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**CONGREGATIONALISM
AND REUNION**

P. T. FORSYTH

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CONGREGATIONALISM AND REUNION

Two Lectures

by

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FOREWORD

THIS small volume comprises two papers originally published under the titles *Reunion and Recognition* and *Congregationalism and Reunion*. They were written more than thirty years ago, and the immediate context to which they refer is obviously dated; yet no one can read them without being immediately aware that, as so often, Dr. Forsyth's insight and understanding illuminate the situation with which we have to deal to-day. Those who have to prepare for the meeting of the International Congregational Council at St. Andrews in 1953 will need to reckon with what Dr. Forsyth has written; and the republication of these papers has this need in mind. Yet it is clear that they will be welcomed in a much wider circle. The discussion of reunion has moved a good deal in the past thirty years; but almost nothing in these pages has become irrelevant either for Congregationalists or any other kind of Christian.

PREFACE

THIS address was given to a gathering of Clergy and Ministers in 1917, where both the presiding bishop and the opening one begged that we might take for granted so much brotherly love that we should cease to lose in politeness the merits of the case, and might be as frank as comrades about its difficulties on either side.

I have expanded the address in writing it out. As given it was more brief and colloquial. In my study I regret that I have been unable to recapture the note of genial *rapport* so easy in the actual presence of such an audience. But I hope what is lost in fluidity may be gained in reality. I have allowed myself to go rather more deeply into things constitutive and final on the written page, where a reader can stop and reflect without losing what is going on. However I fail, I do not want to fail in taking the question as seriously as it is great. To belittle the issue is a sure way to prevent its happy consummation. One has sometimes to regret the unconscious levity of the men of goodwill. And one finds in the most unexpected quarters how hard it is for one Church to gauge the true inwardness of another. I would that we each spent as much concern upon understanding both the case and the ethos of our opponent, as we do on defence or on propaganda.

REUNION AND RECOGNITION

REUNION AND RECOGNITION

Reunion slow. Begin with Federation

THE word reunion in Church life has become a catchword, like the word reconstruction in economic life. It is handed about by some writers and speakers who have no more notion what it practically or inwardly means than the waiter has of the cooking or the chemistry of food. But this at least is clear—it has become an ideal. It carries a spell with it which arrests the general mind both in the Church and out of it. The idea has seized, or is seizing, the general mind of the religious, which is urging the leaders in a way that puts some of them in a strait between their principles and their sympathies. They have not yet had from headquarters the leave to do what is desired. For they are more than idealists. They are men under authority. Idealists are always impatient; it is the believers, the men under authority, that do not make haste. They are the great realists after all; they rest on the effective foundations of things which do not and cannot hurry themselves to the light. And the believers who are against reunion have not yet had the word for it from their Lord. How can they move till they do? They have even a word which moves against it.

The breaches in the unity of the Church are now venerable things. The divisions have lasted so long as to create for the soul a variety of vested spiritual interests which it will take a long time to pool. Each denomination with a history has acquired an ethos or type of its own, which cannot be changed by volition. Collective egoisms also have rusted in

which cannot just be pulled out. And the fundamental merits of the case are under revision as they never were before, in the light of a scholarship whose methods are strange to the older heads and the remoter parts. All this takes time. In the nature of moral things reunion must come slowly. If it came lightly it would lightly go. If it is to be worked out it cannot be hurried. It cannot be made, it must grow. Prematurity is the enemy of maturity. And we need not pay too much heed to the prodding of the Press, or the shouting of the street. We may take for an instance of what I mean the case of the Baptists and Congregationalists. There is absolutely nothing between these bodies but the ethos of a long separation and the theory of applying a rite which is accepted in itself by both, and in which we now see neither is quite wrong. And yet, for reasons I do not here assess, such a reunion of these Churches as has taken place (and is still going on) between the minor Methodist bodies must for a long time be outside practical politics. Well, if union on that small scale be out of sight, how much more remote is its possibility between the Free Churches and the Anglican.

Meantime the early approaches may be made most feasibly among the Free Churches themselves, and by way of Federation—which it may be frankly owned is but a step to the greater goal, and a means to the remoter end. Federation itself is not without its difficulties, but it is the only way to begin. And one advantage of it is this. To have two great bodies like the Anglican Church and the federated Free Church, confronting each other and yet growing tenderer to each other, tends to lift the whole issue to larger dimensions, and to discourage cavilling and bickering. In industry collective bargaining has made its place good. There is no employer, nor association of them, that now wishes to go back to the days before trades unions and to deal directly with individuals or groups. So a strong and united free-churchmanship, facing an episcopal churchmanship, would dignify the conduct of what conflict there was. It would save us from the pettiness which wastes

time and lowers all, which debases the victory by the campaign, and demoralises the champions more than their truth can lift them. The little foxes spoil the grapes. By Federation the United States of the Church could speak in the gate with the great old monarchical Church, and both could speak with dignity and effect, as America does with old England and old Europe to-day. And all the time, while we are federating on a base of sympathy or utility, for the sake of either fraternity or efficiency, we can be rearing, inside that scaffolding, the greater reunion which rests in principle, doctrine, and the power of the Holy Ghost.

*Church Union at last a matter of Church Theology**

For unity is in the last resort a matter of doctrine, of theology, of the Holy Spirit of our Redemption. It is not a matter of the spirit of Christ, in the sympathetic and temperamental sense of that phrase. It is at last a matter of positive, compelling, creative Christian principle. Is the essence of the Church canonical or evangelical? Is it of canon law or moral gospel? The genius of the Church is quite different according as we answer that question. And the answer must be worked out on the merits of the case, as disunion has been worked in. It is not good to apply violent remedies to chronic diseases. But let us get rid of the idea that it is a matter of self-will or prejudice on either side. It is not so among the responsables. The union of believers depends at last on the nature of the trust they believe Christ has given them to administer, and not on their desires. It is not a matter of idealism, which, as I say, is always impatient. It is a matter of revelation; and we must handle the subject-matter of revelation according to its nature as God's will, and not according to our wish or

* See also in the Addendum.

dream. For it was not an idealism that created the Church, but a revelation; and it was a revelation not in the form of communicated truth, but of achieved redemption.

Reunion is among the moral processes, and these are slow. Conversion itself does not ignore the psychology of moral freedom, which cannot be coerced, however sudden. Even God cannot convert the world fast. If our creed, *i.e.* the burthen of revelation which makes the Church by a moral redemption, were to say that there ought to be many autonomous and independent Churches, our desire for unity would have to subdue and order itself according to that behest. And if we discard that notion and draw together, it must chiefly be from an obedience to the imperative of our creative source and responsible charge in Christ. Sympathy might crave union, without being able to justify it by our charter of foundation. It is the favourable climate, but not the real dynamic. Much sympathetic Christianity says, "Preach anything that seems to do men good." And so for many philanthropy, which is a secondary interest of faith, takes the place of worship, which is the first; and the fraternity of man is pursued without reference to the Kingship of God. We must begin with kingship and not brotherhood. We must begin with God and not man, the glory of God as the true weal of man. That is what Christ did. He began with God's work for man as the true and lasting source of man's work either for God or for his fellow. Is it necessary to say that when I have to speak of creed I do not mean a document, but a gospel? It was no formula that God gave in Christ, or Christ gave to us—no formula, either of belief or practice. By the divine deposit I mean the power and not the plan. I mean the *fait accompli* of redeeming grace, and not a rite or an order with a peculiar virtue, on the one hand, nor a mere loving benediction and its tradition on the other. May I add that in pressing union too hard we may be repeating the error that rent the Church—the error of pursuing the catholicity or spread of the Church faster than its holiness or quality.

*It is a question of God's Will and Authority
in his Self-revelation*

So, like many other questions of first moment, this of reunion is a question of authority, more even than of affinity. Those who are hostile to it are so not because their personal sympathies are against it but because they feel themselves the trustees of a revelation which does not seem to allow it. The Church's unity rests on the nature of what creates it, on its Sovereign's will and not on His subjects' tastes, on a search for the mind of the Spirit, and not just on motions of the pious heart. Is it required, is it inspired, by the Gospel of the Grace and Kingdom of God? That is the decisive question. Faith in the sovereignty of that holy love is a greater matter for Christian love than any feeling of affinity. Kingship is more than brotherhood. The great authority takes control of the sympathy it kindles if it is the sympathy of the Kingdom. Of the true and final sympathy Christ is the impulse, but also the law. Sound sympathy between men goes round by Christ's God. It must have an objective and creative source, one equally moral and religious—one evangelical, and starting from the spot where the Kingdom of God was set up once for all; and that was in the Cross of our redemption. In the last resort it is for Christ's sake and His Kingdom's that we love men; it is in His power that we believe in the New Humanity. The unity of the Church has this for its goal and its ground. Its nature is prescribed by what is the authority for the Church, *i.e.* by the Redemption into the Kingdom of God, which created it and goes on creating it. The unity is determined at last by moral power and not historic notes; by its intrinsic power rather than its extensive pale, or immediate sympathy; by the Church's quality rather than by its area; by its supreme passion to be morally holy before it is widely catholic; by the holy and not just by the homely or the happy; by powers of cohesion rather than of compression; by what draws it together rather than what

drives it; by its creative revelation rather than its effective regulation; by saving grace and not safe polity. It has been one of the great errors and banes of the Church to have pursued catholicity at the cost of sanctity; to have sacrificed its elect to its majorities; to have sought prosperity on lines other than its one Gospel; to have been more concerned with the area it covered than with the conscience it bred; to think more of the fabric than of the faith, of the pyx than of the host, of souls than of the soul. I named a form of this plague with which some of us are not unfamiliar. It is said to the minister, "Fill the church, and you can preach what you like." "Get the people, and then try to benefit them"—forgetful that when we were really to see Him He was to come in a most questionable shape, with no beauty that we should desire Him, not as one who plays sweetly on an instrument and is followed by a crowd, but with much to cause neglect and despite as Prophet, and Judge, and Redeemer. He was one that made the mere guardians of His tomb fall as dead. Or the error may take another shape, and a whole Church may lower its franchise to baptism (which is no personal choice), instead of keeping it high to confirmation or membership with its responsible profession; which error is done in order to increase the stake and interest of the public, to make the Church more nearly identical with the nation, and confuse faith with a national natural religion at the cost of the autonomy of the super-historic power.

*The Nature of Church Authority is not
Formal Truth or Canonical Order, but
Evangelical Power*

The authority for reunion, as for all else in Christianity, is a matter of moral power more than of formal truth, of new creation and not of strong cohesion, of regeneration and not of construction, of faith and not just its corporate

expression. Revelation is not communicated truth, but an act of redemption; of which truth is not a schedule but a sacrament, blessing often while it is broken. It is not a gift of supernatural knowledge (such as that God and man are really one), but of new life with God taking effect in a Kingdom moral and spiritual, and creating a unity and not just the conditions of it.

We are all holding truths in such a fetish way as to diminish or even destroy our power—whether they be truths orthodox or truths heterodox. We are often more careful about a permanent deposit of formal truth than about an inexhaustible source of moral power. And that is not the effect that the formal truth in religion was ever meant to serve. It was meant to be a sacrament and not a palladium, a live wire and not an heirloom. I do not say here that we hold the truth in unrighteousness, but may I say that we do not hold it in the way to promote the righteousness of the Kingdom of God? We may keep saying that Christianity is not a formal theology, and yet we let theological differences in academic theology paralyse power for the Kingdom of God in the world. That is to say our theology is making a school (which it should not) instead of a Kingdom (which it should). It belongs to the secondary and not the primary kind. Our Christianity is dominated, as its traditional theology was largely constructed, by something else than that which was Christ's dominant—this Kingdom of God. The Kingdom dominated Him as it could dominate only its King, whose one interest was its foundation in moral redemption and regeneration. But we sacrifice everything to a large and comprehensive Church. We lengthen its cords to rope people in. Too often we rouge the gospel for its public appearances instead of letting its natural complexion tell on men, to win them, sift them, reject, loose, and bind them. We may preach about Christ without preaching Him, or letting Him speak for Himself. We do not wield moral power over the world, because we do the easy thing—we appeal to its heart, or its intellect, and not

its conscience, to fresh vistas or vivid views and not to the new man. We would be more fascinating than commanding. We are more concerned for an æsthetical and impressionist Church (whose Pope is Christ's vicar) than with an ethical Church of the twice-born (whose pope would be Christ's premier). The great appeal of Christianity, from which all else flows, is to the conscience, and, in the actual situation, to the sinful conscience. It is easy to make any assembly we may address cry with a few pathetic illustrations. It is also easy to stir a mystic thrill. And it is not difficult to make people understand, if you handle small quantities in a small way, if, like Lot, you escape into little Zoar instead of obeying the call to the mountains. But, to use the dialectic of prophetic passion, to follow evil to its inmost cell, to track the holy to the heart of things, to touch the devious and elusive conscience of a world, to rouse, to renew it—that is hard. To handle the last moral issue of the whole world needs moral power on such a scale, which is not easily come by. But the Church with that secret has the binding and loosing power of Christ; and it has it only by that secret. It is a power the world both seeks and owns. Does the public really respect, does it really mind in its conduct, those who preach to its fancy or its sentiment without touching its conscience either with godly fear or humble faith? Does it really honour the voice that is more full of the lily work than of the pillars? And that is what the Church is doing too often with society. It is full of truth, with a mystic interior exuding from it like an aromatic gum, of truth with the poetic touch; it is not full of passion and power with a moral royalty burning in it, which compels the world to own that what should be is the only thing that really is and really matters. It does not make people feel that the Kingdom of God is the nearest, the most intimate, and the most searching of things, and that a constant repentance, even if it is a hidden one, is therefore the standing obverse of faith and love. The Kingdom of God is not proclaimed (by the Church, I mean,

rather than the preachers) in a way to produce on societies and nations a repentance for their corporate egoism and for the strife it cannot but breed. Without this kingdom for a centre we are divided; and division destroys moral alertness and dulls moral insight. We have less aptitude or affinity for the shaping moral ideas than for the homespun maxims and conventions. And our voice cracks on the moral note that really decides a world's fate.

*To Found on Evangelical Principle instead
of Apparent Efficiency is vital in a Religion
of Revelation*

When I say that the nature of the Church's unity is really a matter of principle, of doctrine, of moral revelation, please do not tell me that talk of that kind is *a priori*, un-English, German. Surely all deductive method is not German. Is it German to start from principle and work it into practice? Deduction does not mean evolving something from our self-consciousness. Surely the English thing is not to make Christianity live from hand to mouth, to follow the day's opportunism, to subject everything to obvious efficiency, and live on induction from sight instead of the object of faith. It cannot be German for a Church to start from a creative revelation, a positive gospel, and develop its vast content. That is heavenly. With the State it is different. Were it proposed to proceed in this way with the State I am afraid that might be German. It would be German to begin with the idea of the State and to work down from that idea by working up facts into it. For the State was never created by a positive revelation of love, truth, grace, or redemption. It has no such organising principle at its start. Its beginning does not give the law for its end. It is the great field for empirical expediency and utilitarianism. But to begin thus with the Church is neither German nor English; it is Christian. The Church differs entirely from the

State in being created by a revelation which is not a spectacular thing, nor a thing of mere illumination, or knowledge, but a thing of power and action, of moral power, of moral authority, of redemption as a new moral creation of life from death. The Church has a Charter there which carries in it the great lines, liberties, and controls of its life. It has a Holy Spirit most changeless and yet mobile in His continuity, most flexible in His consistency, most various in His unity. How can such a Church be controlled by such a State? There may perhaps be no absolute right and wrong in politics, nor in the Church as a polity; but there is in the evangelical principle [which makes the Church; which is the victory, and the final victory, of absolute good over absolute evil; which raises to churches the sects that honour it; and which sooner or later rejects movements or tactics fatal to itself, however promising they may be in more worldly directions like the winning of the popular vote. Erastianism reduces churchmanship to be but a branch of statesmanship; in the Kingdom of God the statesmanship will be a branch of churchmanship.

Church and State Separate, but not Neutral

On the question between us of Church and State may I say this? If the position we take is not the action of a principle so vital to the Gospel as the freedom of Grace over against the bondage of nature, we have no sufficient ground for our separate existence. A Christianity which regards itself but as a refined form of natural religion, which without more ado transplants love from man's instincts to be God's impulse also, and treats the Cross but as love in sacrifice—such a Christianity gives us no foothold, and no reason to be. For us there is no foundation for a Church's freedom except the evangelical, except a love in God which is purely of grace and not of nature, which begins in forgive-

ness with all its cost and not mere benignity, and which goes on to the Cross in a moral redemption of that supernatural kind. If the canonical and sacramental succession is as organically bound up with the marrow of the Gospel as we think Free Churchism is, it can on no account be surrendered. The only question then is, is it so? Is the connexion with the very nature of the Gospel as direct and organic in the one case as in the other? And that is a matter of inquiry. But for our founders their view of the Church was thus bound up with their view of grace from which it sprang. And it cannot be maintained if grace be but nature spiritualised and the freedom of nature (which is bondage) rarefied. We have not a foundation in the Gospel if grace be reduced to a sacramental infusion, and if the last relation between God and man be but the Catholic one of charity. For love is natural and not miraculous, but grace is the moral miracle of the world, if it is anything definite at all. Christian faith is faith in a miracle.

Till that is understood we must be regarded as somewhat self-willed, factious, impracticable, perpetuating old separatisms when the reason for them has gone. Till that is understood many must regard us but as mere politicians. It is that piece of vital theology, that principle of difference between law and Gospel, nature and grace, which is the touchstone of all theological method—that is what makes it quite impossible for us to regard the control of the Church by the State, *i.e.* of grace by nature, as a thing tolerable for the real Christian faith. There must, of course, be a real relation between them.* As I have said, they cannot be neutral, however independent. But neither can there be control. I have much sympathy with the Scottish form of the relation—recognition without control. The Erastian form is impossible, the more distinctly Christian, and the more vitally evangelical we grow. A really evangelical Erastianism seems to me as unreal as a centaur. I am trying

* Might I refer to a book of mine, *Theology in Church and State* (Hodder and Stoughton), and the second part of it.

to avoid arguing the matter. I am only saying where we are. Your kind invitation does not ask me here for argument. For we are here more to promote understanding of each other than of the subject. The immediate object is not conviction but consideration.

The only question is, therefore, what is the nature of the revelation at the source, by which we are to bind or loose, to forbid or allow new departures? Is it evangelical or sacramental in chief? Nature is upheld by a constant creation, and not frequent touches; is Christianity the religion of constant moral redemption (in terms of the Kingdom of God and its righteousness in the Cross) or of repeated mystic nutrition, of a new heart or of fresh food, of a new creature or of regular meals? Is its principle a new creation or a sustenance periodically renewed? Does character come by decisive moral change (however slow), or by cumulative mystic infusion? Are we regenerate by the Word or fortified by the sacraments? Is the Christian life a continual moral conversion or a continual mystic feeding? Is Christ in the last resort the eternal Redeemer of a wrecked race or the steady Perfecter of a race merely defective? That will be the difference in principle between the Evangelical and the Catholic type of Christianity in the coming conflict for the lead. Is the source of life the Gospel of Redemption to the lost conscience or the sacrament of Incarnation to a soul which is but weak and not lost? We must have mysticism—is it to be the mysticism of the conscience or the mysticism of the imagination; of saving moral action, or of the play of the subconscious? Is it a mysticism searchingly moral or one finely material? Is its stress on the moral action (or personal magnetism), or on the sublimated elements? These alternatives make two types of religion according as each is, not indeed sole but, dominant. Which is the principle of the revelation creative for the Church? Did that contain in chief a polity and a sacrament, or a Gospel and its Word (with sacrament as a form of its Word)? Which was Christ's grand legacy to the world? As **Evangelical Free Churches**

we feel that we owe ourselves and our duty to the former of these alternatives. And the only Church unity is the evangelical.

Two kinds of Catholic Unity—the Holy or Moral and the Canonical

Let us put it in this way. The unity of the Church depends on its Catholicity. Where is that Catholicity? There are two views. Does the Church include, for its privileges and duties, all who share a living faith in the great realities, powers, and affections of the Gospel of our moral Redemption in the Cross; or must it insist on a compliance with the traditions of historic Christianity—like certain views of episcopacy or of sacraments? Is unity determined by the Gospel making the Church or by the Church developing the Gospel, by the source of Christian history or by its course and its canons? Did Cyprian know more of the true Church and its unity than Paul? Is the nature of the Christian authority, in whose obedience we are one, creative or regulative? Is the member of the Church the new creature or the newly christened, the converted or the confirmed? Is the real regulative principle contained in the nature of the creative act or in rescripts of the Church *ad hoc* parallel to that act, or following it? Can we trust the new man, who escapes from precepts and develops the new ethic (as the apostles did) from the new life, so also to develop the new membership and the new polity that best fit in given circumstances the new nature in Christ? Such is the nature of the issue.

And if we are driven to choose, may I say that in our view the unity of the Church is founded in the creative act of our moral redemption which creates our faith to-day and which created the Church at first; it is not in the traditional polity, creed, or cultus we inherit. If unity is in polity Christ died in vain. Unity is in the Gospel, it is not in orders nor sacraments, valuable as these are. The one is

constitutive, the others but convenient. The one is master, the others servants. The value of the former is in itself, and it gives to the latter all the value it has. That is the Evangelical principle stripped of the ceremonies of Orthodoxy. Such a gospel is more moral than the conscience, and more miraculous than the Sacraments. It calls on the conscience to obey, on the heart to love, and on the rite to adore. And when we speak of the moral value as the supreme value in Christianity, we do not mean to reduce it to a mere morality, however genial. The morality or righteousness of faith means a personal relation to our *holy* Redeemer, analogous to His relation to a *holy* God. It is not a qualifying morality of habit or conduct, and it is not a forensic or imputed thing. But it is the religious, and therefore central, habit of the moral soul's confidence and communion with a *holy* God, whose act of revelation is a *moral* redemption of spiritual depth and height, making our faith and love in its own image.

The Church is the company of faith in this moral miracle of regeneration by the Word of the Gospel of holy love. It is the cloud of witnesses to that power. And, like a cloud, it varies in its form according to the nature of its particles and the changing forces of the air. That finished work, that *fait accompli*, of the Gospel, is the power which created for their day those historic stages and *cadres* of the Church which many regard as final because they are canonical. But finality belongs to no rule, but only to moral action, to the supreme act of a holy God in His reconciling Redemption. And the Church which serves that holy action is not a fixed institution but a flexible economy. The principles of Christian faith are more fixed than the methods of Christian work, or the style of Christian machinery, or the tradition of Christian technique.

Our frame of mind then is this. We think that the principle of Church unity lies in the power of the Gospel of our moral redemption, and not in polity nor rite; it is expressed in the brand of the flock and not the make of the fold. It flows

from the authority of the Gospel of our redemption into the Kingdom of God, which is the monopoly of no polity. It lies in gospel more than in office or rite, more than in Sacrament, which was instituted by the Saviour as the creature and servant of His Gospel. Sacraments derive all their solemn value from the miracle of redemption—from the moral Redeemer in the soul and not from the mystic Incarnate in a substance, nor even from the divine Friend in the midst. They are but modes of applying the Gospel, in which the act is more than the mere presence, and the element little by comparison. The mysticism of the Gospel is one which appeals to the crisis of the moral soul, rather than to the aspirations of the spiritual imagination or sensibility. And to the mysticism of refined substance and its transmutation it appeals not at all.

The Connexion of Polity and Sacrament

But am I not lugging in extraneous matter? What has our objection on the ground of polity to do with our objection on the ground of sacrament? This.

Many of you, my brethren, are disposed to allow the validity or the regularity of other than episcopal orders and their claim to full recognition. But a great section of your Church is not—and vehemently not. They hold that in so doing they would betray a trust. (Let us drop vulgar suggestions such as love of power and place, or mere prejudice and conventionality.) And they threaten secession, and the rupture of the Church of England, if intercommunion or an exchange of pulpits is legalised. And this schism seems to you a calamity much greater than the present state of things, unsatisfactory as you find that to be. And so for the sake of your own unity you join in insisting on an episcopal ordination (more or less modified, perhaps) as a condition of union. You invite us to take some form of episcopal

installation as a mere matter of regularising us with you—leaving on one side all dogma, or even theory of Episcopacy. You go so far as to give up a prerogative Episcopacy for an Episcopacy constitutional or even democratic. Which is a great concession—not to us, but to the historic truth of which you have such able explorers and expounders.

Now I will pass by the question whether a fact without a theory of it can be insisted on as universal in its obligation. It does seem to me that as soon as the prerogative theory of the Episcopate is given up, the dogma of it, there is also given up the necessary universality of it. And it is not quite clear how an elective Episcopate can validate Sacraments to its electors. In the way of validation they can only give what they received from the electing body. If the whole electing body of the Church turned Presbyterian, each presbyter would have the same power as any other to validate sacraments. But I will not press that here. What I would point out is that in thus asking our ministry to put itself in order with your Episcopacy (instead of practically recognising, like other Churches, the parity of our Ministry, Gospel, and Sacraments) you are chiefly moved by consideration for your High Churchmen and their retention. But what is it that makes *them* so careful about episcopal ordination? It is the matter of sacramental doctrine. Without the bishop and his unbroken succession (they hold) we can have no certainty of a valid sacrament, which seems of more moment than the sacrament of the preached Word. That validity flows not from faith in the Gospel of our Redemption but from a canonical continuity (with perhaps several weak links). And that belief, in some of its thorough exponents, comes near to being another religion, as legalist as Judaism (though with much more atmosphere) on the points it selects to canonise.

So if we complied with even a modified ordination both we and you would really be yielding to a view of sacraments which *our* whole history and principle at least is there to

disown. And the High Sacramentarians would make much play with our compliance. I am sure I should in their place. And I should urge the compliants to have the courage to pass on to see and own that they had now acquired grace not only as the opportunity of ministry, but as the virtue of orders.

May I add this as creating a difficulty for us? It is now pleaded, since the monarchical or diocesan episcopate has been banished from the first century, that that polity is no less the sole will of God, because it was the product of an historical evolution guided by the Spirit. The difficulty then, of course, is to know where to stop. Why draw the line at the first few centuries? Why not keep going on as Rome does? Why deny the action of the Spirit in the Greek schism, or in the Reformation in the West? Does such a theory of the divine will in the episcopate not put evolution in front of inspiration? Does it not impose as of necessity what is not in Scripture, not in the Gospel? Does it not destroy the principle that Scripture is the arbiter of controversy? Does it not approach the New Testament through the Fathers instead of approaching the Fathers through the New Testament? If polity is the condition of unity, did not Christ die in vain? Is the Gospel effective for the Church only if it has the episcopal countersign?

No possibility of Reunion without Recognition

The crucial question between us is the question of the ministry—the recognition of our orders. On your side it is held (in effect though not by all) that the unity of the Church is created by its ministry: we say that it is only expressed by it. Both Church and ministry are created by the Kingdom of God, and its righteousness set up in the Cross of the world's Redemption. That Cross is the source of the Spirit; that is the bond of union. Union will only come to stay as the Churches

grasp their true relation (not their identity) with that Kingdom of God, which Christ set up, with the Church for prophet and priest, but not for King.

If I may speak strategically (*i.e.* not of my own views, but of my estimate of the views and tendencies on our side) there is no chance whatever within any reasonable time of our Churches having anything to say, as Churches, to union with a Church which insists on episcopacy as a condition, which refuses to recognise the core of Catholicity to be the evangelical succession, and which therefore refuses to recognise our orders—a Church which is especially intractable about intercommunion in the rite we all own to be central to the worship of Him Who is central to all the world as its Saviour, and all the Churches as their life. I think we must face that as the situation. If it were said that under a reformed episcopate the union contemplated would conserve the “essential values” of the non-episcopal Churches, I think we should regard no value more essential than the value of our ministry as equal, in God’s sight and for His purposes, to any ministry whatever. There is nothing of Christ that cannot be given to the soul, whether of the individual or the community, by our ministry. And the beginning of all practical and promising discussion of reunion is its full recognition, to which intercommunion may be the introductory step.

I am not wholly sorry for the present deadlock. For a deadlock it is. It gives time for the powers that have brought us so far to work on. The history of the case in the first two centuries needs considering again and yet again. And, above all, the Gospel of a reconciling Redemption for the world’s moral soul must be grasped anew, which has by right the command of all the Church’s history and ordinances, and for whose sake they were and are created. For the settlement will not be made by the mere historians any more than by the pietists, but by the theologians of that experience which goes to the very heart of the gospel’s genius and purpose, because it was created by it. And particularly it will come by those theologians who are less set on rationalising belief than on

moralising it, and on moralising it (as I said a moment ago) by the essential holiness, the intrinsic moral nature, of the creative act of Grace. The sacramental meaning of Grace must be rescued by the evangelical. Grace as Mercy must take the lead of what is called "a higher gift than Grace"—the infusion into our souls of God's "essence all divine." Otherwise the Reformation is undone.

I would interpolate this. You will get a general episcopacy sooner by not insisting on it as a condition of unity but as a fruit of freedom and flexibility. Polity is a matter of utility—but of a sacred utility, the ability to serve the Kingdom of God and not a revealed constitution. It belongs to the secondary interests of Christianity, not the primary. And though on the primary theology the true wisdom may be to be faithful with Athanasius against the world ("he that is not with me is against me"), on the secondary the wisdom is to manage, and concede, and commend, and make it to be desired ("he that is not against me is with me"). I venture to suggest that you leave episcopacy to its own merits and its own spell, as you leave much weightier matters of belief free in a liberal and comprehensive Church of the Gospel. Leave episcopacy and the other polities free alongside each other as High and Broad co-exist. The other Churches are moving that way. Some of the once most unpromising of the other Churches are moving your way, and appointing provincial superintendents and moderators to protect themselves from the friability of an overdeveloped and unchastened independence. And you on your side are moving to more lay control. Why, your clergyman, as a corporation sole, is often more independent both of bishop and people than the old Independents were.

And the approximations are not confined to polity. They extend to the other and higher matter of the Sacraments. Canon Burroughs said in an address to the London Congregational Board: "Some of *us* are still trying to reinforce religion by the addition of magic; some of *you* to simplify it by the extension of mystery." And he suggests a super-

Churchmanship correcting both.* I am sure the best of our younger men, in numbers rapidly growing, feel the need of recovering mystery without falling into magic (though some reach but reverence without rising to worship). I would have you believe that that is so. And you would find it so if you could get us in our pulpits and not on our platforms, if you would select with care those you take as representative, and if you could know the parts of their utterances that the Press mostly leaves out. One of our handicaps, even among the ministers of the same church, is that we do not hear each other preach or *pray*. We are apt to hear but the extremes or the indiscretions which make piquant copy for a secular Press. We cannot all put ourselves into considered books or articles. There is no doubt there is among us a considerable revival of interest both in the form and in the spirit of worship. Before long we shall see the proper state of things becoming general—the combination of liturgical and free prayer, and the delivery so far of the congregation from the monopoly of the minister or the state of his liver. For my own part I am æsthetically much drawn to a form of the Eucharist, for instance, which I find ethically and theologically impossible—just as, for utilitarian purposes, I find many advantages in episcopacy, if only it would not claim to be the monopolist of the great gospel and true creed.

Moralise rather than Mysticise Faith

By much in your stress on the Sacraments and what makes them such you lend your great weight to the tendency which is so widespread to-day to escape from a rational worldliness by mysticising religion. It is one of the returns to the medieval stage, which was highly rational and highly mystical, but where the mysticism was *superimposed* on the rational rather than organic with it. Whereas we think the state of Christendom shows that that mysticising is not the chief

*I have suggested an eirenicon in my "Church and Sacraments." (Independent Press Ltd.)

need—which is to moralise religion. And that, as I have said, not just by urging the moral precepts and practices conjoined with our religion, but by moralising its intrinsic action, its crucial creative gospel. We must realise in the Cross of Christ a revelation so essentially and spiritually *moral*, through its atoning relation to the Holy, that the current type of religion which answers it shall carry always that dominant stamp, and gravitate that ethical way, especially in its historic action for the Kingdom of God, its action among the nations. When I look at the moral conditions both of the Continent and of our own country (especially since peace) I cannot but reflect that, if the Church could command the moral authority as it plies the mystic spell, or the sentimental note, the New Humanity of God's Kingdom would be at the door. That would be the real establishment of the Church in the nation. It would be setting up in its midst the object for which the Church exists—the righteousness of the Kingdom of God.

The Evangelical Mysticism of the Conscience

But I know what many of you fear, and it is a worthy fear. You fear lest religion should sink to be a mere genial moralism, a mere sympathetic conduct, a mere following of high precepts or ideals devoid of spiritual complexion or atmosphere, and without the miracle of a new creation, the seal of another world, or the note of adoration. You fear the reduction of religion to a moralism tinged by emotion. That is indeed no small danger in a people as practical and as ethical as ours. But you will not succeed in spiritualising the moral element just by *superimposing* the mystical upon it, or ranging them alongside without interpenetration. The mysticism must be in the ethical nature of the Kingdom of God as set up by an *atoning* Cross, the Spirit of a *Holy* Saviour, and the work of a God to whom nothing but holiness could atone. The mysticism must be the mysticism of the holy and not

just of the spiritual, of the historical and not just the susceptible soul. The mystical must be within the very nature of the moral, and not brought up to it, if we are to have a homogeneous religion of the Kingdom of God. It must be the mysticism of that ideal unity of ethic and religion—justification by faith. It must be within the distinctive act of the grand moral Personality and not simply within the process of an ensouled universe. It must be the mysticism of the moral, of the *Holy Spirit*. It must be the spirituality of the Holy. A moral holiness, and a moral redemption by it and into it, is what creates the faith. The mystic union must be a moral and personal reconciliation, the reconciliation of two consciences, rather than a rapt commingling of two beings, or the infusion of one nature into another. What we have to do with in Christianity is the mysticism of the moral soul and not of the religious imagination. It is the mysticism of moral redemption and not the elation of mere spirituality. It is not the temperamental religion of the rapt but the spiritual inwardness of the Holy, *i.e.* our communion of the Absolute Person's absolute Act and Conscience. You fear lest our morality should sink to a bald practiciness devoid of a mystic envelope. I share your fear. You fear to see the Church become but an ethical society with a fraternal note. I appreciate your concern. You miss in many prophets of the moral, the subduing spell of the ineffable and the adorable. So do I. But the holy morality of the Kingdom of God lives with each atom of it in the atmosphere of the ineffable which penetrates it; it is not the ineffable with streaks or tags of morality adhering to it. The real spiritual is not just the unspeakable. It has more positive moral feature and content. Above all, it has action pertaining to the very nature of life and godliness. The moral act of our redemption by God is the fundamental thing in any universe with a moral centre. I quote here some striking lines of John Drinkwater to indicate that the really spiritual is not in vague mystery, but in the interior of a clear vision and a positive share in life's great action and moral purpose.

Think not that mystery has place
In the obscure and veiled face,
Or when the midnight watches are
Unaccompanied of moon or star ;
Or where the fields and forests lie
Enfolded from the loving eye
By fogs rebellious to the sun ;
Or when the poet's rhymes are spun
From dreams that ever in his own
Imagining are half-unknown.

Look rather when the landscapes glow
Through crystal distances . . .
And listen to the song that weighs
A life's adventure in a phrase—
These are the founts of wonder, these
The plainer miracles to please
The brain that reads the world aright ;
Here is the mystery of light.

And we, on our part, must turn with some disappointment from our too intuitionist, humanist, individualist, subjectivist religion to a faith more positive in its revelation, more corporate in its belief, more sacramental in its significance, and still more evangelical in its rebirth.

Take Breath and Look Back

I have gone into the deeper and more potent merits of the case in order to make it clear what the real nature of the division is; it is neither shallow nor arbitrary, either on our side or yours. It is neither factious nor negligible. It exhibits no mere variations, but two deeply different types of a common faith and Kingdom of God. The great divisions of the Church are not due to self-will. They are insoluble apart from the great principles of the revelation that made the Church. Christian sympathies, affinities, or expediences may go far to adjust matters where a common Evangelicalism is already there, as in a federation of the Free Churches; but they do not suffice for reunion between Evangelicalism and Catholicism, between us and you.

Practical Consequences

But to get down from the Mount, and return to our sheep.

For your part I think that before you admit one of us to act even occasionally as either prophet or priest in your worship you are entitled to ask if he has been regularly ordained to our ministry with the presence and sanction of such organised authority as we have. You ought not to consider him so ordained if he has had, as his introduction to the ministry, but a public meeting, more or less religious, with the presence of such friendly ministers as he or his Church may select. No chance group of laymen or ministers on a platform make an ordination. Certainly no single minister may ordain, however eminent. The idea is over-weening. If ever I were honoured by the offer of such a certificate from a bishop as would enable me to take active part in your services, either in prayer or sermon, I should accept it gladly, so long as it was understood to be not an ordination but a voucher from him to his diocese that his inquiries have satisfied him of my due ordination already in the sense I have described by the Church and ministry to which I belong. That in the way of regularising order.

And in the way of validating grace, you are entitled to ask if I have confessed in private experience and public utterance the grace of Christ as Redeemer, the gospel of the world's moral redemption and rebirth by the Cross and the Resurrection therefrom by the Spirit of holiness. The grace conveyed in ordination is but the formal and corporate *opportunity* provided by the Church to minister that gospel; it is not a new spiritual gift belonging to an order and its canonical entry. And from our side we might venture to ask if the visitor from you who led our worship or preached our Word puts the grace of moral and spiritual regeneration at the mercy of canonical and professional technique. At the same time, we assure you that we think of no communion with you in which we should expect you to give up anything so great and high as your episcopacy, if only it were not made

monopolist. We should give due weight and prestige to episcopacy as the *doyen* of the Churches. If you fully recognised our orders (as the Established and the Free Churches in Scotland mutually do) I think the spell and dignity of your episcopacy would draw to you those so recognised more effectively than any insistence on it as a *sine qua non*. We should probably lose a good many to you. Our desire from you in this matter might really be a self-denying ordinance on our part, and cost us far more men than the shotts of the fold that you receive from us now. As episcopacy, in our view and in the view of many of you, arose first to adjust the redeeming principle to the needs of an historic situation, so it might well recognise that other forms of polity had an equal right and blessing in fitting the gospel to serve the very different times in which *they* arose. For their day they were equally of that will of God which we recognise so freely in the Episcopate. And they are so to contemporary sections or strata of every age.

I ought here to say that I recognise the distinction between occasional and stated service in sister Churches. The recognition of full rights in the case of a visiting ministry is different from recognition for a permanent ministry. It is one thing to exchange visits between equals, it is another to take up residence, as in the case of entering on a living, or accepting other stated office within an episcopal jurisdiction. In the latter case more ought to be required in the way, for instance, of pledged obedience to ordinary or formulary. In addition to a recognised ministry of the Church of Christ there is respect to be paid to the ordinances of the Church of England. A visitor from another land, though included in the comity of nations, may need but a passport; but one who comes to reside needs letters of naturalisation for citizen rights.

You have practically admitted our full divine right of apostolic *prophecy*. You do not to the like extent admit our priesthood, though it is but the expression of the priesthood of all believers. May I say, with the respectful frankness of

spiritual affection, that in this respect you are more patristic than apostolic. An early addiction to patristic constrains you. You have read the New Testament, through the glasses of the fathers. I hope that I am not too forward in thinking that, with time, charity, study, and God's blessing, you may find yourselves compelled, as you re-read our common charter, to recognise in us a parity of Christian priesthood—compelled, I mean, by the same fidelity to your trust as at the present stage makes you hesitate or resist. I am, of course, claiming no monopoly for our system. The two great types of Christianity may valuably co-exist and supplement each other according to temperament or circumstance if only neither unchurches the other.

A Word to Free Churchmen

It is a poor courage that is instant in and out of season about the defects of the other camp but never ventures to be faithful with the shortcomings or transgressions of our own crowd. So lest I be charged with speaking only from coward's castle, I wonder if I might venture to turn to my own people of the Free Churches, some of whom are here, and urge them, amid the warmth whether of their sympathies or their criticisms, to cultivate more of the historic mind when treating God's self-revelation both in its source and in its course. Might I urge them to get rid of the habit of mind which would just tolerate Anglicanism until they can succeed in doing away with it and all that makes it? It is a vain and foolish hope. So long as no Church claims monopoly, whether of the State or of the Sacraments, the Churches are members and not devourers one of another. We shall never do any good but much harm if the only end we have in view is to beat the other side to its knees, or drive it from the field. Let us cultivate, amid all critical judgments or polemical tactics, the constructive and eirenical spirit. Let us learn even as opponents to feel complements of each other, on Burke's

principle that "our antagonist is our helper, who will not suffer us to become superficial." Let us fill up what is behind in each other, and together orb in due time into the perfect star. Let us of the Free Churches, when we have protested as sharply as need be against any religious monopoly (except the whole Church's monopoly of the Gospel for the whole world), learn to think more deeply, solemnly, and sweetly about Church and Sacrament everywhere. Let us take order that we ourselves are not severed by Sacraments which should unite, and do not treat as a shibboleth what came down as a benediction. Let us escape from the poverty of insight which regards a Church but as a religious club, and a Sacrament but as a memorial. Let us cherish a spirit of divination in dealing with the old Orthodoxies, and read from them their content of the moral and spiritual Eternal. Let us see that we in our way are not losing the moral in the mystic, the evangelical in the intuitional, the Reconciliation in a mere sympathy unfounded in Redemption. Are we sure that to us the great mysticism is that of the conscience and its atonement and regeneration? Does that conviction mark our religious type at the moment? Are we sure that our protest against penance is not issuing in a religion without penitence, and that our worship is not becoming but a carol of religious good spirits? Let us seek in our relation to the State something more possible and effective than mere severance by a clean cut, or the mere neutrality behind a party wall. And let us all take our bearings for Church, State, Sacraments, and everything else from that Kingdom of God which the nations must serve, for whose sake Church and Sacraments arose, for whose sake even Christ was there Who made that Kingdom His all in all.

ADDENDUM

Ecclesiastical Trades Unionism

The problem of faith within the Church is parallel to the problem of works in civil society. I mean that the history of Religion has a counterpart in the history of Labour. The question of recognising the ministers of those sects that, by God's grace, have made themselves good in history as Churches is parallel to the question about the recognition of the Trades Unions and their representatives by the captains or bishops of industry. That was reluctantly conceded. It was wrung from the employers. And one result of this reluctance and of the strife that overcame it has been that to the workmen their Unions have become the Churches to which they give their loyalty and sacrifice—just as at an earlier day the chapels became for them what the Churches might have been. The Unions are now the labour Churches, and at the cost of the faith Churches. They have secured the recognition of labour by capital, just as capital had to secure its recognition by feudal militarism, as the Episcopate had to do with the Roman Empire—as the Anglican Episcopate has not yet succeeded in doing with the Roman Church. Each struggle, the industrial and the religious, was necessary in the course of our historical evolution. And each has contributed quite vitally to the progress of society and to the development of its resources in the mastery of Nature. Indeed in the labour world things are passing beyond the stage of recognition to that of partnership and joint councils, in the interest of production sound and abundant. And so it should be in the case of religion. Between the vested interest and the encroaching right there should be fruitful and pacific co-operation instead of wasteful rivalry. For that purpose sacrifices, and even compromises, must be made. And our old first charters must be overhauled to see how far they promote or stand in the way.

Re-read our Charters to Re-unite our Churches

Whereof the moral is that we should all spend much time, ability, and science in reviewing our Charter, in finding what our common Lord really did mean and require at the first. It is a matter of historical science and first-rate knowledge of religion thus to disentangle the evangelical from the legal (Luther said it was the first gift of the theologian), or to subdue the mystic power to the moral primacy of the Kingdom of God. And, as I say, I am not sorry that there should be a deadlock, for a time, between us, that the idealists on both sides may go to school with the science of the historic situation, and that we should learn to put the right question (which is half the answer), and to trim our zeal to the pattern given in the Mount. Leaving aside the ultra-moderns, who find revelation only in intuition, we can address ourselves anew to the question whether the historic revelation which makes the unity of the Church was in the source of its history or in its course, whether it was intrinsic to the redeeming Act or superadded in the Church's career.

That is where the chief difficulty comes in. Their original Charter makes certain men, who are democratic in their sympathies everywhere else, feel that they must be quite stiff as to Church polity and priestly function. I respect their scruples. I go some way with them. The democracy has no right to legislate for the Church. Within the democracy must be a control that is not democratic, a monarchical control. The Magna Charta of that control is, we think, the New Testament. But I read the Charter differently about the monarch's will, differently from the men I mention; and I think the tide of scholarship is with me. I do not find the ministry's authority to be canonical, but evangelical. It is not patristic, but apostolic; and the apostles were neither modern bishops nor sacrificing priests.

The whole difference is expressed in their plea that the Reformation, which we view as the rediscovery of the

distinctly Christian conscience (with faith as an attitude rather than an assent), and its rescue from canonical culture, was an unforgivable thing because it was a revolt from ecclesiastical authority. It is a question of the place of ecclesiastical authority in the "obedience of faith," a sufficient phrase, and one prior to the existence of ecclesiastical, as distinct from personal, authority.

Was the organisation of the Church's life a part of the religion, a part of God's revelation? We can reconsider these things effectually with our new Christian methods, new lights, and new perspectives in historical science. We may return from the inquiry with a new view of the creative point. It is not merely historic, it is dogmatic. The Church rests on the theological interior of a gospel and not the canonical interpretation of a rescript or a polity. We may find that the dogmatic is at the source of the historic, and makes the Church's real foundation. History in its course is like statistics. You can prove by it almost anything you wish. What we must do is to get at the source of the wishing in the nature of the new man, and what made him. To us at least he came *through* a Church but *by* a moral Salvation. And we find the real control for the Church to be in the living doctrine of its message and not in its staff—not in its order of creed or canon but in its moral and creative power.

The foes are of the same household, and family differences are among the hardest to adjust. It is not a question of obeying or refusing the King's Will, but of interpreting it. That is a difference which can be severe. It was the whole issue between Christ and the Pharisees, who were as intent as He was on obeying the will of God in history,—as they misread that will. They said it was a polity, He said it was a gospel. They said God required an observance, He said He required something very different—an obedience, the obedience which is living faith. They claimed to be scrupulously correct and canonical, He said they were wickedly righteous. "It matters more what kind of a God we believe in than whether we believe in God."

A New Synthesis the Condition of New Union

I should like to express the conviction that reunion cannot come by compromise, but by a new synthesis. The separation was the work of fundamental minds, and it cannot be undone by anything that is not thorough. What we lack, amid a wealth of fine power in the middle zone, is fundamental minds. National and civil differences can be adjusted by compromise, in which art this nation is a master and leader of nations. But it is otherwise with the great Church issues. For they rest on a final revelation. They go to the roots of moral conviction, spiritual being, and divine action. The most intractable of all our problems, Ireland, is such because the division is at bottom in the region so alien to the English mind. It is the Reformation strife; and it is posed for solution to a people whose nature it is not to be thorough on such things, among whom the Reformation was but a half-baked political compromise, and who, from the ejected Puritans down to seceding Newman, have pursued security rather than certainty, and safety more than salvation. England has a constitutional aversion to theology for this reason—because of its national fixture in the middle register of things; whereas our Nonconformist genius, bred between Puritan and Anabaptist soul concern, has its root in theology or nowhere. We have in principle more affinity with High Church than Broad—being at bottom evangelical and Augustinian, not Pelagian and Erastian. Our chief difficulties are two—with the place of the prince and the place of the prelate. A State Church is Pelagian, a Free Church is Augustinian in its nature. National progress does require the self-confidence of the Pelagian mind, where man contributes to his own salvation. And a Church which reflects such a nation is also Pelagian, and therefore less than free in soul. An Episcopal Church (on the other issue) is canonical, *i.e.* legal, in its nature, and therefore its spiritual habit finds the yoke of State and Law less galling than a Church thoroughly evan-

gical and not Pelagian at all. The only kind of Liberalism congenial or safe for us is that which is presented or allowed by the nature of the Gospel of absolute grace. Free thought and criticism by all means. But the chief critic of Bible and Church is the Gospel and its order of freedom.

To one type of mind, I fear, all this is quite beside the mark, but so also must be the Free Church principle and protest. If we do not rest on a more deep and theological grasp of the Gospel than conformity does, we have no footing and no right to be. Nothing ought to take us out of the old Church but the Gospel which makes the Church ever new. The theology of the matter is not a luxury, it is the creative principle.

The Sects not to be Forgiven but Hailed

Extremists on our side have said that Catholicism was not a Church of the Gospel at all. God winked at it, He did not bless it. That is nonsense. Whatever is wrong with the mass it is right in keeping the Atonement with its evangelical note at the centre of Christian faith and worship. The redemptive is the really Catholic note. But, in the light of a growing historic sense, it is equal nonsense to speak so of the sects. The Church, whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, is not, in the present state of historical study, called on even to forgive the sects, but to honour them (in the very criticism of them) as vehicles and spokesmen of something quite vital to the Gospel of the kingdom, and, at their rise, of the thing supremely vital. I mean this.

The Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of HOLY LOVE and its victory. Now the Church as an institution has fixed upon the holiness—upon holiness in the rare, aloof, and saintly sense, at some cost to the love in the warm, brotherly, social sense. It dwelt on the spiritual majesty in faith at the cost of the spiritual intimacy. It was in this latter interest that the sects arose, in the interest of personal as distinct from institutiona

religion. They fixed on the love rather than the holiness of God, and on the love between Christian people. They *had to arise*, in the interest of the warm fraternity and spontaneity which is as vital to Christianity as its stately reverence, and which was so marked in the first sect of all—the earliest Christian Church with its charismata. They arose as some of the orders arose before them, and in the like interest. They preserved for the people the warmth of the Gospel, which is as necessary as its dignity, and the liberty which is at least as vital as its law. Love was popularised. For lack of this intimacy the Church type of love had fallen into legalism, its grace was canalised in a sacred technique, and irrigation from a central control (if we may put it so) took the place of the blessed rain from heaven. We might almost say, both of the curia before the Reformation and of some of the Reformers after it till the sects and pietism began to tell, what Goethe said of Platen—“He had every other gift but wanted love.” On the other hand, the popularising of the love of God has led in several quarters to the neglect and loss of its holiness, and to a type of religion which loses the moral element in mere sympathy, as ecclesiasticism lost it in mere law. The problem of the hour is so to reconcile these two elements as to secure for society the moral righteousness and holy love of the Kingdom of God. But the true (as distinct from the factitious) *spirit* of the sects has had to come to the help of all the Churches as they grew institutionalised, and it had to come in God’s name, and as the gift and minister of God, to make Churches for the people. It will never be forgotten how all the Churches laughed at the great, humane, and evangelical movement of modern missions when they were first proposed.

Thus, when the sects are so blessed by the Spirit as to grow into Churches, they should be recognised to have a form of ministry which is in its place as vital to the Gospel and the Kingdom of God as the ancient canonical form. It is a recognition the sects have had to make within themselves, in making their ministry professional and settled. The Church as an institution is not identical with the Church of Faith.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND
REUNION

NOTE

The following is an address given during the Assembly Meetings in May, 1918, and at the invitation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND REUNION

I have to speak to two documents, which are practically reports to you of your representatives on two Conferences for Home Reunion among the Churches. One is the report of the Conference on Free Church Federation containing (among other provisions) a declaration of the Faith common to these Churches, which to-morrow you will be asked to adopt. And the other is the interim report of the results of discussion at many meetings between representatives of the Free Churches and some of the leaders of the Anglican Church. This gathering first met, at the call of the Archbishops, to consider the same matter as the other, but to consider it on a larger scale—on the scale of the World Conference on Faith and Order which was inaugurated from America a short time before the war. To that conference we were invited to send representatives. And in both enterprises nothing could exceed the kind, honest, and Christian temper on every occasion.

I may say that I am not handling the question of Disestablishment, far less of Disendowment. When the hour strikes that last can be left to the lawyers and the statesmen to guide the bickering politicians. I speak of spiritual principles, which for a Church are everything, and which override mere expediencies. When we get the real Church principle the wits of able men will draw a true bill and the reasonableness of just men a fair one.

I.

We Independents have a great history of three or four centuries. It has been of the first moment for the national history, both in the seventeenth century and in the nineteenth. We are not a recent body, without any national

traditions or public concern, with only a short history, and an admiration concentrated on minor men. We ought to escape the ban of merely sectarian heroes. We are committed to a Church of at least national import. And we so read our title in the Kingdom of God.

We were never more active than to-day. We were never so well staffed, especially in the matter of a trained ministry. What we find our critics asking is whether we are effective, or even influential, in proportion amid public affairs.

Our great history does much to commit us to a greater. Dr. Nightingale's excellent booklet on *Congregationalism Re-Examined* should be read by all of us—and read on the ecumenical background of Bartlet and Carlyle's History of the whole Church, especially as the Church is set in the midst of Western Civilisation. It is not wholesome to specialise on a period without a large background and perspective of historical culture, as Dr. Nightingale indeed suggests in his preface.

II.

I believe with him that the distinctive thing about Congregationalism is autonomy. It is not spirituality. That is not distinctive. It belongs to other bodies. It is an invidious claim. It raises awkward questions. And taken by itself, it is apt to run into vague mysticisms which destroy the evangelical note of the Church, and impair its stability by neglect of the institutional note. The really spiritually minded man has a very positive foundation of his life and peace. The true note of the Church is positive and historic faith. And spirituality *per se* is coming to be one of our religious dangers. Doubtless Independency began in a spiritual and evangelical movement; but that has spread into so much of modern Protestantism that it cannot be regarded as the distinctive thing in Congregationalism.

I remark also in passing that we stand for a liberal Evangelicalism, and not for liberal Catholicism as that is by some understood. For that erects the social above the evangelical,

whereas the society is created by the nature of Redemption, and not by sympathies, spiritual, rational, or humane. It is the adoption as sons that gives us the fellowship of brothers.

III.

But as to this autonomy—what does it precisely mean? Is it but one of the notions that make sects, or is it the matter of the Gospel itself?

Congregationalism is the oldest form of Protestant Dissent in England. That is to say it is the oldest apostle outside Rome of the autonomy of the spiritual power. It is the oldest of those bodies which hold that Rome's claim is right, but that Rome's way of making that claim surrendered it to the world. We go very far back with our maintenance of the Church's freedom in the face of the Church itself, of the world, and of the State. That is a principle greater than any polity—even than our own.

But our protest arose in a stormy time. And the protesters shared many grave errors with their opponents, which are now outgrown all round. Our plea and protest naturally took at first an extreme form, since it faced a very thorough antagonist. We claimed the entire autonomy of the local Church. Hence our tradition is apt to be against union. And that idea of union will take time to master us. Quips and retorts are of no use here. If we are accused of sleeping in cubicles, what would it profit us to reply that the more organised Churches slept in dormitories?

We now come to see (I am sure a growing number of us do) that such granular autonomy is not equal to the vast problems and tasks that the Church has to face in modern civilisation. Nor is it adequate to reflect the infinite fulness of Christ and His grace to a whole world with its awful wealth of good or evil. Our order has done great service in permeating other Churches with the subordinate rights and freedoms of the congregation. And that is its best function. That is its charisma. Its spiritual place is contributory to the

great Church. It is to permeate and pervade, without losing its own individuality. Local autonomy is only sound and valid as it serves the supreme autonomy of the Great Church amid the powers of the world. Our service to the Great Church is the ground of our distinct existence. If we do not read our autonomy in that light it may become but an egoism, shrinking to isolation and individualism. And this is because, for lack of a great and congenial *milieu* of autonomy, it loses its heart and head and shrivels up. Do we not constantly find in life that our special personality is better secured by self-contribution than by habitual self-assertion? We are saved by our larger self, in our society of selves, from becoming mere oddities, and then futilities. At any rate it is an autonomy we could well mend, when in a town of six churches three of them manage to choose the same date for their anniversary services, or one announces a new pastor without a word to any other Church in the place.

IV.

The abuse on a small scale of the great principle of autonomy may cause three losses, which I just name and pass on. First, we may lose the historic sense, the tact for the past, the note of the Great Church—so that Ephesians, for instance, may become to us but a mystic phantasmagory. We lose the ecumenical note—a loss which Missions have done much to arrest, but cannot by themselves avert.

Second, we may lose discernment for the moral present—the prophetic note. I mean much more than sensibility to public movements and affairs. I mean the moral insight of the prophetic thinker, with a truer eye for deep righteousness than for humming efficiency.

And, thirdly, we may lose the right divination of the spiritual future—the apostolic note. We may, for example, in looking to the future, be more concerned about the feeling of the army than the belief of the Church. And for the long future the latter means far more than the former. We may

lose not only the deep eye for moral issues, but the deeper sense of their eternal cruciality for all history. We may lose the great sense of the immanent Kingdom of God, or we may fail to acquire it. But if we do, then, in the coming age, we shall have a lean and hungry look. And all our crusades against particular wrongs may only go to make our note more strident, our look more drawn, and our power more thin.

Autonomy can easily run down into anarchy if it is not a constant reflection of the *absolute* holiness and *free* grace of God in His Kingdom. It must be created from that. It must live in the autonomy, the self-determination, of the One God and His grace. It must serve in the Holy Spirit that self-sufficient, self-sacrificing grace, Whose great product and great field is the Great Church, with a unity reflecting His own. The autonomy of a Church is not merely a natural freedom turned religious, a fractious freedom gone pious. And it has vastly less to do with natural rights than Christian duties.

V.

The thorough-going autonomy of the single congregation becomes more and more impossible. Our whole recent action as a denomination confesses that. We have been pulling ourselves together to save our life. Entire autonomy is unworkable both spiritually and practically. We cannot carry it out. It would make Christianity like bad iron—granular and friable instead of fibrous and firm. The liberty of the Great Church does mean the limitation of the small. The freedom of the body means the service of the limbs. Even in the central matter of calling a minister the autonomy should not be absolute. It cannot be so in our aided Churches. And it would save their feelings if it were more obviously not so in the self-supporting Churches. It should not be absolute in any Church. The wider Church should have some voice, if not veto. No single congregation should have the right to inflict a minister on the whole denomination or locality. Do you object? Well, I can understand your objection. My

natural man is with you. But I am trying to sit on him more and more. And you cannot carry this through in Christian practice, to say nothing of grounding it in Christian principle. And tell me plainly, Do you give your autonomy either ground or effect elsewhere? For instance, the State started conscripting our ministers. What was it that made it change its mind in a few days? I will leave the answer to those who are sure they know. I think I do. It was dropped. But that was not done, and it was not going to be done, by protest of ours for our spiritual rights against such Erastianism, such Byzantinism. And a still more curious thing is this. Not only are our Trust Deeds at the mercy of the State and its law, but Congregationalism does not provide the training of the ministers whose calling it so jealously claims as a local right. It receives them as a charity. Its ministry is provided for it almost free of charge, by endowments from the past. Living Congregationalism owes its ministry to the generosity of the dead hand. But the first duty of a living Church, the first without exception, is to provide a competent ministry; and it is not right that most of that supreme work of the Church should be done for it by dead hands, by resources outside our collective autonomies. And not only so. Those endowed institutions of our Free Churches are controlled by a department of state. Our colleges are under the Education Department. You can't meddle with the institutions that rear your ministry beyond a point. You can control us (who, indeed, are very willing victims) only by indirect and sympathetic pressure; but the Education Department can do it in its sphere by pressure direct and irresistible. I mention this to show how much our current ideas about spiritual independence need revision in the light of the modern situation. Let us spend more time on criticising our favourite catchwords than our valuable institutions. It is more healthy, if you would allow me to say so. A good institution is good at criticising itself. And it is an understanding criticism, whose one object is the common Gospel made broad and deep for the common good.

May I add one more point for reflection. Is the vote of a majority real Christian autonomy? Even with us is the minority not at times more right and Christian? Is the Holy Spirit "the odd man in a division"? I am not carping. Far from it. I am only begging you to ask some of the fundamental questions about spiritual freedom that bring out the great answers. Let judgment begin at the House of God. The best Churches to-day are more moved to criticise themselves than to show up their neighbours. And that is a great sign of the Spirit. When the great real doctrine of the Holy Spirit arrives, it will produce some strange effects on the too political methods of our Free Churches.

VI.

The truth is what I have said. Our right to exist is our contribution to the Great Church, and *its* efficiency, and *its* autonomy. Entire local autonomy is but the fatal kind of individualism writ large. We have to contribute our autonomy rather than brandish it. We have but a watching brief for the Great Church's autonomy in its application to the local area. Local autonomy is a derived autonomy. But all our best independence is a dependent thing. It is created by a grace whose great form was self-sacrifice. It draws its right and food from the liberty with which Christ created a whole Church's freedom. Our local Churches are but microcosms of that large world. Therefore, it is a relative autonomy; it is not absolute. It is relative to that suzerain autonomy of the Holy Spirit which it is there to serve, not vaguely but in His one household of faith and fellowship. It must always wait on its source, which is the autonomy of the Evangelical power in the whole Church it creates.

Look at the excellent case of Whitefield's. Here is a Church that is deeply concerned about the free action of the London Union at that spot, and sacrifices of its own freedom to it (in noble contrast to another place that could be named, egoist,

derelict, sterile). And here is a Union that is much concerned about the free action and worthy initiative of that local Church, and does all it can to develop it. That is how liberty should live. Each party should be free by considering first another freedom than its own.

Keep your individuality, but not your individualism. Let our Congregationalism be more and more of a leaven, and less of a rival to other Churches. Beware of denomination-ism egoism. It is not a lovely thing. But do not lose denomination-ism self-respect. I have feared we were in some danger of doing that. It is the self-respecting people that are the real influences. Well, I say, let us be more of a leaven, more of a contributory thing and not a monopolist thing. Let us be what I might call a sector of the Church, and not a sect claiming to be the Church. The primary thing is a true and large Evangelical Churchmanship. Of this Congregationalism is but a phase, though a living and leavening phase. It is a means not an end—like every polity. It is a servant not a master in God's house. It has the place in the Church that local self-government has in the State. But, for the greatest issues and problems of public life, whether national or international, a Local Government Board is inadequate.

VII.

Let us permeate. Let us unite effectively with the other elements of the Church's life, in a way that avoids mere fusion and loss of spiritual identity. Let us unite with the other forms of the Church's life. Let us expect them so to unite with us. Give the Spirit His way and His chance (if I may use the word). Without Him the several Churches are like egoist men. We are all individualists till we wake up; and the Churches may go on living a village life, and cherishing but an individual or a preceptual type of piety, till the Holy and Historic Spirit take them really in hand, and force them to love one another and to rely on each other.

All forms of Governments are either Monarchy, Aristocracy, or Democracy. But the perfect State is that which blends and profits by all three. And so all forms of Church polity fall under three kinds—Episcopacy, Presbyterianism or Consistorialism (including Methodism), and Congregationalism. All the varieties of Church government fall under one or other of these heads. Now, these are not rivals. The bane is that they have been. They stand for complementary forms of the Great Church's life and liberty. Episcopacy stands for the Church's welfare and freedom as secured by *authority*. Presbyterianism stands for it as secured by *order*. And Congregationalism stands for it as secured by local *autonomy and initiative*. This last is the interest committed to our charge—a warm, lay, and ethical localism. To make a thing living make it local. To develop local initiative give local responsibility under a large and free control. Think of local responsibility instead of local privilege, excellence, or pre-eminence. But realise that all these three polities are members one of another. They make good for each other. They are all contributory to the fulness of the body of Christ, and complementary in its glory. I should not think it worth while to pass to the one from the other in which I had been reared. They are not there to oust each other, but to fill each other out in the economy of faith. The other polities can give us much that we lack—superintendence, and procedure. We can give what superintendence or precedent might smother. We can give a warm vitality and an adventurous initiative. We can make experiments on a small and safe scale. I agree, of course, that theological principles underlie these different polities. But the theological principles themselves are contributory and complementary in the fulness of the Great Gospel, which is the one source of a living Church, and the one trust committed to it. I want to see a Gospel and a Church which are powerful because they are rich, manifold, and mutual. I want to see a Church rich and powerful in that spiritual way.

VIII.

I am sure that the public after the war* will be more impatient than ever of polemical relations between the Churches. Especially if such quarrels retard the educational improvements which the Churches themselves so grievously need, to say nothing of the nation. Ignorant religion lives in an atmosphere of schism, often the more bitter when it is the more earnest. And let us keep the issue out of the hands of men more politically minded than spiritually wise.

The historic and social horizon of all the Churches needs enlarging for the worthy handling of these great matters. The several Churches need to enlarge their grasp of their own fundamental principles. And to this end they should refuse to be bullied by the anti-theologians. For lack of such a grasp as I mean, their handling of the great moral realities in their social and practical applications is amateurish. A new social conscience is being created; and the Church has to adjust its special charge to that fact which it has done so much to create. It has to go the deeper into the creative centre of the conscience of the New Humanity in the Cross of Christ. May I put it thus? Spiritually we have to marry the Grand Monarch to the great multitude; we have to reconcile the Great Church of heaven's royalty with the great power of earth's democracy. But it will tax all our Christian resources and their statesmanship. At present the Churches are not giving the lead they should give to this new creation of the public conscience. They are not finding a king for it and its self-adulation. For the very conscience can idolise itself and become self-conscious. And one chief reason for the impotence of the Churches is that the scale and the grasp of their own moral powers are often small and parochial. For instance, a new relation of Church to State is coming. Are we rising to the occasion? If not, why not? Partly because we are reared in a Church too suspicious of the State, too oblivious of the nation's place in the Kingdom of God; because we are too much denationalised, and too much disinherited of our

* 1914-18 war.

country's spiritual past, and of Europe's moral history beyond the sects. Our proper ideas of freedom from the State may be cramped by our small sectarianisms, or even shaped by some local anomalies or scandals. Without an historic sense and without a corporate sense nations are barbarian. What of Churches? The Spirit in their midst to-day does but prolong His work with prior ages. The problems we have to solve are problems that these have created for us and left us, whether in Church or State. We cannot without peril break our continuity with God's work in history, with God's Church in history. We cannot just clear two thousand years by a huge somersault and land with a splash in the New Testament, with its polity, practice, or habit of mind. That jars everything. It grieves the Spirit. It denies historic providence. It repudiates the Kingdom of God in history. It robs us of most of the sainthood, sacrifice, and devotion of the whole Church, and often leaves our public prayers to be but pious journalese.

IX.

So much for our principle. To come to my documents, let me begin with the second, which deals with our difference with Anglicanism. That difference represents the distinction between the Churches with an historic sense, a corporate continuity, and a long tradition, and the Churches which are intuitional, spiritualist, and individual.* Now, for a true Catholicity these types need each other. The dignity of the Church needs the warmth of the sects. The intimacy of the sects needs the majesty of history.† But that Catholicity, that

* It is a difference reflected within ourselves by the two elements that went to the making of Independency—the Calvinist and the Anabaptist. I ventured to point out the great importance of this a few years ago in a book called *Faith, Freedom and the Future*, of which I am sorry to say nobody took much notice.

† In ourselves again the two elements need each other. At the opening of last century we were nearly killed with once mighty Calvinism. We are now imperilled by the predominance of the intuitional and romantic element, mid the temporary eclipse of the Calvinist massiveness and command.

double Catholicity, must come. It is the social instinct of the Church, drawing its two sides together. But no social passion can safely renounce the continuity of the entire past, or treat it only in a revolutionary way; which is but a negative way, and by itself a sterile way. The Churches with a history must live up to its large horizon and obligation. They must extend their historic purview. And history on the large scale must come to mean more for us all.

I refer then to the interim report of the Archbishops' Committee. And I speak first of its spirit and temper. That is quite admirable. A great change has set in in the Church of England. A spirit of respect and of conciliation has come, which I for one would fain reciprocate. This is the true spirit of such debate. Discussion, even controversy, may be noble. And the best things in the Church, and even in the Bible, have come from controversy. But mere polemic is arid and sterile. The old style of uncompromising warfare goes out of date. The Church most indifferent to union to-day is not the Anglican.

I come next to speak of its matter. And I observe that here also the whole issue has passed into a new phase in two respects. First, there is a great change in the claim that is made—the change of prerogative prelacy into constitutional, and almost republican, episcopacy. That means much for us who hold that, while the Gospel descends on the Church, the ministry does not; it rises from the Church as a matter of order and not of grace. This change has sprung from the new habit of treating history neither ecclesiastically nor anti-ecclesiastically but historically. It is due to the growth of a scientific knowledge of the New Testament and of Church History, in ways that Bartlet and Carlyle will show you in the book I named—a book whose scientific and historic spirit, in both authors, makes it in itself a monument of Church Reunion. Secondly, there is a change not only of claim but of recognition. The report warmly recognises our ministry on its prophetic side though not on its priestly. That ought to give satisfaction and hope to us; for we believe that the true

apostolic succession is in the prophetic rather than the formal line. It is evangelical rather than canonical. And this change is much due to the growth of the evangelical note in Anglican High Churchism, a note which cannot but recognise itself in the evangelical achievements of the Free Churches. I say it is satisfactory to note this change. But do not let the feeling become self-satisfaction. Let every concession so spiritually moved put us upon self-criticism. Let us give more attention to the priestly side of our ministry. May I suggest the form of our self-searching? The prophetic function of our ministry is exercised in preaching to the people, the priestly in praying with them and for them. Have we neglected the latter for the former? Do we pray as really as we preach? Those who leave us—do they leave us chiefly because of our sermons or because of our devotions? Are we repairing the neglect? Is Anglicanism learning to preach faster than we are learning to pray? Is it gaining more in prophetic power than we are in priestly?*

I have just one criticism to make on the report. It declares some kind of episcopacy to be essential to reunion. It asks us to accept the fact of the Episcopate, without any theory of it. But the plea does not cohere. If a fact is to have a monopoly claimed for it, it can only be in virtue of a theory of it establishing such a right. It cannot be as a mere fact. We all admit the existence of episcopacy as an historic fact. But why the absolute claim?

X.

The discussion that led up to both my documents showed that *the* question which blocks Union all round is that of the ministry. On that question let us concentrate with more and more seriousness. And not only in the way of asserting our right, but in the way of improving our duty. I will come to the point of our right immediately. But let us begin by taking the searching of the Spirit in a way more subtle and docile

* See my Addendum

than our note has sometimes been. Let us take ourselves with some seriousness on this head, and let us ask ourselves two things.

First. Do we respect the ministry as an office vital for the Church even where it is not striking for the public? Have we tended to be too little interested in the ministry as such, as an office, which dignifies the man, and too much interested in the attractive preachers, in men who are thought to give *éclat* to the office, and to lend to it more than they receive. Has such a tendency not two unhappy results? Does it not drop the ministry as an office out of the interest of many families whose sons we should like to enlist? And does it not damp, and even crush, the spirits of sound and valuable men who are devoted pastors and bishops of souls, but who have not the knack of relieving their treasurers of all anxiety? They have not, perhaps, the skill of gratifying the taste of those whose standard of success is a crowded building; nor can they strike the note that strikes a Press for which the Church is an asset rather than a devotion. Thank God for the great preachers and masters of assemblies. Make much of them. But we may buy them too dear at the cost of respect for the ministerial office in less brilliant hands, at the cost of journalising the ministry.

Second. Let us ask ourselves this—whether we have quite lived down a phase of revolt which, in a few hands, became careless about ordination. Half a century ago we renewed an old revolt of ours against ritualism and officialism; and at the extreme end there was a piquant group of that sterile breed called free-lances (sometimes immigrants and Adullamites from rigid bodies outside) who thought to magnify the liberty of prophesying by discarding an ordaining rite, or by reducing it to the level of a public meeting, which was itself often reduced to vulgar eulogy and meaningless hopes. That type of spendthrift prophets and prodigals of liberty is becoming pretty well extinct, I trust; or he ranges shady woods, literary pastures, nameless journalism, or other pleasant retreats from the sobering care of souls.

But about the laying on of hands some still cherish a trivial queasiness which is the relic of the same unreasonable dread of symbolism that led, on both sides of the border, to wild iconoclasm and bald worship, to the wreck of shrines and the ruin of prayer. And the impression left from these 'sports' on the public, and on other Churches, about our carelessness of order is not extinct. The rebel is charged to our general account in quarters that should be better informed. As a matter of fact both our rules and our practices have improved him almost out of existence. Serious ordination has always been the tradition of our churches. And a real ordination is essential for the purposes of our Year Book and its list of accredited ministers—an ordination which includes official representatives of the denomination. No single minister, however eminent, has any right to ordain, nor has any mere group. And our college principals decline to attend the ordination of their students if it is a mere public meeting, and not a solemn service in which the minister is consecrated to his work and regularised to his denomination. The minister with us is not just the Chairman of the Church. He is not just the public orator of its membership, nor the factotum of its activity. Our ordinations are acts of denominational order and worship. If they do not convey grace they do impart public authority, corporate responsibility, and representative opportunity. They are not inaugural festivals with a local magnate in the Chair, poor pleasantries in the air, and cheap advertisement of the new-comer.*

I hope the principle thus prevalent will never be lost. If it were lost we should lose respect from the public, and touch with the Church at large. We should shake the confidence in

* I may here quote the rule in our Year Book:—

"Inasmuch as the Ordination or Recognition of any person as a pastor is a matter deeply affecting the welfare of all the Churches, no such Ordination or Recognition service shall take place without the concurrence and approval of the County Union expressed by the presence of one or more appointed representatives. No ministerial member of a County Union should take part in, or otherwise sanction, the Ordination or Recognition of a pastor of any Congregational Church without first communicating with the Secretary of the County Union and ascertaining that such person is duly qualified."

us not only of Anglicans, with their Episcopal ordination, but of other Free Churches whose comity and confidence it is religious rudeness to defy. They may be Churches that are sometimes as much victimised by scruples for order as we have been by scruples against it; but they guard a real interest of a true Church, as our own freedom does.*

And in the exercise of that trust they are shy of us, as if we were not only free but easy. They may not know our history in its normal tenor, but they are properly shy of union with Churches of the free and easy. They are not sure if our Ministry of the Word is always countersigned by the Church of the Word. And they complain that they do not know if the preacher serves the Church by its commission, or has just succeeded in exploiting it for his natural gifts.

I know well enough that much ordination is like the degree of some universities—it gives a *cachet* rather than a grace, a certain social accent rather than a moral or intellectual power. But that debasement at one end, corresponding to occasional debasement at the other, does not destroy the value, propriety, and gravity of the real thing.

XI.

But now that I have said all this there are certain heads on which we must stand firm if union is to be sound.

A. On the question of order. From the episcopal side there must be frank *recognition* of our existing orders before any conditions can be discussed of regularising us in the episcopal system. (And the like applies to other Churches *mutatis mutandis*.) Episcopacy is not the source of a true Church; it is only one of its expressions. Nor is Presbytery. To submit to re-ordination is to concede monopoly, and to unchurch those you leave. The demand is inconsistent with

* A price must be paid for both order and freedom. To refuse federation with the freer Churches on the ground that their freedom is not free of extravagance at times would be as if in a league of nations the monarchical countries shut out America, and walked each one in its rigid old righteousness.

the doctrine either of the Early Church or of the Reformation Church. It is a novelty in Anglicanism itself, and one which, I think, has passed the zenith of its power, even in that Church, as a purely historic scholarship comes to take command. It is certainly not consistent with the genius of that Gospel which created the Church and its offices at the first.

But here I am not in a hurry. Time is changing both sides slowly and well. For this recognition I would rather wait than press. Time and truth have changed so much that they will change more. I have often said that the enemy of maturity is prematurity. When I am told responsibly that to recognise our orders at this moment would split the Church of England from top to bottom I take it that it is so. And I would rather wait. To rend a Church does not make for unity. But it will not be so in another generation. For the present, we must admit, there is a deadlock. But I do not here believe in the formation without tarrying for any. There are solvents in the air acting powerfully on the obstruction. Mountains which you cannot move by a word you may melt by a process. I will add, however, that if, during the generation I allow, Episcopacy persist in its *non possumus*, and appear as the chief obstacle to a growing passion for unity, it may generate the same prejudice against it as prelacy has done.

In fairness I add this. There are movements among the Baptists and ourselves in the direction of provincial superintendents, which show that the approximation need not be all on one side. We are not blind to the need or the value of Episcopal form, so long as it is regarded as a matter of order and option. The Baptists are ahead of us Congregationalists with this experiment, and I am told, by one who has the best means of knowing, that the success of the system is already beyond all expectation, and it is doing wonders in helping the solution of other difficulties, like removals.

So when the call comes from Anglicans to us of the Free Churches to come in and help them to a reformed Episcopate which shall duly respect our orders, I confess it is a call which

does not find me, for one, deaf or cold. I do not at all propose or wish to go over. But I am ready to do what is possible to-day in the way of sympathetic approximation, and to leave it to those who come after me to do as the Spirit, and the Church, and the Kingdom, and the situation may then facilitate or prescribe. Individual changes of communion from either side to the other mean very little. What does matter is the change of collective attitude or action on both sides.

XII.

B. On the question of polity, we must urge that for New Testament Christianity unity is not a matter of polity. There is no sacrosanct polity, no sacral system.

The Congregational polity has been of vast value both to Church and State. But there is no exclusive divinity about it, or about any other. It has no monopoly of the presence of Christ; it has none in the inspiration of the Spirit. The other polities are as needful to us as we are to them. They all fitly join as limbs in the Body of Christ. It is not the true principle of the Church of the Gospel to let polity divide (as in the case of Episcopacy) nor ritual (as in the case of the Baptists). But the autonomous freedom of the Church *from* the public *for* the public is a vital principle of the Gospel.

And I think perhaps this is the place to say that it is doubtful if Congregationalism (as a polity, I mean, not speaking of it as a spiritual movement) would ever have come into existence but for a double fallacy. Or, having come into existence, could it have survived? No doubt its origin was in a spiritual movement. It rose to give a scope, and inwardness, and warmth to personal religion which the traditional Church did not and could not give. The same is true about its rise in Scotland at a later date, and it may illustrate the point I take. There its first form burnt out, or subsided into captious atoms. But its second form was due to the evan-

gelistic preaching of the Haldanes, early in the nineteenth century, against the Moderatism that then stifled the Presbyterian Church. The groups they formed fell perforce into isolated congregations. What else could they do? The Church would not have them. But being so formed they would have subsided, but for the imported belief that Congregationalism was the New Testament form according to God's will. I do not say that English Independency was *founded* on New Testament polity—it was founded, like all Protestantism, on personal faith—but it was *formed* on it, and conserved when the first flush began to fade.

The double fallacy to which I allude is, first, that the polity in the New Testament is sole and sacrosanct; and, second, that the polity was Independency. History has shown that neither is true.* Neither is true for any Church. Even Presbyterianism could not have been floated off but for a like scaffolding of error, now swimming in pieces round the noble ship. But, if that be so, on what are we to found our right and place in the true Church? What is the divine ground of our order? How are we to adjust our ecclesiastical position to the whole new situation? It is a question the other Churches have also to face. Certainly Anglicanism feels it most. I doubt if in all its history Anglicanism ever felt the same self-searching as it does now. But we have to meet the same situation, and in a like spirit. What is our part and call in realising the Church that *is* in the New Testament, that is latent and inevitable in the New Testament Gospel, and that reflects its unity? Is our particular task not this? Is it not to interpret autonomy by unity, instead of unity by autonomy? Is it not to make our local autonomy serve the great autonomy of the Church spiritual, moral, and evangelical? Is it not to bend our autonomy to the service of that unity without losing it? It cannot be by erasing our autonomy; it must be by making it serve the one kingship of Christ. We must be free to limit our freedom. We must

*More fully in my book on *The Church and the Sacraments* (Independent Press Ltd.), Ch. III., *ad fin.*

sacrifice it at need to the Kingdom of God. And the crying need of the Kingdom of God at the moment is the unity of the Church. The best service we can do with any principle is not to press it blind, or to preach it in blinkers. It is to hold it in trust for its true purpose, and to disburse it in that economy of great principles, the Kingdom of God. It is not to brandish it (as I have said), but to hold it responsibly. It is to modify it for the end in chief. That end is a congenial end. It also is an autonomy, in which the smaller autonomies find themselves by finding their place. We limit the less autonomy by the greater, the derived by the original, the dependent by the creative, the freedom of the Church here and there by the freedom of the Church which is the Mother of us all. It is not ignoble for freedom to obey and serve freedom. The great autonomy, which is the fountain of dignity for all the rest, is the liberty, against the world (and yet for it), of the Great Church, which is the historic servant of the Kingdom of God. We must keep and contribute so much of our autonomy as consists with the unity, and promotes the liberty, of the whole. To idolise autonomy is to enslave it. Have you not found that? And we do idolise it if we pursue it without caring how other politics, equally sound, think of us, or if we press it regardless of how they are affected by it. Our freedom is not natural freedom baptised with Christianity. That may be but religious recalcitrance. But it is the freedom of the new-creating Spirit. And the chief product of the Spirit in the world is the Christian Church. The supreme work of the Spirit is not the sectional pieties or liberties. Our spiritual freedom is our share in the freedom of the Great Church of the Gospel. It is our place in the Church Catholic. The witness of the Spirit is a liberty that is set upon serving the liberty of the Spirit's House. The New Jerusalem descended from heaven four square every way. It was a cubical fabric. It was a vast block of tenements. But our freedom in it is not turning our flat in it into our castle. There should be at least a common kitchen and a common chapel.

XIII.

C. On the question of belief. This has to do with our relation to the other Free Churches rather than to Anglicanism. So it concerns the first of my documents rather than the second. It is to these Churches that our first loyalty lies. We owe it to them to let them know where we are. We claim to be, like them, a branch of the Catholic Church. They have a right to know if we are Catholic in respect of belief, if we are in the true Catholic succession, which is the Evangelical.

I say at once there must be no word of a theological *creed* for *individual subscription* either of member or minister. That does not comport with our history. It does not guarantee either Orthodoxy or Catholicity. And the freedom it is often said to secure is more of a rational than a spiritual; it is freedom of thought (for which the Church does not exist) and not freedom of soul (for which it does). But does that distrust of subscription bar us from a common confession of evangelical faith in the way of public declaration? Does it shut our mouth whenever we are convinced that the public interests of the Great Church in the great world requires such confession for the Kingdom of God?

A common belief is vital to the Church's unity. And it must be ample and generous. But a particular subscription is not. It may even make the unity too meagre to be worth while.

May I be personal for a moment? I remember in 1877 taking part in what was called the Leicester Conference, whose promoters said their principle was that "religious communion does not depend on theological agreement." I say that still. I worship with Jews, Unitarians, and Romanists. But it is another matter when you are not speaking of occasional worship but of the standing existence and action of a Church in the world. For that you must have a common belief, tacit or express. It may be brief, but it must be powerful. And we must be free on due occasion to give it fit expression. We creedless Congregationalists have on several occasions in history made such positive and collective

declarations. And we are called to make one now to place ourselves in line with the other Free Churches.* Such a declaration should be the noble and corporate confession of our faith's creative centre; it is not a creed of dogma scientifically developed. It is the corporate Church preaching to the world the marrow of its divinity. Like all such preaching it is in an act of worship. It is a hymn of evangelical praise, like that greatest of all the early creeds, the *Te Deum*. It is not an inventory of the Church's intellectual furniture (though I wish we cared enough for that to take stock of it from time to time), but it is the Church's mind rising in praise. It is not a summary of beliefs, but it is a confession of living faith. Both the Churches and the world have the right to know what our message is, if we have one. They ought to be told whether our adventurous thinking is still in terms of the Gospel, whatever its phrasing may be.

Is no such declaration lawful for us or possible? If it is impossible, is that the secret of our evangelical impotence? A state of evangelical impotence is just the state in which people squabble about creed and anti-creed, creed positive and creed negative, a system of belief and a system of criticism, each dogmatic, and each lusting against each other, the Church's great rationality attacked by the clever fellow. For the protest against creed often rises from some who are really more concerned about "my creed" than the Church's, and more sure of the one than informed about the other. They do not repudiate belief; they want a good deal of room for their own; they only insist on a go-as-you-please-belief. And that is intellectual atomism and anarchy. It is certainly not scientific, and often it is very sentimental. It is interesting to notice how rationalism turns to sentiment to cover its loss of moral power.

XIV.

These three interests then we have in trust—ministry, polity, and belief; and all in a positive way. We have to wit-

*The declaration was made warmly the next day (May, 1918).

ness for them by the way of our autonomy, and we have to limit our autonomy accordingly. It is not an end in itself, and we have to bend it to its true and practical end. But if we are to do this, if we are to treat our autonomy as a contribution to the whole Church and *its* autonomy, how are we to make the contribution? You cannot protest all the time. That is not what Protestantism means. Is it not better to infuse our views of these things as a leaven, working with other ingredients inside the whole Church's unity, than to shoot them at it from without? You cannot leaven from the outside. You must be mixed with the meal. You cannot leaven by attack. There must be some degree of organic union. To change the figure, you cannot contribute your message by just ranging alongside other Churches and lying there. That may be well enough for firing broadsides into other Churches, but not for the tactics of a fleet, not for mutual support. To change the image again, you will do most for your views if you are their representative in the parliament of the United Kingdom of God, in the councils of the great federate Church. You will do more in that way than if you come up to the walls of other Churches as heralds from the outside requiring submission, or at least recognition. You will do more by contributing humbly to the Church's common fund of faith, action, and efficiency than if you stand forth in a stalwart egoism, aloof as London neighbours, expecting the rest to admire your manly figure, and taking for granted that everybody must know your denominational deities and must long to know more of them. What can you effect if you keep wondering how people can be so tasteless as not to share your own interest and confidence in yourself, or how they can be so ignorant as to be bored by talk of your parochial or provincial heroes dragged in between the fish and the joint?

XV.

May I suggest that in all this movement to union we go slowly? In these mighty matters belief does not make haste, and mere majorities should hesitate. The true test of freedom

is the treatment of minorities—not necessarily yielding to them (as they sometimes think) but respecting them, possibly humouring them. Distrust the ram-stam tactics, the crude partisan, the cocksure individualist, the sectional specialist, and all the people who have a sense of wrong more burning than their vision of right. Believe that there are in the Churches principles, powers, and providences now afloat which are doing more for us than we can do for them. Co-operate with these. Reduce friction. See to it that your criticism be understanding criticism, and not mere amateur opinion, slashing exposure, or hair-trigger mother-wit. Discourage suspicion. Put bitterness under ban. Encourage humour if it is not acrid, and even irony if it has a twinkle in it. For humour is a form of love. It shows a genial faith in your neighbour. And irony may be a divine smile, like heaven's over earth. Put away all malice. "Brothers are engaging." We face Christians who are as eager for truth, right, and Christ as we are. The contest is not a tug between the haves and the have-nots. Investigate. Especially explore first principles. Demand competent guidance in doing so. Cultivate the judicious note rather than the indignant; it is the sympathetic note as well as the intelligent. Distrust the very ready reckoner in these things. Draw more and more from scholars, historians, and thinkers. These are becoming the great eirenics. Learn more from them than from the platforms. The worst formalism may be platformalism, as the formalism of platitudes. We need less polemic. It has served its day. Keep the councils of the Church above Parliamentary methods. Work towards an understanding. I do not mean a mere compromise. Compromise is valuable in the minor practicalities of life; but in the great matters which hold of the Eternal we need something better. We need a real *synthesis*, both of heart but also (which is not so easy) of head. Let us aim earnestly at constructive work. I doubt if we quite realise how much public influence is lost by the policy of criticism so constant as to be sterile. That is one of the reasons why the Press, which is so useful as a register of

opinion, is so ineffectual in creating it. I hope we are not going to fall to be a religious branch of journalism. If we cannot construct let us take aid and lead from those who can, and who do it as men well informed and experienced on the business in hand.

In the conflict of the Church with the world it is well to be bold, aggressive, and, perhaps, a good deal less compromising than is at present the fashion. We may force a crisis, but in handling the differences within the Church itself, and between Churches, it is otherwise. Let us proceed by the way of love, respect, patience, permeation, as the Spirit's way is.

Let us so carry ourselves that our opponents may be aware of us that we are with God and at home with the great ways of God. We ought to deal severely with humbugs, egoists, and mere spiritual adventurers. But we do not meet many such. Let us so carry ourselves, so understandingly, that our adversary may covet us, wishing that he were ours or we were his. Let us love one another, whether love take the form of kindness, or the form of intelligent veracity, telling the truth to each other as those who are members of each other. Let us speak the truth as those who love more than truth. And let us love as those who are much forgiven. For that is the distinctive kind of Christian love.

XVI.

May I add this? Clericalism is not the enemy—not *the* enemy in the sense in which Gambetta once swept France with the phrase. Nor is the enemy materialism. That is now found chiefly among those who know nothing of the isms, and who would denounce materialism if they knew what it meant. But the enemy is naturalism, humanism, idealism of a kind, spirituality of the æsthetic sort, which treats faith as but human nature at its best, knows nothing of a new birth, writes off sin as but a moral neuralgia, and regards atonement as but an anodyne. It all means the egoism of humanity, and its futile efficiency. Such Mithraism in the early days threatened the Christianity that Catholicism saved. These

things form a much more subtle foe to Christianity than any clericalism at one end or materialism at the other, if Christianity is something more than the top storey of human nature, if it is the absolute kingship of God in Christ. Of that stately cause many of the clerics are as noble servants as we strive to be. The danger is a creed that preaches the humanities, the amenities, the urbanities, the sentimentalisms, and even the adventure and research in life, at the cost of the moral realities, divinities, powers, and dominants of the historic Kingdom of God. The subtle danger is when mere impressions from the Unseen, pietist, æsthetic, or occult, take the place of moral regeneration by the Spirit. It is the construing of Christianity by the social affections instead of reading these by the affections of grace. It is the domination of religion by the homely instead of by the holy, by the hearty instead of by the heavenly. It is pre-occupation with a love that loves much instead of the love that is forgiven much, with love passionate in its intensity, instead of love moral in its quality. It is the type of religion that treats the supernatural as superior to nature only in degree and not in kind.

Do not say that considerations of this sort are abstract. Do not damn them with your most fatal word and your most stupid—academic. I am handling powers and not themes. I am not lecturing; and I am not playing with touching things. I am preaching. I am in the wake of the prophet and the succession of the apostle. You would not describe as abstract or academic those last realities which are of our fundamental principles and give us our right to be the Churches we are; and these are what I have been speaking about. It is only on the heavenliest things that we can live. Remember Wordsworth's great epigram (and you are not Christian if your life is not a miracle built round the greatest of all epigrams—die to live). Wordsworth said, "Foundations must be laid in heaven." Man founds at the bottom, God founds at the top. The deeper our problem, the higher we must stand. We must get a fulcrum outside the world. The foundation of mere

belief—that can be traced in our psychology of religion by those who make a hobby of such things; but the foundations of our *reality*, of our *faith*—these are in that heaven which we are so shy of lest we should be called otherworldly, or heavenly minded, or obscure, or deep in the ways of God. I wish we were more otherworldly than we are. I wish we were less afraid of being dark to minds that are reared on the Press and the public, and are blinded by the god of the period and the spirit of the age. It is our dread of the depths that makes us incapable of rising to any height. If you must have everything simple you will do nothing great.

XVII.

Three things I just touch and close.

First. The moral effect of the war on the man in the street (to say nothing of the pew) is disheartening.

Second. For that the moral teaching of the Church during a long peace is responsible. You may rouse public conscience on a point quickly, but you cannot quickly educate it on the ultimate moral issues of all history, such as are now raised by the collapse of civilisation. The Church has not caught the authentic note of the Kingdom of God, and therefore the nation has not. I do not say it has not life or truth. But it has not power. And it is the authentic note of the Kingdom of God and the power of His righteousness that gives both Church and State their final right to be.

Third. For all that, nothing but the Church can save society at last for that Kingdom which is its true destiny. What society needs is a new heart much more than a new organisation; and, when all is said, the Church alone has the last secret of that renewal. But the charm cannot be worked by a divided Church, by a Church which is only a faggot of ecclesiastical egoisms, sturdy independencies, and private pieties. It can be done only by a Church that is palpably the great sacrament to history of the Kingdom of God. Is the notion meaningless to you? Spare some of your concern from the Sacraments which the Church *has*, to consider the

Sacrament which the Church *is*. And ask, Is my Church sacramental in this great and historic sense, whether to the nation or to the locality where it is set? Or is it thinking more of itself than of the Great Church on the one hand, or the great world on the other?

ADDENDUM

We are told that our ministry has the prophetic grace, but not the priestly. It has the function of God's saving access to man, but not the function of man's saving access to God.

This is a denial which shocks us because it destroys the equal priesthood in Christ of all believers. But it is far more profitable to examine it than flatly to repudiate the charge. We do of course repudiate it; but self-searching is mostly more useful than indignation. We do say that the final, the only, priesthood is the priesthood of all believers in that of Christ; that the priesthood of the ministry is not a prerogative grace descending on the Church, but a representative authority rising from it; and that in this respect our ministry has all the priestly value which in a Christian Gospel can be had. We hold by that. But do we actually grasp the position we claim? Do we realise it in our type of religion and of office? What we have in right do we possess in experience and practice? Are we true to the priestliness we claim? Do we show forth truths like those I can go on to name?

I. The Church has a sacerdotal place in the world (see Dr. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, p. 33). It is a priestly society. It is God's corporate priest in the world. It prolongs in an historic antiphon the finished work of Christ. In the communion and power of His intercession it intercedes for the world. By Christ's grace it believes for the world, it confesses vicariously sins the world is too sinful to confess, it offers itself as a sacrifice for the world, it praises God for the world, it stands and acts between sinful man and holy God. Now are we so sure of this, so certain and saturated with it, that we make it actual in the type of our faith and the conduct of our worship? Or, in losing the sense of the Great Church, historic and ecumenical, have we in any measure lost the sense of this corporate priesthood too? Has our general manner of Church life this intercessory and sacrificial note in its spiritual mind and habitual style? Only

the priestly Church *reveals*, and gets home, the priestliness of Christ. Service, sacrifice, worship are more sacramental of grace to the world than all gifts and endowments are. Were the magical priesthood of the Church converted to the moral, the world would soon be converted to the Kingdom of God.

II. The minister is sacerdotal in the Church—again I say not by prerogative but by representation. The ministry is the organ of the Church's priestliness even more than of its prophetic power. And when I say "more than" I mean this. It preaches *to* the Church what it does not receive from the Church—directly at least; but it prays always *with* the Church and *from* it; it is the medium of the Church's devotion; it is the mouthpiece of its prayers, and the organ of its royal priesthood. Except for acoustic reasons it should in prayer face the same way as the people. The minister is pre-eminently priestly in public prayer. He preaches as a prophet from God, but he prays as a priest for the people. There he is more priestly even than in administering the sacraments. For these belong rather to the prophetic side, in which a Salvation is given to man far more than a sacrifice is given to God. What is really offered to God, even in the Sacraments, is prayer and thanksgiving; the occasion is Eucharistic; but the chief thing in all, the source of the prayer and praise, is prophetic. It is God's gift of reconciliation given to us anew from Christ in the midst.*

But now has not public prayer suffered with us in comparison with preaching? Have we taken our priestly work as seriously as our prophetic? I doubt it. And has our prophetic work not suffered in consequence? Has free prayer not tended to become but extempore prayer (and often, therefore, laboured prayer), in which the gifts of memory or invention (as John Owen said, even when inveighing against liturgies) † oust the soul's freedom of grace? Had our

* See the closing part of my book on *The Church and the Sacraments* (Independent Press Ltd.).

† See that searching piece of evangelical psychology, his *Treatise on Spiritual-mindedness*.

preaching become as extempore as much of our prayer, what would our pulpits have come to? Had we prepared as little for men as some do for God where should we have been? Does our prayer ever express more of the idiosyncrasy of the minister than of the consecration of the Church? In the effort to escape this subjectivity do we ever fall into literary art and curious phrase instead of deepening the spiritual reality?

Public prayer should not be wholly extempore, however free. Its priestliness should not be facile. No man taketh to himself this office, nor can he do it at his own charges. Its freedom should be that of costly grace, and not mere temperament or inspiration. The ideal worship should combine both forms—the liturgy, embodying the priestly conscience of the Church, and the spontaneous form, uttering the representative piety of the minister. Remember in a liturgy we do not just repeat; we appropriate the prayer, the faith, the conscience, the utterance of the ever living Church. And in free prayer we do not wish the minister to lay bare the recesses of his private soul. He prays as a “common person.”

So I presume to ask, first, if in dismissing liturgical form we have not lost power to feel and own ourselves part of the conscience of the Great Church, and hierophants of its worship.

Second, I venture to ask if we have not thrown on every minister a burden that few men are gifted to carry. It needs a kind of genius really to voice the worship of a Church, and especially to present sympathetically the needs and desires of a company so varied in heart and soul. Few men are easily free in free prayer, and the readiest are not the freest. It is really a greater burden than preaching, and it should not be taken less seriously. If notes are used for the one, they should be used for the other by those who need their aid. We cannot part with such prayer in our public worship. But we must not overload it. Some ministers find it a blessing, some it has demoralised. From another point of view, the Church should not part with its vocal share in that part of the wor-

ship. And it should not be wholly at the mercy of one man's temperament, health, or English.

Thirdly, may I ask if, for real freedom in this priestly part of our ministry, we ministers do not need a basis of fixed form? We come ourselves uplifted and free through the lift given us by all the people in the liturgy. I speak from much experience.

And, fourthly, do not the prayers of the same man year after year fall into a liturgy whose peculiar phrases reflect his personality and come to be expected? This is especially so in the intercessory prayers, where there is least room for personal variation. And I would rather have a liturgy reflecting the conscience of the Church than one reflecting the idiosyncrasy of an individual.

III. Christ is sacerdotal in the ministry, the Church, and the world. His Cross is the source of all human priesthood in virtue of His offering of Himself for human sin once for all. We lose a due sense of this when we neglect prayer for preaching, when we cultivate the prophetic aspect of the Cross at the cost of the atoning, and reduce revelation to mere manifestation. A real atonement was at once the supreme exercise of prayer by Christ, and the supreme source of priestly prayer in us. To lose it, or to move it from the centre of Christianity, is to lose the true priestly idea and power. The Church's prayer is part of Christ's intercession.

Priesthood and sacrament go together. True, for us and our kind of universal priesthood the great sacrament is the Sacrament of the Word. But the prophets of a priestly Word are equally priests—perhaps chiefly priests. The prophet Moses rose to his full height as intercessor for the people, even if it were at the cost of his own extinction. The Word is not the Word of preaching only. It is also the Word of prayer. The Word of all true prayer is stirred by the Word of Grace. It is a function of it. The Eucharist by its very name is much more of a thanksgiving than a sacrifice. Christ, the living Word and true Sacrament between God and man, addressed His soul to God much more than to

man. It was to God and not to man that He poured out his soul. His very crowning atonement was prayer, and its continued function in the Exalted is continual Intercession. Many who leave us are attracted by the sacraments, but I wonder if it is by the most sacramental thing in them. I can quite understand the way in which a man, feeling demoralised by public and extempore prayer in excess of his spiritual power, should cast himself on the sacraments as massive acts of the Church transcending the individual priest; but I wonder if it is the element of prayer in it that is the attraction, or if the step is ever taken at the cost of individual prayer of the priestly kind altogether. Let us beware of losing the moral power of priesthood or sacrament in the solemnity of its atmosphere, or its halo of reverence, or its symbolism of sacrifice. The æsthetical often ousts the ethical in religion. Some think eloquent prayers the most prayerful.

But it may be asked, if both Church and ministry are as priestly as you say, is there much reason for our schism? Why not be thorough and go over?

The answer is twofold. First, the priestliness in the Catholic forms of the Church turns on something else than prayer, something less personal and ethical than befits the religion of moral redemption. It turns on something in the sacraments which has to be guaranteed outwardly rather than inwardly by a pure transmission of special priestly grace in ordination through an unbroken canonical line. It comes by observation, or by observance at least. It turns on grace treated as a saving infusion of Christ's body into the soul rather than as an action on it of His moral person, and there must be a government guarantee, so to say, of the genuine substance, the pure "drug of immortality." Or else it turns on the Eucharist being treated as a sacrifice offered to God instead of a gift from God. It turns on offering the body of Christ. And there must be canonical warrant that what is offered is Christ's body, which is not discerned, but only certified. There must be a code of spiritual conveyancing.

Both sacrificial views we hold to be wrong. What is

offered to us from Christ's part is the Gospel of an atoning reconciliation conveyed anew in this symbolic form; or on our part it is prayer offered by us to God. It is a prophetic offering or it is a priestly, in that sense as the working in us of Christ's prayer. But both the Mass, as the renewal of Christ's sacrifice, or the Eucharist, as the infusion of a spiritual antiseptic, are excrescences on the principle of prayer, the outpouring of the Holy to the Holy, which made the soul of Christ's offering of Himself to God, and which set up the true priesthood of believers.

And the second reason why there is no call to leave your own communion to find the true priesthood is that the Catholic forms have no monopoly. The priestly function of the Church is not tied to a canonical succession. It is the Lord's anointing and not man's. It belongs wherever the atoning Gospel has moral and hearty scope. Only we have not always done it justice. We have forgotten at times that the assembly of a Church is above all things for worship, and only secondarily for edification or evangelisation. We have inverted that order. We have forgotten that worship is the greatest work possible to a human soul. Hence all has been sacrificed to the sermon, and all forgiven to the successful preacher. Hence also the sermon, like all idols, has fallen in value, and it has come to be regarded as the utterance of a man with a particular talent, rather than a confession and publication of the Church's Gospel and a part of its worship. For worship is our self-confession of God's self-revelation. Preaching is the Church's supreme appeal to the world, but it has lost power because it has been made the chief or only function of the Church, which is really to worship. Preaching is a form of worship, worship is not a form of preaching.

I do not know which is the worse form of mischief—our neglect of priestly worship or the Catholic neglect of prophetic preaching.

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