

ARTICLE VIII.

THE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON CHRISTIAN
REUNION.

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THE effect of the war on the reunion of Christendom is a subject that opens up such a vast field of interest and inquiry that one trembles at the threshold, and wonders in bewilderment which of the many doors that give entrance into the subject should be opened. There are two thoughts which are prominent at the present time: The first is the unity which is being shown in actual operation in relieving the suffering produced by the war—a unity of all beliefs and creeds and religions, based upon the outgoing of human sympathy. The other is the realized spiritual unity shown on the field of battle between the chaplains of the various denominations who are working together in perfect coöperation and harmony. These men who have worked side by side to relieve suffering, and who have ministered side by side in danger and privation, can never go back to the old prejudices and misunderstandings, to the narrow spiritual horizon of earlier days. A statement has recently appeared as follows:—

“In the new Master of the Temple, Dr. Barnes, the English Church has a new voice which will be heard with increasing interest as the days go on. In his inaugural sermon, preached a few weeks ago, Dr. Barnes gave expression to certain views, which, coming from a man in so unique a position, deserve and will command all the more attention. He went straight to the point in pleading for a fuller unity among Christians:—

“Let us not forget that the national spiritual experience takes other forms, and I for one would gladly see them included in the National Church. The great Puritan tradition is of immense ethical value, and in its best expression moulds itself closely on Christ's teaching. The Anglican Church would be richer if she could include within herself those who, guided too exclusively by that tradition, have separated themselves from her. And the Quakers, too, with their burning personal religious experience, and their insistence on the sacramental nature of all our actions, can teach us things that we must not forget. He who would serve Christ in his generation should welcome all varieties of Christian religious experience in proportion to their power to reveal God.’

“The spirit of these words is most welcome, and bears witness to that truest of attitudes which recognizes aspects of truth and life outside its own boundaries. The best efforts for unity to-day are based on this principle of recognizing the Divine working wherever it is seen, and of seeking to co-ordinate all these phases into one great unity. It is hardly likely that Christian people will ever agree on all things, but it is certainly possible and desirable that they should approximate towards a unity which includes many varieties which are seen to be truly of God, and the *only centre of any real unity is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.* No other sort of Christian unity will be of any use at all.”

Dealing first with the human side of reunion, the most prominent movement before the war was unquestionably the social movement. One writer says:—

“The social crisis offers a great opportunity for the infusion of new life and power into the religious thought of the Church. It also offers the chance for progress in its life. When the broader social outlook widens the purpose of a Christian man beyond the increase of his church, he lifts up his eyes and sees that there are others who are at work for humanity besides his denomination. Common work for social welfare is the best common ground for religious bodies and the best training school for practical Christian unity. The strong movement for Christian union in the United States has been largely prompted by the realization of social needs and is led by men who have felt the attraction of the Kingdom of God as something greater than any particular Church and as the common object of all. Thus the divisions which were caused in the past by differences in Dogma and Church Polity may yet be healed by unity of interest in social salvation. In the religion of the Old Testament and in the aims of Jesus Christ the reconstruction of the whole of human life in accordance with the will

of God and under the motive power of religion was the ruling purpose."

Here, then, may possibly be found one solution of the problem.

The rising tide of democracy which has invaded every branch of thought and activity has found its way into the churches. "Religion no longer spends its immense force in tearing men out of social life and isolating them from family, property and state. Therefore it is now free to direct that force toward the Christianizing of the common life." The old enthusiasm is now directed towards the moral regeneration of society, and our eyes are witnessing the dawn of a new era for humanity. Ceremonialism devoid of spiritual power which early clogged the ethical vigor of Christianity was broken in the Reformation, and has never recovered its strength. Greek and Roman Catholicism are faithful to it by virtue of their conservatism, but even there it is no longer a creative force. There are extreme ritualistic drifts in a few individual instances in other churches, but they are not part of modern life; being, rather, romantic reactions toward the past. The present tendency to a more ornate and liturgical worship in the various churches is æsthetic — not sacramental — in motive, and in no way antagonistic, by reason of narrow ecclesiasticism, to social reconstruction. The church of God has always preserved the priceless heritage of the Holy Spirit of God, and that Holy Spirit was infused into the lives of its adherents. The early Jewish Church possessed this tremendous, vital, spiritual force, and out of an oppressed community of slaves produced an organized conquering nation. The same vital impetus produced the fanaticism and fervor of the Crusades and has been the impelling motive of a world-wide evangelism in our own day, such as was never before seen. Were this same spiritual force directed after the war, and

largely as the result of the war, into the channel of moral and social reconstruction, there would be discovered a unifying impulse which would not only unite the warring churches in one community of interest and endeavor, but also incorporate a large constituency now entirely antagonistic to organized religion, but fired with the same fervent zeal and devotion to the cause of humanity.

Of the two great fundamentals of Christian unity, the first is, then, unity in devotion to the cause of humanity. This is beginning with man and rising up to God. This is a work so vast and so productive of results that it necessitates the sinking of all differences for the sake of the ideal set out by our Divine Master. "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." How is the war affecting the cause of social democracy? Has it dealt a crushing blow which will completely shatter all possibility of church reunion along the lines of social enterprise? I think not. The war is a sudden catastrophe, and is mysterious and in some ways inexplicable, but in the end will serve to strengthen the ideal of a pure democracy. It is bringing about closer fellowship and agreement between those nations of the world who stand for high principles. The Allied nations stand on one platform with regard to democracy. Russia is rapidly opening her eyes to the inevitability of popular government, and a closer union will further the universal movement towards a greater recognition of the social problems, and in turn will unite the churches in the aim already suggested.

Leaving the practical side of the subject, we will now consider the question from the point of view of the various existing churches. One of the great difficulties facing the cause of Christian reunion is the determined attitude of the Roman

Church. She is unwilling to consider any advances except those which savor too largely of the type of the

"young lady of Riga
Who went for a ride on a tiger"—

with what distressing results we all know. Rome is always ready to receive individual contributions to the cause of unity, but firmly rejects any thought of a reunion which does not consist of the various bodies accepting in its entirety her scheme of government, her doctrines, and her practices. But is there not a perceptible change in recent years? There is an acknowledgment of Protestant methods and teaching, and a silent confession of weakness, which appears in many ways. Within the Roman Church there are and always have been many who are better than their creed. A priest stood by the dying bed of Paulo Panizzi, a monk who died in Rome about the year 1887. In his lifetime persecuted by the Inquisition, he died in full communion with Rome. The priest addressed him thus: "You will see the Christ—perhaps tonight, perhaps tomorrow. Tell Him there are still some in Rome who love His word as He spake it, and would die for it as His followers even here." Another priest, who has since left the Roman Communion, says: "I believe amid all the corruption Christ is preached, and by a Divine instinct souls are led to choose the good and reject the evil—even the evil they think they believe." There seems to be, besides these individual cases, which could be largely multiplied, considerable modification in the attitude of Rome towards Anglicanism. Writing on the dogma, "No Salvation out of the [Roman] Church," Cardinal Manning mentions with approval Augustine's saying, "Many sheep without, many wolves within," and argues from his knowledge of English Christians:—

"I have known intimately souls living lives of visible sanctifi-

cation as undoubtedly the work of the Holy Ghost as I have ever seen in all conditions of life. How can men go on speaking of those out of the Church as in the state of nature and in bad faith and to be avoided as immoral? . . . But what [he continues] is the state of France, Italy, Spain, South America? All the light and grace of the Catholic Church is in vain for multitudes in the Catholic Countries."

Returning to the recent modifications in doctrine, take that of direct prayers to the saints for gifts and blessings. This doctrine is kept back from manuals intended for English readers. Another is seen in the recent permission to converts to regard the veneration of images, relics, and so forth, as non-essential. Still another is the permission to celebrate Mass at night and without fasting. Still another concession has been made in the fact that the words, "All heretics, schismatics and rebels against our lord the Pope I will persecute and attack," are omitted by Archbishops and Bishops taking oath under the English Crown. Many other points could be mentioned, e.g. that an indulgence of one hundred days is granted to the faithful who spend fifteen minutes daily in reading the Gospel in some authorized translation — this indulgence to be applicable, if desired, to the souls in purgatory — a curious mixture of truth and error. From many such signs some regard it as a fact that Rome is gradually being transformed from within. The hope is that she is being brought, perhaps unconsciously to herself, into closer agreement with Holy Scripture, Apostolic and primitive practice, and is nearer the mind of Christ. Nor can we tell whether it may not be the Divine Will to work a permanent return to truth, through these subtle adaptations of Roman teachers for temporal ends. Rome's method of attracting converts from other churches may prove to be God's method of enlightening Romanists. Two important things, however, must be remembered:

(1) No Roman Doctrine of Trent has been denied. The instances which have occurred are omissions or evasions, for a purpose and for a time.

(2) They occur in books intended for Protestants, and are given grudgingly, and are merely adaptations to the Protestant state of mind and knowledge and reason. Many earnest Roman Catholics admit these concessions are unreal, and grieve over the apparent hopelessness of doctrinal and spiritual reform in Rome. It is therefore vain to look to Rome as she is at present for any contribution to this problem of Christian unity. The war has done little, so far as Rome is concerned, except to reveal her weakness and powerlessness, and to hold up to ridicule her arrogant pretensions, her edicts and decrees.

Turning to the Greek-Russian Orthodox Church, we find a growing regard for, and interest in, the Anglican position. There is also a very distinct realization that any union with Rome as she is, is completely impossible. Archbishop Platon says:—

“We of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholics can have no Church union or communion. The Roman Church knows no union but complete annexation in the sense of perfect absorption. Temporarily she may admit a union founded on equal rights, but later will endeavor to turn equal rights into complete subjection. . . . [Looking towards Anglicanism, he says], I became convinced that not only dogmatical difficulties which I do not even touch on for the present, but differences of ritual, also keep us separated from you.”

He speaks of the difficulty of worshiping in another's church and with another's rites; yet beneath all the acknowledgment of difficulties, he sees no reason why at some future time visible Christian union may not be achieved. Just as the Eastern Orthodox Church existed side by side with the Western until the eleventh century, the parallel existence of the

Russian Orthodox and the Anglican as sister churches might come to pass. He says: "We do not ask you to submit," as Rome does, "we only ask, Do you hold the same Catholic faith we have inherited from our fathers? If you do we are brothers." Many learned Russian theologians have made a profound study of the Anglican position, and look with sympathy and goodwill toward the West. There is, however, a strong undertone of feeling that somehow we do not as a church retain all those characteristics which to them are the essentials of orthodoxy. There is a far deeper conception of the spiritual basis of Christian unity in the worship of the Russians, and with the increasing friendship cemented by alliance we may hope for mutual understanding. There is no possibility or prospect of union with Rome; but with the Greek Church we are at one in at least a single point, which is in protest against the attitude and errors of Rome.

Turning yet again to the various sects and denominations which make up Protestant Christendom, we are confronted by an entirely different problem. We have a large majority already acknowledging organic unity and rejoicing in coöperation. There is a unity amongst them all and with a large part of the Anglican communion, which arises out of the consciousness that there are certain members in them all who are animated by a living, conscious faith in Christ Himself as branches in the vine, and are living in fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ, and thus have fellowship one with another. The anathemas of churches and the suspicious questioning glances of ecclesiastical conservatism are of no avail against this felt oneness with each other in Christ. This is assuredly true unity, and here we find another possible solution of our problem.

The thought of visible unity has often been strongly em-

phasized, because it is said that one of the great hindrances to the world's belief in Christ has been the absence of visible organic unity. The Roman Church once possessed this undisputed unity in Spain and Italy, Austria and South America, but the spectacle of these nations has not converted the world. The hindrances to the world's believing in Christ are not because of the multiplicity of sects, but of an entirely different order. The bitterness, the aggressiveness, the strife, the energy wasted in conflict, the excommunications, the intolerance, the ignorance, the refusal to hold communion with those who differ — these things have shocked the world. When to this unchristianlike spirit are added those demands which Rome has multiplied to an appalling and impossible extent, we cannot wonder that such a misrepresented Christianity has not only failed to convert the world, but has proved a stumblingblock in the path of reunion. Any lasting union depends on its being grounded in truth and manifested in love. The High Priestly prayer of our Lord was full of a solemnity, almost sadness, which seems to indicate that He did not anticipate its complete fulfillment in this present dispensation. Like the command, "Be ye therefore perfect," it is a high ideal to be aimed at; but, because of man's self-will and pride, it will not be attained or manifested until the day when Christ Himself shall return. We can, however, cultivate charity and humility, and check every attempt to introduce terms of communion and salvation not insisted upon by the Divine Head of the church.

In the mission field much can be found of an interesting nature on the subject. At the present time there is no coöperation with the Roman Church, although personal friendship among the missionaries may be very strong. The Roman missionaries are forbidden to enter into any agreement with,

OR take part in any practical effort in coöperation with, the representatives of other Christian bodies. The Russian Orthodox Church also cannot at present enter into any real or full unity. Archbishop Nicolai says:—

“I am in friendly, more than that, brotherly relations with all the missionaries of other sections known to me, and so are our Christians with their Christians. So shall we be from our part always, because we know that the first duty of us Christians is to cultivate Christian love to all men, and particularly to our brothers in Christ. But nevertheless there is no real or full unity between us and the other sections, more than that we are far from such unity because we are divided in the Christian Doctrine.”

Contrast these words with the declaration of the Christian Federation of China, in which are representatives of a large number of missionary societies:—

“The work of this Federation shall be to encourage everything that will demonstrate the existing essential unity of Christians, to watch for opportunities of united prayer and mutual conference between representatives of different bodies of Christians.”

In the denominations at home, as abroad, there is seen to be an increasing readiness to coöperate along every line in which the central facts of faith are made the basis of coöperation. There is a great tendency towards unity, and in some cases an actual federation has taken place or is pending. The more widespread use of a liturgical form of service, and increased friendly relations between our own church and these various bodies — these two are doing much to break down prejudice, and open the way for a closer coöperation than ever before. The diminution of missionary subscriptions, owing to war conditions, will serve to promote consolidation; and we may expect, in the near future, many new developments of Christian union from an economic motive. In almost every part of the mission field the problem of overlapping is being effectively dealt with by a local board, and the effect of the war will be, unquestionably, to promote all that can possibly be

done to unite the various organizations at work. With an increasing shortage of missionaries to fill vacant stations, and an increase of opportunity, the schemes at present on foot to federate missionary activity will receive a tremendous impetus, and will carry the newly formed local churches far on the way to what might be called federated national churches, similar to that which already exists in China.

Looking out over the world, we see conditions to-day which prepare men's minds for a wider unity in all the activities of life. The assumption of control by the military authorities in many places is accustoming the minds of the men to a central authority. The great increase of coöperation in business, resulting in monopolies run by a few men of outstanding wealth or commercial genius, is leading men to realize the value of combining their capital and machinery for mutual benefit. The fact of successful coöperation on the part of the warring nations, and the vast increase in efficiency made by the unity of forces, are great object lessons to the churches. There is a general tendency in the world to-day towards coöperation, and the uniting of forces for successful enterprise. The stores, railroads, power and light companies, public corporations, trades unions, world federation of labor — all exhibit to us the advantage of unity; and, turning to the Church, we find three years of wrangling over an attempt to establish practical unity in an obscure corner of the mission field in East Africa, the occasion being a united Communion Service, the story of which has become historic under the name of the Kikuyu Conference.

I drew attention at the beginning to one movement which might be an ultimate basis of union, and placed it at the beginning purposely, because it is the natural trend of our thought to consider the human side first. As we look out

upon the incoherent disjointedness of the social fabric, and the misery of war, our hearts may be drawn together to seek some common basis of unity of purpose. But there is another side. The plea for humanity would fail were it not for the fact of an invisible church, already existing, and making its presence felt in the wider, visible church of which it is the living force. This spiritual church of God is the great hope of the world, and in a conscious membership we find the greatest bond of living union. There can be no permanent union or reunion except on the basis taught by our Lord Himself in His own Person. As He was both divine and human, so we shall find that reunion will only come when we have an adequate realization of the needs of humanity and an adequate organization of the church to deal with them; and also when we have an adequate realization of the only essential for membership in the Christian church as Christ Himself taught it; and that is a personal spiritual union by faith with Himself. "It is not to be doubted," Moehler said, "that Christ maintains His church in spiritual energy by means of those who live in the faith of Him and are spiritually united to Him." The one Holy Catholic Church of the Nicene Creed is described as being in organic unity with Christ, animated by one spirit, directed from one central source of influence. This church is an invisible church in so far as its members are found in all the churches and are known to God only, but it is visible in the sense that all its members are in communion with the visible church.

The reunion of Christendom will come on this spiritual basis. Details of ritual, organization, even of church government, must be regarded as subservient to the central fact of spiritual life. The true test of Apostolic succession is Apostolic success. The cause of reunion will be helped

onward by the war, because the whole tendency of a period of national crisis is to drive men back to elemental truths, and to strip the soul bare of prejudice and preconceived notions. Artificial barriers are removed, differences melt away, in the presence of danger, and we are open to realize what are the essential things. This war will clear the mental atmosphere of many thinkers, and bring down the whole question of reunion from the academic sphere to that of practical utility. We shall find that Christian unity must be along spiritual and ideal rather than material lines; organic rather than federal. It will be synthetic, in the sense of gathering together all those elements upon which the churches are agreed; rather than analytic, in the sense of defining and providing for every detail of doctrine and ritual. It will be Christocentric, in devotion to a common Master; rather than symbolic, in being based on confessions of faith which tell of Him. It will be spiritual and social, based on the stern necessity of facing social issues and meeting them with spiritual forces.

In our own Anglican Church we have a form of worship and a basis of belief which avoid alike the superstitions of Rome and the incompleteness of denominational teaching. The Anglican Communion is the natural home of all, were it possible to make her claims and incontrovertible position of Catholic teaching and history a reality to the experience of all faithful souls who are seeking after truth.

There are many other points, which might be brought up. It is necessary to mention only two, as they constitute insurmountable obstacles which come naturally under the headings dealt with. In the matter of finding common work for the cause of humanity a basis of union, the question at once arises. Which of the two great lines usually taken up in this work, is

to be adopted? There is, on the one hand, the antisupernatural, rationalistic movement, both in and out of the church, which preaches Socialism or some form of economic and moral revolution, and busies itself in settlement work and slum work on what is in reality a non-religious basis; and, on the other hand, we have the movement represented by the many organizations which make the spiritual and religious side the most prominent, and are intensely conservative in their clinging to the older views of evangelical doctrine. Much of the work among the submerged classes done by our own church is done by men of this type who are steeped in the most devout simplicity of faith in a personal God and in prayer. These two are as far as the poles asunder, because everything that is deemed of the greatest import in life by the one school of thought is looked upon with derision by the other, and no opportunity is lost of ruthlessly criticizing and tearing down every effort that is made.

Then, touching upon the other basis of a spiritual unity which gradually comes to be manifested in actual coöperation, there is the same difficulty of two constantly opposing schools of thought. If we accept what is generally called the Catholic view of the Church, with its emphasis on the importance of the visible church, apostolic succession, episcopal government, and primitive ritual, as the basis of reunion, we may find ourselves nearer the Greek and Roman churches, but we shall uncompromisingly break with all the denominations and with a large section of our own communion. If, on the other hand, we accept as our basis a wider interpretation of the church and what is known as the Protestant theory, we break at once with the Greek and Roman churches, and with that section of our own communion who hold membership of the visible church of apostolic origin, and participation in her

sacraments and adherence to her traditional rules of order and worship as essential to spiritual life.

The war does not seem to have touched very greatly upon either of these difficulties, unless it is to discount the teachings of the German rationalistic school, and thus prepare the way for an acceptance of a supernatural religious basis for social work instead of materialistic determinism, to which this movement was drifting. There are faint gleams of hope, but Christendom has a long and toilsome path to tread before even the slightest possibility of reunion is visible.