

## THE PROPOSED UNIFICATION OF THE CHURCH.

To the Editor of the Church Guardian:

SIR.—It may not be unprofitable at the present time, in view of the approaching Conference at Winnipeg, to elicit in your columns some discussion on the subject which is uppermost in the minds of Canadian Churchmen. I have therefore ventured to put together the following notes, which may serve to elucidate so far a matter at present anything but clear to many.

In the first place, the name adopted to represent what it is hoped may be properly begun by the representatives assembled at Winnipeg, is to a certain extent misleading. There can be no unification of what is already one; and essentially with "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God, and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all," there is essential unity. The Church can think, speak, and act, clearly and legally, and blindly. What is sought to be accomplished, as I understand it, is the additional cohesion which a national Synod would give in externals, the increase of organization which would spring from a common centre, and the vastly more powerful sentiment attaching in the idea of most persons to the apparently more united action of the whole Church in Canada. I believe that such benefits would be more apparent than real; partly because the powers of such a central body would be strictly limited, and must not interfere with matters outside its scope, or with rights inherent in smaller bodies; and partly because the Church has already all necessary power of legislation in her provincial Synods, the only danger being that their legislation might conflict. Still what is real is not always apparent; and what many of our own members do not see, we can hardly expect others to observe.

Next—Special legislation will have to be sought. The only Acts on which the Provincial Synod is conducted are Acts of the old province of Canada previous to Confederation. These Acts would presumably not cover the assembling of any religious bodies without the limits of the said old Province of Canada.

But supposing that unanimity prevails in the preliminary councils, and there should be no difficulty in obtaining enabling Acts from the Dominion Parliament, it may be well to enquire what should be some of the principles on which such a Synod should be formed. In order to indicate these, it will be necessary to make some statements which will seem like a twice told tale to some of our learned clergy and laymen, but which are not so familiar to churchmen generally.

Four kinds of assemblies for church counsel and legislation have obtained in the Church from the earliest times:

1. *Diocesan Synods*—In these the Bishop sat in conjunction with all his presbyters. The earliest example we have is that mentioned in Acts xxi. 18-25, when St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, called together his Presbyters, and enforced the decrees of the Apostolic council of Jerusalem of Acts xv. One of the main objects of a Diocesan Synod in early times was that the Bishop might promulgate to his Diocese the acts of the Provincial Synod under which the Diocese was situated. Diocesan Synods were disused in the Church of England for several centuries, but have of late been revived, and are part of the regular machinery of the Church in the colonies.

2. *Provincial Synods*.—These are assemblies of combined Dioceses, under the presidency of the Metropolitan. There is good reason to think on the authority of Chrysostom, that Timothy had jurisdiction over Proconsular Asia, and that Titus had oversight over all the Churches of Crete. In the second century,

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, superintended the Gallican Dioceses. In the Ecclesiastical history of Eusebius, book v., c. 23, there is the clearest proof of Provincial organization and of metropolitan authority. And the 33rd Apostolical Canon thus reads:—"The Bishops of each province ought to own him who is chief among them, and own him as their head, and do nothing extraordinary without his consent, but each one those things only which concern his own parish (i.e. Diocese), and the country subject to it." The fifth Canon of the Council of Nicæa provided "That in each Province Synods should be held twice in each year, so that all the Bishops of the Province being gathered together to the same place, disputed questions might be investigated."

3. *Synods of the Exarchate*.—The Exarchate is a combination of Provinces. The constitution of this ecclesiastical division is a little later in point of time than the Province, and appear to have been held for cause rather than with perfect regularity. There is, however, no possible doubt about its existence, powers, and position in the Church organizations. As the Bishop was Chief Officer in his Diocese, and the Metropolitan in his Province, so the Exarch, Patriarch, or Archbishop, was chief in his Exarchate. The Synods of the Exarchate were convened under his presidency. To the judgment of these Synods the decisions of Provincial Synods were subject; and from its judgment in the case of a trial of a Bishop there was no appeal, not even to an Ecumenical Council. The authority of Exarchs over Metropolitan Bishops is clearly defined and distinctly shewn. More will be said on this question later on.

4. *Ecumenical or General Council*.—This is, as its name implies, a representative gathering of the whole Catholic Church. In the present divided state of Christendom a true Ecumenical Council is impossible. We need not therefore dwell upon it; but turn our attention to number 3, the Synod of the Exarchate, sometimes called the National Synod: a council superior to, and consisting of a combination of Provincial Synods, is what is now sought to be formed for the Church in the Dominion of Canada. Such a Synod is not unknown to our branch of the Church Catholic, many of them having been held in England. In another letter I will devote some attention to what is known of their history. In this I would point out two principles, upon which such a Synod must be utilized.

1. It cannot be brought into play at the expense of Provincial Synods. It is far more important to the well being of the Church that there should be Provincial Synods without Synods of the Exarchate than that the Provincial Synods should cease to exist because of the use of the higher Synod. The one is a prime necessity of the Church. The organization of the Church would cease to be Catholic if the Provincial system were abolished. Nay, a small portion of the whole Church, such as Canada is, could not obliterate the Provincial Synods.

The acts of Provincial Synods can always be made universal by concurrence. But the Church would cease to be the Church as she has been from the beginning, without her Provincial Synods. The founders of Diocesan Synods, as well as those who drew up the constitution of the Provincial Synods of Canada and Rupert's Land, were strict conservers of the Church's ancient customs and Laws. The constructors of the National Synod of this Dominion, should it be formed, must be, and doubtless will be, equally conservative. The General Convention of the Church in the United States is no model for our imitation. It is an ecclesiastical monstrosity, bearing most resemblance to a Provincial Synod, but still differing in essential respects from it; and is in no sense a Synod of the Exarchate. It recognizes that fact itself; and there must be sooner or later that coun-

try; at least three provinces, which will be united in a Synod of the Exarchate at stated and comparatively infrequent periods.

2. The second principle is that of the perfect equality of the Provincial Synods. Each is the peer of every other. Hence the representation must be the same from each. There are various matters of detail of the highest importance, which would come under the review of those entrusted with the formation of a scheme. But the general lines to be followed must, if the matter is to be conducted to a successful issue, be those of the Church in every age. Any deviation from the Church's custom, tried and proved throughout the centuries, in favour of brand new schemes born of the passing moment, will prove fallacious and disappointing; and will have eventually to give way to the ancient ways. Yours,

F. PARTRIDGE.

Halifax, July 12th, 1890

SIR,—As most of your readers are aware, the above subject is to be discussed at a Conference to be held in Winnipeg during the latter part of next month. And as I can conceive of no more important subject to the Church at the present moment, I crave a small portion of your columns for its discussion. I presume there can scarcely be two opinions as to the desirableness of such unification, as our present position is one of weakness, view it as we may. Take e.g. our relation to the civil power, and contrast it with that of the Methodist or Presbyterian body, and this fact becomes, at once, apparent. If influence is to be brought to bear upon the Government or Legislature in connection with the question of education, or temperance, for instance, these bodies speak with all the authority of national ones; i.e. as the Methodist or Presbyterian church of CANADA; while we, as at present constituted, have to put into operation the machinery of two Provincial Synods and a number of independent dioceses before we can accomplish such a result. And then with the possibility of a difference of opinion. And this weakness is no less apparent when we turn to our own internal affairs. The great questions of Missions, Prayer Book enrichment, Discipline, both of clergy and laity; not to mention others, imperatively demand unification. In fact, if this is not soon accomplished, we shall have, at least three practically independent bodies each calling itself the Church of England in Canada, and each one bearing to the others about the same relationship as we now bear to the Church in the United States. The only difference being the fact that we all owe allegiance to the same civil power.

Assuming, then, that we are agreed upon the main question, what is to be the form which this unification is to take? And here, I presume, considerable difference of opinion will be manifested. Doubtless some of those who are to discuss this important question will be sticklers for precedent, who will insist upon framing the Church in Canada after the third and fourth century model. Now, while I approve of this, so far as that model is adapted to modern requirements, I deprecate the slavish copying—for to day—any system not of Divine appointment, simply because it was the best possible under entirely different circumstances: e.g., it by no means follows that because *Constantine* provided for the conveyance of the Bishops from their distant sees to Nicæa; that Queen Victoria should provide a coach and four to take the Bishop of Nova Scotia to Winnipeg.

But as my letter is already too long I must reserve any further thoughts upon this subject for another letter. Yours, &c.,

W. J. ANCIENT.

Rawdon, N.S., July 9th, 1890.

THAT which we are we shall teach, not voluntarily, but involuntarily.—Emerson.