

CHINESE LEADERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

By W. McCARTHY

BEFORE proceeding to a direct inquiry as to the expediency or in expediency of Chinese leadership in the Christian Church the writer would wish to set down one or two personal considerations. First, he is an Anglican and his ideas are bound to be influenced by that fact. In no opinion here offered does he venture to criticize the methods, aims and ambitions of any Christian bodies outside that communion. But while this ecclesiastical position necessarily limits the range of observation, it emboldens him to deal with matters about which he would otherwise hesitate to speak. Further, his field of service being China, he would not presume to press his argument in either favourable or unfavourable criticism of policies pursued in other parts of the world.

First of all to Anglican churchmen, what does the term Chinese leadership connote? A body of trained catechists left with partial or even complete independence of action? A body of trained clergy in charge of parish churches, self-supporting and self-governing? No. It means neither more nor less than a Chinese episcopate; and if it does not mean that it means very little that can be considered fundamentally important.

In all the varied reading and study that was necessary for the collection of data on which to build up a plea for this great innovation, one met a certain phrase so often that it seemed as if the whole question had become crystallized in that form. The words ran thus: 'The initial step must be made by our Chinese brethren.' While respecting the reasons usually given in support of this opinion we beg

to differ entirely from it, for it is quite possible that had the initiative been taken by foreign missionaries long ago we would by this time have seen the fruition of our hopes. When one looks back on the history of the Anglican Church in China one is profoundly impressed by the admirable reticence shown by the Chinese workers. Though feeling that leadership in the Chinese field, to be really efficient and wise, should be in the hands of Chinese, they have been willing to stand back and reserve for themselves only the subordinate positions. This attitude could not co-exist with a growing consciousness of Christian responsibility ; and so as a result we see that here and there in various parts of the country independent churches have been founded whose purpose and aim it has been to satisfy the natural desire of the Chinese Christian to develop his own powers. A foolish anti-foreign attitude has been taken by some few of these religious bodies, but an independent Chinese Church is not by any means necessarily anti-foreign in an ill sense. Some of the wisest and most experienced Chinese Christians, whilst loyally supporting the mission Church in which they have spent all their Christian lives, yet feel that their allegiance would be better directed to the Chinese branch of the Church Catholic, if it were possessed of its own functions, powers and national leaders. But it has come about that while some competent and suitable men are to be found in positions of prominence and influence in the independent religious bodies there are others who unfortunately are both incompetent and unsuitable. Now the independence enjoyed by these is not only synodal (if one may use the term where no synods in the strict sense exist) but also congregational. In Christian foreign countries where the body of essential truth is held practically by all in common without dispute, this form of church government, having the sanction of age and use and the approval of a large body of Christian opinion, may be allowed to possess certain arguments in its favour. But in China, where matters not only ecclesiastical but doctrinal are in their

first century of development, the results may very easily become disastrous. It is true that the Anglican communion has not yet been affected by such a movement, but the point is here introduced to show the danger we are incurring.

Now the fault of the foreign worker has not in general been lack of sympathy with the great idea, still less any active antagonism to it; but rather the indeterminate attitude taken up by those who claim to be interested in the question and stand, as it were, looking towards it but making no motion to bring about its attainment. It is our business to make inquiry into the reasons for such an attitude, to find out, if possible, whether they are real or imaginary, sound or unsound.

But from the outset let us keep clearly before us that we are pleading for the establishment of the Chinese episcopate, not at any remote period when the Church may assume a full sense of readiness for the change, but now in the present time. Whenever arguments are being brought forward against this suggested alteration in Chinese church government have we not heard again and again: 'We (that is the mission boards, home churches and foreign workers) are not ready for the Chinese bishop yet'; 'The laity are not ready to submit ecclesiastically to a Chinese bishop yet'; 'The clergy are not ready yet, either to produce a bishop from among their own ranks, or to follow the leadership of one of themselves should one be consecrated bishop'? Yet it seems possible that these and similar statements arise from utterly mistaken ideas as to relative values in certain essential points. Is there not, underlying the thought so expressed, an undue appreciation of western abilities, methods and requirements, as opposed to those that would be admired and approved by Chinese? No charge of conscious pride or arrogance is here levelled at the foreign leaders who in the past founded and in the present are guiding the fortunes of the Church in China. What we refer to is so impalpable as to defy real definition and must be described in terms of its mani-

festations and effects. It is an attitude rather than any series of acts, a frame of mind expressed in tones rather than in words. But unfortunately it does induce the adoption of a certain policy that leads directly to the negation of the legitimate aims and aspirations of the Chinese. Nor is this the only ill fruit growing from the same root. This attitude leads to the accentuation of national differences, which may, under circumstances favourable to its development, grow into a very dangerous and unpleasant thing.

When we begin to look at matters with unbiased minds, can we be quite sure that in either ability or methods the standards of the West are so much superior, or more suitable *for the work that has to be done*? We believe it to be true generally that man for man the Chinese is the equal of the foreigner in mental capacity, his inferior in some respects, his superior in others. Nor does it appear that the points of inferiority in his character are so much in evidence as to render him less worthy of the highest responsibility than was his Roman or Greek prototype of the first century when the claims of Christianity really took possession of him and overcame the powerful influence of pagan ancestry and training.

Then, too, on the question of methods, the history of the growth and spread of the Church in China hardly warrants an unquestioning support of the plans and policies adopted either in the past or the present. Do the results we see fairly represent the amount of effort expended? Earnest hard work has often been impoverished and weakened by being carried out according to wrong methods; and one way in which this untoward result has been arrived at has been by the exclusion of Chinese from the highest form of Church leadership.

The methods adopted for the administration of church finance, the larger part of which undoubtedly is provided from foreign countries, have been based upon a dual conception of separation and dependence not the less real because unconfessed. The money is 'yours,' in the words

of the Chinese worker to the foreign missionary, the authority to use it is 'yours,' and so on with reiterant though perhaps unconscious accusation. Whatever may have been the individual teaching on the subject one can hardly doubt that in the minds of Chinese Christians that is the correct possessive to use. Not 'ours' the money, nor 'ours' the direction of its expenditure. This attitude has received the endorsement and sanction of the home boards who look to their missionaries alone to act as their agents in all financial work, failing to realize that in many cases the administration of their funds would be more expeditiously, economically and efficiently carried out by well-selected Chinese workers. In dealing with this point we do not ask simply for consultation in the distribution of church monies, but for a share in the act of distribution itself, one of the most onerous and responsible branches of modern missionary work. We do not here touch the question of the correctness or otherwise of the whole system of foreign grants in aid, but take conditions as they are and plead for a change of action to meet these conditions.

Further, foreign-imposed limitations are put on the natural desire for Chinese expression in the hard and fast type of worship submitted for the use of the Church. Most missionary churchmen would say that our Prayer Book form of worship is more convenient than any other, and we agree with them so far as this statement applies to all such as are *accustomed to such elaborate and stately ritual*. But we ask whether our Prayer Book is really so suitable for the Chinese convert as we think. What proportion of its allusions can he understand, how much of its beauties can he appreciate? To the Westerner the whole is redolent of historic associations of the highest import and interest; even when the historical facts connected therewith are unknown the flavour of reverence and orderly piety, the heritage of centuries of unbroken use and wont, comes to the worshipper with every recitation of the liturgy. But the Chinese convert has not this Christian background.

Why not reduce the Prayer Book to a much more simple form and let the Chinese Church of the future, under the guidance of its own native episcopate, determine the final scope of the book that is to embody visibly the spiritual thoughts and feelings of this branch of the Catholic Church ?

In seeking the reasons for the present policy and lines of action we are brought most reluctantly to two conclusions, either of which is more than adequate to explain why we have no Chinese bishop yet. The first is the presence in the mind of the Church, as represented by both the home and foreign mission staffs, of a conscious or unconscious lack of confidence in tried leaders ; the second is an unwarrantable waiting for adequately western-trained men. The first point is a hybrid growth springing from a variety of concomitant causes unavoidable as long as we continue our present methods. The position accorded to the foreign missionary by the home boards, his standing in China as an accredited teacher, his style of living, his control of the funds, his engagement and payment of the workers, the natural deference and courtesy of the Chinese to one who ostensibly brings a favour, all go to appreciate the foreign at the expense of the Chinese worker. The personal equation does not appear here for solution ; the disability is inherent in the position of the foreign missionary under present conditions.

The second point is more serious for it betokens an attitude of misapprehension and a policy based on demonstrable fallacies. Whenever the matter of the Chinese episcopate is under discussion, thought is almost invariably directed towards the new and higher schools of modern learning, as if these were the only possible sources from which church leaders can be drawn. The policy pursued is based on hypotheses which, we submit, are entirely fallacious : that solid acquirements in or even a veneer of western learning and science is almost indispensable to one taking the office of a Chinese bishop ; that profound learning is an absolutely indispensable qualification ; that

experience in large and important public concerns is a prerequisite ; that not only knowledge of the world but also familiarity with the shifting currents of ecclesiastical life and thought in other parts of the Catholic Church must be possessed by all who aspire to this high position of trust ; and finally that the new Chinese dioceses must have all the complicated machinery, administrative and operative, that the age-old dioceses of the West have grown to require. Put thus baldly, these hypotheses seem insufficient and slight, but we believe they form the basis of many mission policies formulated by the foreign staffs both at home and abroad.

Now while all the things listed above may be convenient, we submit that not a single one of them really touches the essential functions and powers that must be possessed by a true bishop. This is not the place to mention what these should be ; our duty is simply to show that the reasons usually given for refusing to take this great forward step are not sound.

In speaking of the Chinese episcopate and the difficulty of establishing such an office, it appears to us that our eyes are often deliberately shut to the early history of the Church. Can we read of the early spread of Christianity in the book of Acts, in the Pauline epistles and in the history of the sub-apostolic age without being amazed, not only at the rapidity of the Church's growth but also at the apparent ease with which men were found capable of exercising episcopal functions ? It may be said that conditions were much simpler then than now ; this is entirely true if comparisons are instituted between the Asia of St Paul's or St Polycarp's time and almost any western diocese of to-day. But we have to remember that, ecclesiastically speaking, even keeping the Roman communion in view, in China we are still in the days of early Christianity. Will not the same methods of preparation and selection be as efficient here as in Roman Asia ? A more illuminating view may be obtained if we do not confine our comparisons to China and the cultured if effete provinces of the Roman East, but look

at later missions among people not so favourably situated as were the Romans. St Paul's contemporaries had been prepared by Judaism for the reception of Christianity, but what of the barbarous races of the North? It is hardly necessary to mention the anarchic conditions that obtained in the England of the seventh century—pentarchy, hectarchy, heptarchy followed each other in a bewildering series of irregular changes. Might was the prime argument in every dispute. But the last heathen king perished on the battle-field only sixty years after St Augustine's landing in Kent. Though such was the soil in which the faith was sown, it so flourished that within one hundred years of its planting there were no fewer than sixty-one 'native' bishops guiding and administering dioceses. Nor were their positions petty and insignificant. Canterbury, York, London, Winchester, Rochester, Lichfield, Hereford and many others of almost equal importance were amongst the number governed by natives. But here in China, among a people steeped in the tradition of ordered government and settled forms of life, only one man has yet been thought worthy to take up the great trust.

Let us now glance for a few moments at what we have done in modern times to develop for the Chinese Church a corps of Chinese leaders. The figures supplied by the latest published tables give cause for very mixed feelings. Work among the Chinese has been in progress under Anglican auspices for about ninety years, in China itself for eighty; representative non-Roman Christianity has been at work for more than one hundred. We have now twelve bishops, *of whom only one is a Chinese*; two hundred and seventy ordained workers, of whom one hundred and thirty-seven are foreigners while one hundred and thirty-three are Chinese. In the ranks of the catechists the Chinese naturally greatly outnumber the foreigners, as the duties are such as can be far more efficiently carried out by Chinese workers than foreign. Of the ordained, practically all the foreigners are priests, while probably less than half the total number of

Chinese are of that status. But the point is this : there is only one Chinese bishop and he an assistant. After ninety years of work we may surely ask if this is an adequate result or not.

But our plea for action is not based so much upon these known facts as upon certain considerations that arise out of an examination of them. These are two in number :

(i) The nature of the work to be done, having regard to the requirements of a Chinese bishopric in equipment, money and men ; (ii) the character and personality of Chinese leaders now present in the Church who, having due regard to the numbers and qualities of their possible constituents, are capable of fulfilling the requirements of the episcopal office.

(i) We have already noted the disproportionate importance which the huge dioceses in Christian lands are allowed to assume in the formation of our judgment on the question of the Chinese episcopate. The Church of the West during the passing of the centuries has slowly built up institutions and framed organizations the origins of which are to be sought for in the most remote Christian age, but whose ramifications are found obtruding themselves into all classes of society and making themselves felt in every department of civilization. Here in China there is none of that. Whatever form of Christianity was known here in the Middle Ages may justly be said to have vanished without leaving any permanent trace. The Gospel which the western Church brought at the first arrival of the modern missionary was a new thing. The Church is yet in its infancy, in its first century. But while that fact should make every wise man cautious in urging or even suggesting any radical change in the present policy of control, yet it as certainly declares that the requirements of the first Chinese dioceses are first century requirements. How often we are met by the argument that no Chinese bishopric could command either the money or the men to found, build up and control the colleges, schools, hospitals, orphanages and

what not that would form the indispensable adjuncts to any work worthy of the Christian Church. But surely this is only a glaring case of *petitio principii*. It remains yet to be proved that the Chinese Church as such has need of such adjuncts. In the Roman Empire there was a period when the government schools of all grades were closed to the Christian and his children, but this did not hinder the rapid establishment of the native episcopate among the many widely differing peoples who received the truth of the Gospel.

Universities with their various technological departments from whence can issue a highly cultured intellectual church membership, schools that can supply large numbers of students able to enjoy and use the advantages of the higher institutions, hospitals manned with the products of the best medical colleges and fully equipped to meet all demands on skill and resource, a highly differentiated parochial system by which the religious needs of the whole body of members may be met—these and many other things would be good to have *but they are not essential*. The Chinese Church could not use them as they ought to be used, and to possess them without use would be foolish. They will in time of course become integral parts of the church organism; in the meantime the desire to attain them should serve as an incentive to effort and self-training.

(ii) But are the numbers in Christian membership so large as to demand the selection and appointment of persons used to great affairs, men who have received a training suitable for the statesman and national leader? Surely not. Any such claim seems to reveal a kind of distortion of actual circumstances in the mind. The time may come when the Christian statesman specially trained for his responsibilities may be a necessity to the Chinese Church, but present indications show that for many years yet the chief duty of the bishop will be pastoral. And for the carrying out of such work we believe that there are even now present in the Church many who are consecrated and devout, possessed of prudence to control and wisdom to

act, whose sense of duty is firm, whose faith is beyond the power of the world to shake.

Merely to plead for a cause without looking at the practical difficulties that might hinder its progress would be but a vain beating of the air. There are four main difficulties of such a practical nature that if they cannot be met there is grave cause for fear that a sound working scheme would be impossible of realization : (1) the supposedly limited number of those who could suitably be entrusted with the powers and responsibilities of a bishop ; (2) the financial question, including the support of the Church in all its departments and the administration of all the property at present held in foreign names under treaties between Chinese and foreign powers ; (3) the salaries of Chinese and foreign workers respectively and relatively ; and (4) the relation of the Chinese bishop to the foreign workers in his diocese.

Let us then fairly and openly look at these in the order in which they are set down, reminding ourselves that what we are really arguing for is not merely the preparation of one corner of the field, earmarked, as it were, to be converted into a diocese when any one special man is supposedly ready, but the establishment of the principle that Chinese bishops are necessary for the Church's proper growth, with the corollary that they should be consecrated to their high office without delay.

1. First, then, let us consider the supposedly small number of possible leaders. To those who are familiar with the conditions of mission work in the Anglican dioceses and who have intimate personal acquaintance with the Chinese clergy and laity, the supposition appears to have but little weight. We do not need men who shall control large areas and great groups of churches, who shall be in charge of costly and complicated institutions that require a larger supply of men and money than the Chinese Church can yet supply. The early bishop is the type to be copied ; the overseer of one central church with his little local group of dependent chapels and preaching stations. For

such work and for the operation of such a system we claim that there is an ample supply of capable men now to hand. Names and persons come before one in a long list from one's own limited acquaintanceship.

2. But supposing that the supply of men was not only presently ample and available but that it could also be maintained through even a rapid expansion of the Church, there would still remain the great question of finance. This naturally falls into two divisions.

(a) In reference to the first let us remember that the costly and elaborate methods of the West, both as regards property and administration, need have no place in the Chinese diocese. Let the churches be Chinese buildings; let the schools and quarters for the necessary staff be built in the same style, all being brought up to good standards as regards air, light and sanitation, and it is difficult to see why the essential requirements could not be met even by the present constituency. But supposing that for a time these could not be so met; why should there not be a continuation of grants in aid from the foreign boards or from the now existing dioceses? Is the Church not one? True, it would be best of all were the Chinese Church to be quite independent even of the smallest amount of outside financial assistance, as far as such a condition was made compatible with safe and sure development. But for a time at least there might be great difficulty in some places in collecting the needed funds. Support of clergy and lay-workers, building operations, transport expenses, relief of the needy, elementary as well as catechetical schools, orphanages and refuges, the indispensable agencies of a real 'native' episcopate, would all claim immediate attention; and this might ask for foreign help. But this would not be for long, for as in the primitive ages, the gifts of the faithful would certainly be forthcoming for the spread and strengthening of the Church. On the one hand the incentive would be provided by the two important facts that the Church was in the fullest sense Chinese and that their Christian honour

was at stake before their pagan countrymen ; while on the other the repressive influence upon their own giving by lavish foreign gifts would be for ever removed.

(b) But the most complicated financial problem belongs to the future. During the course of the last half century a large amount of very valuable property has come into the possession of the Church in China. Now nearly all of this has been acquired in the name of foreign mission boards, and is held under sanctions obtained by foreign treaties. To all intents and purposes these properties are not Chinese at all, having no Chinese law affecting their status, nor are taxes paid in respect of the greater part of them. When we remember that the value of these properties runs into millions of dollars, and that the Chinese Church membership generally speaking is financially poor, we can realize that we are confronted by a question of real gravity. It is an easy thing to say, as many missionaries have done, that these are all to be handed over to the Chinese Church as soon as it is ready to receive them. But this method of dealing with the matter ignores many points of fundamental importance. A great deal of mission property lies within the boundaries of foreign settlements, where complications might arise at such a transfer of ownership. Then, too, some properties are memorials given and held in perpetuity for certain specific purposes ; others again are held under trust deeds that impose definite legal obligations that cannot be honourably repudiated. How are all these to be dealt with ? The position of the existing dioceses under foreign bishops is another factor in the situation. Let us say at once that for many years they not only must but ought to continue on the lines along which they have progressed for so many decades. The Chinese Church through them possesses the link that binds it to historic Christianity ; we could never afford to give up this peculiar possession that binds us to the Church of the ages by any premature or ill-judged act. The question of holding properties where legal or geographical difficulties exist might remain as at present.

Some day international law may step in and prove one means of solving it without our interference. But in the country districts, wherever native dioceses were established, and where the qualities and value of the properties would present no special difficulties of disposal, the mission ought to be willing to give them over to the Chinese Church for possession, use and control.

3. There is a further financial point that merits our attention—the salaries of Chinese and foreign workers. For some time at least, perhaps in the new Chinese dioceses and certainly in the present missionary districts, there would be, as now, Chinese and foreign workers side by side. At present the foreign salaries are very much greater than those of the Chinese, and on that account some short-sighted people find cause for great complaint. But a slight examination of the existing conditions will do much to remove this misapprehension. Speaking generally, we may say that striking an average of the salaries of all the Anglican missionaries in China we would find it to be considerably less than the same women and men could earn in their own country either as clergymen or in their lay professional capacities. As to the actual purchasing values of these salaries, they vary so greatly in different localities that no fair average can be taken. When we consider the Chinese workers' salaries we find that though they are much smaller than those of the foreigners, yet from the Chinese point of view, in the case of the clergy at least, they are not inconsiderable; and compared with the incomes accruing to the foreign workers their purchasing value is much greater. We are not here discussing the adequacy or inadequacy of salaries at all, what we wish to show is that the disparity between the two scales is more apparent than real. Should the anomaly be continued? Probably in the missionary districts now existing no change on the ground of the supposed inequality would be advisable or even necessary. But it ought not to be continued in the Chinese dioceses for which we are pleading. If the foreigner is content to work

there, he should receive neither more nor less than his Chinese co-worker of equal standing and should arrange his style of living according to the scale set out by the diocesan authority. This would of course be possible to only a limited number of foreigners, as it is not everybody who could make so sudden and radical a change in mode of living. But some could, and their doing so would almost certainly result in great mutual benefit.

4. The question as to whether there should or should not be foreign workers under the direction of the Chinese bishop might well prove the most serious of all problems were the Church to adopt the new policy we have been advocating. But if we are fair to ourselves, honest in our churchmanship and true to our Christian principles there can be but one answer to that question. If to us episcopacy means anything at all it must mean all that is connoted by the term, and that being so we must have courage to stand by our convictions. Should any foreigner feel that duty led him to work in the Chinese diocese, and should the Chinese bishop accept his offer of service, then their relative positions and responsibilities would have to be those that would obtain were the bishop and the candidate of the same nationality. The subject is of course most complicated, but we would lay down as a fundamental principle that all ecclesiastical obedience in a diocese should be made to the bishop of that diocese irrespective of any accident of age, training or nationality. In the case of a foreigner questions of furlough, leave and similar matters would have to be settled between the bishop and his worker individually.

The plea that readers will carefully consider the points put forward in this paper is based on the conviction that the best interests of God's work would be served by the proposed change in policy, and that such a change would produce a development of church responsibility, together with a clear-minded endeavour on the part of Chinese churchmen to build up the kingdom of God in their own wide land.

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