

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE YOUNGER AND OLDER CHURCHES

Report of the
JERUSALEM MEETING
of the
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL
March 24th. - April 8th., 1928

VOLUME III

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
London, Melbourne, Cape Town,
Bombay, Shanghai

First Published October 1928

RECORD OF THE COUNCIL DISCUSSION

THE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

THE RIGHT REVEREND NATHAN SÖDERBLOM,
ARCHBISHOP OF UPSALA

Archbishop Söderblom at the last moment was prevented from attending the meeting in Jerusalem, but sent the following address which he had prepared in response to the invitation of the officers of the Council.

I AM invited to speak to you on 'The Historic Christian Fellowship,' a most complicated and difficult subject. I propose to consider chiefly the unity and the originality of the Christian fellowship throughout the ages. No other human society has such significance or has had so rich, wonderful, bewildering and important a development as the Christian Church. Many changes have come about. Diversities were found, as we shall see, even in the oldest Christian community. One momentous force, however, that has from the very beginning and throughout the ages united the Christian Church, a force that has again and again been questioned and again and again asserted itself, is the Church's consciousness of being a special, superhuman creation of God, unique in heaven and on earth. That point is still to-day a question of life and death for Christianity as such, and most especially for Christian missions.

I. THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST

The unity of all true believers in heaven and on earth is a supernatural fact because we are all one in God and His Christ. And that supernatural fellowship is not only spiritual and invisible. It has from the very beginning been visible, revealed and obvious in word and sacraments, in prayer, and above all in Christian lives and acts of love and self-sacrifice. To-day there is no more apparent and momentous revelation of the reality of that eternal Church of God than the world-wide Christian mission.

In foreign missions the superhuman and divine character of Christianity appears clearly. In the work of missions it is impossible to rely upon human calculations. Missions are the proof that God's foolishness is wiser than men (1 Cor. i. 25).

In an epoch which has revealed as seldom before the curse of individual and national and racial egoism, calculation and pride: in an age when man has exceeded his own limits in bloody competition and in the struggle to gain worldly aims, it is a consolation and a miracle of God that in Christian missions we can also point to an equally or more universal endeavour, which is not in the service of individual and collective egoism, but which is often accused of unpractical expenditure and foolish idealism.

Christianity has been from the very beginning a missionary enterprise. Out of His numerous disciples Christ chose the twelve to be missionaries or apostles.

It was essential to the early Church, also, to overstep its own borders and preach the Gospel. Mis-

sionary enterprise was not a thing that you might choose or leave. It belonged to the very life of the community. It was essential to enlist more and more individuals and groups in the historic fellowship. The propagation of the good tidings was the fulfilment of the commandment to make all peoples disciples. If that commandment occupies the very last verses in the first Gospel, this fact indicates that we have to consider it as a summary, a result of the logic and the life and the suffering and the resurrection of our Lord.

The propagation of the fellowship even created new centres of that same fellowship that became rather more important than Jerusalem itself, although Jerusalem was God's holy city where the supreme sacrifice, the atonement and the new covenant had been accomplished. In Antioch they were called Christians for the first time. Other centres to be created were Ephesus, Rome and Alexandria, the first chief centre of Christian theology. Those very soon surpassed in importance, as centres of the Church, Jerusalem itself. There were, of course, several reasons for this development, which was a fact long before the Mohammedan conquest. One of the reasons is found in the spiritual character of Christianity. We should not forget that the same transference of the centre of the historical Christian fellowship might be accomplished even in our days. Europe and America have no heavenly monopoly.

The Bishop of Dornakal said in Lausanne: 'Fathers and brothers! Be patient with us if we cannot very whole-heartedly enter into the controversies of either the sixth or the sixteenth centuries. Recollection of these embitters church life; they may alienate the young churches from all

ecclesiastical connexions.’¹ The nations, civilizations and churches outside our elder or younger Christendom cannot always be considered and treated as cherished or, rather, insignificant colonies of the confessions and institutions of western Christendom. Such an ecclesiastical imperialism is incompatible with the very essence of the Christian faith and universalism or catholicity.

As in the earlier Church, missionary work to-day does not mean merely one of the activities of the Christian fellowship, but a realization of that fellowship, which cannot be faithful to the Master and to the holiness and catholicity and apostolic character of the Church, without always extending itself. We must count upon the probability that the Christian faith and the whole historic Christian fellowship will have centres in India and in the Far East just as important for the Lord’s Church, its life and its future, as the old centres.

II. THE UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

When we go back to the beginnings of that new personal fellowship freely gathered around the Saviour and the faith in the risen Lord, we need to consider its unity and its diversity.

The spiritual unity of the disciples of Christ and the Church was given a name : *ἐκκλησία κυριακή*, that is, ‘the Community of the Lord’; called later in different languages : ‘community’ (*ecclesia* in Greek

¹ ‘Faith and Order.’ *Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3–21, 1927.* London : Student Christian Movement, p. 495.

and Latin, and in later Latin languages *église*) or with the accent on *κυριακή*, 'the Lord's' (*Church, Kirche*). They were all one, and when separations threatened, St Paul reminded them that the different teachers, Paul or Apollos or Cephas, all belonged to the community and that the community belongs to Christ, and Christ to God (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).

Since from the very beginning that unity was not the mechanical uniformity of a machine or of an instrument or any unorganic dead mass but a living organism, the unity of the flock, gathered around our Lord in His lifetime and later, at no time meant identity. It was from the very beginning a unity in multiplicity. When we look at the New Testament, different types in Christendom are revealed. Let me take only one single example of the diversity inherent in original Christianity because it was a living organism. I refer to the very much debated question of the institutional side of the Christian fellowship. As to what we should call now 'the Church,' the sacred institution, with its time-honoured ministry and order and customs, two things seem to be quite clear.

The first is that Christ never left the sacred institution of His own people. He was put out by force. If we seek for Him in His Church and nation, He is to be found amongst the outcasts who were expelled from the religious and national community through the most degrading and the most cruel of punishments. Where should we realize more vividly than on this sacred spot, Jerusalem, that serious fact which we are so apt to forget or to minimize ?

In the second place, our Lord never mentions any intention to establish a new sacred institution opposed to the old one, into which He was born as a Jew. He

gathered a personal fellowship around Him. He invited them to remember Him when they met together, and His supreme sacrifice for them and for humanity. A new religion and sacred institution incomparably greater, more influential, more international than any other institution on earth, was founded subsequently and, as we hope, under the leadership of the Spirit which Christ announced.

St Paul has often been called the Lord's greatest disciple of all ages. In any case, he has meant more than any other man for the foundation and development of the historical Christian fellowship. The foundation was there. It had been laid. It was Jesus Christ (1 Cor. iii. 11). But no one has ever built on that foundation in a more essential and durable manner than St Paul. It is difficult for us to realize how revolutionary St Paul's views were in his time, and how scandalous they must have seemed to be, not only to the enemies of Christ among his people, but also to such disciples of Christ as were more institutionally minded, and had a more devoted and loyal mind towards the holy religious fellowship of their fathers. As to the existing sacred institution, which Christ had never abandoned Himself but which had shamefully expelled Him, St Paul preaches complete liberty. 'For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage' (Gal. v. 1). St Paul, incredibly enough, went so far as to forbid circumcision for the newcomers. It is quite clear that he wished to leave circumcision free and open. Timothy, as a son of a mixed marriage, was circumcised by St Paul. But Titus, the Greek, never was (Gal. ii. 3). A churchman of our days might have agreed that one of the chief teachers of the Church, such as Titus,

was not bound in principle to undergo the circumcision. But he might advocate the step for the sake of preserving peace in the Church.

It is hard for us to state in an equally exact way the views of St Peter as to the institution, although we have documents in the Acts and in his writings. He called all members of the fellowship a royal priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 9). But most of the original members of that historical Christian fellowship continued their worship in the temple of the old covenant. Peter and John and the others went up together to the temple (Acts iii. 1). They were daily in the temple (Acts v. 42), teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. To them there was no absolute contrast between the old venerable sacred institution and the new personal fellowship around the Lord. To put it in the striking words of Pehr Eklund, the late dean of Lund, 'they were blessed by Caiaphas.' During the worship in the temple they received, of course, the blessing of the high priests. I think that we ought not to be scandalized by such a loyalty to the institution. But the chief thing for us to consider is that the essential unbroken unity of the followers of Christ did not exclude, but on the contrary included, very marked differences of Life and Work, Faith and Order.

When we apply our knowledge of the apostolic age to our own time we should not consider the institutions and order and customs of those first Christian communities as being a law or an ordinance for the Church in our time. We are sons; we are not slaves. We are regulated and guided not by the letter but by the Spirit, by the Holy Ghost, sent to us by God and continuing the work of the Lord. 'The Lord is the Spirit.' But there are some essential

140 YOUNGER AND OLDER CHURCHES

elements of apostolic Christianity that cannot be neglected or abandoned without killing or at least hampering with fatal effect the life and future of Christianity.

III. THE UNIQUE AND SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

To study all the essential factors that produced, in the times of the apostles, and have throughout the whole history of the Church sustained, the essential unity of the Christian fellowship would take us too far afield. Let me, therefore, select a single, most momentous force. The reason why I have found it necessary to point out divergencies in the apostolic teaching is to show that they are entirely secondary in comparison with that saving faith which unites all Christians and which must inspire the chief common activity of the congregation, the missionary enterprise.

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

The new, astonishing fact that unites all Christians and gives them a world-conquering courage is the uniqueness of Christ and the supernatural character of the divine revelation through the prophets and through the Son. The eternal reason and will of God, the Logos, became flesh itself. This view in no way denies God's general revelation to mankind before and outside Christ. No one amongst the apostles has given a more clear-cut and emphatic expression to the uniqueness and absoluteness of the mission of Christ and the Christian faith than

St Paul, but he knows that God has revealed Himself in a general way to all men.¹

However, he points out strikingly the contrast between the confused conceptions outside the special divine revelation, resulting in idolatry and moral depravity, and the special unique self-communication of God prepared by the prophets, fulfilled by Christ. The epochs of ignorance (Acts xvii. 30) are now finished. A man has been appointed by God to judge the world with righteousness. I need not remind you of how St Paul is never weary of emphasizing that God has entered into mankind in quite a new and unknown way. Christ is no *avatar*, not a divine messenger amongst others: He is, according to the whole New Testament, the unique Son (John i. 18; Rom. i. 4). St Paul was chiefly concerned with the Jews who did not recognize Christ. Their religion was only a preparation and had been transformed into a legalism, insupportable for the human soul which seeks salvation. Christ had come to break such fetters (Gal. v. 1). But St Paul had rich opportunity and frequent necessity for pointing out with the same accuracy the difference between the highest non-biblical conceptions and the Gospel. His genius grasped the very soul of Hellenism as well as of Judaism and their common inability to appreciate God's fresh action in Christ. 'Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger

¹ See Rom. i. 19, 20; ii. 14, 15.

than men' (1 Cor. i. 22-25). If we seek in the New Testament for the new mystery revealed in Christ and His cross, St John answers in very much the same way: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal' (John xii. 24, 25). And the Synoptics express the same chief mystery (Mark viii. 35).

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

We go further and ask in what that uniqueness of the Christian fellowship consists. The answer may be given in three most essential observations, which are at the same time articles of our faith.

The new thing was not a message, not a doctrine, but a person, an historic man, Jesus revealed as Christ and as the eternal Son originating a new life. Nothing can be more illuminating or more wonderful than to see how that brilliant Jewish intellect, St Paul, very well versed also in Greek thought, was not confused either by the glory and strength of his own Jewish tradition, which had made him a furious persecutor of the first Christian community, or by the immense wealth of the Hellenic lore and Greek philosophy. That poor craftsman was naturally very proud of his own Jewish nobility (Phil. iii. 4-8; 1 Cor. ii. 6). But his overwhelming experience is the following: 'Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's

good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe' (1 Cor. i. 20-22).

He knew the apocalyptic literature about a new epoch, a new æon. Such an expectation was widely known even outside Christianity. It had come probably from Isaiah to the Sibylline oracles and from there to Virgil. We find it in different shapes in Oriental and Hellenistic documents. We have a sublime echo of that expectation in the Revelation; 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more' (Rev. xxi. 1). Now the unexpected and rather revolutionary opinion of St Paul means simply that the new epoch has already come, not with much outside fuss but through Christ, His suffering and His victory over death and the devil. Death has had its æon; now the æon, the epoch of life, has come. The Christians who live in Christ belong already in principle to a new creation. 'Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new' (2 Cor. v. 17). St John has in substance the same message: 'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die. Believest thou this?' (John xi. 25-26).

The uniqueness of the new *Kyrios* amongst all the different *Kyrioi* worshipped at that epoch in the Roman Empire, further, the uniqueness, the supernatural claims and character of that Lord and of His message, in comparison with all the current conceptions of the Divine and doctrines about man, was a new and scandalous thing in the antique world. To

an outside observer, the carmen sung to Christ as a God, according to the well-known letter of Pliny the younger from Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan, appeared as an analogy to songs and hymns which were performed by other worshippers to other divinities. The Christian Fathers could not acknowledge such a comparison. Their way of maintaining the uniqueness of Christian revelation was very clumsy. They considered the sacrificial meals, the baptisms and other rites and ceremonies of the different religions in that eclectic epoch as imitations, made by the devil, of biblical revelation and the Christian worship. Such an explanation was also historically untrue, because early Christianity and other forms of worship influenced each other in different ways.

But the early Church Fathers were absolutely right when they tried to maintain the uniqueness of Christian revelation. Only they failed in so far as they were not able to distinguish, in the ecclesiastical fabric, between the essential things, the *fundamentalia*, whether they belong to higher religion in general or whether they differ from all other religions, and the *non fundamentalia*, ideas and customs different in different cults or more or less common to the general sacral system and the general revelation.

THE REVELATION OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION REGARDING CHRIST

During thirty-seven years' study of comparative religion, a study necessarily made on a philological as well as on a psychological basis, I have found, now that the knowledge of other religions has become

more general, that the student is struck and at first bewildered by the multiplicity of divinities and saviours and ideas and prophets and teachers and doctrines on God and man. He is tempted to consider all those worships as analogies, that is, as more or less parallel lines of development which continued research may be able to bring into a pattern of evolution, applicable to and explaining more or less fully all those different religious systems in their development. To a certain extent such a pattern can be made. And great systematizers such as Hegel, Wundt, Sir James Frazer and Durkheim have tried to bring out such a normal type of religious development, applicable to all kinds of religion. But here, as in every field of human knowledge, further analysis shows differences that seem at first to be only somewhat diverging specimens, but that bring very soon to the careful eye characteristics that prove them to be rather of an essential and genetic character.

Let us take, for instance, the divine worship of Buddha, Christ and Mohammed. At the first view one thinks that they constitute the same phenomenon ; a great teacher, a man who became later deified and worshipped by his followers, perhaps against his own will. But a closer investigation finds that those three specimens are quite different. Buddha himself claimed to be superior to the gods, who, like men, needed salvation from suffering. If we go to Christ, the situation is the opposite one. He was in every respect subject to God's will : 'Thy will be done.' But at the same time He was the unique and full expression of God's will and thought on earth. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.' In Greek surroundings that was expressed by

the doctrine of the true godhead and the true manhood of Christ against every tendency to consider Christ as an inferior divinity. And Blaise Pascal expressed the same observation in his wonderful style, when he said: 'Christ is the God of men.' That same Jesus, who rebuked the man who called Him good, because God alone is good, claimed a unique divine position, not in a Pantheon, but as the full and definite revelation of the One Almighty God.

Very different again is the case of Mohammed, who objected to any worship of himself. He was simply a messenger, the final and definite *Rasul*, herald, of God, of Allah. When he was worshipped later, that was due to another tendency in Islam, very foreign to the Koran; I mean the worship of saints, replacing, as in the Church, the old popular polytheism. But the apotheosis and worship of Mohammed is absolutely against the chief principle of his teaching.¹

The analysis that I have been pursuing has proved to me that the difference proclaimed by the Bible between a general revelation of God and a special unique revelation of God is corroborated by history and facts. Here I may be allowed to emphasize this first point and to add two more chief elements.

The first and last originality and uniqueness of Christianity consists in this, that unique and absolute truth has in Christianity the shape not of a rule, a law (*Dharma*), or of ideas, theologies, but Christian revelation has the shape of a man: God reveals Himself in a human life. As Glover has expressed it, God cannot do better than to resemble Jesus Christ. In Buddhism Gotama Buddha, the Revealer, reveals the truth about suffering; he reveals a rule or

¹ See in this respect Tor Andrae: *Die Person Muhammed in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde.*

doctrine, *Dharma*, and the result is an order of monks, the *Sangha*. In Christianity Christ reveals not a doctrine but His own Heavenly Father. The result is the Church, the universal, supernatural fellowship, in which the Spirit conveys the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through the means of grace, the word in Scripture, teaching, tradition, sacraments. Therefore the trinities are different in those two religions: *Dharma*, Buddha, *Sangha*, on the one hand and on the other the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

In the Roman Empire, and in Asia wherever the most wonderful conception of the Divine outside biblical revelation is to be found (I mean the *bhakti*, the love and devotion to a personal Lord, Isvara), the chief thing in religion is not a doctrine, a rule, a philosophy, a theology, dogmas, but personality. But here again we find the most striking difference. All those other saviours (σωτήρ) and lords (κύριος) in the eclecticism of the Roman Empire, although they existed not only in myths, but in legends, in touching accounts of their lives and achievements and even sufferings for men, were only gods, not historic personalities. One only amongst them was not only a god, but a man, an historic person, of whom we know, as J. J. Rousseau put it, much more definite facts than about Socrates, for example.

The historic person of Christ, claiming to be, and recognized and worshipped as the full revelation of God on earth, is unique, not only from the point of view of values, when we compare His dignity and greatness with that of other revealers, but, if I except some insignificant imitators, He is unique also in fact as an example.

The second point, which may seem still more incredible from a general point of view, is that the claim of uniqueness, of absolute truth itself belongs to the originality of the biblical revelation. The claim was inherited from Judaism, the mother, from whose bosom the new dispensation was issued. We do not find anywhere in the great religions that claim of being unique which characterizes authentic Christianity from the very beginning. The other great religions are not only tolerant, they are eclectic, in principle if not in fact, especially where nationalistic pride does not exploit them. They have a possibility of placing Christ somewhere amongst the great relativities of their faith. Christianity puts up against all such ideas its own absolute truth.

The third point is this : In seeking for God, man has formed diverse conceptions about the Divine. Evolution and civilization have developed and purified those conceptions and made them more congruous with the cravings of higher human intellect and loftier inspirations.

THE CROSS AND MISSIONS

But here the history of religions has a most crucial point. In Christianity the centre is the most horrible thing on earth—the cross—the most degrading and cruel instrument for punishing the worst of criminals. To-day the cross conveys to us no idea about that fact, since it has been transformed by Jesus of Nazareth (like so many other words, such as Pharisee, Publican, Samaritan, which He has transformed in the mind of men in the most sovereign way). We have substituted the gallows. Somebody has written a book about Christ, calling Him ‘The Man they

Hanged.' Nothing can be more repugnant to human civilized thought and taste.

How explain the fact that Christianity, generally considered as the highest religion, introduces the hideous spectacle of the cross, abhorrent to every civilized taste? I think that the answer is obvious. Man had been seeking for God. The cross is the strongest testimony that God has been seeking man. God's way is as unhuman as possible. But it is no idea: it is an historic fact that has proved to be stronger than any other fact or conception in religion. We must acknowledge the exactitude of St Paul's observation: 'Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Cor. i. 25). God yearned after humanity in order to lift it to His fatherly bosom. His hand was grievously wounded. But He succeeded.

Not only souls and lives of men were depraved and infected by evil, but also human society, yea, even the sacral religious institution was infected by the irrational and complicated influence of falsehood and unrighteousness to such an extent that the divine messenger, God Himself, desirous to grasp and save humanity, must be condemned by the combined action of ordinary men and institutions. Thus the cross has a double meaning. First, the evil hidden in the most incredible way in hearts and conditions, in individual and collective interests and establishments, was unmasked and apparent in its horrifying and ruining perdition, so that man, harshly wakened up, must face reality and hate sin and evil. Secondly, that healthy but reckless action derives directly from God's mercy. God took the fate and salvation of man so seriously that He used the most precious life in history in order to reveal the hideous bane of evil and His own unlimited divine love.

A closer examination of the history of religions shows to us many hints of the significance of suffering in the divine purpose with humanity, from the wailing hymns sung to Tammuz 3000 years or more before Christ. But the cross on Golgotha does not belong to liturgy or thought. Because evil is no mere idea, it is a fact, a woeful fact in human history. God is operating according to other mathematical and strategical ways than ours. According to Christ's law that whoever loses his life for His sake will find it, the historical Christian fellowship, now sorely divided and hampered and weakened and inefficient in its divisions and quarrels, will find itself and realize its unity and fulfil God's purpose and let humanity see that the Father has sent the Son (John xvii. 21), and become a real fellowship, a visible unity. The One Holy Church in losing its actual divided, too human, too ego-centric, too frightened and faithless, courage-lacking, and ridiculously and scandalously inefficient life will extend the life of our Lord by giving itself more whole-heartedly than ever to the extension of His rule on earth.

Those three points show from the analysis of religion on earth an essentially unique character in Christianity. It is not the work of man seeking God but the work of God seeking man.

If we join prayers and hands and endeavour in order to pursue Christian missions, it is because that action of God in humanity and its effects must become known to all men on earth. Thus Christian missions do not constitute, *proprement dit*, a competition with other ideas, or a propaganda, but simply and essentially a news agency about the happening on Golgotha and everything belonging to it. We are trusted by God to tell mankind what He has done. The sig-

nificance of that historic event for every human heart, for society and for the whole of mankind makes it necessary to use every means of genius and love and pedagogics for that news agency.

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND MISSIONS

The supernatural and unique character of the Christian revelation and of the Christian fellowship has been an essential part of Christian unity and Christian faith throughout all centuries. But it is hampered and contradicted in the most disastrous and serious way by the divisions of Christendom. If the different Christian communions and sects do not fully recognize one another as belonging to the same historic Christian fellowship, they contradict directly or indirectly the supernatural uniqueness of Christian revelation. Then it is asked : Where is to be found on earth that authentic reflection of the absolute divine truth ? Where is the work of Christ continued in the right way ? The Church indulges not only in divisions, but also in mutual distrust and competition between the different Christian communions.

We cannot help seeing that the feeling of the curse of disruption and the necessity of union is stronger in the mission field than in old Christendom, where too many feel quite comfortable in the old divisions. At Lausanne, the Bishop of Dornakal said : ' Unity may be theoretically a desirable ideal in Europe and America, but it is vital to the life of the Church in the mission field. The divisions of Christendom may be a source of weakness in Christian countries, but in non-Christian lands they are a sin and a scandal.'¹

¹ 'Faith and Order.' *Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927.* London : Student Christian Movement, p. 495.

The same testimony was given by Dr Lew, Bishop Fisher and all missionaries in Lausanne.

The saying goes : 'Charity begins at home,' but if we observe the strivings for the unity of the Church, we must admit that here 'Charity begins abroad.' It was far away on the mission field that the Church first thought in earnest of her duty to create mutual goodwill, peace and co-operation. 'Charity begins at home,' that is true. It must begin to be put in practice near by, if it is to have any value at all. It was on the mission field, however, that the courageous transition was made from words to deeds, before anything comparable had taken place with regard to the old Christianity itself. The Edinburgh Conference of 1910 will stand as a landmark in the history of the Church. It has done a signal service for the promotion of mutual goodwill and co-operation in Christendom. The Edinburgh Conference made some friends of missions hesitate. Was it right to confer with Christians of another evangelical confession? Wise men in Church and State also condemned beforehand the Stockholm and Lausanne Conferences. And in truth they certainly seemed to all of us impossible beforehand. But there is something mighty and foolish which is called faith in God and His might. There is an appeal stronger than the wisdom and opinion of men. That is the law of Christian charity and the Christian conscience.

Here we have an important lesson to learn. From the very beginning the missionary strivings for co-operation have not faced unity for unity's sake, but unity in order to fulfil the will of the Master. Now it is necessary to remember that the Edinburgh Conference certainly never would have been able to gather so much Christian endeavour and so much

spiritual authority and to produce such a result as has been its outcome if the entire programme had not been, 'Thy Kingdom come.' The participants came together partly in order to study the history, character, position and problems of missions, partly in order to unite on measures to promote the Christian peace message amongst non-Christian peoples, primarily with regard to loyal partition of the work and to co-operation. Since the week of peace of the evangelical missionary organizations in Edinburgh it has become impossible for Christianity at home to put aside the holy duty which orders us to co-operate in the fellowship and spirit of the Master. Without the example from the mission field the strivings for the unity of Christianity would have been much weaker. Without Edinburgh it had been impossible to bring about the Stockholm Conference. After Edinburgh it became impossible and unchristian not to work for a corresponding conference of Christianity.

What we saw in the early Church must teach us to-day to face realities with the same mind and the same respect both of truth and freedom. It would be ungodly to sacrifice anything essential in our faith and in our divine heritage for the cause of unity. We should admit even considerable diversities of forms and ideas in the fellowship rather than create a rigid uniformity excluding or weakening such concrete and strong and living experiences and creeds and forms of worship as are essential to the one or the other group. I think that the missionary outlook will force us at home to a wider outlook, to a new way of considering essentials and non-essentials.

St Paul heard the voice from Europe : Come over and help us. Now the old historical Christian fellowship in its turn says to the missionary communions :

Come and help us to make our faith and the experience of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church real and active on earth ! We fully realize that great difficulties are at stake in the new churches as well as in old historic Christendom. We need each other. But before all we need Christ.

The historical Christian fellowship has throughout its existence some very marked characteristics which remain identical in all changes and developments. Those two observations, the uniqueness of God's action through the prophets and Christ continued by the Holy Spirit in God's Church and community, and the necessary multiplicity and freedom of human temperaments, individual or collective character, must both be borne in mind when we consider the missionary field to be in God's providence a most effective helper towards the unification of that historic Christian fellowship. During these days of Lent and the Holy Week in the sacred city we are most strongly reminded of the essence of Christianity. Edinburgh inaugurated a new epoch for Christian fellowship. Stockholm and Lausanne followed it up. May Jerusalem give to us a new decision to rally our forces and inspire our hearts and our communities and our action with that self-sacrificing love that hath made both one (Eph. ii. 14-16).