

MEETING OF UNION COMMITTEE.

The Union Committee of the three negotiating churches—Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian—conducted a very interesting five days' meeting on Monday evening, Sept. 16th. The meetings were held in the Metropolitan Methodist Church, in Toronto, and there was a full attendance of representatives from each of the three churches. The plan of work was mainly a session of the whole committee in the forenoon of each day to discuss and accept work which had been previously considered in meetings of the four sections into which the committee has divided itself, and on each of which there is a proportional representation of each of the churches. Substantial progress was made toward the completion of a basis of union for submission to the judgment of the uniting Churches, although it was found impossible to make more than a fair beginning in the section on Administration. It is here, apparently, that the more serious obstacles are to be encountered.

Not very many changes were made in the Statement of Doctrine, but those that were made were, after earnest discussion, practically unanimous. In Article I, "of God," the words "Who is Love" were inserted after "the Lord Almighty." In Article II, Of Revelation, the last sentence was changed to read, "We receive as the only infallible rule of birth and life, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, being given by inspiration of God, as the faithful record of His gracious revelations and the sure witness to Christ." Article XI, Of Justification and Sonship, was re-cast to read, "We believe that God, on the sole ground of the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Christ, pardons all who by faith receive Him as their Savior and Lord, accepts them as righteous, and bestows upon them the adoption of sons, with a right to all the privileges therein implied, including a conscious assurance of their sonship." The first sentence of Article XIII reads, now, "We believe that the moral law of God summarized in the Ten Commandments, testified to by the Prophets, and unfolded in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, stands for ever in truth and equity and is not made void by faith, but on the contrary is established thereby." And the end of Article XVIII, "that the finally impenitent shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," substituting the words of Jesus for those previously used. These are most of the changes of any importance made in this exceptionally clear, concise, and complete statement of doctrine.

Perhaps the most important step decided on in Polity was the recommendation that in the United Church whatever the body corresponding to our Session is to be called, the word Presbyterian be retained, with Conference for what is our Synod, and General Council for General Assembly; thus taking one term from each of the three Churches. Some adjustment of the various functions of Presbytery and Conference was made setting these forth in greater detail and more explicitly.

In the Section on The Ministry, the duty of final inquiry into the personal character, doctrinal beliefs, and general fitness of candidates for the Ministry is laid upon the Conference, instead of the Presbytery. Before ordination they must be examined on the Statement of Doctrine and satisfy the Conference that they accept it as in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Questions were adopted to be answered by candidates before ordination, the last of which is as follows:—"Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrines required for eternal salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ? And, are you resolved out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing which is not agreeable thereto."

In the Department of Administration, a policy for the amalgamation of the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Funds and the Widows' and Orphans' Funds of all the Churches was framed and carefully considered, but no final conclusion was reached. Enough was done, however, to show that there is no serious obstacle to union in this direction, and that it will be possible to guard all existing rights of present beneficiaries while making adequate provision for those to come after. The clause on Ministerial Support was omitted, believing that it was wiser to leave the subject to be dealt with by the United Church. As to missions, the committee was practically unanimous that all mission work within Canada, Newfoundland, and the Bermudas should be under the Home Mission Board, and all in foreign lands under the Foreign Mission Board. This would result in a very considerable readjustment of contributions and committees, in all the Churches, but would greatly simplify the Administration, and result in all home work being under the direct supervision of the local Presbytery.

Less progress was made in dealing with the problems of the Publishing Interests and the Colleges, but enough was done to warrant the committee in affirming that it sees no serious obstacle in the way of an adjustment of these interests in the case of union, and a sub-committee was appointed to inquire into all the points of law involved, and report to next meeting of the Joint Committee.

It will probably be a disappointment to many to learn that a basis of union has not been completed for submission to the courts and congregations of the several churches, but in a matter of such large and momentous importance it is wise to hasten slowly. It was decided to leave matters of worship and details of procedure to be dealt with by the United Church, after the union. The committee concluded by the adoption of the following resolution, and will not meet again before September of next year.

This resolution was moved by Mr. C. D. Massey, seconded by Judge Forbes and Mr. S. P. Leet:—

"That this joint committee on the proposed union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches on the completion of the labors of this its fourth session feels that there is abundant occasion for thanksgiving to God, in view of the brotherly intercourse again enjoyed and the spirit of abundant regard and concession that has characterized all the proceedings of the session.

"The practical unanimity in the decision of the committee affords a fair prospect that in due time the matters in hand may be submitted by the various churches under their constitution and usages to the people and their courts for their consideration.

"We are persuaded that decidedly substantial progress has been made toward the end in view, and that such

solutions of difficult problems have been found, so far as we have prosecuted our work, as to enable us to affirm our conviction that the proposed union appears to be practicable.

"When we consider the difficulties and perplexities that must be expected to arise in an effort to bring into one systems so various and of so long standing, we may well be gratified at the unanimity which has obtained. The questions of doctrine, of the different policies and modes of administration, of the tenure of property, of the benevolent funds, especially such as the aged ministers' and widows' funds, the publishing interests, the college and educational works, and the legislation necessary to give effect to the union, have secured all the interests involved, have heavily taxed our most experienced men and clearest thinkers, and must continue to demand their utmost attention till satisfactory conclusions shall have been reached. Such and kindred questions which have arisen demand also the earnest and prayerful attention of all our people and the exercise of due patience till the great work in the Providence of God shall have been completed."

The passage of this resolution by a standing vote, without a single dissentient, was the occasion of a hearty burst of applause, and was made more impressive by the singing of "Blest be the Tie that Binds Our Hearts in Christian Love," followed by prayer and the benediction by the chairman, Dr. Patrick.

"The students and alumni of Knox College are something more than highly indignant over the decision of the Board of Managers to close the college dining hall for one year. The Presbyterian Church supplies the equipment for the dining hall, and there are those among the students and alumni who describe the Board's action as a high-handed piece of business, in view of the evident intention of the church that meals should be served in the college." In view of the unanimous demand by the students for a college dining hall, would it not be wise for the Board of Managers to reconsider its decision and promptly grant their request. The "grub riots" of a previous year, doubtless caused by poor food badly served, should not prevent the college authorities granting the prayer of the students for a proper dining hall within the college walls.

Rev. H. Anderson, Indian secretary of the Baptist Mission Society of Great Britain, stated recently in Calcutta that the agitation in Bengal is a bitter antagonism to English rule, and caused largely by the secular education which the British authorities in India have been imparting. As to the position of missions and missionaries, Mr. Anderson expressed his conviction that the antagonism was not nearly so extensive as those dwelling in the cities supposed. He believed that 75 per cent. of missionary activities were unaffected. But no movement that Mr. Anderson can recall has gone so deeply into the village life of India, the unifying impulse being a nail in the coffin of the caste system. So far as the movement has touched any of the aboriginal tribes it has seemed to urge them forward to the acceptance of the Christian faith, while in certain parts of Bengal, where Mohammedans are numerous, there seems to be quite a new and favorable spirit towards the missionary and his evangelistic activities. He closed his address by urging missionaries to do their part as peacemakers, to sympathize with the sufferings of Indian Christians, to do all that can be done to promote the idea of a great Indian Church, and to preach Christ more than ever as the eternal answer to individual and national unrest.