

Re-Union of Churches

ANGELICAN-CATHOLIC CONFERENCES—VATICAN ATTITUDE DEFINED—POPE'S RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY—ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S STATEMENT.

Recent conferences between leading English Churchmen on the question of Church Re-union have called much attention to the subject, especially among non-Catholics.

Conversations which took place at Malines between Anglican clergy and Cardinal Mercier, who was accompanied by Vicar General Van Roey, led to the discussion of many features of divergence in Church doctrine, and in all three conferences took place for the purpose of seeking a way to complete re-union.

The conferences were unofficial in so far as the Catholic Church was concerned, and a statement by a high prelate of the Holy See yesterday explained the Vatican attitude in regard to the situation.

Re-union of the Churches, it is emphasized, must be conditioned on recognition of the supreme authority of the Holy Father, and the Vatican, while always desiring the union of the Church, prefers to keep out of any conversations unless this condition be accepted.

A long statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the form of a letter to Archbishops of the Anglican Communion, refers to the recent conferences, and explains the attitude of Anglicans towards the re-union. The difficulties, he says, are immense, and for a time may be insuperable.

The attitude of Non-conformists to the problem is also set out by Sir Robert Perks and the Secretary of the Congregational Union.

VATICAN ATTITUDE—CONDITIONS OF UNION DEFINED.

ROME.—Though at the Vatican it is stated that nothing is known "officially" of the Malines Conferences on the re-union of the Anglican and Catholic Churches, I have obtained from a high prelate of the Holy See the following statement, which the "Daily News" correspondent (quoted by special arrangement):—

"All Popes have always desired the union of the Church. The latest Papal appeal was that voiced by Pius XI., when he urged the union of the Oriental Churches to Rome. Similar appeals for union were launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and both the latter and the Pope found supporters, as was shown by the revelation, by Lord Halifax of the earlier Malines conversations with Cardinal Mercier. So Malines became the centre of the discussions. These are quite unofficial so far as the Vatican is concerned.

"The Vatican, while wishing well to such efforts, remains outside. The two points of view are very far apart. The Anglican would welcome a federation of the Churches as a means of strengthening the Christian spirit weakened by the war, and also as a means of world pacification. The Vatican, however, wants re-union on condition of the recognition of the supreme authority of the Pope.

"With such differences agreement is difficult, and the Vatican prefers to keep out of any conversation aiming at re-union, unless Anglican really want more than simple friendship between the Churches and are willing to recognise the supreme religious authority of the Roman Pontiff."

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY—STATEMENT OF RECENT CONFERENCES—ANGELICAN ATTITUDE DEFINED.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has written to the Archbishops and Metropolitan of the Anglican Communion from Lambeth Palace under date Christmas, 1923, on the subject of re-union.

In the course of his letter, the Primate says:—More than three years have passed since the Lambeth Conference of 1920, and I am sending to the Metropolitan of the Communion a brief summary of the position, as I view it, of the Re-union question. This letter is not in any strict sense official. It is merely a brief summary of what seem to be the present features of the scene of "movement" viewed from an advantageous standpoint. The Lambeth Conference, "Appeal to All Christian People," to which we had agreed with almost complete unanimity, was circulated in many languages and in many lands. The Metropolitan throughout the Anglican Communion have no doubt, in accordance with the request of the Conference, taken steps within their respective areas to confer upon the subject with the local leaders of other churches. Besides this I sent copies officially to the heads of other leading churches throughout the world, and the replies from every quarter, Eastern and Western, and from the English-speaking churches and denominations at home and overseas, were uniformly courteous and were sometimes even eager in their expressions of cordiality and hope.

Much has passed since with regard to re-union, and not all of it bears directly upon the Lambeth "Appeal," but that "appeal" has in all cases formed a background to what has been done and said. Within a few weeks of our transmitting the appeal to the authorities of the different Free Churches, a series of Conferences were held at Lambeth between leaders of

officially appointed by the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches and a number of English bishops. These conferences, in their composition, their character and their purpose, have no precedent in the history of the Church in these islands. The Archbishop of York has throughout taken the lead in the discussions, the whole Church owes a debt to the wisdom, determination and patience, with which he has guided the spokesmen on the different sides.

It seems to me therefore, that we have a right, with thankfulness to Almighty God, to regard the position, in Great Britain itself, as fraught with abundant hope. There can be no question that the leaders upon all sides, and through them the officers, clerical and lay, of the respective churches, are disposed in quite a

novel degree to appreciate one another's position and to look forward to a yet nearer approach.

From overseas, reports steadily reach Lambeth, showing the eager welcome which the "Appeal to All Christian People" has received both in non-Episcopal and in Episcopal Churches.

THE CATHOLIC ATTITUDE.

In addition to all this there remains the question—a question which has features of paramount importance—

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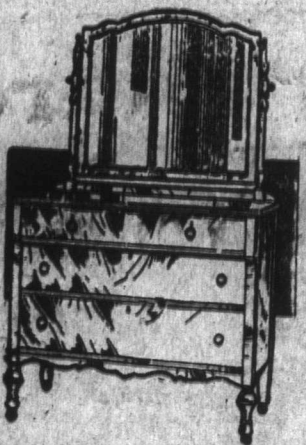
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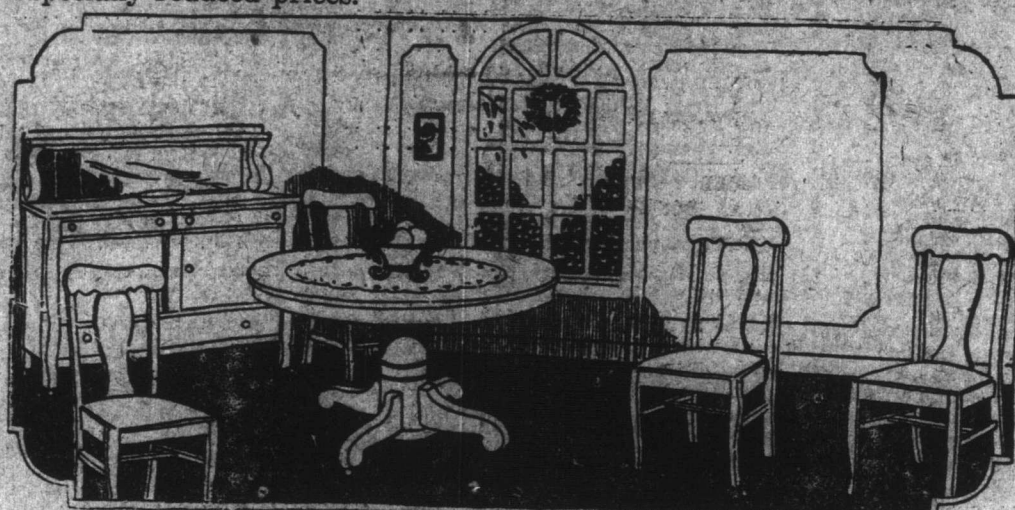
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