

Messenger and Visitor

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Religious Bodies in the United States.

The religious statistics which The New York Independent has been accustomed to publish from year to year have been of much interest. They are especially so this year as marking the numbers attained by the different religious bodies of the United States at the end of the century and also as exhibiting in tabulated form the increase (or in some cases the decrease) of the last decade. Three tables are given. The first table shows the number of ministers, churches and communicant members of the different organizations in 1890 and 1900. The second table shows the net gains in the different denominations in ministers, churches and communicant members during the ten years, with the percentage of gain in members; also the gain in members during the current year with the percentage. The third table similarly gives the figures in reference to a large number of bodies reported in the census of 1890, but in regard to which no information or only very incomplete information is now obtainable.

Taking the religious bodies in alphabetical order we start with the Adventists, of whom there are several bodies, only one of which, however, the Seventh Day Adventists, is considerable in point of numbers. It is also the only one publishing statistical reports regularly. The growth of its membership has been from 28,991 in 1890 to 55,316 in 1900, with an increase of 88 in the number of its ministers and of 470 in its churches.

A good many Armenians have come into the United States during the past ten years. Their present number according to a careful estimate is 8,500, as compared with 335 in 1890.

The Baptist family come next in order. It embraces according to the table the Regular (North, South and Colored) Seventh Day, Free Will, General and Separate Baptists. The Regular Baptists of the North now number 973,820 members, and show a gain for the past ten years of 173,370 or 21½ per cent., and not "21½" per cent. as given in The Independent's statistical table. The Baptist churches of the South have a membership of 1,698,413, an increase during the decade of 328,347, which is 25½ per cent., and not "25½" per cent. as given in the table. The same unfortunate mistake in the use of the decimal point before the figures showing percentages occurs quite generally, though not uniformly, throughout the tables, and the effect is of course very confusing. The Colored Baptists of the United States number 1,864,000, and are therefore the largest Baptist body in the country. Their gain during the past decade has been over half a million. According to the second table, the increase of the Northern Baptists for 1900 was 2,149 that of the Colored Baptists 9,276, while the Southern (White) Baptist show a decrease in membership of 6,587. Such a decrease seems scarcely credible in view of the reported gain of 25½ per cent. for the decade, and it seems probable that a mistake has occurred here. The membership of the Free Will Baptist body is given at 85,100 as compared with 87,898 in 1890. This decrease of 2,798 in membership seems difficult to account for in connection with an increase of 126 in the number of ministers and of 182 in the number of churches. The Northern (Regular) Baptists have now 7,415 ministers and 9,374 churches; the Southern Baptists 12,058 ministers and 18,963 churches, and the Colored Baptists have 24,350 ministers and 15,654 churches. The General and Separate Baptists are small bodies, which, however exhibit large per centages of increase for the decade. There are also three bodies of Dunkards or German Baptists, numbering in all about 111,000.

Under the head "Catholics" is embraced Roman

Catholics, Independent Catholics, Polish Branch Old Catholics and Catholic Reformed. The three latter number respectively 15,000; 10,000 and 1,500. The membership of the Roman Catholic Church is given as 8,610,226, an increase during the past ten years of 2,367,959, or 38 per cent. In reference to these figures the Independent remarks: "The basis of the statistics for the Roman Catholic Church is the special directory of that church, which gives a total of churches and ministers as in the tables, and of population as 10,129,677. In the preparation of the figures for the census of 1890 there was a deduction of 15 per cent. to include, on the best estimate available, baptized children under nine years of age, and that proportion has been preserved through the different years. The details of the Roman Catholic figures in the different dioceses show that they are almost wholly estimates. Almost all are even thousands, which would indicate very clearly that there are absolutely no accurate statistics in regard to the body."

Two bodies, under the name of "Christian" and "Christian Catholic," have a reported membership of 111,835 and 40,000 respectively. "The most phenomenal growth," as The Independent says, of any body is that of the Christian Scientists, which now reports 1,000,000 members as compared with 8,724 ten years ago. It seems quite certain, however, that the million is arrived at by estimate rather than by actual count, and probably a large number of those who are numbered as Christian Scientists are numbered again in the membership of other religious bodies. The Christian Scientists claim to have increased their membership by 920,000 during the year 1900.

The Congregationalists of the United States number 629,874 as compared with 512,771 ten years ago, a gain of 117,103. The Disciples of Christ show a remarkable growth among the denominations. Their present membership as reported is 1,149,982, a gain of nearly 279,000 in the decade, a per centage of 32. It is also, says The Independent, the denomination which has branched out most widely in its church efforts both in the line of church extension and of distinctively church education, which perhaps may account in a degree at least for its growth.

The Protestant Episcopal church of the United States reports a present membership of 716,413, a gain of 184,377 in the decade and of 16,841 in its last year. This gives a considerably larger percentage of gain, it will be seen, than that of the Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist or Presbyterian bodies.

Two bodies, under the name of the "Evangelical Association" and the "United Evangelical Church," report a membership of nearly 180,000.

The (Orthodox) Friends have a membership of 91,868, as compared with 80,655 ten years ago. The German Evangelical Synod has 203,574 members. A number of the so called Quaker and Evangelical bodies have disappeared so far as statistical reports are concerned. The estimated membership of the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches in the country is 65,000.

The Jews had in 1890, 130,496 families, and they are now credited with 211,627 families, giving an estimate population of 1,058,135. Mormons number 500,000 and the Reorganized Church 45,500. Five bodies of Lutherans total a membership of 1,665,878, and show an increase in the decade of 434,806—being 35 per cent. Seven Mennonite bodies have a total membership of about 54,000.

In the Methodist family we have thirteen bodies, the most considerable of which are the Methodist Episcopal with a membership of 2,716,437 and a gain in the decade of 476,083; the African M. E. Church, with a membership of 673,504, and a gain of 220,779; the Methodist Episcopal South, with 1,457,864 members, showing a gain of 247,888; the African M. E. Zion, with 536,271 members, an increase of 186,483 in ten years, and the Colored Methodist Episcopal, with 199,206 members, and an increase of 69,823.

The Presbyterian family is nearly as numerous as the Methodist. It embraces, besides the four principal denominations, a number of small bodies, ranging in membership from 40 up to 12,000. The largest body is the Presbyterian Church (North) with a present membership of 973,433, having made a gain of 185,209 since 1890. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church has gained in the same time 15,252 and now numbers 180,192; the United Presbyterians have gained 21,499 and now number 115,901. The Presby-

terian Church (South) has a present membership of 225,890 and shows a gain in the decade of 46,169. Besides these the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Colored) has a membership of 39,000 having gained 26,000 members since 1890.

The Dutch Reformed Church in America has a present membership of 167,594, and shows a gain for the decade of 15½ per cent. The German Reformed numbers 243,545, a gain of 19 per cent. these "Reformed" Churches really belong to the Presbyterian family. Two bodies under the name of United Brethren in Christ report a present membership of about 470,000, according to the first table, but it would appear that the correct figures would be 270,000. Last in alphabetical order come the Unitarian and Universalist bodies. They are also among the last in respect to rate of increase. The figures show a slight gain for the Unitarians. They number 71,000 as compared with 67,749 in 1890. For the Universalists the showing is still more unfavorable. Their present membership of 48,426 being 768 less than in 1890. There has been also a decrease in the number of Universalist Churches amounting to 192 in the decade. It is very evident that neither the Unitarian nor the Universalist body represents an aggressive and conquering Christian force.

The third table gives quite a large number of bodies with regard to which no reliable information has been obtainable for a number of years. Among these are the Advent Christians, credited with a membership of 25,000; the Christian Union, 18,000; the Friends (Hicksite), 22,000; the German Evangelical Protestant, 36,000; Spiritualists, 45,000; Waldenstromians, 20,000; the Old Two-seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists, 12,000; and, much larger than any of the others, the Primitive Baptists, with a membership of about 120,000.

Editorial Notes.

—One valued subscriber writes us that he has been taking the MESSENGER for fifty years now and has always paid in advance. Another writes to the effect that when times get hard, whatever else must be given up, he always holds on to the denominational paper, and he too pays in advance. These are men of the kind that gives back-bone and character to a denomination.

—The belief, said to be more or less prevalent among the Chinese, that Christian missionaries are accustomed to murder Chinese children in order to obtain their eyes for use in the practice of medicine, is not so incredible in view of the fact that a similar delusion prevails among ignorant people of Europe in reference to the Jews who are accused of murdering children in order to obtain their blood for use in sacrifices. Certain mysterious murders which have occurred of late in sections of Germany where there is a large Jewish population have encouraged this superstition and caused much excitement. It is said that millions of people in Germany, Austria, Hungary and Russia remain fixed in the superstitious belief that certain secret Jewish services are performed with the blood of Christian children.

—The difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants, says Dr. Marcus Dods, is not what it is often said to be that the former accepts the church as his infallible authority, while the latter accepts the Scriptures as his. The Roman Catholic equally with the Protestant accepts the authority of Scripture. The difference lies far deeper. It lies in this that the Roman Catholic accepts the Scripture because the church and his fellowmen tell him that it is the Word of God. The Protestant accepts Scripture as the Word of God, because God tells him so. The Protestant believes it to be God's Word because in and through it God has spoken to him in such sort as to convince him that it is God who here speaks. This is the one sure foundation stone of Protestantism, the response of the individual conscience to the self-evidencing voice of God in Scripture. He does not need to go to the church, he does not need to go to the critic to ask: Is this the Word of God? His conscience tells him.

—Dr. Trotter, after supplying the German St. church, St. John, on Sunday last, proceeded by train on Tuesday morning to the United States, to spend three or four weeks visiting and studying some of the educational institutions of that country. It is his purpose, we understand, to study especially the denominational colleges, and with this in view he will try to visit Colby, Brown, Amherst, Williamstown, Colgate and Rochester. He will also drop in at the Theological Seminaries to which Acadia students are in the habit of going, and at some of the Academies and Technical Schools of New England. Dr. Trotter reports a successful re-opening of the Institutions at Wolfville, also that after the mid-year examinations Evangelist Gale is expected to be in Wolfville to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings, under the auspices of the College, Y. M. C. A., and the churches of the town.

—Meetings to consider What the Past Century has done for International Arbitration are announced to be held on Wednesday of the present week in Tremont Temple, Boston. These meetings are to be addressed by a number of distinguished persons including Dr. Edward Everett Hale, Mrs. Mary A. Livermore, Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, Mr. Ernest Howard Crosby and Mr. John Willis Baer. It would seem to us that the present position of the nations in reference to international

arbitration himself to enforcement the United which are other nation arbitration to which they are cannot be permitted

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