

THE CHURCHMAN

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Rumanian Report.

IN two previous issues of *The Churchman* we have referred to the Report of the Anglican Delegation at the Conference with representatives of the Rumanian Church held in Bucharest in June, 1935, and have called attention to the gravely misleading character of the statements made to the Rumanian representatives as to the teaching of the Church of England. The predominantly Anglo-Catholic membership of the Delegation precludes any claim that it represented more than a party in the Church of England, but there appeared to be every intention to press the matter to a definite issue with as little discussion of a public kind as possible. The remoteness of the Eastern Churches from our purview and the almost universal unfamiliarity with its teachings and general life have made it difficult to arouse interest in what appears to most people merely an academic question. Partly, no doubt from this, and partly owing to the nature of the proceedings a Resolution approving the Report was rushed through the two houses of Canterbury Convocation on January 20th last. The Bishop of Gloucester, as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Council, had given notice of a Resolution of acceptance and approval of the Report as being "fully consonant with Anglican Formularies and a rightful interpretation of the faith of the Anglican Communion," though in moving it he dropped out "fully" and substituted "legitimate" for "rightful." He refused to use "permissible," though the Archbishop of Canterbury would have preferred that word. It seems extraordinary that it should have been left to the Bishop of Birmingham and the Bishop of Truro to oppose the Resolution and more so that only five bishops could be found to support an amendment and none to vote against the Resolution. We may well wonder what the Evangelical Bishops were doing. The Resolution having been carried, it was at once sent down to the Lower House for consideration, though the House was already thinning, as it was late in the afternoon and the subject was not on the Agenda paper. Canon Guy Rogers moved that the discussion be postponed to the next day, but his motion was lost. The House was in an impatient mood and would scarcely listen to Prebendary Hinde's speech in opposition. The fact that so many members had already

left may account for only six voting against the Resolution. Seventeen members, who lacked either conviction or courage, did not vote and ingloriously begged that the fact of their abstention should be recorded. The repute of Convocation is not very high and this Resolution is not likely to raise it.

The Irish Church and the Report.

The presence of an Irish Bishop, the Archbishop of Dublin, as an assessor with the Anglican Delegation, naturally, has made this matter a concern of Irish Churchpeople, and the Irish Church Union has issued a Statement condemning the Rumanian Report. The document is too long to give in full, but we quote the following :

“ The Irish Church Union enters a respectful and emphatic protest against the Report, as all the agreements arrived at contain statements which amount to a direct repudiation of a fundamental principle of the Church of Ireland—viz., ‘ The Church of Ireland, as a Reformed and Protestant church, doth hereby reaffirm its constant witness against all those innovations in doctrine and worship, whereby the Primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid, and which at the Reformation this Church did disown and reject.’

“ For example, the Anglican Delegation ‘ accepted unanimously ’ the following statements on ‘ The Holy Eucharist ’ :—

(a) ‘ The sacrifice on Calvary is perpetually presented in the Holy Eucharist in a bloodless fashion under the form of bread and wine through the consecrating priest and the work of the Holy Ghost in order that the fruits of the sacrifice of the Cross may be partaken of by those who offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, by those for whom it is offered, and by those who receive worthily the Body and Blood of the Lord.’

“ In our Article XXXI headed ‘ Of the one oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross ’ this doctrine is condemned as a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

(b) ‘ In the Eucharist the bread and wine become by consecration the Body and Blood of our Lord. How ? This is a mystery.’

“ The ‘ Orthodox ’ Churches hold the doctrine of transubstantiation. Article XXVIII states this doctrine ‘ is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.’

(c) ‘ The Eucharistic bread and wine remain the Body and Blood of our Lord as long as these Eucharistic elements exist.’

“ This implies Reservation of the elements, which is the practice of the Orthodox Churches, together with the adoration of the same. Article XXVIII says : ‘ The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up or worshipped.’

(d) ‘ Those who received the Eucharistic bread and wine truly partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord.’

“ This is contrary to the statement in Article XXIX : ‘ The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ.’

“ To compare the agreed statements on ‘ The Holy Eucharist ’ with the Articles as above is to demonstrate the utter impossibility of reconciling them.”

The Roman Church and the "Orthodox" Churches.

The doctrine of the Rumanian Church, as any examination of the Report shows, is in full agreement with that of the Roman Church, though the "Orthodox" of the Rumanian Church are, in opposition to the Papal Bull on Anglican Orders, prepared to recognize Anglican Orders as valid. It is, however, desirable to keep in mind the statement of the Roman Catholic Archbishop and Bishops of the Province of Westminster, in their Vindication of the Papal Bull. Replying to the letter of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Pope on the subject of the Bull, they wrote :—

"We have not entered into the question of your agreement with the Eastern or Russian Communion, for it has not come within the direct scope of this Letter. But we may point out that in all which concerns the Real Objective Presence, the true Propitiatory Sacrifice, and the nature and extent of the Priesthood, the Church over which Leo XIII rules and the great Eastern or Russian Church hold identical doctrine."

How a series of propositions which flatly contradict the plain and emphatic statements of the Anglican formularies can be "consonant with them" and a "legitimate interpretation" of them is a matter to which only the pen of the author of "A Tale of a Tub," or of the writer of the "Provincial Letters," could do adequate justice.

The Islington Clerical Conference.

The subject of the Islington Conference this year, "The Reformation and its bearing on some modern problems," was aptly chosen in view of the approaching celebrations of the fourth centenary of the Reformation, and the papers reached a high standard of excellence. As the meeting was held in the Central Hall of the Wesleyan Church the Chairman, the Rev. J. M. Hewitt, made an apt and interesting reference to the fact that in 1739 the Islington Vestry compelled the Vicar of the Parish to "refuse his pulpit to Mr. John Wesley, Mr. Charles Wesley, and Mr. George Whitfield, and that those gentlemen shall not officiate any more for him in the parish church or churchyard in any part of the duty whatsoever." Mr. Hewitt added, "To-day Islington is thankful to have from Methodism a hospitality which, as we have seen, was denied to its Founder."

The Conference has been well reported in the *Record* and elsewhere, and the papers have been issued in a small volume which will repay perusal. One was a very able treatment of the question of Reunion with the Rumanian and other unreformed Churches, by the Rev. O. A. C. Irwin, B.D., Vice Principal of St. John's College, Durham, and Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History, Durham University. We have already referred at some length to this subject, but in view of its importance we give the following from the conclusion of Mr. Irwin's very able address :—

"What then is the conclusion to which examination of the Report leads? The Rumanians recognized our Orders, but the conditions on which they did so were not really fulfilled, for the Anglican Delegates allowed themselves

seriously to misrepresent the doctrines of the Church of England, they were unduly concessive. In their well-intentioned desire to promote closer relationships with the Rumanians, they attempted to bridge the differences by approximating Anglican doctrine to that of the Orthodox. The Report reveals the measure of their success—and failure. As to the agreement, let us say plainly in England and in Rumania, ‘Well meant, but not the teaching of our Church.’

“The whole matter is the more grave because the Report regards the agreements as forming, to quote the words used, ‘a solid basis’ for further discussions whereby ‘full dogmatic agreement may be affirmed between the Orthodox and the Anglicans.’

“Failure to challenge the Report now may lead to its use as a precedent in reunion discussions with other unreformed Churches, and some further re-orientation of Anglican doctrine might be the unhappy result. Protests have been issued in the last few months, notably from the National Church League and from the Central Committee of the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, which has a *clerical* membership of more than 1,500.

“We are not unresponsive to God’s call to Christian unity, sounding so urgently amid our restless world, nor blind to the vision of a united Christendom. We seek closer fellowship with our Orthodox brethren. Why should we not find it along the lines of approach adopted in the case of the Old Catholics, neither of the Churches seeking intercommunion being committed to all the doctrinal beliefs and practices of the other, but each believing that the other holds all the essentials of the Christian Faith?

“The agreements at Bucharest we cannot as Anglicans accept. To apply the weighty judgment of the Lambeth Conference, ‘We must not for the sake of Union barter away our special heritage, for we hold it in trust for the whole Body of Christ’.”

Church and State.

Among the other subjects dealt with at the Islington Conference was that of Church and State, which was discussed by Mr. W. Guy Johnson in a paper of considerable interest. There is a feeling in many quarters that the Report of the Commission on Church and State has fallen flat and may be ignored. It would be a great mistake if such a view were taken by Evangelical Churchmen generally. It is true that some of the recommendations are not very likely to have practical effect, but there are others which will be pressed whenever the opportunity arises. We endorse Mr. Guy Johnson’s advice to read the evidence which is given in the second volume of the Report, as it contains much valuable material for correcting the impression which the Report itself endeavours to create, viz., that some change of a drastic kind in the relations between the Church and the State is urgently needed. We hope to return to this matter of the Evidence in a future issue of *The Churchman*. In the meantime we commend Mr. Guy Johnson’s paper to the attention of those who are wise enough not to ignore so vitally important a question.