

The Problem of Home Reunion.¹

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WHEN I approach, with no little hesitation, the question assigned to me to-day, "What is the Outlook for Visible Christian Unity?" I think it must be said that it depends upon the looker—with what eyes, through what glasses, for what vision he looks. I take the last of these questions first, and say that the vision which fills the eye and mind and heart, of a unity that involves uniformity, a oneness so complete and absolute as to obliterate all differences of religious form in faith or worship, is a vision which in this world is not likely to be fulfilled. It would necessarily mean the absorption into one of the dominant bodies of Christians of all the others. It is, of course, the only proposition that the Roman Catholic Church makes, and only Rome is so far numerically² stronger as to be the possible absorber into herself. It is unimaginable that the non-Episcopal Protestants which make up one-fourth of the 521,000,000 Christians in the world, or the Orientals, who make more than one-fifth, would ever be absorbed into Latin Christianity. Or to take an illustration which comes nearer home. If this unity visible and uniform is our vision, what shall happen to *us* here in America, a little one among a thousand? Could it be possible for us to give up our distinctive points of a ministry with a historic succession, of liturgical worship, of strong sacramental teaching, of the administration of Confirmation, in order that we might be taken over into the larger Protestant bodies—Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist? Or if not, then could it be possible to bring about a visible union among the other Protestant bodies? That beautiful picture of Pentecostal days, when "they all, in one place, with one accord, continued in prayer and supplication," when "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and

¹ Paper read before the American Church Congress in Boston, May, 1909.

² And yet a majority of 59,000,000 are *not* Roman Catholics.

fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers"—that picture is the vision to which we look back with longing eyes and hearts, but hardly forward with hope of future realization. And why? Over against the deep intensity of our dear Lord's high-priestly prayer that they "all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us"—over against this seems set the qualification, as to time and as to manner, of His prophetic promise, "There shall be [not one *fold*, but] one *flock* and one shepherd." The word is *ποίμνη*, not *αἰλή*, and it seems more striking by contrast because our Lord had just used the word "fold" in describing the condition of those "not of this *fold*" whom by the compulsion of His longing love He *must* bring, and there shall be not one *fold*, but "one *flock* and one shepherd." Must we modify our vision, must we moderate our hopes, as we set the prophecy alongside of the prayer? I cannot but think that beside this the possibly more correct translation of St. Paul's words to the Ephesians, "of whom the whole family," or, more correctly, *every* family, "in heaven and earth is named" has perhaps the same suggestive element of teaching; which really underlies the prayer for all conditions of men, so familiar to our ears that perhaps its full meaning is not clear to our minds when we pray for the holy Church universal, or, as it stands—as I wish it did in ours—in the English Prayer-Book, for "the good estate of the Catholic Church," that "all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." Truly that means, if it means anything, that the Church teaches that people who profess and call themselves Christians, even if they are not yet in the way of truth, and do not yet hold the faith in unity of spirit, are in and of the Catholic Church; or, to put it the other way, it seems to me it must mean that, in spite of imperfect holdings of the truth, in spite of the absence of unity of spirit, the holy Church universal consists of all who profess and call themselves Christians.

It is a favourite dream of some among us that unity can be

reached by reconciliation with Rome, if only primacy instead of supremacy could be accepted by the Pontiff. Indeed, it has been publicly stated recently that only infallibility stands in the way. But I am free to say that, quite apart from any claim of universal headship, the gulf which parts us from the Roman Catholic Communion seems to me beyond the power of man to bridge over, and only not beyond the power of God because to Him all things are possible. But this part of the Church, which practically is rather Marian and Petrine than Christian—ten Aves to one Paternoster, and the so-called successor of St. Peter lifted to the divine honour of absolute power and addressed prayer; so many altars and shrines of saints, ancient and modern, that the old altar of primitive worship has virtually the inscription, "To the unknown God"; and "the Mass" no longer "the unbloody sacrifice," in which Christ is both Victim and Priest, but an adoration of that which, under the form of a mutilated sacrament, the wafer without the chalice, is present on the altar. That God in His infinite power can, that God in His infinite mercy may break down these barriers, of course we know; but the human outlook for visible union in this direction is dreamy and dreary indeed. If these words seem bitter and violent, I pray God to pardon me. It is no small part of the great mystery of life that, in spite of all these, which to me are absolute horrors, the Roman Catholic Church holds such sway, converts and controls great masses of people difficult to control, and trains thousands of them into holy and exemplary lives.

What may come of visible unity with the great old Eastern Churches, although less impossible, is certainly very difficult and problematical. At Lambeth, both in committee and in conference, while expressing some hope of signs of better things and broader thinking in the Latin Communion, the expression of opinion was clear and full that "under present circumstances it is useless to consider the question of possible intercommunion with our brethren of that communion in view of the fact that no such proposal would be entertained but on conditions which it would be impossible for us to accept." Looking eastward, the

Bishops found some, though slight, grounds for hope, so that they felt free themselves to appoint a committee of conference with the Orthodox Eastern Patriarch, the Holy Synod of the Church of Russia, and the chief authorities of the various Eastern Churches, with the view "to consider the possibility of securing clearer understanding and closer relation between the Churches of the East and the Anglican Communion." And, along practical lines of suggestion, certain recognized practices were recommended—that we should, in case of emergency, baptize the children of members of any Church in the Orthodox Eastern Communion, and admit properly qualified communicant members of any such Church to Communion in our Churches, and so forth. And yet it is very difficult to see, except in kindly relations that may lead to the clearer and better mutual understanding, how visible unity can be secured between the Oriental Churches and ourselves—the visible unity that could manifest itself in common worship—when not only rites and ceremonies, due in some degree to the warmth and exuberance of the Orientals, separate us so widely, but when we cannot even say together the great symbol of our faith which we miscall the Nicene Creed.

There are two outlooks toward which I wish more eyes were turned: First, toward the Old Catholic movement in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, toward the ancient Church of Holland, and toward the Spanish Reformed Church. Strangely enough, the interest at one time felt and expressed in very positive terms and in very practical ways has largely died away. Apart from and beyond the thoughtless, but I believe unintentional, disregard of the recognized relations of the Bishops of Switzerland and of our own country, in the consecration without consultation or consideration with us of an Old Catholic Bishop to minister to the Poles in America—quite apart from this and before this, the really brotherly relations which brought one of their Bishops to us, and sent Bishops both from England and America to their councils, has dwindled and diminished until neither intercourse nor interest is continued. And yet here lay, and here still lies, I think, a way toward recognition and restora-

tion of visible unity, with intercommunion and interchange of helpful service.

I confess to a feeling that we are not awake to the possibility and duty of making serious and definite proposals for reconciling the Reformed Episcopal Church in America. Small, I believe, that sect is, but it is recent. It has not yet hardened into the stiffness of long separation. Its grounds of doctrinal difference grew out of a contention whose expression is almost forgotten now. The old war of words about "baptismal regeneration" has lost in great degree its meaning and its power, because I think nobody believes now that anybody ever meant to confound baptismal regeneration with conversion. I have come to feel that the grounds on which we doubted and denied the validity of its first episcopal consecration, at least possibly, are unsound and untrue. Not that I have any question that the statement which the American Bishops made at the Lambeth Conference in 1885 is true—namely, that "no deposed presbyter can be elevated to the episcopate in accordance with the decision of the Bishops of Cappadocia and Galatia"; but later investigation, to say the least, makes very doubtful the legality of Dr. Cheney's deposition, the Circuit Court of Illinois having formally decided that he was neither deposed nor degraded from the ministry of the Church. It seems to me, in the light of this later decision, we ought at least to examine the whole matter more carefully, in order to decide whether we might not, whether we ought not to, approach the authorities of the Reformed Episcopal Church, first, with the acknowledgment of the validity of the consecration of their Bishops, and then with the attempt to propose some such alteration in their doctrinal teaching as will enable us to resume communion with them. It seems right and reasonable that, in making overtures for healing separations and reconciling Churches, we not only ought not to forget, but we ought first and foremost to turn our thoughts and prayers to bringing back into visible union and communion with our Churches these her children, who are neither long nor far apart from us.

Then comes the question of the outlook in the direction of Protestant Churches, separated each from the other, but each more widely separated from us. And again I say that the first thing to be considered is the vision toward which we look. The statements which the Bishops put forth at Lambeth last year are essentially and fundamentally important—first: “that in all partial projects of reunion and intercommunion, the final attainment of the Divine purpose must be kept in view as our object, and that care should be taken to do what will advance the reunion of the whole of Christendom, and to abstain from doing anything that will retard or prevent it”; and secondly: “that Anglican Churchmen must contend for a valid ministry as they understand it, and regard themselves as absolutely bound to stipulate for this for themselves and for any communion of which they are members. But it is no part of their duty, and therefore not their desire, to go further and pronounce negatively upon the value in God’s sight of the ministry in other Communions.”

I confess myself utterly unable to put in words any distinct or definite proposal that can be made by which this most difficult problem can be solved, or this underlying and almost insuperable difficulty can be removed. Indeed, the three things that are needed before this can be done are patience and prayer and conference. But there certainly are other ways, patent and possible, by which we can be so thrown together as to make such conferences possible and helpful. More and more, in the great conflict between Christianity and unbelief in its various forms, is the fact of the spread of most un-Christian, so-called religious movements, such as bald Socialism, and the abolition of the sacredness of marriage, reducing it to what is not freedom of love, but licentiousness of lust, about which we ought to get together and take counsel. Whether a man does or does not count episcopal ordination necessary to the valid ministry; whether a man does or does not hold to the Apostolic ordinance of Confirmation; whether a man does or does not believe in the baptism of infants, or even hesitates at the full

acceptance of the Godhead of Jesus Christ, we can, without appearance of compromising these fundamental facts of doctrine and order, work with them in trying to arrest the awful tendencies and theories which corrupt the very springs and sources of our modern life. And to get into touch with those not of our Communion, to come to know them, to meet with them, to have some association with them, some common ground on which to stand together, would, I am sure, rub off some edges, break down some walls, get a more eye-to-eye habit of looking into important questions, tend toward the possibilities not of conference only, but of agreement upon the real proportion and the right proportion between differences and agreements.

Going a little further in the same suggestion of methods, there are some things which seem patent and plain, unless we are to look *only* with the spiritual eye for the *spiritual* Christian unity, not manifested to the eyes of the flesh. I do not think it would do for us, in undertaking any conference, to suppose or to propose that the Preface to the Ordinal means that every minister of every name must come to us for ordination before he can be considered or authorized to minister *anywhere* in holy things. The Preface makes no such statement, but merely deals with the lawfulness of the exercise of the ministry in *this* Church. It neither does deny nor intend to deny the lawfulness of the ministry of other Churches *in* those other Churches, according to their rule of conveying Orders. In the next place, I think we must modify our expressions, and not talk too loosely and too lightly about schismatics and heretics. Applicable to the founders of various separations and to the leaders of different departures from the faith, I do not think that they apply, or ought to be applied, to people who have simply, from inheritance and tradition, become what they are, externally separated, and in certain ways differing from the polity and the teaching of this Church. Of course there are wide divergencies of belief, and still wider differences of opinion; but, after all, the great **fundamental verities** of the Christian faith are held by us all, except

among those who blatantly deny the deity of Jesus Christ. The break is functional, and not organic. Every human being baptized in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is not only in general terms a Christian, but is a member of the Body of Christ. And when one sees the abundant evidence of Divine blessing in the lives and services and teachings and zeal of other ministries, and the results of their ministry in the salvation of souls, while we may count them irregular, if validity means, what it must mean—that they avail to the saving of men's souls—it must mean that God counts them valid ministers, and that we must begin by recognizing them as valid, and offering them the gift that shall make them regular as well.

I believe, also, that we have got to take a more accurate interpretation of the rubric in the Confirmation Office, as well as a more careful rendering of the Preface to the Ordinal; that is to say, that that rubric does not mean that we cannot allow any person not confirmed ever to *receive* the Holy Communion from us. The language is carefully chosen to express what it means—the formal and regular admission to the Holy Communion, by which people are recognized as communicants; but it does not forbid unconfirmed people from time to time to receive the Holy Communion in our Churches. I venture to say (what I said in my address to my Convention last year) that in all dealings with the question of non-Episcopal Churches we ought, in thought and speech, to recall the story of Eldad and Medad, who “went not out into the tabernacle when the Spirit was poured” upon the other Elders; and yet Moses would not let Joshua forbid them to prophesy. And still more, in thought and speech, we ought to realize that we have something to learn from the Master's dealings with those who “cast out the devils in His name and followed not with the Apostles”; and yet Jesus would not let John forbid them. And I am sure that, while we are longing and praying for reunion along wider and more inclusive lines, we have need to be on our guard against increasing differences and divisions among ourselves.

In the very active agitation which is beginning again with no little exacerbation, there is danger of arraying men once more into hostile camps and opposing schools. There will be, I suppose, always a difference of opinion as to whether Elijah or Ahab is the troubler of Israel. Patient, within limits, with personal eccentricity and extreme expression in word and worship, let us beware lest self-indulgence, wilfulness, or easy-going endurance deepen differences into divisions, change schools into parties, turn theological opinions into articles of faith, and so we unfit ourselves by these divisions for proposing, or preparing for, any visible Christian unity in the world. But the persistent aggressiveness which thrusts into ears, willing or unwilling, Roman terms and Roman ways, teaching, in very exaggerated forms, private confession, and attaching an almost mystical and magical value to Communion received fasting, and reserving the Sacrament *not* for communicating the sick—this, to my mind, is liable not only to bring about divisions among ourselves, but is absolutely certain to hinder reunion with anybody else in the world, because Rome simply smiles at the priestly pretences, and the more serious Protestant Christians are not drawn towards, but drawn away from us by such statements as that this Church teaches that the solemn words "This is my Body, this is my Blood" *define* the real objective Presence in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, and that this means "the worship of the Lamb upon the Throne, the adoration of Christ truly present under the outward form of bread and wine."

In a most earnest paper written by a Russian priest, in reply to a letter of Mr. Pullan in the *Guardian*, the suggestion is made that before and apart from investigation or agreement in dogmatic detail, the one thing needed is an *entente cordiale*, a *unio cordium*. Of course this is the necessary preliminary, but it does not contain, or secure, or involve any visible Christian unity. And yet the great hope in the near and far future lies here. Everywhere, expressed in various ways, there is the deep desire to heal the breaches, to break down the barriers, to get together. It is in the air we breathe, it is in the atmosphere

through which we look. God grant it be not only a mirage ; but even if it be that now, it is a vision, please God—a vision that may become a reality of what is to come in God's way and in His time. And we have need to pray to be delivered from hindering that way or delaying that time by impatience, by impetuosity, by thought, or word, or act of wilful or unwitting opposition.



Jesus Christ and the Social Question.

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CHRISTIANS all wish to bring the whole of their lives under the obedience of Christ. No one would now maintain that a man's religion and his social conduct may be kept in watertight compartments. But when we take up our New Testaments in the hope of finding therein some clear guidance in politics or sociology, we are confronted with great difficulties. What kind of answer may we expect to find to the question, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Are we to look for direct guidance in our modern problems from the precepts of Christ recorded in the Gospels? Or, assuming that such complex questions cannot have been anticipated and solved in advance nearly 2,000 years ago, and under conditions widely different from our own, must we be content to ask what solution is most in accordance with the mind and spirit of Christ? What may we infer that He would have bidden us to do if He were to come among us now? The former method of inquiry seems at first sight the safer, because no one can trust himself to interpret the unspoken thought of Christ without bias from his own honest convictions. But a deeper and more critical study of the Gospels has proved that our Lord was not understood by His hearers to be legislating for a distant future. They believed that they had His authority for expecting a great catastrophe which should overthrow all existing social conditions, and in-