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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1930.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Church and State in Malta.

MALTA has been the scene of a dispute between the civil authorities and the Church of Rome which involves important questions of principle. Lord Strickland, the head of the Ministry, who is himself a Roman Catholic, became involved in a controversy with the authorities of the Roman Church through his refusal to allow a Maltese friar to be expelled from the island. When a general election was to be held recently two of the bishops issued a joint pastoral in which they laid the faithful under an obligation not to vote for Lord Strickland. Priests were ordered not to administer the sacraments to those who disobeyed this order. No vote could be cast for him "without committing grave sin." In consequence of this action on the part of the bishops, the election was postponed. At least half the electors, it was said, would have been placed in the dilemma of having to vote against their political principles or to violate their consciences. The bishops took the further step of interfering with the liberty of the press. Every newspaper which supported the Government was placed under ecclesiastical ban, the reading or selling of any of them was forbidden under penalty of mortal sin. The whole matter was taken up with the Vatican, and the recent issue of the correspondence between the British Government and the Vatican has shown the serious nature of the claims of the Roman authorities. As *The Times* pointed out, the correspondence "really converges on this central point—partisan ecclesiastical intervention in the civic affairs of a British dependency." Malta has become the arena in which a question of grave importance to the future of our Empire must be decided. If the British Government allows the claims put forward in Malta by the Church of Rome, they will have granted the right of the authorities of that Church to issue instructions which, in the words of the Government despatch, constitute "a direct incitement to discredit, and even to resist, the freely and constitutionally elected Government of that Colony." The extension of the claim to other parts of the Empire will only be a matter of time, and the aggressive spirit of Rome will lead to the advance-

ment of other demands which must ultimately destroy the liberty derived from the teaching and practice of Protestantism.

South India Church Union Scheme.

It is generally recognized that the subject of most interest and perhaps of most importance to be considered at the Lambeth Conference is the South India Church Union Scheme. The proposals are already well known to Churchpeople. They have been explained and discussed in numerous books and magazine articles for months past. They have been strongly supported by all who desire to see the future of Christian work in the Mission field strengthened, and developed on lines in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament and the Primitive Church. Opinion in India, where the conditions are best understood, has been emphatic in favour of the scheme. A recent manifesto of Indian Christians has expressed warm approval of the movement towards unity. They said that "it is felt that the attainment of unity is fundamental for India's progress" and added that "the United Church of South India must form an integral part of the Universal Church, and whatever is of abiding value in her must be conserved here. . . . In view of the fact that the present scheme provides ample room for development, and also the possibility for union with other Churches, we urge our fellow Christians in South India to accept the present scheme as early as possible." The great majority of Churchpeople throughout the world are prepared to support the view so strongly put forward in this manifesto.

Opposition to the Scheme.

On the other hand, a small body of extreme Churchmen in this country appear to have set themselves to wreck the scheme, and are determined to make every effort to induce the Conference of Bishops at Lambeth either to reject it or to refrain from expressing any opinion upon it. They are asserting that the opinion of the Lambeth Conference will have no value, as the Conference has no authority to make any decisions binding upon any branch of the Anglican Communion. They have suddenly discovered that the Lambeth Conference is only a Consultative Body, and that its resolutions may be ignored as it is no part of the Synodical Constitution of the Church. This is an example of the ingenuity which has been exercised on many occasions by the same party, when it feared decisions hostile to its doctrinal theories of the Church. The practical importance of the present proposals is too great to allow them to be treated as a merely academic matter. The evidence is too clear that there is nothing in the proposals contrary to the Catholic position when rightly understood, and the Bishops at Lambeth will, we have no doubt, recognize the enormous responsibility which will rest upon them in regard to the future of Christianity when they are discussing the proposals, and will act with sound judgment in the interests of the future of our own Communion and its place in Christendom.

The Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.

For purposes of reference we give the Findings at the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen held at St. Peter's Hall last April. The papers read at the Conference are given in this number of *THE CHURCHMAN*, and it will be seen that the chief points in them are supported in these resolutions of the Conference.

The following findings were agreed upon at the final session of the Conference. They are to be taken as in previous years as expressing the general sense of the Conference and not as representing in detail the views of individual members.

As previous Conferences have issued Findings on the subject of Reunion with which the present Conference is in agreement, these Findings are intended to present points of special significance and urgency bearing on the existing situation, which were brought forward during the discussion.

1. The Conference thankfully and whole-heartedly believes that the movement towards union is according to God's Will, even as our Lord prayed that we might all be one, that the world might believe; and that He calls Christians to give outward expression to the working of the Spirit in the hearts of His servants.

2. The Church is the Assembly of those redeemed by Christ, a spiritual fellowship, Kings and Priests unto God animated by the Spirit of Christ. The bond of union is from within and has, as its Divine element, fellowship with Christ. The organized expression of this fellowship must be earnestly sought; and it should embrace those national and racial characteristics best adapted for the expansion of the Kingdom of God in different lands.

3. The Conference holds that in all schemes for reunion Holy Scripture should be accepted as the rule and ultimate standard of faith and practice, with the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as Symbols which safeguard the Faith.

4. The Conference reiterates its conviction that the ministries of the organized non-Episcopal Churches are real ministries of the Word and Sacraments. In essentials, the ministries of Episcopal and non-Episcopal Churches, which imply a sincere intention to preach Christ's Word and administer the Sacraments as Christ has ordained, share the same Divine authority.

5. The Conference maintains that the Sacrament of Holy Communion derives its efficacy from Christ as the sole source of grace and power; and that the grace received through the Sacrament depends on the faith of the recipient and not on the precise form of the ordination received by the minister.

6. The Conference desires that the Church of England should have fellowship with all Christian Churches, and, while welcoming signs of a desire on the part of the Eastern Churches to act reciprocally, regrets that it must regard approaches for reunion between the reformed and the unreformed Churches as at present impracticable.

7. The Conference rejoices that the proposals for Union in South India seek the achievement of union by unifying the ministry through the adoption of the rule of episcopal ordination; and it desires to express its grateful appreciation of the service which has been rendered to the common cause by those who have been willing to change their customs in order to make this possible. The theory generally known as Apostolic Succession has never been a doctrine of the Church of England and it should be made clear that it cannot be imposed on any uniting Church.

8. The Conference rejoices that the South India Scheme has been approved by the General Council of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon and has been widely endorsed by leaders of the non-Episcopal Churches. It prays that the Lambeth Conference may do all in its power to facilitate the adoption of the scheme as a step in the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the mission field.

9. The Conference, believing that inasmuch as the worship of the one Lord is incomplete unless Christians are able to share the fellowship which they have with Him at the Lord's Table, reaffirms the conviction that intercommunion is one of the most effective means for promoting, and not only consummating, organic union between the Anglican and non-Episcopal Churches. The Conference respectfully urges on the Lambeth Conference the necessity of actively furthering this purpose. It considers that the time has now come for full liberty to be granted to enjoy this privilege.

As the call to Reunion comes from God, the Conference appeals to all Christian people to unite in prayer that God will guide the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference in all their deliberations concerning the fulfilment of our Lord's prayer that all His disciples may be one.

Archbishop Lord Davidson.

The death of Lord Davidson has occasioned a sense of loss throughout the country, and many tributes have been paid to the value of his services to the Church during his long life. He was qualified in a unique way for the Archbishopric of Canterbury which he held for twenty-five years. His long association with Lambeth had given him an intimate acquaintance with the work of the Anglican Communion throughout the world. Many Bishops and Clergymen working in remote parts of the globe were astonished at the Archbishop's knowledge of the details of the difficulties with which they had to deal. In addition to this wide knowledge he was skilled in dealing with men, and knew how to win support for any cause in which he was interested by the exercise of his gift of tact. It was generally believed that his sympathies were with the supporters of the Reformation, and since his death fresh evidence has been given of his private sympathy with the movement for reunion with the non-Episcopal Churches. His official attitude was, however, probably influenced by some of the advanced Churchmen to whom in these later years he seems to have yielded for the sake of peace. His primacy closed an epoch in the history of our Church, and we can only hope that the growing recognition of the dangers which face all Christian Churches will lead to a clearer discernment of the fundamentals which all must accept, if the conflict with materialism and indifference is to be won.

Editorial.

The present number is mainly filled with the important papers read at the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen. They deal with "God's Call to Union" and are of special value in view of the consideration by the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference of the South India Church Union Proposals. There are two other articles to which we wish to give prominence as they are of special interest. Archdeacon Paige Cox examines with careful discrimination some "Hindrances to Christian Unity"; the Rev. N. W. Parsons states clearly some facts which need constant emphasizing on the teaching of our Church in regard to "Confession and Absolution." We also offer our readers the opinions of well-known writers on some important theological works recently published.