

UNITY AND THEOLOGY

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UNITY AND THEOLOGY

A LIBERAL EVANGELICALISM THE
TRUE CATHOLICISM

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SYNOPSIS

I. SYMPATHETIC aspirations for Reunion must rest on a foundation for it in the revelation which creates our religion, and unfolds in its history. This revelation is more than a spoken word or a luminous truth; it is God's presence in a new creative Act of Redemption. Such objective religion is the basis of subjective. At this depth, authority is the effective thing rather than affinity, God's grace rather than man's sympathies. Faith's relation to experience or piety. The Gospel does not bring a new interpretation of life, but a new life to interpret. Re-creation is the moral foundation for reconstruction in the grand style; the new birth underlies the new world and its new order.

II. The claim for Episcopacy must rest on a theory of it, its universality on its imperative. Is it imperative? Is it the will of the Redeemer? Is it vital to the Gospel? That is a theological question (though of the prime theology, and not the secondary). Christian life, unity, and liberty must rest on the theology of the Church rather than on its desire; on the Redemption which created the Church rather than on its fraternity. Analogy of the American Constitution for Democracy. Bo for the Church. Only, its saving order is not a polity, as with a State, but a *Holy* Spirit with a positive and active content. A common and creative creed is at least as essential as vivid impressionism or fixed organisation. The same Word of moral power which rent the Church at the Reformation must heal it. The saving Word is a constant creating, especially by crisis. Here is Reunion.

III. We need a rallying centre more positive than the great character, or even the hospitable person, of Christ. We need Christ's consummation of His person in action, moral, crucial, final for God and the world. The Act of the Cross as the creation of the Kingdom of God, which is the *raison d'être* both of Incarnation and Church. The Church prolongs the Redemption, and not the Incarnation.

IV. The point that creates the unity of all Churches is the evangelical crisis of the conscience of God and man in Re-

demption. Reconciliation is moralised by Atonement, and eternalised. It must go beyond a Christianised Humanism, or a union of hearts only, or a social ideal. Hence the unity desired cannot be in a system but in a moral principle, which, as historic, is a power, and a personal power, in action. It is the principle and power of the Kingdom (or rather Kingship) of God, which for Christ Himself determined everything, and especially determined His death *as the active and final crisis of the moral universe*. The unhappy submersion of an evangelical and urgent moral theology in a reflective and leisurely culture-theology. The Kingdom or the Logos? The unity, the catholicity, of the race is in its conscience, and in its conscience as redeemed. The demoralisation of the Church is caused by its passion to be catholic before it is holy. The "hegemony of the moral" means that conscience is the source and security of culture; and it means also the sovereignty of the holy in a society of love. Such hegemony implies the evangelical principle that Atonement to the Holy is the first charge on a Redeemer and His Gospel. To satisfy heaven is to justify earth. The evangelical succession and solidarity mean the moralising of theology, religion and society. The only thing that can really unite the Church is what morally reconciles the world—not the spiritual Jesus, but the atoning Christ.¹

V. But the Evangelicalism must be liberal. First, in its treatment of the Bible, and its welcome of the critical method as among the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, in its hospitality to modern philosophy and culture. And, thirdly, it must be an evangelicalism which makes the foundation for Christian ethic, and so for all social ethic and national politics. A league of nations only possible by a Kingdom of God. The Gospel must escape from coteries and be equal to the moral

¹ I do not develop this in the text for reasons of space. It involves the vital difference between an aesthetical religion and an ethical—between an impressive Jesus, as spiritual splendour satisfying a religion which *views* His person as hero, friend, or ideal, and a regenerating Christ (with all His person gathered upon the Cross in an obedience), satisfying and delighting the Holiness ethical and eternal, which our faith does not view but share. This is a difference which creates two distinct types of religion or of Church, of which the one is much more powerful in history, and more effective for the Kingdom of God, than the other. The severance of the Church from the moral needs of society, which is so deplored in the Report of the Archbishops' Committee on Industrial Life, is due to the capture of the Churches by the aesthetic type instead of the ethical, by the Logos idea instead of the Kingdom, by piety instead of faith, and the study of religion rather than of God.

control of history, nations and affairs. It has to moralise both Church and world more searchingly and powerfully than the teaching of Jesus alone can do; which *by itself* has more ideal than dynamic. The Catholicity is in the dynamic rather than in the precept. Christ was not a legislator. Our Reunion must rest as deep as the Reunion between God and man—on our Redeemer *qua* Redeemer, as the new Creator and energy of the moral universe. Christianity is the religion of moral redemption. A moral religion is very much more than a religion of morality, or even of loyalty. It is a religion of regeneration, personal and historic. That is, if we are to escape the blight of the *via media*, and become as thorough as salvation is. The measure of the world is the conscience; whose own measure is its origin in a Saviour, and not its ideal in a sage. The one holy Church of love is the creation of the one holy Gospel of Grace.

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A LIBERAL EVANGELICALISM THE TRUE CATHOLICISM

I

THERE cannot be many people really Christian who are quite indifferent to union of the Churches in some form more obvious and effective than the present map of the Churches shows. But such people are certainly to be found; who say, "Let us alone. We are doing well enough with a general sympathy growing on the whole, with occasional fraternising on common ground, or with co-operation in neutral regions." But is that not as if Christian unity were no more than suburban neighbourhood, pious proximity, or a collective egoism modified rather than converted? Sanctified egoism may truly do much, but it is only a half-way house. However it be with the private piety of such people, are they more than sectarian in their Church mind? Do they rise above group egoism in the public relations of their faith? As a matter of fact the spirit, not to say the passion, of real union, union effective and not merely ideal or sympathetic, is in the Christian air; it is also, and far more, in the Christian Gospel; and the only question is as to its focus and its forms.

But these conditions do create a very real difficulty, with which many who are keen for the idea do not yet see how to deal. Many of the idealists seem to think that the notion and its eager sympathies are enough. They hold that the obstacles are gratuitous or even factitious, that they are morbid growths which would dissolve if the heart's action increased and the temperature rose. Now we cannot do too much to cultivate the common sympathies—unless we do it at the cost of a Christian intelligence and conscience. But all the good will in the world will not settle the merits of the case. What is the cardiac remedy we should take? In these great and venerable problems solutions are not simple, else they would have been found long ago. Answers to age-long questions are not to be given off-hand. Ideal ardours without historic sense will not suffice. They may mislead. They will certainly disappoint. We cannot deal with history by wiping the slate and starting afresh. We cannot treat tradition as a perfect fool. Agitation will not bring life or liberty for the Church at least. These come from the nature of its creative source. We cannot deal with division by charging it on theology, and executing the culprit out of hand. We cannot make a mental solitude, and call it Christian peace. The problem will not yield to amateur good feeling. If union come, it is a sympathetic theology, but also a positive one, that is to bring it. The Church rests on its belief, which it is constantly clarifying at the spring. And that is why the scholars of history and the thinkers of faith are coming to play such a part in the matter. From being polemics, they are turning to be among the chief

eirenic of the day. Parties may join for expediency, but Churches can unite only on principle. Here the ways of the State are not those of the Church. To develop a State from a general principle may seem academic and Teutonic; but with a Church it is inevitable. A State is not founded on a special revelation, a Church is. The charter of the Church is a gift of God in a sense which is true of no State. Let us not shrink from cherishing for the Church a foundation, principle such as it might be pedantic and even fatal to apply to the State. Let us beware lest our political success lead us to the philistinism of applying to the Church those standards and expediencies which work so well in national affairs. The Church was created at an historic point by a final act moral and divine; the State, however divine, was founded in no such way; it grew by a series of adjustments in an ascending scale.

When we lay stress on the past, and on a point and act in the past, we are only pressing one phase of the standing difference between objective and subjective religion, between a religion of faith and one of piety, between religion of the historic and religion of the intuitionist type, between a religion of the saving facts of history and a religion of the consciousness. It is a difference which much in current religion tends to erase or ignore. With a democracy whose education has just begun there is a fatal impatience of anything beyond brotherly sympathy, immediate impression, vivid views, sharp alternatives, and hard extremes. There is a dangerous confidence in empirical conviction. Now this is all very well for an individual, but it will not carry a society, and least of all a Church. A crude

mass of such impressibles is easily convinced that there is nothing which they cannot grasp, do, or undertake, from a scheme of drainage to the control of the Fleet. And they are abetted by the cocksureness of practical success. The valuable man of business, for instance, is often quite prepared to run the education of the country. So the impressions or opinions of a religion individual and subjective are made to do duty for the realities of objective and historic revelation; and what is called life with its realisms is set up to overbear all the best verdicts of history about reality. The trouble becomes acute in the public attitude to theology, which is now probably the only great subject in which special study is held to be a disqualification, profound truth an enemy to the soul's life, the man in the pew a competent critic, the man in the train an authority, and the Press a court of appeal. It is even held in quarters, not only that a Church of energetic piety can do quite well without a creed, but. that a creed is a useless survival, which, like the appendix, can become a source of danger to the body.

Now in view of all this it is necessary to say, with much respect, that the Union of the Churches can never be brought about on a basis of subjective and empirical religion, i.e. of religion which is more full of its experience than of the source which creates the experience, and creates the Church. It can never be brought about just because it is in the air, nor because it seems to meet democratic aspirations. It does; but these will not bring it to pass: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; to His people He will speak peace."

If I may supplement our vocabulary in this region by a clumsy word, I would say that the divided Churches have become weak, and even futile, through the excessive growth of religious subjectivity. "That must be true which does me good; that must be real which impresses me." Religion indeed is not possible without experience; but we have worn the idea of Christian experience thin. Truly orthodoxy of an intellectualist kind had made the movement to experience imperative. But we have gone farther than that—farther than a due recovery of balance; we have made experience a test. We judge of truth or reality as that which we feel does us good like a proper meal. We have sought the test of truth in the degree in which it is vouched for by immediate, or individual, or group experience. We have not stopped to ask "Whose experience?" nor "Experience of what?" Nor have we found a criterion by which to select from a crowd of experiences the reality which gives them a scale of value. Experience tells me I am saved, but could any experience assure me the whole world will be saved? Such theology does not pierce the depths or grasp the certainty of a divine purpose; it becomes but spiritual psychology. We have no science of God, but only a science of religion. We pursue a theology of consciousness, not one of fact, of history, of gift, of revelation, of power. We infer God and His ways from our consciousness; we do not explain our state of consciousness by God's treatment of us to begin with. We believe in God's fatherhood by a mere analogy from man's. We postpone revelation to religion; which is an entire inversion. And that does not make for

unity. For we are not one as religious but as redeemed, and especially from petty piety.

As we develop the modern subjectivity I name, we grow weak, trite, and trivial. Every Church feels it. And the frank Churches own it. We begin to realise that a ruling objectivity, a creative authority, is the one thing needful both for Union and for life and its liberty. The power to which we owe our life gives also our liberty and our unity. Union must be what our faith is—an act less of sympathy than of obedience to the authority of love's moral and sovereign Gospel. Experience is one thing, and may be but fraternal; faith is another, and must be royal. Faith is a matter of experience, but experience is not faith. And the difference is that in faith we are more concerned with the object than with the experience. "We preach not ourselves but Christ crucified." Faith is much more than piety. It is more concerned with the nature of the object than with the mood of the subject. It is more interested in our justification than in our peace. It is more anxious that God should come by His own than that we should be safe. And it is on faith that a Church rests, and not on experience. It must begin with God. It must found on God's self-revelation, though it may take shape in our appreciation of it. Experience, piety, makes but a group; what makes a Church is faith, and its self-oblivious engrossment with its Object, as Creator and King. Our justification, our forgiveness, is an act of God before it is an experience of ours. Therefore it is not answered by experiences which come and go, but by faith, as a standing act, which has its sunlit patches of experience as God wills. We

are surer than we feel about the Cross of Christ as the tiling that puts us into the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. We are surer of His knowledge of us than of our knowledge of Him. We forget ourselves in a godly sort. Moses coming from the Mount knew not that his face shone. We are not members of the Kingdom of God just because we have gone through an experience. We believe far more than we are conscious of, but experience is limited by our consciousness of it. The unity of the Church invisible is beyond all our sense of being one. It rests on the act of God and our faith of it, our committal to it. And it creates its own recognition.

Experience is not valuable in itself; all turns on its source and object, which gives it its quality, and which we apprehend by faith. Otherwise it could easily produce but an aesthetic religion which consists more of impressions than of life committal. Experience is as our temperament is; faith is as its object, which is grace, holy love as grace. Experience answers suggestion, faith answers revelation. The one may respond to a *movement* of God, to His Spirit, the other answers His *action* and above all His *act*—to His *Holy* Spirit of our redemption. The one is concerned with God appearing and speaking, the other with God coming and doing. The one is luminous, the other new-creative. The one places itself aesthetically, intelligently, reverentially before a manifestation of God, the other ethically, personally, worshipfully, within His saving act. The one depends much on God's gift of a prophet, the other wholly on God's gift of Himself in Christ crucified. And it is on this last that the Church lives, since it was created by it. The Church was created

by the redeeming blood and not by the edifying sacrament. Moreover, the source of the Spirit which makes the Church is the Cross and not Pentecost, a world crisis and not a group experience. The distractions and bewilderments of the Church are due to a departure from the Cross of our justification, and a recourse to the Christ of our varying sympathies. The creative faith is faith in the Christ of the Cross; but the sympathetic experience may feel the attraction of Jesus more than the redemption of Christ. Experience thinks of God moulding us or changing us—words which contain natural notions. But faith thinks of our justification as a new creation—which is the supernatural power. Evolution moulds us, grace remakes us. We are born again in Christ, and not merely shaped or altered. And it is because the Church has ceased to realise itself as a new moral creation that it has lost its moral power over the created world. It may become but a humane institution, a friendly society. It does not feel its existence to be a miracle, therefore it can perform none. It believes in nothing contrary to experience, nothing but what comes in the warm air of experience, therefore its experience is not adequate to the contrary experience of the world.

Does it not follow that the message for the time is not one that merely seeks to enrich, or even interpret, experience, but one that aims to create faith? Faith is not a new interpretation of life, but a new life to interpret. Genius can give the one, the other needs a Saviour. Faith in God's grace is a thing more moral than experience, less temperamental, more universal, more catholic. And being so moral it concerns first a

God of *holy* love, and then our conscience, its sin, and its righteousness. It begins with God's forgiveness and justification of us. Christ the Redeemer is more to it than Jesus the prophet or the paragon. And Redemption is the burthen of the Apostolic gospel. So the unity of the Church rests on the apostolic succession. But by the apostolic succession is not meant merely the historic. It means a succession to the apostles as sacraments and not mere heralds, far less as officials—the succession to them as interpreters and not publishers, as trustees of an experienced Gospel and not of a canonical technique. The Apostolate was the Sacrament that made the Church, men prophetic for a Gospel and not ministrant of a rite. The Church rests on the evangelical succession and its unity is the evangelical solidarity. The interpreter of the Gospel, the real successor to the Apostolate, is not the Church but the Bible as the precipitate of the apostolic message. What opens the treasures of redemption is not a warranted priesthood but regenerate apostles. Is the Bible chiefly the record and sacrament of Redemption, or is it a quarry for orthodoxy, or is it the trust deed of a ceremony?

II

The foundation of any real unity must lie in the nature of our creative source. Religion is just what revelation makes it. What unites individuals into a Church is not a common experience but a common revelation. It is a common Lord, or Spirit, who creates a faith of which its experience is but a phase, who creates a soul whose experiences are but its

chapters or even clauses. I believe with all my heart when I feel nothing, or am engrossed with my day's duty. It is an objective bond and not a subjective sympathy that is the real nexus. The circle is made not by the contiguous points in the circumference, but by their relation to the centre. And the same is true when it is a case of uniting Churches, and not mere units.

And more. The authority, the kind of power that makes our unity, is historic, but it is historic in a focus and not a career. I mean that what is chiefly involved is not just the objectivity of the *course* of history, our canonical tradition, our official continuity, nor even the mottled record of our moral efficiency in affairs; it is the nature and action of the power that, from a *point* in history, creates both the faith and the tradition. That is, it is not objectivity alone, not canonicity, it is theology that is needed. Religion is made what it is by the *nature*, the interior, the dynamic, the theology, of the revealing act.

It is made by a revelation which is energetic, creative, and not merely exhibitory—by revelation as redemption and not just as truth, as an act moral enough to set-up for all conscience the Kingship of the holy God. If our cohesion is not there, it cannot be *permanently* anywhere. Fact, history, is quite necessary, but it is the nature, the interpretation, the theology, of the historic fact, the nature of its purpose and action, that tells. It is the eloquence of the fact, or let me rather say its vitality, its conductivity, its conveying power. It is fact as sacramental. If it were suggested, for instance, that the episcopal polity should be made universal and necessary for the Church while any

theory of it was disclaimed, the two things would not seem to march. Could we claim monopoly for any spiritual fact or institution except on the authority of its rational interpretation or moral monarchy? Could the unity of a Church depend on even the highest convenience? Could the highest practical utility or historic prestige found unity in the Church of an absolute Gospel? What will win the world is indeed a union of the Churches, but a union in virtue of the Gospel that unites them. It is the Gospel that looses and binds, divides and heals—not the Church, and not its ministry.

A theology then is not an adjunct nor a luxury of a Church, but it is creative for it. The Church did not arise out of the character of Christ, nor out of His historicity as a prophet, but out of the loving nature and moral work of His person as Redeemer. It arose out of a Christ not merely historical but theological, out of a creative theology of Christ's work, which made the spiritual power of Gospel and Church something more moral and permanent than the religious impression He produced. He impressed many whom He did not regenerate and did not keep. I am not speaking here of a systematic theology, as I am not speaking of an official Church. Both of these have, to be sure, been treated as sacral, *i.e.*, as of first moment for the soul for their own sake. But I do not mean that organised theology or Church. I am speaking of the prime theology, which is dynamic, and not the secondary, which is scientific—of the theology which is ethical and economic and not logical and aesthetic (if we may

use Croce's terms). I speak of a prime, seminal, creative theology, which does not handle themes but powers, a theology of God's action rather than His truth, a theology of final, moral redemption, which (and not precept or statement) is the centre, power, and characteristic of Christianity. It is the mysticism of moral redemption.

When we realise that such a theology created the Church at the first, we must realise also that it makes the life, liberty, and unity of the Church as it goes on. These things cannot be had from a creed that begins with neoplatonic notions of Logos and Incarnation, but only from one that rises to an Incarnation which we cannot experience, from an Atonement which we can. The Church is made and spread by a continuous creation of the moral kind, which sets up the Kingdom of God by the holiness in His love—by His grace. The creative act is eternal whether in the first creation or the second: and in the second it is a moral creativity. The unity of the Church lies in the moral act of love which created the Church, and continues to create it. Such prime theology is not an expression of faith, it is the origin, creator, and norm of faith, with a simplicity massive, profound, and wealthy. It is revelation; and the religion—does not make the revelation. This revealed foundation of the Church's life is also the power and principle of its unity. Such unity is not to be found in waves of sympathy which sweep over its membership, nor in a hierarchy of its officials, but in the "organising surges" from its Redemption, which at once create and control its life, and which develop a constitution flexible enough for life.

I have said that that unity is more than an organ of Christian fraternity and sympathy. Take Democracy as an example. Take the American Constitution. Is that just the expression of Democracy? Is it just its organ? Is its value the facility with which it gives effect to each flush of movement that spreads through the population from time to time? Nay; from the President's power and veto downwards, (more thorough than anything we have in king or peers) is it not an elaborate and sagacious system, not for registering democracy, but for correcting it and protecting it from itself and its subjective humours? A democracy, of all forms of government, needs that safeguard most. And this should be well considered by those ultra-democratic Christians who live in an atmosphere of suspicion of a central authority. Without that central authority nothing of moment or stay can be done in the region of affairs, of public affairs. The more democratic the Church is, the more it needs a source of life and control, and not of mere energy released from control, and misnamed freedom. Its great movements must be inspired, and permitted, and regulated by its creative principle. The free Churches do not merely register the subjective affinities of an age or of a piety. They rest on a faith. And the difference between a piety and a faith (have I not said?) is that the former, like filial piety, need not take prime account of the character or action of its object, whereas for faith these are prime, and produce worship and not mere reverence. The great committals of a Church must be moved, or at least countersigned, by a faith charged with solemn

and formative beliefs. Sympathy is not a sure sign of inspiration, nor has it its power—though as the power rises, there rises also the temperature in which it works. Faith works by love. The moral dynamic works in a sympathetic medium, with which it may be said to be consubstantial. As structure is vital to melody so is holiness to love, atonement to reconciliation.

Some urgent creed, however brief, written or unwritten, subscribed or supposed, is therefore not only of the Church's *bene esse* but of its *esse*. Indeed, the Church's central account of its faith is not simply its explication of a Logos common to God and man, but the self-expression of a divine Redeemer. It is a creative necessity from His indwelling. It is a necessity. It represents the rock the Church stands on, or rather the trunk it springs from, its eternal conservatism. And it is a creative necessity. With the Christian Church its conservatism is creative. The more it is the same, the more it changes. The God of the Church and its Gospel is, by the subtle Spirit, the grand conservative power of the world; but it is conservative in method rather than in results. As creative it has the secret, the *élan*, the adjustment, the safety and continuity of all true progress, which is a wealthy self-realisation of moral, holy, redeeming grace (Eph. i). For progress must always be measured by reference to the living identity of Christ, which is the nature of its fixed standard. A moving standard is none, as, at the other extreme, an iron standard is none. Christian progress is measured at last by the redemptive and ever creative principle, which makes Jesus the Christ;

by the principle of the moral redemption and the new creation, which is the Saviour coming, if not to Himself, yet to His own. Movement is not necessarily progress because it seems desirable or strategic at a time. It must have a standard working from a higher plane with its own coherency; and for Christianity this standard is an objective revelation of a living, creative, and yet final kind, with all the implicates of such a vital source. It is not a matter of subjective religion and its affinities, but of an objective revelation with its holy miracle of Atonement on the moral side, and its creative reconciliation on the sympathetic. How do you know that Church Union is according to God's will? Because your heart moves so? But many a fraternal ardour has cooled and subsided. Because it is filling the Christian air? But the passion of the disastrous crusades filled the Church high and low for a very long time. They had with them the heart of Europe, of civilisation, of Christendom. Take, on the other hand, the Reformation. Did it take effect because it was popular, or because it was true and touched moral reality? Something of the kind had long been popular. The rank and file of the Church were aching for it, like the best of its elect. But the desire was impotent. The landslide only came when it came as the imperative of a positive and liberating Gospel for the conscience. The breach in the Church came from the principle of its Gospel, and not from a vague feeling pervading it, nor from religious nor humane insubordination. The dividing sword was the creating Word. And the healing of such breaches must

come from the same source. "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, come again ye children of men." But it must also come as a corporate conviction and not merely an individual, as a conviction of the Church and not of its units alone; and it must come as the Church's conviction about what makes it a Church, even in the wilderness, and not about what just develops its belief or range for culture. [I might withdraw my interest from the doctrine of the Trinity and nobody would be much the worse or the better; but if the Church ignored and neglected it, would all its sympathy or its philanthropy save it from subsiding into the world of mere culture and its sequels? That creed of a Trinity saved Europe from the Moors. Athanasius saved the world from Mahomet. He commanded at Tours, Poitiers, and Roncesvalles. And if you do not see that it founds the true unity of the Church, you might at least be led to admit that the unity of the Churches could not exist without it. Still more obviously would this be so in connection with the doctrine of Redemption.] The wickedness of the present war indicates that the belief which is to unite the world, and *a fortiori* the Church, must be one which deals first and effectively with the moral evil in the world, and not merely with its ignorance or its looseness of thought.

My case is that Church unity is fundamentally a matter of the central power in its theology—and in the theology not of individuals, but of the Churches concerned; that the difficulties to be met are not just soluble in fluid and warm sympathy; that, with a final revelation of *holy* love, moral principles

and powers are more determining than affinities; that our first charge is the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, for which the Church exists; that difficulties must be worked out and not hustled out; that they must be worked out morally; and that justice must be done to the truth which each Church or its leaders feel they have in trust from a saving God. Those who are most intractable to us, the best of the high Catholics, are not moved by sheer love of prerogative, prejudice, and obscurantism. Far from it. They have a charge to keep, against even the piety, or fraternity, or democracy of the hour. There must be not only a sympathy, but a moral understanding arrived at. The matters must be thrashed out by the kind of knowledge and conscience concerned. It is not on the platform that the Churches will unite. Nor in philanthropy only. Not even in the secret oratory alone. But, with all these, largely, perhaps chiefly, in the study, where the fontal act and oracle of the Gospel is interrogated anew, and appreciated not simply as a charter but as a dynamic. The truth will create the conviction and impression which is its own driving power; but no amount of either impression or conviction will create truth.

III

In a question like this we need to be positive. We need to come to the point, the creative point. I am almost sorry to be so insistent on this. It is not enough to say we rally on Christ any more than that we rally on experience. We rally on faith, not experience. We preach not ourselves but Christ. And we rally on faith

in what was the centre even for Christ—on the work given Him to do, and done—on His redemption of us into the Kingdom of God, on the Kingdom and the righteousness on which He put everything from first to last. *Ingens iterabimus aequor*. The vital power for the reunion of the Churches, the Catholic power, is the evangelical, the last moral element in all the Churches, even in the Mass. Reunion must be planted deep, as deep as the reunion between God and man, far deeper than any reconstruction even of the Churches. It must rest on the unbought universality of redeeming grace as the greatest moral act of the universe. It must rest on the atoning Reconciliation, on a Reconciliation whose first concern was to do justice to a holy God, if justice was to be done to His love. It cannot rest on a deposit preserved with fidelity, but on a Gospel of grace prolonged by faith. The unity of the Church is supernatural in its source and nature; and it is in the moral region that the true supernatural lies. Union must rest on the permanent, the eternal, element in our living faith, which is the saving element. It is not the element of sentiment on our part so much as of certainty, of the last certainty. And the last certainty is not a certainty of intuition but of conscience, of its redemption, of its miraculous redemption, the Kingship of the Redeemer as such. We must have a foundation more objective than sympathy, an authority more miraculous and creative, one more owned in our last crisis than felt in our calm culture. By authority is meant one moral and not formal, a power whose act for us and in us leaves us no more our own. I prefer the word formal here to the word external. For all authority

must be external, if it is to save us from a mere masterless subjectivity. Externality to our egoism is of the essence of the word. But there is all the difference between an external authority which is formal, statutory, dogmatic, and one which is personal, moral, intimate, kindling, and creative; and this is neither a Church nor a theology—though it can only be described in terms which are theological and not merely humane.

But if the unity of the Church rest on Christ's supernatural and eternal—shall I say—seizure of us, which is our great certainty, it rests on it as personal and moral action on the part of God. The Church holds together by the moral and eternal act of free and triumphant grace which created it, and which is always functioning in it by the Spirit of holiness, which raised Christ from the dead. Its cohesion lies in its moral redemption—Its unity is its Redeemer. We are not vaguely in Christ as a spacious person, but in Christ in His central function, in Christ as the Creator, by redemption, of the Kingdom of God, and of the Church as its trustee. The real unity of the Church is the Kingdom of God, founded and set up in the Cross, and living by Christ as its King. The Church can only cohere in that reality, in the new Creator of its conscience, in the perennial and *holy* grace of Jesus Christ, in His grace taken as His mercy, and not chiefly as His food to us. It is not the feeding of the Church that makes it one, but its continual creation, not its sacraments but its Gospel—its sacraments only as they preach its Gospel. Its true food is its continued new creation in love's moral passion of holiness. And that is not an infused influence but an incessant moral regeneration, a constant con-

quest of our pagan egoism, private and public, the prolongation of the saving act of history which gave it birth. The Church is not the prolongation of the Incarnation, but of the Redemption for which the Incarnation is a postulate.

Therefore the unity of the Church Can be in no mere polity of life or system of creed. All organisation, whether social or credal, is but provisional and opportunist. Living faith is not faith in a fabric whether of order or doctrine. Christ did not come chiefly to teach truth, but to bring the reality and power of eternal life. Till this is heartily owned, the moral power of the Church is lamed and pinched. Christ is divided. The Gospel is bound in the cerements of legalism. It does not come to its own as Gospel. It appeals more to the canons than to the conscience, to a certain technique, priestly or sacramental. It is neither national nor international, for it is righteousness that exalteth a nation. The real unity of nations is in their conscience. It is in a conscience schooled to the righteousness of Christ's holy Kingship, that the unity of the race is secured; it is not in a mystic or fraternal thrill. Man is one by the unity of his moral redemption, by his destined citizenship of the Kingdom of God, and not by the continuity of any fabric, social or intellectual. And a Church which appeals first to something else than the conscience, with its redemption, cannot at long last appeal to a nation or the race.

IV

That retreat into the permanent, eternal, and truly supernatural thing in Christianity, such realisation of

its Gospel, is the true pre-requisite of any Church unity which is to be other than forced, fanciful, or fleeting. It is a point on which the position of a liberal Evangelicalism is clear. The rallying point, the creative point, is not Christ's *teaching*. I am astonished that so many of the leaders of the Church should keep rotating on the amateurism which stakes all on that. And it is not the *character* of Christ. I am again surprised that so many should not have surmounted the fine stoicism which often passes for the religion of an English gentleman. This type is liable to drop to one which reduces Christ to an imitable splendour, or teacher, working by reverence instead of faith. It reads His Cross as an unhappy arrest on powers in Him which seemed to mark Him as the Messiah of spiritual culture, or as the incarnation of a cosmic Logos. He is made to promise the Kingdom to an Israel of sweet reasonableness, shot with prophetic warmth. But the vital and indestructible thing surely, if one half of the New Testament is not to deny the other, is the redemptive work of Christ for the moral universe, as the Gospel within the Gospels, as the last interior of His person, and the full consummation of His task. It is Christ's person as morally redemptive for Humanity, and creative for the Kingdom of God. When we are put upon the last crisis, it is not even the person of Christ as a capacious haven for the world alone, nor as the source of an emotional devotion alone, nor as an unfailling manna for the soul alone, nor as a living epitome of what we are to believe or practise. He may be any of these things at certain stages of the soul, but not for a Church's end or being. For this He is more. The

wealth of His person is all gathered up and all put into His redeeming work, as the creative crisis of the moral universe, (cf. Eph. i, 7, where the redemption in His blood is the fountain of the Church's moral and spiritual wealth, and not an item of it). His real and unique divinity is that He takes away the sin of the world by a new creation in righteousness and its saving judgment; it is not that He can be shown to incarnate the spiritual Reason, or to display the calm, sane dignity of the eternal Son of a passionless Father. The character of Christ may be made to seem so imperturbable as to be more superior than mighty, more dignified than royal. The permanent and binding element in Christianity is thus not the static keystone of a Logos or culture theology, but the creative power of a new and endless life in the holy Kingship of tragic judgment, spiritual victory, and moral reconciliation. The article of a standing or falling Church is the evangelical.

V

Only we must loose our evangelicalism, and let it go with its own moral power. We must save the Gospel from the backwash of law. We must release it from the Bible, for instance, as a bondage, just as we had to release it from the Church as a bondage. We must release the Gospel from the Bible, as the spikenard was released from the broken box to fill the world, or the lamp from the pitcher to overcome the world. We must release it, but never detach it. We must treat the Bible as the Sacrament of the evangelical power, and not the document of a canonical system, an orthodox creed, or a pious type.

The unity of the Church rests on the evangelical succession and not on the canonical, which is legalist and Judaist, and which ties up the Church more than it unites it. The real power is the evangelical confession. The real authority is the evangelical Redeemer thus confessed in a faith as miraculous as the grace it meets. The real unity is the evangelical solidarity. And it rests upon moral and personal conversion, real but not standardised. It rests on a new birth; and on baptismal regeneration not at all. It is in the last resort, a matter of a new centre, a new heart and conscience, and not of a common egoism, common tastes, or common theories in spiritual religion. It is not aesthetic at all in its nature, it is of a deep and transcendent ethic—of the deepest, most searching ethic we know. It rests on the readjustment of the moral universe, in a holy atonement of the evil conscience of man and the holy conscience of God. It treats this power as the norm of all Christian ethic no less than the source of all Christian experience and Church unity. It moralises all experience by the victory of God's holiness in His love.

The only thing then that can unite the Church is what subdues and reconciles the world. It is the world in the Church that divides us so. I do not mean by that the worldliness of existing Christians. I mean the importation into the faith for a long long time, of a divisive paganism, of a kind of thought that had not tasted the reconciliation nor owned the new creation. It is the afterwash of the effort by the early apologists to treat Christianity as a finial upon the fabric of natural religion, as a new storey built upon the natural

man, as an annexe of revealed philosophy where nature's philosophy fell short; but an addition still philosophic in its nature, and more rational than miraculous, more orderly than creative, in its spirit. It is the attempt to give the natural man a pious finish instead of a new creation. As if natural truth, with all its value as a point of attachment, could ever be the basis for a religion of grace, whose radical rebirth goes to the last depths of the soul.

The only power to reconcile the world is not Jesus but Christ. It is not the spiritual Jesus but the atoning Christ. It is not youth's calm hero and high gentleman, but the tragic Judge and Redeemer of a world grown old and wrinkled in wickedness. It is not the wonder of His aspect, nor the sageness of His truth, but the miracle of His historic, universal, crucial and invincible grace. The reconciliation of the natural world rests on God's recovery of the moral world. The reconstruction of public society turns on the redemption of the moral soul; and this the Church is not getting home. It all turns on the supreme crisis of the world-conscience in the Cross. To say so is not to reduce religion to morality, but it is to lift it from ethical monotheism to moral redemption. That is the whole movement of Bible history, both in the Old Testament and the New. It is to make morality transcend itself, and find itself in a religion of holy grace. A moral religion is not just a religion of morality. And to expound the moral interior of the holy is not a piece of speculative theology. It is morality in the grand style, the moral action proper to the whole destiny of man, to the whole rebirth of

conscience, and to the whole nature of God as the Holy.

It is not the Bible, I repeat, that we rally on. The Bible can be, and has been, so treated as to reduce it to be the dull code of a new law, instead of the living organ of an old Gospel. Taken by itself, idolised like a Koran, and treated like a document whose meaning is to be deciphered rather than divined, treated as a script rather than a Scripture, the Bible may well become a bone of contention and a shibboleth of exclusion. An obscurantist treatment of the Bible is a heavy handicap of the Gospel. The effective and conservative Evangelicalism must be more abreast of things than it has often been, both as to the Bible and the Church. There is little hope for anything but a liberal evangelicalism, one which casts off a "language of Canaan," which is sympathetic with sound and illuminative criticism, which has the historic sense, which outgrows the old individualism to magnify a corporate redemption, and which rises above a conventional and "proper" ethic to understand the moral psychology of the new time, and the moral interior of the new man. And it is essential that these liberalisms should not be reluctantly allowed as concessions, but that they should be joyfully proclaimed as corollaries of the principle of the moral emancipation on which everything hangs for evangelical Christianity.

To gather up and make an end. Real union must be planted deep. It must rest as deep as the union between God and man. It must rest on the world-salvation by God in His Cross.

We unite with more force, and to more purpose, when we know it to be God's historic will and achievement, than when we feel it to be man's eager wish. Our binding authority is our Redeemer in His redemption, and not in His instruction. He who redeems us leaves us with nothing we can call our own, but with everything in having Him. He destroys our self-will and our self-salvation, all our punctual compliances as such. Our rock is our Redeemer redeeming us, and not legislating about redemption and its social technique in a Church. That against the Canonist. And, against the pietist, the main thing is not the experience of being redeemed, but of a Redeemer of Whom we are more sure than we are of our experience. We shall never have the right experience of Christ till we are more concerned about His experience of us, till we look on Him Whom we have pierced. In the same way duty, where it is revealed, is a greater thing than the conscience, which is but the candlestick and not the candle. There are plenty of egoists of conscience, but too few of duty. You can cosset conscience, but not duty. Duty quenches the egoism that conscience often inflames. And so the Church is one, not in our Christian experience or conscience, or work, but in the Redeemer as creating the experience and the duty by His redemption. Experience is no authority, it is only the region of authority or its reflection. It is but the territory, not the throne, far less the King on it. And when we take stand on Catholic or Evangelical faith we are not transferring the venue to subjective religion any more than to individual. The Christian Reformation was not a change to individualist religion; that came with the

pagan Revolution. It was a change to personal religion, to a religion which was not a relation between our person and an institution in which the moral Saviour was lost, but a relation between our person and our Saviour's, in whose Cross our egoism is lost and He is our all. Evangelical faith is truly a religion of experience, but it is the discovery there of the object more than the subject, of the object within the experience as its creator, and of the King in whose faith and worship we humbly forget to think about our own loyalty at all.

This faith is the focus and the principle of the Church's unity amid all varieties of polity or creed. And in this way the union of the Churches and the League of the Nations are set on one foundation, which is the moral bond of the conscience and the Kingdom—the conscience redeemed in the one case and enthroned in the other. For the Kingdom of God set up in the universal moral crisis of the Cross is the goal and the ground both of all religion and all ethic. As the great Church is to all the Churches, so is the Kingdom of God to all the kingdoms. And the Great Church and the divine Kingdom are one.