

[*Cheltenham Conference Paper.*]

FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES :

(b) IN THE DOMINIONS.

II.

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IN the findings of the World's Missionary Conference the following words occur : " It is true that in the matter of unity the Mission-field is leading the way, but it does not seem that the movement can advance far with safety, apart from the co-operation of the Church at home. It is undesirable that the links that bind the churches in the mission-field to their parent churches should be severed at too early a date, or that a Church should grow up in Japan, China or India that has not intimate relations with the Church at home, to which it owes its origin." To this statement a great number here to-day might subscribe even though it might require qualification in specific cases. If, however, this principle is accepted with regard to the mission-field, the fellowship of the Churches in our Colonies would seem to present a very strong case for the cause of Christian Unity, and possibly make all the running towards that goal in the near future. And for these reasons.

(1) The Colonies, in the first place, are to all intents and purposes new countries with practically nothing in common with older countries. They have no established customs to observe and no traditions to respect. They look forward and not backward. Their whole philosophy is idealistic. Their whole outlook is coloured by the new conditions with which they are surrounded and of their possible influence on their lives. The sense of fellowship and brotherhood is felt more acutely in new countries, where men and women of all classes are faced with the same difficulties to be overcome, and with the same inspiration for a fresh adventure.

(2) In the second place, they already possess both the elements of missionary propaganda and of home organization. There are—speaking especially of Canada—the missionary problems no less acute than in some parts of the foreign mission-field. The Bible for example, has to be translated into *III* different languages and dialects in order to reach every one in that great British Dominion. There are thousands of Chinese and Japanese, to say nothing of the Galicians, Czechs, Poles and Lithuanians. In addition to all these there are those who are called " old timers," or those descendants of the Selkirk settlers who have intermarried with Indian tribes and therefore present, to some extent, the same problems as do the heathen in other lands. Side by side are the emigrants from the motherland with those elements of religious perception which are at once old and new. These constitute a real and strong link with the

Home Church, and make it possible for the Colonies to take an independent step forward towards unity.

(3) Then there are, thirdly, elements of character arising from the broad acres of a great colony which at once sweep away any traditional prejudices and especially any tinge of insularity which one, alas, finds here at home. Those ideals which a huge territory creates must be of immense value to our spiritual as well as our national outlook, for there is a greater freedom from that narrowness and partizanship which insularity undoubtedly produces.

(4) There is, fourthly, an illuminating factor which may have a distinct bearing on the possibilities of Christian union, to be gathered from the independent legislation in social matters. Our Colonies are free to initiate any such schemes and to place them on the Statute Roll quite independent of the Home Government. As an illustration which will come home to us all, Canada has adopted Prohibition and has by the consent of her people settled it as the law of the land.

From these considerations there could be no better arena for the launching of any schemes for union that are possible. What are those possibilities.

1. Fellowship is a distinct advance on federation. Federation is practised to-day to some extent, but it cannot serve as great a purpose as fellowship rightly understood. It does not prevent overlapping. I speak of one township in Canada where I visited as one of the Mission of Help. It was on the whole a most delightful and friendly visit. I was met at the station by the Wesleyan minister, and at the mission services both he and the Baptist minister took part. Yet the spectacle that religion presented in that small township of less than 5,000 people in a radius of twelve miles was humiliating and saddening. Especially so to us Anglicans. There were fully ordained and able ministers sent out by the Wesleyan, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches. They were the best that could be found, and well paid and supported. These men were able to give their congregations the fullest privileges of their Church life as represented by their denomination. The Anglican Church, on the other hand, was trying to hold the fort for years with only a catechist who was not able even to pronounce the Absolution. Here was surely a waste of excellent material, for with a Union Church two ordained men would have been quite sufficient for the needs of that centre, while the others could be released for service at some other point which at present is untouched for lack of the living agent.

2. Fellowship of the Churches would mean aggression. The Church of Jesus Christ lives only by being aggressive! There is the greatest need for a wide spiritual aggression in both Canada and Australia to-day. In Canada the passion for real estate is leading towards a materialism which is having a deadening effect upon the whole community. In parts of Australia it is even worse. The younger generation is growing up without any knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To give an illustration from North Queensland. A show was expected in a certain township, but the day before it

arrived one of the parsons supported by the Colonial and Continental Church Society arrived for the first time in that place. He was hailed with delight by all the young folk, who greeted him with the question, "Are you the showman?" He replied in amazement, "Don't you know a parson when you see him?" They replied, "How should we? We have never seen one." This is typical and points to the absolute necessity of a spiritual aggressive. At present both Canada and Australia are in a formative condition. They are really waiting for the true mould which shall develop them nationally as well as spiritually. It is ever true that the value and progress of any nation is measured by those ingredients of character in its people without which no nation will live. But in the face of this absolute need of a great spiritual adventure there is the humbling fact that there is no Church or denomination strong enough or living enough to take the lead. I have not the slightest doubt that, if a national Canadian or Australian Church were established, it would impress itself on the life of their people at once and thus secure them not only for the Empire for ever, but also for the Church of Christ. Therefore if we of the mother Church and land want our Colonies to keep clear of the dry rot of materialism and agnosticism, of the paralysing effects of expediency or opportunism, of the incoherency and impotence of a divided Christendom; if we want those new nations, full of the lustre and glory of victors in the late war; if we want them to be handed down to posterity as a synonym for good men and modest women, for honest industry and fruitful labour, for disciplined youth and pious, honourable age, for the absence of vice in their new townships or misery in their new homes, then we of the older country of the mother land, with all our past sad experiences as a terrible warning, must help them to seek the only power possible for these things at the hands of a united ministry in a united Church which proclaims with one united voice, One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. Or again: who shall doubt that the missionary work would be increased a thousand-fold were that work of thrusting forth to the fields already white unto harvest entrusted to and performed by a United Colonial Church? The possibilities of world evangelization would be immense. Canada is only eleven days from Japan. Australia is less from those larger fields of India and the Straits settlements. I believe this to be gloriously possible, but it will only be so when a united Church filled with the one Spirit sends forth its Barnabas's and Sauls to proclaim, not sectarian Christianity, but the new spiritual Zion where Christ is all and in all.

3. Fellowship of the Churches would in time obviate any necessity for subtle distinctions between unity and uniformity which are a stumbling block towards reunion in many minds. Fellowship lifts the whole situation from the low level of polemics to the lofty spiritual atmosphere of eirenic. Fellowship involves more than either partnership, agreement or co-operation. It is founded always upon a common interest. It proclaims a unity not of organization, but of a common life. All the Churches are partakers of the Divine

nature. They are proclaiming a common salvation through the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. The fellowship of the Holy Ghost—a subject upon which we have been all meditating recently—is the response that Churches as well as individuals give to the strivings and leadings of that Blessed Spirit Who maketh men to be of one mind in an house.

Can we not therefore with faith and optimism look to the new nations which are arising in our Colonies for this practical interpretation of the Catholic Church of the future? Can we not hope, with those national ideals which have already cemented those great lands into one homogeneous whole, for a similar unity in their spiritual counterpart? Is it too much to believe that their freedom and independence shall, when spiritualized by the Blessed Spirit, find a way for its impress on the home Church and its missionary handmaid? I do not think it is! The Colonies are the new bottles of spiritual opportunity. They do not want the old wines on the lees of narrowness, sectarianism or foolish controversy. They will in the near future demand, and they will have the right to demand, the new wine of a holy enthusiasm, and a life-giving message for a world sick and tired of the old shibboleths and ready for that truly Catholic Church—that city which is coming down out of Heaven.

This is our vision of the fellowship of the Churches in our Colonies. It is no mirage, deceiving to the eyes through mists which arise from Round Table Conferences or from the specious reasonings which cloak the timidity of leaders. It is bound to come. "Though it tarry wait for it, for it will not tarry." The one Lord, in whom all believe is preparing it. He asks us to help Him, and I am certain He will not ask in vain. Yea, rather that even now you are saying in the words of the great builder of the early Church, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

THE BISHOP OF MOMBASA'S TESTIMONY.

Speaking at the Cheltenham Conference, the Bishop of Mombasa referred to India and East Africa, pointing out the problems before the national Churches. The Church of India, he said, needed the thought and prayer and contribution that all nationalities in India could bring into it. The Church at home must move with the Church in the mission-field, for, unless something did happen, the native Churches might be cut off from the Home Church. In Africa there was a tendency to cleavage between the white man and the black man, and the Church of Christ was the force to bring them together. Referring to the working of the Kikuyu Alliance, it had many encouragements, but it had emphasized some of the difficulties as well. Four Communion were linked up with the Alliance and four were not. The difficulties were not all on one side. Difficulties had come into being such as they had never thought of before, but they were out to meet difficulties and to overcome them. Questions of all sorts were constantly arising, and were referred to the Alliance. The beneficial effect of the Alliance was seen in many directions; the Government, for example, now always applied to the Alliance in regard to matters upon which they needed information or guidance, whereas when the Churches were separate they were ignored. But there was one great weakness; at present they could not meet together at the Table of the Lord, and he hoped that Christians at home would pray earnestly that that difficulty might be done away with.