

ADDRESSES AND OTHER RECORDS

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of the
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THE NEW WORLD

THE BISHOP OF SALISBURY

‘ And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.’—REV. xxi. 5.

IT is natural and right that at the outset of our gathering we should thus meet together, not for business, but to contemplate the great realities which lie behind all we shall do or say together. When Israel was to receive the great revelation on Mount Sinai, a rigorous and exacting preparation of three days was required ; and our own experience tells us that when God has something great to say to us there has always been some kind of spiritual preparation. We cannot approach the Holiest without cleansing our minds from profane or unworthy thoughts and our hearts from unworthy desires. We want verily in this meeting to see God and His purpose for the world, but we must remember that God’s revelation comes only to the pure in heart.

We are here, then, to prepare ourselves for the work before us. And truly we have every assistance towards that preparation. For most of us, I suppose, this is the first visit to the Holy Land, and all round us are the hills and valleys and places which have been interwoven with our holiest thoughts and prayers for years. For us it is a thrilling moment. And yet, if your mood is like mine, it is not the associations of past history which are moving us most—though they move us much—what stirs our soul is the spiritual significance and the possibilities

involved in this present gathering. Of all the past events connected with the Holy City, the one most prominent in my mind is that concourse of people 'from every nation under heaven' . . . Parthians, Medes, Elamites and the rest, who gathered at that great Pentecost and were amazed at the things they were privileged to hear and see. To-day once again a concourse is assembled from many nations and tongues and peoples; and shall we doubt that there will be given to us also something of the illumination, the effectual guidance and the dynamic force which was vouchsafed on that great day?

Our immediate object this morning is to prepare ourselves for our work. What are we here for? What must we do to be ready and worthy agents in God's hand? How shall we offer ourselves in this work?

I

First and above all we contemplate God at work. 'He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.' We contemplate God in creation. But mark you, that does not take us back to the past. Creation is always going on. God is ever creating the world, and the world of to-morrow is not yet created. I once knew the managing director of a great factory. He had started the concern, and under his hand it had grown to greatness; he was every day in his factory, supervising the work, directing the details, ever devising new machinery and scrapping the old, adapting his output to the changing market. Under him the great factory was a single, living, sentient thing. He was the life and soul of it all, he was the source and origin of it all, and I saw it grow under his hand. That is the conception of

creation which our Lord gives us when He says, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' God is ever working in creation. The world of to-morrow is not yet created, and what sort of a world it will be is not yet known.

For, added to that truth, and no less wonderful, is the truth that He has made us to co-operate with Him in the work of creation. We are, as St Paul teaches us, 'workers together with Him.' That means that in His inscrutable wisdom God has chosen to part with some measure of His omnipotence in order that we may be able to co-operate with Him, not as mere instruments, but as free agents, who, discerning His mind, shall share in His creative work. He is making a new world, and the character of the world of to-morrow depends upon the faithfulness and courage and sincerity with which we set ourselves to learn His purpose and plan, and so take our initiative boldly in a doubting and bewildered world.

II

First, then, we contemplate God in creation ; and after that, as in duty bound, we turn to the world situation of our time. This indeed is our task for the next fortnight, but it is right for a moment to view the landscape to-day from the heights as a comprehensive whole, before we descend into the plain with its intricate and exacting details.

Our work is to fall into three main classes.

The first is that of our relation to one another within the Church of Christ.

The second is our common relation to the world outside.

And the third is that vast domain of human

problems with which we are confronted owing to the rapid development of human progress. Let me speak of each in turn.

1. The first thing we have to do as Christians is to understand one another and to establish once for all our mutual relation as brothers in Christ. The physical separation has in the past been somewhat of a hindrance ; but in these days when the world has been shrinking through the amazing advance in communications, and when nations know one another as they have never known one another in the world's history before, it is essential that the followers of Christ should know one another too. It is necessary to bridge over the divisions of space. And not only of space. It is worth while to say again, as was said last night, that the main motive of the summoning of this meeting of the Council was, not only to promote contact, but to assert the principle and genuine meaning of our common brotherhood in Christ. It seems unnecessary in a gathering like this to assert that this means our common equality in the family of God ; and yet, we know, this point has not been fully understood by Christians. I can remember wondering in my early days at the very large space occupied in the New Testament with the account of the Judaizing faction in the early Church, its strength, its fierce endeavour to assert its principles, and its final overthrow by St Paul's teaching of the freedom of the Gospel. But I have since learnt that the warning was needed, and that the Judaizing tendency did not pass with the apostolic age. The essence of the Judaizing spirit is the mental assumption of the Judaizer that his own national type of Christianity is the only right one and should be imposed on all alike. If this definition is correct, we cannot alto-

gether escape the charge—at least we British cannot altogether escape the charge—of Judaizing in our missionary methods, even in comparatively recent times. But we may fairly claim that St Paul's principle has triumphed, and I believe that throughout the whole Church it is now clearly seen that the church of one race will only hinder the cause if it seeks to impose its own customs and formalities upon another, that each church has its own contribution to give, and that this contribution can only be given where each church is springing up freely in its own soil and environment.

And this principle will, I believe, colour the whole of our missionary work in the future. The task of the sending Church is to serve, not to rule; to help, without necessarily directing the policy; and the missionary's message will carry power just, and only just, in so far as his own life bears the impress of his Master's humility. Here then is the principle we assert in our gathering to-day. We are members one of another, we need one another, we all have our share and our place in the Body of Christ, and though all members have not the same office, yet we are one and equal in the common life of the Body, our common task and our common relationship to our Father in heaven.

But there is another aspect of our relationship in the Church of Christ which cannot be absent from our minds. All of us here believe that God wills reunion. Now there is no department of the Church's life where the hindrance and scandal of our unhappy divisions is more felt than in the mission field. The motive force for reunion comes chiefly from the missionaries, and I am not wrong probably in guessing that at the back of all our minds is the hope that this

gathering will, indirectly at least, apply fresh stimulus in that direction. Already, beyond question, the International Missionary Council, with its auxiliary national councils, is offering one of those vitally important opportunities for co-operation among differing followers of Christ, which form the practice-ground for reunion itself. The development of our co-operation will work, I believe, like a rising tide and eventually resolve many deadlocks and barriers on the doctrinal side; and our hopes are high. Nevertheless we must not lose our sense of proportion. Even this gathering, œcumenical as it is, has no right to claim to be fully representative of the Catholic Church, and our very hopes for the International Missionary Council must make us careful lest we risk its full usefulness. We have need to pray both for boldness and also for patience. For boldness, that we may step forward when the right moment comes; but also for patience, that we may be able to wait for those who do not feel the urgency as we do, for those who see dangers of which we, perhaps, are ignorant; in a word, until the advance towards reunion shall be general and whole-hearted. There *are* differences between us, and we may vitiate the soundness of our advance if we act as if they did not exist. I know how great a strain is thus laid upon the patience of many of our fellow-Christians outside Europe. Indeed, it is a sore trial to many of our very best in England and elsewhere, but here as in all else we must wait upon God. We must look from our own poor creative efforts to the infinite wisdom of Him who wills reunion, and even now is making all things new.

2. Then after our relation to one another there is our relation to the world outside; and here our

experience is identical, and in itself supplies a bond of unity. Each one of us lives in an environment in which we are conscious of a non-Christian majority, alien to our most sacred thoughts and desires, whose heart and mind are not trained to contemplate Christ, or understand His decisive influence on the history of mankind. It is common, I say, to us all, for we who live in countries nominally Christian are conscious of precisely the same relationship as others to the world outside; for over against us, no less than against you who live in non-Christian countries, is a great secular civilization which pays no heed to Christ.

In the circumstances there is a danger on either side. On the one hand we may fail to reach out to the secular civilization, and so hold aloof from some operations of the Spirit, to our own great loss. And on the other hand we may reach out too readily, and so lose something of the transcendental truth which God has entrusted to our care. We must avoid, on the one hand, the blindness of the Pharisees, while on the other hand we abhor the facile complacency of the Herodians. Our task is to school ourselves to discern the Spirit of God wherever He is working, and without reference to the denials which other recipients of His gifts may hurl at our Christian creed. This will bring us into touch, not only with the secular world, but with every religious system through which men are seeking God. We shall study such systems in their true inwardness. We shall seek to know them at their best and not merely on the side of their weakness. We shall seek for points of contact and rejoice in finding them. We shall indeed be sure of our own message; but our evangelism will find with its boldness the restraint of a new humility.

It will come ready to receive as well as to give, to learn as well as to teach.

3. I must not linger long upon the third region of the world situation which we are to consider in the coming days, and indeed the position is easily indicated. The process of human development, so amazingly accelerated in our time, has thrown up many problems, important because of their urgency or their difficulty or both, the solution of which cannot be reached without a steadfast and courageous application of the ethics of Christianity. These problems are connected with the rise of nationalism, the new hunger throughout the world for education on modern lines, the development of commerce and industry, and the problems of race raised through the mingling of populations. In the solution of these problems the International Missionary Council has a great part to play. One of the great needs of the world to-day, as our Chairman has often told us, is the need for Christian statesmanship. It must be the work of the Council so to express the corporate conscience of the Church with a statesman's eye to facts, that the political outlook of each country may grow increasingly Christian, and that the kings of the earth, the presidents and prime ministers and rulers of the nations, may be led to throw their glory and honour into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

III

We contemplate God in creation ; and in the light of His presence we contemplate the world situation of our time.

But because we see it in His presence and in the light of His purpose, we must take care to see it in

due proportion ; and that inevitably takes us out beyond the area of our present discussions. To a great extent our work here will be intellectual ; even our devotions will be coloured and exalted by the thoughts which discussion will give us. But for the evangelization of the world something more is required than intellectual processes. It is something—it is a great thing—to see our way clearly ; but our task really is not to see but to *follow*. The duty to love all men is plain, but the power is not always there ; the opportunity to go in and win new worlds for Christ may stir our souls, but the adventure is lacking for so stern a task ; and there are problems which can never be solved by reasoning, but only by the offering of life. The trouble of the Church to-day is not really the difficulty of the new problems which confront her. It is her lack of fire and zeal, of faith and courage and love. Never surely was there a time when the Church's eyes were more open to the facts of the world ; never was the opportunity more plain and more appealing. And yet the Church is slow to move. Schemes there are in plenty ; reports in plenty setting forth what needs to be done. But the Church lacks the vitality to act upon them. 'The children are come to the birth, but there is no strength to deliver.' Which of us has not been oppressed with thoughts like these ? Who can contemplate the facts of the world—such facts as we have before us here—without a sense of impotence which borders on despair ? We look back from the vantage-ground of our gathering this morning upon our home churches in the nominally Christian lands. Can we really claim that in any Christian country the Church is truly awake to the opportunity ? And yet, what infinite resources ! What potentialities of consecrated

life! There are missionaries, evangelists, martyrs, saints and sages lying undeveloped in the social strata of all our peoples. Oh, that the Spirit might blow upon these dry bones that they might live!

That they might live! That precisely is God's will for them. God wills life. That was His purpose in redemption. It was the purpose of the Incarnation. 'I am come,' said the Redeemer, 'that they might have life.' It was the purpose of Pentecost. 'I will not leave you comfortless,' said the Lord of Life, 'I will come to you.' In every Church, in every age God ever wills the survival of the spiritual life of His people. And He wills it for us now. He wills it for your land which is called Christian; for the anti-Christian, anti-clerical, anti-religious multitudes whose influence and power weigh upon your spirit. He wills it for your land which is still non-Christian, where the soil is still untried. *He wills to come.* Why does not the Church move? Thank God for the movement we see, but what hinders a great creative outburst of life? The answer is that revival only comes with man's consent; and as yet the Church as a whole is not awake. As yet there is no general sense of need, no stretching forth in love, no hunger, no penitence.

Here lies our work. When Nehemiah was working for the revival of the corporate life of his nation, he made his workmen build the wall with their weapons at their side; even so we must not be content with building intellectual schemes. We must be ready to fight each on his own account against the forces of evil which are keeping the Church weak and disintegrated. *Here lies our work.* To prepare the Church for revival. We cannot but thank God for the wealth of consecrated intellect which is gathered

for this meeting. But I need not remind any one here that God is looking not only for the offering of our mind, but also for the offering of our heart and will too. My hope and prayer for us all is that we may go back home resolved to consecrate the residue of our lives to the work of preparing our own home churches for the revival which God wills to send. Revival indeed is His gift; but the preparation of the Church for revival is in human hands. And to whom in all our churches is God looking for this work if not to us? Is it really true that He has spoken in our hearts? Is it a real vision that we have seen of the Kingdom? Is it all really from a Master Who is near us and waiting for us to move? 'What I tell you in darkness, that declare ye in the light, and what ye hear in the ear, that proclaim ye upon the housetops.'

It all comes back to this: Am I worthy of the revelation from God which I have been privileged to receive? Can I bear it? Have the devils of sloth and cowardice and selfishness been cast out of my heart? This meeting of the International Missionary Council carries with it to each one of us a great life and challenge. Through all the business that we shall do, a voice will be speaking to each one of us and asking, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' God grant that each one of us here present may have strength to answer 'We are able.'