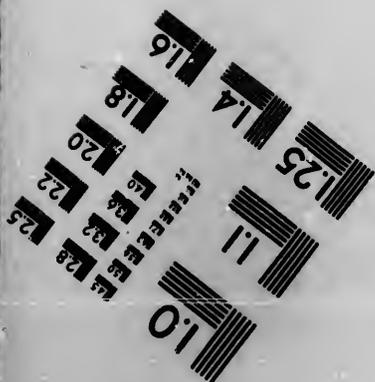
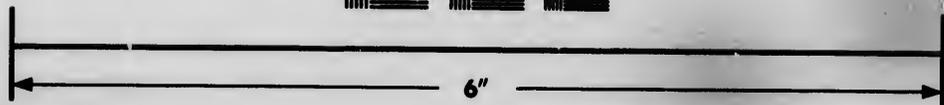
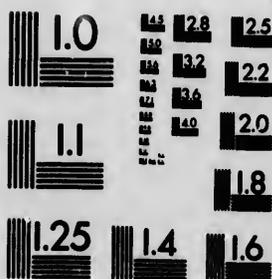


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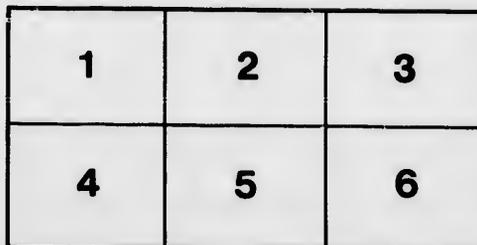
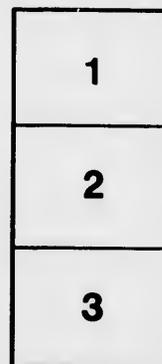
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THE

Bishop's Address

AT THE OPENING OF

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

—:IN:—

ADJOURNED SESSION

—:AT:—

Napanee, January 9th, 1883.

Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada
Not in Copy

BISHOP'S ADDRESS.

To the Delegates of the Annual Conferences and of the Lay Electoral Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, in General Conference assembled:—

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN :—We are met under the authority of our Constitution and Discipline, and in pursuance of this resolution of our regular General Conference, in session in the city of Hamilton last autumn :—

*Resolved,—*That when this General Conference shall adjourn at the close of its final session it shall stand adjourned to meet, provided a Basis of Union shall have been agreed upon, in special session, at the call of the Bishop and Secretary of this General Conference, to receive the report of the said Committee, and take such action thereon as may be deemed necessary; and further to attend to any unfinished business, provided such call be made previous to the meeting of the ensuing Annual Conferences.

All are aware that your Committee on the Union of our Church with the Methodist Church of Canada, the Primitive Methodist Church of Canada, and the Bible Christian Church of Canada, met the corresponding Committees of those Churches in joint session, first in the city of Hamilton, in September last, and subsequently in the city of Toronto, in November and December, for the purpose of ascertaining whether a Basis of Union could be found on which the Churches might with any propriety be called upon to deliberate and decide. All are further aware that these Committees agreed upon a Basis which they think worthy of the consideration of the Churches concerned; wherefore the officers of your General Conference entrusted with the power of call felt it incumbent on them to convene the General Conference under the authority of the resolution cited above. And it was thought best to convene at as early a date as practicable that the General Conference might first pronounce upon the Basis of Union and thereby save the Church, well as might be, from agitation and distraction. As Episcopal Methodists we hold as one of our fundamental principles the supremacy of the General Conference, especially in the settlement of questions of law; and maintain that the unity and authority of the Church are in the General Conference, while it remains plainly within the powers and prerogatives given it in the Discipline. Since important questions of constitution and law were likely to transpire an early call was all the more desirable. In this case the General Conference had marked out for itself and for the Church a plain path clearly within its constitutional functions. It had confided an important interest and subject to a Committee, which Committee was under instruction to report to the General Conference at the earliest practicable date, and full provision was made for the consideration of the report and proper action upon it.

It seems, therefore, to me, believing as I do in law and constitutional procedure as necessary and central to Episcopal Methodism, that it would be, to say the least, premature and quite irregular for any Annual or Quarterly Conference, or any official person, organ or body in the Church to step athwart the action of the General Conference, or in any sense or degree hinder or bias its decisions.

M. P. W. P.

THE FULLEST LIBERTY MUST BE ALLOWED

and secured to private judgment and personal opinions, and proper discussion must not be fettered, but official men and bodies must act according to the mind and instruction of the supreme official authority. Resignation is open to them, but not opposition, while they sustain their official relations: except, indeed, it be that the supreme authority has plainly transcended constitutional bounds; and the supreme authority, the Supreme Court is the power to say where the constitutional bounds lie. Suppose our Parliament to have appointed a Committee to examine certain interests and report at once and directly to Parliament, with a view possibly to refer some matters to the constituencies or the Municipal Councils, what would be thought of the council or constituency or Parliamentary officer that would interfere and pronounce upon the merits of the case more or less distinctly before the committee under positive instructions had reported, or Parliament had decided whether there is anything for the consideration of the councils or the action of official bodies? Our General Conference took a very plain and direct line of action with a very evident intention and desire. It had hoped and planned to preserve the Church from agitation, to keep the societies in unity and peace; first, itself to pronounce upon the important issues of Methodist Union: then, if at all necessary or desirable, to submit the proper measures to the authorized constituencies for their consideration and determination. In due time it was purposed, the Quarterly Conference, and if thought best, the societies should meet. On this line of action, so wisely pre-determined and so well marked out, we are now assembled in adjourned session. The resolution cited above plainly gives us the scope of our operations, viz., "To receive the report of the Committee on Methodist Union and take such action thereon as may be deemed necessary; and, further, to attend to any unfinished business." And since it is an adjourned session, our organization is complete, and our Committees are in force and effect as these matters stood at the adjournment in Hamilton last September. It will simply devolve upon us to fill up the respective delegations as well as we may be able and proceed with our work. It is to be hoped we shall not have a protracted or wearisome session, but it is at the same time to be remembered that the most important interests of our Church, possibly the most tremendous issues of our life are upon us. It is the solemn duty of the hour to preserve the heritage given us of the fathers, to be true to Christ first and His cause; and then to the principles we have so long cherished, the principles of our Episcopal Methodism. To this end we need well to discriminate what is of Christ and what is of our polity, lest we sacrifice Christ to polity, or maintain even the non-essentials of polity at the expense of the cause of Christ. We need in large measure the wisdom that cometh from above, and the mind of Christ, that we may see where we must stand and what we can yield; and then stand where we must; and yield as necessary where we may. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraided not. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Shall we not then upon the warrant of the promises through the merit of Christ draw nigh unto God with all the heart. "God is our refuge and defense, a very present help in trouble." If ever we needed divine aid and guidance, it is in this Conference and amid the perplexities of these times. We want to be right and do right. If so, we shall look unto God and He will help us do right.

It may aid us in being right, and doing right, to recall the present status of the question of Methodist Union, and review for a little its history. The desirability and the practicability of a Union of the Methodist Churches of this country were long ago affirmed by our General Conference and have been again and again reaffirmed by the General Conference; and by official bodies in the Church that considered themselves competent to pronounce upon so important business. The General Conference of 1870 affirmed the principle of Union, and appointed a Committee to meet the Committees of the other Methodist Churches, and formulate a Basis of Union. Their report to the General Conference of 1874 sets forth that their attempts were abortive. The same report, which was duly adopted, declares:—"We firmly

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consider a pure and godly unifying of Methodism highly desirable, and therefore recommend the General Conference to appoint a Committee to consider and formulate a Basis of Union with the Methodists of the Dominion, or of the Continent, or any branch or section thereof, and to authorize the Bishop to unite in any joint call that may be made for such purpose." Here the desirability is emphasized, and the belief in the practicability more than implied, and means are devised to further it. The report adopted by the General Conference of 1878 declares as follows:—"That, concerning the subject of Methodist Union, your Committee in the present stage of the discussion upon the question and the present attitude of the Churches with regard to it, deem it sufficient to re-affirm the action of the Napanee General Conference of 1874 to this extent and effect, viz: "We consider

THE UNIFICATION OF METHODISM HIGHLY DESIRABLE,

and recommend this General Conference to appoint a committee of ten, to remain in force and effect till the next General Conference with powers to correspond with other Methodist Bodies on the question of Methodist Union," etc. The question, then, either as a matter of finesse and claptap, or of earnestness and godly sincerity, has been before the Church, and Methodist Union has been distinctly favored. The Annual Conferences have had abundant time to protest, to declare against the expediency, the desirability, and the practicability of Union. So also have the Lay Electoral Conferences, the Quarterly Meeting Conferences, the Societies, the Classes, and all our constituencies. Which of them, how many of them, have spoken or affirmed against the desirability or the practicability of an Organic Union of the Methodist Churches of this country? Our Church has but one voice on this subject. We believe our General Conference to have been honest when it said:—"We firmly consider a pure and godly unifying of Methodism highly desirable, and appoint a committee to consider and formulate a Basis of Union with the Methodists of the Dominion." We believe the other Conferences and Bodies that have spoken upon this subject to have been honest, and they have spoken as late as our last Electoral Conferences, which, in effect, said "that any Basis of Union to be acceptable to our Church must embrace the Itinerant General Superintendency." Our position, then, as a Church, on the desirability and practicability of Methodist Union has been clear, unchanged, and unmistakable. Wherefore, the men that have advocated measures looking toward a Union have been consistent with our Church action, and perfectly in order. To say the least of it, whatever our desires in the case, they have been as consistent with our Church action as those of us who have been indifferent to Union or opposed to it. There was a time when the Quarterly Meeting Conferences, the District Conferences, the Annual Conferences, and the Lay Electoral Conferences might properly, in the exercise of their rights, have declared against the desirability, the feasibility, and the advisability of Methodist Union. But as constituencies and sub-constituencies they sent on their representatives to the General Conference, our Supreme Court and Legislature, which declared positively and repeatedly for Methodist Union as to its advisability and feasibility. And so far as the constituencies and sub-constituencies spoke upon the subject they have spoken in confirmation of the mind and action of our great representative body, the General Conference. Wherefore, this General Conference, in its former sessions in Hamilton, was clearly within our constitutional lines and along the course of our declared policy in moving forward its Committee, with powers and privileges to find, if possible, in consultation with the Committees of the other Methodist Churches of the country, a Basis of Union that might be worthy of the consideration and adoption of this Conference and of our Church and all the Churches concerned. The consideration of the report of this Committee is the chief business of this adjourned session of the General Conference. The question that now arises is, "Is the Basis submitted by the Committee under all the circumstances acceptable? Shall we approve the Basis of Union now submitted, and be prepared to consummate a Union with all the Methodist Churches of the country upon it? Or shall we reject the Basis and decline to unite upon it? The question of the advisability of Union in general is not before

us, or its desirability or practicability. To bring back any of these questions it will be necessary to move re-consideration and enact much expunging and obliteration. The simple question is

THE ADVISABILITY OF ADOPTING THIS BASIS OF UNION.

And it will be clear to every mind, since we are upon a line of negotiations with other parties, that it is not a question of modifications, amendments, additions, or diminutions, but simply of accepting or declining this Basis of Union. Whatever may be in the future this is the issue first and now.

A temptation may arise for this General Conference to hand the provisions of the Basis on to the constituencies, Quarterly Conferences, or Societies under the directions of Discipline or otherwise without itself declaring decidedly as to acceptance or rejection, and thus placing the responsibility wholly over upon other bodies. All these bodies and all parties concerned must have the opportunity of full and fair discussion, and must in their own place and time do their own work and bear their own responsibility; but from the very constitution of our Church and the line of action of our General Conferences, the primal responsibility rests upon this General Conference. To send on the Basis for the adoption or rejection of the Quarterly Conferences without clearly making known its own mind with regard to it would, it seems to me, be unworthy of this General Conference. Who so capable of weighing its merits as this General Conference? Who entitled to settle the legal and constitutional questions, but this General Conference? Who empowered to arrange our relations to other Churches but this General Conference? Who should so well understand or so carefully guard our interests, honor and rights; who has such authority and influence with our people as this General Conference? I am persuaded that this Conference will weigh carefully all the interests and issues, and will recommend to our beloved people a clear and decisive course of action. While we would not fetter or prejudice the constituencies that must declare upon this all-important question, we must bear in mind that the primal responsibility is upon us, and here, and to-day. By our constitution we are put in this place of authority and responsibility, and we must do our duty. In a good sense leaders and rulers of the people, we are accountable to God for our care of His Church. If the whole aspects of the Union question have changed since their presentation by former General Conferences, or since the former session of this Conference in Hamilton, it is for us to say so. If we have been ourselves deceived, or have been deceiving others; if we have ourselves been misunderstood or have misunderstood others; if we have misjudged in the premises or have changed our mind and intent, let us now declare it. It is for this body to pronounce first, and do what it can to quiet agitation in the Societies. We can hardly suppose that in the present state of feeling and action in the various Churches we shall reverse our long declared policy on the Union Question. So, unless we repudiate the decisions of former General Conferences as to the desirability and practicability of Methodist Union—which would be at once dishonorable to ourselves and dishonest to the other Churches, and therefore not for a moment to be thought of by any one—there is before us a well defined route of proceedings.

It will devolve upon us first to determine whether we accept or decline Union upon this Basis; that is, whether we think sufficiently well of the Basis to send the proper provisions on to the Quarterly Conferences. If we reject the Basis, there would seem to be little else to do. If we accept it so far as we as a Conference are concerned, then it is necessary that we determine what matters shall under discipline go on to the Quarterly Meeting Conferences, and how and when they shall be presented. And herein arises at once an important question which this General Conference must determine. If any of the articles of the Basis of Union infringe any of the five main limitations and restrictions upon the powers of the General Conference

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—as, for instance, if the General Rules of the united societies be changed, Articles of Religion or Doctrines of the Church), the privileges of trial and appeal done away, the plan of the Itinerant General Superintendency destroyed, or the Episcopacy done away, a certain vote and majority are required in the Quarterly Conferences that are not necessary under discipline unless these restrictions are infringed.

This General Conference, not its officers, not the Quarterly Meeting Conferences, not the Annual Conferences, not irresponsible individuals, not private and personal opinion, not Conventions, not meetings here and there, but this General Conference.

AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE ALONE,

is the proper authority to decide whether the constitutional limitations are broken through, whether our Episcopacy is done away, and the plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency is destroyed. This question of constitution and law meets us at the very threshold of our proceedings. And it is a very important question; because it affects the very initiation and the mode of legal proceeding, and may affect the property rights in case of Union. If the Union is effected, it must be the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada that goes into the Union; and in order to carry its property with it, it must go in with the consent of its Societies, under the provisions of its constitution. We do not want, we are persuaded none of the negotiating Churches want strife and division. If there be a Union,

LET IT BE AS UNANIMOUS

as can be expected in the ordinary condition of human affairs. To this end we must proceed upon our constitution, allow the fullest discussion and freest exercise of all constitutional powers.

As to the question whether the plan of the Itinerant General Superintendency is destroyed, and the other question, whether the Episcopacy is abolished or done away in the Basis of Union, possibly some observations are in place here. It is presumed the articles of religion, the doctrines of the Church, the rules of society, the rights of ministry and membership, and the use of the profits of the Book Concern remain intact in the Basis of Union as proposed. If this be the case the only other matters that could require three-fourths of the Quarterly Conferences in their favor by three-fourths majority in such Conference would be the General Superintendency and the Episcopacy, as intimated above. If the plan of the Itinerant General Superintendency is not destroyed in the Basis proposed, and if the Episcopacy is not abolished or done away with, then these matters, important as they are, need not go to Quarterly Meeting Conferences at all, and the Quarterly Conferences need not move in them. And it is for this General Conference to say whether the plan of the Itinerant General Superintendency is destroyed. It is for this General Conference to say whether the Episcopacy is abolished. Let us look at these points. And they must be looked at in the light of

OUR DISCIPLINE AS IT IS TO-DAY,

and not as it was ten years ago, or even as it was six months ago; and certainly not as our beloved Episcopal Methodism exists in its unfettered consolidation and grand perfection in the United States of America, and in the high ideal set forth in their historic statements and ecclesiastical formulas. What they have and what we have to-day are two different things. What they gave us in 1828 and what we have since our General Conference of last autumn, in Hamilton, are two very different things. They can say that the Presiding Elders are appointed by the Bishops, are Bishops' assistants, are a part of the plan of the Itinerant General Superintendency. So could our Church a year ago, and always in the past till the session of this General Conference last autumn in Hamilton. Our General Conference then distinctly affirmed

that our travelling Presiding Eldership is no part of the Itinerant General Superintendency, made provision for stationing the Presiding Elders, and reduced the powers of the Bishop in this regard to the Chairmanship of the Advisory Committee, which appoints the Presiding Elders. This is of course a complete reversal of some of our former ideas of Episcopal Methodism, making the Presiding Elders Annual Conference men, to be possibly stationed instead of General Superintendency men, always to travel their Districts, and is a wonderful limitation of the powers of the Bishop in his capacity as General Superintendent. But so far as I see, if the General Conference has the power and right to accept, constitute, perpetuate, and even within certain restrictions to abolish the Episcopacy and the Itinerant Superintendency, it must have the power and right to say

WHAT KIND OF EPISCOPACY AND SUPERINTENDENCY

it will have, and with what powers it shall be clothed. It must have the power to say what shall be essential to the Superintendency and what not: what shall be an attachment, and what not. If it make the law, and there is no court above it to interpret the law, it must decide what it means by its enactments, and by the principles of the economy it has established. The same General Conference limited the power of the General Superintendent to station preachers so as in an important sense to reduce him to a mere Chairman of the Stationing Committee, and certainly most seriously to interfere with his former *transfer* power, if not wholly to destroy it. For if he cannot station a man without the express consent of the Presiding Elders by a majority duly secured on motion, how is he to know when he lifts him from one Conference that he will get the privilege of setting him down in another? From the General Superintendency we have to-day the General Superintendency of the Basis of Union is not very wide apart. Indeed it is not difficult to maintain that within the sphere of its operation there is a stronger General Superintendency in the Basis of Union than in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada as we are now. For by right of constitution and consequent Discipline, the General Superintendent of the Basis presides in all General Conference Boards and Committees, which is a right he does not by any means enjoy under the mere provisions of Discipline among us.

Had these sweeping and radical changes been brought about by the men advocating Union, some perhaps would have said they were designedly breaking down our polity in order to break up our Church and dissolve us into Union. But so far as I have observed, men of professedly other views as to the proposed Union, of especially asserted high opinions as to the Episcopacy and strong attachment to it have been at least as forward as any in these radical and almost revolutionary changes. Possibly there was a judicial blindness that we might be prepared for events to come. The brethren went out not knowing whither they went. It may be their eyes were holden. So far as I am personally concerned, I do not see that there is enough difference between the General Superintendency of to-day among us, and the General Superintendency of the Basis of Union to make a stand upon against Union. Were it what it once was, the case would be decidedly different. But when I compare what we now have with what is in the Basis, I am of the opinion that the Basis does not materially alter the plan of our present Itinerant General Superintendency: much less, to use the language and meet the restrictive demand of Discipline, does it destroy it? So much for the General Superintendency. Let us now look at the other point, the Episcopacy. Both our Book of Discipline and the facts of the case in history and practice distinguish clearly between the Superintendency and the Episcopacy: the former having existed in Methodism before the latter was thought of: the former relating more particularly to the stationing of the preachers, and the temporal affairs of the Church: and the latter to the ordination of the ministry and the perpetuation of the Holy Sacraments.

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IS THE EPISCOPACY DONE AWAY?

It may be greatly modified; but what we want to know to guide our constitutional action is, is it abolished?

Methodist Episcopacy is not Roman Episcopacy, or High Church Anglican Episcopacy, boasting itself to come down from St. Peter, and bring down some wonderful charm with it. It makes no pretensions to carry with it a sacramental efficacy indispensable to salvation, or an exclusive right to government by divine authority. No Church on earth more than the Methodist Episcopal Church repudiates prelacy, papacy, hierarchy, sacerdotalism and everything that savors of them. We utterly reject prelacy because when it says that Episcopacy is that form of Church Government in which one order of Ministers is superior to another, it plants something in our Episcopacy that neither Paul the Apostle, nor John Wesley the Revivalist, nor Coke the Missionary, nor Asbury the Bishop ever claimed or allowed; that very thing which Paul calls the "mystery of iniquity"—the man of sin, and which grows into the Archiepiscopate the Patriarchate and the Papacy. We have no sympathy either in belief, practice or discipline with them that teach the clergy are divided into three general orders, Bishops Priests and Deacons; much less with them that proceed to say there are other orders subordinate to Bishops, as Deans, Archdeacons; prebendaries, canons, &c., and some go down to the acolyte.

OUR EPISCOPACY

has no kinship to such a prelacy, even at his beginnings. Nor in the mind of its founder and the spirit of his true followers, does it savor in the least of sacerdotalism that it should convey in its own restricted line an efficacy of sacrifices and sacraments, and a virtue of ordinations necessary thereto, traceable under magic touch from hand to head and head to hand, back through we know not what labyrinths to the Holy Apostles themselves, and owing all merit and power to the security of the descent. Others may hold such an Episcopacy: but Methodists, never. If I understand the mind of John Wesley and our own Book of Discipline, we hold first that the sacred Ministry is called out of the laity to be a special order, to secure the preaching of a pure Gospel, and especially the orderly administration of the Holy Sacraments. We hold further that in this order of the Holy Ministry there is the probationary, graduating and transition order of the diaconate; and that when a candidate is ordained Elder or Presbyter he has all the functions the ministry can give him. These are the ORDERS. There may be *offices* in these *orders*, but the Presbyter is complete in *orders*. He can baptize, solemnize matrimony, bury the dead, and preach the word which we make the functions in the order of Deacon; and he can consecrate the elements, administer the Holy Sacraments, assist to ordain and set apart ministers, govern in the Church of God, and if necessary consecrate a Bishop, which we make the additional functions in the order of Presbyter or Elder. Or the body of Elders may delegate ordaining and governing functions to overseers whom we call Bishops. This is our Bishop;

THIS IS OUR EPISCOPACY,

and this ordaining power in behalf of the presbyters and this governing power as the Presbyters may direct are certainly in the General Superintendency of the Basis. It is not so much a question through what grades, offices or orders the man has come, as what are his authority, functions and powers? The two orders Deacon and Elder or Presbyter as we hold them, graduate the one into the other, the less being included in the greater. To talk of a Bishop being an order over the others is rampant prelacy: is what I never was taught, learned or accepted. The Ministerial

SUCCESSION IS IN THESE PRESBYTERS.

Here is the succession in all its powers, offices and functions. These Presbyters may

all engage in ordaining and governing, after the manner of a democracy of the presbyters: that is Presbyterianism. Or they may elect one or more of their number to ordain, and clothe him or them with powers of government more or less; that is Methodist Episcopacy; Presbyterian Episcopacy; a limited monarchy of Episcopacy over the democracy of Presbyterianism. If they govern and ordain by Presbyteries and Synods, that is Presbyterianism, and the connexional bond is comparatively weak. If they govern and ordain by overseers elected and authorized by the Supreme General Conference in which reside the unity and authority of the entire Church, these overseers being the agents of that General Conference and therefore of the united Church, that is Episcopal Methodism;

THE CONNEXIONAL BOND IS STRONG,

the succession sound, and the oversight secure. This view and this alone vindicates the Fathers, and explaining their fundamental maxim that the

METHODIST BISHOP IS FIRST AMONG EQUALS ;

first in office, but equal in orders. And as John Wesley recommended his Episcopacy to the American Methodists,—though he of all men denounced the use of the name Bishop—to give them a united Church government in the supremacy and unity of the General Conference as it then was, and thereby secure to the people the purity of the doctrines and perpetuity and regularity of the sacraments, all under the care of the General Conference and the supervision of its authorized agents; and as these things and these principles and methods are secured in the proposed Basis, I am free to express my conviction that the Methodist Episcopacy is

BY NO MEANS DONE AWAY

in the Basis of Union. Its principle, spirit and method are there in a very good sense preserved.

But when we are dealing with the constitutional question and the relations of the General Conference and the Quarterly Meeting Conferences in this important business we must be governed by our own Book of Discipline, and our Constitution as it stands to-day. Our view of our Episcopacy is very clearly set forth in the following question and answer: "If by death, expulsion or otherwise there be no Bishop remaining in our Church, what shall we do? The General Conference shall elect a Bishop; and the Elders or any three of them who shall be appointed by the General Conference for that purpose, shall ordain him according to our form of ordination." From this it is plain enough the succession and authority are not in a papacy or even an Episcopacy, but in the Elders, and they can erect an Episcopate out of the Presbytery; they can elect and ordain, or, as the Discipline otherwise puts it, consecrate a Bishop; but all must be done under the Constitution and by and with the authority of the General Conference. The Methodist Episcopacy does not come down from above by a superior order, but lives in the parity of the Presbyters and their action. And yet to show us the perfection of this parity or equality the normal method of constituting a Bishop is "by the election of the General Conference and the laying on of the hands of three Bishops, or at least of one Bishop and two elders." Now what constitutes our Bishoprick? Is it the life-term? I find no such requirement in our Discipline. Is it in the possession of certain powers? We have always been changing the powers from greater to less, or less to greater. It is, as I understand it, the election by the General Conference, the consecration or setting apart to the office, and the clothing with certain powers, greater or less, at the will of the Conference of Elders. No one will pretend that the General Conference may not change its mode of election or alter the ritual of consecration at pleasure. Our Discipline further provides that in the absence of a Bishop to preside in the Annual Conferences, and in default of his appointment of a President to act in his place, the Conference shall elect a President from the Presiding Elders who shall perform within his Conference all the duties of a Bishop, ordination excepted.

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From all this it is clear that we make ordination the special duty of a Bishop, that the Elders can ordain even a Bishop himself, and that if the two words, "ordination excepted," were omitted, which the General Conference is competent to do, the Presiding Elder, though unordained as a bishop, might, besides performing all the other duties of a Bishop, ordain candidates to the sacred ministry. Whence it would appear that special consecration is not indispensable to the spirit, essence, power, purpose and effect of our Episcopacy. It is the Elder's seal to their election and appointment, and not the communication of a spiritual and divine efficacy.

The question is, Is the Episcopacy done away?

IT MAY BE GREATLY MODIFIED,

but is it abolished? If it is the election that carries the Episcopacy, then Episcopacy is in the Basis of Union, at least in some degree. If it is the consecration to the office that carries the Methodist Episcopacy, then our Episcopacy is not necessarily in the Basis of Union, and may be said to be done away. If the Episcopacy stands upon both the election and the special consecration, then at least one of its supports is left, and that likely the stronger support, the Bishop-elect being already an ordained elder. But if, as our authorities maintain, the Methodist Episcopacy is not an order, but an office in the Presbytery, and if, as John Wesley clearly understood it, the end and aim of that office is to perpetuate in the Presbytery and in their behalf the line of ordinations, and the ministerial office in the Holy Sacraments, conducting these ordinations and authorizing these Sacraments under the sanction and direction of the entire body of the Presbytery, and in the name or the whole Church, then the Methodist Episcopacy is not done away in the Basis. Its gist, aim, purpose, and results are secured and preserved in the Basis, though there be no stipulation that there be any special consecration or ritual induction to this office. It will be for this General Conference to say whether in its opinion the Episcopacy is done away by the Basis, for that decision will affect the vote to be taken in the Quarterly Meeting Conferences. But for myself, though neither the name Bishop, nor the life term of the office, nor the special ceremonial consecration to the office is found in the Basis of Union, while these are evidently important modifications of our Episcopacy, holding as I do that the Bishop is in orders but a Presbyter, and is by office considered apart from the General Superintendency, the agent of the General Conference, that is, of the Church, in the preservation of the line of ordinations, and of the purity, efficiency, and sufficiency of the Holy Sacraments, I do not consider that our Methodist Episcopacy is by any means in constitution, nature, force, and effect done away in the Basis of Union. If I thought that the General Superintendency was gone, and no vestige of the Episcopacy left, I could not raise, I would not raise either hand or voice in favor of the Basis of Union now submitted to this body, and possibly to the Church for approval. And I am persuaded there are many more of my mind in this General Conference. Methodist Union may be desirable for many reasons, but it might be secured at too great a cost.

Once it is settled, if it should be so settled that the plan of our Superintendency is not destroyed; that our Episcopacy is not done away, and the other restrictive rules are not infringed, the vote in the Quarterly Meeting Conferences may be made less exacting; but still great practical difficulties remain, and questions of vast importance for the Quarterly Conferences to consider, should this General Conference deem it wise to send those questions on to those subordinate Conferences. This General Conference will no doubt consider the Basis article by article and item by item, and give its deliverance thereupon. And should the General Conference decide that the restrictive rules are infringed, and so virtually declare against the Basis, it is competent for the Quarterly Conferences to initiate measures and make recommendations in due course. But we will all agree, and no doubt our Quarterly Meeting Conferences will heartily coincide with us, that if the General Conference find anything in the Basis fatal to Union and beyond the reach of this Conference, so far as practicable the agitation on

the question had better cease. Wherefore this General Conference before rising will, I presume, in the exercise of its best wisdom make provision for either alternative, the success or failure of Union upon the Basis, that the Church may be preserved from destruction and unrest.

Objections to Union on the Basis all have observed, have come up freely from all the Bodies interested from their various points of view. Two of the Bodies say, "You have infringed on our Lay Delegation, excluding it from the Stationing Committee, the very point of power and the very place we desire its action. The Lay Delegation you have yielded us is but a tease and a fraud." The other two, the larger bodies reply, "We have no Lay Delegation in the Annual Conferences, nor have we desired or sought it, but we conceded this for the sake of Union." The largest body says, "You have invaded our pastoral rights and destroyed the autonomy of our Annual Conferences by introducing laymen on the one hand and imposing upon us the Presidency of the General Superintendency on the other." The other bodies reply, some of them, that "Lay Delegation is with them a settled principle, and must in some effective form be recognized in the Annual Conferences; else so far as they are concerned there is no Union." And we reply, so far as we are concerned, that with us the supremacy of the General Conference and the unity of the Church and its authority in that General Conference are settled principles, and that to secure these things we

MUST HAVE A GENERAL SUPERINTENDENCY,

and the Presidency of that Superintendency in the Annual Conferences; and that ordinations and all supreme official acts of authority must be done under the authority of the General Conference, that is, of the entire Church, and in its name. Else so far as we are concerned there can be no Union. One contends for the laical interests, another for the pastoral, and another for the connexional and governmental. One says we have invested funds in pastoral and personal interests. The others say, Prove your special investments, and we ask no share of them unless we or our Churches raise amounts proportional to yours. Albeit in Connexional funds, as the Educational and Missions, we are not behind you, and we have no idea that our debts on Church property proportionally exceed yours. One pushes on the Alabama claims, talks of constructive damages, and boasts a giving power. The others say, "From numbers and chances we have done at least as much as you. We are ready to compare notes." Some of them say it is a degradation of the Annual Conference President to be displaced by the General Superintendent. We answer, we would like to see where the degradation comes in, and which is the officer degraded, if degradation it is: an Annual Conference President that yields to a General Superintendent, or the General Superintendent that yields to the Conference President? Who does the yielding? All around they say, The essential points of our Church polity are gone; one side declaring that Episcopacy is sacrificed, others as stoutly maintaining that the iron-handed grip of Episcopacy is all but crushing out their vitality and liberty, some affirming that lay delegation is all given up, and others complaining that they are burdened and almost smothered with lay delegation. Some are fairly shouting, Our finances are well-nigh ruined; others cry aloud, If Union is a money speculation, we want nothing of it, but we are ready for justice in all things. Some insinuate, Our people cannot bear your preachers; the others as tartly reply, We prefer our own men and our own congregations, and should be very glad had you left us undisturbed by this Union agitation. And thus you would think these Methodist people have nothing in common; no common ground of doctrine or usages; no common origin or history; no common heritage or hopes; no common feelings, desires, sympathies, purposes or aims; diversity all, all antagonism. But if we go patiently through all the objections on the one side or the other we will find most of them balanced off closely enough for Christian men, agreeing in doctrine, desiring organic union, and preferring Christ and His cause to worldly honor and emolument, in the name of love, good-will, and increased power for good, to strike the balance to the account of spiritual and eternal profit, unite their energies, affections and resources for God, and trust Him to make up all their lack out of His fullness in Christ.

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Though this be all so, and though I am firmly persuaded that the organic union of the Methodisms of this land is one of the duties of the hour, I am as firmly persuaded that, humanly speaking, Methodist union is utterly impracticable. Men cannot be driven into it; they cannot be coaxed into it; they cannot be bought into it; they cannot be flattered into it; they cannot be deceived or hoodwinked into it; they cannot be excited into it, and they cannot be reasoned or convinced into it. No art, device, power, or wisdom of man can accomplish this work. If it is ever done with unanimity and success—and if not so done it is better not done at all—it will be because all partake more of the mind of Christ, are filled with His Spirit, and are led by Him in simplicity and humility into all truth. While we do not for a second imagine that the superior part of the intelligence of the Churches or the higher piety was assembled in the Joint Committee in session in Toronto, we are confident that if that spirit, and knowledge in subjection to that spirit could be brought to bear upon this important question in all our assemblies throughout all grades in all the Churches there would not be much trouble about Union.

It is not a question of superior intelligence or acumen, or of firmer adhesion to matters of secondary importance; but it is a question of Christian love, justice, and truth, and of knowledge obedient to love, justice and truth. If Methodist Union be according to these things we ought to have it. If it be not according to these things we had better let it alone. If it be for mere worldly honor, that we may be a "great Church," or have a place in a "great Church;" that there may be larger emoluments to men already well-sustained; that there may be less contributions by those already doing too little; that there may be ease to those already too little employed; that we may obtain an undue advantage over others or resist them in the acquisition of their rights; if there prevail the secular, sinister, or selfish motives, we want to have nothing to do with it. But if it be for the glory of Christ, for the economy of men and means for His service, for the removal of occasions of irritation and strife, for the cultivation of the spirit of unity, for the improvement of Discipline and a stricter conformity to Methodist usages, for the better care of our children and youth, and the more effective organization and operation of our circuit work, the better direction of our energies in missions and Church extension, and general furtherance of the cause of the Redeemer, we need at least to consider the matter very carefully, honestly, and in the fear of God. We may not surrender Scriptural, primary, and fundamental principles, and we shall not be asked by genuine Christian men to make such surrender. But we may be righteously asked closely and conscientiously to examine which are Scriptural and indispensable, and which may be conceded in the interests of love, unity, Christian progress and the advancement of our common Methodism. Surely in such an issue and such an hour we shall not take counsel of bigotry, narrowness or prejudice. Nor shall we take counsel of envy, suspicion and fear. We shall pray to be saved from arrogant assumption on the one hand, and from the weakness of too pliant and ready concession on the other. We shall seek the single eye that the whole body may be full of light. In Toronto there was keen apprehension and full comprehension of important principles, strong contention for them in love, and a Christian surrender of cherished usages, and an intelligent reconciliation of diverse polities under the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was the glow and fervor of that baptism that brought men and systems together in reconciliation and peace. While on the one hand principles were tenaciously held, on the other the men assembled were evidently strongly desirous of carrying out, if practicable, the instructions of their various Churches, and ascertaining whether a Basis of Union could be found worthy of the consideration of the Churches. This was not an easy thing to do, and it was not done without aid from above. And there is not the first qualification here or elsewhere for weighing these grave issues without this baptism of light and love. Without it we fail, with it we reach the right conclusion, be that for Union or against it. Oh that now the Holy Spirit might come upon us in power, and upon all the assemblies, members, and meetings of our Church, that shall have to do with this important business; and upon all the brethren and assemblies of the brethren of the Methodist Churches of this country that are in the midst of similar perplex-

ities and responsibilities. We are anxious to be right and safe ourselves, and we are anxious they should be right and safe. The Lord protect and guide us all. In all our deliberations let us wait humbly and earnestly upon God. I have said this is my only hope of Union; and it is the one direction of my desire to receive it in this way. I expect it, I seek for it, I want it in no other way. When I look at the ways of the world, and the narrowness, ignorance, prejudice, selfishness, pride and worldliness manifested in human counsels and affairs, when I remember the power of party spirit, bigotry, and the satisfaction of a little revenge, even in renewed hearts, and in Christian society; when I remember the false views we get of once asserted right, the obstinacy with which we maintain cherished opinions, and the reluctance with which we yield them, when I think of the suspicion and fear with which we are apt regard others' advancement, and the haughtiness and conceit with which we are apt to make our own; when I think how the unkind words and acts of others rankle in our souls and stir us to hatred, while we imagine our own should be passed over or forgotten, when I think what, this human heart is, and what the mind is under the influence of this heart, and when I review the histories of the Methodisms of this Dominion, humanly speaking, I say Methodist Union here is an impossibility. If ever accomplished peacefully and well, it shall certainly be of God. So that as in the guidance of the children of Israel to the promised land, while on the one hand none but the great God could do it, on the other hand its accomplishment was the demonstration that it was of God. Yet the people passed through all its stages waiting upon God in obedience and faith. And so they proved the will and owned the power of God.

We are now led out into the midst of agitation for Union. Perhaps no one here is to blame for it. Perhaps no one here can claim the credit of it. We seem to be here providentially. Our beloved Zion certainly needs not to be ashamed of her history. She has sturdily and amid great sacrifice contended for imperishable principles, and left her impress upon the political and religious character of this country. She has no apology to offer to men for her existence and work. She fought for the freedom of Church from State, and this has been achieved. She fought for the voluntary support of the Gospel ministry and this has been achieved. She fought for the ecclesiastical rights of those that were called dissenters to perform the ordinances and enjoy the immunities of religion, and these have been secured. She fought for the civil and political liberties of this people, and they have been established and maintained. She contended, labored and suffered in the midst of the segregating influences around her for a solid Church government, with a vigorous central authority, such as John Wesley recommended to the Methodists of America in order to the perpetuation and purity of the gospel ministry and the security and orderly proceeding of the Holy Sacraments among the people, and the style of government has been recognized, vindicated and honored. These principles she can never desert. By them she must stand or perish. Now the question is upon her whether she shall best proclaim the doctrines of our holy religion, preserve the sacraments to the people, promote the glory of God and the liberty and happiness of mankind by continuing in her separate existence as the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, or by uniting with the other Methodist bodies of the country for the propagation of the same doctrines and the perpetuation of the same principles, liberties and rights. With the opening North-West and the Divine and providential indications and calls from heathen lands, which is the better way? Shall we be restricted to this Province or this Dominion: or, uniting with others, seek the ends of the earth to carry our principles thither?

Since my General Conference, and therefore my Church, have so often declared for Union—though personally having never advocated union, and hitherto perhaps not so strongly in favor of it as I ought to have been—and since what I believe a rational and fair basis of compromise has been found, I think we ought now to prepare for Union. And when I review what the other bodies have yielded of their cherished ideas and principles, and especially call to mind how the Methodist brethren of the Eastern Provinces, who apparently have nothing to gain by Union, in a spirit of love

accepted the compromise and co-operated with us in the formation of the Basis, I am convinced the Spirit of our God was with us, and that a work was accomplished that never could have been accomplished except under His guidance and influence. And so I am persuaded that, even as occurs in the conversion of every sinner to God, while there is a work that absolutely cannot be done without God's Spirit, it can very easily be done by the Spirit of the Lord when the man or men submit to His direction and rule.

But we must also remember that while God's special works, like the conversion of men, are impossible to us, it is not impossible to us to hinder or reject God's special works, as many a man rejects his own conversion and plunges into darkness. My only anxiety in the matter is, that we know the will of God and do it. And to this end we must walk in humility and purity before Him, with the eye single to His glory, and in all things submit ourselves to the teaching of His Word and the ever blessed Holy Ghost. Oh, for His abiding upon this Conference, and in all our hearts! Whether we unite or remain separate as now, we all need the Holy Ghost.

From all these considerations this Conference, our Quarterly Conferences, and our Church can easily gather my spirit and convictions in this important business. Personally I had been better satisfied had this agitation not arisen, but I dare not speak against what may be the providence of God. Whether of good or evil, or for good or ill, a mighty movement for the unification of our Methodisms is upon us, and we must meet its issues. Let us prepare to meet them with intelligence, calmness, and brotherly love, and in the love and fear of God. If our Church constitutionally says "Union," let us all say it and stand together. If our Church constitutionally reject this Basis, let us remain loyally together and prosecute the work of God. If the Church constitutionally reject the Basis and say "No" to Union, my voice then would be to brace up our polity, rebuild the broken walls and give our people that to which they will loyally adhere. But for the present hour, when I look at the interests of the Church of Christ to be advanced by a united Methodism, the economy of our men and means here, and the better direction of our energies in the North-West of our Dominion, and in remote parts of the earth, the removal of the occasions of friction and contention betwixt rival denominations holding the same doctrines, occupying the same fields and often the same homes, the incitements to brotherly love and peace, the improved enforcement of discipline, the better systematizing of our claims, our societies and Sabbath-schools, the greater vigor of our educational institutions, and Publishing Concerns, and wider dissemination of a harmonious and homogeneous literature, the increased spiritual momentum of such a body if it abide in unity, humility and love, when on the other hand I consider that it cannot be that the Methodists of this Dominion are for ever to remain divided and at cross purposes, if not in conflict, that the longer Union is delayed the more difficult practically, if not constitutionally, it becomes; that our own Conference has brought our polity nearly to the Union line in the Basis; that though important concessions are made, yet upon honest conviction our sacred interests are guarded and our central and fundamental positions in a good degree maintained; that there is no likelihood that any of the bodies will ever be in a better fraternal spirit or make larger concessions, seeing each has conceded according to its convictions of duty and honor; that if there be no Union now there is great danger of even fiercer strife; that though there may be objections to the Basis for each Church from its own point of view, and practical difficulties in it, yet forbearance and love under light from above can make them temporary and transient; and the Spirit of the Lord and true Christian faith and works which we may reasonably pray for and expect can in proper time remove all difficulties, heal all breaches, and lead to success; when I look on this side and then on that I am constrained to say that in my judgment the time has come for the union of the Methodist Churches of this country: the time for rising above old contentions, chronic irritation, personal interests, narrow views, and every impulse, feeling, and consideration, but the cause of God and the settled principles of religion, honor and truth. Wherefore I would

say deliberately and in the fear of God that as for me I would accept the union, and I would accept it upon the proposed Basis. And I humbly advise our Conferences and people, in view of all the interests involved, to accept it, and to prepare in the love of God and the brethren to meet its issues. Nevertheless I am, as I trust we all are, with our people in their constitutional procedure, and am resolved with them to maintain Episcopal Methodism separate and distinct, or to carry its fundamental and central principles into the united Church, under solemn league and covenant in constitutional action there to be perpetuated.

It is objected we are giving up everything : we are giving up the General Superintendency. I reply, the Basis preserves as solid, though not so extended a General Superintendency as our own. Again, that we are giving up the Episcopacy. I reply, that we are preserving it, except the life tenure and the special consecration to the office. In these matters we are preserving the unity of the Church, and the supremacy and authority of the General Conference, in some regards even above what we have now ; we are preserving the supervision of the work and the agency of the General Conference in all connexional and general work, and the power of the General Conference for the Church to conduct the ordinations and preserve the sacraments, which is the pith and core, the meaning and extent of our Episcopacy ; and all of which are the cardinal principles of Episcopal Methodism. Again, that we are giving up our Traveling Presiding Eldership. I reply that the General Conference in Hamilton left that with the Annual Conferences, to station the Presiding Elders, just where the Basis will likely leave it. Indeed the General Conference in Hamilton brought down our Episcopacy, our Itinerant General Superintendency, and our traveling Presiding Eldership very nearly to the level of the Basis, of Union. So that we in these regards have neither very much to boast of, to give up, nor to defend. Again, that we are giving up our diaconate. I reply, that is about the only distinctly constitutional possession we have left to give up. The disciplinary "divers orders" of ministers, and as we are to-day, the admission of laymen in equal numbers to the Annual Conferences, present the two main difficulties to my mind, and the two main objections to Union—the former constitutional, the latter practical. Yet the Holy Scriptures allow large range for variety in Church government, and Methodism has wonderful powers of adaptation. Again, that we are giving up the ordination of our local preachers. I reply this is a provision of former times, not how necessary, the propriety of which among us is gravely doubted ; and which, with or without Union, may not be long retained. Again, that we are giving up our veto power in the Quarterly Conferences. I reply that we are substituting a better veto power in the General conference, and more, according to the genius of Episcopal Methodism in establishing undoubted the supremacy of the General Conference, and enabling it within itself to complete its legislation. Again, that we are giving up our magnificent property. I reply, that in an honorable and honest Union, according to the Basis by which only can we be bound, we are keeping all our property, and getting besides three dollars to every one we now own. Again, that we are dishonoring the old men, the dying fathers, in giving up the polity and principles for which they suffered, toiled, and contended. I reply, that we are paying them the highest honor, preserving most effectively their energy and life work, and erecting to their sacred memory the grandest monument by carrying their principles into the United Church, and planting the essential constituents of their polity in the richer soil and larger fields of the one humble, earnest Methodism of the wide Dominion. And all the Churches can make the same or similar replies and allegations in their proper degree and sphere. Wherefore, as we stand to-day I see no reasonable way but to adopt the proposed basis of Union, let the other Churches do as they will. If they adopt it in godly sincerity let us be ready in godly sincerity to unite with them. If they reject it, it will bring relief to many of our minds, but I had rather they reject it than we, with the eyes of this Dominion upon us, and of the whole continent, and of both hemispheres, and of Christian and godly men of all ages, and of the angels, and of God. And may the God of all grace and peace by His Holy Spirit guide us to the wisest, soundest, and safest conclusions, to the praise of His Holy Name.

