

and resolve to avoid as far as possible the proselytizing of individuals? More and more it is becoming plain that reunion will be reached by some more satisfactory method than the transference of individuals, with all the heart-burning and friction that this process engenders. We shall have to reckon with the possibility of which Mr. Lacey spoke so impressively at the Pan-Anglican Congress, and to which Chancellor Lias refers when he writes that "we should be ready to consider a scheme of federation in which the various religious bodies should take their place as religious societies or orders within the pale of the one reunited Church." Something of the sort, I have no doubt, we shall be asked to consider, though I would fain believe that the word "federation" will seem to fall very far short as a description of what should be looked for. But if this is the direction in which we may properly turn our thoughts, it must be obvious that the end will not be most quickly reached by withdrawing from the separated bodies just those elements that are in sympathy with the desire for better and more intimate relations. We cannot, of course, forbid any man to follow the leading of the light he has received, but we can bid him be quite certain that he is not mistaking its guidance. If we are persuaded that God has some better thing for us all than our existing isolations and rivalries, we shall feel it to be a sacred duty to do nothing that could needlessly embitter the feelings of those whom we are longing to draw with us into His way of peace.



The Functions of a Missionary Committee.

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TO prepare for the taking up, on another occasion, of the question of Prayer in Relation to Missionary Finance, a preliminary problem is here discussed. Missionary finance is with us largely shaped by Missionary Committees. What are the true functions of a Missionary Committee, particularly in the matter

of deciding to spend? That is our problem, and no apology will be needed for illustrating it chiefly from so well-known a case as that of the C.M.S.

There is something of irony about the very existence of an Evangelical Missionary Society. Its leading men are sure to be those who, above all else, desire Scriptural guidance. Yet there are few things for which the Scriptures give less direction of an explicit kind, and in a shape immediately applicable, than a voluntary association of Christians for a specific purpose. The Church has its marching orders, the individual has all the direction he needs; in each case the bearing of the guidance is seldom other than manifest and intentional. But the Society must find its way by some application of instructions not primarily addressed to itself as such. There is, of course, nothing alarming or discrediting in that circumstance. It may well, however, account for some of the diversity to be found in the views of Committee members as to what they are to be and to do. They are all clear that God's will is to be done, and they all turn to much the same sources to learn God's will. But they have no explicit code of rules to go by; the living principles of the Word of God are many, and each man has his idiosyncrasies with respect to those which move him most profoundly. It would almost be a wonder to find two men who came to the enterprise with exactly the same motives and aims.

It is a splendid characteristic of the Committees we have in view that to do the will of God is, not only professedly, but practically, their constant aim. It is a not infrequent comment of visitors to the Committee-rooms that they are pervaded by a remarkable spirit of prayer and faith. How could it rightly be otherwise? Whenever there is any difference of opinion, there is only one proper solution of the difficulty—more light as to the will of God. In this connection it is worth while to turn aside for a moment to note how constantly, under good chairmanship, the business can be done, and is done, without votes. The cause that prevails commends itself all round. There are,

indeed, times when vote after vote is taken and differences are strong, but such times are not the most characteristic any more than they are the most happy, even for those who prevail.

Devotion to the service of God may thus be assumed as a leading factor in the function of the Committee. Perhaps in practice it counts for a factor of a different order from any other. A dozen men may have as many separate views of their calling and their business on Committee, but when the *agenda* come up for decision, the "views" are forgotten, the will of God in the particular matter is sought, and though a "view" may have its influence in helping or hindering the recognition of the Divine direction, it will generally be at most an influence that does not come up into consciousness.

Nevertheless, at times the very "views" themselves become matters on which the will of God is sought. Then differences become more anxious. It is more easy for a man to determine to do the will of God than to admit that his own view of that will is a partial one, or one of several that are possible. It is quite likely that in any given Committee it is only by groups of twos and threes that things are seen eye to eye, even where broad issues are at stake. Each little group may be characterized by its prevailing conviction upon some one aspect of Missionary enterprise, and from time to time a sort of shock is felt when realization comes that some second, third, and fourth group, though they have long seemed of one mind with us, here branch off because their most characteristic convictions are not in all respects like ours.

The problem on which this article has, with temerity, been launched would be just the one to bring out such shocks, if it were treated as a matter for debate and decision. But that it need not be. It is proposed, rather, to treat it as an occasion for noticing several aspects of a great, solid reality, and for pleading that those who have long seen one aspect clearly will try to recognize those which others in their turn have seen.

The question was, presumably, less complicated when the C.M.S. was young. The Church's marching orders, a deep

sense of the urgent need for the spread of the Gospel, with an even deeper sense of the love of Christ constraining to this form of Christian service, brought together the first founders of the Society. Their own bond of union, under the command of Christ, for the good of the heathen, was the dominating fact. If Missions were to be carried on, these men must, guided by God, find the means, secure the men, select the field, lay down the lines, and direct the scale of the work. Their function was anything and everything which, upon the acknowledged lines of Evangelical Churchmanship, could start and further the cause. There was no question then about decentralization, devolution, and very little even of representation of the home constituency. If the complexity of modern conditions was foreseen, it did not cause the laying down of rules from the first. The simple facts of the case shaped the organization.

Perhaps there is more history in the word "Missionary" than we realize. The very title seems to imply the recognition, as primary, of one aspect of the enterprise. The men to go from home out to those other lands are the people on whose account the Society exists. What the Mission will result in, what claims it will involve upon home funds, what rights of autonomy will grow up abroad—these are questions not yet asked.¹ First let some Missionaries be sent out.

But the complex results have made us long since familiar with these connected questions, and we do not all see alike about them.

Take the question of the meaning of a Mission as distinct from a group of Missionaries. A field is selected under the guidance of God, a staff is provided, thin and inadequate perhaps, but considerable in numbers; stations are equipped;

¹ There is one exception proving the rule. In one of the original rules, No. XVIII., each "catechist" being sent out is reminded that: "Should it please God to bless his labours with success in founding a Christian Church, it is proposed either that he should be sent for, and application humbly made for him to be episcopally ordained to the charge of it, in case he should be found a proper person, or else that some person in Holy Orders should be sent out to superintend it and to administer the Sacraments." That seems the furthest original outlook. See "Account of a Society for Missions to Africa and the East," 1799; facsimile edition, 1886.

organization is set up, including, maybe, some representation of native Christians and of non-missionary European residents, not to speak of Episcopal and diocesan authorities. What now is this Mission? Whose responsibility? Upon whose charges do its needs fall? Who may control it? It is no longer the old simple matter for the Committee to direct the scale of the work. Manifestly the Committee must adjust itself to the claims of certain other people. There seems no hard-and-fast rule which can settle offhand the functions in these circumstances of a Missionary Committee in London.

Think of the Missionaries—some veterans, if some be novices. They have acquired an obvious right, with a correlative responsibility, to take a large share in the planning and carrying on of the Mission in all its branches. Mere obedience to a home authority is no adequate discharge of their office. Something of devolution of authority and responsibility into their hands is inevitable. Think of the native Christians. The future is pre-eminently theirs. For the present they require a growing measure of power and of responsibility. So with other possible elements of the situation. But as we are specially thinking of the Committee as a spending body, let us look a little more closely into their position.

Can they divest themselves of money responsibility? There is the Mission. They have done their best—a good best—to start and foster it; they have rejoiced in its prosperity. Now let it stand on its own feet! Perhaps so, if circumstances allow. But there must be converts numerous enough, prosperous enough, sufficiently well educated and trained to make it fair to leave them to themselves as far as the Society is concerned. That language is used purposely. They are not left to themselves. God had them in His care, and will have. Possibly they have, and will have, foreign Bishops and other overseers independently of the Society. Possibly there are other local Christians, natives or foreigners, with whom they will be closely linked, to their benefit. Clearly circumstances alter cases. But is there not one clear guiding-line? The Committee can only rightly

disclaim responsibility when they have fairly discharged the function they undertook in starting and continuing the Mission. While more Missionaries are essential, they can only consider themselves *functi officio* when they can point to some other proper source for recruits—be it a local Church like that of Canada, or some other Society or Authority, which has taken the responsibility. While more money is required than the local Christians can be fairly asked to raise, the same kind of thing holds good. But who shall say whether such demands are fair, and in what proportion they should be met?

There are some views which would seem to imply that the Society has here become the handmaid of the Mission. The Mission should plan and ask, the home Committee should get and send. Some Committees can and do work on that system, with something of a controlling voice, or veto, as to extension. But another view is also rational—that the Committee are still in existence for sending out Missionaries, and must in some measure judge by the home factors of the case whether, in the circumstances as they see them, more Missionaries should go, and which ones; whether such and such agencies should continue or cease, because of their bearing at home or in other fields. The thing best for the Mission, in the eyes of its own staff, is not necessarily the duty of the Committee.

It is not an unknown thing to hear this perplexing question settled offhand by a man with a view, who thinks he knows exactly how the Committee should treat, not only the particular case which may be in hand, and in which he may have a stake, but all cases of the kind. But the truth is that cases differ, and people's aims and theories differ, to such an extent that there is not, and cannot be, any obvious settlement of the difficulty. It remains, and will remain. The Committee, with earnest prayer and with much mutual consideration between view and view, must continue to treat each case on its merits. There are quite likely to be some inconsistencies, and there will doubtless be a bombardment of criticisms from all sides. The easy solutions, more often than not, are with those who do not go far

into things ; the puzzles remain for those who take their office seriously.

If these things are true, there is a very undefined factor in the general function of a Missionary Committee when it comes into touch with Missions ripening for self-government, self-support, and self-extension.

There are, moreover, some friends of Missions, members of Committees, to whom this whole range of problems seldom presents itself spontaneously. A Mission is, in their eyes, an agency for rapid evangelization. They are often men who expect with a sure hope the early return of our Lord. The plans that might be laid for an assured long history of the Missions may seem to them out of place in an enterprise that is to have so short a day. The cry for help to which their ears are most open is not from old and settled Missions. It is always the regions beyond to which their hearts go out—first to the dark borderland around the centres of Christian light and activity, and after that to the vast regions never yet occupied. Were these men alone to form a Committee, they would tend to the opposite policy from that of making the Society the handmaid of established Missions. The verdict would often be : “ These have had enough ; let the Missionaries pass on quickly, following Apostolic precedent : our resources are swallowed up in other new fields.”

There is, of course, very much to be said for such an ideal of Missions, provided the “ enough ” is reasonably and fairly estimated, and the following of Apostolic precedent intelligently worked out, and not merely relied upon as providing unreasoned authority. The strength of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, with its effective watchword, “ The evangelization of the world in this generation,” is a witness to this, among other things—that there is a great meaning still for the home Churches in the unsatisfied cry for help of the unevangelized. It cannot be supposed that the Societies which stand for the output into the wide world of the Evangelistic forces of a Church can afford to forget the regions beyond.

They cannot put a fence around their present fields and say, "Thus far may we hope to go, but no farther." Not even can they use such words when qualified by "for the present," unless their meaning is that we cannot do what we *ought*, because of some hindering cause. If such words are ever said, it must be at the cost of the saddened heart and defeated purpose of many a godly enthusiast and zealous worker for Missions.

Here, then, is another factor of our problem of spending. Dare the Committee cease to take expanding work at growing charges in the light of the great need abroad; in the light of what it means for the thin line of recruits to be still coming and coming; in the light of what it means for hearts in the home Church to continue, above all else, to pray and long, give and labour, for "the evangelization of the *world* in this generation"?

But besides this double outlook of the Committee toward the foreign field—now to the loved and cherished Missions they have brought into being, now to the harvest waiting still for labourers—they have also a double outlook toward the Church at home.

The friends at home supply the money; the Committee spend it. Who is to settle the amount? To some members of Committee the only possible answer—always, of course, seeking to acknowledge God in it all—is that the Committee must stop when the givers stop. That theory is often put into the plain, common-sense, business-like phrases that speak of debts, or even deficits, as without justification, and of confidence lost when the Committee cannot be trusted to be as prudent as an individual Christian must be with his own income. Manifestly it is a theory which will find many an advocate. At times it may well seem undeniable.

But then comes in the other outlook. Where do the givers stop, and why? To another group of members of Committee there is ever present the strong conviction that Missionary Societies exist, not only to administer what the home Christians give, but to enable, to encourage, to persuade, to importune those Christians to give more and more and more, until the

enterprise is adequately provided for. This is a factor in the problem left out in the last-named theory. The view that the Society must see its way to the money before it takes the obligation is *not* on this view a foregone conclusion. Rightly or wrongly, it is an unchallenged feature of many branches of Christian work that the obligation may be undertaken before the money is in hand. There are regular steady channels of income, and at least all that is steady may be anticipated. Is it strange that some minds cannot be satisfied with the attempt to limit the obligation by "the steady," "the average," or whatsoever else be the measure; that this attempt is unsatisfactory because it makes no *immediate* room for the deepened interest, the keener sense of obligation, the more intelligent self-denial, which must somehow and at some time be secured if there is to be the progress which all desire?

Surprising or not, it is a fact that some are not satisfied to "cut the coat according to the cloth" when the coat is next year's work and the cloth last year's income.

If we come to speak of Prayer for Missions we shall find these diversities still with us. But need they disturb us? It was said above that for Committees the doing of the will of God is in their problems a factor of a different order from all others. Therein is safety and hope. It may well pass the wit of man to devise a sharp-cut theory upon which Missionary enterprise can all be carried on. Meanwhile God has gathered around the one blessed cause a great brotherhood of men by no means cast in one mould. He is a God of infinite resources; He makes His people of many types. Yet is He able to "make men to be of one mind in an house," though perhaps best when they do not weave too many webs of theory. His guidance may lead one and the same Committee by such different paths on different days that they will seem mere opportunists. Yet so long as His guidance is sought and prevails, the "divers portions" and "divers manners" will work out to a more beautiful unity than a Committee could ever devise upon any one consistent human theory.

Even a cursory glance at the financial responsibilities of a Committee thus reminds us of much more in which they need Divine guidance. We can hardly expect to discover any simple and satisfactory code of rules for Missionary expenditure until certain far-reaching thoughts are followed to clear issues. It is plain that weighty results must inevitably follow when a small group of Missionary Societies present themselves before a great body of Christians as a channel, to a large extent the only open channel, through which a main part of their Christian service is to get itself done. The stronger the Societies grow, the more must they accept responsibility for keeping the channel free. It would become dangerous, if not fatal, should they unduly restrict their ventures of faith by which the fields to be watered are selected, should they choke in any way the outflow of devoted service, or should they fail to draw adequately upon the reservoirs of help that are to be found in the thought, the sympathy, the prayers, the gifts, and the labours of the home Church.

This issue remains very grave even if it be narrowed by the most strict reading of what "Missionary" means; if no scope be sought save for service that completes itself in finding men and means to be sent to the foreign field. But, perhaps, such narrowing is really impracticable, or at least unworthy. The home Church may well have greater things to do through its Missionary Societies. The growing Churches abroad may rightly call for light and leading, encouragement and protection, as well as for Missionaries and money.

The Committee must be far more than machinery for collecting and spending money if they are to be at all true to their high calling. They stand forth like stewards in the Master's name and service, with one hand stretched out to receive all manner of devotions from His people at home, and with the other to spread them in the hungry world beyond. Nothing short of the Master's infinite compassion and grace can suffice for their needs, nothing short of His wisdom for their adequate guidance.