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# The Canadian Evangelist.

"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

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## THE Canadian Evangelist

is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ; and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with his own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

### The Press.

#### Our Questions of the Day.

##### RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS OF THE TIME VIEWED FROM THE STANDPOINT OF UNIVERSAL THEOLOGY.

Suppose, instead of taking a vote on the question of revision of certain articles of the creed, and instead of but one communion being occupied there-with, the question of revision of Christianity itself should be taken up. And suppose, further, that instead of but one section, the whole of Christendom was interested, in it. How the excitement there would be! How the finest minds would be agitated! Papers, magazines, pamphlets, would flood the community! The result would be of the utmost benefit. But this consummation, so very devoutly to be wished for, is not likely to be. We quoted last week from a letter in which the writer bewailed the effect created in the minds of the Japanese in their city of Tokio by reason of the diversities of religious opinion presented by the many Christian sects occupied in missionary work in that place.

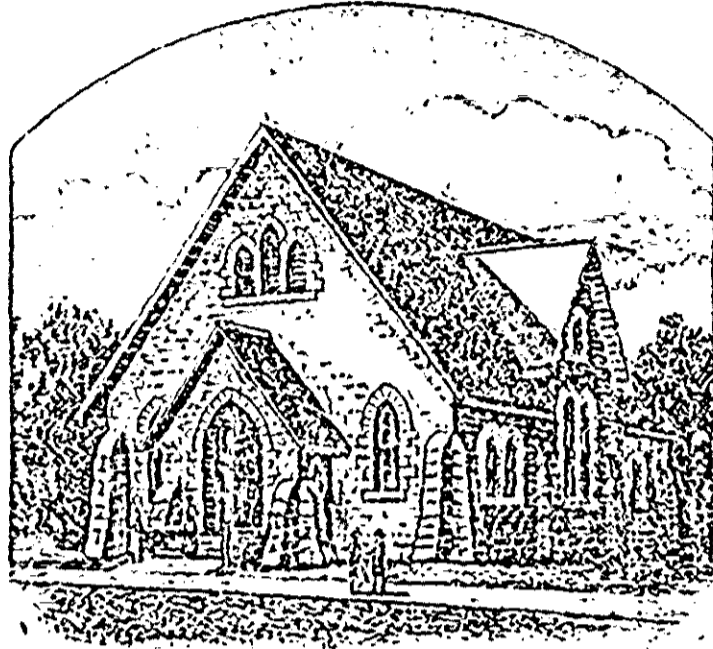
That all who are active there are in earnest is certain. But to any Japanese capable of thinking, what a strange thing Christianity must be, if he pauses to examine the sectarian divergencies! And when he marks the animosities, jealousies, and rivalries, must he not come to the conclusion that these Christians do not love one another? They may unite in preaching and teaching the Word which enjoins mutual love; they may alike hold up the example of life offered by Christ. They may together declare that charity is a Christian virtue, that humility is another, and that unity is a third. But the thinking Japanese, as he ponders, must doubt the love of his rival Catholic and Protestant; must condemn the hypocrisy of those who preach but follow not the example of Christ; must ridicule their assertions as to charity, humility, and unity, when they show so little of any.

Every Christian Church, by retaining its special differences, prevents Christian union. Every Church believing that it is the only holder of the keys of heaven must believe that the educated members of other churches are crazily obstinate, wickedly wilful, and therefore deservedly condemned to penalties.

What must our friend, the intelligent Japanese, think of all this?

"Do not be a Protestant," exclaims the Catholic missionary to him. "If you become one, you will be everlastingly damned."

"Do not be a Catholic," exclaims the Protestant missionary in his turn. "If you become one you will be an idolater?"



DISCIPLES CHURCH, OWEN SOUND.

"Yes," will chime in another Protestant, "the Pope is Antichrist!" "Yes, indeed," adds another. "But if you do not become a member of my division of the great Protestant body, and receive our articles of faith as your articles, you will in the future life be condemned to everlasting punishment; you will be given to perpetual fires and never-ending pains."

"Not quite so," will reply another Protestant. "Our friend, a blue Presbyterian, is not quite correct. We do not believe it. We do not think that infants or people who have never known of Christianity or of this or that special Christian doctrine, will be condemned to such terrible pains and penalties. Better join us, think with us, and be a Congregationalist!"

And so the chorus goes on in the ears of the luckless Japanese. For we are told from Tokio that besides the Greek and Roman Catholic communions there are "various Protestant Churches conducting missions in that great city: Congregationalists, American Baptists, American Episcopalians, American Methodists South, Methodists North, English Baptists, Christian Connection, Church of England, Evangelical Association, General Evangelical Protestant Missionary Society (German and Swiss), Methodist Church of Canada, American Reformed Church, Reformed Church in the United States, Society of Friends, United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Unitarians, St. Paul's Associated Mission, Plymouth Brethren, Disciples of Christ."

Will ever men be men enough to cast off the thought that they are infallible? Looking through the spectacles of religion, men see motives and beams in others' eyes, never in their own.

What immense strides Christianity would make if all its divisions would unite and prove that Christians really love one another!

Christianity has carried civilization to the highest pinnacle that human history uncovers as the canvas of time unfolds for human study. The faith of the cross has transformed wildernesses into Edens. Wherever the cross has been planted, wonderful flowers of rare beauty and exquisite fragrance have sprung up. But the rot of sectarian creeds has invaded every civilization. Serpentine subtlety has destroyed the Edens. Human folly has blasted the beauty and scattered the perfume.

It is just this subtlety, this folly, that prevents Christianity from conquering the world.

After nineteen centuries of existence the millions of Buddhists, Brahmans, Mohammedans, Hebrews, will not ac-

cept it. After nineteen centuries of existence Christianity still finds itself only a sojourner in Asia and Africa, the most thickly populated continents. After nineteen centuries of exertion Christianity finds itself dispossessed of its holy places and of lands where once it was triumphant. After nineteen centuries of work it presents to the world three great splits and innumerable small splits.

It is to the disgrace and shame of the Christian, Mohammedan, and Jewish brothers.

Let us put a plain question to our Christian, Mohammedan, and Jewish brothers.

Setting aside the Japanese in search of a faith in Tokio, let us ask this:

If Christ came on earth to which denomination of Christians would He belong? To the Catholic or to the Protestant or to the Greek Church? And if to the Protestant, to which sect? To Methodists North or to Methodists South? To the Methodist Church of Canada or to the Reformed Church in the United States, to the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, or to the Church of England, all of which search for souls in Tokio? Maybe, it will be said, it would not much matter to which sect Christ should become attached. For men may argue if Napoleon should come to earth again and want to be a common soldier, it would hardly matter what branch of the service he should join so long as it was one that was doing good and useful work, let it be cavalry, infantry, artillery, engineers, sappers, commissariat—any department in the army.

Similarly it would not matter to which church Christ should become attached, for all are doing good work.

This may be true. But they are working on different lines. What a difference there would be if there was united action, perfect agreement, harmony of thought!

Thinking Christians have a right to demand of their spiritual leaders some effort at least toward union, agreement and harmony.

Nineteen centuries is time enough to pass without more unity being apparent.

Who among the ministers will have the bravery to suggest that representatives of all churches meet to plan for a union and to discard all divergencies as non-essential, while retaining those points on which all agree?—*Rabbinicus, New York Sun.*

#### THE REVISION QUESTION.

The vote for revision of the Westminster Creed, which was referred to the presbyteries, has resulted as fol-

lows:—In favor of revision, 133; against, 69; declining to vote, 6; not heard from, 5. The total number of votes, including ministers and elders as recorded, is:—For revision, 3,331; against, 2,332. There is some doubt whether it will be decided that a two-thirds vote is necessary for revision, or a bare majority. If the former, the friends of revision have failed to muster the necessary strength being a little short of a two-thirds majority. Of the 69 presbyteries voting against revision, 16, or nearly one-fourth, are in Pennsylvania, 9 are in mission fields, 16 are in Southern States, 16 in Western States, and but 11 in the Eastern States outside of Pennsylvania. Only 5 of the presbyteries in Pennsylvania are recorded in favor of revision. The vote that has been taken does not however, even if the requisite majority is obtained, decide what changes shall be made. It will decide this alone—that some change is desired. It probably be a much more difficult thing to unite a majority of the presbyteries on any specific changes. As it stands, though, the vote is very significant of the unrest under the present creed. It seems likely, also, to bring prominently before the public mind the question—what are the province and purpose of a creed? There is a species of idolatry that sometimes grows up in connection with a declaration of faith that has been handed down through the centuries, that has been contended for by generations of theologians, and that has become intimately associated with all the religious life and faith of a great denomination. We are apt to forget that the declaration was formulated by mere fallible men; that it was, perhaps, decided by a bare majority vote whether the declaration should be thus and so, or so and thus. There is likely to come up, also, the question, just how far a church can go, and conform to the designs of Christ, in requiring one that seeks its membership and the means of grace and the channels of usefulness therein afforded, to subscribe to formulas of faith not given by inspiration. Some declaration of purpose all associations of men must have, whether in a trust, a political party, or a church. But whether a church can require for admission within its portals more than it is conceded the Heavenly Father would require for acceptance with him, is, we presume, a question likely to come up with increasing frequency in the near future.—*The Voice.*

In the book which is noticed in our Table, entitled "How Shall We Revise?" by seven Presbyterian Doctors of Divinity, the Westminster Confession of Faith is shown to be unscriptural, partisan, inefficient, unsatisfactory—in short, so far gone that there is no hope of patching it up. One of the D.D.'s says that even among its friends one thrusts the knife in here and another there, "until the Confession is as full of knives as St. Sebastian of arrows." These Doctors do not see, however, that the strongest arguments they produce against the Confession is valid against all other creeds, and against any creed that shall be devised to take its place. The chief *raison d'être* of a creed at all is its alleged unifying power. The denominations have insisted that without a creed the Disciples could not maintain a consistent teaching everywhere, and that we must break up into all sorts of sects and factions. But while there is a wonderful uniformity and simplicity of doctrine and practice amongst us, Dr. Briggs says, "Presbyterianism changes its complexion as we pass from State to State, and from city to city." Again, what Dr. Evans says has happened to the Confession happens to other creeds. It is regarded as a fetish, an idol, and at last becomes

in the eyes of many, "beyond the possibility of amendment for all time to come."

These and several other faults and learned men, and it is astonishing that they fail to see that they are not peculiar to the Confession, but inherent in all creeds. So they coolly recommend "a new creed." This reminds us of the clown's answer to a man who returned to him a counterfeit bill with the request, "Please send another." After some delay, the clown returned it with his regrets that he could not get hold of "another counterfeit." But these divines, having shown that the Confession is a counterfeit gospel (not a very close imitation either), go about to hunt another counterfeit.—*Christian Standard.*

In the course of a year's keen discussion, which has prevailed in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, most of the arguments for and against the revision of the doctrinal standards that ingenuity can invent have been advanced. The question has been considered with a degree of thoroughness that leaves little to be desired. All shades of opinion have found opportunity for full and adequate expression. The religious papers have given up ungrudgingly large portions of their space to the consideration of the subject. The great dailies have also felt that it was a matter of interest to general readers, and, with more or less ability and comprehension, they have been kept duly informed of the progress of the movement that has so deeply engaged the attention of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

For some time it has been apparent that the feeling in favor of revision is strong, and that the conviction is generally entertained that some modification of the doctrinal standards is necessary for a more rounded and complete expression of the Church's belief. On both sides of the controversy there are men of great ability and strong personal influence. Though in a matter of this kind personal authority may go but a little way in influencing the final decision, it cannot be but that the attitude taken by such men as Dr. John Hall and Dr. Benjamin Warfield will command respect, and induce some who favor revision to consider the question all the more carefully, and make sure of their ground. On the other side, also, there have been extremists, whose somewhat radical opinions have alarmed many who are prepared to concede the principle of revision. Some have taken the untenable position that the Confession of Faith is almost too sacred to be touched. They are but few in number, however, who entertain the notion that a compilation, however admirable, made by learned and wise but fallible men, must be authoritatively binding on successive generations of Christ's people. The Presbyterian Church commands influence and respect, and is doing a great work at home and abroad, but it would soon lose immeasurably were it to countenance even an inferential claim to infallibility. This happily it has never been so far left to itself to suggest.—*Canada Presbyterian.*

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