

## The Problem of Home Reunion.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR STALKER, D.D.

PRESBYTERIAN readers of the proceedings of the Lambeth Conference must have been interested, not to say gratified, to observe how large a space was devoted to themselves in the reports and resolutions; although they may have been puzzled to know why, when such ample attention was bestowed on them, and on such distant Churches as those of Scandinavia and the Far East, hardly a word was said about such near neighbours of the Church of England as the Baptists, the Congregationalists, and the Methodists. Perhaps, however, these had been dealt with on an earlier occasion, or may be reserved for a later one.

No doubt the reason why the Presbyterians were so pointedly mentioned was because, in the interval between the preceding and the present meetings, a special attempt had been made in Scotland to carry out the recommendation of an earlier date, that Bishops should put themselves into touch with religious bodies in their vicinity, with the view of initiating proposals for union. As might have been expected, so energetic a man as the late Bishop Wilkinson, when he came to Scotland as Bishop of St. Andrews, could not let such a recommendation sleep; and he was ably supported by Bishop Dowden and Bishop Ellis, as well as others. To read, in the biography of the late Bishop Wilkinson, the very detailed account of the proceedings of the Christian Unity Association, which he initiated for the purpose of conference with representative men of the other Scottish Churches, is pathetic, but also very revealing, even to those who, like the present writer, shared in those proceedings. It is evident that he was solicited by a small section of the Church of Scotland, of marked proclivities, who raised round him an impression that there was a movement in the air, and that success might be carried with a rush. As a stranger he had no conception of the real magnitude or weight of this body

of encouragers ; but by degrees the truth dawned upon him, and his disappointment is not concealed by the biographer. While, in the Association, he made a profound impression by his spirituality and evoked a large measure of personal esteem and affection, yet, when he came up—as he did very soon—against convictions as strong and deep-seated as his own, he exhibited no tact or statemanship, in the way of getting round corners and helping things on, but simply stood still, resolving the proceedings into prayer-meetings or religious conferences. In short, as his friend, the Rev. Dr. Donald Macleod, the editor of *Good Words*, remarked, when all was over, “he did not understand Scotland.”

A similar inability to comprehend, for which others must be responsible, occurs in the Lambeth Report itself, where it is suggested that, in the event of union being achieved, the admission of Presbyterians might be effected according to the precedent of 1610. Now, what is the precedent of 1610? In that year King James I., after wearing out the Scottish Church by his importunity, and after prolonged manipulation of the courts of the Church by the arts of statecraft, of which gross bribery, as Dr. Grub, the Episcopalian Scots historian, admits, was one, succeeded in getting Episcopacy so far agreed to that three ministers went up to London and were made Bishops. The formalities on which a rigorous interpretation of Anglican theory might have insisted were in some respects relaxed ; and it is to this concession that the reference in the report points. But the whole transaction was, and is, hateful to Scottish feeling. The incident was repeated at the Restoration, when Archbishop Sharp, known to his fellow-countrymen as “Judas” Sharp, was the ringleader ; and both transactions are associated in the national memory together. Could anything, then, have been more maladroit than such a reference ?

But, indeed, the whole discussion at Lambeth as to how such a union might shape itself was entirely premature. In the Association, at an early stage, it was pointed out that “unity”—the Association’s name and aim—might have at least four

meanings : it might, first, denote merely good feeling and social fellowship ; or, secondly, it might extend to recognition and thankful acknowledgment of one Church by another ; or, thirdly, it might embrace co-operation in work ; or, fourthly, it might at last reach organic unity. The first of these has been attained in a remarkable degree within the Association ; perhaps the second also ; but the third has not. On the only occasion when an opportunity occurred—a united service in connection with the death of Queen Victoria, I think—Bishop Wilkinson himself inhibited his clergy from taking part. For this he was sharply brought to book in the Association ; from which, in consequence, he absented himself for about two years. As for the fourth, it has never had even the most distant appearance of being within the range of practical politics ; and, therefore, suggestions as to the manner of carrying it out are entirely premature, and ought not to have been included in any report.

It may, however, prove an advantage that, in this case, the mark has been overshot ; because the Lambeth documents make it perfectly clear that nothing else is thought of but the swallowing-up of Presbyterianism. Whatever concessions may be made, in imitation of the precedent of 1610, for the purpose of smoothing the path for ordained ministers who might shrink from an admission that their Presbyterian ordination had been invalid, at all events, in the future, all ordinations will be Episcopal. This is not so much plainly stated as everywhere implied, nothing else having so much as suggested itself as possible.

Are Presbyterians so changed that, with impunity, their principles and convictions can be treated in this way ? Certainly there has been a great change since the seventeenth century, when the Scottish Commissioners attending the Westminster Assembly held the same High Church views about their own Church government as the Anglicans of to-day do about theirs. At that time Presbyterianism was believed to be of divine right, and every departure from it, whether towards the right of Episcopacy or towards the left of Independency, was looked upon as sinful. This has now been given up ; and it is not

doubted that God may own and bless those who serve Him conscientiously in the Episcopalian or the Independent way; yet the belief has by no means been modified that Presbyterianism is not only the best but the Scriptural way. In the New Testament "Bishop" and "Presbyter" are identical. The placing of the Bishop above the Presbyters was later; and, while Episcopalians appeal to antiquity and the Fathers, Presbyterians request them to ascend to a higher antiquity and the Scriptures.

Presbyterians value highly the large lay element in their system. When the Bishops from all parts of the world were assembled at Lambeth, why were there not an equal number of laymen associated with them? The Church of England is rich enough in laymen of the very highest type to provide such an element not unworthy of the Bishops; and its presence would greatly have strengthened the decisions, especially as to certain matters. This is Presbyterianism, which has this parity and balance in all its courts. The Presbyterian is, in short, a layman's Church, and therein lies its adaptability to the age. Some weeks ago I heard the Bishop of Kensington declare from the pulpit that the liturgy, while unspeakably dear to Church-people, is not intelligible to working-men—the class which all the Churches are at present anxious to capture—and on the following Sunday I had, in the same place, a striking proof of the truth of the remark. I happened to be worshipping in a cathedral, more thronged than usual at the principal service, on account of the churching of the Judges holding the assizes in the city. In the nave there was, therefore, a large congregation; and there any working-men, attracted by the stir, would certainly be sitting. But the whole proceedings went on in the choir, separated from the nave, of course, by a great screen. Nothing was heard distinctly, even near the front of the nave. After about an hour, a man in front of me said, with relief, to his neighbour, "That's all"; and out they went, along with two-thirds of the nave congregation. A sermon, lasting twenty-five minutes, followed, still in the choir, though even yet there was a larger

congregation in the nave. Only a word or phrase now and then could be heard, such as "And now" at the beginning of a sentence. At last I heard quite distinctly, "The whole creation groaneth," and this seemed conclusive. Of course, to Church-people this will all appear so much a matter of course that they wonder why anyone can carp at it; and the clergy on such occasions are always in the favoured position inside the rails. But what of the working-men, about whom the good Bishop manifested concern? Non-Anglican Churches have not captured the working-classes, either, as they would like; but they are, at all events, far closer to them than this, and they must on no account do anything to make their worship less popular.

The Church of England is strong in the affection of its own people, who are well aware how much it has contributed to create the greatness of the English name. But no less secure is the place which the Presbyterian Church holds in the hearts of its people. The proportion of the population in Scotland that has forsaken Presbyterianism is far less than that of the population in England which has separated from the Episcopal Church; and nowhere has the Scottish Church so lost the population to practical heathenism as the Church of England has done in East and South London. At present the Church of England is experiencing an access of quite justifiable self-consciousness through the assembling of its imperial forces from all the ends of the earth at Lambeth; but, through the Pan-Presbyterian Council, the Scottish Church has also, in recent years, been made conscious of belonging to a larger unity; for in that body nine-and-twenty Churches, in all parts of the world, are represented, some of them being larger than any denomination in Scotland. In short, if there is ever to be any real negotiation for union between Anglicans and Presbyterians, the Churches must meet on a footing of absolute equality, and there must be no foregone conclusions on either side.

The one point of light to which attention is specially drawn in the Lambeth Report is that Presbyterians have always been particular about ordination, the implied suggestion being that

there survives among them some shadow of Apostolic Succession. But, while Presbyterians maintain this rite, surrounding it with strict formalities, the purpose is different: it is efficiency. The ordaining Presbytery thus retains the power of testing the qualifications of those entering the ministry or seeking to be settled in particular congregations. The educational standard, for instance, is far higher than in the Anglican Church, where a single year's study in theology is considered sufficient after the completion of a University course. Three years, on the contrary, are demanded at the same stage by the Church of Scotland, and four years by the United Free Church of Scotland, the two bodies, of nearly equal size, which practically divide between them the population of the country.

The Presbyterian Church, in all its branches, is unanimous in believing three conditions to be requisite to the exercise of the holy ministry—first, personal godliness; secondly, the choice of the congregation; thirdly, ordination, after the testing of qualifications, by the Church. Not only are these the three conditions, but this is the order of their importance. Moral and spiritual character comes before everything else; the right of the congregation to choose its own minister has formed the battle-ground for many a struggle, and now, even in the State Church, the people hold this ground securely; ordination by the organized body is important too, but only in a subordinate degree. To make this the primary condition is the error of what is called Apostolic Succession.

What is it that Apostolic Succession guarantees? It cannot guarantee personal character, as, alas! too many notorious instances prove. I suppose it would be said to guarantee the efficacy of the Sacraments when these are administered by priests in this succession. But what a monstrous doctrine is this! From time to time, in the course of Church history, there have sprung up sects holding that ecclesiastical acts are only effective when administered by holy men. Although, for such a position, there has generally been too much excuse in the moral condition of the Church at the time, it has been easy to

demonstrate how intolerable would be the consequences of such a theory. Venial, however, are these in comparison with the consequences which would follow from the other theory—that ecclesiastical acts, such as Sacraments, are only valid when performed by men in an Apostolic Succession extending over nearly twenty centuries. It might follow, for example, that in a country all Sacraments were without effect for hundreds of years because of some flaw in the succession at a particular point. As is well known, this is no imaginary case, because the Church of England has been recently decreed to be in this very position by the Church of Rome. To many English Churchmen this may occasion no uneasiness; but can this be said with truth of all? The Scottish Church might be able to prove itself to be in the Apostolic Succession, if it were worth while, with at least as much success as the Church of England; but would it not be madness thus to attempt to justify its position to a Church whose own position is denied by the much larger Church which is the true owner of this doctrine? The Scottish Church cannot believe that the Divine procedure is regulated by any such arbitrary rules. “The Sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him who doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that through faith receive them.” These are the words of “The Shorter Catechism,” and this is the doctrine of Presbyterianism not only as to Sacraments, but as to ecclesiastical acts in general.

Why, then, it may be asked, did Presbyterians join the Association formed by Bishop Wilkinson?

First, because it was a unity association, not a union association. So it was from the first denominated; and many times at the meetings this was emphasized, and by none more frequently than by the Episcopalian members themselves. Their position in Scotland has been one of great isolation; and this new departure was—more, perhaps, than they were themselves aware—an aspiration of nature towards fuller correspondence with their environment.

Secondly, the Association provides a centre where representative men of all the denominations meet. This is an obvious convenience, because there are always arising, in the course of public affairs, questions on which it is desirable for such men to know one another's mind, forming conviction by conference and discussion, even if no joint action is taken by the bodies to which they belong. In point of fact, the meeting in the Unity Association of ministers and elders belonging to the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland has not been without influence on the movement towards union between these two bodies which is at this very moment taking shape; and other unions may follow, even if, unhappily, that with the Episcopal Church prove unattainable.

Thirdly, the Association provides an arena for discussion, where those championing different points of view may convince one another; and it is not in the nature of a Scotsman or a Presbyterian to decline such an opportunity. At the very last meeting which it was my privilege to attend, the subject of discussion was Confirmation, on which an able paper was read by the Bishop of Brechin, now Primus in succession to Bishop Wilkinson, expounding the High Church view and making Confirmation out to be the next thing to a Sacrament. A most interesting discussion followed, in which every phase of opinion received expression; but the feature of the occasion was a perfectly annihilating criticism of the view advanced by the Bishop from Dr. Paterson, Professor of Divinity, and successor of Dr. Flint, in Edinburgh University, who, however, wrapped up the trenchancy of his reasoning in so much geniality and good-humour that even the victim joined in the hilarity of the meeting. If any be of opinion that it is hopeless for those holding such divergent views to convince one another, let them consider how, then, the wider union of all Christendom is to be attained. Unless the Romish Church, for example, is to be convinced by argument that multitudes of its beliefs and practices are false, the union of Christendom can only mean the universal adoption of these errors. The proper temper for union negotia-



tions is not a weak disposition towards concession or a willingness to slur over differences, but a manly faith in the rationality of the human soul and in the power of the Scriptures to convince and convert.

In this paper I have not hesitated to give free expression to my own mind; but I hasten to add that no one has more enjoyed such of the meetings of the Unity Association as I have been able to attend, and that, in particular, I have appreciated the qualities and contributions of the Episcopalian members. Their Church has, indeed, had but a dubious place in the history of Scotland; yet it has enshrined a type of piety little known to the population in general, but refined, and sometimes intense; and its influence in directing the religious sentiment of the country may be larger in the future than it has been in the past. Everyone who loves his own Church, and is in any degree occupied with its affairs, is the better of having some opportunity of seeing, in a favourable light, the character, aspirations and achievements of those connected with other denominations; so that he may not fossilize in his own corner, but maintain a wider outlook, always coveting that between himself and all other Christians there may be in things essential unity, in things non-essential liberty, in all things charity.



### The Cup in Holy Communion.

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**W**HAT did it contain at the Last Supper? Grape-juice, certainly, for Christ spoke of its contents as "the fruit of the vine." But in what condition—fermented or unfermented?

The Lambeth Conference of 1888 virtually laid it down that it was in the former state, for it expressed strong disapproval of the use of unfermented grape-juice in Communion, as a departure