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THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1930.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Lambeth Conference.

THE Report of the Lambeth Conference with the Encyclical Letter of the Bishops was issued with admirable promptitude soon after the last meeting of the Conference. The Encyclical Letter presents a useful summary of the general results of the Conference as represented by the seventy-five resolutions passed by the Full Sessions of the Bishops. The Reports of the various Committees are useful as showing some of the phases of thought developed in the course of the discussions. The whole document deserves careful study on the part of churchpeople, as an important statement by the leaders of the Anglican Communion throughout the world on some of the most pressing problems of our time. Christianity has to face new situations, new conditions of life, new aspects of thought and new developments in every sphere. The Report of the Lambeth Conference, although it has no legislative authority, must have a special value as representing in large measure the attitude of the Anglican portion of the Christian world on subjects of universal interest. The Bishops cannot have expected that their decisions would be received with absolute unanimity. There is evidence that there was considerable diversity of opinion in the Conference itself on a number of important matters. It is therefore not surprising that each section of the Church has found much in the Report which it has received with great satisfaction, while there has also been much which raises great doubts and will give rise to keen discussion during the coming months. On the whole the Bishops have reason to be satisfied with the reception which the Report has received. With the exception of a few of the daily papers, there has been a desire to give the Report a fair examination, although at the same time it is realized that it will not arouse the enthusiasm or prove as inspiring as the Report of the Conference of 1920.

The Christian Doctrine of God.

The Report of the Committee on the Christian Doctrine of God is an important pronouncement. All religion depends ultimately on an adequate conception of God, and the Report helps to remove

some of the defective ideas which are entertained at the present time even in circles otherwise well educated and receptive of developments of thought in other spheres. The Committee was under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Armagh, and with his guidance and leadership the depths of the mysteries of God's relationship to man are dealt with in a clear, courageous manner, which must serve to stimulate thoughtful minds to fresh efforts to bring their thoughts of God into more adequate relationship to the whole circle of knowledge. All truth proceeds from God and there must be an ultimate harmony in all the sources of knowledge and discovery, however much at any time they may seem to differ. The Christian conception of God has its own special characteristics. It differs from those of other religions and has as its central elements the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the fact of the Cross. No conception of God can be adequate which falls short of the perfection of the Son, and "the principle of the Cross" is seen in the fact that "Christ taught that in love God rules the world. Through suffering for righteousness' sake men become the instruments of God's love, as it seeks the salvation of mankind. . . . The Cross sums up the struggle of love against evil throughout the ages." Such central facts as these are made the basis of an appeal for fresh study and a better understanding of the whole relationship of God to mankind in all the various activities and conditions of the human race. The whole of life is claimed by Jesus "as the sphere of Divine activity." An enlargement of the mind towards God is needed. The mental inertia of those who cannot or will not bring their minds into the service of their religion has to be overcome. The result will be a renewed relationship to God in the life of prayer, and this will lead to a new intensity of worship. The Bishops have set before us in this report a series of facts which constitute the foundation of Christianity, and on the realization of them depends the future of the Christian Faith.

The Unity of the Church.

There are matters of grave importance in several of the other reports with which it is impossible to deal here. We have been able to give our readers in this number the benefit of the thought of one of the most acute observers and best instructed writers connected with the Church press on the Conference, in an article which we commend to the careful attention of our readers. Our purpose in these editorial comments is to draw attention to a few features of outstanding interest in the Report, and to indicate their bearing upon the future of the Church. We therefore turn to the Report of the Committee on "The Unity of the Church" as dealing with the subject in which the majority of our readers have a special interest. It was the work of the similar Committee in 1920 which raised new hopes and brought new conceptions of a united Church to a world just recovering from the chaos of a world war. The Appeal to all Christian People issued then by the Bishops stirred the hearts of Christians in every section of the Church—even, we

may say, in the Roman Communion. There has been deep disappointment in the hearts of many churchpeople that, amid all the movements towards unity which have taken place, the Anglican Communion has not been in the foremost position, and has not given effect to the principles enumerated so clearly at the Conference of 1920. In regard to the ministry, the one stumbling-block in the way to complete reunion on these principles is reiterated with emphasis in the Report of the Committee this year when it says: "we emphatically declare that we do not call in question the spiritual reality of the ministries now exercised in non-Episcopal communions." The explanation given of what is involved in the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate leads us to hope that the terms of the Committee's statements will be carefully observed, for it brings us back to the conceptions of "the earliest times" of the Church, and to the original conception of episcopacy. It says: "The Historic Episcopate as we understand it goes behind the perversions of history to the original conception of the Apostolic Ministry." No one, whether of our own Communion or of the non-Episcopal Churches, can ask more than this, that we should maintain "the original conception of the Apostolical Ministry."

The South India Scheme.

The chief interest of the Conference for many centred in the treatment of the scheme for unity in South India. The Conference gave approval to its contents in terms which are satisfactory to the representatives of the Anglican Communion immediately concerned with the proposals. The details of the scheme and all that is involved in the consequences of its acceptance have become clear through the statements of the Report and the explanations which have been given of them by Bishop Azariah and other representatives of our Church in South India. It is now realized that South India, when the union scheme is carried through, will no longer contain a branch of the Anglican Communion, but will be constituted into a Province of the Universal Church. This, it is made clear, does not mean the setting up of a new Schism, for the various Churches uniting will be in communion with their mother Churches throughout the world. This is the method which has been adopted to avoid obvious difficulties connected with the acceptance of an episcopal form of constitution. It will take some time to realize all that is involved in these new conditions, and more especially in the conditions which will exist at the end of thirty years, when the ministry of this new province will be one with the fully constituted Historic Episcopate. We can foresee some necessary changes in the conception of Episcopacy, and some modifications in the attitude of the non-Episcopal Churches towards the idea of Episcopacy. There are many difficulties and considerable dangers, but we believe that in the interests of that unity which we believe to be in accordance with the mind of Christ, there will develop a conception of the episcopal office more in harmony with that of the Primitive Church. The Reunion Scheme in South India,

and the similar schemes in Persia, China and elsewhere, will have reactions which it is difficult for us in our present circumstances to realize, but we trust that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there will be development towards a fuller and better condition of the Church, and as the Church was guided in early days to the form of government most suited to its needs, so it may be again. But we must pray that it may be saved from those perversions which seem so easy when human weakness, pride and ambition frustrate the Divine plan.

Nonconformists and the Lambeth Report.

It is a matter for deep regret that there is considerable dissatisfaction on the part of a number of the leaders of the Evangelical Free Churches with the Conference Report on Unity. It is possible that this dissatisfaction may raise obstacles in the way of carrying out the South India Scheme of Reunion. The dissatisfaction is aroused by the fact that in the Report, as a prominent Free Church leader says, "marked prominence is given to the prospects of closer relationships with the Eastern Orthodox and the old Catholic Communions. It is clear that it is in this direction, rather than in the direction of the evangelical reformed churches that Lambeth is looking with hope as regards union." There is some justice in the complaint that prominence is given to conferences between the representatives of the Orthodox Churches and those of our own Church, while there is little reference to the prolonged conversations which took place between the leaders of the Free Churches and the representatives of our own Communion. We shall have more to say on the statements made on behalf of our Church to the representatives of the Orthodox Churches and the old Catholic Churches, as they contain a number of features which require very careful examination. We can only hope that the attitude attributed by Free Churchmen to the Bishops does not represent the real facts of the situation, and that any such onesided bias on their part was altogether unintentional and undesigned. We trust that it arose from the unbalanced pressure of many conflicting interests necessarily connected with the drawing up of documents in any deliberative assembly. Evangelical church-people are keenly concerned that there should be no misunderstanding on the part of Free Churchmen of their desire of Evangelicals for closer association with them, and we believe that this desire is shared by the majority of the Bishops of our Communion throughout the world.
