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THE CHURCHMAN.

SEPTEMBER, 1908.

The Month.

The
Lambeth
Encyclical. WE are afraid it must be confessed that the Lambeth Conference has not aroused any very strong interest or made any deep impression. Perhaps our expectations had been set too high, for many Churchmen had been hoping that on several of the more important and critical questions now before us we should have some light and leading from the Conference. But while the Letter says much that is valuable on the fundamental questions of the Deity of our Lord and the Holy Trinity, as well as on the practical questions of Social and Missionary Service, we seek in vain for guidance on the problems connected with Marriage and Divorce, on Christian Reunion, and on the Use of the Athanasian Creed. The way in which some of these subjects have been relegated to the decision of local branches of the Anglican Communion serves to show that any clear and undoubted pronouncement which would have represented the consensus of Anglican opinion is regarded as impossible. On the whole, perhaps, it is not to be regretted that this recognition of the rights of national Churches has been expressed once again. It may save us from difficulties in the future, if certain tendencies to centralization in the Anglican Communion should become too greatly accentuated. It always makes for liberty to have these problems faced and decided by particular branches of the Church, and in an ever-growing liberty will be found one of the greatest safeguards of ecclesiastical purity and progress. It is, of course, impossible for us this month to touch upon more than one or two topics comprised in the Lambeth Letter. They

will necessarily provide food for thought and discussion among Churchmen for some time to come, and in this discussion will probably be found the most fruitful results of the Conference.

Marriage Problems. The vote of eighty-seven to eighty-four in favour of regarding it as "undesirable" that the marriage of an innocent party should be solemnized in church is a very significant result. It means, first of all, that out of 243 Bishops, only 171 were present or else voted on this important issue. The majority in favour of the resolution represented not more than one-third of the Prelates of the Anglican Communion, while the size of the minority shows how strong and almost equally divided was the feeling. In face of these facts it is, of course, impossible to contend that the Anglican Communion has any distinct voice on this subject, and the matter will necessarily still remain open. We venture to predict that our Communion will never get men to see and accept the position that the innocent party is to be placed upon the same level as the guilty one, and is therefore to be compelled to bear a life-long stigma without redress so far as the Church is concerned. Such a position is not according to the mind of Christ as revealed in His Word, but is only the expression of a peculiar ecclesiastical view of matrimony, which is as far removed from Scripture truth as it is from ordinary principles of righteousness and justice. We have no wish whatever to suit our acts to please people or to gain popularity, and we are quite ready to run counter to popular feeling if we are warranted in doing so by the Word of God. But when, as in this case, we adopt a view that stands self-condemned by all ideas of elementary right and truth, we are doing an injury not only to the Church, but to the cause of the Church's Master.

The Deceased Wife's Sister Question. It was not at all to be expected that the Lambeth Conference would pronounce upon this subject in view of the fact that in several branches of the Anglican Communion marriage with a deceased wife's sister is perfectly legal. The Eaton case, decided by the

Dean of Arches last month, has, however, raised the whole question afresh for us at home, and it is difficult at this moment to see how it is going to be settled. The *Record* very truly described the decision as "a righteous judgment," and the *Guardian* regrets that the case was ever allowed to go forward. When the two leading representative organs of our Church thus substantially agree on the present situation, the matter cannot possibly be regarded as in any sense a party question. The *Guardian* has also rendered invaluable service to the cause of truth and peace by providing, in its issue of August 5, extracts from the advice given to clergy by various Bishops shortly after the passing of the Act last year. No less than eleven representative Bishops deprecate any refusal of Holy Communion to those who have contracted these marriages. One thing, at least, is perfectly clear : as Canon Thompson was ready to acknowledge the Court of Arches in permitting the trial to go forward, he ought now to accept its decision. If the Court had decided in his favour, he would probably have been quite ready to use it on his own behalf. It is impossible to sympathize with one who first accepts the jurisdiction of the Court, and then refuses submission because its decisions happen to be against him. If he cannot honestly and loyally carry out the legal requirements of his position, he should, of course, resign. But apart from this case the entire question must soon be faced. To call these marriages "incestuous," even in a technical sense, is quite impossible, for if they are in any sense "incestuous" they are wrong, and there is an end of it. No one can be dispensed for the purpose of "incest," yet Rome grants dispensations for the solemnization of these marriages from time to time. It has been pertinently inquired, What would be the attitude of those who object to these marriages towards such dispensed people if they wished to join our Church and attend Holy Communion? The one thing that dominates the situation is the question whether these marriages are contrary to the Word of God. If they are, they are wrong, and nothing can set them right. If they are not contrary to Holy Scripture, they

cannot possibly be inherently wrong in the sight of God. And the significant thing is that in all the recent debates and discussions no reference has been made to the argument from Scripture. So far as we have been able to discover, the passage in Leviticus which was formerly thought to be the stronghold of this position has not been mentioned. Why is this? If, then, the phrase in the Table of Kindred and Affinity stating that these marriages are "forbidden in Scripture" is no longer warranted, the best way will be to take steps to have it removed. It is no mere question of the law of the land, but of the relation of the law of the Church to the Word of God. Meanwhile, for a practical common-sense point of view, as expressed in one of our ablest secular journals, the following words of the *Westminster Gazette* are worthy of attention :

"We confess it amazes us that serious Churchmen can be willing to stake the credit of the Church as a moral guide on its adhesion to an ecclesiastical opinion which is so completely out of touch with ordinary sentiment. To brand innocent people, or people whom the vast majority of their neighbours consider innocent, as 'open and notorious evil-livers' is not to raise, but to lower, the standard of morals. You can say nothing worse about the real and flagrant offenders; and if it is to be said about the innocent, it will not affect them, but it *will* induce the belief that, according to the Church's code, the really vicious are no worse than their law-abiding neighbours. Nothing can be more mischievous than for the guardians of morality to confuse the boundaries in this way."

It is, indeed, astonishing to confuse matters in this way, and it is even more surprising that those who oppose marriage with a deceased wife's sister on the ground of affinity as equivalent to consanguinity have apparently not a word to say against the serious fact that first cousins are allowed to marry without any question. Surely, then, there is a call for some clear and balanced thinking on the entire subject, lest we should be unconsciously led away by distinctions which have no warrant whatever in the Word of God.

The question of Christian Reunion has received fresh attention during the month in various quarters. The Dean of Westminster's valuable sermon, together with the pronouncement of the Lambeth Conference, has kept the subject well to the front. In particular, we have read with

The
Vision of
Unity.

deep interest the views of leading Presbyterians as elicited by the *Church Family Newspaper*. Their statements of their own position should be carefully read by those Churchmen who think that Reunion by absorption, however long the process, is the most excellent, and indeed the only possible way. This is what Principal Lindsay of Glasgow says :

“We Presbyterians are quite assured of the validity and regularity of our Orders. We go further: we believe them to be of more ancient standing than the Anglican. We recognize the validity of Anglican ordination (as we do of Wesleyan, Congregational, and Baptist), but we think it irregular. . . . The historic Episcopate is seen by us in the pastorate of our congregations, which represents the Congregational Bishops of the early centuries. We believe that our ordination comes down to us by successive generations from the times of the Apostles.”

Other Presbyterians have written in equally clear and frank terms, and it is essential that Churchmen should take every opportunity, as recommended by the Lambeth Conference, of trying to understand the position of those who belong to other Communion. It is abundantly evident, and has been so all along, that Presbyterians will neither do anything which will imply any slight on their own Orders and ministry, nor take any step towards absorption into Anglicanism which will tend to remove them farther away from non-Presbyterian Communion, with which they are in close doctrinal and spiritual sympathy. All this tends to show the seriousness and complexity of the situation, and the utter impossibility of settling the matter by any such one-sided plan as even a very gradual absorption of the Presbyterian ideal into the historic Episcopate. We must face the problem afresh, and on very different lines. As Canon Henson very rightly said, expressing the feelings of many Churchmen for years past, the famous quadrilateral of the Lambeth Conference of 1888, which placed on a level of equality the Scripture, the Sacraments, the Creeds, and the historic Episcopate, is a barrier, not a help, to Reunion.

Can
Nothing
be Done?

In view of the strong recommendations of the Lambeth Encyclical that Anglican Churchmen should take every opportunity of meeting for private discussion with those of other Communion, in order

to learn more clearly each other's point of view, it is earnestly to be hoped that something definite and tangible will be done in this direction. Our New York contemporary, the *Churchman*, in commenting on the Dean of Westminster's sermon, uses the following pointed language :

"As is usual when reunion is spoken of in such positive terms that its realization is forced upon everyone's attention as a pressing and immediate necessity, the common admonitions follow both in the *Church Times* and in the *Guardian* to discourage haste, or what is called rashness. Nothing, to our mind, is more purposeless than such comments. They remind one only of the pious protests and fraternal greetings which passed between the rival Popes during the time of the schism in the Western Church, each desiring his rival to take the first step, and both afraid to put themselves in a place where their words might be taken seriously. There can be no such thing as rashness in getting out of a position that is uncatholic and unchristian. Admonitions to be patient in disobedience to Christ's command are worse than an absurdity. They are not only contrary to His own words, but irreconcilable with the spirit of His whole life."

We heartily re-echo this opinion, and we hope that those in authority, as well as many Churchmen in their private capacity, will face this problem in the light of what has happened during the last few weeks, and see whether there is not some way out of the present *impasse*. It cannot be right to go on in our present state of "unhappy divisions," and we will not believe it is beyond the power of Christian sanctified wisdom, enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, to make at least a commencement towards the realization of our Lord's prayer that His people "may be one."

A useful and noteworthy contribution to the subject of Christian Unity is found in the current number of the *Church Quarterly Review*, in an article on "The Lambeth Conference and the Union of the Churches." While the spirit of the entire article is admirable, we call especial attention to the following point, which goes to the very heart of the problem :

"Let us get rid of the expression 'validity' of Orders and Sacraments. Whether or no Orders and Sacraments are valid is, after all, something which we cannot settle. What we should ask is whether they are 'regular'—that is to say, whether a particular body of Christians correctly interprets the mind of Christ declared to us by His Church in the fulfilment of His

command to celebrate the Sacraments and to send out messengers of His Gospel. . . . We have then to be sure, not that the Sacraments of the Presbyterian bodies are valid, but that they are regular."

It would be a great point gained if we could follow the writer's advice, and at once and for ever cease from discussing validity and concentrating attention on regularity of ministry. What do we mean by "valid" in reference to ministry? Does it mean a validity which guarantees spiritual blessing in the ordinances administered? Then, if people are showing in their lives and communities the undoubted fruit of the Spirit, is not the validity of their ministry clearly proved? History shows beyond question that a ministry may be spiritually valid even while it is historically irregular. Irregularity is not invalidity. We are grateful for the admission from so well-known a High-Church organ as the *Church Quarterly Review* of a point which Evangelical Churchmen have always uniformly held, and if we see unmistakable tokens of spiritual blessing in any ministry or Church, we may be perfectly certain, as the Dean of Westminster so truly said, that our differences are not those of faith, but of discipline, and as such it ought to be possible to resolve them.

What is Schism? In the same article the connected question of Schism is also dealt with in the following words :

"What is the meaning of schism? The ordinary point of view of one body of Christians when speaking of schismatics is to suggest that they are themselves the Church, and all the others are schismatics—that is, persons who have separated themselves from it. . . . Now, historically that point of view cannot be held in any case. To an impartial observer it is quite impossible to say that the Eastern Church separated from the West, or the West from the East. They divided. A division was caused and a schism was created—that is to say, a division in a body; so at the time of the Reformation a schism was created, or, rather, many schisms were created. But it is not that this or that Church separated from the great body of the Church: a division was created in the body, sometimes large, sometimes small; and so in relation to ourselves and a body like the Wesleyans. And if this be the proper point of view, it is equally important to recognize that the sin of schism does not probably in any case lie wholly on one side or the other. Neither Leo X. nor Henry VIII. can be considered entirely free from either moral or intellectual blame. Even the strongest admirers of Luther cannot acquit him of blame. We are not prepared to defend either the spiritual life of the Church of England in the eighteenth century, or the spiritual self-assertion of the Wesleyan movement. Schism means sin in the past, and needs penitence and reparation in the future."

Nothing could be truer than these words, and nothing more welcome than the admissions they involve. If all Churchmen adopted this position, we should be quickly brought much nearer the goal of unity. The idea that Dissent as a whole is schismatic is impossible and preposterous. In view of the attitude of the Church of England, with its encroachments on individual conscience, in Elizabeth's reign, as Bishop Creighton points out; in view of its tyranny in 1662, in requiring subscription to a Prayer-Book which had not been published; and in view of its deplorable attitude in the eighteenth century to the Methodist and Evangelical movements, we ought to be ready to face facts and admit them, however unwelcome they may be. As the writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* truly says, the first step towards Reunion will be a great service of penitence and reconciliation. If we approach the subject in this spirit, we are certain to carry with us the right-minded men of other Churches, and to pave the way for that unity which is now only a vision, but which must, and will one day, be realized.

**Candidates
for Holy
Orders.** We desire to call earnest attention to a very valuable and important document—the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Committee on “The Special Training of Candidates for Holy Orders.” It can be obtained from Canon Bullock-Webster, Parkstone, Dorset (1s. 6d.), and should be in the hands of those who are concerned, as we all ought to be, with the present dearth of curates and the general condition of clerical life in the Church. The Report is full of most varied information drawn from all quarters, and, if carefully studied, it should prove very fruitful of results. The Committee recommends that a course of education and training, such as is outlined, should be placed within the reach of all who may be selected as suitable candidates, and that this should be done by treating the education of the Church's ministers as a fundamental department of Church finance. This is a bold, statesman-like, and welcome pronouncement, which we cannot but believe will make its

impression in the right quarters. It is common knowledge that the students of Presbyterian Churches, to say nothing of Congregational and Methodist, are far more thoroughly trained than our own. While they require the students to spend three, and sometimes four, years at a theological college after obtaining a degree, we on our part cannot always be sure that our graduates will remain even a year at a theological college. When we think of what it means to obtain ordination on the strength of an ordinary Arts Degree, together with the provision of certain University Divinity certificates, we may well stand amazed that such an arrangement was ever permitted. And yet this is all that is required from a good proportion of candidates to-day. No wonder that the laity cherish a contempt for the average sermon heard in our churches. The worst of it is that not a few of our young men do not realize the need of fuller training, but seem content to enter the ministry with almost a minimum of knowledge and experience. Alas for them (and their congregations)! they are not long in finding out their intellectual and spiritual barrenness, for they have no reserve of knowledge or experience, and are in danger of ministerial failure for lack of resources. We hope and believe this Report will do much to end the present unfortunate and deplorable state of affairs, and bring about a great improvement in the quality and character of our ministerial work. One step could and should be taken at once. Our Bishops, who in some respects hold the key of the position, should make it compulsory on all graduates to attend a theological college for at least one year. If, as we hope, the Bishops are led to adopt this definite plan as the result of this Report, we feel sure that the laity will respond with the necessary funds in order to make it possible for our students to obtain the high qualification for Holy Orders that the requirements of the position imperatively demand.

