

LAMBETH CONFERENCE.

The Report of the Committee on Church Unity.

The committee appointed to consider and report upon the subject of "Church Unity in its relation (a) to the Churches of the East; (b) to the Latin Communion; (c) to other Christian Bodies," was composed of the following:

Bishop of Aberdeen, Bishop of Argyll, Archbishop of Armagh, Bishop Barry, Bishop of Brisbane, Bishop of California, Bishop of Carlisle, Bishop of Colchester, Bishop of Coventry, Bishop of Delaware, Bishop of Dunedin, Bishop of Fredericton, Bishop of Georgia, Bishop of Gibraltar, Bishop of Glasgow, Bishop of Jamaica, Bishop in Jerusalem, Bishop of Llandaff, Bishop of London, Bishop of Marquette, Bishop of Maryland, Bishop-Coadjutor of Minnesota, Bishop of Newcastle, N.S.W., Bishop of North Carolina, Bishop of Perth, Bishop of Peterborough, Bishop of Pittsburgh, Archbishop of Rupert's Land, Bishop of St. Alban's (convener), Bishop of St. Andrew's, Bishop of Sodor and Man, Bishop of Southwark (secretary), Bishop of Southwell, Bishop-Coadjutor of Springfield, Bishop of Sydney, Bishop of Toronto, Bishop of Trinidad, Bishop of Truro, Bishop of Wakefield, Bishop of Western New York, Bishop T. E. Wilkinson, Bishop of Worcester, Archbishop of York (chairman).

The committee have thought well to entrust the work to three sub-committees for these sections, and to a fourth with special reference to the Scandinavian and Moravian Churches. Their reports, as amended by the main committee, are as follows:

(a) On Churches of the East.—The sub-committee appointed to consider the question of "Church Unity in its relation to the Church of the East," find themselves confronted by a subject so extensive in its range, that they can only hope to deal with it in outline, and to indicate some general principles which it is necessary to bear in mind. They would begin by recalling the reference to this subject which is found in the Encyclical letter of the Lambeth Conference of 1888.

"The Conference has expressed its earnest desire to confirm and to improve the friendly relations which now exist between the Churches of the East and the Anglican Communion. These Churches have well earned the sympathy of Christendom, for through long ages of persecution they have kept alive in many a dark place the light of the Gospel. If that light is here and there feeble or dim, there is all the more reason that we, as we have the opportunity, should tend and cherish it; and we need not fear that our offices of brotherly charity, if offered in a right spirit, will not be accepted."

The manifestations of friendly feeling referred to in this passage have been even more remarkable during the intervening period of nine years. It is enough to instance the cordial welcome given to the present Bishop of London when, as Bishop of Peterborough, he attended last year the coronation of the Tsar, and the still more recent demonstrations of brotherly regard which were manifested on the occasion of the late visit of the Archbishop of York to Russia. It is impossible not to see in these events a very hopeful indication of increasing desire on their side, as well as ours, to bring about a clearer understanding and closer relations between these two branches of the Church of Christ. They tend to emphasize and to confirm the numerous expressions of good-will which have been exchanged during a long course of years between prelates and other ecclesiastics of the Anglican and Eastern Churches. A cordial reception was given by the four Patriarchs of the East to the revival of the Bishopric which represents the Anglican Communion at the Mother-City of Christianity, and this attitude has been constantly maintained, and has been one of uniform good-will and helpfulness. The committee do not forget that it is easy to misunderstand and to over-estimate the value of such kindly words and friendly actions. But after every allowance is made there remains enough to strengthen the hopes and to gladden the hearts of those whose minds are set upon the promoting of closer relations between the Churches of the East and the Anglican Communion.

It is now the duty of the committee to suggest

some of the means by which this good work may be furthered, and, if God will, finally accomplished. One of the difficulties which stand most prominently in the way is the ignorance which prevails on either side as regards the position of the other. With a view to diminish or to remove this hindrance the committee are of opinion that a systematic effort should be made* to bring before the ecclesiastics of the Eastern Churches in their own tongue the services of the Anglican Churches, particularly the office for Holy Communion, along with such other statements of doctrine and of practice as may seem most likely to be helpful, and on the other hand to procure the translation into English of the liturgies and authorized catechisms of the Churches of the East. As regards the latter undertaking, the committee would call attention to the excellent work which has been done during the past thirty-five years, first by the Russo-Greek Committee of the General Convention of the American Church, and afterwards by the Ecclesiastical Relations Commission of the same body, as well as by more than one voluntary association working in connection with the Church of England.

Your committee would further suggest the appointment of a committee, with authority to communicate with the Orthodox Eastern Patriarchs, the "Holy Governing Synod" of the Church of Russia, and the chief authorities of the various Eastern Churches, in order to ascertain how far it may be possible, without sacrifice of principle, to take steps towards the promotion of such closer relations. There is reason to believe that a desire for such action exists on the part of not a few individuals among the prelates of the Eastern Churches, but it is important to know how far this feeling is shared by the ruling authorities of the Churches themselves. It would be the duty of such a committee to ascertain by careful enquiry and friendly communication, and by personal conference, where possible, how far there is any such desire on the part of the Eastern Churches; and further, in what light it would be regarded by the various branches of the Anglican Communion. Those who, on either side, are best acquainted with the important differences which exist between the teachings and customs of the Anglican and the Eastern Churches, will best appreciate the difficulties which appear to stand in the way of their reconciliation; but they will also most hopefully believe that when the origin and the character of these divergences are more accurately understood, many of them will be found to have no authority from the Churches themselves, and others to be not incapable of explanation and adjustment. Many of these divergences have their origin in the different characteristics of Oriental thought and expression, and in the differences of temperament which distinguish the Eastern nations from those of the West; and similar difficulties may no doubt exist on their side with regard to ourselves. The committee are thankful to recognize, and to bring to the notice of the Conference, the great regard and high reverence which are shown to the Word of God in the Orthodox Churches of the East, and the readiness which they have endeavoured to encourage and to promote the circulation of the Holy Scriptures among the people in their own tongues. Above all, the committee desire to express their conviction that by united prayer the happy issue will most surely be found, and they rejoice to know that both in East and West there are already a goodly multitude who are offering up such intercessory prayer. In such a matter as this there can be no room for faithless fears among those who truly "believe in the Holy Ghost" and in His willing power to draw together in the bonds of love the divided members of the Body of Christ.

(b.) On the Latin Communion.—As regards the Church of Rome, a series of documents has been issued by Pope Leo XIII., expressing his desire for the union of Christendom, but unfortunately asserting as its only basis the recognition of the Papal

supremacy as of Divine right. In the last of these documents the Pope proceeded to an examination of the position of the Church of England, and thus called forth an answer from the Archbishops of the English Church. Though controversy is rarely a method of promoting unity, there are grounds for thankfulness in the courteous tone in which much of this controversy has been conducted; in the abandonment by the Pope of much irrelevant and spurious matters which previously rendered discussion hopeless; in the limitation of the sphere of courtesy to definite points; in a large amount of subsidiary literature, embodying the results of much research; and in the desire shown on both sides to understand, and not consciously to misrepresent one another. If this spirit increases, even controversy will not have been in vain; and we await the issue of such controversy with entire confidence.

The committee do not propose to submit any resolution to the Conference on this branch of their subject. They desire to adopt, as the substantial expression of their own opinion, the words of a Committee on Home Reunion of the Lambeth Conference of 1888:

"The committee with deep regret felt that, under present conditions, it was useless to consider the question of reunion with our brethren of the Roman Church, being painfully aware that any proposal for reunion would be entertained by the authorities of that Church only on condition of a complete submission on our part to those claims of absolute authority, and the acceptance of those other errors, both in doctrine and in discipline, against which, in faithfulness to God's Holy Word, and to the true principles of His Church, we have been for three centuries bound to protest."

I.—(c.) On Other Christian Bodies.—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, 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 Testament, 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 conviction that the English Church was endowed with a quality analogous to that possessed by chemical intermediates 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

* In this connection the following Renter message, dated St. Petersburg, August 7th, will be of interest:—"The Holy Synod will shortly send to England four students who have this year completed a course at the Ecclesiastical Academy here. Their mission in England will be to follow the movement of English ecclesiastical literature, to promote an active exchange of information regarding ecclesiastical matters between England and Russia, and to instruct, through the Press, the authorities on ecclesiastical matters in England regarding the principal doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church."