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

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

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1929.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

"Lambeth and Reunion."

THE subject considered at this year's Cheltenham Conference—"Lambeth and Reunion"—is one of special importance and urgency. When the Bishops meet next year for the Lambeth Conference the subject of Reunion will come before them in the practical form of the proposals put forward for the union of the Churches in South India. Great issues will then have to be decided, and on the decisions made will depend the future of the Anglican Communion, not only in the Mission field, but throughout the world. We are glad to be able to give our readers the chief papers read at the Cheltenham Conference held last April at St. Peter's Hall, as they contain a clear statement of the whole question as viewed by Evangelical Churchpeople. It is important that the position of Evangelical Churchmen on the problem should be clearly stated, in view of much that is being said against the reunion proposals, and the Cheltenham papers provide the required statement. The Conference had the advantage of a valuable explanation of the Free Church point of view from the Rev. Dr. Fullerton, one of the Secretaries of the Baptist Missionary Society. His frank statements must be carefully weighed in any endeavour to seek closer relationship with the non-Episcopal Churches at home. The paper of the Principal of Ridley Hall on Inter-Communion also deserves special attention as indicating a line of approach to unity which is being increasingly recognized as the method most in accord with the mind of Christ, and as best calculated to lead to the desired consummation.

Cheltenham Conference Findings.

For purposes of reference we give the Findings which were agreed upon at the final Session of the Conference.

1. The Conference recognizes with thankfulness the growing desire among Christian people for closer fellowship and inter-communication, leading to reunion, and believing that this is in accord-

ance with the will of God earnestly prays that efforts to this end may be welcomed by the Lambeth Conference.

2. In all schemes for reunion Holy Scripture should be accepted as the final authority in regard to faith and practice, and the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as the summary of Catholic doctrine.

3. On a review of the present condition of the Christian world the Conference is convinced that approaches towards reunion between reformed and unreformed Churches are impracticable and undesirable, and that efforts should be concentrated on reunion between the Anglican Communion and other Reformed Churches.

4. It is the duty of English Churchmen to aim at developing the character of their Church with a view to including the recognized members of the orthodox non-Episcopal Churches.

5. The duly accredited Ministers of these non-Episcopal Churches should be recognized as exercising a full and valid ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

6. Seeing that the principle of a Constitutional Episcopacy is generally accepted, it is essential that no dogma of Apostolic Succession should be associated with Episcopacy, and that the Constitutional Episcopate should have its decisions endorsed by the clergy and laity before they are promulgated.

7. The Conference heartily welcomes the principles adopted at the Seventh Bangalore Conference for reunion in South India.

8. The most effective means for promoting organic union between the Anglican Communion and the non-Episcopal Churches is by intercommunion expressed in reciprocal fellowship at the Lord's Table. The Conference would urge on the Lambeth Conference the necessity of actively furthering this purpose.

9. The Conference earnestly appeals to all Clergymen in sympathy with these Findings to interest and instruct their congregations in the need and urgency of reunion of the Churches at home and overseas.

The Practical Aspect.

These Findings of the Conference have been criticized as not embracing the full problem as it concerns the whole of Christendom. The answer is obvious. It may be given in some words which the Bishop of Bombay is reported to have used recently : " Unless I am blind and deaf, and incapable of discerning the signs of the times, it is with some Protestant Churches that God is offering us the first partial Reunion. I am content to be guided by the principle of the Open Door." We can afford to ignore the sneers of a section of Churchmen at " Pan-Protestantism." These Churchmen will only secure their desired union with Rome by an absolute submission to the claims of the Pope, and no loyal English Churchman can contemplate reunion with an unreformed Roman Communion. Those who speak of reunion with non-Episcopal Churches as contravening " the principles of Catholic Order " will have to make quite clear what Catholic Order is and how it is contemplated to contravene it. The acceptance of the fact of Episcopacy does not necessarily involve

the acceptance of any theory of Apostolic Succession, and more particularly it does not involve the acceptance of the theory which has grown up with the Tractarian Movement. Free Churchmen have acknowledged their readiness to accept a Constitutional Episcopacy, and no one can require of them the acceptance of any particular theory of Episcopacy, any more than at the present time any special theory is required of those who are recognized as Evangelical Churchmen.

The South India Proposals.

The Bishop of Lichfield dealt with the subject of Reunion recently in his Diocesan Magazine. He pointed out that much depends upon the spirit in which the question of Reunion is approached. There can be, he said, no sort of unity unless we seek for the spirit of brotherly love, which is in perfect harmony with the spirit of loyalty to truth. He went on to point out the different spirit which is abroad. "On the one hand there are those who write about a 'Lambeth plot'—presumably a plot to give away our Catholic heritage. This may be smart journalism, but smart journalism is a poor accompaniment to the prayer in the upper room." He referred to those who on the other side regard all "who are not content with a merely Protestant union" as being "Roman at heart." We have not seen any statement of this kind—possibly because we do not understand what is meant by "a merely Protestant union." We can, however, join with the Bishop in deprecating the controversial spirit introduced into the discussion by those who see danger to what they call their Catholic heritage in the South India Scheme. The Bishop's own view is given in this sympathetic reference to "the very remarkable scheme for reunion in South India"; he says of it: "My own study of it shows me that there are difficult and doubtful points, but I cannot see that there is anything in it which (rightly understood) compromises Catholic Order, or is likely to hinder a wider reunion when the time for it is ripe." We look to the Lambeth Conference to give a warm welcome to a movement full of promise for the future of Christianity.

"The Roman Question."

There has been much rejoicing in Roman Catholic circles over the settlement of "the Roman Question" by Signor Mussolini. The terms of the peace which close the rupture of nearly sixty years standing between the Quirinal and the Vatican have been duly ratified on both sides. But there are already signs that the relationship between Church and State will not be as harmonious as Roman Catholics have anticipated. The Head of the Fascist Party has declared his views on the position of the Roman Church in no uncertain terms, and the Pope has replied in equally vigorous language. He regrets that "the serene joy" with which the agreement between them had been received should be so soon "profoundly and sadly disturbed." He describes his bitter disappointment. He did not "expect heretical and worse than heretical expressions on the very

existence of Christianity and Catholicism." The Duce's remarks that Italian Catholicism has for some time not been fruitful, and that intellectual production in this field is to be looked for elsewhere, caused the Pope special annoyance. The Pope emphasizes his claim that he impersonates and exercises the sovereignty of the Church by Divine Mandate, and refuses to tolerate the idea that liberty of discussion is to be allowed. It is obvious from this breach in the harmony at the outset that the new status of the Vatican will not be free from disagreements with the secular authorities. What wider entanglements in international affairs may arise it is impossible yet to say.

The Meaning of Canonical Obedience.

The diocese of London has given a striking example of the spirit which actuates the extreme section of the Anglo-Catholics. The Bishop laid down some very moderate restrictions on the practice of Reservation. A small body of extreme clergy refused to be bound by those restrictions. Their contention was that their duty to the whole Catholic Church, their inherent rights as priests, and the method of appointments to the Episcopate, absolved them from Canonical obedience in this matter to their own Bishop. The Bishop pointed out to them that they accepted the offices which they hold in the Church knowing the conditions under which they were to be held, and that it was too late when they were placed in important positions on such definite understandings to turn round and say that they repudiate the obligation which they solemnly took with their eyes open. He adds: "I feel sure that the conscience of the laity of the Church will not support you in that contention." The question which lay people are asking, is, What interpretation do these clerics put upon the oaths which they have taken? At his Diocesan Conference the Bishop referred again to the matter. It raised, he said, the whole question of Canonical obedience. Nothing could be clearer than the wording of the oath. The laity feel that if a clergyman finds himself in a position where he cannot conscientiously fulfil an obligation into which he has entered, the only course open is to resign, and to retire from the position. That is the honest course pursued in any other calling. It is not too much to expect the Clergy to observe the simple rules of honest action.

Editorial Note.

We are able in this number to give the chief papers read at the recent Cheltenham Conference on "Lambeth and Reunion." They form a useful record of the views expressed at an important gathering. Mr. G. C. Parkhurst Baxter's Study of Akhnaton deals with a unique and interesting movement in the life of ancient Egypt. The Reviews of Books give, we hope, some guidance on a number of the most useful recent publications. We regret that we have not been able to refer to as many as we should like to have brought to the notice of our readers. Some have been held over to our next issue.