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The Situation in China.

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(Concluded from page 447.)

II.

I MUST now consider the situation of Christian missions in China as affected by the political and social situation, or as influencing it with power or with inertness. The contrast between 1913 in its later months (and the early months of this current year), with the apparent open doors and days of opportunity, and the anticipations and hopes and prophecies of almost final triumph of the Cross, is not only saddening and discouraging, it is also a perplexing phenomenon. Dr. A. H. Smith, in reviewing this period, writes thus—and he has been optimistic almost to a fault in the dawn of this new era: “It may be taken as certain that the establishment of a Republic will often mean a freedom from restraint hitherto felt”—*i.e.* (apparently), the restraint of the anti-foreign influence always present in Chinese life and thought—and he proceeds, “authoritative notice to missionaries to abandon their stations on account of the unrestrained lawlessness prevailing is of ominous significance.” We must note also that the effect of such a disastrous reaction of insecurity, if not of positive hostility, towards foreigners and towards foreign missions, though it be, as we trust will be found, only partial and only temporary, must act with deadening effect on the new spirit of inquiry, and the growing expectation of Christians gaining a distinct upperhand lead in China. “Materialism” has, we fear, mingled far too much with the inquiry into the claims of Christianity and with the plans of not only Christian Chinese, but of Christian missions also, in patronizing or promoting Christ’s religion. What shall we *gain* by knowledge and enlightenment and learning, with their material

advantages in high schemes and in arts and applied sciences? and not "What must I do to be saved?" has been the inquiry! And the folly of divorcing religious instruction from education instead of placing it in the forefront, as the beginning and crown and glory of primary and of higher education as well, has been deliberately affirmed and adopted by some of China's leading young men. And the check given even for a time to the growing popularity of the sacred and Divine religion, however indefinite and inarticulate, must yet gravely disappoint these mistaken adherents, and also the number of young men and young women who were questioning and inquiring and listening and debating not long ago. - I cannot but regard the sudden overclouding of China's political and religious sky as a moving and a loud warning call to Christian reformers and teachers and preachers, who have imagined that a new China requires of necessity a new Gospel—or at any rate new apologetics; a restatement of the truth (which is the while eternal and immortal) to suit the new attitude of mind in this new century. If the "foolishness of preaching" has not been severely or carelessly left alone, it has been deemed in reality to be foolishness to the itching ears of present-day hearers and students. And new problems and methods and principles have been so discussed and in nearly interminable conferences and committees, as to silence or deaden the trumpet-call of the Lord's own command and battle-cry and great commission.

But yet mission work is by no means paralyzed or suspended in China. It is a pathetic and at the same time an inspiring thought that thousands of preachers and teachers, native and foreign, in China, with danger and unrest near them or actually upon them, are quietly and effectively witnessing for Christ. It was so in the days immediately following the going down of the storm of the Tai-ping rebellion, with the aftermath—if I may change the simile—of unrest and lawlessness, of rumours and riot and treachery, which followed the rebellion. The workers "did the next thing," and their labour has not been, and will not be, "in vain in the Lord." "Through flood and flame the

passage lay" then—flood and flame may be near us now, but "Jesus guards the way."¹

Then, turning from the individual workers, we should like to know what is the situation of the Church of Christ in China. Is it at last—the Church in Heathendom and the Church in Christendom—*one*, so that the world may see the glory and wonder, and, seeing, may believe (the faith which is "life eternal") that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world? In the year 1860 it was reported that all the non-Roman missionaries in China, to the number of about one hundred, were assembled in Shanghai, partly as refugees from the peril of the regions in revolution, partly to watch the going down of the rebellion, and to mark God's leading hand to press inland or coastwise with the Gospel. Did they seize that solemn and unique opportunity—an earlier Kikuyu gathering with a similar object—for organizing and effecting *corporate union*, so that they might present to the Chinese one message, one Lord, one faith, *one Church*; not many and diverse, and "agreeing only to differ"; and offer such as the model and guide for the coming Church in China? In those far-off days of sowing and breaking up the fallow soil, the individuals, and not the Church aggregate, absorbed perhaps all thought and policy. It is alarmingly different now. The harvest is in progress; hundreds of thousands of converts to the faith have been baptized; Churches have of necessity been organized—so many! Thank God for His grace, which has blessed His servants abundantly, notwithstanding our unhappy divisions. Yet, so many, again! marking the Church's tardy obedience to her Lord. And now China, patriotic as she wishes to be in all things, demands her own Church, and it is being projected and formed in some places. But when some model is sought for, their thoughtful leaders, or some of them, exclaim: "We know that our Lord

¹ One of the most significant signs of life and of the spirit of inquiry, amidst so much to chill and check the work of missions, may be seen in the fact that by the British and Foreign Bible Society alone, and besides the issues of the Scotch and American Societies, 2,183,000 copies of the Holy Scriptures were sold in China last year.

prayed for and thus enjoined unity, if not uniformity, for His Church and people ; we know that His inspired Apostle defined and described unity as he understood it thus, ' that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment ' (1 Cor. i. 3). We cannot see such a model, such a united Church, anywhere ; we therefore conclude that you are all wrong, and that we must construct a Church of our own, not necessarily antagonistic to Western Churches, but certainly not one with you." So comes in, by the direct fault of Christians, a further long rent in the seamless robe ; and what seems to us most alarming amidst the anxious torrent of debate which surges over this question is this—that any theory, any proposal, any scheme, but our Lord's own prayer and command, will sway the discussions and inspire action. Some, like Dr. Sanday in his interesting papers on the subject of union, assure us that the first thing to be done all over the world is to create *an atmosphere*. " When an atmosphere has been created that is really favourable to reunion, reunion will come, but not any sooner." But why delay 1,800 years ? Yet we seem to have breathed that atmosphere for many years past in Christendom and in the mission-field. The writer of this article was President for many years in succession of a society for concert in prayer and consultation, representing missions of at least twelve leading Christian bodies in Shanghai. We never met without the sigh for unity, and the suggestion of this great ideal of Christ's Church, " that they all may be one." Surely the atmosphere is round us, and is the very air breathed by Christians of many creeds and forms ; yet we are not one. We adjourn. " Do not think of corporate union, or attempt it yet," says a leading and eminent missionary authority. All we can do towards unity is " to understand one another better." Will that make us understand better why we are not one ? I trow not. Mr. Silas McBee, to whose large-hearted spirit and schemes Christians in America and England owe so much, seems to hope that it will be so effective ; and his magazine is significantly called the *Constructive Quarterly*.

But is it supposed, then, that we shall be led by mutual interchange of thought to see that error is truth in disguise, and what we have called truth—the truth of God—is capable of recension and compromise? Let it ever be remembered that unity, as it has been well said, *knows no compromise, but does know comprehensiveness*. Then other earnest theorists contend that what you need in China is not unity of the Chinese Church with the Church Catholic, but that it be, what it from the very nature of the case can never be, an indigenous Church, and that with a learned ministry it must choose its own doctrine and forms and ceremonies. Others, as it seems to me, both here and in the mission-field, betray a strange shame or distrust of their own Mother Church of England. They are ready to contend for its rules and for its authority, but they would not impose it, or suggest it even, as it is, by rule of faith and by doctrine so founded, and by ancient order constituted and established, and present it to the world.

It is, perhaps, just worth the while to record here the fact that there are few Protestants who would not with gladness reunite with Rome, if Rome would be Rome no more, but the Church of St. Paul and St. Peter if you like, in doctrine and discipline, and free from the traditions of men which have made the law and Gospel of God of none effect. If she will abandon her nonconformity of error and conform to the Truth, we will conform to her. And the extreme fallacy of English Churchmen in claiming that they long more for union with Rome than with other Protestant Churches is inconceivable, when they know that all Rome's advances towards reunion are the fervent offer of a kiss of peace if we will unconditionally submit to her, not in any sense offering compromise, but to her in unaltered error.

Surely our Church is too Western, say some again, for the imaginative Eastern nations. Yet it is, as a matter of fact, no more Western than Eastern. Surely we have ourselves drifted too far, say others, from the great Catholic unity of Rome, and must not impose this nonconformity on the infant Churches of India and China; forgetting what is surely history and not the inven-

tion of animosity, that *the* great nonconformity of Christendom is medieval and modern Rome. Now all this is not only wholly inimical to the plans and hopes of true unity, but it surely ignores also, or minimizes, the supreme authority of our Lord's prayer, that all His people may be one—one surely in verity and not in order alone. And we come to the practical question for the furtherance of reunion—is not a common centre, a trysting-place, a Church comprehensive of all truth, scriptural, apostolic, primitive, reformed, exclusive of all error, ancient, medieval, modern, which in such dense thickets has hidden and encumbered the fair garden of the Lord—is not such a centre necessary for the attraction and adherence of all true Christians? Suppose we have such, say, in the Church of England, which, through the British Church, is as old as Rome itself, and the true survival, and cleansed and reformed and recovered representative of the Church Catholic, built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets. If this be a fact, and not a theory only, why should any devout and sincere and orthodox Christians hesitate to conform to this Church? Dr. Dimock has most soberly and suggestively said that in this question of the restoration of the unity of Christendom, whenever we have to set on one side of the balance such matters as have to do with visible organizations, and on the other side that which has to do with the essential doctrines of Christianity, we must hesitate not for a moment in recognizing the far superior weight, the paramount claims of the doctrine of Christ. If so, rejoin, sincere Nonconformists. Why urge upon us as the prime condition of our joining the English Church, the conformity to her orders, and to her outward order generally, and the consequent condemnation and abandonment of the orders and forms, or freedom from forms, of our own denominations, instead of being content with "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," and letting everyone follow his own prejudices and convictions?

There is another argument, however, to be drawn from Dr. Dimock's true and sober statement of proportions. It is this: premising that the question of unity is not to be the play-

thing of prejudice and excitement or of opinion, but a question of obedience or neglect, when the prayer and the command of the Head of the Church are remembered—then unity, reunion, is the duty of all Christians—and if a Church is existing and available for the purpose of reunion, which presents Christian verity with comprehensive completeness, if to that Church in very great measure the “free Churches” and Protestant Christians generally owe their deliverance from the nonconformity of Rome, and reunion and return to the confession of the faith once delivered to the saints—if that Church, without unchurching other bodies, or denying all validity in their orders, or all grace to their Sacraments in the past, yet suggests for the future, as an outward and visible bond of union, the *bene esse* of the very ancient and Catholic Apostolic episcopal orders, with the laying on of the hands of the presbyters, is it not passing strange that the call and word of the Lord does not with these sincere Christians compel them, with almost the indignation of grief as a duty long delayed, to brush aside the infinitely lesser questions, where not conscience and truth and Divine principles are concerned—if they alone hinder them from joining the Church in which they have the greater and all-important guarantee of full conformity to the word and truth of the Gospel? If anything in the recent Kikuyu controversy suggested any censure or criticism, it was, perhaps, the apparent reticence of the consulting Bishops, though this was not absent evidently from thought or suggestion, to press this practical basis and “mother” of reunion upon the other missionaries represented and in council for their own adherence and acceptance: for the future or nascent Churches in Africa, in China, in India, are not likely to unite in one Church at the suggestion of their Western teachers, so long as they see those teachers holding back from present union. Just possibly the failure thus far of the many Christian bodies in China to unite may be acting unconsciously as a drag on that higher progress which we have seemed to see at hand to-day. Co-operation is the atmosphere in which conferences and policies and committees live and speak

just now. A hopeful sign, if co-operation be not used as a blind to hide the confessed hopelessness of unity. Federation was in the air after the great Conference of 1907, and is still in evidence. That, too, as well as co-operation, is a sign of hope, but only as a short path to *unity*, not as a swerving path away from it. We doubt the efficacy and practical working of either without previous and definite unity in verity; and the question obtrudes itself authoritatively with which I began, Do we remember clearly in our manipulation of co-operation and federation that what our Lord prayed for and enjoins and waits for is unity? Is it too late to hope that the English Church, steadfast and faithful to her Creeds and doctrine and Sacraments, and to the Faith, in all the fulness of that great Word, may even yet unite the forces of the missions in China in their plans for advance and forward movements to win the land and every land for the Lord of all?



Some Impressions of Irish Romanism.

BY THE REV. C. H. K. BOUGHTON, M.A.,
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IN the course of a ministerial life which, though short in years, has been chiefly spent in the training of candidates for the ministry, it has fallen to my lot to devote a good deal of time to the study of that summary of Anglican theology, the Thirty-Nine Articles. The Articles, as all well-instructed Church-people know, take up a mean position between the extremes of Romanism on one side and certain aspects of Protestantism on the other. But the Articles were composed and revised at various dates between 1553 and 1571, and were based in part on still earlier sources such as the Confession of Augsburg in 1530 and the Confession of Würtemberg in 1552. Therefore the Romanism to which they are opposed is the Romanism of a bygone age. It is the system of doctrine and practice