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## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE NEW MISSIONARY CHURCHES.

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**M**Y subject is the Church of England and the new Missionary Churches. The difficulty at the outset is that there are as yet no new Missionary Churches. There are a number of proposals in different stages of development for the formation of such Churches. Until they are completed it is impossible to discuss with definiteness the relation of the Church of England to them and their relation to the Anglican Communion.

At the present time there are, I believe, more or less informal negotiations being carried on in various parts of the Mission Field between the representatives of our Communion and the leaders of other Reformed Churches to see if some method of union can be devised, as union is desirable in order to overcome the obvious difficulties in the relationships of the converts in the different Communions. These difficulties have been discussed on several occasions at these Conferences.

Only two of these sets of proposals are mentioned in the Report of the Lambeth Conference. One concerns the steps towards union in Persia. The other is the South India Scheme. The Lambeth Conference Report notices the proposals for a United Church of Persia as approved by the Inter-Church Conference held at Ispahan July 23-August 5, 1927. The reference to this Conference is brief. There is a Presbyterian Mission in North Persia and a C.M.S. Mission in South Persia. The Lambeth Conference Committee encouraged the Church in Persia to go forward towards the goal of union carefully studying present movements in other parts towards Church Unity and, in particular, the Scheme for a United Church of South India. They note as essential for the Unity of the Church the Historic Episcopate in a constitutional form, but they do not mean that the Church of Persia should be an Anglican Church. They hope that, developing along the lines of its own genius, it will have some particular contribution of its own to bring into the Catholic Church. In regard to a proposal that two ordained Ministers from the Northern (Presbyterian) Churches should join in the laying-on of hands at the ordination of an Episcopal Minister; and similarly that the Bishop should take part in the laying-on of hands at the ordination of a Minister of the Presbyterian Church, they say:

“ We recognize that there are inherent difficulties in this proposal but recommend that in view of the situation existing in Persia due inquiry be made with a view to discovering whether some Scheme of Joint Ordination be possible, always providing on our part that the essentially episcopal nature of the ordination be properly safeguarded.”

Two important points are to be noticed in the policy thus indicated: (1) The insistence upon the Episcopacy and episcopal

ordination as essential and (2) the Church of Persia is not to be an Anglican Church, but is to develop on its own lines as a National Church forming part of the Universal Catholic Church—provided of course that none of the developments arising from the special circumstances in Persia shall conflict with any of the essential elements of teaching or worship of the Catholic Church. The significance of these points will, I hope, become clearer as we proceed.

The main features of the South India Scheme are sufficiently well known not to require any but the briefest mention: only the features will be noted which serve to guide towards the wider application of the scheme to other new Missionary Churches that may be formed—if any such are formed. The South India Scheme is evidently intended to be the model on which such movements are to be based.

I expect the Scheme as it came from the Lambeth Conference proved a surprise to most of us. From the basis that the Lambeth Conference has no constitutional authority to accept or reject the proposals—the responsibility for action lying with the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, the Report continued:

“The Church formed by the uniting bodies is to be autonomous in the fullest sense and free from any control, legal or otherwise. The Anglican dioceses concerned are to be no longer a part of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon; but they go forth from the Anglican Communion in order to make their own distinctive contribution to the faith and order of the new United Church. The new organization will be ‘a distinct province of the Universal Church,’ but (and here is a limitation which should be carefully noted) it is understood on all sides and is recognized in the Scheme itself that no province of the Universal Church is free to act according to its own choice in contravention of the faith once delivered to the Saints or without regard to the preservation of the fellowship of the Church Universal.”

We shall have to consider the nature of these limitations, as much will depend on what is regarded as a contravention of the faith once delivered to the Saints and what is essential to the preservation of the fellowship of the Church Universal.

To the whole scheme general endorsement was given by the Lambeth Conference and comments made on the following points: (1) The Episcopate is to be accepted with the functions assigned to it, but the acceptance of any one particular interpretation of it is not required. (2) The rule of the Anglican Church is to be recognized that an episcopally ordained ministry is required for the due administration of Holy Communion for those congregations which have in the past been bound by that rule. (3) Eventually every Minister will be an episcopally ordained Minister, and the Scheme is to be modified so as to make it clear that the intention is to reach finality in the unification of the ministry of the united Churches. (4) Confirmation is not to be insisted on as a pre-requisite term of union, but its use is earnestly commended.

On the definite questions submitted to the Lambeth Conference answers were given as follow: (1) The anomalous position of the new Province being in communion with the Anglican Communion and also in communion with bodies not in communion with the

Anglican Communion is to be met by the principle of "economy" and it is explained that this is a technical term representing administrative action to meet a temporary situation without prejudice to any principle of ecclesiastical order. (2) Consecration *per saltum* is not invalid and is justifiable in the special circumstances of the inauguration of the United Church. (3) Confirmation is not an indispensable preliminary to the Ordination of a Priest or the Consecration of a Bishop. (4) With regard to the participation of presbyters in the laying-on of hands at the Consecration of Bishops, it is regarded as legitimate at the inaugural Service of Consecration, but at all subsequent Consecrations they prefer that it should not be adopted, and care should be taken to make plain that the presbyters do not take part as Consecrators.

It is clear from these statements that we are brought face to face with the problem of the Ministry which has been frequently discussed at these Conferences, and we can only reiterate the statements which have already been made on several occasions.

Many feel that it is a great pity that these problems concerning the relationship of our Church towards the non-Episcopal Churches could not have been courageously faced in the homeland, and settled by the negotiations carried on between the leaders of the Free Churches and representatives of our own Communion. It looks as if the Anglican Communion in general and our own Church of England in particular were saying to a remote and small missionary community in India :

"We do not want to face these difficult problems ourselves. We fear that no agreement upon them could be reached at home with our inherited traditions and prejudices. As the difficulties have become acute with you and it is essential that you find some solution for them, we agree to your doing so ; but, while you are attempting to solve them, you go out of the Anglican Communion for all practical purposes. If you fail to solve them, we do not quite know what your position will be. If you solve them on the lines of which we approve, we shall be glad to receive you back among us. You will have provided us with a happy solution which may become the model for all similar movements in the formation of new Missionary Churches throughout the world."

This may help to save our Church at home from immediately facing and dealing with the relationship of our Communion with the non-Episcopal Churches, and of carrying to their logical conclusion all that is implied in the decision of a Committee representative of the Anglican Communion which declared that :

"Ministries which imply a sincere intention to preach Christ's Word and administer the Sacraments as Christ has ordained, and to which authority so to do has been solemnly given by the Church concerned, are real ministries of Christ's Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church."

This was obviously the crux of the Lambeth Conference, and many regret that some means was not found for the Mother Church to deal with the question. To relegate it to a small missionary community in India does not seem the most dignified or statesman-like way for the Mother Church to deal with so large and important a problem.

The Lambeth Conference has laid emphasis upon the benefits which are to accrue to the Universal Church from the special gifts brought into its treasures by the Native Churches. There is a very strong national spirit in some of these Churches already, and the national spirit tends to grow stronger. It sometimes takes the form of objecting to be bound to the leading strings of the West. The causes of division in Western Christendom do not in great measure concern them. They wish to develop on their own lines, and it is possible that some of the developments may raise problems on a number of the subjects which are the sources of our differences. It may be that the Native Churches may see no reason to pay attention to the restrictions which the West would appear to impose upon them.

The Eastern mind may easily arrive at interpretations of Christ and His Message that may not accord with some of the formulæ of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy or with some of the institutional features of Western Christianity which are held to be essential, more especially by those who cling to the belief that Episcopacy is the sole method given to the Church by the Holy Spirit for its organization, and that the Holy Spirit can never in the future alter that method once given. We may also ask: Are we right in our methods of dealing with these Native Churches? A change is no doubt coming; but in the past we have sent out our missionaries, and their duty has been to place before the people Christianity as it is understood in the West. The Christian education of the people has gone forward under the constant instruction and oversight of the foreigner. We have been fearful of trusting the natives. We have at times shown a want of confidence and faith in their advance on right lines. It has been suggested that we have departed from the lines of the earliest missionaries. St. Paul and the other leaders of the Early Church did not act in this way towards the Churches which they set up. They taught the people, many of them converts from gross heathenism, and after a brief period they were left with occasional visits and supervision to develop their own Church life. Ministers from among themselves were chosen, and the work went forward under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many and grievous mistakes were no doubt made, but probably not more than have been made by the Church in every age. Christianity was adapted to the special needs of the peoples of various countries, and the Truth tended, as it always does, to prevail. The Early Church had a sure confidence in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we probably require far more of that confidence than we have hitherto displayed. This subject has been treated more at length by Mr. Roland Allen in his book *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's and Ours*, a volume which I understand has had the largest circulation of any recent work on Missionary Policy. If these lines were adopted fully, it is impossible to say what the future development of the Native Churches would be. But can we be satisfied that they would universally adopt our present form of the Episcopate, or deal with doctrines along the lines of Western thought?

There are, however, signs that a new conception of the Church and especially of the Anglican Communion is emerging, which will give rise to a completely new conception of the relationship of the Church in this land to the new Missionary Churches. When we turn to the section of the Lambeth Conference Report dealing with the Anglican Communion, we find a remarkable change of outlook. No longer, they say, are we to look for a distinctive Anglican Communion throughout the world.

"Our ideal is nothing less than the Catholic Church in its entirety. Our Communion in its present character is transitional, and we forecast the day when the racial and historical connections which at present characterize it will be transcended, and the life of our Communion will be merged in a larger fellowship in the Catholic Church."

The Report examines the principle underlying this conception. The bond which unites is spiritual. It is based on common doctrines and common ideals. The risk of divergence to the point even of disruption has to be faced, but belief in the Holy Spirit leads to trust in His power working in every part of His Church as the effective bond to hold us together.

The racial bond indicated in the title Anglican has begun to disappear. The Churches growing up in China, Japan, India and other parts of the world are joined to us solely by the ties of common beliefs and common life. The prospects which these considerations open to us indicate that

"the development of unity with other churches will be something other than the expansion of the Anglican Communion as we have known it. It looks forward to the final unity of the Catholic Church."

This beautiful ideal of unity is very attractive, and we all sincerely desire that it should be achieved; but it requires careful examination to realize the difficulties to be overcome, and to test it in the light of past experience. Such an ideal of unity must include the Roman Catholic Church with its theory of the supremacy of Peter and the Popes as his successors. This rules out the consummation unless some radical change occurs in the Roman Communion, of which there is no evidence as yet.

The attitude of the Roman Church towards any movement in the direction of reunion is amply displayed in the "Encyclical Letter on Fostering True Religious Union, of our Most Holy Lord Pius XI, by Divine Providence Pope to his Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinances in peace and communion with the Apostolic See," issued in 1928.

The following sentences indicate the unbending attitude of the Head of the Roman Communion :

"And in what manner, we ask, can men who follow contrary opinions belong to one and the same Federation of the faithful? For example, those who affirm and those who deny that sacred Tradition is a true fount of divine Revelation; those who hold that an ecclesiastical hierarchy, made up of bishops, priests, and ministers, has been divinely constituted, and those who assert that it has been brought in little by little in accordance with the conditions of the time; those who adore Christ really present in the Most

Holy Eucharist through that marvellous conversion of the bread and wine, which is called transubstantiation, and those who affirm that Christ is present only by faith or by the signification and virtue of the Sacrament; those who in the Eucharist recognize the nature both of a sacrament and of a sacrifice, and those who say that it is nothing more than the memorial or commemoration of the Lord's Supper; those who believe it to be good and useful to invoke by prayer the Saints reigning with Christ, especially Mary the Mother of God, and to venerate their images, and those who urge that such a veneration is not to be made use of, for it is contrary to the honour due to Jesus Christ, 'the one mediator of God and men.'<sup>1</sup> How so great a variety of opinions can make the way clear to effect the unity of the Church We know not; that unity can only arise from one teaching authority, one law of belief, and one faith of Christians."

After a reference to distinctive doctrines of the Roman Church which are to be received as completely as the doctrines held in common by all Christians, the Pope states the grounds of his refusal to allow his subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics.

"For the union of Christians can only be furthered by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ we say, which is visible to all, and which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it."

But the Roman conception of the Church is maintained by members of other Communions, the Orthodox, the Old Catholics and a section of our own Church. The organization of the Church on Episcopal lines is regarded by them as essential, and the validity of the Sacraments is made to depend upon the Episcopal succession. This view is not acceptable to Evangelical Churchpeople, or to the members of the non-Episcopal Communions which are so extensively represented in the Mission Field. They have very generously been ready in their earnest desire for unity to accept the Episcopate in order that the unity of the Ministry may be realized. A fear has been expressed that where the present generation might thus be willing to accept the Episcopate without tying themselves to any one theory in regard to it, future generations might insist on the rigid theories of Apostolic Succession, and all the developments of Institutional Christianity. It is not unknown that Evangelical Churchmen have turned their back upon the liberty with which Christ has made them free, and have accepted the bondage of our modern Judaistic system.

The history of Western Christendom provides us with a warning as to the lines of development which may be followed when the theories of Institutionalism are accepted. The growth of the Papacy is evidence of the power of Episcopacy to capture the machinery, and then become entangled in the work of the machine till there is no escape. In England we have seen develop in the last sixty or seventy years a view of the Church which excludes, if applied logically, all non-Episcopal bodies. For the achievement of the ideal put forward by the Lambeth Conference there must be a free, full, absolute reliance upon the Holy Spirit to guide the Christians of all lands into a fuller realization of all the possibilities of a United Christendom than has yet emerged.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I Tim. ii. 5.