

## Some Thoughts on the Church of India.

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THE problem that India presents to the Christian Church faces us still in this year of grace 1912. It is this: How can the Church of India be made to gather native strength, so that it may be as indigenous, as racy to the Indian soil, as the Church of England is, let us say, to its own land, only in a richer, wider meaning of the term?

This may come about in one of three ways: The non-caste classes may one day be able to prove to the peoples of India the elevating power of the Gospel of Christ, when its force is widely felt over their large area for social, moral, and spiritual good. Or, from one of the northern centres of education, there may arise a religious leader who can focus the spiritual ambitions of India round the Person of our Lord. Or, again, some Indian Prince may, under the influence of Christian conviction, establish Christian institutions in his Raj; and the resultant blessing from God might point to him one day as the Christian ruler of a united Christian India.

Precedent for each of these methods could easily be found in the history of the Church; and a modern fulfilment in India even now may not be so far off as we are apt to think. The growing influence of the Christian masses in the Diocese of Madras might easily direct the religious impulses of India into wistful longing for the Christian's God. At any moment, from the Mission Colleges in the Dioceses of Calcutta or Lahore a leader might arise, with clear vision of the Person of Christ and of India's needs, who could lead her people into peace. It is possible that Central India might soon provide a Prince of exalted rank, who will take his stand as a Christian, and draw his people after him, through evangelization and education, into the fold of Christ.

It may be objected that the twin forces of Western civilization and Western faith have been omitted in this summary, but the sooner we realize that the Indian Church must stand on Eastern soil in Eastern hearts, the easier our task will be. India's evangelization will be done by her own sons. Our Western hold on India, religious and political, is, after all, only for the time. Our work will be complete when an Indian Christian King is acclaimed at Delhi, and an Indian Archbishop is seated on his throne. Then the amazing story will be truly written, and it will be seen how the destinies of that great land were placed for a while in trust with this little island in the Western Sea, and how, religiously and politically, we fulfilled our trust.

This we conceive to be the end ; but the end is far off yet, and meanwhile there is much to be done. Let us adjust our view.

1. First and chiefest stands the need of quick and living sympathy. Men of the mystic type are wanted more than most in India—men with sane, direct, intuitive sense of the realities that lie locked in bosoms, human and Divine. Such men are able to play upon the strings that control destiny. To them the vision of God in Christ is final and complete, and they move with naturalness and accuracy among the Divine mysteries. They cease to feel troubled about difficult details, when once they have seen something of what lies beyond. And all this knowledge enables them to move with equal ease amongst the secrets of the human heart. It simply lies open, and men rejoice to have it so, for love opens wide to love. A missionary once travelled for four days on the Indian Ocean. On board was a Hindu of high position, the Prime Minister of an Indian State, twice a guest of Queen Victoria at Windsor, in the train of his Prince. Night after night, on the clear, calm sea, long talks on the deepest things of God and man revealed a sympathy that could be felt. "I will pray daily for you," were the last words of the Hindu, "and we shall meet with God."

The higher educationist is a figure that looms large in modern missionary thought. In real life, a rather dour man

stands in the mental picture. Disciplined himself, he expects discipline and secures it. Order is Nature's first law, and so is his. Truths and facts of Faith are arranged in lecture-form under the enormous pressure of the task he has in hand, which is to draw out the best—physically, mentally, and spiritually—from the Indian boy. The work is done, and, as far as it can be, under present conditions, is grandly done. For devotion to it few can compare. But the task is growing far beyond his powers. Competition with well-equipped Government institutions presses harder year by year on heart and head. The evangel is in danger of losing its beauty and its joy in the severe outlines of its truth. Christian truth is not always easily recognized as "love in the head," nor its love as "truth in the heart." It seems as though the hostel work of Messrs. Holland and Tubbs at Allahabad has the future before it. There all the knowledge and sympathy of the private coach are at the disposal of the student, who seeks his responsible tuition in some central college, but who finds an able friend and counsellor at home whom he loves and trusts.

It is probable, too, that other methods of missionary work need more co-ordination in presenting this final and convincing appeal of Christian love. For instance, the medical man might join hands with the evangelist more frequently. A movable medical camp set up in the centre of a district that is being worked by evangelists, would give point and power to the spiritual message. To be able to say, "Take your sick yonder, a mile or two, for a deed of love, while you, strong ones, listen to a word of love from God," is a method that reminds of Christ. Or, again, the industrial mission might be more strongly developed to strengthen the pastor's hands, as he tries to advance the temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of his flock.

But love is at the heart of it all. Love is the wand of the enchanter that will rally Indian strength to the Indian Church.

2. In all our evangelization, Love with Truth will be the guiding motto, but in the development of the Indian Church

the emphasis will be the other way—Truth with Love. We must at all costs present the truth we see, orderly and complete, lest the Church develop on wrong lines ; but we know well that truth will never take its proper place without the welcome which love inspires.

For example, we are English Churchmen, and our convictions are not only our own, but they have endured the test of time ; and they must find acceptable presentation, if they are to have their place in the Indian Church that is to be. One great question before us is how to present effectively Episcopacy and Liturgy, our formal expressions of order and worship ; for we are convinced that these possess powers of endurance and continuity denied to other forms. We may be right or we may be wrong, but the appeal to history gives the verdict on our side, and we must be faithful to the truth we see.

But when we look at the facts, it is probably true that monarchical Episcopacy, as we understand it, is uncongenial to the Indian mind. His method of government from time immemorial is that of the *Panchayat*, which is most akin to Presbyterianism. Also there is no doubt that the Indian loves flowing speech as he loves flowing robes, and that the severely compact Collect is foreign to the whole temper of his thought and devotion. What, then, shall we do who feel that these things count in the long run ? As Bishop Montgomery suggests, we do detect a look of delicacy in the earnest faces of the younger denominations, and we wonder whether they will last.

With regard to Episcopacy, the challenge uttered by the Bishop of Bombay in a sermon at Oxford in October, 1908, must be taken up in deep earnest : “ I call upon the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge to set themselves to the task of studying over again the whole question of the origins of Episcopacy, with its bearing on the validity of ministry and Sacraments, and presenting to the Church a dispassionate, scientific, scholarly statement on the whole subject.” In all probability, the task has now been taken in hand by others besides the late Bishop of Salisbury, and the results will be welcomed by the

whole Church. Without attempting prophecy, one may for the present believe, from the tendency of modern research, that we are returning to the position of the older divines, Hooker, Andrewes, and Cosin. They saw that some Churches "have not that which best agreeth with the Sacred Scriptures . . . the Government that is by Bishops," and they "lament that men want that kind of polity or regimen which is best, and content themselves with that which . . . the necessity of the present hath cast upon them" (Eccl. Pol., III. xi. 16). But, on the other hand, they do not "press Episcopacy into the front rank of Christian verities," but maintain firmly that, while it is certainly necessary for the *bene esse* of the Church, it is not necessary for its *esse*. If the Church were to advance this plea lovingly and respectfully for the consideration of the Indian Church, with full conviction of its truth, we believe that Episcopacy would win its way by the very moderation of its appeal.

The same problem in another form presents itself for solution with regard to Liturgy. We probably all agree with the eminent divine who once said that if all men offered prayer always, as some men offer prayer sometimes, we should have no need of a Liturgy. But it is not so. The ancient prayers, "hot with the breath of all the saints," from David onwards, are our best support in public worship. Still, when all is said on this side, we need to get back to older ideals in public prayer. To quote from a recent well-known book: "When a trained congregation was interceding, the normal method seems to have consisted of three elements—(a) the bidding, or announcement of a topic of prayer, which might be extended into an address of several clauses explanatory or suggestive; (b) an interval in which prayer was made for the subject specified, either in silence, or in the form of some Litany or set of versicles; (c) a 'Collect,' summing up all the petitions so made in one public liturgical prayer said by the Bishop or priest."<sup>1</sup> If this be true, we can, with true historical continuity, offer the ancient

<sup>1</sup> "Some Principles of Liturgical Reform," Frere, p. 142.

freedom in worship that once was ours, but is, alas! ours no longer. It is quite true to say that our duty is to give India our best, and leave to them to make their own forms of approach to God; but the real question at issue is whether our English Liturgy as it stands to-day, is really the best that the West can give. There are sources of devotion in the Liturgies of the Greek Church which have been far too long unused. The doctrine of the immanence of God, rightly interpreted and expressed, will make a strong appeal to Indian hearts which are too often left cold by our methods of thought and speech to God concerning His transcendence. When we have given India the very best that the whole West can give, combined with the plasticity of our own ancient ideals, we may expect a warmer welcome to liturgical worship.

The truth is that we of the West have very far gone from original righteousness in the matters of our order and worship; and it will probably be found that the effort to adapt our methods to the spiritual "climate" of other lands will teach us lessons of no small value to the Church at home.

3. But the actual development of the Indian Church will probably proceed on lines that cannot as yet be clearly discerned. The contribution of the Anglican Church to the whole missionary enterprise is small compared with that made by other bodies. It has a keen cutting edge of devotion and of knowledge, but it distinctly lacks the weight of numbers behind it. All the more reason that the whole striking force should as far as possible combine; and it is through union with other missions that the Anglican contribution may be made to tell most forcibly in the Indian Church of the future. To take a concrete instance, the education of the people of the Punjab will inevitably become a matter of great importance, now that the centre of our power has been transferred to Delhi. Three educational institutions have already won great names—one in Delhi, in the south, under the Cambridge Mission; another in Lahore, in the centre, under the Presbyterians; a third in Peshawar, in the far north, under the C.M.S. Would

not a great accession of strength to Christian education arise from a federation of these three centres under the style and dignity of a Punjab Christian University? Many other instances of immense advantage accruing to the whole cause of missions by a combination of scattered forces might easily be given. They would all provide object-lessons of the reality of Christian comity, and at the same time give opportunity to each contributory stream to make itself felt in the future of the Indian Church.

So much for the relation of the mission bodies amongst themselves. Something may here be added in closing by way of their relation to the Indian Church. One well-known mission council seems to be organized on the principle of giving the Indian co-equal responsibility with the European—in other words, is trying hard to prove that unequal things are equal. A missionary will always, by force of character and training, dominate in council and in action. When the pace of the oxen is not and cannot be the same, is it wise to yoke them together, and expect no straining of the yoke? One section of the Indian Church is asking, and reasonably enough, for separate independent spheres, but side by side. Let the missionaries, they say, take over all the evangelistic, medical, and educational work; let us be responsible for the pastoral and industrial spheres of labour. Let us make our own mistakes, but we will make something else—a Church that an Indian can understand and love. The father has been carrying the grown-up son long enough, and the Indian's inability to stand alone is simply due to the fact that his father has not often let him try to walk by himself.

4. Such considerations as these will, we believe, further the end in view. The great command "Preach the Gospel" has been faithfully and wisely interpreted as involving educational, medical, industrial, pastoral, and literary work, all animated by the evangelistic spirit; but the winsome beauty of Christian life and love must shine through it all still more clearly, if it is to woo and win the Hindu heart for Christ. Our Anglican con-

tribution to the development of the Indian Church seems to need re-setting in the clearer light of modern thought, before it can take its true place in the spiritual history of India. And when it is so re-set, it will receive the careful attention that is its due, through a fuller co-operation with the work of other mission bodies in the same fields, and by a wiser recognition of the capacities of the Indian Church to develop on lines true to the genius of the Indian race.

National movements are in the air, and they are the sign of the times. Educational and social problems are being dealt with in terms of national life and aspiration, but they sink into insignificance beside the greatest problem of all—Religion. India is at heart religious. She is conscious of her spiritual powers, and aspires to spiritual development and dominion. Religion is of profound and final importance to the Indian mind. The great apostle of India will be the man who can capture and foster and focus the spiritual sympathies of India in one grand National movement, under the control of our Lord Jesus, the Captain of the world's salvation.

Let us pray that, called of God, he may soon arise.

