

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PATH TO REUNION.

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ON every attempt at formulating plans for Reunion among the churches, made either by Anglicans or Free-Churchmen, how often this note is struck in conclusion ; that we must not be in a hurry, or that the times are not yet ripe for the proposed changes. What is meant thereby, presumably, is that although the facts of the case remain the same, the spirit in which hopefully to approach them is not yet born. We have still to wait for the Spirit of God to move upon the waters.

Obviously, the facts are the same. Whatever may have been the political circumstances which gave rise to the secessions from the Established Church which we now call Free Churches, we know that they laid stress on certain " notes " of Christianity, which they felt to be essential to it ; and we are justified in believing that these distinctive points-of-view persist in their descendants to-day. Can these divergent attitudes be reconciled, or transcended, or transformed, so that Reunion is made practicable thereby ? There has been much discussion of every feature of the situation ; appeal has been followed by manifesto, statement by reply and counter-reply, proposals by alternative proposals, while crucial points have been dealt with, in turn, by those who would erect them either into insuperable barriers, or evade them altogether.

All the time, we must maintain, the ultimate facts remain the same. They are either such as to make Reunion possible, or they are not. When people instinctively speak of the time not being ripe for the proposed changes, they are really indicating just where the crux of the matter lies. It is not the basal facts which must be changed, it is rather that the accretions in the way of prejudices and acquired attitudes which have gathered around these facts must first be cleared away. And that, as anyone can see, will take time.

While, however, we wait, there is a possibility that the growth of the desired change of feeling may be hindered, or even stopped. When the glow of inspiration was upon the Lambeth Conference, and the Appeal was accordingly issued, there followed a great wave

of response from all sections of the Church in so far as cordial welcome of the Appeal went. Christian men, on all sides, thought that they were glimpsing the dawn of a better day. But with the inevitable delay in proceeding from a preliminary statement to actual proposals for Reunion, there has arisen a critical spirit, which, springing from the old-time prejudiced points of view, is endangering the cause of Reunion. From the Anglican side the generous sentiment of the Lambeth Appeal has been succeeded by niggardly proposals for a tentative intercommunion of church life, which revive all the old hard situations and which have a desperate facility for hurting sentiment while granting concessions.

Surely, if we were to execute a radical change in the way in which we face the matter of Reunion, and giving over worrying the bone of controversy, were to devote ourselves to the task of creating the spirit among ourselves which would either resolve our difficulties or transcend them, we should see the true position of the facts once for all, and know whether Reunion were practicable or not. William James taught, as is well known, that our passionate and volitional nature lay at the root of our convictions: "Our passionate nature," he says, "not only lawfully, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds, for to say, under such circumstances, 'Do not decide, but leave the question open,' is itself a passionate decision, just like deciding 'yes' or 'no,' and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth."

Let us try to put the matter psychologically: Our judgments are formed largely by prejudice. We are led to accept certain conclusions in most matters, either because we have been reared in an atmosphere congenial to them, or because they are compatible with the way we are accustomed to look at the world, or because they are traditional in our particular class in society, and are so instinctive that we cannot conceive of ourselves violating them. Only thus can we explain why so many worthy men, who habituated to use their minds in the same way, and trained to the full use of their faculties, differ so much in their conclusions. So it is that it is largely a question of psychological considerations, and the study of motives, when one comes to study the problem of Reunion.

How strongly prejudice works! The writer heard a well-known Free Church minister a short time ago, speaking on the subject

of Reunion. After detailing the work which was being done by informal conferences between representatives of the Anglican and Free Churches, he came to the question of re-ordination, and the validity of non-episcopal ordination. "I come of a clerical family," he exclaimed; "both my father and grandfather were ministers, and if you ask me to deny the validity of my orders, you ask me to give away the inheritance of my fathers, and this thing I cannot do." His exclamation may not have expressed a logical, but it certainly voiced a practical objection to the cause of Reunion; and it is just these practical objections and their removal which we must consider at the present time.

He would be a bold man who, in the present unformed state of modern psychology, would attempt to dogmatize concerning the conclusions to which it appears to lead, as though these were the axiomata of a complete and well-grounded science; yet even now sufficient data are available to suggest a "method" which should yield valuable results in the attempt which ought surely to be made, in the interests of Reunion, to remove underlying obstinate prejudices.

Exponents of the New Psychology tell us that the original causes of our prejudices are forgotten by the conscious mind, but are operative in the subconscious, in what seems to us a blind irrational way. We can only say, however, that they work irrationally, because we have forgotten the prime cause, and cannot see the reason for the attitude of mind which we call prejudiced. For instance, it may be irrational for a man to hesitate to commence a new piece of work on a Friday, if he simply follows custom; but it would not have been irrational in the people of that generation in which the custom originated, and who abstained from making any new adventure then, because it was the day of the Cross.

Taking a wider view of mental facts, we are to believe that our character and conduct are mainly shaped by "complexes," which are formed in the subconscious region of the mind. A "complex" is a system or relationship of mental factors, wishes, memories, tendencies, and so on, which have come to be grouped around some dominant idea, so that the whole forms an organic unity, and being highly charged with the emotional element, operates powerfully in giving the feeling-tone to conscious life. Here, no doubt, we do discover a true factor of capriciousness in mental life. Given

the presence of the emotional impulse in sufficient intensity, it will gather around it accretions, which seem at first sight incompatible and incongruous. The burnt child fears the fire, but he may also fear anything which is merely luminous: the man who has made his way in the world may not only be aggressive in attitude, but he will probably be democratical in politics and be insensibly drawn to Free Churchmanship, because it seems to give ampler room to the layman, than the hierarchical system of other religious bodies.

When we bear in mind, therefore, the history of the relationship of the bodies of Christians, whom to-day we know as the Free Churches, with the national Church from Reformation times; the persecution followed by counter-persecution, the admixture of political motives with religious professions, the lapses from righteousness in dealing with discomfited opponents, which have marred the conduct on both sides in this long-drawn struggle for freedom of religious expression; and when, moreover, we realize that all these experiences have left noxious residua in the subconsciousness of the religious life to-day, and that not one out of fifty has any full knowledge of the origin of these vast amorphous "complexes": we can see with a clearness of vision which amounts to despair, that to retrace our footsteps, and to endeavour out of this evil inheritance to achieve reconciliation and Reunion, is a task for angels, and psychologically impossible.

While we may reasonably despair of making anything of the relics of the past, we are led by the positions to which the New Psychologists are arriving, to believe that there is a new way open to us, by which we may so modify these same, that not only may they be rendered innocuous, but, on the contrary, may be made into useful allies. Complexes, we are told, can be modified, and can be broken up altogether. They can be broken up, if it is possible to bring to the consciousness of the individual concerned the circumstances and the occasion, which may have obtained in early childhood, which gave rise to the regnant obsessive thought.

This position has been reached by the actual data which psychotherapy has yielded. Patients suffering from hysterias, obsessive thoughts, or unreasonable dreads, have had these ills removed when they have been able to bring the repressed memory to light, and have been able to face up to their trouble. A complex, on the

other hand, can be modified, by way of sublimation, if it can be suitably attacked. We are familiar with the fact of sublimation; we are not always so cognizant of its cause. The boy, notorious for his dare-devil disposition, matures into the intrepid explorer, or dauntless pioneer: a Saul, exceedingly bitter against the Church of Christ, becomes Her most zealous champion.

Now, such sublimation is not accomplished by the action of the will, nor by the direct operation of the reason. The more we actively attempt to change ourselves, the more we defeat our own ends. There comes into operation what is termed "the law of the reversed effort." The will to do a certain thing, especially if effort is necessary to incorporate it into mental life, most certainly will induce the counter-suggestion.

Until quite recently, psychologists were unable to suggest a cure, though they could correctly diagnose mental aberrations. It has been reserved for the New Nancy School of Psycho-therapy to make the discovery of the manner in which this can be done. The subconscious is under the control of the *imagination* and not of the will, and the method by which the imagination is brought to bear upon it, consists in a combination of auto-hypnosis and auto-suggestion. The patient is taught to thoroughly relax both his mind and his body, until a state is reached which is that of the dreaminess which exists when one lies between the waking and the sleeping state. Then a formula is used, which has been carefully obtained by means of continual alterations in it, according to the results which have accrued from its use, it may be a positive command, or statement, or a mental picture, and this is repeated to himself by the patient, until sleep or the waking state supervenes. It has been found that such auto-suggestion works itself right down into the subconscious, into the region where the complexes are operative, and that when there, it so modifies and re-groups the blindly working factors of the subliminal mind, that the result is that a new mentality, proper to the suggestion used, is progressively built up, which makes possible the realization of the ideal at which the patient aims.

The precise manner in which auto-suggestion works, is not known; but, generally speaking, it brings to pass a releasing of ideas, emotions, and their correlative quasi-instinctive activities, to the action of the intelligence, and so to the control of the will of conscious

life. We must try to conceive of phases of life, based on past experiences of the race, and, coming nearer to human computations, historical vicissitudes, which have become buried in the subconscious, and which, from the point of view of intelligence, have come to occupy a faint place beside it in consciousness, coming into dominance once more by being released into consciousness and being modified profoundly, under the discriminating glance of the intelligence. Instinctive feelings, prejudices, and what people call "points of view" are all states of mind which are controlled by subconscious processes. In all of them the power of forming associations is inhibited, and there is an element of obsession present, by reason of which the attitude persists. Ideas stand stock still, shut up to their one monotonous function of reiteration.

Thus we are led to see the hopelessness of the quest after Reunion which tries to approach it by way of arguments derived from the historical past. The history of the churches, both doctrinally and in matters of church regiment, is such that the more it is examined and discussed, the more luxuriantly the tares of discord grow. Prejudices are revived, and "attitudes" receive fresh strength. Again, to do nothing, on the "times are not yet ripe" principle, is equally fatal to Reunion. For the life of men and societies is always in a state of equilibrium or balance. Such "balance" is a biological necessity, and beyond the control of the reason or will. So it comes to pass, that all the while we dwell apart we unconsciously justify ourselves in doing so. To say that the times are not yet ripe, is really to acknowledge that prejudice is too strong, and that, after all, it is better to let it disappear by the slow and gradual process of time.

The nature of the subconscious mind, and the way in which suggestion works therein, compels us to ask whether there may not be a path to Reunion, which is wholly psychological and experimental.

With the data of the New Psychologists before us we can see thus much; that if there could be held up before the churches a vision, or luminous idea of Reunion, which would sink down into the heart and conscience of believers, there would eventuate such a general re-orientation towards this great matter, that the end would be achieved easily and cheerfully. We, as united, would feel that we had been released from an old bad nightmare of a stubborn

prejudice, and that somehow we felt free, with our feet set in a large place.

How should we proceed, in order to impress the imagination of the churches? Obviously, we are to seek for a formula which shall make the appropriate "suggestion." It must be something clear and plain, and easily understandable by all. It must embody the whole idea of Reunion. The suggestion must not be spasmodically applied, it must be regularly given.

Now, what is there which would lay hold of the imagination of religious people, and which would be so succinct a formula, as that which has been so often advocated; the interchange of pulpits and the practice of intercommunion. From other points of view than that of the psychological, such intercourse between the churches has been advocated; but it has not been largely entered on, because of difficulties of the intellectual order. There have been reasons against such proceedings. We are told that such ways are pernicious short cuts, which only lead to the quagmire of vague undenominationalism; or that they are in the nature of compromises, which, because they do not rest on principle, are bound to retard the movement towards Reunion.

Statements such as these have been made repeatedly, and yet it does not seem to occur to people to ask what justification there is for them.

Surely, it has always been true that the character of society has been according to the social heredity which it has inherited. Hence, intercourse between different nations, or churches, or the groups composing any society, has been the one grand means of building up the idea and ideal of unity, so that, wherever, on other considerations, it was possible, it has been accomplished. When people deprecate any attempt to change our social heredity in this matter of Reunion, they stand confessed as not having understood the nature of the problem. Such people have inherited a social tradition hostile to Reunion, and so long as they go back on the past, or, in the intellectual order of things, argue about positions and principles, they only render the position more hopeless, and themselves to be more outside the stream of the forces making and shaping the world of the future.

But to return to the nature of the psychological experiment which is here advocated. It would be desirable that there should

be an interchange of pulpits at regular intervals, say, four times a year. The idea behind such exchanges, and the things to be hoped from such intercourse would be explained to the faithful, by their respective ministers, some time before the exchange took place. Where definite opposition to the proposal was met, the project could be dropped, temporarily. It would be an outrage, indeed, against every psychological principle to bring pressure to bear upon an unwilling people.

Interchange of pulpits at *regular* intervals would obviate such interchange from being only occasionally made; it would relieve the Bishops of the responsibility of deciding whether any particular interchange were desirable, and it would also relieve the timid incumbent who believes in the cause of Reunion, but who is deterred from asking his Bishop for permission to make an interchange of pulpits, by the fear that he would be looked upon as unsound in churchmanship.

Above all, it would be a sound scheme, psychologically. The presence of the strange minister, his words, and what he stood for, would constitute a powerful suggestion to the congregation that Reunion was desirable. Reunion would be no longer a matter of church-newspaper talk, but a living reality for the time being, a lively symbol of what might be.

The suggestion would occur regularly, before its effect could have waned, and thus over all the country there would be this tremendous psychic impulse delivered, again and again, until an irresistible desire for Reunion would be born in the heart and conscience of believers; and the thing would be done. What had been the ideal for so long, the thing which people had emotionally thought of, and desired, would have been translated into actual fact.

A means, still more effective, is open to us in our endeavour after Reunion. This is, the practice of intercommunion. It is well known that suggestions work most effectually when given to one in the hypnotic state, and that auto-suggestions can best be applied when the experimenter is in that dreamy, abstracted state which happens between the waking and the sleeping condition, or when the mind is given up to contemplation, and is withdrawn from outer things. Hence, those of a mystical temperament are most apt to undergo profound changes of view-point, to receive intuitions which carry so much assurance of their validity that they

are closely followed, as the ends to which life ought to be uninterruptedly directed. As Royce has said: "Mystics are the only thoroughgoing empiricists." The New Nancy School makes much of the importance of the mental state of the patient; and suggestions are made, only when the proper state of hypnosis or of mental vacuity, together with, and induced by bodily relaxation, has been attained. Now, if the practice of intercommunion could be made under appropriate circumstances, we should appear to be making (but from a very different motive) just the necessary preparation which psychologists find so useful for the suggestions which they make to have due effect. If a certain number of church people in each parish, who were in the fullest sympathy with the project, could be got together for a quiet time of prayer and meditation; following the methods of the "Fellowship of Silence," so fruitful in the hands of men like the Rev. Cyril Hepher; then the appropriate mental state would be induced in which the suggestion could work. Such a meeting together might be made at the Nonconformist Church at which fellowship in the Sacrament was to take place, some time before the service commenced. Then the little company would join their Free Church brethren in the sacred building, sitting separately from the rest, and would receive the elements either first or last so that their identity and its significance might not be lost. When worshippers are met together to join in a common act of adoration, and when the rite is a mystical one, where only "faith can touch and handle things unseen"; there, if ever, we have the very conditions which, under God, could be utilized to so drive home a suggestion, that it would be the most fruitful of result.

These regularly-set times of intercommunion might very well coincide with the recurrent interchange of pulpits, and would be reciprocal as between Anglicans and Free Churchmen. A selected band of earnest people from each church or chapel would undertake thus to prepare themselves, and to practise intercommunion, in the spirit of that saying of William Penn made many years ago: "Humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devoted souls are everywhere of one religion, and we want to be helped to learn to recognize, and to live in this oneness."

Divergent theories of ordination, and the nature of the sacrament of Holy Communion make the idea of intercommunion an impossible one with many people. Here principle, based on latent

prejudice, comes into view. But we cannot too often insist that, things being what they are in mental life, the cause of Reunion is not primarily concerned with principle and the past, but with faith and the future. We must assume our premisses provisionally, and argue forwards, in order to test them by their consequences.

Mental gestation precedes the birth of every movement. And how can there be this necessary preliminary without such intercourse as is here advocated? We hear much of social psychology in these days, and doubtless it will bulk more and more largely in the future, and influence the ideas of statesman and educationist, social worker, and religious person alike. It would be a notable contribution to psychological science and practice, if the experiment advocated could be put into practice, and brought to a successful conclusion. There is no society on earth to compare with the Church for supplying the conditions which can make such a psychological experiment a possibility. Let us see that the children of this generation shall not be wiser than the children of light. The consonant voice of the united faithful, raised in praise to Almighty God, would for ever form a rhetorical premise to every effort in social- or mass-psychology thereafter.

Religious insight is mainly dependent upon the emotions to which the religious imagination appeals, so that we may say that thought, guided by interest, is the royal road to enlightenment. The profound modification of the subconscious complexes which result from suggestion, may have as cause the tapping of a deeper level of life where the Spirit of God dwells and works. We most aptly speak of the method of His work in the heart, as an "influencing." We believe He is the agent in "conversion," and wherever great psychic changes, whether individual or social, happen.

Especially is He responsive when our heartfelt cry is: "Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire." Where earnest Christian people long for Unity and stir up their desires, and give them a common direction by meeting together in order to gain a foretaste of what might be, then we believe that a great obstacle to His working in the Church will have been removed. Our present disunity must, indeed, grieve the Holy Spirit of God. For he is a Person, "and it is the essence of personality to include the many in the one as the means of its realization." Yet by our divisions we hinder the work that He could do in the Church of Christ. We,

ourselves, grow and develop by spiritually incorporating others in ourselves. We assimilate persons, who are alien to us at first, in fellowship and friendship; and make use of their capacities, and receive and reciprocate their love. If only the Holy Spirit could so work among the scattered members of the body of Christ, we should not only have a united witness for God to the world, but a new Christian ethos would be created which would be suited to the world-situation as it is to-day.

Whatever we may think concerning Reunion, the situation is such that the intellectual method of approach seems devoid of any hope of its solution. We have debated principles, and "explored avenues" *ad nauseam*. Already a change is taking place: in every pronouncement made in these days, from both sides, the gist of it is this; that we must try to draw more closely together, and must come to understand each other better. Hence, our contention that the approach must be psychological, is virtually granted. Only, instead of letting the gradual process of time work the change, we would effectively apply psychological principles to the task, and seize the present opportunity, when Reunion is a "live" option, of settling the matter once for all.

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CHURCH QUARTERLY REVIEW.

THE CHURCH QUARTERLY REVIEW for January contains two articles on the Modernist position. Both deserve careful reading, for Canon Headlam and Professor Goudge deal shrewd blows at the central defences of the Modernist citadel. It is a pleasure to read argument conducted on so high a level, even if we have to make an exception of Canon Headlam's description of Professors Lake and Jackson as "quite second-rate scholars." The Rev. F. D. V. Narborough gives us an incisive criticism of Schweitzer's argument under the title of "The Messianic Secret." Dr. Pearce astonishes us by the disclosure of the number of ordination candidates in Worcester Diocese six centuries ago. We asked ourselves the question, "Was its Bishop a man to whom all who sought orders and could not obtain them elsewhere had recourse?" The Rev. W. C. Bishop is illuminating in his study of the Early Roman Liturgy, and Dr. Box shows that he never misses any contribution made to the history of Judaism. The Reviews—especially that of Professor Webb on Alexander's Gifford Lectures—are worthy of their setting in this excellent number of a learned and readable quarterly.