fund, Rev. A. H. Scott, of Perth, had met with encouraging success in his work. In all 123 aged ministers had received the benefit of the fund. An appeal for sympathy in aid of the help for these ex-servants of the Church was also made. The report, including the recommendations of the committee and the continuation of Rev. A. H. Scott, Perth, as special agent for the fund, was adopted.

On motion of Messrs. J. K. Macdonald and Walter Paul, the sum of \$200 was voted to the ex-Moderator, and a like sum to the present Moderator towards travelling expenses incurred in attending frequent and various functions.

Sabbath Observance.

Mr. John A. Paterson, K.C., moved the adoption of the report on Sabbath observance and legislation.

Rev. J. G. Shearer of the Lord's Day Alliance stated that it would take generations to estimate the value to the country of the Lord's Day Act, about to be passed. Under it no Sunday excursions, saloons, theatres, professional sports, fishing, hunting, shooting, bathing or amusements of any kind would be allowed, and no Sunday papers, either domestic or