

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Master of Sacred Theology Thesis

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

4-1-1965

The United Church of Canada History of the Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches of Canada

Walter Seehagel

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/stm>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Seehagel, Walter, "The United Church of Canada History of the Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches of Canada" (1965). *Master of Sacred Theology Thesis*. 332.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/stm/332>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Sacred Theology Thesis by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE PRESBYTERIAN, METHODIST,
AND OTHER DENOMINATIONS IN CANADA

Short Title

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Walter F. Saubagel

April 1953

33767

Approved by:

Carl L. Meyer
Professor

Harold H. Moore
Professor

35767

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
HISTORY OF THE UNION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN, METHODIST,
AND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES OF CANADA

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Walter F. Seehagel

April 1965

35767

Approved by: Cecil L. Meyer
Advisor

Herbert Meyer
Reader

35767

BV
4070
C69

M3
1965
no. 17
C.2

.....	1
.....	7
.....	7
.....	13
.....	15
.....	30
.....	38
.....	42
.....	48
.....	54
.....	64
.....	67
.....	71
.....	79
.....	87
.....	102
.....	103
.....	109
.....	115
.....	130
.....	133
.....	140
.....	148
.....	156
.....	159
.....	161
.....	167
.....	173

Chapter		Page
	VIII. CONCLUSION	Page
	LIST OF TABLES	iv
	Evaluation of the Movement	186
Chapter		
	I. INTRODUCTION	1
	II. CANADIAN BACKGROUNDS OF THE UNITING CHURCHES	7
	The Congregationalists	7
	The Methodists	15
	The Presbyterians	25
	III. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE UNION MOVEMENT AND EARLY EFFORTS AT UNION	38
	Early Advocates of Union	38
	Motives for Union	42
	The Period of Co-operation	48
	The Local Union Churches	54
	IV. FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD UNION	64
	Formation of Union Committees in the Uniting Churches	67
	The Joint Union Committee	71
	Preparing the Basis of Union	79
	Problems	95
	V. REACTION OF THE UNITING CHURCHES	102
	Congregational Reaction	103
	Methodist Reaction	109
	Presbyterian Reaction	115
	VI. SECURING ENABLING LEGISLATION	130
	Preparing the Bill	133
	The Bill in the Dominion Parliament	140
	The Bill in the Provincial Legislatures	148
	The Effect of the Bill	156
	VII. CONSUMMATION OF THE UNION	159
	Taking the Vote	161
	The Inauguration	167
	State of the Church at the Consummation of Union	173

Chapter	Page
VIII. CONCLUSION	176
Summary Statement.	176
Evaluation of the Movement	186
APPENDIX A.	193
APPENDIX B.	194
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	195

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Amalgamation of Churches Prior to Union.	62
2. Results of Methodist Vote on Union	111
3. Results of First Presbyterian Vote on Union.	118
4. Results of Presbyterian Vote on Basis of Union	119
5. Results of Second Presbyterian Vote on Union	125
6. Results of Ballot on Union, Presbyterian Churches	164

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The date of June 10, 1925, is one of the most significant dates in Canadian church history. On that date, three denominations, two strains of historic Christianity, merged. On that date, the Presbyterian

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Amalgamation of Churches Prior to Union.	62
2. Results of Methodist Vote on Union	111
3. Results of First Presbyterian Vote on Union.	118
4. Results of Presbyterian Vote on Basis of Union	119
5. Results of Second Presbyterian Vote on Union	125
6. Results of Ballot on Union, Presbyterian Churches	164

Each of the uniting churches was itself a united church. The Presbyterian Church in Canada, which came into being fifty years prior to the formation of The United Church of Canada, was the result of nine different unions within that communion. The Methodist Church, Canada, which came into being forty-one years prior to its entry into The United Church of Canada, was the result of eight different unions within the Methodist family. The Congregational Churches of Canada, consummated a union even while they were negotiating union with the Presbyterians and Methodists, when nineteen years prior to the formation of The United Church of Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada was

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The date of June 10, 1925, is one of the most significant dates in Canadian church history. On that date, three denominations, representing two strains of historic Christianity, merged. On that date, the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Congregational Churches of Canada, representing historic Calvinism, and the Methodist Church, Canada, which represented historic Arminianism, united to form The United Church of Canada.

The consummation of this union was achieved only after more than two decades of formal negotiation. The seeds of this union had been sown, however, long before negotiations began. Each of the uniting churches was itself a united church. The Presbyterian Church in Canada, which came into being fifty years prior to the formation of The United Church of Canada, was the result of nine different unions within that communion. The Methodist Church, Canada, which came into being forty-one years prior to its entry into The United Church of Canada, was the result of eight different unions within the Methodist family. The Congregational Churches of Canada, consummated a union even while they were negotiating union with the Presbyterians and Methodists, when nineteen years prior to the formation of The United Church of Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada was

formed. Altogether then, nineteen different unions within the respective uniting churches preceded the union which created The United Church of Canada.

The United Church of Canada was created by an act of Parliament. This does not mean that The United Church of Canada is Canada's state church. Canada does not have a state church. But it does have a national church, and The United Church of Canada is that national church. Its houses of worship dot the Canadian landscape, and its influence is felt in practically every community. It feels a sense of responsibility to all, regardless of race or color or creed. It provides a "home" for people of varying nationalities and backgrounds, as well as varying religious attitudes and convictions. The United Church of Canada is a "modern" church for "modern" man.

This study concerns itself with the movement which brought The United Church of Canada into being. The writer is concerned not so much with the theology and the psychology of the movement, as he is with the history of the movement. Accordingly, the study will endeavor to set forth "how" The United Church of Canada came into being, and not "why" it came into being. It will therefore trace the union movement step by step until its consummation on June 10, 1925.

The study will begin with the Canadian backgrounds of the uniting churches. It is the writer's opinion that an

overview of the beginnings, development, and particularly the union movements within the uniting churches is helpful for an understanding of the later movement that brought these churches together. The study will show that even while the uniting churches were effecting union within their respective families, they were looking to a wider and more comprehensive union.

The study will then take up the union movement proper. It will take note of the beginnings of the movement, and deal with early efforts at union which resulted in cooperation between the uniting churches and the emergence of so-called Local Union Churches. From this point the study will proceed to the period of formal negotiations toward the union. It will deal with the formation of union committees in the respective churches, leading to the formation of the Joint Union Committee, representative of the three negotiating churches. It will take up the work of the Joint Union Committee and show how it went about its task of preparing a basis upon which the negotiating churches might effect a union. A number of problems facing the framers of the Basis of Union will also be noted and briefly considered.

The study will then concern itself with the reaction of the negotiating churches, to the proposed Basis of Union. It will show that both the Methodist and Congregational churches were prepared to take the final steps leading to

union, shortly after the proposed Basis of Union was completed. It will also take note of the long and bitter struggle within the Presbyterian Church, before a final decision to unite with the Methodists and Congregationalists was reached.

The study will then proceed to the matter of securing enabling legislation in the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures. In this section of the study, the writer will deal with the preparation of the proposed legislation, the introduction of that legislation into the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures, and the securing of enabling legislation. In so doing, the study will take note of various efforts to have the legislation disqualified, defeated, and modified in the interests of the non-concurring churches.

After showing that enabling legislation was secured, the study will proceed to the consummation of the union. This section of the study will take note of some of the problems, tensions and rivalries connected with taking a vote in the churches. It will also describe the impressive inaugural service in which the union was consummated, and will give a brief report on the state of the church at the consummation of the union. A summary statement, attempting to draw all the sections of the study together, and an attempt at evaluating the movement, will conclude the study.

The study is of necessity limited in scope and extent. Its primary objective is to give a factual account of the movement which led to the union of the three churches in question. The study is handicapped by reason of the fact that the writer was constrained to work with limited sources. Valuable materials such as personal correspondence of Joint Committee personnel, minutes of meetings and conferences held by various committees and subcommittees, suggestions of groups and individuals to committees, were not available to the writer. Some of these materials have been lost, and those which are extant reside in the archives of The United Church of Canada, to which the writer did not have access.

The writer did, nevertheless, have access to a number of valuable primary source materials. The Joint Union Committee prepared historical statements from time to time, which were published together with the Basis of Union in 1924. Historical summaries appeared also from time to time in the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The latter, together with the Journal of Proceedings of the Methodist General Conference, and the Canadian Congregational Yearbook, formed a valuable source of information. Then too, the Record of Proceedings of the First General Council of The United Church of Canada, contains reports of various committees and boards, which also provide a valuable source of information. The United Church of Canada Act was valuable as a

source of legislative data.

A number of the authors quoted by the writer also furnish primary source material. Men like Dr. S. D. Chown, who was the last General Superintendent of the Methodist Church; Dr. George C. Pidgeon, who became first Moderator of The United Church of Canada; Thomas B. Kilpatrick; Dr. Ephraim Scott, a vigorous opponent of union; and Gershom W. Mason, who was legal counsel for the subcommittee on Law and Legislation, all were "on the scene." The information they supply is that of eyewitnesses who actively participated, in one capacity or another, in the union movement.

The writer has endeavored to make a frank and fair presentation of the facts at his disposal. If facts have been misconstrued or someone has been misinterpreted, it was purely unintentional. It is the writer's hope that this study will make at least a small contribution to the history of the union movement in particular, and to church history in general. He himself has benefited greatly from this study. It is his hope that the reader may benefit in like manner.

Union of Canada. C. E. Silcox, referring to the Congregationalists in his comprehensive study of Church Union in Canada, says that, "in 1925, when Church Union was consummated, they were so small numerically that in the public mind they hardly entered the picture at all, and the union was thought of quite commonly as a Presbyterian-

CHAPTER II

CANADIAN BACKGROUNDS OF THE UNITING CHURCHES

The Congregationalists

To understand and appreciate the movement within Canadian Protestant Christianity, culminating on June 10, 1925, in the union of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches of Canada, it is well to acquaint oneself with the Canadian backgrounds of the three uniting churches. The union of 1925 was really the climax to union movements that were a part of the background and developments of the churches concerned. It will be the writer's purpose therefore, in this chapter, to present a brief overview of the beginnings of the three churches in Canada, and show how they consolidated their forces by a process of amalgamation and union.

By far the smallest numerically, and least influential territorially, of the three uniting churches, was the Congregational Union of Canada. C. E. Silcox, referring to the Congregationalists in his comprehensive study of Church Union in Canada, says that, "in 1925, when Church Union was consummated, they were so small numerically that in the public mind they hardly entered the picture at all, and the union was thought of quite commonly as a Presbyterian-

Methodist affair."¹

Congregationalism in Canada stemmed in the main from two streams of immigration. One stream flowed from the New England States into the Maritime Provinces of Canada, and the other stream flowed from England into Lower Canada.

The first appearance of Congregationalism in Canada was made in the Province of Nova Scotia. About the year 1750, Mather's Church in Halifax was founded as the first dissenting congregation in Canada.² Later in the decade the first extensive settlements in Nova Scotia were made by New England settlers, who had been promised religious liberty by the Nova Scotia legislature. These New England settlers were of Puritan stock and had been raised in Congregational churches. By the year 1770 there were seven Congregational ministers in Nova Scotia.³

The New Englanders settled also in various parts of the Maritime Provinces generally, and organized churches. Just prior to the American Revolution, however, a goodly number of them returned to the United States. This caused no small hardship to the congregations they left behind, and was one

¹C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, Its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 46.

²W. G. Wallace, "Congregationalism," Encyclopedia Canadiana (Ottawa: The Grollier Society of Canada Limited, 1958), III, 70.

³Ibid.

of the contributing factors to the collapse of the early Congregational endeavor in Nova Scotia. The American Revolution also served to separate the Congregational churches from their Associations on the American side of the border, with the result that they could no longer rely on a supply of ministers from New England, and consequently accepted the ministrations of Scottish Presbyterians.

A third factor adversely affecting Congregationalism in Nova Scotia was the invasion of Newlightism, a religious revolt that occurred in Nova Scotia during the height of the American Revolution, and "was characterized by an unusual amount of enthusiasm for things of the spirit."⁴

The central figure in the Newlight movement in Nova Scotia was Henry Aline, a native of Newport, Rhode Island. When still a boy, he moved with his parents to Falmouth, Nova Scotia. Though poorly educated, he seems to have been a voracious reader of religious books of varying kinds, some of which made a deep and lasting impression on him. Aline was a deeply religious individual and placed a great deal of emphasis on the assurance of individual salvation. He conducted a brief but energetic ministry. Preaching his message of personal regeneration, which H. H. Walsh characterizes as a "strange mixture of various systems of

⁴H. H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 117.

theology"⁵ he visited all the chief settlements in the Maritime Provinces and every center where a Congregational church had been established. His energetic ministry was not without effect as he spread his gospel of Newlightism, and in some instances succeeded in breaking up existing societies and planting Newlight congregations beside them. Alline literally "burned himself out" and died at a very early age. He had left his mark, however, and the Newlightism which he preached had, before its disappearance from the scene, succeeded in practically destroying the Congregational Church in the Maritimes. Since most of the Newlight congregations formed a nucleus for the first Baptist Convention in Nova Scotia, Henry Alline is regarded as the father of the Baptist Church in that province.⁶

During the early years of its existence in Canada, Congregationalism received practically no help from England, and, after the outbreak of the American Revolution, very little help was received from New England. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century however, the London Missionary Society did manage to send several ministers to Canada. As a result, Congregationalism found its way to Quebec, when Clark Bentom, sent out by the

⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁶Silcox, op. cit., p. 41.

Missionary Society, founded a church there in 1801.⁷ This particular congregation underwent a whole series of changes until it eventually became a Presbyterian church.

Eighteen years later the first Congregational church was organized in Ontario under rather strange circumstances. This was in reality a union church, inasmuch as its membership consisted partly of Congregationalists and partly of Presbyterians. The organization they effected was called The Congregational-Presbyterian Prince of Peace Society. Inasmuch as they did not have a minister, the local school-teacher was recruited and ordained as their minister.

Even though a number of the ministers sent to Canada under the auspices of the London Missionary Society affiliated with the Presbyterians shortly after their arrival, Congregationalism began to show some signs of progress. In 1827 the Congregationalists, together with the Baptists and Presbyterians, organized a Home Missionary Society with the object of promoting Christianity in the country. The first secretary of the Society was Henry Wilkes "to whom possibly more than to anyone else the later development of Congregationalism is due."⁸ To a degree the Society achieved its objectives. It assisted in establishing many churches, some of them union churches, but many of them purely also

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 43.

Congregational. Before too long, however, the Baptists withdrew and formed their own society, while only a few Presbyterians retained an active interest.

Subsequent to the consolidation of Congregationalism in the homeland, Congregationalism received new impetus in the form of substantial assistance from England. The result was that Congregationalism began to progress rather rapidly in the Maritime Provinces, in Quebec, and particularly in Ontario. In the wake of this progress the churches formed the Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1846, and seven years later the existing unions in Ontario and Quebec were amalgamated to form the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec.⁹

While Congregationalism progressed and attained a certain stature in Eastern Canada, it made very little progress in the West. One of the first and few Congregational churches in the West was organized under the auspices of the Colonial Missionary Society whose purpose was to plant Congregational churches in all the British Colonies. The Society sent W. F. Clarke to Victoria on Vancouver Island, where a congregation was organized in 1859.¹⁰ At that time Victoria harbored a considerable number of colored people seeking asylum from the United States. The minister also

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Walsh, op. cit., p. 261.

did some work among the colored refugees for which he was branded a "nigger preacher," reported to the Colonial Missionary Society, censured, and withdrawn. The endeavor at Victoria consequently collapsed.

Practically nothing further was done in the West until almost twenty years after the Victoria venture. A few Congregational churches sprouted here and there, some of which were the result of strife and dissension within Presbyterian ranks. Congregationalism only touched a few of the major centers of the West, and hardly ventured into frontier territory at all. The net result was that Congregational numbers and influence were practically nil in the West.

In the eastern part of the country Congregationalism was involved in a movement to consolidate its forces. Reference has been made to the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec. Shortly after formal negotiations between the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists began, the above-mentioned unions amalgamated, in 1906, to form the Congregational Union of Canada,¹¹ and a year later took in a number of churches in affiliation with the United Brethren in Christ, on a somewhat federal basis.

¹¹The Canadian Congregational Yearbook, 1906-1907, Thirty-Fourth Annual Volume (Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company, 1906), p. 22.

By this time the Congregationalists were ripe for some sort of wider union. Though Congregationalism had become a recognized and respectable communion, it faced a number of problems which did not seem to admit of any satisfactory solution, outside perhaps, of union with one or several larger and more influential communions. Early in its Canadian history Congregationalism had lost its connection with New England through the war of the American Revolution. The mother church in England was exceedingly slow in organizing for action, and when she finally did, it was too late to be of any real and lasting assistance in Canada. Then too, Congregationalism received little or no benefit from European immigration into Canada. Coupled with this was the fact that it lost some of its best leaders both to the United States and to other denominations on the Canadian scene, particularly the Presbyterians. The fewness of Congregational numbers, and the decentralized form of government, with its emphasis on the independence of the individual congregation, held out little hope for expansion in the vast and sparsely settled Dominion of Canada. Consequently, when overtures for union with larger and more influential bodies were made, it seemed the wise and expedient thing for the Congregationalists to accede to, and even promote such a union.

The Methodists

The second of the three uniting churches to come under consideration is the Methodist Church of Canada. Methodism, in the words of H. H. Walsh, "has long been recognized as one of the determining influences in shaping the national character of English-speaking Canada."¹² Two characteristics of Methodism combined to give it a distinct advantage over its rivals on the Canadian frontier, and validate the claim made by Walsh. One of these characteristics of Methodism was its "class meeting" which had been organized by its founder, John Wesley, with the purpose of keeping his followers true to their conversion experiences. The other characteristic was the "circuit system" with its itinerant ministry. The former served as a check on the extravagances of religious enthusiasm, and the latter was very well suited for the supervision of isolated settlements on the wild Canadian frontier. Consequently, Methodist numbers and influence in Canada grew to rather significant proportions.

Exactly when Methodism had its beginnings in Canada is difficult to determine. It first appeared in what is now Canada, in the person of Laurence Coughlin. Coughlin had been one of Wesley's preachers and came to the colony of

¹²Walsh, op. cit., p. 123.

Newfoundland in 1765.¹³ The following year he was formally engaged for work in the colony by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and later ordained by the Bishop of London. Though officially a minister of the Church of England, his preaching and practice continued to be Methodist. His work met with a considerable amount of opposition both from within and without the church, with the result that he left Newfoundland less than ten years after his arrival, a thoroughly discouraged and weary man. His work had not been in vain, however, and though the field was later occupied by a succession of laymen, the cause of Methodism which he had planted, continued to make progress.

In the Maritime Provinces of Canada, Methodism in Nova Scotia was largely indebted to two different streams of immigration. One consisted of Yorkshire, England Methodists who settled in Cumberland County, beginning in 1772.¹⁴ A notable Methodist leader, characterized by one Methodist historian as the "Apostle of Methodism in the Eastern Provinces,"¹⁵ emerged from the ranks of these immigrants in the person of William Black. A Newlightist revival had broken

¹³J. E. Sanderson, The First Century of Methodism in Canada (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), I, 13.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 16, 17.

¹⁵William Briggs et. al., Centennial of Canadian Methodism (Toronto: William Briggs; Montreal: C. W. Coates; Halifax: S. F. Huestis, 1891), p. 27.

out among the Yorkshire Methodists within a decade of their arrival in Nova Scotia. William Black was converted during the course of this revival. Consequently, at an early age he left his home, and without instruction or appointment embarked on an extensive evangelistic campaign. His efforts resulted in the extension of Methodist principles and the founding and perpetuating of a goodly number of Wesleyan societies.

William Black's ministry was a series of triumphs as he moved from one Maritime province to another; not only in the number of converts he gained for Methodism but also for the men of eminence and rank in Maritime society that he brought into the new movement.¹⁶

As a result of Black's energetic and fruitful ministry his following was soon too large to be taken care of by himself. Black appealed to Wesley for missionaries from England. When England failed to help him, he appealed to the Methodists in the United States. In answer to his plea, the Methodists in the United States assigned Freeborn Garretson and James Cromwell for work in Nova Scotia. They arrived in Halifax in 1785 and began their work.¹⁷ From that date on Methodism became firmly established in Nova Scotia.

Two years prior to the arrival of Garretson and Cromwell in Halifax, the United Empire Loyalists landed in

¹⁶Walsh, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁷Sanderson, op. cit., p. 19.

the Eastern Provinces of Canada. Thus, 1783 is a significant date in Methodist history, significant because, as one Methodist historian put it,

By a coincidence which one cannot but regard as providential, that great evangelistic movement initiated by Mr. Black took definite shape just in time to become a mighty moulding influence for a new population, estimated at not less than twenty thousand, and to form a potent factor in the development of a fine type of national and religious life in the Provinces.¹⁸

This was the second stream of immigration to which Methodism in Nova Scotia was indebted. Without doubt, this stream of immigration gave Maritime Methodism, and Methodism in New Brunswick in particular, a real shot in the arm. It also gave it a highly beneficial tie with the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. Hereafter Methodism flourished in the Maritime Provinces and while it did encounter periodic setbacks and never did outstrip the Presbyterians or the Baptists in numbers, it did gain considerable strength and influence.

The first Methodist preacher in what is today known as Quebec was Commissary Tuffey, a British officer of the 44th Regiment, who came to Quebec in 1780.¹⁹ Tuffey began holding services among the soldiers and immigrants, and continued till his regiment was disbanded and he returned to England.

¹⁸Briggs, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁹Sanderson, op. cit., p. 23.

In what is today known as Ontario, another British officer, Major George Neal, was responsible for the introduction of Methodism. Six years after Mr. Tuffey began his activities in Quebec, Neal began to preach on the Niagara frontier, and continued his efforts for some years.

Following the close of the American Revolution, midway between the year that Tuffey began activities in Quebec and Neal began his activities on the Niagara frontier, Methodist settlers came from the United States and established themselves along the St. Lawrence River and about the Bay of Quinte. These Methodist settlers were, and remained until after the War of 1812, a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

In the wake of these settlers came the Methodist itinerants from the United States. The year 1790²⁰ witnessed the coming of the first of these itinerants, in the person of William Losee. Losee came to Canada to visit some United Empire Loyalist friends. While visiting with them he preached several sermons and so impressed his hearers that they asked him to become their minister. Losee consequently petitioned the New York Methodist Conference, which he was serving, and received authorization to form a Canadian circuit. He then returned to Canada and took up his work in earnest. Losee was followed into Canada by a succession of

²⁰Briggs, op. cit., p. 56.

itinerants from the United States, notable among whom were Nathan Bangs, William Case and Henry Ryan. The resultant close association of early Methodism in Canada with Methodism in the United States was a great boon to the former, for probably no other religious group could command such backing and was so well equipped by nature, organization and experience, to cope with the mass movements and needs of people on the frontier.

This same beneficial association with the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States became a detriment to Canadian Methodism during the War of 1812 and subsequent years. The British Wesleyans began to send missionaries into Canada, and the result was that Methodism in Canada began to be troubled with the problems of British or American affiliation. Needless to say, feeling ran quite high at times. Many of the early Wesleyan missionaries from England refused to stay and went home. Others replaced them, however, and competition continued apace.

In 1820 an agreement was reached between the British Wesleyans and the Methodist Episcopal Church.²¹ By terms of the agreement the British Wesleyans were to occupy what is now Quebec and the Methodist Episcopal Church was to continue to occupy what is now Ontario. Within a few years the agreement was violated and a new controversy began to rage.

²¹Silcox, op. cit., p. 48.

In addition to the various Wesleyan and Methodist Episcopal affiliates in Canada, there emerged also a number of smaller Methodist bodies. One of these smaller Methodist bodies was the New Connexion group, whose missionaries had come from England to Quebec and established some work. In the year 1837²² one of the New Connexion missionaries appeared in Ontario and initiated negotiations with a small Wesleyan society there, with the result that the two merged.²³

Another small group was the Primitive Methodist Church. Two Primitive Methodist laymen, William Lawson and Robert Walker, migrated to Canada from England in 1829,²⁴ and organized a society based on Primitive Methodist principles, in what is now Toronto. They applied for help to the Primitive Methodists of England and received it. The work was strongest in the agricultural districts and spread to various points in Ontario.

Still another small group in Canadian Methodism was the Canada Bible Christian Church. In 1831²⁵ the Bible Christian Society of England appointed two of its missionaries for work in Canada. One of these missionaries, Francis Wetherall, established his work in Prince

²²Ibid.

²³Methodist mergers and unions will be dealt with later in the chapter.

²⁴Sanderson, op. cit., II, 406.

²⁵Ibid., p. 426.

Edward Island and the other, John H. Eynon, in Ontario. Most of the work done by this body was done in these two Provinces.

About one hundred years after the introduction of Methodism in Nova Scotia, Canadian Methodism was still very much divided. During that first century of their existence in Canada the various Methodist bodies were busily engaged in extending their fields of activity, strengthening the work within those respective fields, organizing district meetings and conferences, and actively competing with other denominations as well as with one another. Nevertheless, a number of mergers and unions did take place during the last half of that first century of their existence in Canada, all of which were forerunners of a grand Methodist union in Canada.

Over a period of more than half a century, beginning with the year 1820, Methodism in Canada underwent a total of eight different unions, involving some sixteen separate bodies and culminating in the grand union of 1844. The agreement of 1820 between the British Wesleyans and the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States has already been referred to.²⁶ When four years after the agreement was made, the churches of that territory occupied by the Methodist Episcopal Church formed a separate conference,

²⁶Supra, p. 20.

and again four years after that were recognized as an autonomous communion, known as the Episcopal Methodist Church in Canada, the British Wesleyans considered this a violation of the agreement and promptly sent missionaries into this territory. This led to a controversy which in turn led to a union of the British Wesleyan Conference with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, now called the Wesleyan Methodist Church in British North America. The union was consummated in 1833.²⁷ Two years later a separation occurred and a new Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada came into being, and maintained a separate existence until the union of 1884.

A succession of unions within Methodism followed in the years 1837, 1843, 1847 and 1854 leading to a rather significant union in 1874, when The Methodist Church in Canada came into being. This newest Methodist body brought together the Wesleyan Methodists of the Maritime Provinces, the Wesleyan Methodists of Ontario and Quebec, and the New Connexion Methodists. Subsequent to this union there were four Methodist bodies in Canada still unrelated, namely, the above-mentioned Methodist Church in Canada; The Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada; The Primitive Methodist Church in Canada; and, The Bible Christian Church.²⁸

²⁷Sanderson, op. cit., I, 302-315.

²⁸Silcox, op. cit., p. 51.

These four bodies, looking toward a grand Methodist union, conducted union negotiations over a period of several years, and on September 5, 1883, adopted a basis for union to become effective July 1, 1884.²⁹ The name chosen for the united body was The Methodist Church.³⁰

The combined strength of The Methodist Church at the consummation of union was as follows: Total number of ministers, including superannuated or supernumerary, and probationers, 1,644; total number of members, 169,903, 157,752 of which were considered to hold full membership, and 12,151 of which held probationary membership.³¹

Subsequent to the union of 1884, the Methodists became a rather aggressive church, particularly in Western Canada. Pursuing a vigorous and energetic mission policy, Methodism soon had spiritual commitments from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In addition, Methodism became very much involved in social work. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Methodism seemed to have reached its height, and commitments across the country were becoming a tremendous strain on its resources of men and money. A desire to ease the burden through some sort of church union began to manifest itself among the Methodists.

²⁹Sanderson, op. cit., II, 402.

³⁰See Appendix A for a graphic account of Methodist unions.

³¹Sanderson, op. cit., 404.

The Presbyterians

The history of Presbyterianism in Canada is an extremely complex subject. It is largely the record of a rather complicated series of divisions and unions within the Presbyterian family. The Presbyterian family in Canada was for all practical purposes consolidated in the grand union of 1875 when The Presbyterian Church in Canada came into being. But even then there were dissenting voices and non-concurring ministers and congregations, as there were in 1925, when The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as a church, entered The United Church of Canada. As a matter of fact, there is still today a continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada. It will be the writer's purpose in this section of the chapter, to attempt to unravel some of the complicated threads of Presbyterian history in Canada, and show that the Presbyterian family attained to an appreciable measure of peace and consolidation.

John Thomas McNeill, one of the historians of Presbyterianism in Canada, says:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada may be thought of as a river that has received many tributaries. One who explores the upper waters will at once observe that most of the tributary streams can be traced back to the Church of Scotland. But there are rivulets of other origin as well, which he will not fail to chart.³²

³²John T. McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1875-1925 (Toronto: General Board, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1925), p. 1.

Presbyterian history in Canada begins about the middle of the eighteenth century. It is claimed, however, that there were Presbyterians in Canada long before that.³³ One source places them as early as 1600.³⁴ These early "Presbyterians," it is claimed, were Huguenots, or French Protestants of Calvinistic persuasion. There is no record of significant Huguenot contributions to Presbyterianism in Canada; nevertheless, one would suppose they could be considered one of the "rivulets of other origin" inasmuch as some of their descendants were known to be of the Presbyterian faith.

Another "rivulet of other origin" were the Dutch and the Germans. Shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, a considerable migration from Holland and Germany to Canada took place. Among these immigrants were many German-speaking Reformed or Presbyterian people. It is interesting to note that in connection with this group of immigrants there occurred the first Presbyterian union of a sort, in Canada. The German-speaking immigrants were unable to secure the services of a minister. To solve the problem, one of their own number, Bruin Romcas Comingoe, was ordained according to Presbyterian orders, on July 3, 1770, by a

³³William Gregg, History of the Presbyterian Church In The Dominion of Canada (Toronto: Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Company, 1885), p. 27.

³⁴McNeill, op. cit., p. 4.

temporarily constituted presbytery of two Presbyterian and two Congregational ministers, at Halifax, Nova Scotia.³⁵

This temporarily-constituted presbytery serves as an introduction to yet another "rivulet of other origin" inasmuch as one of the ministers who participated in Comingoe's ordination was the Presbyterian, James Lyon. Lyon, a graduate of Princeton, had been sent to Nova Scotia by the presbytery of New Brunswick, New Jersey. He ministered largely to Presbyterians of Irish origin, most of whom had come to Nova Scotia shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century and just prior to the Scottish migration into Canada, settling in localities like Halifax, Pictou, Truro and Onslow. James Lyon is reputed to have been the first Presbyterian minister to labor in Canada since the days of the early Huguenot ministers.³⁶

The permanent foundations of Presbyterianism in Nova Scotia were laid by missionaries of the Burgher (Associate) and Anti-burgher (General Associate) Synods. Both were Scottish secession groups and had divided on a matter of

³⁵Gregg, op. cit., p. 68.

³⁶McNeill, op. cit., p. 5.

conscience.³⁷ The former had appointed the Rev. Daniel Cock for work in Nova Scotia, which he undertook at Truro in the same year in which Comingoe had been ordained. Within a period of years he was joined by two ministers of the same Synod, and in 1786 the three ministers, together with two laymen, formed the first permanent-type presbytery in Canada, namely, the Burgher Presbytery of Truro.³⁸

In the same year in which the Burgher Presbytery of Truro was organized, Rev. James MacGregor came to Pictou, where James Lyon had served. MacGregor was an Anti-burgher and as such refused overtures to co-operate with the Presbytery of Truro. With Pictou as a base of operations he labored faithfully and long, organizing congregations, building churches, ministering in a great many settlements throughout Nova Scotia and introducing Presbyterianism to New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. In answer to his appeal for help, the Anti-burgher Synod sent two men to assist him and upon their arrival an Anti-burgher presbytery was formed at Pictou in the year 1795,³⁹ consisting of three

³⁷Burgher and Anti-burgher Synods were the result of a split in the Associate Synod of the Secession Church in Scotland. The former was willing to take the oath insisted upon by the government for all who wished to be recognized as Burghers (citizens). The latter refused to take the oath, hence, Anti-burgher, and a split in the synod.

³⁸McNeill, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁹Gregg, op. cit., p. 105.

ministers and a layman. In twenty-two years the old differences between the Burghers and Anti-burghers were forgotten and the two presbyteries, together with the presbytery of Halifax, formed the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. This is what Dr. S. D. Chown, the last General Superintendent of the Methodist Church in Canada, has called the "first church union in Canada."⁴⁰

In the meantime, the Church of Scotland, headwaters for a majority of the "tributary streams" of Presbyterianism in Canada, had entered the Maritime Provinces. During the latter part of the eighteenth century there was a large influx of Presbyterians into the Maritimes and the Church of Scotland did some work among them. However, until the Glasgow Colonial Society was organized in 1825,⁴¹ the Church of Scotland made no organized effort to send ministers into, or establish itself firmly in the Maritimes. Spasmodic efforts only were made. A Church of Scotland minister came to Halifax in 1783 and became pastor of Mather's Church.⁴² His stay was brief and uncomfortable due to the fact that the congregation consisted partly of New Englanders, partly of Scotch, partly of dissenters, and partly of those who

⁴⁰S. D. Chown, The Story of Church Union in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 9.

⁴¹Gregg, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴²Supra, p. 8. Also known as the Protestant Dissenting House and later called St. Matthew's Church.

adhered to the Church of Scotland. In subsequent years a number of other ministers who had been trained in the Church of Scotland came to the Maritimes, some of whom worked under the auspices of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, while others retained their old country connection.

The work during this period was unorganized. But after the Glasgow Colonial Society was organized, it financed, directed and systematized widespread mission work and organized many congregations true to Presbyterianism in Nova Scotia. Nevertheless the work of the former flourished and was formally organized with the formation of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in connection with the Church of Scotland, in 1833.⁴³ Two years later the work was further organized when the Presbytery of New Brunswick became a Synod together with the Presbyteries of St. John and Miramichi.

Even while Presbyterianism was making strides in the Maritime Provinces, people of Presbyterian persuasion experienced the faithful and fruitful services of Presbyterian ministers in that portion of Canada which now constitutes the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The history of Presbyterianism in these two Provinces begins at the city of Quebec. A Presbyterian congregation was established there some time after Quebec was captured by General Wolfe in

⁴³Gregg, op. cit., p. 331.

1759.⁴⁴ The first pastor of the congregation, George Henry by name, had been ordained in the Church of Scotland and has the distinction of being the first Presbyterian minister in that province. After a pastorate of thirty years, the latter of which were almost totally inactive, Henry was succeeded by another Church of Scotland minister, Dr. Alexander Spark, who served the congregation over a period of twenty-four years until his death in 1819.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, a contemporary of Dr. Spark, also a Church of Scotland minister, and a former army chaplain, John Bethune, pioneered Presbyterianism in the city of Montreal. After a brief stay in Montreal he moved to Williamstown in Glengarry County, Ontario. In this area he conducted a long and fruitful ministry primarily among United Empire Loyalists who had migrated to the area from the United States.

During these years the Church of Scotland endeavor in Ontario and Quebec was largely unorganized. It was left to the Dutch Reformed Church of the United States to make the first systematic effort to send missionaries into the area under consideration, which it did just before the turn of the century.

While Bethune and the Dutch Reformed ministers were at work in the eastern and central part of what is now Ontario,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 145.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 148-151.

other Presbyterian ministers found their way into the Niagara district, most of them by way of the United States, and organized a considerable number of congregations. A number of presbyteries were organized in the area, and in addition to them a number of individual congregations sprouted as offshoots of American presbyteries. By the year 1833 there were a number of active presbyteries representing three strains of Presbyterians in the area now constituting Ontario and Quebec. The Presbytery of the Canadas had been formed in 1818, and was composed largely of Secessionist ministers.⁴⁶ This presbytery was constituted a synod in 1820, but failed, and was reorganized as the United Presbytery of Upper Canada.⁴⁷ In 1831 it became the United Synod of Upper Canada, just one week after the formation of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland. Nine years later these two synods united under the name of the latter.⁴⁸

By this time the presbyteries of Stamford and Niagara were also in existence, the latter having been organized in 1833. The following year a new body was organized in the territory under consideration, namely, a branch of the reunited Secession Church of Scotland. This group was active

⁴⁶Silcox, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴⁷McNeill, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴⁸Ibid.

primarily in Western Ontario, although it did organize a congregation in Montreal. In 1843 this presbytery became a synod and fourteen years later assumed the name of the United Presbyterian Church in Canada.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Presbyterianism penetrated, though ever so slightly, into the vast area west of Ontario. Through the instrumentality of Lord Selkirk, Presbyterian settlers came to the Red River Settlement in what is now Manitoba, in 1812 and subsequent years. It was not till 1851 however, that the first Presbyterian missionary came to the area in the person of John Black. During the intervening years a goodly number of Presbyterians had attached themselves to other communions, notably the Anglican. For eleven years Black was the only Presbyterian minister in the area. Eventually however, other Presbyterian missionaries came and labored not only among the Red River settlers, but also among the Indians and settlers right to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.⁵⁰

Thus, by the middle of the eighteenth century the time had come for a divided Presbyterianism to consolidate its work in Canada. One historian put it this way:

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁰Gregg, op. cit., p. 574.

by the middle of the century the Church had followed settlement to all parts, and possessed the means of perpetuating itself and the promise of great expansion. Too obviously that expansion was hampered by disunion. But the Scottish ideal of a national church had never been lost, even among those whom conscience drove into Secession. And now within the various Presbyterian bodies in Canada there arose a desire for union which would not be denied.⁵¹

The reader's attention is now directed to a brief account of Presbyterian consolidation by way of unions.⁵² Prior to 1860, two significant unions had taken place within Presbyterianism. In 1817 the Burgher Presbytery of Truro and the Anti-burgher Presbytery of Pictou, together with a few Church of Scotland ministers, had formed the Synod of Nova Scotia.⁵³ Then in 1840 the United Synod of Upper Canada and the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland united under the name of the latter.

During a period of sixteen years, beginning with 1860, eight distinct Presbyterian bodies representing considerable variations in outlook, tradition and customs, were drawn together in a series of unions culminating in the grand union of 1875. The state of Presbyterianism in Canada

⁵¹McNeill, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵²See Appendix A for a graphic account of Presbyterian unions.

⁵³William Gregg, Short History of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada from the Earliest to the Present Time (Second Edition, Revised; Toronto: C. Blakett Robinson, 1893), p. 194.

during the decade preceding 1860 was as follows: there were eight distinct and self-governing bodies, not counting the presbytery of Stamford, previously referred to. Five of these bodies were active in the Maritime Provinces and the other three were active in Ontario and Quebec. The eight bodies were the following:

1. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland, founded in 1831;
2. The Synod of the (Free) Presbyterian Church of Canada, founded in 1844;
3. The Synod of the United Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, founded in 1834;
4. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, founded in 1817;
5. The Synod of the Free Church of Nova Scotia, founded in 1844;
6. The Synod of the Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, founded in 1854;
7. The Synod of New Brunswick in Connection with the Church of Scotland, founded in 1833; and,
8. The Synod of the (Free) Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick, founded in 1845.⁵⁴

The first of these unions took place in 1860, at Pictou, Nova Scotia, when the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Synod of the Free Church of Nova Scotia united to form the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America. The

⁵⁴McNeill, op. cit., p. 16.

new body represented more than seventy-five percent of Presbyterian strength in the Maritime Provinces.

The following year a second union was consummated between the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, to form the Canada Presbyterian Church. The new body experienced rapid growth subsequent to the union and was by far the largest body to enter the union of 1875.⁵⁵

Five years later, in 1866, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick, originally called the Synod of New Brunswick, united with the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America.

In 1868 a fourth significant union took place when the Synod of New Brunswick in Connection with the Church of Scotland and the Synod of the Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island joined forces to form the Synod of the Maritime Provinces in Connection with the Church of Scotland.

After six significant unions Presbyterianism in Canada was still divided into four separate synods, two in the Maritime Provinces and two in Ontario and Quebec. Subsequent to the union of 1868 the following synods were still in existence:

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 21.

1. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America;
2. The Synod of the Maritime Provinces in Connection with the Church of Scotland;
3. The Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church; and,
4. The Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church in Connection with the Church of Scotland.

Following a decade and a half of union negotiations, the four Synods consummated a grand Presbyterian union on June 15, 1875. Six hundred and twenty-three ministers constituted the roll of the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.⁵⁶ True to Presbyterian tradition, however, there were dissenting voices and some twenty-one ministers of the uniting synods declined to enter the union. Dr. Ephraim Scott, later to become a vigorous and bitter opponent of Presbyterian union with the Methodists and Congregationalists, spoke of the event in this way:

In June, 1875, the Presbyterians in the different provinces of Canada, one in doctrine or religious belief, and one in polity or church government, united also in one organization, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, with nearly ninety thousand communicant members in a thousand congregations, grouped in thirty-three presbyteries, four synods and one General Assembly.⁵⁷

Thus was Presbyterianism in Canada consolidated and ready for more concerted action throughout the country and eventually a wider union.

⁵⁶Gregg, op. cit., p. 188.

⁵⁷Ephraim Scott, "Church Union" And The Presbyterian Church in Canada (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, Limited, 1928), p. 8.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE UNION MOVEMENT AND EARLY EFFORTS AT UNION

Early Advocates of Union

From the foregoing account it is evident that the three denominations involved in the formation of The United Church of Canada were union-minded churches. Over a period of ninety years, beginning with 1817 when the Synod of Nova Scotia came into being, and ending in 1906 when the Congregational Union of Canada was formed, nineteen different unions were consummated within the ranks of the three uniting churches. Each of these unions served to stimulate a future union, and their influence on the eventual union of the three denominations in The United Church of Canada can hardly be overemphasized.

Even as the architects of denominational unions were engaged in the business of closing the ranks within their own churches, many of them envisioned an even wider union of Protestantism in Canada, and hoped that their own unions were stepping stones to that end. Thus, leaders of the Presbyterian union of 1875, looked for an even larger union than they were consummating, including not only the Congregationalists and Methodists with whom they were to unite in fifty years, but also the Anglicans and the Baptists.

In his first address as the first Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Dr. John Cook expounded on the subject of union. In the course of his address he said:

For larger union is, I trust, in store for the churches of Christ even in Canada, than that which we effect this day. That is but a small step to the union which our Lord's intercessory prayer seems to contemplate. . . . I look for a union in the future, before which the present--blessed and auspicious though we justly count it--shall appear slight and insignificant. May God hasten it in His time!¹

The rounds of applause greeting Dr. Cook's words were indicative of the fact that his was neither a new nor private opinion, but one shared by many in the Presbyterian family.

Principal Snodgrass, another leader of Presbyterian union, was quoted by the Toronto Globe as looking forward to a national Church of Canada. He spoke of "a church around which the present generation and generations yet to come shall rally, for which they will give liberally of their means and ability, so that it may do well and worthily the great work that lies before it".²

The same spirit of union prevailed also in Methodist ranks. No sooner had the Methodists consolidated their forces throughout the Dominion in the union of 1884 than

¹John T. McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1875-1925 (Toronto: General Board, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1925), pp. 245, 246.

²Edmund H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1930), p. 244.

enthusiasm for a larger union began to manifest itself. A series of articles on the subject of wider union appeared in The Canadian Methodist Magazine. A second series of articles in the same magazine openly advocated organic union with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In 1890, the General Conference of the Methodist Church expressed its sentiments in the following words:

With all sincere Christians we desire to see a closer union among those who labor for the universal prevalence of Christianity. . . . We rejoice in the manifest signs of the times, in the willingness exhibited by so many to merge their minor differences for the sake of the common good: to remove the emphasis from ideas that for generations have been almost rallying points, if by such concessions more united action could be secured.³

While the movements within Congregationalism were not strictly speaking unions, by which two or more bodies with expressed differences were drawn together, but were really amalgamations, visions of union were seen in that body also. Rev. Enoch Barker, Chairman of the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, at its meeting in 1874, spoke against the divisions in the church and went on to say:

In order, then, to remove occasion of discord, to cultivate broad views and large charity, to arm the Church with its divinely given power, to economize the labor and funds of the Church for missions, to convince the world that Christ and His religion are from above, and especially to please Him whose heart

³George C. Pidgeon, The United Church of Canada, The Story of the Union (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 16.

⁴Thomas B. Kilpatrick and Kenneth H. Cousland, Our Common Faith (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1928), p. 3.

yearned for the oneness of His people - these glorious objects would urge us to seek so close a union as possible among all Christ's people and to make any sacrifices, except those of principle, in order to accomplish it.⁵

Even prior to the Presbyterian union of 1875 and the Methodist union of 1884 voices advocating wider union were heard. After the union of 1860⁶ within Presbyterian ranks, Professor Ross of Truro, Nova Scotia declared:

We accept what has been done most thankfully as a token of further union. . . . When the spirit of union begins to move, who will venture to set bounds to its influence?⁷

And again, a year later, when a similar union took place in the city of Montreal, one of the union leaders expressed these sentiments: "May God grant that not in this church alone, but in all churches, the spirit of union may prevail, going out from Montreal as a centre, till it covers the land."⁸ Indeed, voices advocating organic union of a wider scope and nature were heard almost continuously for a half century before formal negotiations for such a union actually began.

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶Supra, p. 35.

⁷C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, Its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institutes of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 103.

⁸Ibid.

Motives for Union

The motives leading to the formation of The United Church of Canada were of course many and varied.⁹ Conflicting opinions regarding the nature of those motives are advanced, depending of course on whether they come from advocates or opponents of union. Dr. Ephraim Scott, a staunch Presbyterian opponent of organic union with the Methodist and Congregational churches, has this to say:

The movement which developed that attempted merging of the Churches, began doubtless, on the part of many, with the motive high and true. Many good men viewed it at first with favor. The word "union" had a pleasant sound. A great Church was a pleasing dream. The general attitude towards it, whether in approval, disapproval or doubt, was largely benevolent. . . .

On the other hand the ideal of a great organization, a "national Church" to be a power "in the whole . . . religio-political realm" grew in the minds of its advocates, until it seemed to fill the horizon of their vision to the exclusion of all other considerations.¹⁰

Dr. S. D. Chown, the last General Superintendent of the Methodist Church, speaks for his fellow advocates and promoters of organic union when he characterizes their motives thus:

⁹E. L. Morrow, Church Union in Canada; Its History, Motives, Doctrine and Government (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1923), pp. 49-113, offers an exhaustive list of motives for and against union.

¹⁰Ephraim Scott, "Church Union" and the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, Limited, 1928), p. 9.

In every respect they were worthy of Christian men. . . .

There is no reliable evidence to show that the parties thereto were animated by consideration of what they might get. On the contrary, they were sincerely moved by the prospect of what they might contribute to produce the highest and most complete expression possible to them, and to other denominations which might join with them, of a Christian Church in Canada, which would be more fully representative of the mind of Christ than any hitherto, and be the most effective instrument available for the fulfillment of the divine purpose of human redemption.

The promoters of union were possessed by a conviction, that the mission of Jesus was not only to save mankind from sin and its consequences, but also to unite the world in a brotherhood of love and fellowship, to be known as the Kingdom of God. It appeared to them that Jesus foresaw that the evident unity of his disciples yet to be would be a means of persuading the world to believe in Him as the One sent of God to be the Saviour of men, and the spiritual leader of humanity. They discerned also in this fellowship one of the first principles of the Christian Church.¹¹

By and large the stated motives for organic union are spiritual, economic, or nationalistic. This is not necessarily in the order of their importance for, or influence on, the subsequent union. It is, however, the order in which they will be discussed.

Many of the advocates and promoters of organic union were motivated by a genuine desire to see the divisions in Christianity healed. To many of them the divisions troubling and separating the church were a sore reproach, and cause for genuine distress. The fulfillment of Christ's prayer, particularly the words: "That they all may be

¹¹S. D. Chown, The Story of Church Union in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), pp. 1,2.

one,"¹² seemed to them to call for organic union. They firmly believed that as long as divisions existed and persisted, New Testament teaching, and in particular Christ's prayer, were far from being fulfilled. Many believed that the will of God for the Church "is a unity of spirit expressed outwardly in so striking a fashion that it will convince the world of the truth of Christianity."¹³ In the conviction that they were following the will of God and that organic union would serve as such an outward expression of unity, they advocated and promoted it.

Admittedly, some rather debatable exegesis was indulged in with reference to Christ's words in His intercessory prayer, and, as the union movement gained momentum and particularly as opposition arose and intensified, some unionists seemed to be overtaken of a spirit of "union at all costs." Come what may, the union must go forward. Responsible, at least in part for this spirit, was perhaps the growing importance and influence of the economic motive.

In 1867, just eight years prior to the Presbyterian union and sixteen years prior to the Methodist union, the Dominion of Canada, consisting then of five Provinces, came into being. Canada was built largely around a railroad. One of the outstanding accomplishments of its first Prime

¹²John 17:21.

¹³Kilpatrick and Cousland, op. cit., p. 16.

Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and his government, was the building of a transcontinental railroad, linking east and west, and completed in 1885. Although the completion of the railroad did not immediately bring the anticipated "rush" of immigration, it did serve to open up the country and pave the way for settlement. Settlements began to dot the western prairies and British Columbia. And then, the end of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, brought the "rush" of settlers, by way of a large influx of immigrants from the British Isles, South and Eastern Europe, and the United States. A fourth, but lesser source of settlers for the west was eastern Canada itself, and in particular the province of Ontario.

This, of course, had its effect on the churches in terms of increased opportunities and weightier responsibilities. The Congregationalists did not expand into the West to any appreciable degree. The Methodists and Presbyterians, however, tried to keep pace, not only with the westward movement of their people but also with the ever-increasing number of immigrants who streamed into the country. Both the Methodists and the Presbyterians experienced a period of unusual mission expansion and acquired unprecedented commitments across the country.

Although both the Presbyterian and Methodist churches had consolidated their own forces by way of comprehensive unions within their own ranks, they were hardly equipped to

cope with the ever-increasing needs and commitments that confronted them. Distances in the West were great, communities were small, and resources of men and money were limited. In spite of this, competition was keen, and widely-separated, sparsely-settled hamlets and villages throughout the West were dotted with inadequate facilities placed there by the competing denominations.

Denominational exclusiveness was perpetuated on the frontier, with the result that many hamlets and villages were heavily over-churched. Overlapping in small communities became a problem of serious proportions. There was a growing feeling that money and men were being wasted in unnecessary duplication. Different approaches to the problem were suggested and tried, but were all beset with seemingly insurmountable difficulties. The conviction grew that the only solution to the problem was for the churches to present a united front. One farmer probably spoke for many a unionist when he said that "the differences between the denominations were not worth paying for."¹⁴ And so, the economic motive, the desire to conserve manpower and money, the desire to eliminate unnecessary competition and duplication, was perhaps the single most influential motive for organic union of the churches.

¹⁴Chown, op. cit., p. 16.

Then there was also the nationalistic motive. A spirit of union pervaded the Canadian air. Politically this spirit manifested itself in the birth of the Dominion in 1867. Religiously it manifested itself in a series of Presbyterian and Methodist unions culminating in the grand unions of 1875 and 1884 respectively. In many Protestant quarters there was a growing feeling of "one country, one church." As the country expanded westward and the task of evangelizing a vast new territory peopled by millions of foreigners lay before the churches, it was felt that this could not be done either with speed or effectiveness by a divided and competitive church. Division and competition were a source of bewilderment to many a foreigner. This bewilderment is exemplified in the Doukhobor in the small western town, who, seeing four churches from the town square wondered whether they were all "Jesus churches." When assured that they were, he asked, "why four?" The conviction grew that the new country should present to the new Canadian a new spirit of unity and harmony in the church and provide an example for the churches throughout the world to follow.

¹Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada as Prepared by The Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, Also A Brief Historical Statement (Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, November, 1914), p. 13.

The Period of Co-operation

Various approaches to the problem of duplication by division were advanced and tried. In some areas community churches were established which, while they solved the problem in some localities, did not provide an overall satisfactory solution. The idea of a federation was also advanced, but never was received with much favor. In some instances certain geographical areas were arbitrarily divided into districts where one or the other denomination was responsible. By various methods and means a degree of co-operation was achieved.

The period of co-operation was to a large extent the forerunner of organic union. Where the ideal of organic union had taken root co-operation served to keep this ideal alive. It also served to facilitate the transition when organic union became a reality. Unofficially, co-operation had been practised in various places for a number of years. Officially, it began in 1899, with an agreement between Home Mission authorities of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches "not to send an additional missionary into any locality where either Church was already carrying on its work."¹⁵

¹⁵Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada as Prepared by The Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved By The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, Also A Brief Historical Statement (Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, November, 1924), p. 19.

A subsequent agreement provided for withdrawing a missionary from fields where both denominations already had men at work. Gradually the system of co-operation was extended also to other areas of church work, such as social service, religious education, theological education and others.

After several years of "official" co-operation, representatives of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches and their respective mission superintendents met to discuss the practical aspects of co-operation.¹⁶ The problems of co-operation were freely discussed, and a number of suggestive resolutions were passed. The first resolution directed that a letter be sent to all authorities in charge of home mission fields calling for their co-operation to avoid unnecessary competition. The second resolution urged them to keep the principles of co-operation always before them, and directed them to meet for periodic consultation about opening new fields or possible realigning of fields already opened. The third resolution recommended that mission authorities operate according to the principle of "non-intrusion" in such fields as have been occupied by one of the churches for at least one year. And the fourth resolution called for consultation between ministers and missionaries of both churches operating in the same territory, with a view to realigning their fields, and reporting the results

¹⁶Ibid. pp. 19, 20.

of their consultations to their respective authorities.¹⁷

These resolutions were, of course, not binding upon mission authorities or the missionaries in their charge. How effective they were in providing solutions to the problem is difficult to determine. In many instances the suggestions put forward by the resolutions were followed. Consultations were held, fields were realigned, and an appreciable degree of co-operation was achieved.

The co-operative plan was most successful in the West. While different methods were employed in different parts of the country, that used in the Province of Alberta will serve as a picture of the methods generally employed in other Provinces. Dr. S. D. Chown, last General Superintendent of the Methodist Church and for six years Chairman of a Joint Committee on Co-operation in Home Mission Work in Alberta, describes the Alberta method as follows:

The work of rearrangement of mission fields, so as to produce the best result possible with the least expenditure of men and money, was entrusted to a Joint Committee composed of the Annual Conference Missionary Committee of the Methodist Church acting jointly with the Synod's Committee on Home Missions and Social Service of the Presbyterian Church. This Joint Committee was called 'The Provincial Committee on Co-operation of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of the Province of Alberta.' By this committee the whole Province was divided into districts. A committee was appointed for each district, with authority to consider the work within their respective bounds, and to make recommendations as to proposed changes in each district. These District Committees reported annually to the

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 19,20.

Provincial Committee, which, according to authority conferred upon it by the supreme courts of the Churches represented, rearranged the work, and reported their action to Presbyteries interested, and to the stationing Committee of the Methodist Conference.

When deciding what changes to recommend, the District Committees heard representations of the charges affected, and gave serious attention to the following considerations: priority of occupation of the field; the relative strength in members and adherents of the different denominations; the relative amounts contributed by the two denominations involved in support of the agencies of religion amongst themselves; and the readiness of the different denominations to minister to the field promptly and effectively.

In making such arrangements equality of denominational sacrifice for the mutual benefit was carefully considered, and observed as far as possible.

The roll of membership in each charge so constituted was composed of all the members of the negotiating Churches within the territory assigned to the charge. The charge itself had complete connexional relation to the denomination to which it was assigned, and with which it was affiliated. Representatives of Churches affiliated with Presbyterianism attended Presbyteries, and representatives of Churches assigned to Methodism had full standing in Methodist District Meetings. But connection with any co-operative congregation did not necessarily imply abandonment of denominational preferences and affiliations.¹⁶

As a result of the procedure described above, the most thorough-going co-operative efforts were made in the Province of Alberta. A notable feature of the endeavor in that Province was the division of fields effected by the provincial Co-operating Committee. It was agreed in committee that as far as sparsely settled or unoccupied territory was concerned, the Presbyterians were to concentrate their

¹⁶Chown, op. cit., pp. 52,53.

efforts among the settlers along the lines of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the Methodists were to concentrate their efforts among settlers along the lines of what is today the Canadian National Railway.¹⁹ The facts that Alberta enjoyed a population increase of almost sixty per cent during the second decade of the twentieth century and that public opinion largely welcomed co-operation as a step in the right direction were doubtless important factors in the success of the co-operative endeavor in Alberta. In addition, the provincial Co-operating Committee continued to function actively even while negotiations for organic union were being conducted and met each year until 1921.

The Alberta Co-operating Committee had been constituted in January, 1911, in the city of Calgary, by representatives of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches.²⁰ Later in that same year, the Joint Committee on Co-operation in Home Mission work was constituted by authority of the supreme courts of the three uniting churches. This committee reviewed the whole co-operative endeavor and decided that the principles of co-operation be applied in adjusting overlapping in existing fields; in arranging religious work in absolutely new fields; and, in work to be done among people of foreign nationalities.²¹ Inasmuch as the Alberta system

¹⁹Ibid., p. 54.

²⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 217.

²¹Chown, op. cit., p. 51.

was already functional, it was recommended that the ways and means of effecting such co-operation be those that had been organized in that Province. Several months later a provincial committee was also functional in Saskatchewan. However, the co-operative endeavor was never as successful there as in Alberta.

The period of co-operation can be divided into a number of distinct stages. The first stage began in 1899 with the agreement between the Presbyterian and Methodist churches not to send an additional missionary into any locality where either church was already active.²² The second stage began in 1903 and lasted until 1911. This stage was initiated by the meeting of a joint committee of the two churches with their respective mission superintendents, at which time the four suggestive resolutions were passed.²³ This stage was characterized by informal conversations between mission superintendents, ministers, and missionaries on the field, with a view to avoid intrusion, realign existing fields, and avoid competition in new areas. The third stage was launched by the formation of Co-operating Committees in the uniting churches, and extended over a period of approximately seven years, ending in 1917. This stage was characterized by formal agreements between the churches. These agreements

²²Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 19.

²³Supra, pp. 49, 50.

were enforced primarily and most successfully in the western provinces. The co-operative endeavor was largely under the direction of provincial and district committees, after the manner of the Alberta method. During this stage of the co-operative period, considerable amalgamation of charges and delimitation of fields was effected.

The Local Union Churches

A contemporaneous phenomenon and an important out-growth of the co-operative movement was the development of so-called local union churches. This development was intimately related to the union movement and had a decided influence on the final consummation of the union.

In the early stages of their development the local union churches were generally local community societies, holding property in their own name and utilizing the services of whatever ministers they could obtain. Not infrequently ministers of various denominations provided religious services in rotation. As early as 1901 there were 267 union churches in existence.²⁴

After formal negotiation towards organic union had been initiated and a proposed Basis of Union had been submitted by the Joint Committee in 1908²⁵ a further

²⁴Silcox, op. cit., p. 73.

²⁵Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 23.

development in union churches took place. A new type of union church came into being. This new type of union church was characterized by the fact that it accepted the proposed Basis of Union insofar as it was applicable to the local situation. The first of these new-type union churches was organized by a Presbyterian minister at Melville, Saskatchewan, in 1908. A second such church was organized by a Congregational minister at Frobisher, Saskatchewan, in January, 1909.²⁶ By the year 1911, which saw the formation of Co-operating Committees on Provincial and Dominion levels, several more of these new union churches had been organized in Saskatchewan, and plans were well under way for yet others.

Whereas the co-operative endeavor was most satisfactory in the Province of Alberta, the Province of Saskatchewan provided the most fertile soil for local union churches. Many areas of Saskatchewan seemed to prefer the union church to the co-operative society, in which Presbyterians were converted to Methodists and vice-versa. And so it was that local union churches spread most rapidly in that Province.

The early union churches were usually affiliated with either the Presbyterian or the Methodist church. When union churches began to organize on the proposed Basis of Union however, they had no close denominational connection. The

²⁶Silcox, op. cit., p. 215.

desire for some kind of connectional relationship soon began to manifest itself. Leaders of the local church union movement wanted a closer connectional organization of their churches, and at the same time retain a committal relationship with each of the parent churches. There was a growing desire for a General Council of local union churches with an Executive Secretary of its own, and a relationship with the parent churches through an advisory council.

Representatives of local union churches held two meetings in the latter part of 1912 for the purpose of considering just such a proposal.²⁷ A resolution setting forth their desire to that effect was drafted and sent to the Joint Committee on Co-operation for consideration. The Joint Committee considered the proposal but was not entirely in sympathy with it. The Joint Committee's reply indicated that direct affiliation of each local union church with one or the other parent churches was to be preferred.²⁸ The committee did however agree to appoint a subcommittee to sit in conference with representatives of local union churches, relative to the proposal.

A subcommittee was appointed and a conference was held in 1913 at Regina, Saskatchewan, and the whole question of

²⁷Ibid., p. 219.

²⁸Acts and Proceedings of the Forty-Third General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, June 6-14, 1917 (Toronto: Murray Printing Co., 1917), Appendices, p. 240.

connectional relationship with the parent churches was aired. While subcommittee members contended for direct affiliation of each local union church with one of the parent churches, representatives of local union churches held out for affiliation by way of an advisory council. Finally it was resolved to appoint an advisory committee to function as follows:

1. The advising and counselling of Union Congregations as to the general direction of work;
2. To consider and make arrangements whereby ministers connected with the three churches now negotiating union may be able to accept the pastorates of union churches without loss of standing or of forfeiting claims on connectional funds;
3. To consider and advise with regard to tenure, administration and disposal of all church property involved in the establishment of a union church;
4. To advise as to the collection and disposition of missionary, educational and other funds;
5. To give such other counsel as may appear to them to be expedient.²⁹

In addition, the following procedure relative to the formation of union churches was suggested:

1. That when in any community it is locally considered desirable, a petition be circulated, praying for the organization of a Union Church;
2. That the said petition shall set forth the church relations, if any, of the signatories to the petition, and the said petition shall be accompanied by all other information considered relevant;

²⁹Silcox, op. cit., p. 220.

³⁰Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1914, p. 390.

3. That the said petition be presented to the local courts of the churches interested for report to the advisory committee, and that it also be presented to the advisory committee for their consideration and action.³⁰

These recommendations of the Regina Conference were submitted to the Joint Committee on Co-operation, and approved. The Joint Committee then also appointed its representatives to the advisory committee.

Subsequent to this agreement between the local union churches and the parent denominations, local union churches spread with increasing rapidity. Conditions in the West were conducive to the establishment and success of such churches. In a society where class distinctions were for all practical purposes non-existent, where people were unified in education, in commerce, in government, and in practically every other area of endeavor, the religious soil was almost bound to be fertile for the rise of such union churches.

These union churches were, however, a cause for continual concern to members of the Joint Committee on Co-operation. The latter were troubled by the rapid growth and future development of these churches. Local union churches were established for the most part on the assumption that organic union between the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches was imminent.³¹ It became

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1914, p. 390.

increasingly evident that in the event organic union should not be consummated, large numbers of independent congregations would be left without denominational affiliation, and would be forced either to organize a new denomination, or whither and die. In their concern for the growth and future development of local union churches, the members of the Joint Committee on Co-operation effected a revision of an earlier agreement. The terms of the revised agreement provided for the continued organization of local union churches on terms of the proposed Basis of Union, with the provision that such churches were to be affiliated with the parent denomination to which they were to be assigned.³² This revision obviously hoped to stop the growth of independent local union churches.

There followed a period of experimentation. First affiliation with one denomination was tried, and then affiliation with two denominations. The latter procedure found the most favor, and was formally adopted by several provinces as the approved procedure. As far as the Joint Committee on Co-operation was concerned, either single or double affiliation was permissible.³³

The whole matter of this new type of affiliation gave rise to tensions between independent local union churches

³²Ibid., 1917, p. 244.

³³Ibid.

who were affiliated by way of an advisory council, and such as advocated single or double affiliation. The independent churches were not about to take matters lightly. They had acquired an appreciable measure of strength and influence. The feasibility of an independent church in the West was even discussed.³⁴ By 1921 there were seventy independent congregations holding connectional relationship under the General Council of Local Union Churches. Of these seventy, sixty-seven were in the West, and three were in Ontario. Six of the congregations were vacant, one was served by an Anglican, two by Baptists, eight by Congregationalists, twenty-one by Methodists, and thirty by Presbyterians.³⁵ The majority of the churches were owned jointly by the Presbyterians and the Methodists.

From the above figures it can be seen that the General Council of Local Union Churches had become an entity that could not be ignored. Local union churches, particularly in the West, were becoming rather impatient with the indecisiveness of negotiations toward organic union. They had been established on the assumption that organic union would soon be consummated, and they were anxious to see that it was. When the General Council requested representation on the Joint Union Committee of the negotiating churches, the

³⁴Ibid., 1914, p. 367.

³⁵Silcox, op. cit., p. 224.

request was granted, and from 1921 to 1925 the General Council held official representation on the committee.³⁶ When legislation for the proposed United Church of Canada was drafted, it provided for the inclusion of congregations of the General Council. And when the First General Council of The United Church of Canada convened, the local union churches had their proportionate share of representatives.³⁷

Meanwhile, the work of amalgamation went on apace all over the country. In some localities congregations holding single, double or even triple affiliation were being organized on terms of the proposed Basis of Union. Co-operation was being practised in other areas, particularly in the Maritimes, where it found a great deal of favor. The union movement which emerged in the West progressed continually eastward. Long before union therefore, was officially consummated, local unions had, with the blessing of the parent churches,³⁸ taken place in hundreds of localities. By various methods and means, from co-operative societies to independent local union churches, to union congregations holding either single or double or triple affiliation, some 3,000 union congregations were formed prior to the

³⁶Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 29.

³⁷Record of Proceedings of The First General Council of The United Church of Canada, (Toronto: n.p., 1925), p. 5.

³⁸Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1917, p. 244.

consummation of union in 1925.³⁹

The following table, prepared by C. E. Silcox,⁴⁰ presents a picture of the union situation in 1923, just two years prior to the consummation of the union.

TABLE 1
AMALGAMATION OF CHURCHES PRIOR TO UNION

Synod	Number of Churches			Total
	Co-operating and Delimiting Territory	Affiliated	Independent Union	
Maritime Provinces	22	6	2	30
Montreal and Ottawa	..	28	1	29
Toronto and Kingston	168	2	..	170
Manitoba	64	69	15	148
Saskatchewan	350	51	30	431
Alberta	278	16	3	297
British Columbia	132	4	3	139
	1,014	176	54	1,244

In reading and interpreting the figures given in the table above, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration. First, the figure 1,244, representing the total number of churches amalgamated prior to consummation of the union, seems to contradict the figure of 3,000 mentioned earlier. In interpreting this figure it is to be remembered that it represents "pastoral charges," which in turn were representative of some 3,000 preaching stations. Similarly,

³⁹Chown, op. cit., p. 60.

⁴⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 227.

the figure 1,014 in the first column, needs to be interpreted in the light of the real situation. When interpreting this figure, it is to be remembered that in many charges represented by the figure, there never was any real competition between the Presbyterians and Methodists. However, this is not to say that the figure is wholly inaccurate or dishonest, for it must be remembered that co-operation of one kind or another was undertaken not only for the purpose of eliminating competition where it existed, but also for the purpose of preventing competition where it did not yet exist.

In summary, it can be said that the co-operative effort, was on the whole successful, particularly in the western provinces, in achieving the purposes for which it was intended and undertaken. Co-operation anticipated organic union,⁴¹ and the prospect of organic union was largely influential on the success of co-operation. The two movements went side by side, the former forcing the denominations to the latter. Had organic union not been achieved, the end results of the co-operative effort would have left the negotiating churches with a colossal ecclesiastical mess on their hands. Under prevailing circumstances, a concerted movement toward organic union seemed the only plausible step.

⁴¹Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1914, p. 390.

55

CHAPTER IV

FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD UNION

Dr. George Monro Grant was probably the first to publicly envision organic union in Canada. In an address entitled "The Church of Canada; Can Such a Thing Be?" which he delivered at a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Montreal, 1874, he said:

God will give us the church of the future. It shall arise in the midst of us, with no sound of hammer heard upon it, comprehensive of all the good and beauty that He has ever evolved in history. To this church, Episcopacy shall contribute her comely order, her faithful and loving conservatism; and Methodism impart her enthusiasm, her zeal for missions, and her ready adaptiveness to the necessities of the country; the Baptist shall give his full testimony to the sacred rights of the individual; the Congregationalist his to the freedom and independency of the congregation; and Presbyterianism shall come in her massive, well-knit strength, holding high the Word of God; and when, or even before, all this comes to pass, that is, when we have proved our Christian charity, as well as our faithfulness, proved it by deeds, not words, who shall say that our Roman Catholic brethren, also, shall not see eye to eye with us, and seal with their consent that true unity, the image of which they so fondly love? Why not? God can do greater things even than this. And who of us shall say, God forbid?¹

Similar visions and voices were seen and heard, particularly after the Presbyterians and Methodists had consummated their respective and comprehensive unions. The

¹C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, Its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institutes of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 465.

Presbyterian Church in Canada foresaw an even greater union than that which was consummated within its own ranks in 1875. The Methodists likewise looked beyond their union of 1884 and envisioned an even wider and more comprehensive fellowship than that which they had effected. The Congregationalists, their distinctive principle of individualism notwithstanding, were becoming increasingly aware of the need to engage in some sort of a general co-operative endeavor with other religious bodies. Even the most ardent independents among them, were beginning to wonder if an acceptable basis of union between the Congregational Churches and some of the other religious bodies could not be formulated.

The first official overtures toward organic union were put forward, however, by the Church of England (Anglican) in 1885, when the Provincial Synod of Canada appointed a committee on Christian Union² and invited other interested bodies to discuss the possibilities of union. The following year the Methodist General Conference reacted favorably to the invitation and appointed a committee "to confer with a Committee of the Provincial Synod of the Church of England on the union of the Protestant Churches."³ In 1888 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada took

²John T. McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1875-1925 (Toronto: The General Board, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1925), p. 247.

³Ibid.

similar action.⁴

Consequently, representatives of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches met in Toronto, in April 1889.⁵ The possibilities of union were discussed. In the meantime however, the Lambeth Quadrilateral had been issued. The fundamental provisions of the Lambeth Quadrilateral were:

The Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary to salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith; the Apostles' Creed as a baptismal symbol and the Nicene Creed as a sufficient statement of the Christian faith; the two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, administered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him; the historic episcopate locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.⁶

It was inevitable that discussion would eventually center on provisions of the Quadrilateral, in particular on the fourth provision which dealt with the historic episcopate. Since neither the Anglicans nor the Presbyterians and Methodists were inclined to yield their respective positions with regard to the historic episcopate, no progress towards union

⁴The Acts and Proceedings of the Fifteenth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, June 12-20, 1889 (Toronto: Presbyterian Review Print, 1889) p. 64.

⁵Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1890, p. 59.

⁶"Lambeth Conferences," Lutheran Cyclopedia, ed. Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 566.

could be made. When next the idea of organic union emerged, it concerned itself with the non-episcopal churches.

Formation of Union Committees in the Uniting Churches

It is somewhat ironic that the Presbyterian Church in Canada, from whose ranks came a sizeable body of vigorous opposition to organic union, also took the initiative in instigating such union. In the year 1892 the Presbyterian General Assembly convened in Montreal. A fraternal deputation from the General Assembly addressed the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec meeting in the same city, and, "in holding out the right hand of fellowship, practically invited closer corporate Union."⁷ Early in the next year, ten Congregational ministers requested a conference with representatives of the Presbytery of Toronto, for the purpose of discussing union of the two churches. Two such conferences were held. It was agreed in conference that the Presbytery of Toronto should petition the General Assembly to appoint a committee to meet with a similar committee of the Congregational Union, and the Congregational ministers in turn, were to bring a similar petition before their churches. The Congregational Union received the petition and appointed a new standing committee on Christian

⁷Thomas B. Kilpatrick and Kenneth H. Cousland, Our Common Faith (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1928), p. 17.

union. The General Assembly took a broader view than that called for by the petition, and appointed a committee on the general subject of union "with instructions to hold themselves ready to confer with any similar body or bodies which may be appointed by any other church or churches should the way be clearly opened up for conference."⁸ This committee was reappointed year by year up to and including the year 1901. Although the Congregationalists kept their committee ready to act, and the Methodists affirmed their willingness to negotiate with other Protestant churches nothing of consequence happened in the way of union negotiations until after the turn of the century.

An incident of significant proportions occurred in the autumn of 1902. The Methodist General Conference had convened in the city of Winnipeg. Numbered among the delegates of the Presbyterian General Assembly's fraternal deputation to the General Conference, was Principal Patrick of Manitoba College. When he took his turn to address the delegates of the General Conference, he made a strong appeal for the unification of Methodists and Presbyterians. Disclaiming any authority to speak in an official capacity, he did nevertheless challenge the Methodists to union.

⁸Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1893, p. 47.

The Methodists evidently accepted Patrick's challenge as representative of the spirit of the Presbyterian Church. Nor did they ignore it. Their Church Union Committee reported in favor of organic union of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. They went on record as being favorable to a "measure of organic unity wide enough to embrace all evangelical churches, and regretted that all efforts had failed to bring about such a result."⁹ In view therefore, of the fact that the relationship of the three churches had already been marked by an appreciable degree of unity and in view also of the national need which called for careful economy of manpower and money, the General Conference expressed the opinion that the time was ripe for a definite move in the direction of organic union. The Conference issued a declaration on union which contained the following statement:

Whereas a definite proposal has been discussed to some extent in the press and elsewhere looking to ultimate organic union of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches in Canada, this General Conference, in no spirit of exclusiveness toward others not named, declares that it would regard a movement with this object in view with gratification.¹⁰

⁹George C. Pidgeon, The United Church of Canada, The Story of The Union (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 33.

¹⁰Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada as Prepared by The Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved By The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, Also A Brief Historical Statement (Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, November, 1924), p. 20.

A committee consisting of the General Superintendent, Dr. Albert Carman, seven clergymen and seven laymen was appointed to confer with representatives to be appointed by other churches.

Meanwhile, the Congregational Churches of Canada were in the process of consolidating their own forces. The move toward a more comprehensive union within the Congregational family was approaching its consummation. Throughout the course of their negotiations the Congregationalists kept in view the possibility of a wider and more comprehensive union. Thus, they welcomed the proposals to confer with the Methodists with a view to organic union.

The Methodist declaration and resolution also gained a favorable reception in the Presbyterian General Assembly. The Assembly referred the matter to a committee which met with similar committees of the Methodist and Congregational churches in 1904.¹¹ At this meeting a resolution was passed, declaring that organic union was both "desirable and practicable." This resolution was transmitted to the supreme courts of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches with the result that each appointed a committee to confer with the committee previously appointed by the Methodist Church.¹² Thus the stage was set for full-fledged

¹¹Ibid., p. 21.

¹²Ibid.

negotiations toward organic union, and for the next few years the union spotlight played on the work of the Joint Union Committee.

The Joint Union Committee

The Joint Union Committee consisted of denominational committees representing each of the negotiating churches. Each of these committees had been appointed by their respective denominations for the purpose of consulting on matters of church union with the other two. They were organized with a chairman and a secretary. As denominational committees, it was their function to hold separate meetings for the purpose of reviewing the progress of discussion in the Joint Committee; to report to, and receive instructions from their respective denominations; and to nominate their denominational representatives to the various subcommittees appointed from time to time by the Joint Committee.

Over a period of five years, extending from 1904 to 1908, the Joint Committee met five times,¹³ during which period its major task, that of preparing a proposed Basis of Union, was for all practical purposes completed. It was customary to rotate the chair at these meetings of the Joint Committee. First a Presbyterian chaired the meeting, then a Methodist, and then a Congregationalist. In addition

¹³Ibid., pp. 21, 22.

to the rotating chairmen, the Joint Committee had three joint secretaries, one from each of the negotiating denominations. In the interim between meetings of the Joint Committee denominational committees, subcommittees, and an executive committee consisting of the respective chairmen of the denominational committees, the chairmen of subcommittees that were appointed from time to time, and the three joint secretaries, held meetings as the need demanded.

After each meeting of the Joint Committee, a report, setting forth the prevailing tenor and spirit of negotiations, and the conclusions reached in conference, was printed and submitted to the negotiating churches.¹⁴ In this way the negotiating churches were kept posted on the general trend and progress of union negotiations on their behalf.

Dr. E. Lloyd Morrow, who had access to, and studied documents of the Joint Committee, and engaged in frequent correspondence as well as private discussions with men who were on the scene, testifies that during the five years spent by the Joint Committee on its assigned task, all went well. He says:

A fair, frank, and conciliatory temper was characteristic of the proceedings. . . . Despite numerous divisions on major and minor points of differences, there was no single instance of a vote of church against church. All divisions were mixed denominationally.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 22.

Two principles actuated the endeavors of the committee. The first was to find an adequate place in The United Church for the special aspects of Christian truth and life embodied in the principles of the negotiating churches. The second was to prepare a statement of doctrine, polity, administration and ministerial training that would form as far as possible an up-to-date Basis of Union.¹⁵

The first meeting of the Joint Committee representing the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches in Canada, was held at Knox Presbyterian Church, Toronto, on December 21, 1904.¹⁶ The meeting lasted three days. Dr. R. H. Warden was elected to chair the meeting, D. A. Sutherland was appointed secretary, and Rev. F. J. Day and Rev. E. D. McLaren were appointed associate secretaries.¹⁷ The purpose of this first meeting was to determine to what extent the committees of the negotiating churches could agree.

It was to be expected that such a gathering of mixed denominational backgrounds, having such a purpose, would encounter a number of difficulties, and so it did. Various difficulties relative to the varying backgrounds of committee personnel, and the practical aspects of union negotiations were exposed, and frankly and freely discussed. It was

¹⁵E. Lloyd Morrow, Church Union in Canada, Its History, Motives, Doctrine and Government (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1923), p. 21.

¹⁶Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 21.

¹⁷Kilpatrick and Cousland, op. cit., p. 21.

agreed in committee that "the union of the churches, to be real and lasting, must carry the consent of the entire membership, and that no final step could be taken until ample time had been given to consider the whole question in the courts of the various churches and by the people generally."¹⁸

This statement of the committee was later frequently referred to by opponents of organic union. They argued that the union did not carry the consent of the entire membership, and that ample provision had not been made for consideration of the question by the people generally. The practical result of the meeting was the appointment of five subcommittees who were to concern themselves with questions relative to Doctrine, Polity, the Ministry, Administration, and Law, respectively. From time to time these committees subdivided for the purpose of considering specific matters relative to the major question that confronted them.¹⁹

The first meeting of the Joint Committee has been called "one of the most significant ecclesiastical gatherings held in Canada up to that time."²⁰

¹⁸Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1905, p. 280.

¹⁹Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 22.

²⁰Kilpatrick and Cousland, op. cit., p. 21.

One report predicted that the meeting marked a new era in the religious history of Canada. It said:

The composition of the conference, the personal worth and representative character of the members, the purpose of the meeting, the questions under deliberation, the temper of the discussions, and the tendency and prospects of the movement, all combine to make the gathering significant. In its issue it may be epoch-making. The organic union of these three Churches in Canada is by no means assured, but the most conservative and doubtful man in the conference was impressed with the apparent yielding of even the stubborn obstacles. It may take years, it may take more than a decade, but a movement was begun yesterday which will tell powerfully not only on the three churches named, but on all the churches in Canada, on the public life of the country, and on the history of the world. The action of this Joint Committee was the first formal step. That step was the beginning of a new era in the religious history of Canada.²¹

Dr. E. D. McLaren, one of the associate secretaries of the Joint Committee is reported to have said:

The effect can hardly fail to be very considerable. The direct effect--the effect upon those who were present at the conference--was very marked. Those who were strongly desirous of union before had their desire strengthened and found in the discussions that took place an enlarged basis for their hopes; while those who were of a different view, if not converted to the union idea, were at least powerfully impressed by the considerations urged and by the spirit displayed.²²

Generally speaking, the first meeting of the Joint Committee served a number of purposes. It served to manifest the sentiments of committee members, either for or against union; it served to expose the obstacles and clarify many of the

²¹Ibid., pp. 21, 22.

²²Ibid., p. 22.

issues that lay before the committee; it served to set the temper and tone of future meetings; and it provided the basic organization for future negotiations.²³

The second meeting of the Joint Committee was held in December, 1905, in Toronto, this time in Metropolitan Methodist Church, where all subsequent meetings of the committee were held. At this meeting the Joint Committee received and reviewed reports of the subcommittees on Doctrine, Polity, and Ministry.²⁴ These were the only committees that had held meetings of any consequence. Embodied in the report of the committee on Doctrine was a tentative "doctrinal basis" formulated chiefly on the basis of the Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith, published under the authority of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,²⁵ and a summary of the English Presbyterian Articles of Faith.²⁶ The doctrinal summary of the Articles of Faith had been prepared by the Montreal section of the committee.

This tentative "doctrinal basis" consisted of nineteen articles, and, with the exception of an article on prayer, which was added later, and a few minor revisions concerned

²³Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 21.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Published in 1905.

²⁶Record of Proceedings of The First General Council, The United Church of Canada (Toronto: n.p., 1925), p. 58.

primarily with wording, order and sequence, was the doctrinal basis upon which the negotiating churches consummated organic union.

The third meeting of the Joint Committee was held one year later, in 1906.²⁷ Six months prior to this meeting, the Presbyterian General Assembly requested that the Anglicans and Baptists be invited to participate in union negotiations.²⁸ This request had been endorsed by the Methodist General Conference meeting in the same year, and acted upon by the executive committee of the Joint Committee. The executive committee decided

to address a friendly letter to the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England in Canada, and to the Chairmen or Presidents of the various Baptist Conventions, explaining the action already taken by the Joint Union Committee, and extending to the authorities of the Churches named a cordial invitation to send delegates to participate in their discussions, should they consider it advisable to do so.²⁹

The Joint Committee endorsed and confirmed the action that had been taken by its executive committee.

The Anglican reply to the invitation was most cordial, and stated that any such undertaking by a Bishop demanded the authorization of the General Synod. When the General Synod met two years later, it authorized the appointment of

²⁷Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 21.

²⁸Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1906, p. 36.

²⁹Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 21.

a committee "as long as the Joint Committee would be willing to remember that our delegates are, of necessity, limited to the lines laid down at the last session of the Lambeth Conference."³⁰ Inasmuch as the Anglican position on the historic episcopate as set forth in the Lambeth Quadrilateral³¹ had not changed, nothing came of the invitation.

The Baptist reply was equally cordial. Yet, their reply was in the "form of an uncompromising pronouncement, which was intended to close out all prospects of Organic Union."³² In their reply the Baptists declared their conviction that they were charged to preach a "special gospel," and, in order to fulfill that charge they considered it "necessary to maintain a separate organized existence, and to propagate their views throughout the world."³³ From this point on, union negotiations were confined to the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches, until 1921, when Anglican participation was again briefly considered.

The next two meetings of the Joint Committee were held in successive years, and concerned themselves with receiving and reviewing reports of denominational subcommittees, implementing where possible, denominational suggestions and

³⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 132.

³¹Supra, p. 66.

³²Morrow, op. cit., p. 36.

³³Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 22.

recommendations, and putting the final touches to the proposed Basis of Union.³⁴ Thus, after five years of work, the Joint Committee was prepared to submit a proposed Basis of Union for consideration and action by the negotiating churches.

Preparing the Basis of Union

The major task confronting the Joint Union Committee representing the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches, was that of preparing a "basis" upon which the three churches named, might consummate organic union. In its first meeting, the Joint Committee set itself to this task by appointing subcommittees, which were to concern themselves with the all-important questions of Doctrine, Polity, the Ministry, Administration, and Law respectively.³⁵ These committees in turn subdivided as the need and demand to study specific questions in relation to the larger question dictated.

The major portion of this task was completed within a period of five years, extending from 1904 to 1908. During those years of preparing the Basis of Union, every meeting of the Joint Committee received, reviewed, and revised the findings of the subcommittees. These revised findings were

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

in turn reviewed and revised by the denominational committees in separate meetings, after which they were again considered in Joint Committee in the light of revisions and suggestions offered. Each year the revised Basis of Union was printed and published for the information of the negotiating churches.³⁶ In 1908 the Basis of Union was submitted to the Presbyterian General Assembly in its practically completed form.³⁷ Except for some minor changes and revisions, the original draft of the Basis was not substantially altered between the years 1908 and 1915 when it received second and final acceptance in the Presbyterian General Assembly.³⁸

The major issues confronting the framers of the Basis of Union, were those with which the five subcommittees were to concern themselves. Each of these issues involved specific principles and practices of the respective denominations, some of which needed to be harmonized and some of which needed to be compromised.

The three negotiating churches represented two strains of theological conviction, Calvinism and Arminianism. In addition, some Congregationalists were suspect of being sympathetic toward Unitarian ideas. Had the committee

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Chown, op. cit., p. 34.

³⁸Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1915, p. 43.

attempted to reconcile these divergent theological views, the churches would not have arrived at a basis upon which to consummate their union. As it was, the committee busied itself not with reconciliation but with harmonization, where harmonization was possible.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith, as its standard of doctrine subordinate to the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist sources of doctrine, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, were the twenty-five Articles of Religion, John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, and the first fifty-two sermons of the first series of his discourses.³⁹ The Congregationalists in Canada, for all practical purposes creedless, accepted the statement of doctrine prepared in 1884 by the National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States.⁴⁰

Those unionists who hoped for a restatement and revision of the creeds of the churches, did not have their hopes fulfilled. The subcommittee on Doctrine did not attempt to prepare a new and revised creedal statement, but set itself to the task of finding a "formula that would not trespass too harshly upon the particular confessions of

³⁹The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Church Canada (Toronto: William Briggs, 1919), p. 11.

⁴⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 135.

faith of the three negotiating churches. . . .⁴¹

That the subcommittee was successful in fulfilling this task, is evident from the doctrinal statement which it brought forth. The preamble to this doctrinal statement already makes this clear. A pertinent portion of the preamble reads:

We further maintain our allegiance to the evangelical doctrines of the Reformation, as set forth in common in the doctrinal standards adopted by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, by the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, and by the Methodist Church.⁴²

The twenty articles which follow, attempt to manifest the distinctive emphases of Calvinism and Arminianism. Their reliance on the standards of the negotiating churches is negligible. They are largely indebted to the Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith and the English Presbyterian Articles of Faith,⁴³ the latter having been summarized by the Montreal section of the subcommittee, under the leadership of Dr. Scrimger.⁴⁴

To facilitate its task, the subcommittee on Doctrine at its first meeting subdivided into four sections, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax, respectively. The subcommittee also decided to study the Brief Statement

⁴¹H. H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 292.

⁴²Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 3.

⁴³Supra, p. 76.

⁴⁴Morrow, op. cit., p. 116.

of the Reformed Faith which had recently been published. When the subcommittee next met in plenary session, the Winnipeg and Halifax sections had no report to make, other than that nothing seemed to be standing in the way of organic union. The Toronto section expressed itself in favor of a slightly revised Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith. The Montreal section submitted its doctrinal summary of the English Articles of Faith. These two documents then became the frame of reference for future study and deliberation. The first draft of the statement of faith was presented to the Joint Committee in 1905.⁴⁵

It did not take the subcommittee long to formulate a statement upon which the members could agree. In the words of Dr. Pidgeon, who became the first Moderator of The United Church of Canada, ". . . it is simply amazing that agreement could be reached in so short a time on the doctrines of grace."⁴⁶ It is to be remembered, however, that the frame of reference within which the subcommittee worked was largely Presbyterian in substance, and since only slight revisions and modifications were made, the statement of faith finally drafted and presented to the Joint Committee had a decided Presbyterian flavor with occasional Methodist emphases. The Congregational contribution to the

⁴⁵The United Church of Canada, Proceedings, 1925, p. 58.

⁴⁶Pidgeon, op. cit., p. 36.

statement was largely one of contending for more simplification of the various articles of faith. This statement of faith, based largely on the Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith and the Montreal section's doctrinal summary of the English Articles of Faith, formed part of the Basis of Union endorsed by the Joint Committee in 1908 and submitted to the churches for their consideration.⁴⁷

A second issue confronting framers of the Basis of Union was that of polity, or government. The subcommittee on Polity began its task of setting forth the fundamental principles of government in the proposed United Church of Canada, by undertaking a study of the various forms by which the negotiating churches governed themselves. It was the subcommittee's purpose "to prepare a summary of the polities of the three negotiating churches, setting forth the powers and duties of each court."⁴⁸ The sources for these summaries were the Methodist Book of Discipline, the Presbyterian Book of Forms and some Congregational sources. After completing this study, the subcommittee expressed the opinion "that while the officers and courts of the negotiating Churches may bear different names, there is a substantial degree of similarity in the duties and functions

⁴⁷Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 23.

⁴⁸Morrow, op. cit., p. 246.

of their officers and courts."⁴⁹ In spite of this opinion, the issue of polity was probably somewhat more difficult to resolve than was the issue of doctrine. In reality there were some rather marked differences in the forms by which the negotiating churches governed themselves. A brief overview of the respective forms of government will bear this out.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada was a "society, a voluntary fellowship, banded together upon the acceptance of certain conditions of religious belief and practice."⁵⁰ The fundamental principle of its polity was government by presbyters or elders, who were chosen by the people,⁵¹ and held equal authority in the church. The local congregation was autonomous. Even in cases where several congregations shared the services of one minister, each of the congregations had its own organization and enjoyed autonomy over its own affairs. The Presbyterian congregation was organized basically along the lines, that temporal affairs were presided over by the people and spiritual affairs were presided over by the minister. A board of trustees held all local

⁴⁹Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 6.

⁵⁰Ephraim Scott, "Church Union" and the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, Limited, 1928), p. 13.

⁵¹Rules and Forms of Procedure, Presbyterian Church in Canada (Toronto: The Westminster Co., Limited, 1909), p. 54.

property, and temporal affairs were the specific province of a board of managers.⁵² Spiritual affairs were the specific province of the session which consisted of the minister and the appointed elders. The right of choosing managers and elders resided with the congregation, which was required to hold at least one meeting per annum,⁵³ as did the right to call the minister. The minister was called permanently, but his call needed the approval of the Presbytery, as did his installation.

The Presbytery was the "unit" of Presbyterianism. Chosen by the people, it was composed of the minister and one elder from each congregation in a given geographical area. The Presbytery functioned as the supervising agency in the calling, examining, ordination and settlement of ministers. In executing this function, the Presbytery was always guided by the choice of the people. In addition, the Presbytery carried the responsibility of selecting members of the General Assembly.⁵⁴ Historically three ordained ministers were required to form a Presbytery and thus a church. In 1925, the year in which organic union was consummated, there were seventy-eight Presbyteries in the

⁵²Ibid., p. 12.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 21.

Presbyterian Church in Canada.⁵⁵

Whereas the Presbytery was the "unit" in the Presbyterian form of church government, the General Assembly was the supreme court of the church. Inasmuch as the members of the General Assembly were selected by the Presbyteries, the respective members of which were chosen by the people, the General Assembly was representative of all the churches and all the people of the denomination. The General Assembly met annually under the chairmanship of a Moderator, who was normally chosen from the roll of active pastors, and held office for a term of one year.⁵⁶

Somewhere between the Presbytery and the General Assembly, stood the Synod. The power of Synod was limited. Its function was:

to adjust the bounds of Presbyteries within its own limits; to take the oversight of Presbyteries; to review their records; to consider references and to give advice and instruction when deemed necessary; to judge and dispose of complaints and appeals; to dispose of overtures; to grant to Presbyteries to take students on public trial for license; to receive reports of Presbyteries and to consider all matters connected therewith; and to attend to all matters assigned to it by the General Assembly.⁵⁷

Constituted by Presbyteries, there were eight Synods in the

⁵⁵Silcox, op. cit., p. 148.

⁵⁶Rules and Forms of Procedure, Presbyterian Church in Canada, p. 28.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 24, 25.

Presbyterian Church when organic union was consummated.⁵⁸

In many respects Methodist polity corresponded rather closely with Presbyterian polity. Corresponding to the Presbyterian Presbytery, was the Methodist District Meeting. Corresponding to the Presbyterian Synod, the Methodist Church had an Annual Conference. And corresponding to the Presbyterian General Assembly, the Methodist Church had its General Conference.

Methodist polity, although it was of the Presbyterian type, in some respects differed markedly from that of the Presbyterians. In contrast to the Presbyterian Church in Canada, which was an unincorporated, voluntary society,⁵⁹ the Methodist Church, Canada was incorporated by an act of the Canadian Parliament.⁶⁰

Another contrast manifests itself when one considers the unit of authority in the respective churches. The unit of authority in the Presbyterian form of government was the Presbytery. In Methodism, on the other hand, the unit of authority was at the top of the organizational ladder, namely, the General Conference.⁶¹

⁵⁸Silcox, op. cit., p. 148.

⁵⁹Scott, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶⁰Gershom W. Mason, The Legislative Struggle for Church Union (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 7.

⁶¹The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Church Canada, p. 50.

Yet another significant contrast was resident in the function and authority of the corresponding courts known as the Presbyterian Synod and the Methodist Annual Conference. Whereas the Presbyterian Synod had rather limited authority, the Methodist Annual Conference had absolute control over pastors and pastorates through its stationing committee.⁶² The stationing committee sent ministers to congregations or circuits for a definite period of time. Congregations and circuits had, for all practical purposes, no voice in the choice and tenure of ministers.⁶³

At the bottom of the Methodist organizational ladder stood the local congregation or society. Local property was held by a local board of trustees.⁶⁴ Normally a number of congregations or societies comprised a circuit. Although general supervision of the temporal and spiritual affairs of the circuit were entrusted to an executive body called the quarterly official board, which decided practically everything,⁶⁵ theoretically the minister or superintendent of the circuit held the power, inasmuch as the majority of the board members were nominated by him.

A number of circuits constituted a district. The

⁶²Ibid., p. 74.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 83-87.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 171.

⁶⁵ ⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 123-130.

Methodist District Meeting corresponded to the Presbyterian Presbytery, although it had considerably less power and authority. The functions of the District Meeting were confined largely to the gathering of statistics and the selection of representatives to the Annual Conference.⁶⁶ At the consummation of union in 1925, there were 141 District Meetings and twelve Annual Conferences in the Methodist scheme of organization.⁶⁷

The Annual Conference was the next higher court in the Methodist organization. Inasmuch as it controlled pastors and pastorates through its stationing committee, the Annual Conference was a body of considerable influence and authority.⁶⁸

At the top of the Methodist organizational ladder stood the General Conference, which met every four years. This was the supreme legislative body of the church, and the General Superintendent who presided over it, was the chief executive.⁶⁹ The General Conference had "full power to make rules and regulations for the Church" under the following limitations. It did not have authority to

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 111,112.

⁶⁷Silcox, op. cit., p. 148.

⁶⁸Supra, p. 89.

⁶⁹The Doctrine and Discipline of The Methodist Church Canada, p. 50.

establish new standards or rules or doctrine contrary to the existing standards of doctrine. It did not have authority to revoke, alter or change any article of religion. It did not have authority to destroy the plan of the itinerant system. When the General Conference desired to make changes in the general rules of the church, it could do so only by a three-fourths majority vote.⁷⁰ The General Superintendent held office for a term of eight years and was eligible for re-election. He was the chief executive of the church and presided over sessions of the General Conference as well as all its standing committees, courts and boards. It was his duty to see to it that resolutions of the General Conference were carried out, and he was responsible for the conduct of his office to the General Conference.⁷¹

The Congregationalists prided themselves on their independence. The unit of Congregationalism was the local congregation, which was a law unto itself. Neither civil nor ecclesiastical authority or dignity was allowed to exercise control or power over the local congregation.⁷² Progressing up the ladder of organization, the Congregationalists had Associations and a Union, which corresponded to

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 52, 53.

⁷²The Canadian Congregational Yearbook, 1906-1907, Thirty-Fourth Annual Volume (Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company, 1906), p. 22.

the Presbyterian Synod and the Methodist Annual Conference, and the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist General Conference respectively. The Congregational Associations and the Union were not legislative bodies however, but existed primarily for the purpose of fellowship. The Association was constituted by a number of congregations, held together solely by the bond of fellowship. The Union was constituted by delegates of the various Associations, and was presided over by a chairman or a president.⁷³ In some instances the Congregationalists chose to speak through the Union, but unlike the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist General Conference it had no legislative or judicial power.

Having completed its study of the various forms by which the negotiating churches governed themselves, and become aware of both the prevailing similarities and differences in the respective forms of government, the subcommittee on Polity endeavored to incorporate into the Basis of Union the good things from each system.⁷⁴ It is to be remembered that the subcommittee did not attempt to lay down all the specific details by which the proposed United Church of Canada and all its agencies should govern themselves. Rather, it attempted to set forth only the basic principles

⁷³Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁴Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 6.

of government and left it to the proposed church to work out the details.⁷⁵ It did not, for example, attempt to set forth fixed principles of polity for the local congregation. The Congregationalists, so jealous of their independence, probably would not have consented to this, had the subcommittee attempted to do so. The final result was that each congregation of the proposed United Church of Canada was given the privilege of retaining that type of government to which it had become accustomed.⁷⁶ For this reason, varying types of local polity were in effect after The United Church of Canada came into being.

In setting forth the basic governmental organization of the proposed church, the subcommittee designated the pastoral charge, which might consist of one or more local congregations, as the basic unit of organization.⁷⁷ Proceeding from there, it took over names from the existing polities of the three negotiating churches, and designated the higher courts of the proposed church to be the Presbytery, the Conference, and the General Council respectively.⁷⁸ The proposed Presbytery was taken over from the Presbyterian system, and was similar to its Presbytery, the Methodist

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 6-11.

⁷⁶Ibid. pp. 7, 10.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁸Ibid. pp. 10, 11.

District Meeting, and the Congregational Association. Generally, the function of the proposed Presbytery was to supervise pastoral charges, supervise ministerial education, and license, install and supervise ministers in its assigned area.⁷⁹ The Conference was taken over from the Methodist system, and corresponded to the Annual Conference, and the Presbyterian Synod. The Conference was to be a territorial court, consisting of an equal number of ministers and laymen, and was to exercise authority over the ministry in the matter of admission and discipline.⁸⁰ The General Council in turn, was contributed by the Congregationalists, and corresponded to the highest courts of the three negotiating churches, namely, the Presbyterian General Assembly, the Methodist General Conference, and the Congregational Union. The General Council was to have oversight of the Conferences, legislate on matters relative to doctrine, worship, membership and government of the church. It was to legislate also on matters relative to property, determine mission policy, have charge of the church's colleges, and appoint committees and officers for the various departments of the church's work.⁸¹ The General Council was to be presided over by a Moderator.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 9,10.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 10.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 10,11.

A third issue confronting the Joint Committee in its task of preparing a Basis of Union was that of administration. The subcommittee on Administration had to concern itself with the adjustments that would necessarily have to be made in such areas as minister's salaries and pension funds, foreign mission work, publications, educational institutions, auxiliary organizations, in short, all those matters pertaining to the various means, methods, boards, agencies and organizations through which the work of the negotiating churches was carried on. The subcommittee made a detailed study of all these matters and concluded that in most cases the necessary adjustments could be made with little or no difficulty. The problem of pensions and salaries was not entirely resolved and was left for the proposed church to struggle with.

Problems

One of the major problems confronting the Joint Committee in its task of preparing the Basis of Union revolved around the office of the Ministry.⁸² A subcommittee was appointed to give special consideration to this matter.

⁸²For a detailed study related to this problem, see John T. McNeill, A Statement Concerning Ordination to the Ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church (Canada), The Congregational Churches of Canada, and The United Church of Canada (N.p., Prepared and Issued by Order of The General Council of The United Church of Canada, 1926).

Two questions regarding the ministry caused considerable disagreement. One question concerned itself with the matter of placement of ministers; the other concerned itself with the matter of a minister's relation to the doctrines of the church.

The problem of placement arose out of the fact that there was considerable divergence of method in the negotiating churches. The Methodists placed their ministers through a stationing committee, which determined the location, salary and tenure of the minister. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists placed their ministers by means of a call system. Each congregation had the right, a right which it dearly cherished, to call its own minister and make with him its own arrangements as to tenure and salary. The Methodists were strenuously opposed to the call system. They felt that it left a minister altogether at the mercy of a congregation. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists were equally opposed to the Methodist system of placement. They felt that it was an undemocratic and dictatorial procedure.⁸³ Both sides were adamant. The Presbyterians and the Congregationalists were not inclined to yield the call system and the Methodists were determined to retain the stationing committee.

⁸³Walsh, op. cit., p. 294.

Faced with this problem, the subcommittee attempted to synthesize the two systems and finally agreed on a procedure whereby the individual pastoral charge would have the right to choose its own ministers by calling, but the right of appointment to the charge resided in a settlement committee, which was to "comply as far as possible with the expressed wishes of ministers and pastoral charges."⁸⁴

The problem of the minister's relation to the doctrines of the church was precipitated largely by the Congregationalists' strenuous objection to creedal subscription. However, they alone were not responsible for the problem, inasmuch as varying points of view were also presented by the other two churches.

All three negotiating churches were accustomed to examining their candidates for the ministry. These examinations had varying emphases however. The Presbyterians laid a great deal of emphasis on an "oath of fealty to the doctrines and courts of the church."⁸⁵ In relation to doctrine, Presbyterian candidates for ordination were required to give an affirmative answer to the following questions:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and manners?

⁸⁴Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 12.

⁸⁵Walsh, op. cit., p. 293.

2. Do you believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as adopted by this Church in the Basis of Union, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and in your teaching do you promise faithfully to adhere thereto?⁸⁶

The Methodist examination of candidates for the ministry confined itself largely to the candidate's personal habits, his religious experience and life, and his personal conviction as to his choice of vocation.⁸⁷

The Congregational examination inquired into the theological convictions and religious experiences of the candidates, but refrained from requiring his subscription to any specific body of doctrine or belief. From the very outset of deliberations in the Joint Committee, the Congregationalists "called for a simpler summary of Christian doctrine with greater emphasis on Christian experience and conduct."⁸⁸ With regard to a minister's relation to the doctrines of the church, the Congregationalists presented the following statement:

in the matter of ordination to the Church's ministry, we consider that it will best safeguard the intellectual integrity of ministers, and at the same time preserve the Church from formalism, if at the ordination of candidates to the ministry they shall not be compelled to give an absolute subscription to a creed, but, having before them the Doctrinal Statement of the

⁸⁶Rules and Forms of Procedure, Presbyterian Church in Canada, p. 78.

⁸⁷The Doctrine and Discipline of The Methodist Church, Canada, pp. 107, 108.

⁸⁸Pidgeon, op. cit., p. 39.

Church may frankly and in their own language indicate their relation thereto. It shall then remain with the ordaining body to decide as to the acceptance of a candidate, great importance always being attached to his general spirit and character.⁸⁹

The problem relating to the Ministry was finally resolved as outlined in the Basis of Union. The examining and ordaining body, being the Conference, must satisfy itself that the candidate is in "essential agreement" with the doctrines of the church, and accepts these doctrines as being "in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scripture." The examining body must also satisfy itself as to the candidate's personal character and his general fitness for the work and office of the ministry. Having satisfied the Conference as to these things, the candidate is then eligible for ordination, at which time he gives answer to the following questions:

1. Do you believe yourself to be a child of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Do you believe yourself to be called of God to the office of the Christian ministry, and your chief motives to be zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire for the salvation of man?
3. Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrines required for eternal salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are you resolved out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing which is not agreeable thereto?⁹⁰

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 40.

⁹⁰Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 14.

A lesser problem concerned itself with the name to be given to the proposed new church. The question as to what the proposed church should be called was not given serious consideration until the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee. At that meeting the issue of nomenclature was raised, and a motion was made that the name of the proposed new church should be "The United Church of Canada."⁹¹ After some debate an amendment was moved, to which another amendment, calling for general suggestions was moved and carried. A number of suggested names came to the Joint Committee, among them the name finally chosen. The latter received the most favorable reception whenever the question of a name was discussed. Eventually it was officially chosen by the Joint Committee when it revised the Basis of Union for the last time. Dr. S. D. Chown makes the following observation relative to the choice of the name "The United Church of Canada":

The name United Church of Canada was chosen for at least three reasons.

First: the difficulty of framing a composite word of an euphonious character which would combine and do justice to the former names of the uniting Churches.

The present name was also chosen because it expressed the fact of union between the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canada, and because it calls attention to the policy of The United Church "to foster the spirit of unity in the hope that this

⁹¹Silcox, op. cit., p. 164.

sentiment may in due time, so far as Canada is concerned, take shape in a Church which may fittingly be described as national."⁹²

A problem of major proportions confronting the Joint Committee in its task of preparing the Basis of Union was the problem of law. Related to this problem were all the legal aspects of union. A discussion of this problem will be undertaken in a later chapter entitled "Securing Enabling Legislation."

⁹²Chown, op. cit., p. 155.

103

Let thy work appear unto their children, God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us: Thou shalt establish

CHAPTER V

REACTION OF THE UNITING CHURCHES

At its fifth meeting, held December 9-11, 1908, the Joint Union Committee, having arrived at what it considered an acceptable Basis of Union, adopted the following resolution:

This Joint Committee on Church Union, representing the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches, in closing their fifth conference, desire to acknowledge with humble gratitude the goodness of God manifested in all their meetings.

In the brotherly spirit of their deliberations, in the harmony of their decisions, in the solution of many difficulties presented to them, they recognize the guidance of the Divine Spirit, and they submit the results of their conference to the Churches represented by them.

They believe that the conclusions to which they have been led in regard to the important interest considered by them show that the organic union of the negotiating Churches is practicable. They assume that ample opportunity will be given, not only to the courts, but also to the general membership of the various Churches, to consider the results of their conferences, and they expect that the more fully these are considered the more generally will they be improved.

The Joint Committee would have been glad to welcome to their conference representatives of other Christian communions, and, although this widening of the conference has not yet been found practicable, they hope that, in the event of a union of the negotiating Churches, a still more comprehensive union may in the future be realized.

The Joint Committee regard their work as now substantially completed. They commit it to the Great Head of the Church for His blessing, and to those portions of His Church which they represent, with confident hope of their approval.

Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants and Thy glory unto their children. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.¹

Herewith the Joint Union Committee transmitted its proposed Basis of Union for consideration and reaction of the three churches negotiating organic union. Two of the churches reacted favorably, almost immediately, but in the third there was to be prolonged and bitter debate of almost two decades duration, before organic union of the three churches was officially consummated.

Congregational Reaction

When the Joint Union Committee began its negotiations in 1904, the Congregationalists were moving in the direction of a union within their own family. By the time the Joint Committee was prepared to submit its proposed Basis of Union to the churches, that union had been consummated. In 1906, the Congregational Unions of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec, respectively, amalgamated to form the Congregational Union of Canada.

Inasmuch as the Congregationalists were rather desirous

¹Basis of Union of the United Church of Canada as Prepared by The Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, also A Brief Historical Statement (Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, November, 1924), pp. 22, 23.

of consummating an even wider union, having decided already in 1904 that "organic union is both desirable and practicable," they were quick to register a favorable reaction to the proposed Basis of Union. At its annual meeting in 1909 the Congregational Union of Canada formally received the proposed Basis of Union, briefly discussed it, and adopted the following recommendation:

The Congregational Union at its annual meeting in 1904 decided "that organic union is both desirable and practicable." It now remains to decide whether organic union on the basis prepared by the Joint Committee is desirable and practicable. As this must be determined in the Congregational way by the votes of the churches, your Committee would recommend that the documents agreed upon by the Joint Committee, along with this report, be sent to the churches for consideration.²

The Congregational Union was not a supreme court of the church. In view of this, it could not pronounce for or against union on the proposed basis, without first canvassing the Congregational membership. It therefore ordered that a vote relative to union on the proposed basis be taken among the members of the various churches, the results of which were to be reported at the next annual meeting of the Union. The vote, cast on the basis of the following questions, was taken in the early part of 1910, and reported to the annual meeting of the Union in that same year.

1. Are you in favor of the Canadian Congregational churches entering into the proposed Union on the

²The Canadian Congregational Yearbook, 1909-1910, Thirty-Seventh Annual Volume (Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company, 1909), pp. 43,44.

Basis of Union drafted by the Joint Committee?

2. If the proposed basis is not satisfactory, what changes do you suggest?³

According to the figures which appear in the historical statement prepared by direction of the Joint Union Committee, the results of the vote in Congregational churches was as follows: of a total of 10,689 members, 3,746 or approximately 35 percent voted on the question. Of those who voted, 2,933, or approximately 78 percent voted in the affirmative, and 813, or approximately 22 percent voted negative.⁴

What one Canadian church historian has called "an overwhelming approval,"⁵ was really not such an overwhelming approval at all, inasmuch as only slightly better than twenty-eight percent of the Congregational membership spoke for union on the proposed basis. Be that as it may, the Congregational Union of Canada, after receiving the results of the vote at its 1910 meeting, carried the following resolution:

That this Union considers the action it has already taken as sufficient and will now wait until the other negotiating bodies have had an opportunity of testing

³Ibid., p. 44.

⁴Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 24.

⁵H. H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 294.

to a corresponding degree the feeling of their constituencies.⁶

At the same time the Congregational Union also reappointed its Committee on Church Union, and directed the appointment of a special subcommittee "to investigate all the legal and administrative interests involved in the proposed Union both as to individual churches and societies."⁷

As far as the Congregationalists were now concerned, they were prepared to take whatever steps were yet necessary to consummate organic union. From this point on they waited patiently for the other two churches to make their decisions. The Methodist decision was not long in coming, but the Presbyterian decision was to come only after prolonged and bitter controversy.

Meanwhile, the Congregationalists continued to exercise patience and to extend their willing co-operation. In 1914 at the invitation of the Presbyterian General Assembly⁸ their Committee on Church Union met with the corresponding committees of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches to discuss

⁶Congregational Churches of Canada, Yearbook, 1910-1911, p. 32.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Acts and Proceedings of the Fortieth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, June 3-10, 1914 (Toronto: Murray Printing Co., 1914), p. 41.

1. The proposed changes in the Basis of Union suggested by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.
2. The changes suggested by the denominational Committees on Church Union.
3. The name to be given to the United Church and the names to be given to the courts and officials of the United Church.
4. The legal aspects of the whole question of Church Union.
5. Other matters preparatory to the final recommendation regarding Church Union to be presented to the proper courts of the negotiating Churches.⁹

During the course of the above-mentioned meeting, the Joint Committee amended the proposed Basis of Union. At the annual meeting of the Congregational Union the following year, the Committee on Church Union reported in favor of the amended basis, expressed its gratitude over the fact that union negotiations had advanced yet another stage, and ventured the hope that there would be no unnecessary delay in consummating organic union.

During the next five years the Congregational Union took no significant action on union, other than to express its continued willingness to exercise patience, to continue its policy of co-operation, and to hold "itself in readiness to take all constitutional and legal steps necessary"¹⁰ when these should be called for. Subsequent to the action of the

⁹Basis of Union of the United Church of Canada, p. 25.

¹⁰Congregational Churches of Canada, Yearbook, 1916-1917, p. 22.

Presbyterian General Assembly of 1921¹¹ the Congregational Union expressed its joy over that action, and instructed the Committee on Church Union to "take such united action as may be necessary to bring the corporate union of the three denominations into effect."¹²

The Committee on Church Union carried out this directive and gave its report at the next meeting of the Union. Subsequent to this meeting, the documents prepared by the Joint Committee, which were required for legislation in the Dominion and Provincial Legislatures, were submitted for approval of the various Congregational societies and congregations. The former gave their unanimous approval and the latter approved by an "overwhelming majority." At its 1923 meeting, the Congregational Union approved the proposed legislation, and appointed its Committee with power to act in conjunction with the committees of the sister churches in "procuring such Legislation and taking all such action as should be necessary to consummate the union in the United Church of Canada."¹³ At this time the Union also elected its representatives to the first General Council of The United Church of Canada.

¹¹Infra, p. 131.

¹²Congregational Churches of Canada, Yearbook, 1921-1922, p. 26.

¹³Ibid., 1923, pp. 16,17.

Methodist Reaction

The Methodists were almost as expeditious in approving the proposed Basis of Union as were the Congregationalists. Although there was a body of opposition within its ranks, the Methodist Church registered official approval at its first General Conference subsequent to completion of the proposed Basis of Union in 1908.

Inasmuch as the General Conference of the Methodist Church met only at four-year intervals, and would next meet in 1910, the Joint Committee, in submitting the basis for consideration by the Churches, recommended that no official action be taken in the matter until all three bodies could act more or less simultaneously in 1910.¹⁴

When the proposed Basis of Union came before the General Conference in 1910, the Conference declared "its approval of these documents agreed upon by the Joint Committee as a basis upon which the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches may unite."¹⁵ An attempt by the opposition block to have the above-mentioned documents "cordially received" rather than approved, was defeated, and the original resolution passed with a substantial majority.

¹⁴Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 23.

¹⁵Journal of Proceedings of The Eighth General Conference of The Methodist Church, Canada, August 14-31, 1910 (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910), p. 330.

In contrast to the opposition block in the Presbyterian Church,¹⁶ the Methodist opposition, though vigorous and determined, recognized the decision as the voice of the church, and deemed it its Christian duty to abide by that decision. From this point on "the Methodist Church was a unit, . . . and throughout the long years of delay and disappointment kept the faith in the possibility of church union."¹⁷

At the same time as the General Conference approved the proposed Basis of Union, it directed its Special Committee to send the proposed basis to the District Meetings for consideration, and to the Annual Conferences for consideration and adoption or rejection. It further directed that "if the reports from the Annual Conferences warrant such action, to send the documents of the Basis of Union to the Official Boards and membership of the Church for consideration and adoption or rejection."¹⁸ In this same connection, the General Conference also authorized the Special Committee "to call a special meeting of the General Conference further to consider the matter of consummating the proposed union," provided that the "result of the vote

¹⁶Chapters V and VI, Passim.

¹⁷C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institutes of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 188.

¹⁸Methodist Church, Canada, Proceedings, 1910, p. 330.

would warrant the action."¹⁹

The first of these directives was carried out in 1911, with the result that eleven of the twelve Annual Conferences voted in the affirmative and one in the negative. Membership-wise, the vote was 1,579 for and 270 against. Thereupon the Special Committee discharged its duty in relation to the second directive and submitted the whole matter to the Official Boards and the membership of the church. The vote by officials and members of the church was cast in 1912 on the question: "Are you in favor of organic union of the three Churches on the Basis proposed by the Joint Committee?"²⁰ The vote resulted as shown by the following table.

TABLE 2

RESULTS OF METHODIST VOTE ON UNION

Total Number of Officials	Voting For	Voting Against	Not Voting
29,820	23,475	3,869	2,476
Total Number of Members Eighteen Years and Over			
293,967	150,841	24,357	118,769
Total Number of Members Under Eighteen Years			
29,373	17,198	2,615	5,560

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 24.

Inasmuch as eleven out of twelve Annual Conferences, and of those individuals exercising their franchise, eighty-five percent of officials, eighty-five percent of members eighteen years of age and over, and eighty-six percent of members under eighteen years of age, voted in the affirmative, the consensus among Methodists was, that the church had spoken overwhelmingly in favor of union on the proposed basis. Consequently, the Methodist Church did not deem it necessary to take a further vote, and from 1912 on, the General Conference of the Methodist Church was fully prepared to consummate organic union with the Presbyterian and Congregational churches on the basis prepared by the Joint Committee. On July 16, 1912, the General Conference Special Committee declared itself "satisfied that the Methodist Church is now prepared to proceed toward the Union of the three negotiating Churches on the Basis of Union heretofore agreed upon."²¹

At the invitation of the Presbyterian General Assembly,²² the General Conference in 1914 reappointed its Church Union Committee, which met later that year with the corresponding committees of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. In 1918 the General Conference received the report relative to that meeting and confirmed the action taken at that time.

²¹Ibid.

²²Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1914, p. 41.

Meanwhile, some of the Methodists were becoming somewhat impatient with the whole union endeavor. The seeming inability of the Presbyterians to commit themselves to definite action, in spite of the fact that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had endorsed the proposed Basis of Union, was disturbing. The West, which more or less led the way in union, was becoming particularly impatient. The General Conference of 1918 considered the following memorial from the Saskatchewan Conference of the Methodist Church:

That whereas negotiations for union have now been going on for fifteen years; and whereas the local union movement is spreading rapidly, and we believe that the Church should lead rather than be led; and whereas the Methodist Church is really the Union Church, ever consistently standing for union, and therefore should claim the place of leadership:

We therefore recommend (1) that the General Conference notify the Presbyterian Church that, believing that the time is more than ripe to recognize the demand for union, it is our intention in June, 1920, to adopt the Basis of Union, inviting all existing Union churches and any other evangelical bodies wishing to join with us in organizing The United Church of Canada, and calling the General Council of that Church to meet at that date; and (2) that the General Conference should suggest very earnestly to the Presbyterian Church that the acute situation, especially in the West, and the swift movements going on, call for a reconsideration of the policy adopted by that Church.²³

The "policy" referred to in the latter part of this memorial was adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly

²³Methodist Church, Canada, Proceedings, 1918, p. 299.

in 1917,²⁴ and called for a "truce" in negotiations, in view of the fact that the country was at war, and that the previous Assembly had agreed to take no further action anent organic union until the second Assembly after the conclusion of that War. The Methodists responsible for the memorial were undoubtedly motivated on the one hand by a genuine desire to consummate the union, particularly in view of the fact that in the West, many union churches had been established in anticipation of the Union. On the other hand, they were motivated by a desire to force the unionists in the Presbyterian Church to override the opposition. Patience and wise counsel prevailed however, and the General Conference passed the following resolution:

The General Conference does not deem it fitting to suggest to the Presbyterian Church a reconsideration of the policy adopted by that Church; but while recognizing the acute situation resulting from the long delay, the General Conference would counsel patience, a wise and Christian endeavor to meet pressing local situations by co-operation, a cordial spirit towards those local Methodist and Presbyterian congregations that have with good intent anticipated the consummation of organic union, and always a loyal devotion to the work of Christ committed to our Church.²⁵

The General Conference did not meet again until October, 1922. At that time the Conference approved the proposed draft of legislation prepared and submitted by the Joint Committee, and appointed a Committee of Forty to act

²⁴Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1917, p. 53.

²⁵Methodist Church, Canada, Proceedings, 1918, p. 299.

on behalf of the Methodist Church "to procure the enactment of the said proposed Acts of the Parliament of Canada and the Legislatures of the Provinces of Canada."²⁶ The Committee of Forty was also authorized to

consider and deal with any proposals made by or on behalf of any of the negotiating Churches or any Committee thereof, or otherwise, with respect to the said legislation, to make or concur in any changes or amendments to the said proposed Acts that they in their discretion may deem advisable in order to carry into effect the provisions of the Basis of Union and the general principles contained in the said proposed Acts, and with the representatives of the other negotiating Churches, to settle and determine the final form of any such legislation, and generally to do all such acts and things as the said Committee may deem expedient to procure whatever legislation may in their opinion be necessary or requisite to effectuate and consummate the said Union, pursuant to the provisions of the Basis of Union and the principles contained in the said proposed Acts.²⁷

At this time the General Conference also elected seventy-five ministers and seventy-five laymen as members of the first General Council of The United Church of Canada.

Presbyterian Reaction

Subsequent to the 1912 declaration of the Methodist General Conference Special Committee,²⁸ the story of the union movement is largely a record of proceedings in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Even though the General

²⁶Ibid., 1922, p. 95.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 24.

Assembly of 1910 declared its "approval of the documents agreed upon by the Joint Committee as a basis upon which this Church may unite with the Methodist and Congregational Churches,"²⁹ at the same time directing that this declaration together with the documents mentioned therein "be transmitted to Presbyteries for their judgement under the Barrier Act,"³⁰ a long and bitter controversy waged within the Presbyterian Church before union was consummated fifteen years later.

From the outset of union negotiations there had been opposition in the General Assembly. By and large, the Presbyterians were desirous of a fuller measure of unity with other churches. However, there were those in the ranks of Presbyterianism who feared that union such as was being proposed and negotiated would encroach upon the freedom and integrity of their church, and they were steadfastly "opposed to any step by which that freedom and integrity might be imperilled."³¹

²⁹Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1910, p. 38.

³⁰The Barrier Act is intended to be a barrier against hasty legislation by the General Assembly. It provides that certain important measures, after approval by the General Assembly, must also be approved by a majority of the Presbyteries before becoming effective. When a majority of the Presbyteries register approval, the next General Assembly may put that legislation into effect.

³¹Ephraim Scott, "Church Union" and The Presbyterian Church in Canada (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, Limited, 1928), p. 47.

There were those who were surprised and shocked, when at the 1910 Assembly, the Committee on Church Union concluded its report by moving that the proposed Basis of Union be approved by the Assembly and sent down to the Presbyteries for their judgement under the Barrier Act. The General Assembly had received the proposed Basis of Union in 1909, in conjunction with the report of its Committee on Church Union. The Joint Committee had recommended that no action be taken until all three bodies could act more or less simultaneously in 1910, to which the General Assembly concurred. At the same time the General Assembly directed that copies of the Committee's report, including the proposed Basis of Union, be transmitted "to Presbyteries, Sessions and Congregations, for their use, in order that they may be fully informed as to the whole question, and be prepared to deal with it when it comes before them for disposal."³²

Many were convinced that the membership should speak before the matter was put before Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. They were equally convinced that the membership would not approve. Hence, the surprise and shock when the Committee moved that the whole question be submitted to Presbyteries for their judgement. This they regarded as an attempt to by-pass the will of the people, inasmuch as the next General Assembly could enact the union without going to

³²Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1909, p. 39.

the people, provided that the Presbyteries reacted favorably.

The unionists carried the issue, however, and the matter was transmitted to the Presbyteries for their consideration and reaction. Of seventy Presbyteries extant, sixty-seven registered their reaction. Fifty Presbyteries voted in the affirmative, and twenty in the negative. A total of 1,269 individual votes were cast, with 793 registering approval and 476 registering non-approval.³³

In view of the majority of Presbyteries approving union on the proposed basis, the General Assembly of 1911, acted in keeping with its provision of 1910, to the effect that

in the event of the return from Presbyteries warranting further steps being taken in the direction of union, the Assembly of 1911 will proceed to consult Sessions, and Congregations regarding the whole matter.³⁴

The vote, cast on the question: "Are you in favor of organic union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches?"

brought the returns shown in the following table.

TABLE 3

RESULTS OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN VOTE ON UNION

Total number of Elders	Voting For	Voting Against	Not Voting
9,675	6,245	2,475	955
Total number of Communicants	106,755	48,278	132,911

³³Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, pp. 23,24.

³⁴Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1910, p. 24.

A second vote, cast on the question: "Do you approve of the proposed Basis of Union?" brought the following results.

TABLE 4

RESULTS OF PRESBYTERIAN VOTE ON BASIS OF UNION

	Voting For	Voting Against	Not Voting
Total number of Elders	5,104	2,192	1,379
Total number of Communicants	77,993	27,197	182,754

In addition, on the first question, 37,175 adherents, that is, individuals who did not hold full-fledged membership, but had a somewhat loosely-connected relationship with the church, voted in the affirmative, and 14,174 voted in the negative. On the second question, 27,756 adherents voted in the affirmative, and 10,316 voted in the negative.³⁵

An examination of the results will reveal that better than ninety percent of the elders reacted to the first question, seventy-two percent of which indicated in favor of union. On the other hand, sixty-five percent of the elders reacted to the second question, seventy percent of which indicated approval of the proposed Basis of Union.

The reaction by communicant members was considerably less favorable. Only slightly better than forty-six percent of the communicant membership registered a reaction to

³⁵Basis of Union of The United Church in Canada, p. 24.

the first question. Of those who did, almost one-third reacted negatively. With regard to the second question, just slightly better than thirty-six percent of the membership registered a reaction, and of those who did, less than sixty-five percent approved the Basis of Union. In the final analysis, only thirty-seven percent of the communicant membership approved of union, and twenty-seven percent approved of the proposed basis. This perhaps best explains why anti-unionists subsequently claimed that the church had not spoken decisively. Reflected no doubt, in this vote, was the influence of those opposed to organic union. Subsequent to the 1910 decision of the General Assembly, to send the question down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act, there emerged a loosely-knit organization called "The Presbyterian Association for the Federation of the Churches of the Protestant Denominations." As the name indicates, this organization pressed the idea of "federation" as a solution to the problems confronting the churches in their task of meeting the needs of an ever-receding frontier. This organization evidently was the nucleus of the opposition when the vote was taken.³⁶

In 1912, the General Assembly heard its Committee on Church Union recommend that the Assembly reaffirm the ideal of organic union and continue to press for the fulfillment

³⁶Silcox, op. cit., p. 190.

of that ideal. However, the Assembly did not fail to take recognition of the fact that a rather substantial minority had voted both against union and the proposed basis. Consequently, the Assembly resolved that

In view of the extent of the minority, which is not yet convinced that organic union is the best method of expressing the unity sincerely desired by all, the Assembly deems it unwise immediately to proceed to consummate the union, but believes that by further conference and discussion practically unanimous action can be secured within a reasonable time.³⁷

At the same time the General Assembly also directed that any suggestions in relation to the union question be referred to the Committee on Church Union "for their consideration in the hope of removing objections and with a view to further conference with the Committees of the other negotiating churches."³⁸

For the time being, the merger movement was halted. The weeks and months following the 1912 General Assembly were comparatively peaceful for the Presbyterian family. The action of 1912 had made it clear that the unionists still hoped for "practically unanimous action." The anti-unionists relied on the sentiments of 1905 and 1912 to the effect that a decision to consummate union should carry "the consent of the entire membership," and took courage from the results of the vote which indicated they held a substantial

³⁷Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1912, p. 45.

³⁸Ibid., p. 46.

body of strength. Moreover, they were confident their strength was increasing.³⁹

However, the General Assembly of 1913 shattered the peace, and gave rise to a highly organized opposition. In that year the Assembly resolved that

for the fullest and fairest consideration of every aspect of the question further amendments to the present Basis of Union and alternative proposals be invited and referred to its Union Committee, in order that after considering them it may again enter into conference with the Committees of the other negotiating churches, with the view of setting before our people a final presentation of the question for their judgement, in the hope that union may be consummated with no unnecessary delay.⁴⁰

During that Assembly, a vigorous and determined opposition was organized. Dr. Ephraim Scott, a staunch member of the opposition, reports as follows:

During the debate a member of Assembly asked another aside and said, "They are determined to drive this thing forward. Something must be done to save the Church. We must call a meeting and organize. Which will you do, find a place to meet or call the meeting?" "I'll find a place to meet," was the response. "All right, I'll call the meeting."

Nearing six o'clock that afternoon, when the vote of Assembly to press forward to "union" was announced, a call was at once given,--"Will all who wish to continue the Presbyterian Church meet at seven o'clock this evening in the hall of St. Andrew's Church, King Street West."

At seven they met, some thirty or forty. After the thronged Assembly and Congress in Massey Hall they

³⁹Scott, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴⁰Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1913, Appendices, p. 302.

seemed but few. To human eye the future was not rich in prospect or promise. But they knew they were right, and with quiet purpose and trust they organized to do what the Assembly had been chosen and pledged to do, "maintain and defend" the Presbyterian Church, a trust which a majority in that Assembly had betrayed. This was the first nation-wide organization for that purpose, and in a few weeks--"The General Committee of the Organization for the Preservation and Continuance of the Presbyterian Church in Canada"--numbered over one hundred and seventy ministers, and more than five hundred leading laymen, elders and others, some seven hundred in all, representing every considerable community from Atlantic to Pacific.⁴¹

From this point on the opposition was "organized on a nation-wide basis." Shortly thereafter "The Women's League" was organized in Montreal, with essentially the same purpose, namely to "preserve" the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The League wholeheartedly endorsed the Organization for the Preservation and Continuance of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and pledged its co-operation. Three years later, a new organization called the "Presbyterian Church Association" was formed in Toronto.⁴² This organization waged a determined fight for the preservation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada for the duration of negotiations, including the Bill before the Dominion Parliament and some of the Provincial Legislatures.

The action taken by the General Assembly in 1914, and the subsequent meeting of the Joint Committee has already

⁴¹Scott, op. cit., pp. 52,53.

⁴²Ibid., p. 56.

been referred to.⁴³ It is, however, noteworthy that between regular sessions of that Assembly those opposed to union held separate meetings in a neighboring hall. One man who attended those meetings testifies that they "were largely attended and were marked by purpose, confidence and enthusiasm."⁴⁴

In the interval between the 1914 and 1915 meetings of the General Assembly, the Joint Union Committee of the negotiating churches reviewed and amended the proposed Basis of Union. Except for the addition of an article on prayer⁴⁵ and an Appendix on Law, the amendments were few and relatively insignificant. In 1915 a tense General Assembly considered the amended basis. By the time the General Assembly convened in 1915, the amended basis had been accepted by the other negotiating churches, and they were reported anxious to take whatever action was yet necessary to consummate the union. In addition, the country was at war. Shortly before the Assembly was to convene, the opposition broadcast a coast-to-coast appeal, urging the Presbyterians, in view of the war, to call a halt to negotiations.⁴⁶ These

⁴³Supra, pp. 106, 107.

⁴⁴Scott, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴⁵E. Lloyd Morrow, Church Union in Canada, Its History, Motives, Doctrine and Government (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1923), p. 128.

⁴⁶Thomas B. Kilpatrick and Kenneth H. Cousland, Our Common Faith (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1928), p. 29.

factors all combined to gender tremendous interest in the 1915 Assembly of Presbyterians. The largest Assembly up to that time considered the amended Basis of Union, approved it, and directed that the amended basis, together with the Appendix on Law, be sent down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. The Assembly further directed

That the question of Union be submitted to Sessions, and also to Communicants and Adherents of the Church, in the following form: "Are you in favor of Union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches of Canada on the Basis of Union approved by the General Assembly of 1915? Yes. No." The people are reminded that the decision on this question must be reached on the basis of the votes cast.⁴⁷

The results of this vote, shown in the following table, were reported to the next General Assembly.⁴⁸

TABLE 5

RESULTS OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN VOTE ON UNION

Approving remit	53	Presbyteries
Disapproving remit.	13	Presbyteries
Ties.	3	Presbyteries
Irrelevant returns.	2	Presbyteries
Rejected (Cariboo).	1	Presbytery
No returns from	4	Presbyteries
	<u>76</u>	

Sessions		Communicants		Adherents		Pastoral Charges & Mission Fields	
For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
7,066	3,822	106,534	69,913	36,942	20,004	1,331	494

⁴⁷Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1915, p. 43.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 36,37.

The vote of 1915 showed that Presbyteries voted largely as they had previously. Whereas fifty had registered approval in 1912, fifty-three registered approval in 1915. Among communicants and adherents however, the opposition increased significantly. The number of communicants registering approval in 1915 was substantially the same as in 1912. The number of adherents registering approval in 1915 dropped slightly from 1912. However, among communicants registering non-approval, the opposition increased by more than 20,000 votes. Similarly among adherents registering non-approval the opposition increased by almost one-third.⁴⁹

The increased opposition notwithstanding, the 1916 General Assembly, by a vote of 406 to 90, resolved

That in accordance with its recommendations this General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, do now resolve to unite with the Methodist Church of Canada, and the Congregational Churches of Canada, to constitute "The United Church of Canada," on the Basis of Union, approved by the General Assembly of 1915, and by the majority of Presbyteries since consulted under the Barrier Act.

That a Committee be appointed to carry out the policy of the Assembly, and to act in co-operation with Committees of the Methodist and Congregational Churches of Canada, in obtaining the necessary legal advice and in taking such steps as may be deemed proper to prepare for making application to the Dominion and Provincial Legislatures for such legislation as may be necessary to secure the conveyance of property of the United Church;

That this Committee report to the first Assembly following the end of the first year after the close of

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 279.

the War, and that, with the consent and authority of that Assembly, application be made for the legislation proposed at the following Session of the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures.

That provision be made in this legislation to conserve the property rights of all congregations that may determine by a majority vote of the communicants, not to enter the United Church.

That the union be consummated as soon after the securing of legislation as the regular steps can be taken.⁵⁰

The General Assembly had thus committed the Presbyterian Church in Canada to organic union with the Methodist and Congregational churches. The Methodists and Congregationalists were understandably happy to receive the news. The opposition on the other hand, considered the action "ruthless," a "breach of faith."⁵¹ That autumn the opposition met in Toronto, and reorganized its defences.⁵² In the interval between this incident and the next meeting of the General Assembly, the latter was literally besieged with overtures petitioning the Assembly not to carry through its resolution, so that a schism in the church might be averted.

The General Assembly of 1917 took recognition of the many overtures, and hoping to avert a schism in the church, called a truce. The Assembly urged that debate and organized propagandism be discontinued on either side, and further declared

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 57.

⁵¹Scott, op. cit., p. 56.

⁵²Supra, p. 123.

That inasmuch as the resolution of the last Assembly sets forth that further action will not be taken until the second Assembly after the close of the War, to secure peace in the meantime, the Assembly urges that controversy on the matter of Organic Union be dropped by all parties; that no attempt be made at the present time to set forth in detail the action appropriate to a future period, but that the Church patiently await the new light which it may receive by Divine guidance through the growing experience of the people, and the lessons of the War.⁵³

For four years there was peace within the Presbyterian family. During those four years, the General Assembly did not even hear reports from its Committee on Church Union. Those opposed to union gained in the confidence that the church would not be carried into union. Then, the question of union was again raised in the General Assembly of 1921. The Assembly expressed the opinion that during the years of the truce nothing had occurred that should change the mind of the church, on the contrary, the mind of the church had been confirmed and strengthened in its previous decision. The Assembly resolved therefore, to "take such steps as may be deemed best to consummate organic union . . . as expeditiously as possible."⁵⁴

A committee was appointed to confer with corresponding committees of the other two churches, with instructions to report to the next General Assembly. The committee met in Joint Committee and in 1922 reported the results to the

⁵³Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1917, p. 53.

⁵⁴Ibid., 1921, p. 30.

General Assembly.⁵⁵ What now remained for the General Assembly, was, to adopt the legal documents that were yet to be prepared; to inform the membership of its action; to elect its members to the first General Council of The United Church of Canada; and, to have its representatives fight the pending legal battle in the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures. In due course all of these items were taken care of. The record of this action shall be presented in the next chapter.

⁵⁵Infra, Chapter VI.

CHAPTER VI

SECURING ENABLING LEGISLATION

Inasmuch as the three churches negotiating organic union, had through their respective church courts resolved to unite with each other to form The United Church of Canada, it was necessary for them to seek and obtain legislation in both the Dominion Parliament and each of the Provincial Legislatures. Such legislation was necessary in order that the Basis of Union approved by each of the negotiating churches could be put into effect. Dominion legislation was necessary in order to incorporate, to provide for the government of the new church, to confer powers of reception upon it, and to deal specifically with such areas as came under the legislative control of the Dominion. Provincial legislation was necessary to confirm Dominion legislation in each of the Provinces and make provision for the vesting of general property in each of the Provinces.¹

The three churches were of course free to unite, when and where and with whom they should choose so to do. If, however, the three churches wanted to be sure that they could carry their property with them into union, it was

¹George C. Pidgeon, The United Church of Canada, The Story of The Union (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 86.

necessary for them to seek legislation enabling them so to do. Inasmuch as a good deal of denominational property, such as colleges, and a vast majority of general property was held under Dominion charter, it was necessary to seek Dominion legislation to regularize the transfer of such property to the new church. And since practically all of the local church property of the denominations was held under Provincial regulations of one kind or another, proper provision for the vesting of that property had to be made in each of the Provinces.

As indicated above, the Congregational Union of Canada was prepared to take final steps necessary to consummating union as early as 1910. By 1912 the Methodist Church, Canada, was similarly prepared. When in June of 1921 the Presbyterian General Assembly resolved "to consummate organic union . . . as expeditiously as possible,"² it also directed

That a representative committee be appointed, with instruction to confer with the negotiating churches, and to carry out the policy of this Assembly, and to report to the next General Assembly.³

In October of that same year the Joint Union Committee, comprised of the above-mentioned Presbyterian committee and

²Acts and Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, June 1-9, 1921 (Toronto: The Murray Printing Company Limited, 1921), p. 30.

³Ibid., p. 49.

corresponding committees of the other two churches, met in Toronto. Three duly appointed representatives of the General Council of Local Union Churches were also in attendance. At this meeting the Joint Union Committee decided

That a standing Committee on Law and Legislation be appointed to consider and report on the Legislation necessary to give effect to the Union of the negotiating Churches, and to have prepared copies of all proposed bills to be submitted to the Parliament of Canada, and such other legislative bodies as may be necessary in the premises, to be submitted to a further meeting of this Committee, and thereafter to the Supreme Courts of the negotiating Churches; and, further that the Legislation Committee have the power to secure the necessary legal assistance.⁴

In its report to the General Assembly in 1922, the Committee on Church Union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, proposed that the "ablest legal counsel possible" should be retained, and "that all documents bearing on the proposed union . . . be submitted to the above-named Counsel for their consideration."⁵ The committee also proposed that Counsel, yet to be chosen, should be required to report all the steps necessary to consummation of the Union as well as all the proposed documents to be submitted to the Dominion Parliament and Provincial Legislatures, for its

⁴Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada as Prepared by the Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, Also A Brief Historical Statement (Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, November, 1924), p. 29.

⁵Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1922, Appendices, p. 509.

consideration. These proposals of the committee were adopted, and Mr. W. N. Tilley and Mr. R. S. Cassels were retained as legal counsel for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Mr. Tilley and Mr. Cassels were instructed to prepare such bills as were necessary to consummate the union, and to prepare as well, legislation that would safeguard the rights and interests of all concerned, be they for or against union.

Preparing The Bill

On June 26, 1922, Mr. Gershom W. Mason and Mr. McGregor Young were formally retained as legal counsel for the Committee on Law and Legislation.⁶ In keeping with the 1921 decision of the Joint Union Committee, it was their task to assist the Committee on Law and Legislation in preparing "copies of all proposed bills to be submitted to the Parliament of Canada and such other legislative bodies as may be necessary. . . ." ⁷ Counsel were given a "free hand and the legislation as finally passed, with a few exceptions . . . followed the broad lines of the original draft."⁸

To acquaint counsel with Presbyterian action up to this point, they were given extracts of the Church Union

⁶Gershom W. Mason, The Legislative Struggle for Church Union (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 3.

⁷Supra, p. 132.

⁸Mason, op. cit., p. 4.

Committee's report which had been approved by the General Assembly in 1922,⁹ as well as the report of the Presbyterian counsel, Mr. Tilley and Mr. Cassels. Inasmuch as counsel for the Committee on Law and Legislation were not retained until the latter part of June, and were expected to have the drafts ready for consideration of the Methodist General Conference in September, the time allowed for completion of their task was indeed rather limited.

Counsel set themselves to their appointed task with zeal. A host of problems needed solving. Mr. Mason enumerates some of those problems as follows:

The constitutions of the uniting Churches varied. The Methodist Church was a body corporate, having been incorporated in 1884 by Act of Parliament. The Presbyterian Church in Canada had not received any similar incorporation although recognized as an entity by many statutes, Dominion and Provincial. It had found it expedient to secure the incorporation of a number of boards in order to facilitate the holding of its property and administration of its affairs. The Congregational Churches were separate autonomous units and there was no governing body having legislative or administrative authority although to further their common purposes they had procured the incorporation of several of their associations, notably The Congregational Union of Canada and two Missionary Societies. It was planned to unite all these organizations and to make provision for their continuing their function until The United Church should devise ways and means of carrying on their work.

It was necessary to consider the respective jurisdictions of Parliament and of the Provincial Legislatures. It was clear that only Parliament could incorporate the united body, that it had jurisdiction over much of the general property . . . , and that it had jurisdiction over the

⁹Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1922, p. 30.

property of congregations outside of any province. It was also clear that provincial legislation was necessary to deal with the property of congregations situated within the provinces, with many trusts which were within the provincial jurisdiction, and with the civil rights of the Churches in the provinces, such as the right to solemnize marriage.¹⁰

In its task of preparing the bill for legislation, counsel frequently referred to the proposed Basis of Union, studied a voluminous body of relevant material gathered from the negotiating churches, considered a large number of statutes pertinent to religious institutions and property-holding societies, and the like. The first drafts were sent to Mr. Rowell, chairman of the Committee on Law and Legislation, on August 31, 1922. The general principles of the proposed legislation are summarized as follows:

1. The incorporation of The United Church of Canada with appropriate powers;
2. The vesting of general property of the negotiating Churches in The United Church;
3. The vesting of congregational property in trustees for the congregations as a part of The United Church either,
 - a) under the terms of a Model Deed or
 - b) for the sole benefit of the congregation;
4. The substitution of The United Church for the respective uniting churches in their relation to their colleges;
5. The clothing of The United Church and its congregations with appropriate civil rights in each province;

¹⁰Mason, op. cit., pp. 7,8.

6. The right of each congregation to decide by majority vote as to entering the union and to retain its property no matter what the result of the vote; and
7. The division of the general property of a negotiating church between The United Church and the congregations voting not to enter the union.¹¹

During the intervening weeks between submission of the drafts to the Committee on Law and Legislation, and the consideration of those drafts by the Joint Union Committee, a number of minor revisions were made. The Committee on Law and Legislation presented the revised legislation at a meeting of the Joint Union Committee, on September 22, 1922.¹² The drafts were carefully considered, certain amendments were suggested, and the Committee on Law and Legislation was authorized to make such changes as were in harmony with the findings of the meeting. The Joint Union Committee also directed that the proposed legislation "be sent forward to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Congregational Union."¹³ The negotiating churches were requested to act on the documents, and authorize their respective Committees on Church Union "to put the legislation into final form for Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures."¹⁴

¹¹Ibid., pp. 9,10.

¹²Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 33.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

The first of the negotiating bodies to act on the proposed legislation was the Methodist General Conference. In 1922 it approved in principle, and in general, the form of the proposed legislation.¹⁵ Thereupon it appointed a Committee of Forty to act on behalf of the church in keeping with the request of the Joint Union Committee. The following June the Congregational Union took similar action. In the same month, the Presbyterian General Assembly also approved in principle, and in general, the form of the proposed legislation. It further authorized its committee

to act for and on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, in co-operation with similar Committees from the other negotiating Churches, with authority to put the Bills in final shape, and to procure the enactment of the proposed Acts of the Parliament of Canada, and of the Legislatures of the Provinces of Canada, and of such other Legislatures of the colonies and countries outside of Canada as may be necessary to consummate the said Union.¹⁶

At the same time the General Assembly decided to appoint 150 representatives to the first General Council of The United Church of Canada. A further resolution authorized the Committee on Church Union to confer with representatives of the opposition, with a view to maintaining unity in the church. If this were not possible, then it was to try and

¹⁵Journal of Proceedings of The Eleventh General Conference of The Methodist Church, Canada, September 27 - October 14, 1922 (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1922), p. 94.

¹⁶Presbyterian Church in Canada, Proceedings, 1923, p. 28.

reach an agreement as to the name and status of congregations not entering the union, and the division of denominational property and rights of the church.

Later in that same year, the Joint Union Committee met in Toronto, and received reports of action taken on the proposed legislation, by the supreme courts of the negotiating churches. Inasmuch as the reports indicated that all three bodies had approved the proposed legislation in general, and inasmuch as certain amendments had been suggested, the Joint Committee set itself to the task of considering the proposed legislation in the light of the amendments suggested by the negotiating churches. The Committee on Law and Legislation was then

authorized and empowered to do all such acts and things as it may consider advisable to procure the enactment of legislation by the Parliament of Canada and the Legislatures of the Provinces of Canada, . . . as in its opinion may be required to consummate the union, not inconsistent in principle with the draft legislation as approved by the negotiating Churches, and to put such legislation in final shape for enactment, and for greater certainty, but not so as to restrict the generality of the foregoing, for these purposes, to delegate to any Committee or Committees such powers and duties as it may determine to so delegate, to act in co-operation with any Committee appointed by or under the authority of this Committee, to engage a secretary, to retain counsel and engage such assistance and make such expenditures as it may deem necessary and to have full charge and supervision of the preparation, presentation and final settlement of all such legislation.¹⁷

¹⁷Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada, p. 34.

At this time the Joint Union Committee also appointed a Committee on Literature, Information and Public Meetings, whose purpose it was to spread knowledge of the principles of union, and keep the church informed as to procedure that was being followed. In an endeavor to accomplish its purpose, the committee held public meetings and issued various pieces of literature.

From the standpoint of the unionists, something of this nature was perhaps long overdue. Throughout the course of negotiations there had been little or no education of the people, outside of the fact that reports of committee action were made available from time to time. The union forces needed some sort of organized effort at indoctrination of the people. It is to be remembered that increased opposition to union was registered in the vote of 1915. Throughout the years subsequent to that vote, with the exception of the "years of the truce," the opposition had been gaining in strength. At the 1923 General Assembly, a new scheme of federation, designed to stop the union, was proposed. The scheme received a full hearing but was rejected by the General Assembly in favor of union. This decision of the General Assembly forced the opposition "back on their last lines of defense, namely, the Houses of Parliament."¹⁸

¹⁸C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, Its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institutes of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 258.

In the intervening months between the General Assembly's decision and the application for legislation, there was a great marshalling of forces, both of unionists and anti-unionists, for the battle that lay ahead.

Meanwhile, a subcommittee of the Committee on Law and Legislation met frequently during the latter months of 1923. Last minute revisions and amendments were made to the proposed legislation, and arrangements for the formal introduction of the Bill in the Dominion Parliament and Provincial Legislatures, were completed.

The Bill In The Dominion Parliament

The Bill was introduced to the Dominion Parliament in the spring of 1924. It received first reading on April 10.¹⁹ Before the Bill received first reading, however, an effort was made by anti-unionist forces to prevent legislation. On March 11, 1924, their counsel "notified the House of alleged technical disqualifications in the petition for the bill,"²⁰ on the grounds that it had not been sufficiently advertised. Two days prior to first reading of the Bill, the Standing Orders Committee met to consider the matter. It was the opinion of the Standing Orders Committee that there had been sufficient advertising in connection with

¹⁹Mason, op. cit., p. 45.

²⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 264.

the application for legislation, and the Bill received first and second readings on successive days.²¹ It was now necessary for the Bill to go before the Private Bills Committee. In preparation for its presentation before this Committee, counsel for the Committee on Law and Legislation met in Toronto to discuss last minute arrangements with the chairman of that committee. One week later counsel were given authority to effect an amendment that would permit congregations to vote themselves in or out of union, during a six-month period before the Dominion Act would come into force.²² Previously the Bill provided for a vote of congregations during a six-month period after the Act came into force.

Hearings before the Private Bills Committee commenced on the last day of April, 1924, and lasted for six full days. During the course of this sitting, church leaders and their legal counsel presented arguments for and against the Bill. The proponents of union were accorded the opportunity of opening the argument. An imposing array of unionist leaders, drawn from the ranks of both the clergy and the laity, presented their arguments as to why legislation was being sought, and why it should be granted.

²¹Mason, op. cit., p. 45.

²²Ibid., p. 46.

According to their arguments,²³ legislation was being sought for the purpose of incorporating the proposed United Church of Canada as a legal entity, and for the purpose of making fair and equitable property divisions between the uniting and non-concurring congregations. The negotiating churches had, according to their respective procedures, which they deemed constitutional, resolved to unite with one another, on a proposed Basis of Union. Parliament was being asked to give legal effect to their resolve. The question before Parliament then, was simply whether or not "the action taken by them had been constitutional and whether the bill was fair to the minorities."²⁴

The proponents of union consumed the better part of three days (with time out for questions), in presenting their arguments. The opponents of union were then given their opportunity. They employed essentially the same arguments that had been employed throughout the whole course of union negotiations. They contended that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, did not have the power or authority to commit the whole church to union.²⁵ The opponents of union had long contended that the unionists were

²³Ibid., pp. 51-68.

²⁴Ibid., p. 51.

²⁵S. D. Chown, The Story of Church Union in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 85.

attempting to blot out the church, and even though votes were taken in Presbyteries, Sessions and Congregations, "while they served to show the attitude of the people, . . . those votes of the people were ultra vires, invalid, of no effect."²⁶ It was further contended that the courts of the church did not have the right

to merge, blot out or end the Presbyterian Church in Canada. That Church has no provision for its own extinction. The courts of that Church are chosen and appointed to care for the Church as it is, and are pledged, by solemn vow, "to maintain and defend the same, and to follow no divisive course from the present order established therein." Any who wish to change can withdraw from that Church, but they have no right or power to blot out, wind up or merge that Church. Therefore, all the resolutions of the General Assembly and of presbyteries for merging the Church were ultra vires, of no effect.²⁷

A French-Canadian lawyer, Mr. Eugene Lafleur of Montreal, made a brilliant plea on behalf of the opponents of union. He contended that the Bill would destroy the Presbyterian Church in Canada, that the legislative powers of the church's courts did not extend to its destruction, but existed rather for its maintenance and preservation, and questioned finally the power of Parliament to pass the Bill. In concluding his remarks he pleaded with the Private Bills Committee to discard the Bill because:

²⁶Ephraim Scott, "Church Union" and The Presbyterian Church in Canada (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, Limited, 1928), p. 45.

²⁷Ibid.

1. The General Assembly had no power to destroy the church;
2. The Bill was beyond the power of Parliament; and,
3. The Bill was fundamentally unjust.²⁸

In all, seven people spoke against the Bill during this sitting. Each of them advanced fundamentally the same arguments. After they had concluded their presentation the proponents of union made their reply. This was followed by a further reply from the opponents of union, after which the proponents of union were given one-half hour to conclude their presentation. By and large the same ground was covered in the above replies and the concluding statements. The debate concluded on May 9, 1924.

Hearings were resumed before the Committee on Miscellaneous Private Bills, on May 21, 1924. The following day a very significant amendment was proposed by the opponents of union. The proposed amendment provided that the

Act shall not come into force until the first day of July 1926, and not then,

1. Unless the courts shall have finally decided . . . that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada had the power, under its constitution and the rules to agree to a union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada with the Methodist and Congregational Churches upon the basis of union. . . .
2. Unless the courts shall have finally decided that the Parliament of Canada can constitutionally enact this Act in whole or in part; and if the courts

²⁸Mason, op. cit., pp. 77-80.

should decide that this Act is constitutional only in part then it shall come into force only as to such parts as are declared constitutional; provided further that the latter question shall be submitted to the Supreme Court of Canada by a reference by the Minister of Justice.

3. If during the session of Parliament immediately preceding the first day of July, 1926, the courts have not finally decided the questions involved in subsections 1 and 2 the Parliament of Canada may further suspend the operation of this Act.²⁹

This amendment was carried.

The above amendment was of course designed to defeat the whole purpose of the Bill. The purpose of the Bill was to seek legislation so as to avoid future litigation. As the proponents of union now put it, "they had asked Parliament for legislation and had been offered litigation."³⁰ They now prepared and circulated a statement setting forth their objections to the provisions of the amendment, showing their real purpose.³¹ During the course of further debate, a motion to reconsider the amendment was lost. This meant that the amendment would accompany the Bill to the floor of the House.

The debate before the Private Bills Committee was drawing to a close. A few revisions, the most important of which dealt with provisions for taking the vote in

²⁹Ibid., pp. 94,95.

³⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 266.

³¹For an abbreviated form of the statement, see Mason, op. cit., pp. 97,98.

congregations, were dealt with, and on June 24, 1924, the amended Bill was reported to the House.

On the floor of the House, the amendment which would have destroyed the whole purpose of the Bill was defeated. A great many representations for and against the amendment were made. An interesting feature of the debate before the House was the fact that both the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, and the leader of the Opposition, the Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen, took sides on the issue. Both Mr. King and Mr. Meighen have been represented as chief spokesmen for the anti-union and union causes respectively.³² This was however, not altogether the case.

It was no secret that the Prime Minister was not overly enthused with the cause of union. However, he did speak against the above-mentioned amendment, and offered a compromise solution, which would allow the Bill to pass Parliament with the following provision inserted at its close:

In as much as questions have arisen and may arise as to the powers of the Parliament of Canada under the British North America Act to give legislative effect to the provisions of this Act, it is hereby declared that it is intended by this Act to sanction the provisions therein contained in so far and in so far only as it is competent to the Parliament so to do.³³

³²H. H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 301.

³³Acts of The Parliament of The Dominion of Canada, Passed in the Session Held in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Years of the Reign of His Majesty King George V, Being the Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament Begun and Holden

Mr. Meighen, in "what was generally regarded as not only the finest speech of the debate but also as a contribution of permanent value to the discussion of the question as to the function of Parliament in matters respecting the Church,"³⁴ spoke against the proposal of the Prime Minister, and against the amendment in question. He also spoke in defense of the Bill. His speech was followed by the vote. The amendment, designed to defeat the whole purpose of the Bill, was itself defeated. As far as the House was now concerned, the matter was for all practical purposes settled. The remainder of the Bill was passed with little difficulty.

It now remained for the Senate to deal with the Bill. First reading of the Bill in the Senate took place on July 8, 1924.³⁵ Essentially the same ground was covered in the senate as was covered before the Private Bills Committee and before the House. A number of amendments designed to negate the effect of the Bill were again proposed, and defeated. An amendment dealing with the provisions in regard to taking a vote in congregations was however added. This amendment passed the House and on July 19, 1924, the Bill became law.³⁶

at Ottawa, on the Twenty-eighth day of February, 1924, and Closed by Prorogation on the Nineteenth Day of July, 1924 (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, Law Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1924), 11, 104.

³⁴Mason, *op. cit.*, pp. 122,123.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 130.

³⁶Parliament of The Dominion of Canada, *Acts*, 1924, p. 85.

The Act of Incorporating The United Church of Canada, to become effective June 10, 1925, had been secured in the Dominion Parliament. Thus ended what one writer has called "the great ecclesiastical battle of the century so far as Canada is concerned."³⁷

The Bill in the Provincial Legislatures

When the Bill was passed in the Dominion Parliament, three Provincial Legislatures, namely, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, had not as yet passed legislation relative to the proposed union. Although the Prince Edward Island Legislature had passed the Bill, the Lieutenant Governor refused to give the Bill Royal Assent, and Royal Assent was necessary to give the Bill legal status.

Inasmuch as the Dominion Act had been passed, and by receiving Royal Assent become law on July 19, 1924, a rather peculiar legal situation could have obtained. If the above-mentioned provinces had failed to take favorable action on the Bill, the resulting situation would have been highly irregular. As it was, the provinces named eventually took favorable action, the Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island gave Royal Assent, and the Act, with certain provincial provisions, became law across the country.

³⁷Silcox, op. cit., p. 263.

During the early months of 1924, legislation was introduced in the Provincial Legislatures of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Without too much difficulty and delay³⁸ the United Church of Canada Act was passed by the Legislatures named.

Application for legislation was first made in the Province of Manitoba. The opposition which the proposed legislation met in that Province, was characteristic of that which it met in other Provinces as well. The opposition was almost wholly Presbyterian. Representations for and against the Bill were made. The arguments of the opposition were essentially the same as those advanced throughout the course of negotiations for union, and later advanced in the Dominion Parliament. The opposition held that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church did not have the power to commit the whole church to union. It was also held that those who opposed the union were in fact the legal owners of the church's property, and such as were entering into union with the Methodists and Congregationalists were in fact seceders, and should forfeit their rights to any of that property. It was also held that the congregations of the Presbyterian Church should be given another opportunity to vote on the question of union.³⁹

³⁸Except for Prince Edward Island, where Royal Assent was withheld by the Lieutenant Governor, and it was necessary to have the Bill passed again.

³⁹Pidgeon, op. cit., p. 88.

Those who spoke on behalf of the Bill contended that all three negotiating churches had reached their respective decisions to unite, by way of constitutional methods. They pointed out that the Methodist Church and the Congregational Union had unanimously decided in favor of union, whereas the General Assembly had made its decision only after the question of union had been submitted to Presbyteries, Sessions and Congregations, on two different occasions. It was their contention that the votes registered on these two occasions expressed the sentiment of the church as being in favor of union, and the subsequent decision of the General Assembly to unite with the Methodist and Congregational churches, was altogether constitutional.

On March 12, 1924, the Bill passed the Private Bills Committee of the Saskatchewan Legislature, with slight amendments. By the following day the Private Bills Committee of the Alberta Legislature had passed all sections of the Bill but one. On the same day the Bill had received third reading in Manitoba without amendment or revision. Similar progress was being made in the Legislatures of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.⁴⁰ By the time the United Church of Canada Act had been passed in the Dominion Parliament, the proposed legislation had passed in all the Provincial Legislatures named.

⁴⁰Mason, op. cit., p. 35.

After the Dominion Act was passed, it remained for British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec to take appropriate action. In Ontario the Bill met with appreciably more difficulty than in the Prairie Provinces and the Maritimes. Ontario was a center of anti-union sentiment, and every effort was made to have the Bill defeated. When finally it did pass, it went beyond the Dominion legislation, inasmuch as it provided that

In the case of non-concurring congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, their property on and after June 10, 1925, shall stand in the same relation to the church to be formed by such non-concurring congregations as it stood to the Presbyterian Church in Canada before the passage of this Act.⁴¹

The Bill had first been introduced in the Ontario Legislature on February 26, 1924.⁴² Before the necessary presentation could be made, however, the opponents of union filed a writ in the Ontario Supreme Court, against those who were seeking legislation on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. The writ asked the Supreme Court to restrain the defendants from acting as representatives of the Presbyterian Church in negotiating union with the Methodist and Congregational churches. The writ further asked that the Supreme Court restrain the defendants from petitioning the Dominion Parliament or any of the Provincial Legislatures to pass legislation anent incorporating The United Church of Canada.⁴³

⁴¹Silcox, op. cit., p. 268.

⁴²Mason, op. cit., p. 36.

⁴³Pidgeon, op. cit., p. 87.

The writ notwithstanding, the proponents of union proceeded with their petition to the Ontario Legislature. When finally the Bill came before the Private Bills Committee, an amendment contradicting the basic principle of the Bill was passed. The amendment provided that such congregations as would not concur in the union

be deemed to continue to exist as The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church and the Congregational Churches and that no congregation of any of the three Churches should be deemed to have entered the United Church until it voted so to do.⁴⁴

The basic principle of the proposed union, for the incorporation of which the negotiating churches were seeking legislation, was

that the three churches had the right to unite with one another without loss of their identity to form The United Church of Canada, each church carrying all of its historic tradition with it into the new United Church.⁴⁵

Inasmuch as the amendment was contradictory to this principle, the proponents of union could not afford to let it become part of the Act.

The Committee on Law and Legislation held a series of meetings with regard to the whole situation. It was finally decided that in view of the inconsistency of the amendment with the basic principle of the proposed union, the Bill should be withdrawn. The Bill was therefore withdrawn and reintroduced the following spring.

⁴⁴Mason, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁵Pidgeon, op. cit., p. 87.

When the Bill next came before the Ontario Legislature it was somewhat revised in view of the Dominion Act having been passed in the meantime. This time the opponents of union introduced a bill of their own declaring that

The United Church of Canada Act passed by the Parliament of Canada did not effect the civil rights of any minister or member of the Presbyterian Church in Canada or prevent the use of the name by the members; that all Presbyterians who became members of The United Church should be disqualified from acting in any way as members or officials of The Presbyterian Church in Canada or its boards; that if two-thirds of the members of any congregation voted to join The United Church the congregation would enter The United Church and its property would be held for the congregation, and that a commission should be appointed to divide all property excepting Knox College and congregational property between the Presbyterians entering union and not entering union.⁴⁶

An attempt was made to arrange a settlement between the unionists and anti-unionists. A series of lengthy conferences were held between a subcommittee of the Private Bills Committee and representatives for and against the Bill. The proponents of union finally, but reluctantly, agreed to surrender Knox College in Toronto, with the provision that the new church would be able to use its facilities for a period of up to three years. When the Bill was finally reported to the Legislature and passed, it included an important amendment which provided for the creation of a Church Property Commission

⁴⁶Mason, op. cit., pp. 143,144.

with power to vest a church building in trustees for a minority in communities or localities, not including cities of over 50,000 where there were two or more congregations of the same parent church and each had voted not to enter union; to inquire into irregularities in voting and declare the proper result of such voting; and to use its offices to remedy cases of extreme hardship, acting in an advisory capacity.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, in the Prince Edward Island Legislature, where the Bill had once passed but failed to receive Royal Assent, a Bill amended in keeping with the Dominion Legislation was presented and passed with little or no incident. Prince Edward Island legislation provided for a commission of three persons, whose duty it was to settle any congregational disputes over property, that might arise. In addition, the commission was to report to the next session of the Legislature "as to what amendments and additions (if any) should be made to the Act, to make an equitable adjustment and division of the congregational properties concerned."⁴⁸ In British Columbia similar legislation had been enacted the previous fall.

Quebec was the only province that had not passed legislation when the Act of Incorporation became effective on June 10, 1925. The Bill was first introduced into the Quebec Legislature in 1925 and then re-introduced in 1926. By this time the union had been consummated and The United Church of Canada was a functioning body.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 150.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 151.

The members of the Quebec Legislature were of course largely Roman Catholic in their religious persuasion. Although some Roman Catholics viewed the union movement with a wary eye, on the whole Roman Catholic interest in the inter-Protestant struggle was negligible. The Quebec Legislature had committed itself to follow in the footsteps of the Ontario Legislature, and for that reason had viewed the proceedings in Ontario with a great deal of interest. The legislation that was finally passed in Quebec contained largely the same provisions as that passed in Ontario. As Ontario provided for a property commission, Quebec did likewise. As Ontario had given Knox College to non-concurrents, Quebec did likewise with The Presbyterian College in Montreal.

Two notable additions were made by the Quebec Legislature, however. The Quebec legislation empowered the clergymen of both the united and non-concurring congregations to keep registers of vital statistics, and provided that the American Presbyterian Church in Montreal, which had never become part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, be recognized as an integral part of The United Church of Canada.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Silcox, op. cit., p. 270.

The Effect Of The Bill

The United Church of Canada Act, as passed by the Dominion Parliament, receiving Royal Assent on July 19, 1924, and further confirmed by legislation in the Provincial Legislatures, was designed not to effect a union, but to incorporate a property-holding entity, to secure a fair adjustment of existing denominational and congregational property, and to prevent future litigation. The negotiating churches were free to unite without an Act of Parliament. If, however, they wanted to be sure that they could legally carry their property with them into union, and be safe against future claims against that property, they needed incorporation as a property-holding body. For this they needed an Act of Parliament.

Precisely this is what The United Church of Canada Act provided. It recognized the union of the three churches, to take effect on June 10, 1925. It incorporated The United Church of Canada as a property-holding body. It provided for a Property Commission to settle property issues. The Property Commission as provided for, consisted of nine members, three from The United Church, three from the non-concurrents, and three to be appointed by these six. If the six failed to agree as to the appointments, the Chief Justice of Canada was to resolve the issue. The Act also provided that congregations could vote themselves into, or out of,

union. Such voting was to be done during a six-month period prior to the formal consummation of union.

The Act was not passed without a struggle. The issues involved were dear to the hearts of unionists and anti-unionists alike. Each had a cause, and each contended for that cause with vigor and determination. Naturally, the unionists suffered somewhat of a let-down inasmuch as they were forced to make a number of concessions. On the whole, however, they were satisfied that they had successfully achieved their objective.

Many of the anti-unionists were bitter. They felt that legislation had been "pushed through" even as they felt that the General Assembly had "pushed through" the decision to unite. Some of them considered the legislation tyrannous, dishonest, autocratic and absurd; tyrannous because the Presbyterian Church as a church was legislated into union; dishonest in the division of property; autocratic in the power given to officials of the church; and absurd in that congregations were able to vote themselves into, or out of, a union which that legislation itself had brought into being.⁵⁰

The United Church of Canada had become a legal entity. The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church, Canada, and the Congregational Union of Canada had been merged to form that entity. Officially the union was yet to

⁵⁰Scott, op. cit., pp. 66-68.

be consummated. In the meantime, the congregations of the uniting churches were to be given an opportunity to vote. That vote was to reflect the mind of the people. The story of that vote belongs to the Consummation of the Union.

With the passage of enabling legislation, the battle front of the "church union fight" was transferred from the legislatures to the local congregations. Prior to official consummation of the union of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches on the date specified by Dominion legislation, the congregations and ministers of the churches named, if they so desired, were to be given an opportunity to vote themselves out of the union. The United Church of Canada Act provided that all congregations of the three uniting churches enter The United Church on 10th June, 1925, with the exception of those that vote not to enter, and provisions were to be made that any minister or member of the three uniting churches who gives proper notice of intention not to become a minister or member of The United Church "shall be deemed not to have become" a minister or member of The United Church.¹

As to how and when the vote was to be taken, the Act

¹Acts of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Passed in the Session Held in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Years of the Reign of His Majesty King George V, Being the Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament Begun and Holden at Ottawa, on the Twenty-eighth Day of February, 1924, and Closed by Prorogation on the Nineteenth Day of July, 1924 (Ottawa: P. J. Acland, Law Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1924), II, 104.

160

CHAPTER VII

CONSUMMATION OF THE UNION

With the passage of enabling legislation, the battle front of the "church union fight" was transferred from the Legislatures to the local congregations. Prior to official consummation of the union of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches on the date specified by Dominion legislation, the congregations and ministers of the churches named, if they so desired, were to be given an opportunity to vote themselves out of the union. The United Church of Canada Act provided that all congregations of the three uniting churches enter The United Church on 10th June, 1925, with the exception of those that vote not to enter, and provisions were to be made that any minister or member of the three uniting churches who gives proper notice of intention not to become a minister or member of The United Church "shall be deemed not to have become" a minister or member of The United Church.¹

As to how and when the vote was to be taken, the Act

¹Acts of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Passed in the Session Held in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Years of the Reign of His Majesty King George V, Being the Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament Begun and Holden at Ottawa, on the Twenty-eighth Day of February, 1924, and Closed by Prorogation on the Nineteenth Day of July, 1924 (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, Law Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1924), II, 104.

provided that in any congregation where the Session or Official Board received a requisition signed by a stated number of persons entitled to vote asking that a vote be taken, there, provisions were to be made for a vote by ballot being taken over a period of "not less than two weeks" during the six months' period before 10th June, 1925, or "within the time limited by any statute" of any Province that had passed the Bill before the 19th July, 1924.² Sessions were also given authority to call meetings on their own motion for the purpose of taking the vote.

The qualifications of voters were also set forth in the Act. The Act provided that

The persons entitled to vote . . . shall be only those persons who are in full membership and whose names are on the roll of the Church at the time of the passing of this Act. In any Province where by an Act of the Legislature respecting The United Church of Canada passed prior to the passing of this Act, a different qualification for voting has been prescribed, the qualification for voting under this section shall be as provided in such Act. In every other Province the persons so entitled to vote shall be those who by the constitution of the congregation, if so provided, or by the practice of the Church with which they are connected, are entitled to vote at a meeting of the congregation on matters affecting the disposal of property.³

Under these provisions the uniting churches went about the business of taking the vote in their congregations and determining the will of their people. The results of this

²Ibid., pp. 89,90.

³Ibid., p. 90.

vote would determine the state of the new church on the day of consummation.

Taking The Vote

Although the Dominion Act had set forth the qualifications of voters, the churches were to experience some real difficulties in the taking of the vote. The Dominion Act provided for "differences" contingent upon whether or not a given Provincial Act had been passed prior to the Dominion Act. Five Provincial Legislatures, namely, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, had passed legislation prior to the passing of the Dominion Act. This meant that voters in those Provinces were qualified under the terms of the Act passed in that Province in which they were resident. Voters in British Columbia, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island were qualified under the terms of the Dominion Act, inasmuch as those Provinces passed legislation subsequent to Dominion legislation, and followed the provisions of the latter. Quebec of course did not legislate until after the consummation of the union.

Other difficulties were also experienced. The Dominion Act provided for a vote by ballot. The question was debated "what does a vote by ballot mean?" "Does it mean a secret vote or not?" Should the ballot be signed or not? Then there were also the Union Churches, whose membership consisted largely of Methodists and Presbyterians. Questions arose as

to whether or not they should vote, and if so, shall they vote separately. In some such congregations, the Presbyterian element demanded a vote.⁴ Another difficulty arose out of the fact that some congregations did not really understand what they were voting on. Some congregations were of the opinion that they were voting to remain completely independent. Thus, one congregation in Nova Scotia and three in Saskatchewan, voted to remain completely independent. Three congregations in Ontario and one in Quebec did likewise. However, the former discovered that under the terms of the Ontario Act they had no choice but to enter the continuing Presbyterian Church, and the latter voted to enter the union after the Quebec Act was passed.⁵

Having lost the battle in the Legislatures, the opponents of union set themselves to the task of "salvaging" as many members and congregations as possible. The Presbyterian Church Association, which had been organized for the express purpose of preserving and maintaining the Presbyterian Church in Canada, went on the offensive and endeavored to force a vote wherever possible. The fact that congregations were able to vote themselves out of the union, stimulated active opposition to the union. A Methodist union leader observed

⁴C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institutes of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 279.

⁵Ibid., p. 280.

that the "right to vote out furnished an opportunity to circulate petitions and pledges against union, and by the use of electioneering methods to raise the spirit of contention to fever heat."⁶ The resulting controversy between unionists and anti-unionists became exceedingly bitter "dividing not only neighbor against neighbor, but even creating tension within family units."⁷

In all charity, it should also be pointed out that the proponents of union made their proportionate contribution to the tensions and controversy. Where votes were taken, they campaigned as zealously as did the opposition. In some instances, ministers and sessions resorted to various subterfuges in order to avoid taking a vote, and thus carried their congregations automatically into the union.⁸

Thus, in the midst of intense competition, the vote for or against a union that was supposed to solve the problem of competition, was taken. Due to the variety of qualifications for voters, the variety of methods by which the votes were gathered, and the countless disputes that arose in the course of counting the votes, there was disagreement between the unionists and anti-unionists as to the final outcome. An

⁶S. D. Chown, The Story of Church Union in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 91.

⁷H. H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 302.

⁸Silcox, op. cit., p. 274.

absolutely accurate record of the results is impossible to come by. However, the Bureau of Literature and Information whose duty it was to receive and distribute results of the voting as it was conducted in the various congregations, offered the following summary as the record stood on June 2, 1925:

Of the 174 Congregational Churches in Canada all but 7 will enter Union. The total number of Methodist Churches in Canada is 4,797, and all will enter Union. In the Presbyterian Church, . . . there are, in all, 4,509 preaching places. Of these 3,904 have had the right to vote. Of these there are 667 places which have voted non-concurrence.

In the Presbyterian Church in Canada there are 1,128 self-sustaining charges. Of these 325 are to be found in the non-concurring list. From these 325 Unionist minorities have withdrawn.⁹

Dr. C. E. Silcox, who in later years made a comprehensive study of the returns, offers the following figures, which are perhaps the most reliable record extant.

TABLE 6

RESULTS OF BALLOT ON UNION, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

	Total Membership	For Union	Against Union
Non-concurring churches	143,870	32,352	78,781
Concurring churches	241,134	119,870	35,517
Voting by ballot	185,560	90,614	35,517
Voting by resolution	29,256	29,256	.....
Entering Union by default	26,318	.....	.....
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	385,004	152,222	114,298

⁹Record of Proceedings of The First General Council of The United Church of Canada, June 10-18, 1925 (Toronto: n.p., 1925), p. 74.

Dr. Silcox adds a word of explanation. He points out that the figure 90,164 in column two of the table, represents the congregations voting by ballot under the terms of either the Dominion or Provincial Acts. He further points out that if only the votes by ballot were counted, the result would be 122,966 in favor of union and 114,298 against union. When the total membership of congregations voting to enter union by way of a congregational resolution is included, the vote in favor of union is increased to 152,222 as indicated by the total of column two. If, however, the membership of congregations who did not vote and therefore entered union automatically, is included, the final result in the Presbyterian churches is 178,630 in favor of union, and 114,298 against union.¹⁰

Dr. Silcox also compiled a table of figures showing the numerical strength of Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches across the country, including the record of how they voted. Those figures, compiled by Dr. Silcox, are perhaps the most reliable record of the strength of The United Church of Canada at the consummation of union.¹¹

Even while voting was still in progress in some areas of the country, preparations for the formal consummation of the union were being made. On the two days prior to the

¹⁰Silcox, op. cit., p. 281.

¹¹See Appendix B.

designated date of consummation, the Congregational Union of Canada held its last sessions and concluded its business. The Executive of the Union was authorized to continue in office and "take all steps necessary for the consummation of union, and the chairman and secretary (one or either of them) to sign such documents as were necessary on that occasion."¹² The Methodist General Conference had held its last regular session in 1922. A special gathering was called, however, the day before the consummation, and action similar to that of the Congregationalists was taken.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church also met just before the consummation. After taking such action as was necessary for the consummation, and just before the close of the session, it was resolved:

When this Assembly adjourn this afternoon it do adjourn to meet in College Street Presbyterian Church at the hour of nine o'clock in the morning on Wednesday the twenty-fourth day of June, 1925, unless in the meantime its rights, privileges, authorities and powers shall have ceased under the terms of . . . The United Church of Canada Act . . .¹³

Hereupon,

A respectful protest against such adjournment, with its object of blotting out the Presbyterian Church, and a claim of right by seventy-nine members of that Assembly (forty is a quorum) to continue in session as the same

¹²The Canadian Congregational Yearbook, 1925 (Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company, 1925), p. 18.

¹³The Acts and Proceedings of the Fifty-First General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, June 3-9, 1925 (Toronto: Murray Printing Company, 1925), p. 84.

Assembly of the same Church, was handed to the moderator, and permission asked to read a copy of it to the Assembly. This was refused, but lengthy addresses in opposition to that protest were permitted and loudly cheered.

When the moderator pronounced the benediction and declared the Assembly closed, the seventy-nine loyal members immediately chose one of their number, an ex-moderator, to preside, and, amid the thunders of the organ, which blared its loudest to drown the proceedings, the Assembly was reconstituted with prayer, and then adjourned to meet at 11:45 that same night in Knox Church.¹⁴

Thus the Church-union fight continued to the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Here in this Assembly the final step of separation was taken. And, the following day, after more than two decades of negotiation, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church, Canada, and the Congregational Union of Canada consummated organic union in The United Church of Canada.

The Inauguration

The organic union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church, Canada, and the Congregational Union of Canada, was formally consummated at a large inaugural service held in the Mutual Street Arena, Toronto, on June 10, 1925. In anticipation of that historic event a news correspondent said:

¹⁴Ephraim Scott, "Church Union" and the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, Limited, 1928), p. 63.

Never since Confederation has so nation-wide a compact been achieved as that which will come to its consummation today in this central city of the Dominion. The significance of the event is appreciated not only by the people of Canada--for they were arriving in hundreds yesterday from every corner of the country-- but scores from the United States and many from overseas were clamouring for tickets.

Special correspondents from leading newspapers in the United States and one from Australia have applied for seats in the Press Gallery, until the accommodation is exhausted and will have to be augmented.

Not only in Toronto will these inaugural services be held. In every town and village in Canada where there is a United Church similar services will be conducted, some of them simultaneously with the central function in Toronto, others at a later date. Many of the smaller towns have arranged for open-air services in the public parks, and the setting aside of the whole day for a celebration of the historic event. Special services are also being held for the children in many instances.¹⁵

The inaugural service opened with the singing of "The Church's One Foundation," during which the three hundred and fifty members of the first General Council of The United Church of Canada, proceeded in procession, to their appointed seats. The members of the first General Council had been appointed by the supreme courts of the uniting churches. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had appointed one hundred and fifty members, the General Conference of the Methodist Church had appointed the same number, the Congregational Union had appointed forty members, and ten had been appointed by the General Council of Local Union Churches.

¹⁵Chown, op. cit., p. 119.

The inauguration then continued with an order of service specially prepared by a committee and approved by the Joint Union Committee. The officiants in the service were, the Rev. George C. Pidgeon, D. D., Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; the Rev. Samuel D. Chown, D. D., LL. D., General Superintendent of the Methodist Church, Canada; the Rev. W. H. Warriner, D. D., Chairman of the Congregational Union of Canada; and, the Rev. Charles S. Elsey, Chairman of the General Council of Local Union Churches.¹⁶

The focal point of the service, according to one of the officiants, was the Hallowing of Church Union.¹⁷ This particular phase of the service proceeded as follows:

PRESBYTERIAN MODERATOR:--According to the grace given unto our fathers, as witnesses to the Apostolic Gospel and standard-bearers of the Church commissioned to make disciples of all nations, more especially in the manifestation of the Spirit in vigilance for Christ's Kirk and Covenant, in care for the spread of education and devotion to sacred learning, receive ye our inheritance among them that are sanctified.

ALL:--We glory in the grace given unto us in this goodly heritage.

CONGREGATIONAL UNION CHAIRMAN:--According to the grace given unto our fathers, as witnesses to the Apostolic Gospel and standard-bearers of the Church commissioned to make disciples of all nations, more especially in the manifestation of the Spirit in the liberty of prophesying, the love of spiritual freedom and the

¹⁶The United Church of Canada, Proceedings, 1925, p. 5.

¹⁷George C. Pidgeon, The United Church of Canada, The Story of The Union (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 78.

enforcement of civic justice, receive ye our inheritance among them that are sanctified.

ALL:--We glory in the grace given unto us in this goodly heritage.

METHODIST GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT:--According to the grace given unto our fathers, as witnesses to the Apostolic Gospel and standard-bearers of the Church commissioned to make disciples of all nations, more especially in the manifestation of the Spirit in evangelical zeal for human redemption, the testimony of spiritual experience, and the ministry of sacred song, receive ye our inheritance among them that are sanctified.

ALL:--We glory in the grace given unto us in this goodly heritage.

CHAIRMAN OF GENERAL COUNCIL OF LOCAL UNION CHURCHES:--According to the grace given unto our fathers, as witnesses to the Apostolic Gospel and standard-bearers of the Church commissioned to make disciples of all nations, more especially in the manifestation of the Spirit in the furtherance of community life within the kingdom of God, and of the principle, in things essential unity, and in things secondary liberty, receive ye our inheritance among them that are sanctified.

ALL:--We glory in the grace given unto us in this goodly heritage.¹⁸

Subsequent to the Hallowing of Church Union, the General Superintendent of the Methodist Church offered a prayer commemorating the faithful.¹⁹ Hereupon, followed the Declaration of Church Union, as read by Dr. Chown.

Whereas, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church, and The Congregational Churches of Canada by their free and independent action, through their governing bodies, and in accordance with their respective

¹⁸The Inaugural Service of The United Church of Canada, June Tenth, 1925 (Montreal: Mercury Press, 1925), pp. 21,22.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 23.

constitutions, did agree to unite and form one body or denomination of Christians under the name of 'The United Church of Canada,' on the Basis of Union above set out;

And Whereas, The Supreme Courts of these three Churches and The General Council of Local Union Churches did by resolution approve in principle a Bill to be submitted to the Parliament of Canada for the purpose of incorporating The United Church;

And Whereas, The United Church of Canada Act has been passed by the Parliament of Canada constituting the three Churches as so united a body corporate and politic under the name of 'The United Church of Canada,' and the congregations represented by The General Council of Local Union Churches have been, by the said Act, admitted to and declared to be congregations of The United Church of Canada;

And Whereas, the said Act ratifies and confirms the Basis of Union above set out as the basis on which the said Churches have united;

And Whereas, the three uniting Churches and The General Council of Local Union Churches have appointed the undersigned as their respective representatives on the first meeting of the General Council of The United Church.

Now, Therefore, we, the duly appointed representatives of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church, The Congregational Churches of Canada, and The General Council of Local Union Churches, respectively, on the First General Council of The United Church of Canada, do hereby subscribe our names to the said Basis of Union.²⁰

In keeping with this declaration, the four representatives of the respective uniting churches and the General Council of Local Union Churches, affixed their signatures to the Basis of Union. To Dr. S. D. Chown then fell the honor of making the following historic pronouncement:

²⁰Ibid., p. 25.

I hereby declare that the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Congregational Churches of Canada, and the Methodist Church, Canada, along with the General Council of Local Union Churches are now united and constituted as one Church, to be designated and known as "The United Church of Canada."²¹

Hereupon followed a prayer, constituting the first General Council of The United Church of Canada. The General Council then transacted its first item of business, namely, the reception of the American Presbyterian Church, Montreal, into The United Church of Canada. This particular portion of the inaugural service was then closed with the singing of the hymn "O God of Bethel."

The consummation of union was then sealed with the celebration of Holy Communion. Dr. George C. Pidgeon had been elected to officiate, and Professor S. P. Rose, D. D., of Wesleyan Theological College in Montreal, preached the sermon, based on John 12:20-32.²² The sermon was followed by the singing of "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," after which the communion elements were consecrated, and then dispensed by some two hundred and fifty laymen, under the direction of Dr. Pidgeon. The service of Holy Communion was closed with a prayer of thanksgiving offered by the officiant, Dr. Pidgeon.

The following day a news correspondent covering the inaugural service enthused as follows:

²¹Pidgeon, op. cit., pp. 79,80.

²²The United Church of Canada, Proceedings, 1925, p. 7.

Rivalling in intensity or religious fervor and attendance any Protestant revival which the world has ever witnessed, yesterday morning's gathering will live long in the memories of those fortunate enough to be present. Beneath the lofty arched roof of the great Arena, the sacred covenant of union was signed on a sheepskin parchment by the leaders of the three uniting Churches, the while a sea of upward of seven thousand upturned faces gazed on the spectacle in silent reverence and prayer. But probably the most inspiring and deeply devotional procedure of the morning was the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the mighty throng. It was a reverent concourse of people who sat in deep silent devotion as the bread and wine were passed from hand to hand, symbolic of belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some two hundred and fifty laymen - elders from the Presbyterian Church, stewards from the Methodist Church, and deacons from the Congregational Church - moved smoothly and quietly through the tiers of seats, and though the entire celebration was completed in about half an hour, there seemed no undue haste, but rather the slow, methodical progress which marks the service of Communion in any church gathering.²³

Thus, after more than twenty years of negotiations, the union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church, Canada, and the Congregational Churches of Canada, was consummated on June 10, 1925.

State Of The Church At The Consummation Of Union

When The United Church of Canada was officially constituted, it inherited all of the Methodist Church, over ninety percent of the Congregational churches, and almost two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church. The most accurate

²³Chown, op. cit., p. 120.

statistics available²⁴ show that at the time of union, the total number of congregations in the three uniting churches was 9,480. Of this number, 8,688 entered the union. Of the number of congregations that entered the union, 163 were Congregational, 4,797 were Methodist, and 3,728 were Presbyterian. A total of 792 congregations, eight of which were Congregational, and 784 of which were Presbyterian, did not concur in the union.

In its report to the first General Council of The United Church of Canada, the Bureau of Literature, Information, and Public Meetings submitted the total membership of the newly-created church at 692,838. The membership of the new church was comprised of 12,220 Congregationalists, 266,111 Presbyterians, and 414,047 Methodists. As the manpower of the new church, the Bureau reported that 3,819 ministers were entering The United Church of Canada. The Congregationalists brought eighty-five of this number, the Presbyterians brought 2,037, and the Methodists brought 2,065. The number of missionaries entering the new church was 648, of which twenty-four were Congregationalists, 310 were Methodists, and 314 were Presbyterians. The total ministerial force of the new church, as reported to the first General Council, was 4,467.²⁵

²⁴See Appendix B.

²⁵The United Church of Canada, Proceedings, 1925, p. 75.

The fusion of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists, in the new church, was achieved quite readily. Those who were union-minded had been drawn closer and closer together during the course of the negotiations. When the union was finally consummated they felt as one. In spite of theological and political differences, they had united upon a Basis of Union broad enough so as to include everyone, and offend no one, that was union-minded. Those who came into the union were satisfied that the objectives for which they had struggled were achieved. The will of God, they felt, had been done. Although there was a bitter aftermath, although there were many property settlements to be made, although a considerable number of ministers found themselves without churches because they were unionists and their congregations voted against the union, the new church set itself to the task of evangelizing a growing country, and meeting the spiritual needs of an ever-receding frontier.

177

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Summary Statement

The United Church of Canada, which came into existence on June 10, 1925, is representative of three distinct strains of Protestant Christianity in Canada. Two of these strains, represented by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Congregational Churches of Canada respectively, had their roots embedded in historic Calvinism. The other, represented by the Methodist Church, Canada, was of the Arminian tradition. Having negotiated a Basis of Union, sufficiently broad to embrace both the liberal and conservative elements, the three churches consummated organic union, and planted a new denomination upon the Canadian religious scene.

Each of the uniting churches was itself a united church, and had been committed to the principle of union at an early date. To be sure, when the first missionaries came across the sea or moved into Canada from the United States of America, they brought with them the divisions of their home churches, and planted them together with the congregations they established. Gradually, however, it became evident that much that had contributed to divisiveness in the homeland, did not exist in the new country, and divisions became increasingly difficult to maintain. A new spirit of

fellowship, the vastness of the new country, the very meagre resources of the widely-scattered churches, and the need of frontier settlements for the Christian Gospel and the ordinances of religion, all contributed to the growing conviction that competing churches were too costly a luxury.

The principle of union found practical expression in the year 1817, when two Scottish secessionist groups, who had been responsible for laying the permanent foundations of Presbyterianism in Canada, resolved their differences and united.¹ In subsequent years, eight separate unions were effected, culminating in the general Presbyterian union of 1875.²

Methodism in Canada has a similar history of union. In the first century of its existence in Canada, Methodism was as divided as Presbyterianism. However, as was the case in Presbyterianism, so in Methodism, the principle of union began to find practical expression. Beginning with the year 1820, some sixteen different Methodist bodies consummated eight separate unions, culminating in the general Methodist union of 1884.³

The Congregational Churches of Canada were equally

¹William Gregg, Short History of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada from the Earliest to the Present Time (Second Edition, Revised, Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1893), p. 194.

²Ibid., p. 188.

³J. E. Sanderson, The First Century of Methodism in Canada (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), II, 402.

committed to the principle and practice of union. In the year 1846 Congregationalism in the Maritime Provinces formed the Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Seven years later, the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec came into existence. Little more than a half century later, in 1906, even as organic union with the Presbyterians and Methodists was being negotiated, Canadian Congregationalism consolidated its forces under the Congregational Union of Canada.⁴ During the following year this Union received a number of churches in affiliation with the United Brethren in Christ.

From the foregoing it can be seen that the three bodies which merged to form The United Church of Canada, were at an early date committed to the principle of union, and were experienced in putting this principle into practice. For the most part they fostered the idea that wherever the issue which had caused division ceased to exist, and wherever it was economically and socially expedient to present a consolidated front, it was their Christian duty to unite. The members of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches were frequently together in evangelistic and reform movements, and when the Canadian West began to open up as a home mission field, it became the policy and practice of each church to co-operate in meeting the spiritual needs of

⁴The Canadian Congregational Yearbook, 1906-1907, Thirty-Fourth Annual Volume (Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company, 1906), p. 22.

the settlers, and providing them with the ordinances of religion.

Thus, the seeds of organic union were sown. The latter years of the nineteenth century witnessed the appointment of a number of church union committees. The Presbyterian Church sent overtures to the Congregational Churches and also formed a committee to confer with other churches on the general subject of church union. About the same time, the Methodists devised and proposed a scheme of federation of local congregations. The result of these activities was that the existing sense of fellowship was deepened, the areas where overlapping of church work occurred were more sharply defined, and the way was opened to more extensive and formal co-operation between the churches.

In the year 1899, a formal agreement "not to send an additional missionary into any locality where either church was already carrying on its work," was negotiated by the Home Mission authorities of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches.⁵ This was the beginning of "official" co-operation between the churches, and might well be considered the beginning of actual negotiations leading to the consummation of

⁵Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada as Prepared by The Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, Also A Brief Historical Statement (Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, November, 1924), p. 19.

organic union. The period of co-operation that followed was in a real sense the forerunner of organic union. Where the ideal of organic union did not yet exist, there the co-operative endeavor of the churches served to plant it. And where the ideal of organic union had already taken root, there the co-operative endeavors of the churches served to keep it alive and even solidify it.

A rather significant step toward organic union was taken at a meeting of the Methodist General Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1902. As a member of the Presbyterian fraternal deputation to the Conference, Principal Patrick of Manitoba College struck a vigorous note of union in his remarks to the assembled delegates. The Conference subsequently appointed a committee to confer with representatives of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, on the subject of church union. During the following year these two churches took corresponding action.⁶

The Joint Committee on Church Union held a preliminary conference in April, 1904,⁷ and the members reported back to their respective church courts that they were of one mind "that organic union is both desirable and practicable." When the Joint Committee next met in December, 1904, it set itself to the task of negotiating organic union. It was

⁶Ibid., p. 20.

⁷Ibid., p. 21.

generally recognized by members of the committee, that the matter of organic union was of such importance that it should not be considered hastily. It was further recognized that the decision to consummate organic union should carry the consent of the entire membership, and that no final step should be taken until ample opportunity had been given for consideration of the whole question in the courts of the respective churches and by the membership generally. To facilitate its general task of drafting a basis upon which the negotiating churches could unite, the Joint Committee appointed five subcommittees which were to concern themselves with questions on Doctrine, Polity, Administration, the Ministry, and Law, respectively.

Subsequent annual meetings of the Joint Committee received, reviewed, and revised the findings of its subcommittees, with the result that by 1908 a Basis of Union had been drafted and agreed upon.⁶ This document was transmitted to the supreme courts of the negotiating churches together with the recommendation that it be submitted to the lower courts and the general membership of those churches. During the next three years the proposed Basis of Union was received and approved in general, by the supreme courts, and in harmony with the constitutional procedure of the respective churches, submitted for consideration of the lower courts and the general membership.

⁶Ibid., p. 22.

Subsequent to the plebiscites in the churches, the supreme courts took appropriate action. The Congregationalists, who had voted some months before the Presbyterians and Methodists, gave their approval by a decided majority. The Congregational Union, therefore, considered the action as sufficient, and expressed itself prepared to await the outcome of the plebiscites in the other churches, and to take whatever steps were yet necessary to consummate the union.

The lower courts and the general membership within the Methodist Church, by a very substantial majority, registered approval of organic union with the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, on the basis proposed by the Joint Committee. Thereupon, the General Conference Special Committee went on record as being "satisfied that the Methodist Church is now prepared to proceed toward the Union of the three negotiating Churches on the Basis of Union heretofore agreed upon."⁹

Those who participated in the Presbyterian plebiscite were asked to approve or disapprove, not only organic union with the Methodist and Congregational churches, but also the Basis of Union proposed by the Joint Committee. Although both questions received approval by the majority of voters, the disapproving minority was substantial enough to move the

⁹Ibid., p. 24.

Presbyterian General Assembly to recommend delaying consummation of the union, in the hope that greater unity could be achieved within its own ranks.

Annual meetings of the Joint Committee continued, and in spite of increased opposition within the Presbyterian Church, progress towards consummation of the union was continuously manifest. In the year 1914 the proposed Basis of Union was slightly revised, and the name "The United Church of Canada", together with the names of its courts, was approved. The Presbyterian General Assembly of 1915 approved the revised Basis of Union and again submitted the whole question to the lower courts and the general membership of the church. Although the ensuing plebiscite revealed that the disapproving minority had registered a slight increase, organic union with the Methodist and Congregational churches was again approved. Thereupon, the General Assembly resolved to proceed to consummate organic union with the Methodist and Congregational churches, and a committee was appointed to act in conjunction with the corresponding committees of the other churches to take whatever steps were yet necessary to legally consummate the union. The committee was instructed to report to the General Assembly after the end of the first year following the close of the World War.

Until 1921 there was little official activity relative to union, and comparative peace and quiet prevailed within the Presbyterian Church. The committee, as instructed, worked

in conjunction with corresponding committees of the other churches and quietly discharged the duties laid upon it by the General Assembly. In the year 1921 the General Assembly again took up the question of union and resolved "to consummate organic union . . . as expeditiously as possible."¹⁰

In the meantime, there had come into existence in Western Canada, a rather substantial number of local union churches. The local union churches consisted for the most part of Presbyterians and Methodists, with a sprinkling from other faiths, who availed themselves of the services of ministers from either denomination. Normally they held connection with one or the other, or even both of the parent bodies, and from time to time various plans of co-operation, delimitation of territory, and affiliation were devised and put into practice. For the most part the local union churches were formed in anticipation of organic union, and it is safe to say that they exerted no small measure of influence in bringing that union to consummation. In the course of time "The General Council of Local Union Churches" which was representative of a majority of the union churches, was formed, and from 1921 on its representatives were welcomed to the annual meetings of the Joint Committee. When the first General Council of The United Church of Canada convened, ten representatives of the local

¹⁰Acts and Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, June 1-9, 1921 (Toronto: The Murraby Printing Company Limited, 1921), p. 30.

union churches were among its delegates.

Subsequent to the decision of the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1921, draft bills for the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures were prepared and carefully considered. These bills were received, considered, and approved by the supreme courts of the negotiating churches, and then introduced to the Dominion and Provincial legislating bodies. In spite of opposition attempts to have the legislation disqualified or amended, primarily on the basis of the fact that the Presbyterian Church in Canada could not be legislated out of existence, the necessary legislation was enacted by the Dominion Parliament, to become effective on June 10, 1925. Similar legislation was enacted by the various Provincial Legislatures from 1924 to 1926.

The Dominion legislation set forth that the three negotiating churches had the constitutional right to unite without loss of their identity, and incorporated The United Church of Canada as a legally established property-holding entity. It also provided for the right of congregations, ministers, and members to vote not to enter the union. It further provided for a Property Commission through which non-concurring congregations could receive an equitable share of the general property of the church in which they formerly held membership. Several of the Provinces also provided for a Commission to make adjustments in cases of extreme hardship of minorities in relation to congregational property.

What remained, was, for the vote to be taken, the union to be consummated, and property settlements to be made. During the six-month period prior to the effective date of the Dominion Act, the vote was taken. On June 10, 1925, the date established by Dominion legislation, the union was solemnly consummated at a large inaugural service held in Mutual Street Arena, Toronto, Ontario. Upwards of 8,000 people witnessed the consummation of the union which had taken more than two decades to negotiate. And even as the union of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists was consummated, the new church had visions of an even wider and more comprehensive union. This is indicated by the concluding words of the Joint Committee's final report to the first General Council of The United Church of Canada, which stated:

We draw attention to the fact that the spirit of unity has characterized the Churches of Canada from the dawn of her history. Each of the Churches now uniting is itself a United Church. The present Union, now consummated, is but another step toward the wider union of Evangelical Churches, not only in Canada, but throughout the world.¹¹

Evaluation Of The Movement

Every man has a bias, and this writer is no exception. It is therefore difficult to attempt to evaluate objectively, a movement like that which brought Presbyterians, Methodists

¹¹Record of Proceedings of The First General Council of The United Church of Canada, June 10-18, 1925 (Toronto: n.p., 1925), p. 63.

and Congregationalists together, to form The United Church of Canada. Basically, there are two approaches to a movement of this nature. The one approach is guided by the principle "no organic union without doctrinal unity," and the other is the principle of the unionist, "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." To place the whole movement in an objective frame of reference, therefore, and try to evaluate it without bias, is difficult.

Inasmuch as the movement which culminated in The United Church of Canada brought together several denominations having distinctive doctrinal differences, it must be labelled unionistic. The doctrinal differences were not resolved; on the contrary, they were largely ignored in a statement of faith broad enough to embrace liberal and conservative elements in either of the churches.

Each of the uniting churches lost something distinctive by entering the union. The Congregationalists, lost much of their highly-cherished independence. Throughout the course of negotiations they contended for that independence, as they did for an ever simpler statement of faith. Though historically related to Calvinism, and instrumental in drafting the Westminster Confession, they later developed an apathy toward creeds and insisted on intellectual freedom. Accordingly they formulated only broad, simple statements of faith, as an expression of their fellowship. It was their

hope that something similar would be adopted in the Basis of Union. Their hope was however, not realized.

The Methodists lost something fundamental inasmuch as the Basis of Union did not require creedal subscription, to which, of course, they were accustomed. They also lost their stationing committee, by which they had been able to control pastors and pastorates. In polity they seem to have gained somewhat, inasmuch as the Basis of Union provides for a polity nearer to the Methodists than to the Presbyterians.

The Presbyterians lost perhaps more than either of the other two uniting bodies. It cannot be overlooked that they lost approximately one-third of their church. In addition, they left behind the Westminster Confession and the symbols they had been accustomed to using for instruction in the fundamental doctrines. They also lost the fundamental principle of their polity, which regarded all administration as a service to the Lord, and all servants as equals. There were no degrees of authority in the Presbyterian system. Both ruling and teaching elders were considered equal in authority, different only as to function.

The union got off to a bad start when almost one third of the Presbyterian Church voted non-concurrence. The aftermath was characterized by bitterness, competition and litigation, resulting in broken churches and divided communities. A number of simple measures might have prevented much of this.

In the first place, the whole union movement should have been accompanied by a program of education. Education aimed at mutual understanding on the part of both the leaders and the rank and file of the membership, could have gone a long way toward solving many of the movement's problems. As it was, the proponents of union did not conduct a program of education until just a few years prior to consummation of the union. By that time the opposition was well organized, and anti-union sentiment was firmly entrenched in the minds of many people.

The motivation for union left something to be desired. The whole movement should have been characterized by a high spiritual level. Doubtless there were many who had motives high and true, but the primary motive seems to have been the conserving of men and money. While this principle may have some value, it is not the principle upon which a movement such as this should be based. And then, as the negotiations became more difficult in the face of rising opposition, a spirit of "union at all costs" seems to have prevailed, among the unionists. Perhaps the principle, "how will this benefit the kingdom of God" rather than "how will this benefit the churches" might have served to raise the level of the entire union movement.

The unionists might have taken greater recognition of the strength of the opposition. Granted, that both votes in the Presbyterian Church indicated a majority in favor of

the union, however, this was a majority of those who exercised their franchise, and not a majority of the membership. In the final analysis, less than half of the communicant membership of the Presbyterian Church, carried that church into the union.

Another measure which may have served to prevent much of the bitter aftermath and provide for a more successful union is a vote of the people on the basis of proposed legislation, prior to the passing of that legislation. In this manner, the rights of all concerned, concurring and non-concurring could have been clearly spelled out, and the negotiating churches could have received a much more intelligent commitment from the people, prior to going before the Legislatures for enabling legislation.

Was the union movement successful? Did the union movement achieve its objectives? From the standpoint of the unionists, these questions can be answered in the affirmative. One of the objectives of the union movement seems to have been to form a church that could admit the largest number possible and exclude as few as possible. This objective was achieved. The basis upon which the churches united was sufficiently broad to admit almost anyone. The United Church of Canada is a liberal church. It does not have a consistent theology. Almost any one can find a home in its communion. It imposes no doctrinal tests. It therefore attracts those who resent creedal formulation and subscription, and cherish

intellectual freedom. It preaches a social gospel, and frequently makes public pronouncements on various public issues ranging from capital punishment to divorce to feminine attire.

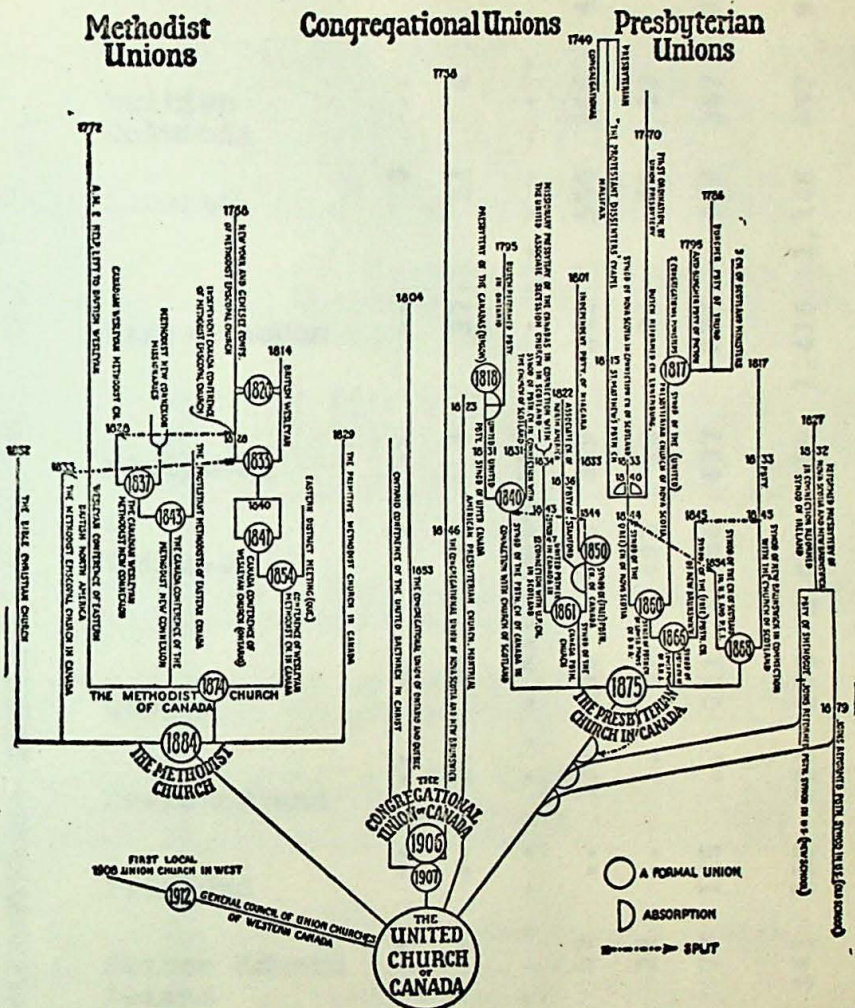
Another objective of the union movement was to create a national church in Canada. This The United Church of Canada is, however, not in the sense that it is a state church. The nationalism of The United Church of Canada is based not on privileges which it expects from the State, but is created rather by a sense of responsibility to every people of every community of the country. The United Church of Canada feels the responsibility to serve any and all who are not served by any other church.

Statistically, the movement that culminated in the formation of The United Church of Canada, must be considered a success. The United Church of Canada is today the second largest Christian communion in the country. Among Protestant communions it ranks first. The Dominion census of 1961 lists its membership at 3,664,008 or 20.1 percent of the total population.¹² Statistics are not, however, a primary criterion for success. The real success or failure of the movement cannot be judged on the basis of statistics. It can be judged only on the basis of how faithful the product

¹²Canada Year Book, 1963-64 (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer and Comptroller of Stationery), p. 176.

of the union movement has been to the task committed to its charge. This year The United Church of Canada celebrates forty years of history. A study of the record and achievement of the church during that forty-year period since the consummation of the union would indicate the measure of faithfulness with which The United Church of Canada has discharged the responsibilities committed to its charge.

Appendix A



S. D. Chown, The Story of Church Union in Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930)

APPENDIX B

NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF FORMER CONGREGATIONAL, METHODIST
AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES, BY CONGREGATIONS

	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Prince Edward Island	Trinidad	Newfoundland	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia	Total
Non-concurring Congregational Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	..	..	3	..	8
Non-concurring Methodist Total	15	7	..	..	..	26	64	4	27	24	4	171
Non-concurring Presbyterian Total	83	29	24	..	..	52	492	14	22	40	28	784
Total Congregations	716	473	141	115	334	695	3,027	760	1,416	1,146	657	9,480
Congregations Uniting June 10, 1925	633	444	117	115	334	643	2,530	746	1,394	1,103	629	8,688
. All Concurred												
Non-concurring Methodist Total	343	263	68	..	334	458	1,683	319	513	550	266	4,797
Non-concurring Presbyterian Total	358	203	73	115	..	211	1,280	437	876	572	387	4,512

194

C. E. Silcox, Church Union in Canada, its Causes and Consequences (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 282.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada as Prepared by the Joint Committee on Church Union and Approved by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, The General Conference of The Methodist Church, The Congregational Union of Canada, Also A Brief Historical Statement. Toronto: The Joint Committee on Church Union, 1924.
- Briggs, William, et al. Centennial of Canadian Methodism. Toronto: Wesley Buildings; Montreal: C. W. Coates; Halifax: S. F. Huestis, 1891.
- Canada Year Book, 1963-64: Official Statistical Annual of The Resources, History, Institutions and Social and Economic Conditions of Canada. Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery. Pp. 175,176.
- Chown, Samuel Dwight. The Story of Church Union in Canada. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930.
- Congregational Churches of Canada, The. Yearbook, 1906-1925. Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company.
- Gregg, William. History of the Presbyterian Church in The Dominion of Canada, From the Earliest Times to 1834. Toronto: Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Company, 1885.
- Short History of the Presbyterian Church in The Dominion of Canada, From the Earliest to the Present Time. Second edition, revised. Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1893.
- Kilpatrick, Thomas B., and Kenneth H. Cousland. Our Common Faith. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1928.
- "Lambeth Conferences," Lutheran Cyclopedia, ed. Erwin L. Lueker. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954. p. 566.
- Mason, Gershom W. The Legislative Struggle for Church Union. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956.
- McNeill, John T. A Statement Concerning Ordination to the Ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Methodist Church (Canada), The Congregational Churches of Canada, and The United Church of Canada. N.p., Prepared and Issued by Order of the General Council of The United Church of Canada, 1926.

- . The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1875-1925. of the
Toronto: General Board, Presbyterian Church in Canada,
1925.
- Methodist Church, Canada, The. Journal of Proceedings of
The General Conference, 1894-1922. Toronto: William
Briggs.
- Morrow, E. Lloyd. Church Union in Canada, Its History,
Motives, Doctrine and Government. Toronto: Thomas
Allen, 1923.
- Oliver, Edmund H. The Winning of the Frontier. Toronto:
The United Church Publishing House, 1930.
- Parliament of The Dominion of Canada, The. Acts Passed in
the Session Held in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Year
of the Reign of His Majesty King George V, Being the
Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament Begun and
Holden at Ottawa on the Twenty-eighth Day of February,
1924, and Closed by Prorogation on the Nineteenth Day
of July, 1924. II. Ottawa: F. A. Acland, Law Printer
to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1924. Pp. 85-104.
- Pidgeon, George C. The United Church of Canada: The Story
of the Union. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950.
- Presbyterian Church in Canada, The. Acts and Proceedings of
the General Assembly, 1893-1925. Toronto: Murray
Printing Co.
- Rules and Forms of Procedure, Presbyterian Church in Canada.
Toronto: The Westminster Co., Limited, 1909.
- Sanderson, J. E. The First Century of Methodism in Canada.
2 vols. Toronto: William Briggs, 1908.
- Scott, Ephraim. "Church Union" and the Presbyterian Church
in Canada. Montreal: John Lovell and Son, Limited, 1928.
- Silcox, Claris Edwin. Church Union in Canada, its Causes
and Consequences. New York: Institute of Social and
Religious Research, 1933.
- The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Church, Canada.
Toronto: William Briggs, 1919.
- The Inaugural Service of The United Church of Canada, June
Tenth, 1925. Montreal: Mercury Press, 1925.

United Church of Canada, The. Record of Proceedings of the First General Council, June 10-18, 1925. Toronto: N.p., 1925.

Wallace, W. G. "Congregationalism," Encyclopedia Canadiana. III. Ottawa: The Grollier Society of Canada, Limited, 1958. Pp. 70,71.

Walsh, H. H. The Christian Church in Canada. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956.