

LEADERSHIP IN THE MISSION FIELD

BY SIR A. H. L. FRASER, K.C.S.I., LL.D.

THE article in this Review for July 1917 on 'The Modern National Spirit, the Indian Church and Missions,' by the Rev. Herbert Anderson, is one of great interest. The sympathy which the writer displays for the national spirit, and the sober but earnest desire that he has that that spirit may secure its legitimate aims, must meet with much approval from every friend of India. The relation that he establishes between the national spirit and aims in politics and social life, on the one hand, and the same spirit and aims in the Church, on the other, is one that cannot be lost sight of. Not all the proposals which he makes towards the formation of an organized Indian Church 'free from foreign control and desirous of developing its life, under the guidance of Christ, in its own way' may command immediate assent; but the whole aim of the article will win very general acceptance.

The Findings of the National Conference, held in Calcutta in December 1912, quoted by Mr Anderson, may be very briefly stated thus: (1) that 'the stage has been reached when every effort should be made to make the Christian Church in reality the most efficient factor in the Christian propaganda in this land'; (2) that a strong desire exists 'for a comprehensive church organization adapted to the country'; (3) that 'the Indian Church should have entire freedom to develop on such lines as will conduce to the most natural expression of the spiritual instincts of Indian Christians'; (4) that there is a 'wide-spread indication of the awakening of a true spirit of sacrifice and service in the Indian Church,' and that therefore the conference is convinced that 'churches and

missions should open for Indians the highest and most responsible positions in every department of missionary activity.'

It is not the purpose of the present article to discuss these four resolutions; but I am distinctly of opinion that they are of great importance, and that it is very desirable to have them brought prominently forward at the present time. The situation in India is such as to demand attention to these very points. In politics we find deep interest displayed in the national spirit and aims which are manifesting themselves in India; and, whatever the actual result may be, we are confident that things will not be allowed to remain as they were before the war. A very exceptional effort is being made to grapple with the problems which the national spirit raises in India. If this is so in politics, it must be so also in the Church.

It is quite true, however, and never to be forgotten, that the position in politics is not quite the same as it must be in the Christian Church. Twice the disciples raised among themselves the question which of them should be greatest. On one occasion Jesus took a child and set him by Him, and said, 'He that is least among you all, the same is great' (Luke ix. 48). The other occasion was, strange to say, near the end under the very shadow of the Cross; and there arose a contention amongst the disciples which of them should be accounted to be greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them . . . But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve . . . I am in the midst of you as he that serveth' (Luke xxii. 24-27). One could have no sympathy with a struggle in the Christian Church for mere status and dignity. But this is not what we are discussing. We are discussing rather status as the opportunity for service, and responsibility as that which ought to belong to the man who is doing the work. What we are aiming at is that the evangelization of India should be

carried out in the manner most likely to secure its rapid and healthy progress; and there can be little doubt that this will result in a great increase of responsibility in the Indian Church, and in the Indian Christian worker, and to a marked change in his status.

I have been privileged recently to carry on a fairly wide correspondence with missionaries in all parts of the field in Africa, India and China. I find among the missionaries a very strong feeling that the time has come when there must be a great change in missionary methods. They feel that foreign missionaries cannot accomplish the work that has to be done; that it must mainly depend on indigenous agency; and that we must specially look to the local church to carry on the functions with which it has been endowed by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, a deeper interest seems to be evoked among the non-Christian peoples in all parts of the field; so that there is more demand for those who are competent to guide men into the Church, and to expound to them the principles and doctrines of Christ. This correspondence has led me to feel that the same classes of problems are rising in all mission fields. I must, however, give myself in this article specially to India, simply because I know India better than I know any other field; and I must leave those who are better acquainted with other fields to say how far the remarks made may apply to them.

I touch for a moment on the subordinate agents employed by missionaries. I find that there are many complaints of the difficulty of finding an adequate supply of such agents at the present time; because the old sources of supply happen to be drying up; and men and women are not coming forward so freely as had been hoped to take up mission work. The village agents are not always what is desired. Generally the teachers are quite equal to those of government schools; and considering their origin there is certainly no reason for disappointment. Some of them are excellent; but the quality is very often poor, and the

supply inadequate. The instruction imparted is also too often not such as to make good villagers, but rather to take anything that is good away from the village, and to utilize it in some kind of 'service' somewhere. This will not do if the village life of India is to be elevated and enlightened. This matter is receiving, to a certain extent already, earnest attention on the mission field; and plans have been laid for making a careful and effective local inquiry which would have been carried out by now but for the difficulties occasioned by the war. The deputation which was to have gone out to India to consult with the missionaries and churches, and all interested in village life, has had to be postponed until the end of the war. In view of the extraordinary movements among the common people and in the villages, the matter is recognized as of great urgency.

One defect which seems to be often felt is that the pastors and teachers are not always fitted by character and training to be village leaders, to take their place in the front rank among their fellow-villagers, and to push forward good work of an economic and social character. Too often they have been, all their lives, dissociated from village life; and when they go back they are not fit to take their part in that life and to elevate it. They ought both to be leaders in the village life as a whole. They are not to rule, but to co-operate and to lead in co-operation. How best this may be secured will be a special part of the inquiry to which reference has already been made. Although all this deals with the simplest and most unobtrusive part of the Church's life and work, yet it is of vital importance. If the Church fails to grapple with the problems affecting village life promptly and effectively, an opportunity will be lost the value of which is infinite, and the loss of which would be irrecoverable.

I pass now to the problem of securing Indian workers of a higher quality—men who may be leaders in the different

parts of Christian life and work of the Church in India. Missionaries of all churches are beginning to feel the urgency of this problem ; and many would subscribe to what was stated by the Findings (already quoted) of the National Conference of 1912. Yet the effective efforts to solve the problem are little more than sporadic. Things are drifting. There is no accepted policy, no systematic grappling with the problem. We see that every mission is undermanned ; that missionaries everywhere have no time to think out lines of policy ; that they have not even time to do classes of work the urgency of which is plain ; that every department of work suffers just because the missionaries in charge have not time to work effectively. It becomes clearer every day that the work of christianizing India must be done mainly by Indian agency ; and yet Indian agents are not to be had. We see important work in the old programmes, which Indians could do well and which the missionaries cannot overtake, neglected or only half done, because Indian workers are not there to do it. We see missionaries prevented from exercising that personal influence which is specially important in India, and to which so much of the success of the older days was due, because they are burdened with work much of which could well be done by Indian workers ; and Indian workers are not available. We see new and glorious opportunities of reaching masses of the people who are stirred to their innermost depths, wholly or partially lost, only because the Indian labourers are few.

Why is this ? Let me quote what some of our leading missionaries say on the subject. One writes :

We have all to deplore the fact that, of the large number of Indian Christians who have the benefit of a college education, the great majority go into government service or into the lucrative profession of law. We are thankful for the graduates who have entered mission service as teachers ; but very few indeed turn to pastoral or evangelistic work. Among the reasons given for this are the following : the insecurity of mission service, the low salaries, and the unwillingness of missionaries to place Indians in positions of independent responsibility.

Another missionary mentions a particular case :

The church has been without a pastor for six years. A young man considered suitable was trained and licensed ; but the arrangement fell through for financial reasons ; and the congregation not having been able to secure him as pastor, he became a Y.M.C.A. secretary. It would be well that such men, trained by us and suitable to take considerable responsibility, should have a career open to them in our mission such as the Y.M.C.A. gives them.

Another missionary writes :

We have a few really satisfactory agents. Within the last three years two have sent in resignations. One of these might be termed a really capable leader in evangelistic work. One of the secondary reasons for his leaving was on the grounds of status and salary ; and our higher Indian agents ought surely to have a larger share in shaping the policy of our work.

There is another side of the shield. It is thus set forth by one of the missionaries :

We cannot help feeling that a principal cause of the evil is the condition of the Indian Church. If the spiritual life of the Church were what it should be, the difficulties would not be found to be insuperable. Part of the weakness lies in the fact that missionaries have so little time to keep in touch with the young people in the Church, even though, as pupils in our schools and residents in our hostels, they come under our charge. If we were able to secure their friendship at the critical period of their lives, many of them we hope would offer for direct Christian service.

Another missionary puts the matter thus :

The principal causes of the present lack of workers are to be found in the churches and in the homes. The churches for the most part have not had an adequate realization of their responsibility in this matter. They have not kept the glory of service and suffering before their members or made it their business to raise up an army of workers to labour for the spiritual good of India, whether in connexion with the mission or with the churches themselves.

To me there is something exceedingly pathetic about all this. Our best and most distinguished missionaries are amongst those whom I have quoted.

We have practically three reasons assigned for the want of workers. First, the financial reason, which must be met, because although there is glory in service and suffering, there is no glory in compelling other people to suffer. The second is the want of adequate opportunity of suitable

work, and of responsibility, and often of interest, in the work which is committed to the Indian agents. In regard to this the hearts of our best missionaries have been touched; and they are anxious to find the remedy. The third is a defect in the spiritual life of the Indian Church. It is encouraging to know that all recent reports indicate that there is a great change of sentiment setting in in this respect, and that we may look for a revival of spiritual life in the Church which may have glorious effects on its work. All these things are matters which have to be considered carefully and prayerfully by the missionaries in India and the missionary bodies at home.

I wish now briefly to refer to the history of the development of local self-government and of the employment of Indians in the State, as likely to afford us some help in grappling with similar problems connected with the Church. It has been long recognized that we are bound in India not to ignore the reasonable claims of Indians to have a share in the administration and government of the country. This obligation was set forth in the generous promise of the late Queen Victoria in her Majesty's great Proclamation transferring the government of India from the East India Company to the Crown, a promise which was solemnly renewed fifty years later by King Edward VII. That promise recognized the obligation to see that, as far as may be possible, His Majesty's 'subjects of whatever race or creed shall be freely and impartially admitted to offices in his service the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge.' This promise had of necessity to be carried out, always with due regard to the interests of the people and of the administration of India; but it was systematically kept in view; and great progress has been made.

During my thirty-seven years in India I saw great changes. Before I went to India, there were, for example, no Indian members of the civil service in Bengal at all. At the end of 1908 there were thirteen Indian civilians in the

graded list, besides ten Indians not members of that service holding posts ordinarily reserved for it. In 1871 the highest position held by an Indian in the Executive Service was the comparatively subordinate one of Assistant Magistrate. Since then we have had Commissioners of Division as well as Collectors and Assistant Collectors; and when I was Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, an Indian officer held the executive appointment of next highest rank in the province to mine, as Senior Member of the Board of Revenue. Since then we have Indian members of every provincial executive council; and we have had a singularly distinguished succession of Indian members of the Viceroy's Council.

At the same time extraordinary progress has been made in the development of local self-government in districts and municipalities, and in the establishment of legislative councils in every province, wherein the non-officials have a voice and an influence which would not for a moment have been believed possible by most men when I entered the service. For myself, I have no hesitation in saying that I believe the policy which has thus been worked out to have been not only righteous and just but also entirely wise. I believe that the results have been in every way advantageous to the interests of the country. We certainly have not reached the highest point in the application of that policy. It is still being carried out, and is advancing in geometric progression.

That to which I attribute the steady progress under that policy, so far as it has been applied, is this, that it was definitely and deliberately adopted and that it has been determinedly enforced. It is always a difficult matter for a man who is full of a sense of responsibility for important work to make up his mind to throw the responsibility for that work upon anyone else, or even to share it with another. Therefore if such a policy as has been indicated is to be carried out, it must be determinedly insisted upon by those who have the authority to enforce a policy. I know that

among those who were opposed, or at least indifferent, to the development of local self-government and to the more extended employment of Indians, there were very often found Indians already in the service; and I simply attribute that to this fact, that it is very difficult for earnest men to believe that the work that they are doing ought to be done by other people. Similarly and for the same reason, it was very often the case that some of our European officers who most efficiently discharged their own trivial round and common task were amongst those who opposed the development of the policy indicated. Therefore it was necessary that Local Governments should keep this policy constantly before them, should determinedly maintain a system of training that would provide men for official work and for the discharge by non-officials of the work of local self-government, and should insist on such men being set to work. The Local Governments holding this policy before themselves, insisted upon their subordinates carrying it out. Similarly it was necessary for the Government of India to keep that policy consistently before them, that they might insist upon its being carried out by Local Governments. Similarly again it was of very great advantage that the Secretary of State should, either in his own heart or through his council, have very clear and decided views upon this subject. Where any of these authorities failed to keep the matter before them, progress was slower than it ought to have been.

It seems clear, I think, that this is very much what we want in regard to the similar problems now affecting the Church in India. We want to have a clearly defined policy; and we want to have that policy consistently enforced. It must be kept before our missionaries, who must realize that they are not doing their best work unless they are assisting in the development of the Indian Church, and putting Indian workers into positions of responsibility and trust quite equal to those which they themselves have occupied. The time has come not only to have a vague

desire to do justice to Indian aspirations and to employ the Indian Church and Indian workers, but also to go beyond that. We must have a clear and definite policy in regard to all the problems that are involved—the share which Indians are to take in every department of mission work, and also the work which the Indian Church is to do and the share which it is to take in the evangelization of India. Great progress, for which we thank God, has been made of late years in organizing the Christian Church and setting it to work ; but this is a case in which we cannot afford to be weary in well-doing. Alongside of progress in this matter also, there must be a determined effort to give Indian workers a due share of responsibility for missionary work, and an ever increasing part in its direction and administration. All this involves going into the question in respect of every department of missionary and church work ; and the consideration of all the problems which will arise in this connexion seems to me to be now so urgently demanded that it cannot be postponed. Societies at home should get into touch with one another on this subject ; but they cannot frame their policy except in consultation with the men who are carrying out the work on the spot ; and the men who are carrying out the work on the spot are not only the missionaries and the mission councils but also the leaders and representative members of the Indian Church. I have not ventured to put down anything definite either as to the precise questions which must be grappled with or as to the solutions which may be desirable. I have views on these points ; but I think it is most desirable that such matters should be taken up in the first instance on the field. What I desire to urge is that a definite policy should be deliberately adopted and determinedly carried out.

A. H. L. FRASER