

ART. III.—THE SECOND FULHAM CONFERENCE.

THE Report<sup>1</sup> of the Second Fulham Conference has now been for some time in the hands of the public, and the party from which the proposal for this gathering first came seem now only eager to forget that their wishes were ever met. That is but natural, for the comments of their own journals contain abundant evidence that they regard the main conclusions reached by the Conference as most unfavourable to their case. Still, however natural such an attitude may be, we had a right to expect something more than this. The second Conference was asked for by Lord Halifax on the distinct and reiterated plea that its deliberations ought to make for peace by providing a means of bringing the teaching of Churchmen into line.<sup>2</sup> We were justified, therefore, in supposing that the issue of the Conference Report would have been followed by the publication of some statement from Lord Halifax, urging clergy who are of his opinion to bring their teaching and practices strictly within the limits suggested by the results of the Conference.<sup>3</sup> It may be that some such

---

<sup>1</sup> "Confession and Absolution." Report of a Conference held at Fulham Palace on December 30 and 31, 1901, and January 1, 1902. Edited by Henry Wace, D.D., Chairman of the Conference. London: Longmans and Co.

<sup>2</sup> The passages in his London Diocesan Conference speech were reported as follows: "Far from the [first] Conference having been a failure, it has proved conclusively that it is by a recourse to such opportunities for discussion and explanation that we may best hope to heal those unhappy divisions which so grievously dishonour the Christian name and so seriously hinder the work of the Church." Towards the end of his speech the noble lord explained the same hope in even greater detail: "Such opportunities for meeting cannot fail to prepare the way for such a measure of agreement as will at least mitigate our unhappy differences, and promote that unity of teaching amongst those who call themselves Christians the lack of which so grievously hinders the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of souls, not only here at home, but throughout Christendom at large" (*Record*, June 14, 1901).

<sup>3</sup> These results were summed up by the chairman as follows: "With respect to the first subject proposed to the Conference, the members were agreed that our Lord's words in St. John's Gospel, 'Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained,' are not to be regarded as addressed only to the Apostles or the clergy, but as a commission to the whole Church, and as conveying a summary of the message with which it is charged. It is, therefore, for the Church as a whole to discharge the commission, which she does by the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments and by godly discipline. But the members of the Conference are agreed that the discipline of private confession and absolution cannot be shown to have existed for some centuries after the foundation of the Church. It grew, in fact, out of the gradual disuse, perhaps about the fifth century, of the 'godly discipline' of public penance, referred to in our Communion Service as existing in the primitive Church. From

allocation is already being prepared. If it does not appear, we must draw the conclusion that since the work of the Conference Lord Halifax has entirely changed his views as to the value of such gatherings. The only other reference would necessitate our believing that Lord Halifax expected the Conference to support the views of the extreme Anglicans, and was therefore preparing the way for an appeal that Moderate Churchmen would "level up" their teaching and practices.

If no appeal to their friends be made by the extreme Anglican members of the Conference, it is scarcely possible that more of these gatherings should be convened. So far as I am aware, the Bishop Creighton Conference, interesting as its discussions were, failed to produce the smallest effect upon extreme Anglican teaching as to the Lord's Supper. If Bishop Winnington-Ingram's Conference is to be equally sterile, upon what ground could another be summoned? Moderate Churchmen have, indeed, no cause to fear them, for in each case their principles have been very triumphantly vindicated. But their representatives are busy men, and the work of a Conference of this character is heavy as well as anxious. It is not fair to ask considerable sacrifices from distinguished and laborious clergy if the promises held out by one side before the proceedings are to be ignored when the discussions have gone against them.

The main conclusions arrived at by the Conference have been so fully considered that I do not propose to go over the ground again. It may, perhaps, be more useful to point out the comparative inadequacy of the discussions. No doubt the time at the disposal of the Conference was far too short for any thorough survey of the whole ground, but it is only right to add that more might have been done but for the extreme loquacity of some members. Lord Halifax and "Father" Benson were the chief offenders, and their persistence is the more conspicuous when it is contrasted with

---

the meaning which the Conference agreed was to be assigned to the words of our Lord in St. John, the formula of ordination in our Ordinal could not be regarded as in itself inculcating the duty of private confession and absolution. It was agreed that our other formularies permitted such confession and absolution in certain circumstances, but the Conference were not agreed as to the extent to which they encouraged it. On the practical question there was a deep divergence of opinion in the Conference, some members holding that the practice of confession and absolution ought to be encouraged, as of great value for the spiritual and moral life of men and women; while others were deeply convinced that its general encouragement was most undesirable, that it should be treated as entirely exceptional, and that the highest form of Christian life and faith would dispense with it and discourage it" (pp. 109, 110).

the comparative silence of competent scholars like Professor Swete and Professor Mason, each of whom spoke but thrice, whilst the Dean of Christ Church and Dr. Gee intervened only four times. As it was, the Conference did not consider the whole of the field opened up by the Bishop of London's reference, and much which urgently called for attention was more or less completely ignored.

In a recent number of the *CHURCHMAN*<sup>1</sup> attention was drawn to some practical aspects of the question upon which it was hoped that light would be thrown. As to nearly all of these, the Conference leaves us still without guidance.

1. In regard to the modern teaching of extreme Anglicans, there is in the arguments, more especially of Lord Halifax and Mr. Benson, much useful information. There exists now, as there existed in former years, the difference to which attention was, in the article referred to, drawn between Neo-Anglican doctrine and that of the more cautious High Churchmen. The position defined in a quotation from the late Canon Carter's "Doctrine of Confession in the Church of England"<sup>2</sup> is apparently that which sober High Churchmen still hold. It is not that of Lord Halifax, nor is it that so crudely set forth in the Manuals placed in the hands of young children in so many extreme Anglican parishes. It is a marked defect in the proceedings of the Conference that what may be called the popular statements of Neo-Anglican doctrine were not brought in some way under review. As a matter of practical politics, we want to know whether it is right to place in the hands of boys and girls books which

---

<sup>1</sup> February, 1902: "Some Aspects of the Confessional."

<sup>2</sup> "Confession is essentially the exceptional and remedial element of Christianity. The Holy Eucharist, prayer and self-discipline, teaching and Divine illuminations, are the proper rule, and ought to be the sufficient food of the life of the baptized. Their intended effect is to refresh and strengthen, increase and perfect, by a progressive advance, the regenerate nature in its eventful course, till it attain its consummation of bliss in conscious union with God in Christ. More ought not to be needed. But because such grace is often hindered, or may decay, or even be lost, the remedial ordinances are given to renew the faded, or debilitated, or departed life" (p. 231). With this compare an important statement made during the Conference by Dr. Moberly: "The Reformers wished deliberately to substitute one ideal for another. Auricular Confession had been a part of the normal idea of a pious Christian life. That was what they wished to alter. The Prayer-Book ideal of a devout Christian life was different from that. It appears from the Communion Service, and from the Absolution in Matins and Evensong, that its compilers wished to substitute as the ideal a normal condition, instead of a special machinery, of self-humiliation. They wished to protest, not only against compulsion, but against Confession as normal" (*Report*, pp. 64, 65).

suggest that they cannot or should not come to their first Communion until they have been to confession, and that regular resort to the Confessional should be for them a normal feature in the spiritual life. The results of the Conference absolutely discredit all such teaching. It is shown to have no support either in Holy Scripture, the life of the primitive Church, or the formularies of the Church of England; but since it is the extensive circulation of these Manuals which has done so much to force the subject of the Confessional upon the public attention, it is a matter for regret that they did not receive explicit condemnation.

2. The proceedings of the Conference do not, after all, give us the much-needed light as to the sources from which the English confessor is to draw instruction for the discharge of his very delicate office. Who are to be his guides? Pusey, in order to afford some kind of assistance, had to adopt a Continental work, which he bowdlerized to the best of his ability. But Pusey's "Gaume" is, after all, like "The Priest in Absolution," little more than a series of extracts from the sainted Liguori and other authorities, whose works it is superfluous to characterize. Is it, or is it not, to these Continental and Roman sources that the English confessor must go for his guidance as to the casuistry and the practice of the Confessional? <sup>1</sup> If it is, then, so detestable, so debasing is the general character of that literature that the person who would direct younger clergy to its study takes upon himself a responsibility from which even a callous man of the world might be expected to shrink. If the average English lay Churchman knew the character of that literature, the subjects it discusses, the minutiae of moral (especially of sexual) disorder into which it enters, and the low standard set up by some of the casuists, he would hardly view with satisfaction any prospect of such studies receiving more systematic and intimate attention from his parochial clergy.

It may or may not be due to this aspect of the subject that we have a demand for the setting apart of certain clergy as confessors. That subject, under the guise of "The Special Training of the Minister," was to have been discussed at the fourth session of the Conference. But partly, perhaps, because the results of the earlier proceedings discredited habitual confession and destroyed the peculiar claims urged on behalf of confessors, and partly, perhaps, from the extreme garrulity of Mr. Benson, who opened the discussion on that session, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Benson's words in the fourth session of the Conference are significant: "I suppose it is scarcely necessary to dwell on the preparation needed. That we may get out of books" (p. 93). What books?

topic was not reached. This was unfortunate, for public opinion is not quite healthy upon the subject. A good many persons, who very much distrust the growth of the Confessional amongst us, appear to suppose that the appointment of a few, or of many, clergy as "licensed confessors" would effect a convenient compromise, and limit the extent of the evil. They urge that, since our Church does admit, under certain special circumstances, the right of man or woman to make confession, it would be better to appoint certain persons who alone should minister to them. They allege in support of their plea the extreme difficulty of the confessor's task if taken seriously; the complex nature of the problems he is called upon to solve; the grave moral peril which attends the duties of the confessor; the extreme imprudence of allowing any young man of twenty-four just admitted to Priest's Orders to place himself in a position of so much peril; and the doubt as to whether the office, as its nature is suggested by some Anglican Manuals, can usefully be exercised by any save persons of peculiar character and mature years. No one can deny the force of these suggestions. A High Churchman, who thinks that the Confessional has become an established institution amongst us, may well be pardoned for a wish to surround it with as many safeguards as possible. His attitude is very much that of the man who, deploring the existence of an evil, regards that evil as inevitable, and thinks the best thing he can do is to regulate it.

But, before any such concession is made, the other side of the question must be considered. We have in the plea for licensed confessors a subtle attempt to place the Confessional, with the practice of regular resort thereto, amongst the admitted and lawful features of life in the English Church. The Conference has shown us that neither Holy Scripture nor the records of the primitive Church offer any countenance for such an innovation. It is equally plain that no authority for such an Order of clergy can be found in the Prayer-Book of the English Church. So far as people are invited to clear their consciences or resolve their doubts by confession it is as an ordinary part of the relations of parishioners with their parish clergy. The Communion Office and the Visitation of the Sick are times at which clergy are speaking in the presence of their own people, and all that is said must be deemed to be said in virtue of the relationship between them.<sup>1</sup> The hearer of the

---

<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to confine the words of the Communion Office exhortation, "Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word," to the clergy of the parish. But compare the passage in the Homily of Repentance: "They may repair to their learned

exhortation in the Communion Office might be troubled in conscience when out of reach of the ministrations of his own clergy, and the liberty suggested is in every way natural.

The office suggested by our Prayer-Book, "the ministry of God's Holy Word," is, moreover, the peculiar office of the parochial clergy. If they do not exist to apply "the comfortable salve of God's Word" to the consciences of their people, what is the purpose of their calling? Discussions of sin and temptation are not alien from or exceptional incidents in their work. Their pulpit ministrations are not meant to be disquisitions on Eastern archæology or Palestinian geography, the early history of monotheism, or the morals of the Roman Empire; still less were they intended to review the latest novel or discuss the last subject of a *Daily Telegraph* "silly season" correspondence. Man as a sinner in need of a Saviour; the Bible as a message of hope and salvation; the life of the believer in relation to the duties and responsibilities, the trials and temptations, the sins and the victories of his daily experience—these are the things with which the clergy are meant to deal. It should be their business to know the necessities of members of their flock and how best to meet them. It is they who, when ordained priests, promise in the face of the congregation to "use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole," within their cures, "as need shall require, and occasion shall be given." To set apart a special order of persons for the hearing of confessions is to cast a slur upon the ministrations of the parish clergy, and to take from them an office which, so far as it is permissible at all in our Church, is distinctly theirs. Any such arrangement would, we can hardly doubt, bring the general body of the clergy into a position of inferiority in the minds of some persons, and, not improbably, would entail differences and strife within some congregations.

Moreover, as I have already suggested, the licensing of confessors would be an official recognition of the custom of habitual confession. Once let the Bishops admit this much, and we shall see a rapid growth of the custom. Who knows how many clergy would deem it inconsistent with their parochial dignity and personal standing to lack the mark of confidence implied by a license to hear confessions? Then would come in the further necessity of indicating forms of confession, and providing (what our Church has not done) a form of absolution for the private confession of persons in

---

curate and pastor, or to some other godly learned man, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God's Word." Here the priesthood of the laity seems to find recognition.

ordinary health. Once, indeed, pass beyond the limits of our own Prayer-Book, and who shall set up or compel respect for other boundaries? On the whole, therefore, specious as the plea is, the appeal for the licensing of confessors appears to be one which sober Churchmen must resist.

3. But the question of licensed confessors raises also the subject of direction. Here, again, the Conference does not help us. Pusey felt the difficulties of this subject, but the literature of the Anglican Confessional hardly seems to reflect Pusey's caution. It clearly contemplates direction. Here is one of the worst evils of the Confessional. The priest, as a director, may claim and use a power which makes him the virtual controller of the penitent's life. It is this which in the past has helped to make the Confessional so dire an enemy to true religion. The confessor as director is a historical figure of very ill omen; but evil as have been the results of his work as seen in the pages of European history, they have been still worse in their influence upon the general attitude of men towards the Christian faith. But in this matter also the Conference does not help us.

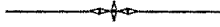
4. Only one more point seems to call for attention. Indignation has been aroused in extreme Anglican quarters at Canon Aitken's reference<sup>1</sup> to the fall of a confessor. The subject is an unpleasant one, and a subject which no doubt every member of the Conference would fain have avoided. But how is it possible to leave out of sight the perils of the Confessional both to penitent and to confessor? Probably few people believe that the Confessional in England is, or could be, quite the same thing as the Confessional abroad; but the Continental position cannot wholly be ignored.<sup>2</sup> The peril to the English clergyman is of the same character, though doubtless of less severity than in many other lands. Well did Pusey say: "If you had no fears, I should fear for you. I should question whether it be wise to urge you to a ministry wherein you would be so liable to fall from not fearing its perils, and consequently taking no precautions."<sup>3</sup> The moral dangers of

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> How significant is the appearance in a scientific treatise on the work of the Confessional of an Appendix headed: "De agendi ratione cum personis quæ ad turpia sollicitantur a clericis!" The Council of Venice in 1859 specially enjoined on confessors to keep before their eyes the decrees against this sin. Pius IX., in the Bull *Apostolicæ Sedis* in 1869, maintained the excommunication of priests who absolved their guilty partners. The congregation of the Inquisition in 1867 warned all prelates that the Papal constitutions were in this matter being neglected. For further evidence, if needed, v. Lea, "Auricular Confession and Indulgences," i. 381 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Pusey's "Gauze," p. 90. For corroboration of Canon Aitken's

the Confessional to confessor as well as penitent are a subject which no prudent defender of the Confessional, still less any of its opponents, can ever neglect. A. R. BUCKLAND.



#### ART. IV.—THE ROMANCE OF JEWISH MISSIONS.

##### I. IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TIMES.

ONE has sometimes heard it said that missions to the heathen contain many elements of interest which are entirely wanting in missions to the Jews. If this statement is founded on the fact that the enormous aggregate of heathendom, composed as it is of numerous races of mankind utterly diverse one from another, offers a greater opportunity to the pen of the writer, the brush of the artist, and the lens of the photographer than one single race of men, we willingly concede the truth of the remark. It is evident that mission work amongst the former is carried on amidst a variety of conditions—social, political, and religious—and a variety of rites, habits, and customs which are altogether absent in any appreciable degree of comparison from the latter. A Jew is a Jew all the world over, no matter in what particular country he may be living. His physical characteristics are the same; the colour of his skin, with a few noteworthy exceptions,<sup>1</sup> is the same; his religion is the same; his social habits are much the same; and his modes of thought are much the same. Mission work conducted amongst such generally prevailing conditions as these necessarily lends itself to a monotony which does not exist in that carried on amongst the hundreds of Gentile races in the world.

This concession, however, requires modification, because of certain minor distinctions amongst the Jews. These exist from the fact that they are a people dispersed throughout the world. There is the Eastern and the Western Jew, the German or Polish Jew and the Spanish Jew, the Orthodox, the Reformed, the Chassidist, and the Karaite Jew. The existence within the limits of one race of different types arising from variety of country, language, and sect, whilst it lends a certain amount of colour, light, and shade to missionary work, does not invest it with that marvellous kaleido-

---

general position, see also "Chronicle of Convocation," 1877, pp. 231, 232; and the Bishop of Truro (Dr. Gott), "Charge," 1897, p. 97.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, The Falasha Jews in Abyssinia, the negro Jews in Loango, and the black Jews in Cochin (Malabar Coast).