

Editorial

THE general theme of the present issue is that of Church Union. The subject is one that appears to demand fresh consideration at the present time, not only because of its vast importance in the contemporary Church scene but also in view of a number of Reports bearing on the matter which have been issued in the course of the last few months. Two of these are the subjects of articles in the following pages, namely, *Church Relations in England* and *The Fulness of Christ*. The former is concerned with the relation of the Church of England to the Evangelical Free Churches in the light of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Cambridge Sermon of 1946. It is here reviewed by the Rev. Prof. J. P. Hickinbotham, of the University College of the Gold Coast, who was himself a member of the Archbishop's Commission which drew up the Report. Professor Hickinbotham was also one of the theologians responsible for the report *The Fulness of Christ*, which represents the Anglican Evangelical answer to the questions posed by the Archbishop of Canterbury with regard to the contrasts and conflicts of 'catholic' and 'protestant' theology. As the Report itself is avowedly Evangelical in outlook, we were anxious to have a review of it from a more independent point of view, and we are particularly grateful to Canon Alan Richardson of Durham for undertaking this task for us. Evangelicals will appreciate the generous terms in which he refers to the Report as expressing, in the main, the authentic Anglican tradition; but it is hoped that they will at the same time give due consideration to Canon Richardson's criticisms of what he considers to be certain deficiencies in Evangelical eucharistic doctrine.

Two further articles bear upon the same general theme. The Rev. Leslie W. Brown, Principal of Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum (who kindly serves as our Correspondent in India), writes on the Church of South India in the light of the experience gained during the past three years of the Union; and the Rev. W. H. Murray Walton, Vicar of Bromley, Kent, seeks to bring home the urgent challenge of the ecumenical movement by reference to his past missionary experience in Japan.

The article by the Rev. Wm. Leathem, Vicar of St. John's, Harborne, Birmingham, will be of interest to others than those who read the recent correspondence in *Theology* by the Rev. Hugh Martin with regard to the argument for infant baptism derived from the analogy of circumcision. Dr. Martin contended that "there is no true analogy at any point between baptism and circumcision". Mr. Leathem challenges this statement on biblical grounds, and by an examination and comparison of Old and New Testaments arrives at an exactly opposite conclusion.

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On May 1st there was published a Report on *Relations between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland*¹, as the result of conversations which have taken place between representatives of the two Churches during the past year or two. The Report acknowledges that

¹ Church Information Board, 2/6.

“ despite the large measure of fundamental agreement between the respective Churches of England and Scotland, there exist also formidable barriers, arising in part from unhappy chapters of past history, in part from long-continued separation, but in part also the result of conscientious convictions, still sincerely held on either side, respecting the form of the Church’s government and the ordering of its ministry ” (p. 8). A long-term policy is called for, in which the entire range of the differences between the two Churches would be fully and frankly discussed. Meanwhile, as a short-term policy, it is recommended that (a) the Church of England should formally sanction invitations to ministers of the Church of Scotland to preach in parish churches in England ; (b) that permission should likewise be given to ministers of the Church of England to accept invitations to preach in parish churches in Scotland ; and (c) that the Church of England should formally sanction the admission of baptised communicant members of the Church of Scotland, cut off from the ministrations of their own Church, to Holy Communion in the Church of England.

It will be noted that these recommendations recognise equality of ministers of the two Churches for the preaching of the Word but not for the celebration of the Sacrament. This would seem to imply the primacy of the Sacrament in reference to the Word and to cast doubt upon the validity of the Sacrament when celebrated by a non-episcopally ordained minister. We do not pursue the matter further ; we are content to ask, Is this the official or traditional teaching of the Church of England ?

In this connection we draw attention to another Report, entitled *Intercommunion*¹, issued by a Theological Commission of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, of which Prof. D. M. Baillie was the chairman. The Report does well to point out that the problem of intercommunion exists only for those who recognise that within the one Holy Catholic Church there are *Churches*—not merely in the regional sense (as in the New Testament) but in the form of separate denominations. “ It is evident that for Churches which do not recognise each other as Churches, there can be no problem of intercommunion ; and any one Church which stands upon completely exclusive claims cannot recognise a problem of intercommunion at all ” (p. 9). Evangelical churchmen in general would agree that intercommunion may exist between Churches that have unity of doctrine without unity of order, and that the possibility of such intercommunion is involved in the very recognition that other Churches are true parts of the one Church of Christ.

Finally, we take this opportunity of commending to our readers the Report of a Commission of Theologians appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to consider *The Scheme of Church Union in Ceylon*.² The Scheme (the text of which is available from the U.S.C.L. 2/6) provides for the uniting of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists to form the new Church of Lanka (the Sinhalese name for Ceylon). It received the sympathetic approval of the Lambeth Conference of 1948.

¹ S.C.M. Press, 2/-.

² Church Information Board, 1/6.