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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Theodorit (fl. 457) in his "Questions on Joshua," where he describes the alternative set before the Israelites of worshipping either the gods of the heathen or the Lord God. "Then the people" (he writes), "repudiating the worship, (*λατρείαν*) of the false gods, promised to serve (*δουλεύειν*) the God who had redeemed them." After repeating the reply of Joshua, the people are described as again promising to "serve" (*δουλεύειν*) the Lord. Upon which Joshua rejoins, "Ye are witnesses unto yourselves that ye have chosen to serve (*λατρεύειν*) the Lord."¹ Upon this the learned editor of Theodorit's "Works," Professor Schulze, observes: "*δουλεία* et *λατρεία* idem. nil clarius nil magis promiscuum."

The ancient Church would undoubtedly have pronounced the *dulia* of saint-worship and the *hyper-dulia* of Mariobatus to be a flagrant violation of the second commandment, and to be, according to the clearest sense of that inexorable law, an act of idolatry.

(To be continued.)



ART. III.—THE PROSPECTS OF HOME REUNION.

FIVE years have now elapsed since the last Conference of Anglican bishops was held at Lambeth; and a rather shorter period lies between us and the next Conference, which is announced to be held in 1897. It appears, therefore, an appropriate moment for recalling to mind the business which was transacted in 1888, and observing what practical fruits have resulted from it. This will be of special interest in reference to Home Reunion, which was then first officially taken up by the Church at large, and which at the time formed the subject of ardent aspirations and prayers. The question has certainly not been allowed to slumber in the interval. It has been considered at one Church Congress after another, and on each occasion its paramount importance has been recognised. Moreover, what is of more significance, it has been discussed in joint meetings of Churchmen and Non-conformists who have admitted its expediency, and have frankly interchanged views upon it. First among these in point of time was the Langham Street Conference of a few leading clergymen and laymen of the Church of England and an equal number of prominent Congregationalist ministers, whose deliberations, under the presidency of Earl Nelson, extended over many months, the results of them being pub-

¹ Quæst., in Jos., c. 24.

lished in 1889.¹ More recently have taken place the Conferences at Grindelwald and Lucerne in 1892, and during last summer,—the outcome of the private enterprise of a Wesleyan minister, the Rev. H. A. Lunn, M.D. These gatherings have been in their way encouraging, and far from useless; but they have been altogether unofficial, and, from their very nature, have not effected any practical advance towards the solution of the problem. When we inquire what actual official steps have been taken in the matter, the reply is decidedly disappointing. Formal communications have passed between the authorities of the Church and the Nonconformist bodies, but these communications have been absolutely barren of result. To what is this owing? Is it because the object is intrinsically unattainable? Let us not for a moment be faithless enough to entertain such a thought as that. Have, then, either the Anglican or the Nonconformist demands been unreasonable? Or has the failure been due to some misunderstanding, or to an unwillingness, on one side or the other, to discuss the question at all? It is obvious that, if either of the last two alternatives represents the true view of the case, it is more favourable for the prospects of Reunion than if either side has adopted a position which the other cannot concede to be admissible. Absence of mutual understanding and absence of inclination may be cured, but it is not so easy to recede from a position which has been taken up as essential and final. My own belief is, that the deadlock is, in fact, due in part to want of inclination and in part to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. But, as this view may be disputed, it is desirable to test its accuracy by reference to original documents. I shall endeavour to substantiate it by citing, (1) the Lambeth utterances on Home Reunion; (2) the overtures addressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Nonconformists of this country; and (3) the replies which the four principal Nonconformist bodies, the Congregationalists, Baptists, Wesleyans and Presbyterians made to those overtures.

At the Lambeth Conference of 1888, a committee was appointed to consider "what steps (if any) can be rightly taken on behalf of the Anglican Communion towards the reunion of the various bodies into which the Christianity of the English-speaking races is divided?"

This committee presented to the Conference a Report,² in the first section of which, after reviewing the efforts for Home

¹ See *The Langham Street Conference*. Occasional Paper of the Home Reunion Society, No. 17 (W. Wells Gardner and Co., 1889; price 3d.).

² See "Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with the Resolutions and Reports of the Lambeth Conference, 1888" (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888), pp. 81-89.

Reunion which had been already made, they came to the conclusion that they were more than justified in recommending to the Conference that some steps should be taken by it in the direction specified in the resolution constituting the committee. The Report then proceeds as follows :

II. In considering how this could best be done, it appeared to the Committee that the subject divided itself naturally into two parts : first the basis on which the united Church might, in the future, safely rest ; secondly, the conditions under which present negotiations for reunion, in view of existing circumstances, could be carried on.

With regard to the first portion of the subject, they submitted, "as supplying the basis on which approach might be, under God's blessing, made towards Reunion," the now famous four articles, which were afterwards embodied in the 11th resolution of the Conference, and they added :

The Committee believe that upon some such basis as this, with large freedom of variation on secondary points of doctrine, worship, and discipline, and without interference with existing conditions of property and endowment, it might be possible, under God's gracious providence, for a reunited Church, including at least the chief of the Christian communions of our people, to rest.

Then, on the second head, the Report proceeds :

III. But they are aware that the main difficulty of the subject lies in the consideration of what practical steps can be taken towards such reunion under the actual religious conditions of the community at home and abroad ; complicated, moreover, in England and Scotland by legal difficulties. It appears to them, moreover, clear that on this subject the Conference can only express an opinion on general principles, and that definite action must be left to the constituted authorities in each branch of our Communion, acting, as far as possible, in concert.

The committee, therefore, submitted a proposition which, with one or two immaterial verbal alterations, ultimately formed the 12th resolution of the Conference.

In the concluding section of the Report, a suggestion was made which was passed by the Conference as resolution No. 13, and the Conference was requested to commend the subject of Reunion to the special prayers of all Christian people, and to issue a pastoral letter upon it.

This Report, of course, possesses only the authority of the committee who presented it ; but its recommendations were cordially accepted by the Conference. Among the resolutions which the bishops passed on various subjects, are to be found the following on Reunion :

11. That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be, by God's blessing, made towards Home Reunion :

(A) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(B) The Apostles' Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(C) The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unflinching use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(D) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

12. That this Conference earnestly requests the constituted authorities of the various branches of our Communion, acting, so far as may be, in concert with one another, to make it known that they hold themselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference (such as that which has already been proposed by the Church in the United States of America) with the representatives of other Christian communions in the English-speaking races, in order to consider what steps can be taken, either towards corporate reunion, or towards such relations as may prepare the way for fuller organic unity hereafter.

13. That this Conference recommends as of great importance, in tending to bring about reunion, the dissemination of information respecting the standards of doctrine and the formularies in use in the Anglican Church; and recommends that information be disseminated, on the other hand, respecting the authoritative standards of doctrine, worship, and government adopted by the other bodies of Christians into which the English-speaking races are divided.

There remains to be cited one more Lambeth utterance on the subject of Reunion, namely that portion of the Encyclical Letter which deals with the subject. Its language is as follows:

After anxious discussion, we have resolved to content ourselves with laying down certain articles as a basis on which approach may be, by God's blessing, made towards Home Reunion. These articles, four in number, will be found in the appended resolutions. The attitude of the Anglican Communion towards the religious bodies now separated from it by unhappy divisions would appear to be this: We hold ourselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference with any of those who may desire intercommunion with us in a more or less perfect form. We lay down conditions on which such intercommunion is, in our opinion, and according to our conviction, possible. For however we may long to embrace those now alienated from us, so that the ideal of the one flock under the one Shepherd may be realized, we must not be unfaithful stewards of the great deposit entrusted to us. We cannot desert our position either as to faith or discipline. That concord would, in our judgment, be neither true nor desirable which should be produced by such surrender.

But we gladly and thankfully recognise the real religious work which is carried on by Christian bodies not of our communion. We cannot close our eyes to the visible blessing which has been vouchsafed to their labours for Christ's sake. Let us not be misunderstood on this point. We are not insensible to the strong ties, the rooted convictions, which attach them to their present position. These we respect, as we wish that, on our side, our own principles and feelings may be respected.

Competent observers, indeed, assert that not in England only, but in all parts of the Christian world, there is a real yearning for unity—that men's hearts are moved more than heretofore towards Christian fellowship. The Conference has shown in its discussions as well as its resolutions that it is deeply penetrated with this feeling. May the Spirit of Love move on the troubled waters of religious differences!

Such having been the pronouncements of the Lambeth Conference on the subject, let us now see what steps were taken to communicate them officially to the Nonconformists of this country. In accordance with the 12th resolution, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in April, 1889, addressed identical letters to the heads of the leading Nonconformist bodies in England. The following, which was sent to the Chairman of the Congregational Union, will indicate the tenor of all :

Lambeth Palace, S.E., April 10, 1889.

MY DEAR SIR,—I was requested by the Bishops, at their first joint meeting after the Lambeth Conference, to send, with our united respects to yourself as representing the Congregationalists of England, a copy of an Encyclical Letter issued by the Conference. I would ask you kindly to refer to resolution 12, which will be found on page 25, and to the report on Home Reunion at page 81, and I can assure you that the sentiments there expressed were heartfelt on the part of the whole assembly, and the readiness most real and present. We know that under whatever diversities of opinion, a true and loving hope of oneness in Christ Jesus is a living power in the hearts of all His people.—Believe me, dear sir, your most faithful servant,

EDW. CANTUAR.

The Rev. F. J. Falding,

Chairman of the Congregational Union.

This letter was considered, and a reply agreed upon at the following autumnal meeting of the Congregational Union. The reply, which is given at full length in the *Christian World* of October 3, 1889, began by heartily reciprocating the spirit of goodwill and courtesy in which the Archbishop's letter was conceived. With regard, however, to the substance of the letter, it proceeded as follows :

3. We are, we believe, faithful to the prevailing temper of the churches which we represent when, along with the Bishops, we deplore the number of ecclesiastical divisions by which the Christianity of Great Britain is distracted and weakened ; and we hope the time is not distant when, as the result of candid and prayerful conference, those divisions, in spite of any outward differences that may remain, will cease to break the unity of the Spirit.

4. For such conference the Congregational churches are fully prepared ; and we respectfully suggest that an arrangement for meetings, at which members of the Established Church and Nonconformists should unite in the various offices of worship, and in deliberation on practical measures of co-operation in the common service of the Christian Faith, would be a seemly preparation for conference on the larger, though not more important, question of organic union raised by the Encyclical Letter.

5. We do not understand the Bishops to invite to conference the representatives of other Christian communions in the English-speaking races, "but to intimate their readiness to confer with them in order to consider what steps can be taken, either towards corporate reunion or towards such relations as may prepare the way for further organic unity hereafter." The scope of the suggested conference is thus limited to questions touching ecclesiastical incorporation, more or less complete ; and it is further limited by the conditions or basis of conference which the Bishops set forth.

6. This limitation of scope deprives the proposal to confer of much of its interest and importance. The first end at which the several Christian communions of the country, including the Established Church, should, in our judgment, aim, is the casting out of the sectarian spirit from among ourselves, and the open, habitual recognition of one another, despite differences of creed and organization, as equally churches under Christ. This unity in diversity would, we believe, be a nearer approach to the realization of the unity for which the Head of the Church prayed, than would any form of ecclesiastical incorporation which is possible under the present conditions of religious life in England.

7. But the conditions or "basis" which the Bishops indicate present to us as Congregationalists further aspects of difficulty. One of the resolutions adopted at the Lambeth Conference is in these terms :—

[Here follows No. 11 of the Lambeth resolutions, cited above.]

8. We rejoice to recognise in how many of the points specified in the proposed "basis" the churches we represent are at one with the Church represented by your Grace, but regret that the fourth article can only be regarded as an insuperable obstacle in the way of conference. What that article proposes is that the Congregational churches abandon their distinctive testimony, and accept, not union with a sister church, but incorporation into a system against which they have been an historical and continuous protest. There is a sense in which we not only hold the "Historic Episcopate," but maintain that it is fully realized in our midst and by our churches. Our pastors are bishops, and we strenuously affirm and teach that their "episcopate" is at once primitive and historical, *i.e.*, after the form instituted of Christ, observed and enjoined by His Apostles. This office our pastors hold by Divine authority, and through Divine appointment, their institution being of Christ, who acts through the voice and election of the churches, whose one and common Head He is. This view of the episcopate is our historical inheritance, and we construe it as no mere matter of polity or ritual, but as of the essence or nature of the Church, necessary to its complete dependence on Christ, and involving its no less complete independence of the State. This conception of the Church, held as a matter of deep and settled conviction by Congregationalists, and derived as they believe from the New Testament, is the very thing it is here proposed that they surrender as a condition preliminary to a conference on Home Reunion. This is a surrender they cannot make, and ought not to be expected to be able to make; and we therefore feel compelled to decline a conference which would allow such a surrender to seem possible.

* * * * *

The reply of the Baptist Union to the Archbishop's note was determined upon a few days later. It will be found in the *Christian World* of October 10, 1889. The reasons for declining the suggested conference are thus expressed in it:

Mindful of the prayer of our Lord for the unity of His people, we are, we trust, as deeply concerned as your Grace to promote fraternal intercourse, practical co-operation, and also organic union amongst societies of Christians, whenever such fellowship can be secured without impairing the sole and absolute authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over His people, and without a departure from His teaching concerning the doctrine, worship, and government of His Church as contained in the New Testament Scriptures. We have carefully examined the articles on which we are invited to consider the readiness of the Anglican Episcopate to confer with us as to "what steps can be taken either towards corporate

reunion or towards such relations as may prepare the way for fuller organic unity hereafter," which are :—

[Here follow the four Lambeth articles, with a reference to the Encyclical Letter, pp. 88, 24, 25.]

As to the first of these articles (A), we are in full accord with your Grace. The supreme authority of the Holy Scripture in matters of religious faith and duty is a cardinal principle underlying our Church organization and individual life. The other three articles—(B), (C), and (D)—laid down in the Encyclical Letter contain terms so obviously susceptible of two or more interpretations that they do not seem to us to promise a profitable issue to any deliberations founded upon them. For instance, our churches hold that they have "the historic episcopate," as it is laid down in the New Testament, and they do not consider the diocesan episcopate of the Anglican communion to be in accordance with the New Testament law of Church government.

But our chief difficulty as Baptists in approaching the suggested conference arises from the fact that our churches hold and teach—

1. That the Christianity of the New Testament was essentially the introduction of a spiritual, personal, and non-sacerdotal religion.

2. That the New Testament law of baptism requires a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a prerequisite to the administration of the rite; or, as it is well expressed in the catechism of the Church of England in answer to the question "What is required of persons to be baptized?" "Repentance whereby they forsake sin, and faith whereby they steadfastly believe the promise of God," and that the administration of baptism to infants, when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot satisfy these conditions, is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture and to the practice of the primitive and apostolic Church.

3. That in subjection to the teaching of the Word of God, the internal government of each Christian Church should be conducted by the professed servants of the Saviour, and should be in no way controlled by the sovereign powers of the State. These principles—excepting our views on Christian baptism—we hold, as your Grace is fully aware, in common with other free churches in this country, with whom we are not only united by the ties of brotherhood, but also by a common concern for the salvation and well-being of all men.

They further added that they did not think that the suggested conference would advance the special object of Home Reunion which the Archbishop had in view.

The Wesleyan Methodist Conference did not reply until nearly a year later, when Dr. William F. Moulton, as the President for the time being, sent to the Archbishop a letter dated August 7, 1890, of which the following may be regarded as the two material paragraphs :

The Conference, whilst deploring needless divisions, and still more a schismatical spirit, is of opinion that the true unity of the Church of Christ does not necessarily require the corporate union of the several churches, or their acceptance of any form of polity and government.

And whilst fully recognising the spirit which animated the committee on Home Reunion appointed by the Bishops, the Conference is of opinion that the articles presented as a basis for possible Reunion (especially the fourth, which relates to "the Historic Episcopate") do not, in the absence of fuller information and more exact definition, provide a practical ground for the discussion of the subject.

The Archbishop's letter of April 10, 1889, was also sent to Dr. Oswald Dykes, then Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England; and the Synod of that body at their meeting in May, 1889, appointed a committee to deal with it. Accordingly, under their direction, Dr. Alexander Macleod, who had in the meantime become Moderator, sent to the Archbishop a reply dated July 29, 1889, which was subsequently approved by the Synod at their next meeting in April, 1890. In that reply Dr. Macleod stated that the Archbishop's letter, with the copy of the Lambeth Encyclical Letter and Resolutions and Reports, had been laid before their Synod. Attention had, he added, been specially called to the 12th resolution, and likewise, in that connection, to the four Articles, which in the opinion of the Lambeth Conference supplied a basis for an approach towards Home Reunion. The reply then proceeded:

I am instructed to assure your Grace that the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England feels deeply thankful to the Divine Head of the Church for the spirit of Christian brotherhood which has found expression in these important documents. We deplore, as you do, the divided condition of the Church, and, believing it to be (in spite of external divisions) one in its possession of a common life in Christ, we also earnestly desire to see its unity more visibly manifested, either through corporate reunion, or, at the least, through closer and more sympathetic relations. We hold ourselves most ready to enter into conference whenever it shall appear probable that such negotiations would lead to any useful result. Meanwhile, it seems due to the frankness with which the Bishops have approached us, as well as to the sacredness and gravity of the interests involved, that we should state at once how far the articles of the suggested basis appear to us adequate or suitable for their purpose.

The reply went on to say that no possible objection could arise on their part to Articles A and C; that it was not likely that any difficulty would be felt as to the employment of the (so called) "Apostles' Creed" as a baptismal symbol, since such use of it was frequent amongst them, though not enjoined; and that they also unreservedly adhered to the Nicene Creed, though they were scarcely prepared to recognise in those venerable documents "the sufficient statement of the Christian faith." It had pleased God to guide His Church to other doctrinal conclusions, almost equally essential to the Faith, especially the Augustinian doctrines of Grace, and the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone. The reply then proceeded as follows:

It does not appear to us that the modern Church is at liberty to drop silently from her testimony such precious truths which she has been led to define after centuries of discussion, and to fall back upon the creed of A.D. 325, as though during these intervening ages the Holy Spirit had added nothing to the understanding of the Christian Faith. . . . Had it been proposed to negotiate with the "doctrinal Articles" of the Thirty-nine as a basis, we (like our forefathers in earlier times) would have

recognised in them a body of doctrine common to us with our Anglican brethren, on the ground of which we might approach each other with good hope of agreement.

Finally, as respects Article D, I regret to say that it lies open, in our judgment, to two serious objections as a proposed basis for Reunion.

The first is, that the phrase "Historic Episcopate" admits of being variously understood, and would need, therefore, to be more precisely defined. Presbyterians claim to follow that "historic" form of the "episcopate" which appears to them to possess primitive authority—that, namely, which obtained (as is now widely admitted) in the first century, before Presbyter and Bishop had come to be distinguished as two distinct orders. The steps which led from that primitive arrangement to Diocesan Episcopacy, and finally to the Patriarchates of the East, and the usurped supremacy of the See of Rome in the West, were steps so gradual that we are at a loss to know at what point we are to find the exact type of the "episcopate" intended by the epithet "historic," and deemed to be of fundamental consequence.

The other objection which, in our judgment, lies against this article is, that it elevates into the same rank with Holy Scripture the Creeds and the Sacraments, a matter which to us seems secondary. We doubt the wisdom and the propriety of assigning such a fundamental place to any system of church polity or administration. The dispute which at one time was maintained betwixt Prelatist and Presbyterian in England has lost a good deal of its old heat and something of its former importance. Competent scholars in the Anglican Communion concede that the original "episcopate" of the New Testament was not diocesan. We frankly acknowledge, on the other hand, the very early development out of the primitive Council of Presbyter-Bishops of a single Bishop who was *primus inter pares*. Whether the advantages or disadvantages which have resulted to the Church from that development have been the greater, may admit of different opinions; but so long as no exclusive "Divine right" is alleged for Presbytery on the one hand, or for Diocesan Episcopacy on the other, this question of the Church government, it appears to us, may wisely be left open for practical adjustment and compromise in view of the actual needs of the Church of Christ.

Your Grace may be assured that it is with the utmost respect and a sincere desire to further a good understanding between our respective communions, that I have felt called upon to state at this early stage, with so much freedom, our attitude with reference to the "Articles of the Basis." We rejoice to find ourselves in accord with our Episcopal brethren in everything of a positive nature which they deem essential in regard to faith and worship. Our difficulties amount in brief to these two points: (1) That the Basis does not go so far in the definition of doctrine as we could wish; and (2) that it includes one article which calls for fuller explanation on a subject which appears to us to be of secondary, not of primary, importance.

The Lambeth proposals were also submitted to the Countess of Huntingdon's connexion, and their reply expressing a desire for the suggested brotherly conference was laid by the Archbishop before the general body of English Bishops in the spring of 1890. Arrangements were made for holding the desired conference, and it met and considered the question, but, unhappily, failed to arrange terms of union. The other replies were also reported by the Archbishop to the English Bishops, but as these replies were not favourable to the idea of a con-

ference, there appeared to be no further action which could be taken in reference to them. Their tone evidently did not hold out an immediate hope of negotiations for Reunion being carried on with any prospect of success.

In analyzing the replies which have been cited of the four principal Nonconformist bodies, the first point which strikes us is that they all concur in regarding the acceptance of the four Lambeth articles as intended to be a preliminary condition to the proposed brotherly conference. Was this a correct interpretation of the overtures made to them? I cannot think that it was. The Archbishop's letter had made no allusion to the eleventh resolution of the Lambeth Conference which contained the articles. It had simply referred to resolution No. 12, which, as will have been observed, is altogether independent of the preceding one. The letter did, it is true, call attention to the whole report of the committee on Home Reunion, in which the four articles are to be found. But there is not in this Report any more than in the resolutions themselves a syllable to indicate that these articles were to form the basis of the brotherly conference, which was recommended, or that they must be accepted before the conference met. On the contrary, the summary of the Report given above shows that the proposal of the committee, on which the 11th resolution of the Conference and the four articles were founded, and their proposal for brotherly conference which was echoed in the 12th resolution of the Conference, formed, in the view of the committee, two entirely distinct branches of the subject, the first being prospective and future, and the second a matter of immediate concern and interest.¹ It is true that the Bishops at Lambeth, both in their resolutions and in their Encyclical Letter, felt it right to put forth those articles as forming, in their view, a possible basis of Reunion. But it would have been open to any of the Nonconformist bodies to formulate a counter-proposition; and both parties might then have entered into conference to compare their proposals and ascertain how far the two were capable of being blended with one another, or how far either would admit of modification, with a view to a mutual agreement being arrived at.

¹ The note at the foot of the page of the *Christian World* of Oct. 3, 1889, in which the Archbishop's letter is set out, is extremely inaccurate. To the reference in the letter to "the report on Home Reunion at p. 81" is appended in that paper the following note: "In this passage of the Report the following is proposed as the basis of conference" (and then are set out the four articles). It will be observed, however, (1) that the Archbishop's letter refers, not to any particular passage in the Report, but to the whole Report, which begins on p. 81 and extends to p. 89; (2) that the four articles do not come in until pp. 86, 87; and (3) that they are proposed as a basis for an approach towards Reunion, and not as a basis of conference.

Even, however, supposing that this is an erroneous view of the situation, and that no conference was offered or could have been held except upon the basis of the four articles, the reasons given in the replies for declining to enter into conference appear altogether insufficient. Congregationalists advance no objections to the first three articles, but consider the fourth, which mentions the Historic Episcopate, as an insuperable obstacle to conference. And yet in the very next sentence they claim that they themselves, in a sense, hold "the Historic Episcopate," and that it is fully realized in their midst! If so, why oppose a *non-possumus* to the article? Why assume that it must bear a sense which is incapable of explanation or modification to an extent which could be accepted by them? Surely if they hold "the Historic Episcopate" equally with ourselves, nothing could be more desirable than a conference to see if both sides could come to some agreement upon it. The Baptists adopt, if possible, an even more unreasonable position. For they affirm that the last three articles (B, C, and D) "contain terms so obviously susceptible of two or more interpretations that they do not seem to us to promise a profitable issue to any deliberations founded upon them." Surely, however, the fact that the terms of a proposal from one party to another are capable of more than one interpretation furnishes a strong reason why the proposal should not be rejected *in limine*, but should be made the subject of conference and discussion in order to discover what the terms actually do mean. At any rate, if in the present case they were really indefinite and capable of different constructions, neither of the conferring parties would have been compromised by accepting them as a basis of conference. The Wesleyans take a similar view. They are of opinion that the articles (especially the fourth, relating to the Historic Episcopate) "do not, in the absence of fuller information and more exact definition, provide a practicable ground for the discussion of the subject." But it is obvious that a conference would have afforded the best possible opportunity of obtaining the desired fuller information and more exact definition.

The reply of the Presbyterians is far more logical, as well as encouraging. They accept unreservedly Articles A and C. They also accept B, though they do not consider that it goes far enough; and, with regard to D, they frankly state their two objections to it; first, that the phrase "Historic Episcopate" admits of being variously understood, and would need more precise definition; and secondly, that it elevates a matter, which to them appears secondary, into the same rank with Holy Scripture, the Creeds, and the Sacraments. The second objection is a purely formal one; and the fact of its having been made is rather a hopeful sign than otherwise, for it

indicates that, as the reply goes on expressly to admit, the Presbyterians no longer regard their rejection of Episcopacy as a vital matter. On the other hand, the fuller explanation necessary to remove the first objection might, it is obvious, be furnished in conference. Accordingly they alone, of the four great bodies whose replies we have discussed, hold themselves "most ready to enter into conference whenever it shall appear probable that such negotiations would lead to any useful result."

The real cause for the different attitude of the Presbyterians to that of the other bodies is not far to seek. It lies in the different estimate formed by them of the importance of the outward and organic unity of the Church. They "earnestly desire to see its unity more visibly manifested, either through corporate reunion or, at the least, through closer and more sympathetic relations." The Congregationalists, on the other hand, regard "unity in diversity" as a nearer approach to the unity for which Christ prayed than any form of ecclesiastical incorporation at present possible in England. The Wesleyans are of opinion that "the true unity of the Church of Christ does not necessarily require the corporate union of the several Churches, or their acceptance of any form of polity and government." The Baptists, no doubt, profess themselves to be as deeply concerned as the Archbishop "to promote fraternal intercourse, practical co-operation, and also organic union among societies of Christians, wherever such fellowship can be secured without impairing the sole and absolute authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over His people, and without a departure from His teaching concerning the doctrine, worship, and government of His Church, as contained in the New Testament Scriptures." But, equally with the Congregationalists and Wesleyans, they declined the suggested conference, owing to the difficulties which they felt in taking part in it, and the absence of a belief that it would lead to any useful result.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the real explanation of the tone of the replies of all the four great Nonconformist bodies lies in the absence of any desire, or rather in the existence of the reverse of a desire, for corporate reunion. It was this which led them, in the presence of admitted ambiguities, to put an unfavourable, rather than a favourable, construction upon the terms of the overtures which had been made to them. If a strong desire for corporate reunion had existed, they would have been eager so to interpret the overtures as to find therein a possible solution of the problem. As they were lukewarm on the matter, if not actually averse to it, they were rather inclined than otherwise to interpret the overtures in a sense which threw the failure

of the negotiations upon the Bishops instead of upon themselves.

Indications, however, are not wanting that since these replies were sent there has been a considerable growth among Nonconformists of a sense of the duty and importance of endeavouring to effect a corporate reunion of the various Protestant Christian bodies among the English-speaking communities throughout the world. When the obligation which rests upon us all in this matter has been fully realized, a very different reception will assuredly be accorded to such proposals for conference as were made in 1889. Instead of the proposals being so construed as to place the *maximum* of obstacle in the way of their acceptance, the most favourable interpretation which is possible will be placed upon them. Instead of ambiguities in them being regarded as a bar to the suggested conference, the prospect of clearing up ambiguities will be considered an additional reason why the conference should be entered into. Both sides will then meet, rightly determined not to compromise anything which they regard as a principle, but prepared to make concessions to each other in all matters which are not in their opinion essential. If the subject of Reunion were approached in this spirit, it would be faithless to doubt that a mode of arranging it satisfactory to all parties could be found. Episcopacy is, no doubt, the most difficult question which will have to be faced; and yet it even now presents features which suggest a possible solution of the problem. Under the existing constitution of our Church, Presbyters are associated with the Bishop in the laying of hands upon candidates for ordination. At this very time the extent to which the Bishops have autocratic powers, or are controlled by the clergy and laity, differs widely in the various Anglican Churches throughout the world. By the constitution of that branch of it which exists in the United States of America, a standing committee consisting partly of clergymen and partly of laymen is associated with each Bishop, so that the dioceses are in fact administered after a semi-presbyterian fashion. The maintenance of episcopacy, therefore, would not seem to be incompatible with a recognition of the essential features of Presbyterianism and other non-episcopal systems. And so with questions of doctrine, and ritual, and evangelistic machinery. *Might it not be possible to maintain our present Anglican standards and yet allow such divergencies from them as would embrace the particular tenets and practices of the Congregationalists, and Wesleyans, and even of the Baptists?* The greatest difficulty would, no doubt, lie with the Baptists. Infant baptism is, and must of course remain, the regular practice of the Church, and no parish could be left without a

clergyman able and willing to administer it. But parents even now are not excommunicated from the Church of England if they conscientiously abstain from bringing their children to be baptized; and ministers who had similar scruples with regard to the baptism of infants might be permitted to exercise their functions in other ways, provided there was always another clergyman at hand to administer the Sacrament when it was required. In like manner, a reform in the direction of more parochial and congregational self-government might be introduced which would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Congregationalists; and modifications might be made in the Act of Uniformity which would give to the Wesleyans all the freedom of worship which they can properly desire. Their class-system, of course, as in fact it originally did, might well exist within the Church no less than outside its pale. The grand principle which we as Churchmen should recognise is that the National Church ought to embrace all the Christians of the country; and, therefore, that while it may and must, as a Church, maintain a standard of doctrine and ritual embracing non-essential as well as essential points, its conditions of membership ought to be so wide that no one who professes and calls himself a Christian should be involuntarily excluded from it on account of holding or adopting any doctrine or practice which is inconsistent with that standard, but is not of vital importance. The counter-principle which we ask Nonconformists to admit is that, provided the National Church of his country would allow him to retain his own doctrines and practices, no Christian ought to hold aloof from it merely because, as a Church, it sanctions or teaches different doctrines and practices in matters not of vital importance.

There are some, no doubt, who regard these principles as calculated, if carried out, to produce confusion and anarchy. I believe, on the contrary, that, if rightly applied, they would place our National Church and our common Christianity upon a sound basis, and would lead, as nothing else will or can, to the strengthening and extending of the kingdom of God both at home and abroad.

PHILIP VERNON SMITH.

