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 Development, and Mrs. H.
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 ke, delegates Native Christian
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Interdenominational Missionary Conference.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I take for the subject of my address "Missions and Governments." In dealing with the subject, I wish it to be understood that in any remarks of a controversial character I alone am responsible. I wish complete freedom for what I have to say—I hope that it may help towards a serious consideration of this very important subject—but neither this Missionary Conference nor the Church to which I belong is to be held responsible for any words I may use. And if remarks at times are made in a seemingly provocative manner, I have deliberately so stated them, as it seems better to make one's points as outstanding as possible. I would only say that in all cases I have refrained from anything that may in any way be regarded as criticism of individuals.

The relation between missions and Governments is but one aspect of the age-long conflict between the Church and the world. It may be said that the problem has existed from the beginning of Christianity, but so long as there was an age of persecution the world was in obvious opposition to the Church, and the problem and the balance of relationships did not arise. It was when peace came to the Church by the accession of the Emperor Constantine that difficulties began which have continued more or less in varying forms until the present day.

Bishop Westcott is reported to have said that the world got into the Church in the fourth century, and we have never since been able to get it out; or, as another writer has said, "The spirit of the world by inoculating society at large with a very diluted and attenuated serum of Christianity secured for it an immunity from violent and inconvenient attacks." The Church made alliance with a world which became Christian in name, but only in name. And as we read the story down the ages we are forced to ask whether it be not true for the Church as well as for the individual disciple that friendship with the world is enmity with God, and that it is indeed possible for the Christian Society, as for the individual, to gain the whole world, and yet to lose her own soul.

It would be impossible within the limits of a short address to make an historical survey of the situation in the past, and the various stages by which we have arrived at the intricacies of our African problems, which have resulted from the occupation of the continent in a comparatively brief period by explorers, traders, colonists and missionaries. It is sufficient to say that we as missionaries have to face the problem of reconciling an aloofness from, and at the same time an intimate association with States, Empires and governments; an independence of the existing standards of the State, and a concern not merely with the individual citizens of the State, but also with its home life, laws, commerce, public health, education and international relationships. Few nations are at the present time in a condition of stability, though all are trying to attain such a condition as the outcome of the social, political and economic revolution through which we all are passing. It is well to remember that stability can only be attained by the pursuit of a steady idealism.

Governments are in their very nature and function changeable, because they express and reflect the changing or developing policy of nations. Moreover, "government" is in itself an abstract term. What it means in any given area where missions are working is the ideas (or prejudices) of certain administrators, magistrates, medical officers, or educationists on the spot, or the interpretation put by them upon the ideas (or prejudices) of certain other people for whom they act.

There is undoubtedly much happy and fruitful co-operation both within and without the British Commonwealth. Action in regard to the opium traffic, the fight against tropical diseases, the slave traffic and traffic in women and children, as well as in education and general social advancement. On the other hand, there is evidence of uneasiness lest by becoming too much identified with the humanitarian schemes of civil authorities Christianity should be losing its savour. Here the relation of missions to governments is seen to be part of the whole problem of Christian witness in social life. In the early Church this problem hardly existed as we know it. The Church and the world stood over against each other in violent contradiction. In the Middle Ages the problem was non-existent for an opposite reason, for the accepted social ideals of the society of that period were those of a united Christendom—even though in practice those ideals were not attained.

To-day, on the other hand, we stand at the end of a period when for some hundreds of years society has not reckoned to be carried on on Christian principles, and in which there has been a gradual abandonment of Christian idealism as impracticable; while, on the other hand, there seem also to be indications that Christian principles are in some directions being increasingly abandoned altogether in spite of their apparently in other directions becoming embodied in social and political life.

Two quotations may be given from people with an African experience. One writes:—

“Missions are in a cleft stick, and it is not the hostility of the Government that causes the difficulty, but its goodwill. Christian missions need to re-emphasise their Christian mission. Theologically speaking, a doctrine of grace needs to replace the present doctrine of nature. . . . The aim of Christianity is to rescue the world from sin, not misguidedness, or an untidy mind or bad habits.”

Another says:—

“The religion of a government can seldom be other than the common ground of agreement among its supporters, and though at the present time governments may be friendly, one must always remember the lesson of the secularisation of the Church in the fourth century. . . . The fact is that governments can never afford to allow large corporations to exist in their midst with a complete field of independence and with ideals which may possibly conflict with those of the State, and so they are prepared to get some measure of control under the guise of a friendly subsidy. The Church itself has at times shown that there are few more effective ways of silencing a tiresome priest than by promoting him to be a dignitary; it is not surprising if the State tries to follow something of the same plan in its dealing with the Church.”

It is obvious that the increasing comity of missions tends to invite the co-operation of governments with missionary work. As long as the missions of various denominations were going their own way, none of them were to any large extent strong enough to be active partners with governments in the working out of any common policy. In 1910, however, the Edinburgh Conference gave expression and impetus to co-operation between various missionary bodies, and the next step of co-operation between representatives of these bodies and representatives of governments followed in a more or less natural way. It may be said, from the missionary point of view, that the present time is an age of conferences, and it is the fact of the existence of such a Conference in the Colony of Southern Rhodesia that brings us together here to-day.

But associated with this movement there are certain drawbacks and dangers which it would be foolish for us to ignore.

There is a subtle danger in the looseness wherewith we are growing accustomed to speak of the "*churches and the Church.*" The Anglican Bishop of Gloucester (Dr. Headlam) in his Bampton Lectures says:—

"It has been suggested that the expression 'the churches' might be useful (in the literature of the early Church) in the same manner as has become customary in certain modern circles, for a number of different societies in each place separate from one another, just as there are what are called Roman Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan, Congregational churches in one city. It is difficult to conceive of anything more fundamentally alien to the whole spirit of the New Testament than this. . . . No justification can be found in the New Testament for our modern divisions "

No doubt the more thoughtful among us are aware of the danger of treating organisations such as this which express the comity of missions as though they were identical with synods of the whole Christian Church, and some are doubtless shy of a federalism which can do little or nothing to curb idiosyncrasy, and which may be in danger of being in a large measure content with something less than a unity which rests on Holy Order.

It is with considered deliberation that I venture to mention this, for it has its bearing on the constitution of this Conference, where in para. 7 we read:—"The Conference to consist of ministers, missionaries and other workers in connection with any denomination operating in Southern Rhodesia; the said denomination having been admitted into the Conference by the vote of the Conference." By this I understand that we meet together as a collection of individuals of different denominational affinities, but as individuals and not as delegates from the various churches and religious bodies to which we belong. No vote of this Conference in any way binds the various religious bodies; and as regards each one of us as individuals, I understand that even if we vote in a particular way in the Conference, such a vote is to be regarded as an expression of a private opinion which may be over-ruled by a higher authority if circumstances so require. I do not say that this would often be the case, but it is on these terms that we are able to meet and to take part in our various deliberations. Conferences such as this have their value primarily from the fraternal intercourse for which they provide opportunity, of which we should be deprived if gatherings such as this did not bring us together. Secondly, I feel that their value is shown by the resolutions we are able to pass after full discussion on matters where we are able to arrive at a statement which more or less is the expression of a common mind, and thirdly, there is also a value to be seen in those occasions which from time to time are marked by a sharp difference of opinion, where the fact of such divergence makes it plain that the time has not yet arrived when we can take common action in regard to the point that comes under dispute.

It seems well to draw attention to these points, for occasions have been known in the past where government officials or others appear to have been considerably surprised to find that some individuals have not accepted the resolutions of this Conference as final decisions which had something of binding force.

We need also to notice that a Conference such as this tends more or less inevitably to develop a corporate character and outlook of its own, even though it is comprised of different missions and earnestly desires to interpret their mind; and the habit of negotiation with government through such an organisation means that the organisation may tend to commit

individual missionaries to a policy in relation to government which they cannot conscientiously accept.

These I believe are real dangers which we need to remember, but the fact of their existence does not warrant an attitude of cold aloofness. Rather do we find in them a challenge to humble and sincere and critical co-operation, which should stir us into more fervent and penitent prayer and work for Christian unity.

One of the special difficulties in cases where governments look to Conference for guidance in regard to matters such, for instance, as education (to take a concrete example) appears to me to be this. I take my illustration from the Conference at Le Zoute, at which I was present in 1926. The missionary bodies meet together, they hold a full discussion in the presence of representatives of various governments, they issue a report in which outlines of a policy are stated, but it is all done from the missionary side. The missionary bodies lay their cards on the table; the governments keep theirs up their sleeves. No doubt such a situation is more or less inevitable with our present system of party parliamentary government, and it seems to be coming to be increasingly recognised that a democratically elected parliament can be at best only one vital expression of the consciousness of the community, that no political theory can afford to ignore the numerous forms of associative and institutional life of the community outside parliament, and that the most democratic parliamentary system may fail because it is not capable of guiding the community along creative lines of development. And it may be well for us to bear in mind that in colonies such as ours the various missionary bodies, when gathered in a constituted conference, have an opportunity—indeed, it may be said an obligation—to give expression to a large part of the spirit of the community, and that they in no sense owe their being or their authority to the creative fiat of the State.

We have always to take our stand against the theory of the omnipotence of the modern State. The claim to State absolutism, which appears to be a dominant notion with most modern politicians, is precisely one which no religious society can admit without being false to the very idea of its existence, or placing the divine law at the mercy of political convenience. It would be unbecoming for me here to seek to develop a line of thought in accordance with my own personal beliefs about the Church, nor have I any desire to do so. But I do desire to emphasise this: that the atmosphere in which law has lived for hundreds of years has been all in favour of the doctrine that recognises two and only two social entities—the individual on the one hand and the State on the other; whereas it is a fact that our social life presents itself as a series of groups which can show clear signs of a life of their own, inherent and not derived from the concession of the State. The State may recognise and guarantee the life of such societies, and may demand marks of recognition and guarantee for so doing, but it no more creates that life than it creates the individual, though it orders his birth to be registered. And it is one of the problems of the future to secure from legal theory the adequate recognition of the positions of such societies, among which the churches may claim to be included, and noticeably so in the life of our British dependencies, where their missionary activities are largely devoted to work among the subject races who politically have no voice, or one which for practical purposes is inaudible.

Further, the conscientious claim for such liberty for ourselves cannot stop at this point. History shows us otherwise. Throughout the struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was the right of their own Church to exist as a trainer of character, which drove the Jesuits, Huguenots, Puritans and Dutchmen to become, often in spite of themselves, the promoters of liberty. For all these men character was bound up with religious system; many of them did not care for and some of them definitely disapproved of religious and political liberty. But they were one and all driven to fight for the existence of that society, whatever it

was, which was for them the true home of the spirit and could alone direct it to the highest ends. This they did in spite of all theories of the risks of rebellion, or the evils of anarchy, or of accusations of embarrassing the government, and sometimes in astonishing contradiction to the principles which in other spheres they maintained. It is perhaps true to say not that civil liberty is the child of religious liberty, but that liberty, whether civil or religious, was the work often reluctantly, sometimes unconsciously, undertaken by communities of men who had an end higher than political, who refused to submit religion to politic arguments and who fought for ends never entirely utilitarian, for indeed the eternal argument for liberty is the right of human nature to reach the noblest.

It is here that we come to touch on the problem of native education, or to use the better title adopted by the Department appointed by the Government to handle this important subject—*native development*. Details in criticism of administration may no doubt be found—for no human work is perfect—but we ought to do everything in our power to prevent the work that has been carried to its present point from being hampered or set back as some are urging on the grounds of political expediency. To hinder the development of the native peoples of the Colony would be as much an act of oppression and despotism as the hindering of the development of the European, for the evils of oppression and despotism are not primarily to be found in the suffering, but in the deterioration of character which they produce—a deterioration which in the long run is noticeable not only in the oppressed, but in the oppressor. And the real problem of poverty in our days, whether for Europeans or for natives, is not so much the lack of the bare necessities of existence, but the diminished opportunity of nobility of life.

It is vital that missionaries should continue to think out and try their very best to agree upon the aim of Christian education. Character and conduct inevitably depend upon creed and philosophy, upon our answer to the question "*What think ye of Christ?*" And we have to beware of a Christ who is created in our own image, for it is extraordinarily easy to confuse Christ Himself with our ideas of Him. And granted that we all to a greater or less extent fashion the Christ in our image or in compensation for our own defects, we need every help to keep before us and over and against our one-sided littleness the objective grandeur of Him as the full revelation of God. And it is only as we keep this vision before us that our work will have that true efficiency which is so vitally necessary—the efficiency which is the outcome of loyalty to Christ and not of any lower motive.

If they are faithful to this ideal, times are bound to arise when missions will embarrass governments, from the very fact that the Gospel is a fermenting influence, and Christians can never be content with the *status quo* which government officials are often too anxious to preserve. It may not be possible to ensure that *no* conflict shall ever arise; and in such cases the State will always have the last word, because she has material force at her disposal. Yet she will do well to recognise the power of spiritual principles and to remember that though the Church has been compared to an anvil, it is, as a Huguenot leader reminded Francis I. of France, "an anvil which has broken many hammers."

And the Church, if in any case she feels bound to refuse obedience in duty to a higher allegiance, must be prepared to suffer for doing so; for, after all, adversity and not prosperity is the birthright promised by her Lord. It is our business to be faithful to principles, and to be careless about results; it is the putting of results before principles which has so constantly proved disastrous. We must level up the world and not level down the Church, so "that the whole world may feel and see that the things which were cast down are being built up, and the things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are returning to perfection through Him from whom they took their origin."

ERRATA.

- Page 6 line 3 for "where" read "whether".
" 8 " 9 " "unture" " "untrue".
" 20 four lines from bottom after "throw" insert "down".
" 22 two " " " for "6" read "9".

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