

THE CHURCHMAN

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THE MONTH.

The Arch-
bishop and
Unity.

THE Lambeth Conference Reports reach us just as this number is going to press, and we can only give a résumé of the principal resolutions arrived at. Indeed, it would not be respectful to the Conference to do more at present, for it is clear that decisions which have been come to only after five weeks of solemn deliberation by the greatest gathering of Bishops ever assembled in England, demand, and must certainly receive, the most careful and thorough consideration before any settled opinion is formed concerning them. The Conference dealt with a variety of subjects, but none was of greater importance than that of Unity, and the strength of the desire of the Conference to have its Appeal rightly understood may be gathered from the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury invited a number of representatives of the Press to meet him at Lambeth that he might explain what had really been done. The following report of the interview is taken from the *Morning Post* :—

“ We have considered,” he said, “ questions of reunion with the Church of Rome, with the Swedish, Scandinavian, Moravian, and other bodies. What we largely concentrated our efforts upon was our relation to the other Reformed Churches—that is, outside Rome and the Eastern Churches.

“ What we ask now is that the Churches will give effect locally to what we have agreed to centrally, but we know that a long time is needed to bring about such an enormous change in the whole situation. Our steps must be very careful and very deliberate. We have enacted nothing, but have suggested large principles, which we shall try to carry out.

“ As regards the Church of Rome, our position, as far as we know, is hopeless. They do not consent to waive anything they have ever said, but by the grace of God they may be softened. We should long to get them all in, but we do not see our way at present.

“ As to the Eastern Churches, there have been Bishops of those Churches in England in consequence of the Conference, but of course they have not been at the Conference. The largest possible hope has been put into our

minds as to the possibility of a closer union with them. With reference to the Scandinavian Churches, we have got absolute harmony. The reunion project should be launched with the right kind of spirit."

We note with satisfaction that the Lambeth Conference has recognised that the position in regard to the Church of Rome is "hopeless"; we never supposed it was anything else, but it is well to have the fact so clearly and so authoritatively stated. The references to the Eastern Churches and the Scandinavian Churches are interesting; but most important of all is what effect the decisions will have upon local churches of the Anglican Communion, e.g., in the Mission Field and the Colonies, and also upon the relationship between the Church of England and the Nonconformist Churches at home. The Conference has "suggested large principles" which, says the Archbishop, "we shall try to carry out"—a most hopeful statement when considered in the light of the proposals agreed upon.

The Conference prefaced its Resolutions on Unity by an "Appeal to all Christian People" which embodied the great principles to which the Archbishop referred. As the Appeal itself has been published in full in the Church Press and in several daily newspapers it need not be quoted here at length. We have no hesitation, however, in saying at once that we are most thankful for the noble and generous spirit in which it is conceived; it represents—as last month we expressed the hope it would do—"a real advance towards intercommunion and fellowship among all who love the Lord Jesus Christ." If we are asked in what respects "a real advance" has been made we are content to indicate three.

(1) In the first place, we cite the words used concerning membership of the Church. "We acknowledge," says the Appeal, "all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is His Body." "Sharing with us"—the phrase is singularly reminiscent of one of the Cheltenham Findings; in any case it brings within the "universal Church of Christ" the overwhelming majority of Nonconformist brethren, whom some, at least, have hitherto not hesitated to rule out.

(2) Next, the essentials of unity : these are defined in a manner which we venture to say will command a large measure of support :—

**Essentials
of Unity.**

We believe that the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the whole-hearted acceptance of :—

The Holy Scriptures, as the record of God's revelation of Himself to man, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith ; and the Creed commonly called Nicene, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith, and either it or the Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal confession of belief :

The divinely instituted sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole fellowship in and with Christ :

A ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body.

How far this is an " advance " upon anything that has gone before, may be seen by a reference to the Quadrilateral which was adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 and has remained unchallenged ever since. In order that the contrast may be seen we quote the full formula of that date :—

(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 unfailing 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.

All who have been intimately concerned with the reunion question know only too well that Clause (d) has been the rock upon which all proposals have foundered. The formula adopted by the Conference of 1920 is very different, and in relation to its third clause (" a ministry acknowledged " etc.), the Appeal says :—

May we not reasonably claim that the Episcopate is the one means of providing such a ministry ? It is not that we call in question for a moment the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the Episcopate. On the contrary, we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace. But we submit that considerations alike of history and of present experience justify the claim which we make on behalf of the Episcopate. Moreover, we would urge that it is now and will prove to be in the future the best instrument for maintaining the unity and continuity of the Church. But we greatly desire that the office of a Bishop should be everywhere exercised in a representative and constitutional manner, and more

truly express all that ought to be involved for the life of the Christian Family in the title of Father-in-God. Nay more, we eagerly look forward to the day when through its acceptance in a united Church we may all share in that grace which is pledged to the members of the whole body in the apostolic rite of the laying-on of hands, and in the joy and fellowship of a Eucharist in which as one Family we may together, without any doubtfulness of mind, offer to the one Lord our worship and service.

(3) Our third evidence of "a real advance" is to be found in the definite proposals put forward by the Bishops for giving effect to the great principles they have laid down :—

**Definite
Proposals.**

We believe that for all, the truly equitable approach to union is by way of mutual deference to one another's consciences. To this end, we who send forth this appeal would say that if the authorities of other Communion should so desire, we are persuaded that, terms of union having been otherwise satisfactorily adjusted, Bishops and clergy of our Communion would willingly accept from these authorities a form of commission or recognition which would commend our ministry to their congregations, as having its place in the one family life. It is not in our power to know how far this suggestion may be acceptable to those to whom we offer it. We can only say that we offer it in all sincerity as a token of our longing that all ministries of grace, theirs and ours, shall be available for the service of our Lord in a united Church. It is our hope that the same motive would lead ministers who have not received it to accept a commission through episcopal ordination, as obtaining for them a ministry throughout the whole fellowship.

In so acting no one of us could possibly be taken to repudiate his past ministry. God forbid that any man should repudiate a past experience rich in spiritual blessings for himself and others. Nor would any of us be dishonouring the Holy Spirit of God, Whose call led us all to our several ministries, and Whose power enabled us to perform them. We shall be publicly and formally seeking additional recognition of a new call to wider service in a reunited Church, and imploring for ourselves God's grace and strength to fulfil the same.

It can hardly be doubted that this Appeal will give a tremendous impetus to the Reunion Movement in the Mission Field (e.g., South India) where the Churches seem to be ripe for action, as well as in some of the Colonies, where long steps towards unity have already been taken. It cannot fail, also, to have a very material effect upon the problem as it faces us at home, and will tend, as we hope, towards its solution, although it will not escape notice that "episcopal ordination" is to be the channel through which the "commission" to non-Anglican ministers is to be given. That the Bishops feel the time for action has come is clear from the resolution which immediately follows the Appeal :—

The Conference recommends to the authorities of the Churches of the Anglican Communion that they should, in such ways and at such times as they

think best, formally invite the authorities of other Churches within their areas to confer with them concerning the possibility of taking definite steps to co-operate in a common endeavour, on the lines set forth in the above Appeal, to restore the unity of the Church of Christ.

In regard to some matters of detail which have long been the subject of general discussion, the Resolutions offer clear and definite counsel. Thus we read—and we note the sanctions with great thankfulness—that in view of prospects and projects of reunion :—

Sanctions. (i) A Bishop is justified in giving occasional authorization to ministers, not episcopally ordained, who in his judgment are working towards an ideal of union such as is described in our Appeal, to preach in churches within his Diocese, and to clergy of the Diocese to preach in the churches of such ministers :

(ii) The Bishops of the Anglican Communion will not question the action of any Bishop who, in the few years between the initiation and the completion of a definite scheme of union, shall countenance the irregularity of admitting to Communion the baptized but unconfirmed Communicants of the non-episcopal congregations concerned in the scheme.

But the resolutions also contain some limitations. **Limitations.** For instance, believing that certain lines of action might imperil both the attainment of its ideal and the unity of its own Communion, the Conference declares that :—

(i) It cannot approve of general schemes of intercommunion or exchange of pulpits :

(ii) In accordance with the principle of Church order set forth in the Preface to the Ordinal attached to the Book of Common Prayer, it cannot approve the Celebration in Anglican churches of the Holy Communion for members of the Anglican Church by ministers who have not been episcopally ordained ; and that it should be regarded as the general rule of the Church that Anglican communicants should receive Holy Communion only at the hands of ministers of their own Church, or of Churches in communion therewith.

We can well understand that these limitations will be criticised, but details must be considered in their relation to the general plan ; and it will not be lost sight of that the above resolutions do make some very considerable concessions. But for the moment we are not arguing the question : we are only making the facts known.

Equally important is the declaration made by the Conference “ in view of doubts and varieties of practice which have caused difficulties in the past.”

(i) Nothing in these Resolutions is intended to indicate that the rule of Confirmation as conditioning admission to the Holy Communion must neces-

sarily apply to the case of baptized persons who seek Communion under conditions which in the Bishop's judgment justify their admission thereto.

(ii) In cases in which it is impossible for the Bishop's judgment to be obtained beforehand the priest should remember that he has no canonical authority to refuse Communion to any baptized person kneeling before the Lord's Table (unless he be excommunicated by name, or, in the canonical sense of the term, a cause of scandal to the faithful); and that, if a question may properly be raised as to the future admission of any such person to Holy Communion, either because he has not been confirmed, or for other reasons, the priest should refer the matter to the Bishop for counsel or direction.

It will be felt that the Conference has handled a very difficult problem in a masterly way, and when it is remembered that members were practically unanimous there is every reason to be thankful.

Another set of Resolutions deals with the position of women in the Church. The Lambeth Conference recommends that in future laymen and laywomen shall be on an equal footing with regard to admission to all Church Councils and Assemblies. It also recommends the revival of the Order of Deaconesses, the Form and Manner of the service containing: (a) Prayer by the Bishop and the laying on of his hands; (b) A formula giving authority to execute the Office of a Deaconess in the Church of God; (c) The delivery of the New Testament by the Bishop to each candidate. It is, however, expressly stated that the Order of Deaconesses is the only Order of Ministry by women which can be recognized by the Anglican Church.

What is to be the work of the Deaconess so ordained and so commissioned? The Conference has taken a much larger view than many expected, and we can well believe that the proposals will be very seriously canvassed. It must, of course, be remembered that these recommendations have themselves to be formally adopted in different parts of the Anglican Communion before effect can be given to them; and it may be pointed out that, in the resolution defining the functions of the Deaconess, Clause (d) (ii) was carried by 117 votes to 81. The resolutions dealing with the matter are as follows:—

The following functions may be entrusted to the Deaconess, in addition to the ordinary duties which would naturally fall to her:—

- (a) To prepare candidates for Baptism and Confirmation;
- (b) To assist at the administration of Holy Baptism; and to be the ministrant in cases of necessity in virtue of her office;
- (c) To pray with and to give counsel to such women as desire help in difficulties and perplexities.

(d) With the approval of the Bishop and of the parish priest, and under such conditions as shall from time to time be laid down by the Bishop (i) in Church to read Morning and Evening Prayer and the Litany, except such portions as are assigned to the priest only ; (ii) in Church also to lead in prayer and, under licence of the Bishop, to instruct and exhort the congregation ;

Opportunity should be given to women as to men (duly qualified and approved by the Bishop) to speak in consecrated or unconsecrated buildings, and to lead in prayer, at other than the regular and appointed services of the Church. Such diocesan arrangements, both for men and for women, should wherever possible be subject to provincial control and co-ordination.

Marriage Problems. On the question of Marriage the resolutions are less definite than some people would desire, but it must be remembered that they deal with principles rather than with details. We quote the following resolution, which is of great importance in view of current controversies :—

The Conference affirms as our Lord's principle and standard of marriage a life-long and indissoluble union, for better for worse, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, and calls on all Christian people to maintain and bear witness to this standard.

Nevertheless, the Conference admits the right of a national or regional Church within our Communion to deal with cases which fall within the exception mentioned in the record of our Lord's words in St. Matthew's Gospel, under provisions which such Church may lay down.

The Conference, while fully recognizing the extreme difficulty of Governments in framing marriage laws for citizens many of whom do not accept the Christian standard, expresses its firm belief that in every country the Church should be free to bear witness to that standard through its powers of administration and discipline exercised in relation to its own members.

League of Nations. The Bishops, in a series of resolutions on International Relations, give an emphatic endorsement to the essentially Christian basis of the League of Nations, and urge that the peace of the world, no less than Christian principle, demands the admission of Germany and other nations into the League of Nations at the earliest moment which the conditions render possible. Further, they express their grave concern at the disease and distress prevailing over large parts of Europe and Asia and call for energetic action to be taken for the relief of the suffering.

The Official Report, containing the full text of the Encyclical letter from the Bishops, the resolutions adopted by the Conference and the Reports of the various Committees, is published by the S.P.C.K. in pamphlet form at 2s. net.