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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

# THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1931.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

### *The Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.*

THE Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen held at St. Peter's Hall on April 13, 14 and 15 was a most successful meeting. In view of the Lambeth Conference Report on Unity and the important problems raised in it the Conference reviewed the whole situation in a general consideration of "The Basis of Anglican Doctrine and Fellowship." It was pointed out in the letter summoning the Conference that in the Lambeth Report "a new view of the Anglican Communion has been accepted, and its relation to the Unreformed, Reformed and the New Missionary Churches has in consequence received a new orientation" and therefore "it is a matter of primary moment that Evangelicals should grasp clearly what is involved in the new outlook, as some of the proposals can only be adopted by the acceptance of changes in our historic attitude to the Reformation and to the Reformed and Unreformed Churches." The main object of the Oxford Conference was "to discover where Evangelicals stand in the new phase of the Reunion movement and to set forth unambiguously the convictions that determine their attitude." Thanks to the kindness of the readers of the papers at the Conference we are able in this number of THE CHURCHMAN to give a verbatim report of all of them, and it will be seen that they form a valuable contribution to the discussion of some of the most important problems before the Church at the present time. We regret that we are unable to give any of the addresses of the speakers who took part in the discussions. They formed a useful contribution to the final drawing up of the Findings.

### *The Findings of the Conference.*

For the convenience of our readers we give the Findings 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.

The Conference is in agreement with the Findings issued at previous Conferences on the subject of Reunion.

1. The Conference holds that the Anglican Communion historically and doctrinally stands definitely among the Reformed Churches whose Rule of Faith is the Catholic doctrine of the Supremacy of Holy Scripture.

2. The Conference holds that the distinctive doctrines of the Church of England are clearly "set forth" in the XXXIX Articles of Religion, which are its authorized Confession of Faith and its final interpreting authority of the doctrine "contained" in the Book of Common Prayer.

3. The Conference affirms its conviction that in the proper and natural order any steps towards closer Fellowship and Reunion with other Communion should first be taken with those great non-episcopal Churches which are akin to us racially, historically and spiritually.

4. The Conference welcomes the fostering, on the part of the Anglican Communion, of a brotherly spirit of friendly intercourse with unreformed Churches which manifest a desire to reciprocate, but it believes that the present approach to a formal union or full intercommunion with either the Eastern Orthodox Church or the Old Catholic Church will jeopardize the Reformed and Scriptural Basis of our own communion and will seriously retard the movement towards Union between the Church of England and the Free Churches. The Conference takes this opportunity of expressing its sympathy with those Christians in Russia who are enduring the storms of persecution.

5. The Conference rejoices in the vision of a wider unity of the Catholic Church presented by the South Indian and Persian schemes of Church Union, and trusts that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit those efforts may result in the formation of strong and stable branches of the Church of Christ.

6. The Conference reaffirms its belief that intercommunion is one of the most effective means of promoting rather than of consummating organic union between the Anglican and non-episcopal Churches, and regrets that the Lambeth Conference definitely refused to encourage so fruitful a means of achieving unity. The Conference repeats its conviction that the time has now come for Anglican Churchmen to enjoy this liberty.

#### **A Memorandum on the Doctrines of the Orthodox Eastern and Old Catholic Communion.**

The Findings of the Oxford Conference received strong support in a memorandum issued by forty clerical and lay members of the Church of England on "The Lambeth Conference Report and the Old Catholic and the Orthodox Eastern Churches." In this memorandum a number of the statements in the Lambeth Report are questioned. The Bishops accepted the Old Catholic Declaration of Utrecht as containing nothing which might be an impediment to union with our Church. The Memorandum points out that the

Old Catholics communion appeals "primarily to the 'Primitive Church' (by which it seems to mean the Church of the first ten centuries) not as with us primarily to Scripture." It says also that our Church does not approve of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) which approved the worship of images. The statement in the Declaration of Utrecht "We receive the Body and the Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ under the species of Bread and Wine," while it is capable of an interpretation not inconsistent with the tenets of our Church, is much more suggestive of teaching which our Church has rejected as false. The exegesis of Hebrew ix. 11, 12, propounded in the Declaration of Utrecht, has been rejected by our most scholarly theologians. This refers to the statement that the Holy Communion "is a sacrifice because it is the perpetual commemoration of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross, and it is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews ix. 11, 12 for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God (Heb. ix. 24)."

#### Some Further Points in the Memorandum.

In regard to the teaching of the Orthodox Church the Memorandum regarded some of the statements made by the Bishops to the Representatives of that Church as ambiguous and one-sided and not presenting our position truly. It was stated that the XXXIX Articles are to be explained by the Prayer Book and not *vice versa*. The significant words in the Articles "And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith" are omitted. These words expressly exclude the possibility of the "Body" being given by the hand of the minister or taken by the hand of the communicant. For the statement in the Report that "after Communion the consecrated elements remaining are regarded as the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in that they have the same efficacy as before the administration" no authority is given, and is the view not of the Church but of a party in it. The Report also states that the phrase "that we and all Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins," applies "to the whole company of faithful people living and departed." There is no justification for linking these words with the phrase "the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice," which is itself an expression not to be found in our Prayer Book, nor is there anything in the Articles or the Prayer Book to support its use. The memorandum shows that the XXXIX Articles were drawn up to show the official interpretation put upon the Prayer Book by its compilers. The Declaration prefixed to the Articles shows that Charles I and Laud regarded the Articles as presenting the standard of doctrine of the Church.

#### Criticism of the Memorandum.

The Bishop of Gloucester has issued a long statement in reply to this Memorandum. He thinks that the 300 Bishops at Lambeth have more authority to define the doctrine of our Church than

40 lay and clerical members. He evidently overlooked the fact that the Lambeth Conferences were originally called on the distinct understanding that they would never define doctrine, as the doctrine of the Church is contained in its formularies. It has also been pertinently suggested that among the Bishops may have been many from overseas with little acquaintance with the doctrines of either the Orthodox or Old Catholic Communions. But the chief fact is that although the formularies of these Communions may contain an appeal to Scripture, it is of a different character from that of our Church, and it permits practices which our appeal to Scripture disallows. The Lambeth Conference of 1888 indicated this when it said: "It would be difficult for us to enter into more intimate relations with that Church so long as it retains the use of icons, the invocation of Saints, and the cultus of the Blessed Virgin." It is well known that in other respects there are also serious divergences between the practices of the two Communions. The Orthodox Church uses the term "Transubstantiation" to indicate the presence in the elements, and although we are told that it is not used in the same sense as in the Church of Rome, yet the Orthodox doctrine is held by a large section of the Church of England. The views of that section are apparently to be regarded as the true view of the Church of England, and to be bound upon our Church by union with the Orthodox.

#### **The Rev. Thos. J. Pulvertaft.**

The paper by the Rev. Thos. J. Pulvertaft on "The World Position of the Anglican Communion," included among those read at the Oxford Conference, was written by him some time before his lamented death, which occurred before the Conference was actually held. His presence and help were greatly missed at the Conference sessions. In previous years his sound advice and wide knowledge were always at the service of the Conference and proved on many occasions, especially in the drawing up of the Findings, a source of wise guidance. His help will also be missed in many other directions. He took an active interest in *THE CHURCHMAN* and was not only a constant writer of articles and reviews, but was one of those to whom we turned for counsel when any question regarding the editorial work had to be decided. Of his personal character and fidelity to Evangelical teaching it is not necessary to speak here, as ample testimony has already been borne to them in *The Record* and elsewhere. We shall long miss his many gifts and his sympathetic and attractive personality.

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