

## The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, OCT. 27, 1881.

### THE MEETING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

Manchester seems thoroughly aroused to extend an almost boundless hospitality to the Union delegates. No easy matter to house and care for fifteen hundred strangers, yet it is being done, and the great city apparently unconscious of the effort. Depositing my luggage at the railway station, accompanied by a friend I wended my way to the Roby Chapel, a genuine meeting-house of the past generation, plain, commodious, back from the street, differing, however, from many in this, that it appears to have had a graveyard around, which is now paved over, and on one end of which have been erected school premises. Up one storey to the extemporized "cloak room,"—"such a getting up stairs,"—some few coming down, a stream running up; coats, umbrellas, satchels, leather bags, inquiries where to go, and a gentlemanly usher at the top answering every question with calm, kind civility, though the same query had been repeated a hundred times. On this flat were class-rooms, not with sliding doors opening all into one, but rooms very like those on either side of a hotel upstairs hall. The benches, as we peeped in, were covered with what every one coming up had had in their hands, a reduplicated array of bags, etc., etc., laid out in rows. There were greetings and inquiries, and, as in my own case, gazings around as one zig-zagged through, if perchance any familiar face would meet the eye. Another storey, up which another stream, minus carpet bags, was rushing, up we went. Some young men patiently were mounting also, laden with tea cups, bread and butter, and tea. Then a large room, such a babel of tongues, though not a woman was present, cheery, not boisterous laughter, standing, sitting, tea cup in hand, bread and butter too. It seemed as if the whole fifteen hundred were there, and still they came. In the Roby Chapel that evening a Thanksgiving Service was held, and a Temperance meeting in Cavendish Chapel, both of which were crowded and enthusiastic, but which we did not attend, very glad to seek our home.

Tuesday morning, punctually at 9:30, the Jubilee Meeting formally opened with praise, Scripture and prayer. Then followed the chairman's address, which I shall en-

deavour to notice. A few preliminary words regarding it. Delivered with energy and pathos, no report can reproduce the power, though the words under the printer's hand have assumed the permanent form. Eye undimmed and force unabated would seem to mark Dr. Allon during the hour and half of delivery, and the vast audience of five thousand in the Free Trade Hall of Manchester wearied not to the end. Masterly, pointed, bold and true may be recorded regarding it.

The subject was "The Church of the Future." The opening sentences, "The free course of the Spirit is grievously hindered by vindications of its embodiment. To men intent upon spiritual purposes it is irritating and humiliating to have to expend time and energies in contentions for the validity of mere organization—yet great principles are often determined by very subordinate conditions." As, however, Church order formed the subject of the address in May last, this address kept the spiritual life more especially in view. Dr. Allon first insisted upon the "fundamental distinction between Divine ordination and human circumstance—the former determining principles, the latter expediencies." Principles change not, expediencies do; forms of church life are of the latter order, shaped sometimes by the exigencies of polemical warfare, the requirements of special circumstances, often to be left behind that we may press on for those things before. Things hallowed by the past must be repudiated by the future, as "the memorial serpent of brass which at one time enshrined in the very ark of God for the nourishment of pious feeling, perverted at another time had to be designated Nehushtan, and ruthlessly destroyed."

We were warned, however, against imagining that form was nothing. "So far as we know, pure spirit cannot exist either in life or in thought. Some body must be prepared for it. Some medium of communication is essential to it. Thought must have material and inspiration and form of expression, therefore whilst keeping before men the true, lofty and spiritual ideal, we must not starve the spiritual by disallowing the proper ministry of the material, which must always be a question of degree and adjustment concerning which different answers will be given by different men and different ages; our part being to adjust in our own day, according to the lights we have, ever aiming at the more spiritual still."

In the light of these principles certain prognostics were ventured regarding future church developments, if these commend themselves as true, we had better set our house in order by them, for we can do nothing against the truth. And first, we may confidently conclude that the Church of the future will be that which in theological teaching and religious nurture the most fully provides for the spiritual necessities of men. There must be a theology, we must have a *theologia*. True, knowledge is not life, but it is the nutriment of life, and upon its quality life depends. Here rationalism may be judged as compared with the forces of Evangelical life: "Where is the rationalistic church to be found that is either historic, powerful, or missionary?" whilst the Evangelical spirit evokes

life, inspires with a pitiful, self-sacrificing, and aggressive zeal. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you."

Two elements of vital power in Evangelical belief are given: The profound moral righteousness of its theory of forgiveness, which does not climb to God's favour over prostrate principles of righteousness, and its perfect ethics, and that not only in its ideal, but in its dynamic force, for Christ gives life.

A second venture regarding the Church of the future is that the future will be with the Church that the most fully recognizes the prerogatives and responsibilities of the individual in his relation to the great spiritual whole. The true gospel church does not crush out the individual as Rome and sacerdotalism does. The perfect church grows upward from the perfection of its individual members, and in this individual restoration rather than in the orthodoxy of its creed or in the form of its polity the strength of a church consists. Each man must give account of himself to God.

Thus, too, the church of the future will be that which requires and obtains service not only from its officials and organizations, but also from its entire membership. A hive of workers, living, loving. True to these considerations the churches of our order have nothing to fear, "let us but apprehend all truth in its spirit, not in its letter, present it to men and insist upon its spiritual embodiment in a free religious life, they who wield these spiritual forces are invincible."

Such is but a bare outline of this noble discourse, which, published now in separate form, will repay not only perusal, but careful study. We would record a few impressions regarding some of its incidentals. In combating that form of teaching that would sacrifice all form, even the Bible and Christ Himself, to the spiritual, in which all else is to be swallowed up, reference was made to Dr. James Martineau. His views were opposed, but a noble tribute was paid to his memory, a bold catholicity which carried the sympathy of the vast audience present. "Personally," said Dr. Allon, "I cannot refer to this great thinker without a respectful tribute to the literary beauty, religious sincerity, and spiritual sensibility that characterize him." Christianity is broader than its name; other sheep the Shepherd has, not of this fold.

In such men as Dr. Allon and Dr. Stoughton, to whom we shall have occasion hereafter to refer, we also noted how age does not necessarily bring weakness either of intellect or expression, no, nor blindness to the state of things as they are to-day. In both these men, and in others we might mention, the memories of the past only seem to make them more keenly in sympathy with the issues of to-day; which, if they do not meet with the impetuosity of youth, they do meet with life's accumulated experience and power. An active life of fifty years may be recalled by men still erect in manly vigour and freshness. Many men of over threescore were there, and yet the freshness of youth was in their speech and action. Younger men of the present generation seem in some meas-

ure to age earlier. We are practically living the poet's line—

"Better fifty years of Europe than an age of Cathery."

Cui bono?

It is doubtful if anything during the meetings will evoke a more general manifestation of sympathetic feeling than that which was called forth by the resolution regarding the death of President Garfield. Dr. Thompson, in moving the resolution, alluded to the common bonds of language and of kin by a common sorrow made more manifest, and to the womanly sympathy of our Queen with the now widowed woman of America; and allusion was also made to the weight of responsibility now resting upon president Arthur. The resolution was carried in silence, five thousand people rising as one man, scarcely a dry eye in the whole assembly, and the feeling was deepened during a brief reply thereto by Dr. Henry Storrs, of New York, who alluded to a remarkable personal reminiscence. Sixteen years ago he had left New York to attend the May meeting of the Union in England; the steamer in which he then sailed was the first to leave that port for Europe after the death of President Lincoln, he had now sailed by the first departure after President Garfield's death. He called to mind the words of sympathy from the Union then, which still lived in his heart, and he acknowledged the power of the sympathy this day expressed with his nation in their hour of sorrow. England and America were but parted portions of one and the same great people, and he blessed God for this recognition of mutual sympathy. Alluding to the Queen's message of condolence, he said: "When the Queen of England, whose sympathies were not limited by the sea, or national limits, sent that throbbing telegram to America's stricken Queen—for that lone Christian woman, in the solitude of her little home out in Ohio, was Queen of their hearts—the American people answered, 'God bless the Queen! God save the Queen!' Though she be not ours by civil rule, she is ours in Christian love and sympathy. She stands before us as the representative of all the great wide womanly and manly sympathy that was ever flowing across the sea."

Never have I seen better illustrated the power of a great audience moved by a common sentiment, a dead silence in which the tones of the speakers seemed to echo from every heart, interrupted by outbursts of applause which were hushed almost immediately into silence again; facing the audience, I could see the glitter in almost every eye and watch the intensity of every feature. In the dark ways of Providence, ever wise and kind, James Abraham Garfield's death seems destined to effect unions, calm factions and strengthen Christian fortitude and faith with an efficiency to which the most devoted life could scarcely aspire.

"'Tis by defeat we conquer,  
Grow rich by growing poor,  
And from our larger losses  
We draw the greater store."

J. B.

Love that asketh love again  
Finis the barter nought but pain;  
Love that giveth in full store  
Aye receives as much and more.  
Love, exacting nothing back,  
Never knoweth any lack,  
Love, compelling love to pay,  
Sees him bankrupt every day.