



The Liberal Catholic Church

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TO THE GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD:

Ever since my recovery of health and return to active service early in June of last year, I have studied repeatedly and carefully the past, present and possible future of the Liberal Catholic Church. This letter is intended to share with you the conclusions I have reached and the plans I have in mind regarding that future. It is sent to you for comment, criticism, and, if found genuinely constructive, for action.

The first draft of this letter, addressed to the Presiding Bishop and the General Episcopal Synod, was finished on 23rd February. When the news came of the death of Bishop Leadbeater on 1st March, and I realized that the wise counsel of our Presiding Bishop on which I had counted so much was no longer available physically, I thought over the whole situation for several days and came to the conclusion that there was no valid reason for withholding the letter. I could not see that the situation regarding the Church had been changed in the slightest and the matters touched upon in the letter were just as urgent. Accordingly, with some necessary changes and some additions caused by further thought, this letter that I am sending you is the one that I would have sent to the Presiding Bishop.

I have described conditions in our Church with which I am personally familiar, largely those prevailing in the Province of the United States. I believe, however, that many of these conditions are to be found in other Provinces of the Church. Furthermore the social background I have had chiefly in mind is that of the American people. Each one of you must be the judge whether the matters touched upon and the proposals made in this letter apply to your respective countries. I believe they do, provided the necessary adaptations to national outlooks and problems are made, but you must decide whether the ideas I shall set forth are applicable to this Province only, or are worthy of adoption by the Church throughout the world.

The early years of our Church, from the time of its founding until about 1925, were marked by great enthusiasm, vigorous internal growth, rapid ex-

pansion. Churches and Missions sprang up in many countries on five continents, members poured in, ordinations to the Priesthood were frequent, the Liturgy was prepared, translated and printed in several languages, several Church magazines were founded, *The Science of the Sacraments* and *The Hidden Side of Christian Festivals* appeared and were widely read. This extraordinary growth must be ascribed, not to the inherent appeal of our Church to the world at large, but primarily to the fact that early in its development several prominent leaders in the Theosophical Society, men of exceptional ability, became tremendously interested in the spiritual power of the sacramental services and the immense possibilities of human betterment offered by the Church. Their enthusiasm spread to many other members of the Theosophical Society and, although there has never been, as we know, the least organic connection between the two organizations, the presence in the Church membership of some thousands, and in the ranks of the Clergy of some hundreds, of people who were devoted to theosophical ideas and ideals, has led inevitably to a strong infusion in the literature and teachings of the Church of the finest and most inspiring of the ethical teachings and philosophical viewpoints of Theosophy.

There is nothing to regret or conceal in this. Our Church owes to Theosophy a magnificent tolerance which is rare in Christendom, a genuine appreciation of the worth and spiritual value of every other Church and Religion. It is indebted to Theosophy for a sound and reasonable philosophical background, which is refreshingly different from the majestic, but artificial and wholly unreal structure of the greater part of Christian theology. In the liberty of thought permitted to its members and to the Clergy, in the absence of creedal requirements for membership, in the complete banishment of all expressions of fear and cringing from Liturgy and Hymnbook, tribute must be given to the inspiration of Theosophy. In the superb conception of God as the Life of the Universe in contrast to the tribal deity so often pictured in Christian worship and preaching, Theosophy had its influence. Yet at the same time it must be admitted that the Church has suffered from even this association of the two organizations. In the world at large there are violent prejudices, many misconceptions regarding Theosophy and the Theosophical Society. We have shared in the abuse directed at the other organization, and no doubt will suffer in the future. Still I believe that what the Church gained in the way of an enlightened outlook was worth the price. Nevertheless in the years to come it is the part of common sense to keep the two organizations apart. Each has its work to do in the world and nothing will be gained by mingling the two, either physically, or in the mind of the public.

This first period in the development of our Church was a time of foundation building. Hopes ran high and the future was rosy with promise. Many felt that the Liberal Catholic Church with its incomparable Liturgy, its unique combination of the powerful sacramental form of worship with the fullest measure of intellectual liberty, would sweep the world and profoundly influence Christian thought.

Then the wind of doctrine began to veer, at first faintly and at intervals, then directly and with power. The result was to be expected. Hundreds of members, having enthusiastically joined the Church some years before upon the suggestion of one revered leader, now adopted the ideas of another leader

with equal enthusiasm and left the Church. The Church, as Church, apparently meant little to them. Their eyes were fixed on another goal, at first that of service leading to discipleship, then that of inaction leading to liberation. I do not now regret that exodus, although at the time I felt it keenly, nor do I in any way blame our members for leaving. Rather, the question has occurred again and again to me: "What was so lacking in our Church that it could not hold these people once they had joined?"

Following the exodus there came a period best characterized as that of consolidation. Those that remained in the Church were there because they wanted to be there, because the services of the Church gave them what they most desired. The growth during this period was small compared to that of earlier years, but it was solid. I believe the condition of the Church to-day is far more stable and capable of permanent expansion than during the preceding era of enthusiastic inflation.

A few months ago I began to notice in the services and among the members what best may be described as a stirring of the life currents of the Church. This has steadily increased until at the present time here at St. Alban's Pro-Cathedral in Los Angeles, and, judging from reports, elsewhere in the Province, a veritable torrent of spiritual power is sweeping through the services of the Church. Continually the impression has grown stronger in me that we are now entering upon a new period in our history, one apparently of worth-while achievement and healthy growth, a time wherein we shall begin the building of that structure for which during the past years we have been laying the foundations. Great events seem "just around the corner."

In order to gain some idea of the nature of the coming structure I have tried on numerous occasions to form an honest, uncoloured estimate of what we have so far accomplished, and then with that as a basis to see the probable lines of future development. The Church means so much to me personally, that I confess I found it quite difficult to stand, as it were, outside the movement and survey it from a distance. Because of this it is likely that the picture I shall endeavour to draw is distorted, and no doubt many of you will not see eye to eye with me, but perhaps my efforts, because they are sincere and very much in earnest, may give birth to constructive thoughts with which you can correct my own.

During the last ten years it has forced itself repeatedly upon my attention that while the Liberal Catholic Church is functioning quite vigorously as a small, independent body, it is not remarkably successful in improving the lives of its members, and is not, to any noticeable extent, influencing the religious thought of our time. Yet we were given an exceptional opportunity to do big things. Being a young Church, although a branch of the ancient trunk, and absolutely free from all affiliations with any other Church, we were not hampered by the rigidities and conventions of the older Communions. When, at the time of our organization, every traditional shackle was struck away, leaving us equipped with all that was best, most lovely, and most inspiring in the Catholic form of worship, but without the handicap of the old repressions, ancient fears and theological nightmares, we should have leaped forward to great adventures in the world of religion. But we did not. We were content to remain rather a pale copy of existing Churches. It is not too late to take up the life of adventure. We still are free from hampering tradi-

tions. A world of immense opportunity still awaits our labours. Let us see what we have so far achieved, in order to determine whether we might do more, far more, in the years which lie ahead.

All of us in the Episcopal Synod have definite knowledge, I believe, that the Sacraments are not mere ceremonials, symbols, commemorations, but are channels of a spiritual power, which we have felt strongly, again and again, not only at the Celebration of the Eucharist at the altar, but in the exercise of our office, especially when ordaining. Because of that vivid personal experience we value the Eucharist, not so much as an act of common worship, however beautiful and uplifting that may be as a ceremony, but as the greatest means at our command to aid the world spiritually and to make real to our people the actuality of the spiritual. The total number of eucharistic Celebrations in Christendom has been increased possibly some 300 to 400 each week, because of the existence of our Church. This increase, while it has undoubtedly augmented the total volume of released spiritual power, is almost negligible, I should think, when we take into consideration the hundreds of thousands of eucharistic Celebrations which take place weekly in the sanctuaries of the Roman and Old Catholic, the Anglican and Episcopal, the Holy Orthodox and other Eastern, Communion. Does this relatively small accession of spiritual influence justify the labour, thought and expense inevitable in maintaining a separate movement such as ours? If this increase is the chief reason for our continued existence, would it not be wiser to work with and in existing Churches, already established, financed and staffed?

Because the Liberal Catholic Church exists, some scores of sermons are preached each Sunday in addition to the many thousands of sermons which are addressed to the faithful in the other Churches of Christendom. The sermons at our services are liberal in tone, but not more so, I believe, than in other liberal Churches. Sometimes, because the preacher is more familiar with theosophical doctrines than with the history and thought of Christianity, the sermons are rather weak in presenting ideas in a way most helpful to Christian people. I have heard of cases in which bewildered Christian people, seeking religious enlightenment and guidance, have strayed into one of our services and listened to the sermon, only to depart more confused than ever, or pained and indignant. The causes of the difficulty for the most part seemed to lie in unwise selection of sermon material and lack of sympathetic understanding of the viewpoint and feelings of those brought up along traditional lines. Also our preachers, because so few of them have received any Seminary training whatsoever, are frequently unable, despite their earnestness, either to construct or deliver a forceful, useful sermon. The sermon may be informative but generally with thoughts and ideals extracted from theosophical books. Such sermons consist primarily of memorized statements; they are essentially compilations, not woven of threads drawn from the prismatic skein of human life by the preacher himself. They seldom deal with the living, urgent, immediate problems of our own time, but are reminiscent of the problems confronting the world at the time the theosophical books studied were written. If the accuracy of the foregoing is conceded, we are obliged to admit that the average sermon in a Liberal Catholic Church is not a moulding, directive force in Christian thought. This does not apply, of course, to all our Clergy. Some of our preachers are talented and their sermons unusually fine. But, judging

from the comments which from time to time have come to me from the laity, what I have just written does apply to the majority of our preachers. Yet they are not to blame. Without the training considered essential in the best of the older Churches—training which we can not give because of lack of funds to establish Seminaries—our Clergy are doing a remarkably good piece of work, which compares not unfavourably with that of other Churches. Nevertheless, taking all this into consideration, it does not seem evident that for the sake of continuing with Liberal Catholic sermons we should go to the expense and labour of carrying on the work of our Church. At far less cost and effort these sermons could be delivered as lectures in halls before larger audiences and probably with greater influence upon public thinking.

Among other things which we did in our self-sacrificing enthusiasm was to start Mission after Mission, sometimes at considerable expense, effort, privation to ourselves, only to see the work fail for lack of public interest and support. Houses and other property have occasionally been bought, partly paid for, lost by foreclosure. Halls or rooms have been rented, furnished as chapels, eventually given up after a struggle against financial odds. Clergy have been ordained, supplied with expensive altar accessories and vestments, started on their career as Priests. After a few years, or even months, having either lost interest, or become discouraged because of public apathy, they have withdrawn from active service. If our Church is to advance, some way must be found to overcome the apathetic indifference of the people in whose midst we are. It is not particularly sensible to mark time, hoping that a change for the better in the public attitude will take place in the future. That change will not take place by itself. It can be brought about only by our own efforts, by achieving something which not only arouses public interest but awakens public approval. Support and financial assistance will come forward quickly enough when we make it clearly evident that we have something worthy of support. We must not forget that people have grown tired of supporting a Church merely because it is a Church. It must earn the money that is given, it must win the allegiance of altruistic people by what it does, not by what it is. An hour or two of worship on a Sunday, a sermon of indifferent quality and convincingness, a midweek evening meeting of some sort, do not justify the expenditure of the large sums of money needed to build an adequate Church structure. The money could be much better spent in other ways. But if such a structure could be in use day and night for seven days a week, if it were devoted to the betterment of the community and not to the glorification of an organization, then the money would be well spent. All this must be taken into consideration in our plans for the future.

From the foregoing survey of our achievements, I cannot escape the unpalatable conclusion that the Liberal Catholic Church, up to the present time, has not demonstrated that it fulfills any special, indispensable function in the world. It certainly has not influenced the currents of Christian thought to any appreciable extent, nor is there any indication that it will become more influential in the future, if it remains exactly as it is to-day. In the existing social, moral, economic and political chaos, its vision has not been clearer than that of other Churches, its voice not more decisive. In fact, in these urgent matters, its voice for the most part has not been heard at all. And for some reason, which I cannot fathom, the very heart of its worship, the Eucharist

with all its spiritual power and consolation, seems unable to attract and hold the people, unless it is supplemented by an interesting sermon. Attendance at Church, unfortunately, still depends to a large extent upon the personality of the priest, and especially upon his ability to preach. Our Church in many ways is unique and should have attracted wide-spread attention, but apparently our distinctive notes have been struck so feebly, that if our Church disappeared tomorrow, I fear it is probable that its loss would be unfelt by the world.

During the period of consolidation the Church of necessity stood still. It was not the time for change, for departures, for trying new experiments. Now, however, that our foundations have been well established, it seems opportune to think of the future, to develop well-designed plans to guide us in the elevation of our structure. I am convinced that, *with a certain fundamental change in our outlook and with the adoption of a directive programme,* a future of enormous possibilities for good will open before our Church. Without such a change in outlook, such a programme, I cannot see how the Church can do more than drag on through the years as a small, relatively feeble, poorly financed organization, priested by devoted but largely untrained men, lacking a definite goal and unable to play any essential part in the reconstruction of civilization.

Mention has been made of a "definite goal." What is the goal of our movement? What are we trying to *do*? Why does the Liberal Catholic Church exist? Is the answer to be found in the opening words of our *Statement of Principles*? Let me quote them: *The Liberal Catholic Church exists to forward the work of her Master Christ in the world, and to feed His flock.* At first reading this statement seems to set forth our goal quite clearly, but upon reflection the question arises: "What is the work of Christ in the world?"

Universally in earlier centuries, and at the present time in conservative Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, the supreme work of Christ was thought to centre round the doctrine of Salvation. The Sacrifice of our Lord as Saviour, the deliverance of man from sin, the infusing of spirituality in order that immortality might be attained, were all key-ideas which through the centuries led to regular attendance at worship, generous giving, devoted labour and sacrifice. In order that His Sacrifice might not be in vain and that souls might be saved from eternal torment, apostles and missionaries ventured over unknown seas into strange lands, endured privation, suffered loneliness and the loss of all that most men hold dear, at times underwent torture and agonizing death. At the heart of the doctrine of Salvation, despite its emphasis on hell, there lies a splendid ideal, inspiring millions to good works, leading to acts of glorious heroism and self-forgetfulness. This ideal filled the pages of history with the deeds of martyrs and saints, it led to the founding of schools and monasteries wherein the lamp of learning remained alight in a darkened world, it inspired the construction of soaring cathedrals and the painting of unequalled masterpieces, it created an incomparable literature of devotion and aspiration. The goal of Salvation has kept, and still keeps, millions of believing people fairly well upon the slippery path of moral living and has produced a civilization which, though very imperfect, is nevertheless stamped with some magnificent virtues.

Enlightened modern thought has laid aside the ideas of hell, damnation, everlasting punishment, divine wrath and vengeance as inadequate, misleading and unworthy. Salvation in the older sense has become meaningless, thereby snapping the ancient mainspring to Christian action and worship. When, in addition, there is revived, as in our Church, the sound philosophical idea of rebirth in which ultimate failure is impossible, and, further, when for the personal, loving Sacrifice of Christ as Saviour there is substituted the remote, impersonal Sacrifice of the Logos, some of the strongest motives which led Christian people in the past to attend and support their Church have been annihilated. Lastly, when it is taught that all men are inherently immortal and that the after-life in heaven is not bestowed by any Sacrament upon the faithful but is the birthright of every one regardless of creed or religion, it is obvious that we must find new incentives to bring people to church. After all, why should anyone bother about going to church? Would it not be better for health of mind and body to spend Sunday in the country, under the trees, among the flowers, basking in the sunlight, or tramping the woods? Why join a Church at all? Cannot one do just as much good in the world and lead just as moral a life without joining a religious organization? Indeed, why is there any necessity for what is called religion? Is not the whole notion of religion an anachronism, a relic of earlier days of ignorance, superstition, fear? Why not toss overboard the whole deckload of distorted ideas collectively called religion—the warped inhibitions, antiquated morality, inadequate ethics, man-made scriptures, pseudo philosophy, emotional delusions, elaborate mythology, rigidities and intolerances—and substitute therefor a sane morality and ethic, based on experience and guided by the facts of science? These are the sort of questions that are being asked to-day, not by the flippant, but by the serious, not by the materialist, but by the idealist. If our Church, as well as every other Church, is to survive the scorching flame of present-day questioning and continue to serve mankind in the future, it must be able to justify not only its existence as a Church, but the existence of religion itself.

In Liberal Catholic literature one main reason for people to attend church has been advanced as a substitute for older motives. Subordinating the fact that it is exceedingly good for one's spiritual progress to be present at a service, emphasis is laid on the idea that by being present at the Eucharist, especially if one coöperates earnestly with the intent of the service, the volume of spiritual power called down is augmented and therefore more people in the neighbourhood of the church are benefited. This lifts attendance at worship from a matter of personal benefit to an act of social service. It is certainly a noble conception and ought to be sufficient to cause faithful attendance at services. At first it does arouse considerable enthusiasm and response on the part of new members, especially those who have been taught something of the inner side of things. Unfortunately, with the exception of a comparatively small number of sensitive people, there is little first-hand knowledge of the reality of these spiritual forces. The teaching concerning them has to be taken on faith by a considerable number of the members and even of the clergy. If anything arises to shake that faith, if circumstances make it inconvenient to attend services, or if some other interest comes into the life, the tendency is to drop away from the Church. The number of inactive members in this Province, and probably in every other Province, steadily grows larger year

✓ by year. It is not that the people resign. It is rather that the Church does not offer them that which really holds their interest and retains their loyalty. Whenever a person begins to attend church from a dry sense of duty, even though that duty may be associated with the evoking of spiritual forces for the helping of mankind, he may be expected in time to drift away into something else. It follows that if the calling down and distribution of spiritual forces is all we have to offer to our members and to the visiting public, we cannot hope to build up a permanent membership, so long as the impossibility of gaining first-hand knowledge of those forces causes people to depend upon faith in the statements of others. Faith, like sand, is an unstable foundation. The best we can hope for, under such conditions, is to witness a constant stream of people flowing slowly into the Church organization and then out of it again. If our sole work is the release of spiritual forces at the Eucharist, the most efficient and quickest way to attain this end would be to ordain every willing man to the priesthood and ask him to celebrate the Eucharist daily in a private chapel.

Some have urged strongly that if we offered exceptionally fine music at our lovely ceremonial services we should attract a much larger number of people, especially those of artistic sensibilities. This is undoubtedly true. When we compare our liturgical music with some of the glorious compositions of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches we are rather eclipsed. Yet we have found by actual experience that much greater response inwardly is gained when our congregations join heartily in the singing of the comparatively simple music of our services, than when they sit passively listening to much finer music which can be sung only by a highly trained choir. This is a genuine dilemma. Shall inner responsiveness be sacrificed to musical perfection? Perhaps the answer is that certain services, or parts of each service, could be devoted to exquisite but difficult music. In any event, it seems obvious that our Church must rely on more than fine music to draw people to its altars.

From the widest point of view, free from doctrinal fogs, what then is the work of the Christ in the world in which the Church should be engaged? Is it not that of seeking to arouse in every human being, who comes within its field of influence, the finest and best in terms of character, the noblest in terms of service, the highest in terms of spiritual understanding? In short, our work is to hasten the development of humanity in the essentials of a genuinely religious life. *These essentials do not, in my opinion, have much to do with doctrines and creeds and theological formulas, but they have everything to do with life and living.* If we could only make manifest in people some of the splendid ideals of modern Humanism, but shot through and through with the fire of spirituality undarkened by any clouds of smoky theological speculations! To my way of looking at things, everything points to the inevitable conclusion that our Church exists primarily to aid people to live more nobly, more happily, with greater sanity, in friendly relationships with their fellows, carrying with them wherever they go the spirit of lovingkindness, radiating spiritual influences. Our work is to help people solve their personal problems, to adopt wholesome moral codes, to make the best of their opportunities, to call out those faculties or powers which may be latent within them. In short, instead of seeking to prepare people for the world to come, we should

strive to show them how best to live here and now. Is this not our goal? If so, what are we doing to reach it?

Mostly, I think, we are relying on the spiritual efficacy of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, to transform the lives of our people. That this happens to some is undeniable. I have myself seen some amazing changes for the better. But are we accomplishing *all* that is possible with the means at our command? I am sure that we are not, largely perhaps because we have never given the matter long and careful consideration. We have endeavoured, of course, to help people by means of our sermons. Unluckily, few people in my experience, after the lapse of several days or even hours, retain any effective memory of what has been preached. Most people remember whether they liked the sermon, or did not like it; they may even be able to repeat two or three of the points made; but as for any actual change in their lives as a result of listening to the sermon, there is little or none. Usually about as permanent a mark is left on the character of the listener as is left upon water when stirred with a stick. If we really want to help people *live nobly*, it seems to me that we should study how to do that work effectively. May it not be that in our present efforts we are ignoring certain fundamental laws in the psychology of education? Many psychologists, I notice, are of the opinion that the lecture (and therefore the sermon) is of slight educational value. They point out that only when the auditors begin to think, as well as listen, are results accomplished. When people are permitted to ask questions, to voice their doubts and difficulties, and in turn to be questioned by the leader of the meeting, thinking is stimulated and results follow. Passive listening alone is seldom effective, yet no other arrangement is possible during a sermon at a service. The inevitable conclusion is that while the sermon may be useful to *attract* people, if we really wish to *help* them, class work is essential. Notice also that sermon topics must vary from Sunday to Sunday if the differing types of human beings are to be interested. In class work alone is continuity of teaching possible and effective. Class work fundamentally is educational, the sermon exhortative.

One of the most striking characteristics of modern civilization, in contrast to that of earlier centuries, is the lack of any systematic and adequate training in appreciation of the *values of life*, to use a phrase favoured by philosophers. The major emphasis in school, college and university, is on facts, not values. It has been shown repeatedly that experience is dual, that there is always a two-fold approach to reality, yet this basic distinction is just as constantly overlooked. The first aspect of experience is that of a great mass of facts, objective data—I shall make no effort to enter the maze of epistemology and walk endlessly between hedges of opposing theories—which have been discovered and reported. Such facts are impersonal, exist independently of us. They may be verified, checked, measured, whenever the observer qualifies for such research. The second aspect of experience is the *meaning* to us of all that pours in through the screen of the senses. We are not measuring machines—as one writer has put it—we live, feel, think, and certainly these reactions are of basic importance. The first approach is the way of *science*, using the methods of analysis, description, classification, generalization. The second approach is the way of *art*, using the methods of intuition, appreciation, synthesis. The first is related to the realm of facts, the second to the

realm of values. A sunset from the factual side consists of a series of light vibrations, possible of classification and measurement, which have been reflected from distant mountain top, shimmering sea, clouds formed of water particles. From the value side that same sunset may be the opening of a magic casement on to a glorious world of infinite consolation, measureless inspiration, nameless joy.

All the finest things of life, all the impelling motives leading to splendid action, come in the realm of values, yet formal education in the schools is concerned almost exclusively with facts. This is probably due to the overwhelming influence of the scientific attitude and achievements upon modern thinking. From the earliest day at school to the last in the university, the minds of the students are stuffed with facts. Examinations are concerned only with facts, or the technique for gaining facts. Little is done, or can be done for lack of time, to show how those facts may be utilized to healthy and beneficent ends in the art of living. In these vast, high-pressure machines of modern life we call schools and colleges, the plastic nature of youth is squeezed through certain rigid moulds, measured by examinational standards, stamped with the factory mark, and shot out into an unenthusiastic world as "educated"! Thus we grow up knowing all about motor cars and electrical appliances, airplanes and radios, telegraphs and railways; we read and endeavour to discuss electrons and cosmic rays, vitamins and diets, sex aberrations and marriage codes; we hurry through the latest novel, talk of economic crises, social revolutions, expanding universes; we may even try our hand at dissonating music and bold bad literature—yet we are still unhappy and frequently make a mess of life. Of what good is it to accumulate masses of facts unless we can extract some living value from them?

In this world where every kind of riches—except money!—may be had for the asking, people do not know how to make use of them. In public libraries are thousands of books containing masterpieces of literature. These books, so far as the mass of the population is concerned, remain unread, unknown, largely because few have been taught properly how to appreciate them. (The average study of literature in the schools effectually kills all desire to go farther.) There is a wealth of marvellous poetry, in which thoughts wing their way to the stars in melody and beauty, yet that wealth is shunned by most, because no one has shown them how to appreciate it. There are lovely paintings, available in the original or in copies, rich in meaning, vivid in colour, born of insight and skill. Yet to millions they do not exist, because their eyes have never been opened and they do not understand. There are brilliant descriptions of the far-flung excursions of philosophical adventurers in search of reality, which are just as stirring in their way as tales of physical exploits. Yet these are unknown to the multitude because they have never been translated into the vernacular of the people. Nature is a fascinating book of revelation to those who have learned to turn its pages, yet most people on their visits to the country seldom understand a single symbol of what they see, because no one has pointed out to them how to use their eyes.

And so it goes through the whole of human experience. Wherever we turn we see values lying idle, unrecognized. Yet these values have the power to transform life. The people are not happy as they are. They vaguely want something. So many of them live drab little lives, full of pettiness and froth;

grey little lives, lacking in colour and charm; hopeless little lives, smeared with passion and smut, because to them there is nothing better to do. When we step outside our own circle of acquaintances where there is culture, appreciation of finer things, some realization of life's values, and move about in the dingy world of the masses, we realize as never before the bitter need of something more in religion than an hour of worship on Sunday. What do the days and years bring to millions of our brothers to help them in the fashioning of their lives? Little enough! In the beginning some schooling, not much of it of real value, most of it soon forgotten. Then the grind to earn a living. Marriage, a home, children. Household cares and joys, the problems of shop or office, scrappy news and gossip of the newspapers, excitement regarding the coming election, the thrill of a hectic "movie," the reading of a popular sexy novel, small talk with friends and relatives, sister banging on the piano and brother blaring on the saxophone. Then Sunday arrives, the day devoted to spiritual things. A sermon about something or other in the Bible, not very interesting, a slight emotional stir caused by the singing of a familiar hymn, vague listening to the well-known words of a long-known service, home again to get something to eat, a nap under the newspaper, a walk in the park, a ride it may be in a bus or motor car, some small talk and the Lord's Day is ended. This is what we call life! No wonder human advancement is so painfully slow. In lives somewhat above the average there may occasionally be a lecture, an hour of fine music, a book of worth. Yet for the most part it is all so barren compared to what it might be. What are we doing, as a Church, to make these lives richer, happier, wiser? Very little, in truth. A Sunday sermon, an hour of worship. This is not enough. It lies within our power to do far more.

There may be instant objection that all this has nothing to do with religion. It has everything to do with it! We cannot divide life into compartments and then seek to help in one department and ignore all the others. The spiritual life is of the nature of a glow permeating the whole of life. Whatever ennobles one phase of life, irradiates the rest. *Religion primarily is a spiritualized education in values.*

✓ Civilization itself, acute observers declare, is in grave danger unless the real education of the people is taken in hand. Cultural and moral education is lagging far behind scientific discovery and invention. Here lies the menace of the future. In his *Revolt Against Civilization* Lothrop Stoddard says:

"Civilization always depends upon the qualities of the people who are the bearers of it. All these vast accumulations of instruments and ideas, massed and welded into marvellous structures rising harmoniously in glittering majesty, rest upon living foundations—the men and women who create and sustain them. So long as those men and women are able to support it, the structure rises, broad-based and serene, but let the living foundations prove unequal to their task, and the mightiest civilization sags, cracks, and at last crashes into chaotic ruin."

Obviously then the matter of adult education in life's values is of supreme importance. Are there agencies engaged in adult education? Yes, hundreds of them. In any large city one may find Forums, a wide variety of Clubs, organizations such as the Y. W. C. A. and Y. M. C. A., High Schools, Colleges and Universities, offering class instruction and lectures along many lines, most of them factual, but many of them cultural. In some cases membership in the organization is demanded before one may attend the gathering; in many cases a fee is asked, or admission charged. For some reason the Churches

have neglected this tremendously important field of human service. Of course, many of them have offered courses of adult instruction in religion—Biblical history, creedal doctrines, denominational observances—and here and there a liberal Church presents an occasional lecture along social or economic lines, but outside this little if anything has been done. There is no Church, no organization of any kind, so far as I can ascertain, which offers a well-designed and comprehensive curriculum of adult education, adapted to the needs of every essential phase of human life, and presented in the light of spiritual values. The adult education I have in mind is not concerned with the collection and memorization of facts, with research techniques and technical problems. It is concerned primarily with values, and if facts are introduced they will be used only to elucidate values. This "value-education" should not be academic, technical, involved, requiring years of preparatory study; it is not concerned with examinations and tests of knowledge; it has nothing to do with degrees and honours. Fundamentally adult value-education is a means of growth and development, an instrument for the solving of problems, a way of acquiring new skills to meet new emergencies. Education of this sort is a coöperative activity, in which teacher and student together search after the larger meanings of everyday experiences, and formulate a working philosophy of life. It is the wisest and best way for maturity to adjust attitudes and habits to new experiences.

Have we not in our efforts to help the men and women of this civilization at this critical time drifted about aimlessly long enough? Have we not expected that if we set up our altars, used a revised rite, delivered liberal sermons and proclaimed liberty of opinion, the people would flock in? Is it not obvious now that they are not flocking in? To say that our Church is intended for the esoteric few, is, as I see the matter, to admit defeat and then to attempt to justify defeat by rationalization. Is it not time that we should study earnestly our Church, our methods, our attitudes, our assumptions, ourselves, to see what is lacking? Should we not endeavour to find some way, far more effective than the one we have been using, to transform and enrich the lives of the people we are seeking to help? There does not seem to me to be any need whatsoever to *relinquish* anything of value that we now have, but there is urgent need that we *add* much to that which we are now using in our efforts.

Earlier in this letter I stated that in my opinion a future of enormous possibilities for good would open before our Church, provided we made a certain fundamental change in our outlook and adopted a directive programme. That change in outlook is this: That we cease to regard the Church primarily as an organization for common worship and consider it as existing fundamentally for spiritualized education in life's values. I propose that we strike out boldly in this new direction, that of undertaking education in the values of life as our *major* object. *I do not desire or contemplate any drastic change.* Under the new attitude our services would remain much the same as they are now, public worship would take place exactly as now, the Sacraments would be administered, sermons would be delivered. But little by little, following the guide of practical experience, we would establish course after course, until eventually there would be a carefully arranged, fully rounded out curriculum, planned to the one end of enabling the varying types of human beings within our care to achieve most quickly the best sort of life of which each is capable. All of the courses in this curriculum, if they are to be really

successful in the *spiritual* awakening of the people, must not be mere copies of the classes and lectures offered by scores of secular agencies and societies, but must convey both in teaching and atmosphere, that behind all physical life is the Divine Life, that the world, the universe, is but a veil of appearance hiding the Eternal Beauty, that every creative human act is at heart a revelation.

The plan I have in mind does not contemplate any competition with existing schools, colleges and universities. The Church, in this new field of activity, would teach largely those subjects which existing centres of learning either neglect to teach, or offer under restrictions which place the instruction beyond the reach of the average person. A highly paid staff of instructors, especially of the type of professor who is weighed down with erudition and academic degrees, will not be required. For example, I have in mind a dozen or more of the laity living in Los Angeles, who are abundantly able to teach any one of several of the courses I shall outline shortly. With a little training scores of others could qualify for the same work. If this is true of Los Angeles it should likewise be true of every large city. Of course, if skilled instructors in existing colleges and universities offered their services, we should accept them with enthusiasm and gratitude. But I should like to emphasize that we are not dependent upon such assistance. The instructors should be of both sexes and selected for the most part from the laity. This policy will draw into active service a large number of people along lines, not only of the greatest interest to themselves, but also of great benefit to others. Not only should the laity be employed in teaching, but in preaching as well. Then, instead of expecting the unlucky priest to preach interestingly on every conceivable subject under heaven, the sermon could be delivered by one who knows the subject thoroughly, having made a special study of it. An available corp of preachers, each familiar with certain lines of thought, is certainly to be preferred to one or two preachers in Holy Orders who have time only to gain a superficial knowledge of those same lines of thought. Increasing public knowledge makes it imperative that we provide preachers who are specialists in the subjects discussed. Nothing has injured religion more in the eyes of the intelligent world than the superficial, inaccurate sermons which are so often delivered from Christian pulpits.

Parenthetically, I believe that it would be advisable to found an Order, composed of men and women, who would undertake to qualify themselves to render valuable service in the work of the Church by teaching and preaching. There is a strong undercurrent of idealism and willingness to work without a profit-motive among people to-day, especially among the young people with whom I have come into contact. It is possible, if the goal is worthy and not too narrow, to evoke a magnificent and stirring response from many of them. Some time ago, when I developed briefly before a few friends some of the ideas expressed in this letter, a young lady present—a wholesome, talented type—exclaimed fervently: "I would devote my life to that!" A week or two later, after a sermon dealing with the educational goal possible to the Church, a number of young people gathered round me after the service all apparently filled with the intense desire to be of future service in the work of instruction. This promises well for the future. Is it not wise to tap this reservoir of spiritual power and use it for the helping of mankind, instead of allowing it to run to waste? If such an Order is established, three logical divisions of the mem-

bership are indicated: (1) Those who are preparing themselves for the work of teaching and preaching; (2) those, duly qualified, who give part time to this work; (3) those who devote themselves entirely to this work, journeying from Church to Church in the territory to which they are assigned. The members of this group obviously should be guaranteed their living expenses.

The *summm* of all the departments of instruction in the proposed plan of education would be that which I have termed "the Spiritualities." (This term, so far as I am aware, has not been used heretofore in quite this connection, but it expresses exactly what I have in mind.) The clergy, for the most part, would act as instructors in this department, inasmuch as their life, training and priestly functions are concerned primarily with spiritual things. (Indeed, I favour the policy that only those men who have an aptitude for the Spiritualities should be ordained to the priesthood, all others being shunted off into the many other departments of education. Or, the other way round, only those instructors, who have shown a genuine understanding of the Spiritualities, should be drawn into the priesthood.) You will notice that study of the science and forces underlying the Eucharist and other Sacraments forms part of the instruction in this department. Intelligent coöperation at worship should be emphasized, while the *realization*, not mere intellectual recognition, of the spiritual power of the Eucharist should be regarded as one of the essentials in the understanding and developing of the spiritual life, the supreme Value of all values. Illuminated by the other courses of study and training in the department of the Spiritualities, it seems to me that the Eucharist should become ever nearer and dearer to the people, and that attendance at worship would be changed from a perfunctory duty to an hour of supreme exaltation and appreciation. With people attending the various classes held daily, including Sunday (except, of course, at the hour of worship), there is every reason to expect that the attendance at the Eucharist, not only the chief Celebration on Sunday, but every other Celebration, will be considerably increased. It is even possible that in larger centres a sung service might be held daily, to the great advantage of young priests. I am convinced that the establishment of the suggested courses of instruction would greatly augment, not lessen, the sacramental side of our work.

It is not expected that the people, most of whom are engaged in business or occupied with the cares of a household, will attend more than one or two of the courses offered each week, the selection of the course or courses, being determined, naturally, by the interest aroused and the convenience of the hour. But inasmuch as the courses might be repeated at intervals during the year each time at a different hour, as well as from year to year, it would be possible ultimately for each person to benefit by all of the courses. This ought to sustain interest and stop the drift away from the Church.

In order that there may be clear understanding of the nature of the courses planned, I shall present a tentative curriculum. It should be understood that there is nothing final about this list. Courses should be undertaken only when there is a demand for them; they should be dropped if they prove valueless or unwanted. No doubt, also, the list which follows is incomplete or not adapted to the needs of all countries. Curricula obviously must vary according to the country. Lastly, may I emphasize once more, I have in mind

courses permeated by a *spiritual* glow, not academic presentations from only the intellectual or practical point of view.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL APPRECIATIONS

The Art of Living

An introductory, general course giving a survey of the whole plan of adult education, indicating its purpose and showing how best to make use of the instruction offered. Relation of appreciation, culture, self-expression to the art of living.

Appreciation of Literature

Readings from, and comments upon, masterpieces of literature. What constitutes greatness in writing. Lives of authors. How to select, read, understand and appreciate books. (There might be similar courses in *Poetry, Fiction, Essays, Biography, Travel.*)

Appreciation of Philosophy

An intimate, human study of the lives, opinions and times of the greater philosophers. Their influence on the thinking of the world. Relation of philosophy to daily life.

Appreciation of History

Dramatic unfoldment of great events of history, with emphasis upon cultural values, social developments, religious changes, rather than on wars and rulers.

Appreciation of Music

Difference between good and bad music. Cultural value of music. How to listen. Development of good taste. Lives of composers. Studies, illustrated on piano and organ, of Folk Songs, Popular music, Orchestral music, Symphonies, Operas, Oratorios, Masses.

Appreciation of Art

How to look at paintings, etchings, statuary, buildings. Principles underlying various arts. Lives, times, achievements of artists.

Appreciation of Science

The scientific spirit, its influence on modern thinking. Growth of scientific knowledge. Effect of discoveries upon civilization. New outlooks. Evolution. Popular astronomy, etc.

Appreciation of Nature

How to observe. Lives and habits of flowers, trees, insects, birds, animals. Story of geology and physiography. (Whenever possible this course should be given while on excursions in the country.)

DEPARTMENT OF CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION

Creative Writing

Technique of writing, with actual training. There should be separate courses in *Prose, Verse, Fiction.*

Reading

Training in reading aloud, with attention to voice, emphasis, expression, correct pronunciation.

Public Speaking

Preparation and organization of lecture material, delivery, interest, convincingness.

Interpretative Dancing

Preparatory exercises. Discipline of the body. Training in expression.

Dramatics

Writing of plays. Presentation of plays. (This course can be made of the greatest interest and value. Young people, especially, take the keenest joy in putting on plays. There is no better way to develop poise, presence of mind, good carriage, correct pronunciation.)

Community Singing

Many, for whom solo work is impossible, are able to find happiness and expression in group singing. Folk songs and musical plays, in costume, are always enjoyable.

Artistic Handicrafts

The handicrafts are enormously valuable in enriching and beautifying life. Courses might be offered in *Wood Working, Wood Carving, Wood Turning, Metal Work, Jewellery, Enameling, Pottery, Lettering, Illuminating, Weaving, Photography, Basket Making, Leather Work, Bookbinding*. Articles could be made for home use, church use, for sale in a gift shop.

Printing

Valuable as a training and at the same time to enable the Church to get its simpler printing done at small cost.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

Current Social Problems

Changing social conditions and resulting problems. Proposed solutions.

Effective Morality

Influence upon morality of changing social and industrial conditions. New moral values and resulting code. (This course must be shaped by realism, a thorough understanding of modern conditions and problems, not an antiquated theology.)

Sex and Marriage

Causes of unhappy and broken marriages. Rules of healthy sex life. How to approach marriage intelligently, with understanding of resulting adjustments and obligations. (This course can be made of immense practical value if ably conducted. There should be a division of the students into four groups meeting separately: Unmarried men, unmarried women, married men, married women.)

Intelligent Citizenship

Responsibilities of citizenship. Intelligent voting. Study of public questions and political issues.

Applied Economics

Current economic problems. Effect on daily life. Suggested remedies. Studies in all economic systems, so that an intelligent understanding of what each one is endeavouring to do may be gained.

International Relations and Events

Relations between nations. Causes of disharmony. International Peace. Racial antagonisms. Current events.

DEPARTMENT OF PERSONAL PROBLEMS

Diet and Personal Health

Instruction in the simple, but usually neglected, rules of health. Diets. Food combinations. Physical exercises.

Home Making and Social Arts

What is necessary to make the home happy and attractive. Social courtesies and usages. Training in the duties of host and hostess.

Good Taste

Laws and cultivation of good taste in dress, selection of colours, home furnishing and decoration.

Care and Training of Children

Urgently needed to assist and counsel harassed and puzzled parents.

Vocational Guidance

Aid to the young in selecting life work.

Use of Leisure

Because of the shortening of working hours and consequent increase in leisure, the intelligent and profitable use of such free time has become an acute social problem.

DEPARTMENT OF THE SPIRITUALITIES

Character Education

Laws and methods of effective character education.

Meditation

Purpose and practice of meditation, carefully adapted to differences in human temperaments.

Mysticism and Some Modern Movements

Study of the philosophy and outlook of a number of modern movements outside the Churches, with especial emphasis on mysticism. Philosophy underlying mysticism. Influence in daily life. Readings from the Mystics.

Scriptures of the World

Sympathetic study of the great world scriptures and religions. Study of the Christian Scriptures, not as an infallible revelation, but as a record of spiritual aspirations and insights.

Churches of the World

Sympathetic study of the great Churches of the world in an effort to understand what each has contributed to the helping of mankind.

Sacramental Worship

The Eucharist and other services of the Church. Their origin, meaning and purpose. How to coöperate. Spirituality and the spiritual life.

In addition to adult education, provision should be made also for the training and education of children in the values of *their* world and in keeping with *their* needs. There is little to be gained by retaining the old type of Sunday School, equipped with a map of the Holy Land, and confining its instruction to the Bible. I have a committee at work studying this important matter and seeking everywhere for information regarding the best methods of instruction.

Inasmuch as the erection of a suitable building (or buildings) such as would be required by a Church engaged in the work of education herein described would necessitate in the end the expenditure of large sums of money, I believe that such centres should be established only in the larger cities which are situated in key-positions in relation to surrounding territory. Churches in the suburbs or in smaller cities and towns, need not maintain a staff of instructors, but could draw upon the nearest large centre for their teachers and preachers. This implies that every congregation will have opportunity in time to attend the same courses as those given in the large centres. This would solve a serious problem, that of carrying all the advantages and inspiration of adult education to suburban and rural districts, where it is most needed. The building used by even small congregations should include if possible one or two class rooms, a studio and workshop, an auditorium with stage, in addition to the church proper. Also, it is important to provide a place for social gatherings. A Church dinner followed by a happy social time can do more to establish friendly relations and consolidate the congregation than a month of sermons.

I feel strongly that attendance at all courses of instruction should be free, except in those pertaining to the artistic handicrafts wherein a charge should be made for materials supplied. I believe such a school, when once established, could be maintained by voluntary contributions. When people really appreciate what they receive they usually give more than the smallest coin in the purse. I also believe that many of the instructors would serve without salary, for the time being, even as our priests and bishops now give their time to the Church without financial recompense. If this is the case, the cost of maintaining an educational centre will be greatly reduced.

I also believe that all the courses should be open to every one without any requirement of Baptism or Confirmation. When the nature and purpose of these Sacraments are once understood, they will be sought after by the people without any urging on the part of the clergy. As is now the case, our services ought to be open to all, although it might be advisable, in the course on Meditation, to arrange for a special service open only to those taking that course. We should also continue naturally to administer Communion to all who come to the altar rail, whether they are members of the Church or not.

One further matter of considerable importance remains, that of the name of our Church. After seventeen years of active service in the Church I am forced to admit that the word "Catholic" in our name is a serious handicap in this country. It is forcing us to labour under a heavy burden of suspicions, antagonisms and misunderstanding which are not of our causing. Millions of Protestants in America fear the intentions of Rome and believe whole-heartedly in tales of undercover political conspiracies. To them, as to thousands outside any Church, the very word "Catholic" is anathema, and any organization bearing such a name is shunned. To former Roman Catholics, who have left their Church for one reason or another, the name is often disliked because of old painful associations. Among ardent Roman Catholics I find that there is a strong feeling that we are upstarts using a venerable name which is rightly theirs. So from all sides criticism is levelled at us.

During the formative years of our Church the Episcopal Synod decided to retain the word "Catholic," not only to indicate that the Church was a

legitimate branch of the ancient tree, the seed of which was planted by the Christ, but also to suggest the type of worship which took place within our sanctuaries. It was thought that by adding the word "Liberal" two ends would be accomplished: (1) that it would be an act of courtesy to distinguish our Communion with its extremely liberal views from the conservative Old Catholic Church of Holland through whose Apostolic Succession our Orders were derived, and (2) that the possibility of our being confused with the Roman Catholic Church would be lessened. It may have been lessened to some extent, but there is still so much misunderstanding and prejudice that I am beginning to doubt the advisability of starting any large educational scheme under the name "Liberal Catholic."

Two courses of action are possible: either change the name of the Church, or conduct the educational work of the Church under some other name.

From time to time various names have been proposed: *Sacramental Church of the Living Christ*, *Liberal Church*, *Church Universal* are examples. The difficulty with so many of the suggestions made is that the names remind one of those selected by various "New Thought" and other organizations which are sprinkled so plentifully over America. Nor do we wish to choose a name sounding like that of some ephemeral sect. Personally I prefer the name "Liberal Catholic" and I voted for it at the First Episcopal Synod, but I feel strongly that personal preference has nothing to do with the matter and must give way to the larger welfare of the Church. Perhaps it would be possible to find a name suggesting both our spiritual and educational functions. The name *Collegiate Church* would in some ways be ideal, but it is already used in other connections. Possibly *Liberal Collegiate Church* would be sufficiently distinctive and definite. (Collegiate: Constituted or conducted like, or connected with a College.) *Church Collegiate* is another possibility. *Collegial Church* has been suggested. "Collegial" is used much less frequently than "Collegiate," although the two words have the same meaning. "Collegial" would also permit the naming of individual Churches after some Saint; thus, *St. Alban's Collegial Church*.

The other alternative is to carry on our educational work under another name. *Collegiate Foundation* (provided this name has not already been pre-empted by some other organization) has its good points. If this were adopted the Liturgy used could still be "according to the Rite of the Liberal Catholic Church" although the advertizing and publicity would appear under the name of the *Collegiate Foundation*. Also for a large centre here and there it might be possible to use such a name as *St. Alban's School of Adult Education*, or *St. Alban's College*, but what names could we use in the case of suburban and other smaller Churches? If we followed out our present arrangement of naming them after Saints and spoke of *St. Mary's School*, *St. Raphael's School of Adult Education*, *St. Anthony's College*, and so on, the misunderstanding certainly would be greater than is now the case.

I feel certain, however, that if we really turn our attention to the problem we shall be able to find a suitable, dignified, distinctive name which may be translated into any language and used in any country.

It may interest you to know the programme of action I have in mind.

(1) Within a few days after the printing of this letter I shall send copies

of it to all the clergy in the Province of the United States. If a large number of them approve of the ideas set forth I will then

(2) Lay the whole matter before the laity for discussion and approval. This secured, the next step will be to formulate with extreme care

(3) *A Ten Year Plan* for the development of the Church into an efficient organization in *spiritualized* adult education. Roughly, the first steps in this plan will include

(A) The selection and thorough training of future instructors, first here in Los Angeles, where the experiment will be tried out, then elsewhere in certain cities in the United States. In this it will be advisable to

(B) Secure the advice and services of a competent educator not only in connection with the pedagogical training of the future instructors, but also in the

(C) Preparation of a comprehensive curriculum. Every effort will be made to

(D) Build up a serviceable reference library. Meanwhile in every way of which I can think I will

(E) Draw the plan to the attention of public-minded men and women who may be able to assist financially in establishing the centre in Los Angeles. In this connection it will be necessary either

(F) To enlarge the existing St. Alban's Pro-Cathedral by adding class rooms, studios, workshops and an auditorium with stage, or, which is by far the better arrangement, buy land in a more suitable location and put up exactly the buildings we need. In this case we could either sell the present site and tear down the Pro-Cathedral, or retain the site and use the building for a Parish Church.

(G) An essential part of the plan will be to publish a Journal in which full information may be given to other centres and to other countries regarding our successes and failures, those things which have proved valuable and those things which were found to be unnecessary. Such a Journal will be invaluable in minimizing mistakes, developing an educational technique, and in drawing attention to our work. The contents of this Journal should be of the very essence of applied Christianity, free of dogma, cant, outworn tradition.

(H) It will be part of this plan to train at Los Angeles instructors and clergy for work in other centres and, if desired, candidates for such service sent from other countries. In this way the experience and lessons learned at the Los Angeles experimental venture may be shared with other centres, thereby hastening the work of reconstruction.

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In the light of the foregoing I recommend to the General Episcopal Synod the careful consideration of two important matters:

(1) *The possibility of reorganizing the Church throughout the world along the lines suggested in this letter.*

(2) *The selection and adoption of another name for the Church.*

✠ IRVING S. COOPER,

Regiónary Bishop, Province of the
United States of America.