

METHODIST UNION.

The question of union of the several Methodist bodies of this Dominion was one of the main questions before the General Conference in session at Hamilton, the past three weeks, and is no doubt interesting to all, more or less. We give below the report of the Union Committee.

The Committee appointed by the General Conference to consider the question of a union with the several branches of Methodism in this Dominion, viz., the Methodist Church of Canada, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada, the Primitive Methodist Church, Bible Christian Church, beg to submit the following report:—Your Committee, in accordance with instructions received from the General Conference, has met the several committees appointed by the other Churches above named, with the view to ascertain if such a general union is practicable, and what modification, if any, of the existing economy of the various churches would be regarded as essential in any proposed basis of union. We found the brethren composing the above-named Committee ready to co-operate cordially in the endeavour to reach a common understanding in reference to term of union, and by a hearty and unanimous vote the discipline of the Methodist Church of Canada was accepted as a basis of negotiations. At the same time it was felt that no union could be lasting or beneficial which does not carry with it the general consent of the membership of the churches represented, and that to secure this some mutual concessions would be necessary. In regard to doctrines, general rules, usages, and constitution of the lower courts, no difference of opinion was expressed. In regard to the General Conference there were two points in which certain concessions were desirable, viz., General Superintendency and lay representation in the annual conference. The representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church express themselves as attaching great importance to the principals of Superintendency, but not in the particular form in which it has hitherto existed among them. They were of opinion that the church which they represented would yield the life appointments and separate ordination, but would stand firmly by the principle of an Itinerant Superintendency in some form, leaving the powers and functions of the office an open question. The representatives of Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian Churches while not advocating superintendency *per se*, expressed themselves as willing to accept the principle in order to promote a general union, provided that the other bodies would concede the principle of lay representation in all our Church courts be so recognized as to admit laymen into one annual Conference to some extent, and in some form. 2nd. The paragraph 86, page 39, of the discipline referring to the election by the general conference of its President be so amended as to provide for an Itinerant General Superintendency in some form. In reference to the former resolution, it was distinctly understood that the lay representation in the Annual Conference was not to affect the composition of the Stationing Committee or the examination of ministerial character. Your Committee having carefully considered the whole subject, in view of the desirableness of a United Methodist in Canada would venture to earnestly recommend the General Conference to adopt the above resolutions. It further recommends that the General Conference direct the appointment of a mixed Committee consisting of 27 persons, viz.:—Seven by the Toronto Conference, seven by the London Conference, five by the Montreal Conference, three by the Nova Scotia Conference, New Brunswick, and by the Newfoundland Conference to meet the Committee of the other bodies in the City of Toronto on the last Tuesday in November. The church in which the meeting shall be held and the hour of meeting to be arranged by the Toronto Conference. It further recommends that the members of the above named Committee be elected by the representatives of the several annual Conferences here present, and that said committee meet for organization before the rising of the General Conference. It still further recommends that should the Joint Committee agree as to the details of a basis of union. The plan of union agreed upon shall be submitted to the Quarterly Boards for approval or otherwise at the next February quarterly meeting. It is further recommended that when the superintendents of circuits be required to report immediately to the Secretary of the General Conference the vote of the quarterly meetings, and should it be found that two-thirds of the quarterly meeting voting thereon have declared in favour of the plan of union proposed by the Joint Committee, the President of the General Conference shall convene the General Conference in order to give effect to the proposed union, said meeting of the General Conference to be held subsequently to the meeting of the Annual Conference. It further recommended that when the General Conference adjourn it adjourn to meet at the call of the chair. All of which is respectfully submitted, Wm. Williams, Chairman. W. C. Brown, Secretary. The report was received and ordered to be printed.

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