

able to join in true unity of spirit while we long for and pray for the "hastening of Thy kingdom; that we, *with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name*, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory."



## The Problem of Home Reunion.

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THE subject is a large one. It involves the mutual relations of Churches and denominations in Canada, in Australasia, in South Africa, in the United States. It involves the future of the rising Native Churches in Asia and Africa. But I confine myself in this paper to the question of Home Reunion in Great Britain. We have all rejoiced over the utterances of the Lambeth Conference on Home Reunion. We might have wished them to go further, but we realize that they mark an important step in advance.

I put aside, for the time, the question of Establishment. Apparently, for the present, the State connection of the Church of England is fatal to any projects of reunion with Nonconformists, so many of whom conscientiously hold that Establishment is in itself wrong, not merely in a political sense, but having regard to the spiritual position of the Visible Church of Christ. For the purpose of the discussion, we must assume either that these objections have been waived, or that the Church has been disestablished.

It is important to distinguish between Union and Intercommunion, which are often confused. There is Intercommunion between the different Churches within what is now called the Anglican Communion; but not Union. If there were Union, the Irish Church and the American Church could not alter their Prayer-Books, which both have done. Both of them, and the Scottish Episcopal Church, are self-governed, and we have no

voice in their arrangements. It is the same, more or less, with the Church in the great self-governing Colonies—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. Some American and Canadian Churchmen are doubtful even about the Central Consultative Body proposed by the Lambeth Conference, which, although it would have no binding authority, they regard as likely in practice to limit their freedom. And yet between all these Churches there is Intercommunion. You can invite any of their clergy (subject to certain mild regulations), not merely to preach, but to take your services; and if you visit any of those lands you can do the same for them.

Now, suppose negotiations were entered upon between the Church of England and the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. If Union were contemplated, we should have to arrange for a common government, whether it be Parliament or Convocation or a General Assembly, or some entirely new body. All Church laws would have to apply equally to England and Scotland. If the Episcopate continued here, it would have to be there also. If it were not there, it could not be here.

But Intercommunion would be quite different. Each Church would retain its independence, and might remain just as it is now. What, then, would Intercommunion mean? It would mean practically just what it does between the Anglican Churches above mentioned. Men talk as if only exchange of pulpits were involved, but that is only a part of the matter. Many of us would be delighted to hear some of the great Scotch scholars and divines, from whom we all learn so much, either in St. Paul's Cathedral or in our parish churches; and also to see our Bishops and other leaders in St. Giles's or Free St. George's at Edinburgh. The American Church, wisely recognizing the "prophetic gift" in men outside its pale, has lately altered one of its Canons so as to allow a man not ordained to its ministry to preach, subject to the Bishop's sanction; and this virtually admits their own laymen or the ministers or laymen of other denominations. A similar freedom with us would enable the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's to invite to the pulpit, not merely Dr. Horton or

Mr. Meyer, but Cardinal Bourne, or Mr. Voysey, or Mr. Blatchford. Enable them—that is, if they wished, and they certainly would not wish. But it is well to remember that liberty to do right almost necessarily involves liberty to do wrong also. All this, however, is not Intercommunion. Intercommunion with the Scottish Churches would mean that you could invite Presbyterians to officiate at your Communion services or any others, just as you can invite Irish or American clergymen.

So much to clear the ground. Let us now confine ourselves to the position south of the Tweed. I need not describe it. It is sufficiently familiar. But think for a moment what St. Paul would probably say to it. Surely something like this: "What! You boast of being 'all one in Christ Jesus'; you put those blessed words over the Keswick tent; you exchange compliments on Bible Society platforms; you read each other's books, and sing each other's hymns; yet you put up rival synagogues in every village, almost in every street! No united worship in your churches; no gathering as one body around the Table of the Lord! Are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men? If I come again, I will not spare!"

In fact, the thing is wrong! While it lasts, we are quite right to minimize its evil effects by manifesting the spiritual unity which, after all, does exist among all true Christians. But I deprecate the position being defended. I object to the doctrine that as we are one in Christ outward separation does not matter. It does matter. The whole Christian Church is the weaker for it—much the weaker. Granted that God has overruled it for good in many ways. Nevertheless, it is wrong. The divisions at Corinth were divisions within one Church, like our internal divisions between High, Low, and Broad. St. Paul condemned even them: what would he have said to rival external organizations, had they been set up there, or at Ephesus?

This paper is to consider what remedy is possible. Let us look at the meaning, and the possibility, of both Union and Intercommunion. Take the latter first.

1. It is one thing to imagine Intercommunion between the Churches of different peoples—say, between the Church of England and the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. It is quite another thing to imagine Intercommunion of several Churches or denominations within the same area. I would say to any clergyman: "Take your own town or parish: can you imagine Intercommunion, as already defined, between your church and the Baptist or Methodist church opposite? We are sometimes told that it already exists between the different Nonconformist denominations. Yes, to a small extent—that is, they do exchange pulpits and services; but only occasionally. For the most part, each goes its own way. The Council of the Free Churches does not prevent the quite natural and inevitable rivalry between this and that chapel. Intercommunion between them and us would mean, in practice, our going on, ordinarily, much as we do now. The Wesleyan Conference would still rule the great Wesleyan Society. The Congregationalist and Baptist congregations would still be individually independent—each a complete "Church" in itself, acknowledging no authority over it. The Church of England would still be under the same laws and government as before; but now and then, say for Lent Services or Harvest Thanksgivings, you would invite your Methodist or Baptist neighbour to preach; when you were planning a holiday, you could include him among the men available to act as your *locum tenens*; and you, in your turn, would take his place when invited. Your people could attend your early celebration one Sunday, and his "ordination" the next. That would be Intercommunion. Do you like the prospect?

2. Union would be quite a different thing. Union means amalgamation; coming under one authority, one set of laws, one system of public worship, of patronage, of discipline. It need not mean uniformity. Large liberty might be allowed, but it would be allowed by the one supreme authority. Societies or Orders within the Church might have their own rules as regards liturgical or extempore worship, plain or choral services,

black gown, surplice, vestments, or the layman's frock-coat, and so forth. A Methodist Order might have its class meetings; a Baptist Order might be excused baptizing children; an Anglo-Roman Order might be allowed incense and reservation; but all would be within the limits which the United Church would lay down.

Consider how such an arrangement could be effected. Are we to contemplate a united Conference of the Church of England and, say, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Wesleyans, the Primitive Methodists, the English Presbyterians, the Friends, and the Salvation Army, each body with one vote in the negotiations? No one would suggest this at home; but it is what is frequently suggested for Native Churches abroad. This, however, I do not discuss here.

But do you mean the Church of England on one side, and all the rest as one body on the other, with equal voice? That would be fair in a sense. But then comes in the voice of history. There was one Church in England once, both before and after the Reformation—barring, in the latter case, some clergy and laity who claved to the Roman allegiance. Now, that one Church was, and is, the Anglican Church. What of the other bodies of Christians? As a matter of fact they were, and are, seceders. People speak of the "Established Church" and the "Free Churches" as though they were always separate organizations; but history tells a different tale. We may, if we like, allow that secession was justifiable; certainly we may allow that the fault was largely our own; but this does not alter the fact. The brethren of the separation, as they have been called, did belong to us once, and they did leave us, while we stayed where we were. Therefore the word which Churchmen naturally use is not Union, but Reunion; and they mean by that term the seceders coming back. However generous we may be in spirit, that is what is meant.

The real question is, On what conditions can they come back? and what concessions can we make to induce them to come back? I can scarcely imagine a more complicated

problem. Public worship, patronage, property, finance, discipline, and the future mutual relations of existing churches and chapels, all are involved. The problem would demand the highest qualities of statesmanship.

It is commonly said that all would be easy but for one great obstacle—Episcopacy. I do not in the least agree that all would be easy apart from Episcopacy. But let us at all events face that question.

The American Church, some years ago, proclaimed what is called the Quadrilateral, as “supplying the basis” for “Home Reunion,” and the Lambeth Conference of 1888 adopted it. The four “articles” forming it were: (1) the Old and New Testaments; (2) the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds; (3) the two Sacraments; (4) the Historic Episcopate. Observe that they are not systems, ethical or doctrinal, ancient or modern. They are definite and tangible historic things—the Historic Canon of Scripture, the Historic Creeds, the Historic Sacraments, the Historic Episcopate.

But it is said: Why include the Historic Episcopate, and thus “bang, bolt, and bar” the door against non-Episcopalians? And then ensues minute controversy as to the exact date from which Episcopacy prevailed in the early Church, and as to its exact character. This does not seem to me to be relevant. All admit that in the post-Apostolic age there was no complete or settled organization, and that the Diocesan Episcopate, while very early in the East, was later in the West. Nevertheless, the time came, after certainly no long interval, when it was universal. Certainly it was before either the Historic Creeds or the Historic Canon of Scripture.

This, in my judgment, involves no mechanical theory of Apostolic Succession. But one thing is certain—the Anglican Church did not invent the Episcopate. Our fathers never deliberately adopted it in imitation of some other Church; they simply *derived* it, exactly as they *derived* the Canon of Scripture, the Creeds, and the Sacraments. Suppose there was at some obscure date or other a break in the succession—I do not say

there was; I imagine not—but if there was, what does it matter? The Anglican Episcopate is as old as the Anglican Church; it is, as a matter of fact, historic.

We often hear Evangelical speakers say that Episcopacy is not of the *esse* of the Church, but only of the *bene esse*. I sometimes think, to judge by the utterances of some, that they really mean, not *bene esse*, but *male esse*; while I, for my part, entirely believe in the *bene esse*. That does not mean that every Bishop is a good Bishop, any more than *male esse* would brand every Bishop as a bad Bishop. I speak of the system.

But observe that the Quadrilateral does not say that the Historic Episcopate is of the *esse* of a Church. It only says that it is of the *esse* of the Anglican Church or Churches. If thirteen hundred years, or more, are not enough to settle that, it is hard to say what length of time would settle anything! I notice that the recent Lambeth Encyclical speaks of “non-Episcopal Churches,” which is sufficient evidence that the assembled Bishops did not consider the Episcopate absolutely essential to the existence of a Church; and we are sure that many of them regard, say, the Presbyterian Scottish Churches as true branches of the one Church Catholic. But these are not, and cannot be, parts of the Anglican Communion. Even if we arranged Intercommunion with them, that would not make them Anglican.

Still, I may be asked again: Why “bang and bolt and bar” the door of Home Reunion by insisting on the Historic Episcopate? I reply by a counter question: What do you propose? What is your own scheme of Reunion? I do not mean Intercommunion, I mean Union—that is, one United Church in England. Do you suggest that Bishops should be abolished, and that we should adopt the Presbyterian or Congregationalist system? If there is one United Church, it must either have Bishops or not have Bishops. Which do you mean? And if you retain the Episcopate, you necessarily bring under it all the members of the Church. Why, then, complain of the Quadrilateral?

We ought to observe the careful language of the Quadri-lateral. It does not involve episcopal palaces and seats in the House of Lords. It does not even involve special garments or special titles. It recognizes a possibly great variety in local circumstances and arrangements. The words are: "The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church." What could be wiser or more liberal?

But it is quite another thing to insist on Episcopal ordination as the only valid ordination, or to deny to the Nonconformist's Lord's Supper the virtue of a true Sacrament. And nothing is more hopeful than the evident desire of the Lambeth Conference to smooth the path of non-Episcopalian ministers in rejoining our Episcopal Church, by "authorizing arrangements" for "the period of transition," "which would respect the convictions of those who had not received Episcopal Orders." The words are no doubt vague, but at least they show a genuine sense of the real difficulty and a genuine desire to find an acceptable solution.

It seems to me, therefore, that we cannot possibly hope for Reunion except on the basis of the Historic Episcopate; unless, indeed, we are prepared to abolish Episcopacy, and thus break a practical continuity which has lasted for at least seventeen or eighteen centuries. But I hope I have shown that the Episcopate is by no means the only obstacle, and that the whole problem is a most complicated one. And when we bear in mind the question of Establishment in addition to all the other questions, it is impossible to be sanguine of the early success of the best-conceived efforts. I for one deeply regret this; but I cannot shut my eyes to facts. All the more, however, am I grateful to the Bishops at Lambeth for not refraining from giving utterance to the longings of their hearts.

Finally, may I indulge in a dream? I seem to see in my dream the Church of England, filled with the spirit of love and self-sacrifice, saying to the State: "Let us separate—in a friendly way. We will not stand upon our rights. For the sake of the

cause of true religion in our land we will not fight over our property ; we will accept the awards of an impartial body of arbitrators ; we will supplement out of our personal incomes what you award to the Church, however much it may stint us. You will, we are sure, give us terms something like those of the Irish Church. We withdraw our Bishops from the House of Lords ; we lay aside privileges of precedence and the like. We will organize ourselves into a self-governing Church, as in Ireland ; we only ask liberty to do our duty to the people committed to our charge." Then I seem to see the Church turning to the Free Churches, and saying, " Brethren, we are now a Free Church like you ; come and join us, and let us be one Church. You will, we are sure, accept the Episcopate, and we will at once consecrate to it a dozen of your best men, whom you shall elect. There shall be abundant elasticity regarding worship, patronage, etc. ; and all shall be governed by a great General Synod of Bishops, clergy, and laity. Then we can as one Church give ourselves wholly to the Lord's work, seeking the salvation of all men at home, and aiming at the evangelization of the world in this generation."

Alas ! it is a dream only, and I see no likelihood of its being fulfilled. But at least we can pray for grace to be large-hearted, and to be kept from any policy or action, political, social, or ecclesiastical, which will emphasize existing divisions. We can learn by heart, and often repeat to ourselves, those touching words of the Lambeth Encyclical : " The waste of force in the Mission-field calls aloud for unity. Nor is this less necessary for the effective conduct of the war against the mighty force of evil in Christian lands. With the realization of this need has come a new demand for unity, a penitent acknowledgment of the faults that hinder it, and a quickened eagerness in prayer, that through the mercy of God it may be attained." And as we repeat these words to ourselves again and again, we can from our hearts seal them with a fervent " Amen."