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ART. V.—THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN ITS
RELATION TO NONCONFORMISTS.

ARTICLE I.—INTRODUCTION.

I.

I WILL prefix to my paper, and the series which is to follow it, the report on the subject adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1897.

“The question of unity with Christian bodies, other than the Eastern and Roman Churches, is one which has awakened among the members of this Conference a deep and most affectionate interest, and has led them to consider once more on what basis such unity might be established.

At the Lambeth Conference of 1888 the following important resolution was passed on the subject :

That in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be, by God’s blessing, made towards Home Reunion—

- (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.

And now to-day we can only re-affirm this position as expressing all that we can formulate as a basis for conference.

It may be well for us to state why we are unable to concede more.

We believe that we have been Providentially entrusted with our part of the Catholic and Apostolic inheritance bequeathed by our Lord, and that not only for ourselves, but for the millions who speak our language in every land—possibly for humanity at large. Nearly a century ago the Anglican Church might have seemed to many almost entirely insulated, an institution, in Lord Macaulay’s language, “almost as purely local as the Court of Common Pleas.” Yet at that time an eminent Roman Catholic (Count Joseph de Maistre) declared his con-

viction that the English Church was endowed with a quality analogous to that possessed by chemical *intermedes* of combining irreconcilable substances.

This quality of our Church we cannot forget and dare not annul. We feel we should not be justified in placing "new barriers between ourselves and the ancient historical Churches." Nor, in a different direction, do we believe in mere rhetorical calls to unity. Nor would we surrender in return for questionable benefits the very elements of the peculiar strength and attractiveness of our own system—its quiet adherence to truth, its abstinence from needless innovation, its backbone of historical continuity. We cannot barter away any part of our God-given trust, because we feel that such action would involve an amount of future loss and forfeiture which we cannot estimate at the moment.

For these and other reasons we cannot concede any part of our essential principles.

II.

Yet, if this, our inevitable attitude, seems discouraging to many loving hearts, those who are watching for the day of reunion to whiten upon the clouded sky are not without tokens of the coming dawn.

Let us glance for a moment at our four principles. We rejoice to see—1. The general and loving acceptance of 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.

2. It is cheering to find that not only the Apostles' Creed, but also the Nicene Creed, is received by so many holy and gifted minds among our separated brethren. In the Nicene Creed—that lasting safeguard against all forms of speculation which call in question either the perfect manhood or the true Godhead of our Blessed Lord—they acknowledge the essential Christianity necessary for eternal life, more particularly the full truth concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. As to the Two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself: many to whom the question has been referred not only assent to the necessity of the unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution and of the elements appointed by Him, but, in accordance with our Prayer-Book, see in the one ordinance the Sacrament of life, in the other the Sacrament of growth.

4. The historic Episcopate not unnaturally raises graver difficulties. Yet in America, many of our Presbyterian brethren appear to have been not unwilling to remember that in England in 1660 their forefathers would have been prepared to accept episcopacy with such recognition of the laity as now

exists in the United States and in the Irish and in many of the colonial Churches. We naturally turn to the Established Church of Scotland, which approached us at the beginning of the present Conference with a greeting so gracious and so tender. That body has amongst its sons not a few who are deeply studying the question of the three Orders in their due and proper relation.

III.

As we approach the conclusion of our task, we wish to advert to two subjects which should stand out high and clear above all else: (1) The Divine purpose of unity; (2) the existence of conditions in the Church and spiritual world. The first as our authority for working, the second our encouragement to work.

1. We are thankful that the subject of Christian unity is gaining an increasing hold upon the thoughts, and, we believe, upon the prayers, of Christian people. The day is past in which men could speak of the Church of God as if it were an aggregate of trading establishments, as if our divisions promoted a generous rivalry, and saved us from apathy and indolence. Men of all schools of thought are realizing the grievous injury which has been done to Christianity by the separations which part holy men and women of various Christian bodies from each other.

2. We find an ever-growing hope of reconciliation in the historical phenomenon of *circumstances* generating a *condition* in the world of thought.

Such *condition-crises* sometimes occur. Their history is this: For a long period two strains of thought, two currents of opinion, two sets of ideas, exist in a community. Of these, one at the outset is greatly in excess of the other; but that other has in it the true principle of growth, and so at last the two elements stand in equilibrium. Then the balance turns irresistibly, and the hopeless minority of one century becomes the triumphant majority of another. At the present time we are led to believe that this principle may be applied to "Home Reunion."

Circumstances, which are but God's preparation, produce the *condition* which is God's advance. We look forward in faith and hope to the sure coming of a time when this condition will arise by the anti-sectarian and conciliating work of God the Holy Ghost in the life of Christendom.

The *circumstances* of our Christendom are rapidly producing the *condition* which is antagonistic to separation. The circumstances to which we refer are such as these: Larger

and more liberal views of the interpretation of Scripture ; movements which enlarge and correct men's knowledge of Church history ; the overthrow of metaphysical systems which deprave and discolour the attributes of God ; belief in and love of the living, ascended Christ, giving earnestness and beauty to Christian worship ; thought critical, ethical, æsthetic—these things are bringing about the *condition* in which union will be as natural as disunion has been for some centuries.

In this renewed spirit of unity we trust that our beloved Church will have a large share. We speak as brothers to these Christian brothers who are separated from us. We can assure them that we fail not in love and respect for them. We acknowledge with a full heart the fruits of the Holy Ghost produced by their lives and labours. We remember the fact, so glorious for them, that in evil days they kept up the standard at once of family virtue, and of the life hidden with Christ in God. We can never forget that lessons of holiness and love have been written upon undying pages by members of their communions, and that the lips of many of their teachers have been touched with heavenly fire. We desire to know them better—to join with them in works of charity. We are more than willing to help to prevent needless collisions, or unwise duplication of labour. We know that many among them are praying, like many of ourselves, that the time may be near for the fulfilment of our Master's prayer that "they all may be one." Surely in the unseen world there is a pulsation of joy among the redeemed ; some mysterious word has gone forth among them that Christ's army still on earth, long broken into fragments by bitter dissensions, is stirred by a Divine impulse to regain the loving brotherhood of the Church's youth. May we labour on in the deathless hope that, while in the past unity without truth has been destructive, and truth without unity feeble, now in our day truth and unity combined may be strong enough to subdue the world to Christ ; and the muse of the Church's history may no longer be hate, but love ! May He grant us (in Bishop Jeremy Taylor's words) "uniting principles, reconciled hearts, and an external communion in His own good season" !

Time ripens, thought softens, love has a tender subtlety of interpretation. Controversy in the past has been too much the grave of Charity. We have much to confess and not a little to learn.

IV.

When we come to consider the practical steps which are to be taken towards reunion, we feel bound to express our con-

viction as to the magnitude and difficulty of the work which lies before us; a work which can only be accomplished by earnest, and, so far as possible, united, prayer to our Heavenly Father for the help of the Holy Spirit that we may be delivered from all hatred and prejudice, from everything that can hinder us from seeing His holy will, or prevent us from accomplishing His divine purpose.

The Lambeth Conference of 1888 adopted the following resolution :

“ That this Conference earnestly request the constituted authorities of the various branches of our Communion, acting, so far as may be, in concert with one another, to make it known that *they hold themselves in readiness* to enter into brotherly conference (such as that which has already been proposed by the Church in the United States of America) with the representatives of other Christian Communions in the English-speaking races, in order to consider what steps can be taken, either towards corporate reunion, or towards such relations as may prepare the way for fuller organic unity hereafter.”

We consider, however, that the time has now arrived in which the constituted authorities of the various branches of our Communion should not merely make it known that they hold themselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference with representatives of other Christian communities in the English-speaking races, but should themselves *originate such conferences and especially arrange for representative meetings for united humiliation and intercession.*

It was hoped at the time of the Reformation that the National Church would satisfy the consciences of all the inhabitants of the country, and would unite every English subject in the common Christian faith and organization. This, however, after the great upheaval of the Reformation, was impossible. The Reformation, although the Reformers did not realize it themselves at first, meant the full recognition of the principle of liberty of conscience and liberty of worship. And there were two facts that were the sure presage of future divergence. One was that the Reformation had not affected the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and other countries. The other was, that this great movement had taken a different form from that which it took in England in almost all the other countries where it was welcomed. In Switzerland, Germany, France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Scotland, hardly a single Bishop had joined in the general desire for renovation. In these countries the

Reformers had unfortunately to break away from the old system of things altogether. In each of these countries they wished to set up the Episcopal form of government, but they could get no Bishops. Switzerland, Holland, and Scotland modelled their churches after the type set up by Calvin. The Huguenots in France followed the same example. Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway received their new ecclesiastical organization under the influence of Luther. It is thought that Sweden has a true historical succession of episcopal authority; but that point is not yet quite determined. England alone, guided by the strong arm of Henry VIII., Edward VI.'s council, and Elizabeth, maintained her old institutions, received episcopal authority from one generation to another, and cleansed herself from the superstitions and corruptions of Rome by a wholesome renovation instead of a complete revolution.

Now, from these two facts, the existence of the Roman Church in neighbouring countries in increased and consolidated power after the Council of Trent, and the different course of the Reformation in Europe and in Scotland, it was absolutely certain that the Roman type and the Calvinistic type would reappear in England.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

(To be continued.)



THE OLD CATHOLIC MOVEMENT.

FROM time to time the readers of the *CHURCHMAN* have been informed of the progress of the Old Catholic movement—that endeavour on the part of certain Continental Catholics to recur to the principles of primitive doctrine and order on which our glorious Reformation in England was based. The Old Catholics do not precisely correspond to any of our religious parties at home, which is no doubt the reason why so little is known or heard of them. But as a revolt against Rome, the influence of which, at first infinitesimal, is steadily increasing, the movement is worthy of the careful attention of English Churchmen, to whatever school of thought they may belong.

Since November 21, 1897, the Old Catholics have had a *sixth* bishop. Up to that date there were but five: three in Holland, presiding over a body which broke off relations with Rome some two centuries ago, one in Germany and one in Switzerland. There are, moreover, two bishops-elect, one waiting for consecration till sufficient funds can be collected