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THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1922

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Towards Reunion. SINCE our last issue there have been many happenings of importance to Churchmen, and we are inclined to place first in interest the further steps taken in the direction of Reunion. It is a mistake to suppose that the Lambeth Appeal is passing into the limbo of forgotten things. It is very much to the fore, and is exerting a quiet but none the less potent influence upon the Churches in all parts of the world. At home there has been a remarkable manifestation of desire for Christian unity shown at the Annual Assembly of the National Council of the Free Churches. When we find the President urging the Bishops not to be discouraged because all had not been accomplished in eighteen months there is reason to be hopeful that Nonconformist leaders will not easily rest until some satisfactory solution of the problem has been found. From the Church of England side the approach was of the most cordial character. The Bishop of Liverpool, supported by several of his clergy, attended to welcome the Conference to the city, impelled, as he put it, by a threefold motive : memory of the past, the needs of the present, and a great hope for the future. The greatness of that hope may be judged by the Bishop's own words. They already had spiritual communion with each other, and they were almost within sight of the unity of a federation of Churches, but, he added, many of us want something more. "We have a greater vision. We want a corporate unity, and never were we more hopeful than now, for the day may

not be far distant when the greatest step will be taken towards the unity of Christendom by a union of the Churches of the Reformation. It has come in Scotland. It will come in due time, I believe, in Great Britain and her Colonies. It cannot be forced ; it must not be hurried ; but organic Christian union is a fragile and beautiful flower for which we are creating an atmosphere in which it may be able to spring up and grow and overspread the world. We who are old and grey-headed may never live to see the dawn of that most glorious day, but many here, I believe, will live to see it." At a later period of the session, the Bishop of Manchester attended and, speaking on "Goodwill in Church Relations," referred to the improved attitude which had taken place on the question of Nonconformists speaking in Church of England pulpits, and pleaded for a stronger effort to be made to understand each other's position, expressing the belief that very often the same words were used by both, but in different senses. He even went as far as to declare that if he felt Establishment stood in the way of Reunion he would be willing to lead a campaign for disestablishment. His words made a deep impression and evoked a generous response. We refer to these incidents as showing that the attitude of the Assembly towards Reunion is full of encouragement. It has sometimes been asked, "Is there among Nonconformists the will to Reunion ?" The discussions at this Conference, both in tone and substance, furnish a sufficiently significant answer.

The East
African
Example.

But the most striking illustration of the desire for Reunion comes from East Africa. The seed sown at the first Kikuyu Conference is bearing good fruit, for, at a second Conference held there quite lately, an agreement was reached on the extraordinarily complex problem of ordination. It was agreed among the Churches and missions represented at the Conference that in future in the ordination of native clergy the presiding presbyters of all the Churches should take part. The Bishop will preside at English Church ordinations, and the Moderator and presbyters of the Church of Scotland missions will assist in the rite ; whilst at the Scottish ordinations the Moderator will preside and the Bishop and his clergy assist in the laying-on-of-hands. This proposal has been referred to the Home Churches and the Missionary Societies concerned, and if consent is given we may see realized in the

mission-field the great ideal of a United Christian Church. It will be a great thing if from the mission-field the Church at home should learn the way to unity. The further progress of the movement will be watched with interest and sympathy and prayer.

An Unwelcome Note. But, with so many signs of encouragement, it is painful to be reminded that there are still some among

us who have very imperfect views of what constitutes membership of the Church of Christ. A pamphlet by Dr. Darwell Stone and the Rev. F. W. Puller, *Who are Members of the Church?* has lately been issued which is of a thoroughly reactionary character. The great conception of Church membership, disclosed in the Lambeth Appeal, raised the whole question into an atmosphere of fellowship and spirituality, but this pamphlet would put us back again into the period when it was the fashion in certain quarters to unchurch our Nonconformist brethren. Its purpose is to upset the Lambeth definition : " We acknowledge 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 " ; and, recognizing that this definition is fundamental to the whole Appeal, Dr. Stone and Mr. Puller examine the question under two heads. They consider, first, the case of those who have been baptized in communion with the legitimate rulers of the historic Church, but are now excommunicated, and their contention is that the Lambeth Conference " has accepted a principle which contradicts the teaching of Holy Scripture, the immemorial belief of the Catholic Church and a declaration of the English Articles of Religion." Next they consider the case of " those who have been validly baptized as adults in schismatic bodies, whether these bodies explicitly teach heretical doctrines or not, and also those who, having been validly baptized in such schismatic bodies when they were infants, have deliberately adhered to bodies in schism when they have reached years of discretion." It will not escape the notice of those who read this pamphlet that while, in the first case, they appeal to the teaching of Holy Scripture, in the second case they limit their appeal to " Messages from the Fathers which," they claim, " show clearly that the Church has been accustomed to regard all such persons as external to the Church " — and the reason for this limitation must

surely be that they can find no authority in Holy Scripture for the support of their contention.

An Anglo-Catholic Definition. Dr. Darwell Stone and Mr. Puller reject the Lambeth definition and give one of their own. It is in these terms: "The Church Militant is a Society consisting of all those who believe in Christ, and have been validly baptised, and are in fellowship with one or other of those organised groups of Christians which possess a legitimately appointed Ministry deriving its authority through an unbroken series of successive episcopal ordinations from the Apostles, and profess the truth once for all delivered to the Saints; which faith is summed up, so far as its most important articles are concerned, in the Creeds, and is guarded from certain heretical corruptions by the dogmatic definitions of the accepted Ecumenical Councils." It is extraordinary that at this time of day there can be found men who, in defiance of the light of the best scholarship, will yet seriously maintain that episcopal ordination is necessary to the validity of the Christian ministry. It is the old question, which we hoped was dead and buried long ago, whether episcopacy is to be viewed as the *esse* or the *bene esse* of the Church? The Lambeth Appeal takes the Anglican view; this pamphlet takes the Romish one. The authors use many pages to set out the passages from the Fathers bearing on their contention; it would have been better if they had applied themselves to discussing such questions as "What is a 'schismatic body'?" and "What is a 'valid' ministry?" in the light of present day facts. Do the writers seriously believe that their contentions can be accepted? If that were the case, any question of Reunion, except by absorption, would be at an end. But we believe that the higher and more Christian conception of the Lambeth Appeal will prevail.

The Modernist Controversy. Just after our last issue was published it was made known that representations had been made to the

Bishop of Oxford, charging the Rev. H. D. A. Major with heresy in connection with his teaching concerning the resurrection of the body. It seems futile at this stage to write about it at length, seeing that it has been dealt with very fully in various sections of the newspaper press, but a brief reference to it may be

permitted. As every reader knows, the Bishop of Oxford, acting upon the opinions of University Professors whom he consulted, declined to proceed in the matter on the ground that Mr. Major's words in the passage quoted did not contravene the teaching of Holy Scripture or the Church. The Bishop of Oxford has published the whole of the correspondence, together with the Opinions of the Professors in a pamphlet, *The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body* (Mowbrays); and Mr. Major has published his defence also in a pamphlet under the most unfortunate title, *The Resurrection of Relics* (Blackwell). The Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom appeal was made, found no reason to interfere, and there the matter rests for the present. But it cannot be doubted that the whole discussion has raised considerable alarm, especially among laymen; and the suggested proceedings for heresy revived and deepened the anxiety felt over the views expressed at the Modern Churchmen's Conference last summer at Cambridge. The full text of the papers read thereat has been published and the matter was referred to in Convocation, although the anticipated debate did not take place. It is understood that at the next session a further attempt will be made to get the views expressed at the Conference formally condemned.

Disorders in the Church. But the prevalence of Modernist views is only one phase of the present disorders in the Church. The other phase is the adoption of doctrines and practices which are hardly distinguishable from those of the Church of Rome. It is felt by many loyal and faithful members of the Church that it is impossible to remain silent in face of such a double menace, and the Dean of Canterbury and others associated with him have put out for signature "a solemn public protest against the violation of law and neglect of moral obligations which are now allowed to prevail among many of the clergy of the Church of England." The grounds of complaint are set out with force and impressiveness, and the protest concludes with these gravely important words:—"Thus the whole basis of the Church of England as established by law is being undermined, and in this unjust and injurious state of things we have no resource but to make this protest. We desire only the observance of the doctrine and worship prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer and the Articles of the Church of England, which are formally acknowledged by all clergy to be agreeable to

the Word of God ; and we appeal to the authorities of the Church to maintain the rights of members of the Reformed Church of England in their most sacred interests.” A large number of representative Churchmen have signed this protest, and we believe that signatures may still be sent to the Dean of Canterbury at the National Club, 12, Queen Anne’s Gate, S.W.1. The protest will do good not only by calling attention to these most serious departures from the faith and practice of the English Church, but also by its solemn witness to the reality of vital truth.

The Memorial to the Archbishop, presented by the **Unity Within**. Bishop of Oxford and other leading Churchmen, asking his Grace to appoint a Commission to endeavour to find a basis of doctrinal agreement on matters which are the subjects of controversy between different sections of the Church of England, has excited interest. Their work, it was urged, should be solemnly commended by authority to the prayers of the Church. The inquiry should extend over a long period, with an interim report in a year or two. It was further suggested that the Commission should be composed of men thoroughly representative of all parties, of wide sympathies, of constructive minds, and, largely, under forty-five years of age. The Memorial was signed by representatives of the Anglo-Catholic, Broad, and Evangelical schools, and the idea presumably was that the proposed inquiry would promote unity within. But the Archbishop of Canterbury has refused to appoint such a Commission on grounds which will assuredly commend themselves to all thoughtful and far-seeing men in the Church. If there is any hope of “unity within” it will be realized not by a Commission seeking to find a formula which all can accept, but by a more general acceptance of revealed truth and a more thorough recognition of the loyalty which is demanded of all members of the English Church. Differences of opinion there must always be, but given honest faith and unquestioning loyalty on all sides a much larger increase of agreement could be reached than at present exists.