

MISSION FIELD.

THE CHURCH IN INDIA.

BY THE REV. R. R. WINTER, OF
DELHI.

(Continued.)

Now comes the question of unity. If the Catholic Church, not only in its beliefs and the personal life of its members, but in its corporate life as the universal society, is to be brought as part of the essence of the faith before the Indian people, surely her unity must be not only a leading characteristics, but would appear to be of the essence of her being. I am writing now, not of that wide unity which, alas! lies for the present beyond our reach, but of the unity of the Anglo Catholic Church within the bounds of any one country. To consider this now is a matter of no mere theory, but of present importance, because many are inquiring whether Indian Christianity be not a thing so wholly *sui generis* as to be in danger of losing its characteristics if brought up in the same fold as English Churchmen; that the habits of mind, thought, and life of the two races are so widely divergent as to be mutually repellant; and whether, therefore, the Indian Church should not be organized apart from the Christianity of the European and semi-European part of the population.

This, I venture to submit, seems contrary to all historic precedent. It is true that Christian people have most miserably separated from one another, but this has been because on one point or another they have differed from the main body of the Church; but do we find that the Church in any one country has deliberately divided her one body, and said, "I will cease to be one, and will now become two"?

What do we see in Italy and Gaul of the fifth and following centuries? What a babel of rival races in Italy after the fall of the Western Empire—Roman and Greek; Gaul and Goth; Lombard and Norman, all gathered within one narrow peninsula. And again, what do we find in France? The Roman of the cities, the Gaul of the country districts, the invading Visigoth, Burgundian and Frank. Where could we find more widely divergent racial characteristics? Yet did the Church say to the Southern Italian, "You are so different from these high-handed Lombards of the North we are sure you will never develop your own line of thought or bring out your subtle characteristics, which, if left to grow, will throw so much light on Christian doctrine; we will, therefore, give you a separate organization, that you may grow, after a friendly fashion, indeed, side by side with your neighbors, but you shall not have your characteristic thoughts, ways, and theories interfered with"? Again, could wider divergence be found than between the Latin of Southern Gaul, not yet made France, and the Teutonic Frank of the North? Yet do we find divergence in religious organization? Abundance of confusion, it is true,

everywhere, but no separation. We see Catholic unity everywhere asserted in the midst of varying races and warring nationalities; while all without was a chaos of languages, jealousies, and varying laws, in many ways akin to the present position of India, yet the one place of peace and union was the Church, which in the progress of generations lessened divergencies, smoothed jealousies, assimilated laws, till all could be brought within the bounds of one nation. Would the hard-working, plodding, down-trodden English of the soil, and the ruling, cultured, domineering Roman have ever been accentuated by the presence of two parallel Church organizations? Let me quote part of Guizot's 12th Lecture on the History of Civilization in France. "There is one fact which dominates over all, which characterizes the Christian Church in general. . . this fact is the unity of the Church, the unity of the Christian Society, despite all the diversities of time, place, domination, language or origin. Singular phenomenon! it was at the very time that the Roman empire fell to pieces and disappeared that the Christian Church rallied and definitely formed herself. Political unity perished, religious unity arose. I know not how many nations of various origins, manners, language, and destiny are thrown upon the scene; all becomes partial and local; every extended idea, every general institution, every great social combination vanishes, and at this very moment the Christian Church proclaims the unity of her doctrine, the universality of her right. This fact . . . has rendered immense services to humanity; the mere fact of the unity of the Church maintained, gave tie between countries and nations which everything also tended to separate; and from the heart of the most frightful confusion arose perhaps the most extensive and the purest idea that has ever rallied mankind—the idea of spiritual society."

Let us now look at this question of a separate Church for the Indians with reference to the other great, strictly organized, and ever active exponent of Western Christianity. There is an abundant crop of post-Reformation sects in India who do not pretend to care for unity; our phase of Protestant Christianity is much the same to them as another. These scattered fragments, good and noble work though they are doing as pioneers, will as times moves on present but little attraction to the people of India, wanting as these bodies are in antiquity, authority, and cohesion; but is this the case with the Church of Rome? She knows wisely how to adapt herself to widely differing wants of race and temperament, yet Rome will never give up her unity. At what a disadvantage then shall we of the Anglo-Catholic side of the Church be placed! Rome pointing to the antiquity and continuity of her unity, would say: "Here is no invidious distinction between race and race, no difference between a Western and an Eastern brother;

with us there is one bishop, one rule, one organic whole." I believe she would win hand over hand against us, and we should be left in a corner—the best-intentioned people in the world, still lamenting over our unhappy divisions. In spite of much Indian jealousy at the present time of English interference, what they really fear is not influence or union, but domination; and I believe the more ignorant would be amazed, and the better educated deeply offended, if told there could not be one Church for the ruled and the ruling race.

[To be continued.]

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