

THE CHURCHMAN

August, 1918.

The Month.

ELSEWHERE in our columns will be found three further papers read at the Cheltenham Conference in June last. The first four dealing with the respective points of the Lambeth Quadrilateral appeared last month. On the question of the Historic Episcopate two papers were read, the second being by Dr. Eugene Stock, and it is an especial pleasure to be able to print it in full this month, for there is probably no living man with a wider experience of all phases of the reunion question, and as a member of the "Faith and Order" Committee and in many other ways he has rendered solid service to the cause. The concluding addresses at the Conference dealt with the Possibilities of Reunion and were contributed by the Rev. George F. Irwin, whose brilliant paper written from the Episcopal Church point of view was full of courage and hope, and the Rev. Dr. Garvie, whose powerful speech (specially reported for the CHURCHMAN) gave a clear analysis of the whole position as viewed from the side of the Non-episcopal churches. It is easy, of course, to take an exaggerated view of the importance of a movement in which one is specially interested, but we do honestly believe that the Cheltenham Conference has rendered distinct service to the Church in calling attention to the question of reunion, in creating an atmosphere, and in indicating possible lines upon which closer relations between Episcopal and Non-episcopal churches, leading in God's good time to something in the nature of inter-communion, may be promoted. Evangelical Churchmen may well feel proud and encouraged that they have been enabled to frame a policy which, if followed in its entirety by the whole Church, would certainly take us a long way on the road towards the desired goal. Already there are signs that other

Churchmen are awakening to the importance of the question, and are discussing it in a broader and more large-hearted spirit than would have been the case even three years ago, and for this welcome change of attitude no small credit may belong to the Cheltenham Conference.

The attitude of rigid exclusiveness so long adopted **Lord Halifax's** towards this question by the extreme High Church **Speech.** party has thrown into all the stronger relief the remarkable speech made by Lord Halifax at the Annual Meeting of the English Church Union. He dealt with several important questions, and among them that of Reunion was given a foremost place—reunion, not with the Roman and Greek Churches alone, which in past years formed, and doubtless still forms, so large a part of his programme, but also with Non-episcopal churches. It was not so much what he said, as the spirit in which he said it, which made the speech so valuable. Thus in regard to the responsibility for divisions he asked, "Can any portion of Christendom close its eyes to the duty of repentance for the past, of making such amendment for that past as may be possible, or afford not to show the utmost charity and forbearance in regard to those from whom it may find itself in separation largely by its own fault?" Again, in regard to Home Reunion, he said, "We know what action on the part of Rome would attract us and prepare the way for reunion; it is precisely by similar action on our part that we may hope to attract those whom we wish to draw back into our own communion." Moreover, in regard to the work of grace in the heart, he said that "in whatever degree we see this Christian life being lived, there we may be certain God's grace has been given, and that as long as any soul faithfully corresponds with the grace given to it, that soul is living in God's favour, and that as such we have no need to be disquieted about its spiritual condition." We do not suppose that Lord Halifax has abandoned any one of his distinctive principles, but we seem to see in the words we have quoted something of a new spirit—more tolerant towards those who are separated from us and not alone towards those from whom we are separated—which should mean much whenever the time comes, as please God it will come, that the Episcopal and Non-episcopal churches may draw more closely together.

Still more striking, and, in its way, still more significant was the attitude towards Reunion shown by the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury at its sitting on July 10. Canon E. A. Burroughs, who, we are glad to see, is fast making a place for himself in the discussions of that venerable body, brought forward a resolution in these terms:—

“That this House, being convinced of the importance, especially at this time, of visible unity and united witness among all who acknowledge Christ as Lord, urges upon Churchmen, as a step towards ultimate reunion, the duty of seeking and welcoming opportunities of joint witness and joint action with those who, while not of the same communion with us, are engaged in the service of the Kingdom of God.” It was seconded by the Dean of Bristol. Exception was taken to the speeches in which it had been moved and seconded, but for the resolution itself a wonderful amount of sympathy was expressed. It is true that amendments were proposed, but then this was inevitable in such a composite body, and any one who has ever sat through a debate in the Lower House will know how keenly sensitive the members are to exactness of expression. Thus the Archdeacon of Berks was anxious to omit the reference to “visible unity,” and Canon Burroughs agreed to the omission, but he resisted an amendment proposed by the Bishop of Buckingham to insert the words “Such opportunities, etc., as are not in conflict with the principles of Catholic Faith and Order,” and, seeing that there might be twenty different interpretations of the phrase, the amendment was rejected by thirty-three to twenty-seven. An amendment to insert the words “so far as they are compatible with Church Order,” was, however, carried by thirty to twenty-nine, a majority of one. The resolution was then agreed to by fifty-four to three, and the fact may be regarded as a triumph.

In the course of the debate, several things were said which were noteworthy on their own account but more, perhaps, because of the position of those who said them. Thus the Dean of Bristol expressed the view that “the reunion of Christendom was at present visionary, but not Home reunion. He had talked with many soldiers who reproached the Church for its attitude, which imitated the spirit of Rome, ‘He followeth not us.’ But ‘the wind bloweth where it listeth,’ and

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not through keyholes of locked doors. If Catholic tradition is in conflict with charity it must give way. Otherwise we are the Separatists, we are the Pharisees, we are the schismatics." The Dean of Westminster said that "the first step must come from the side of the Church. Hers is the chief responsibility. But what should be aimed at is not little expedients, but a sweetening of public opinion." The Rev. R. J. E. Boggis said that "Christian divisions were a scandal to the world, which marvelled that disciples of Christ could not even unite in the Breaking of Bread. Corporate reunion seems far off, but we can prepare the way for it. At Barnstaple a number of useful conferences had been held. He would welcome interchange of pulpits if sanctioned by authority." Canon Markham observed that "the Church cannot now approach the people with the principle that 'schism is a sin.' He had recently offered the parish church at Grimsby for united prayer-meetings, the ministers of all denominations leading the devotions for half an hour each. The Roman Catholic priest had sent no reply to the invitation." Canon Markham admitted that he "might be asked to pay a return visit. Also, people would say, 'Then it does not matter where we worship.' But such risks must be faced." These were some of the encouraging things which were said, and the impression produced by the whole debate was one of real hopefulness.

Where, then, do we stand? The Cheltenham
 Around a
 Table. Conference has shown that a large number of Evangelicals are prepared to assent to a definite line of action, and it is believed that the "findings," or something very near to them, are assented to by a still larger number who were not definitely associated with the Conference. Then, we have the remarkable speech of Lord Halifax which must inevitably carry weight with another body of Churchmen. And, again, there is the resolution of the Lower House of Convocation, supported by many definite High Churchmen. It must not be supposed that, even taken together, these incidents show the general body of Churchmen to be agreed upon any definite course of action, but they are unmistakable indications of a sympathetic spirit towards the question of Home Reunion, such as the Church has not experienced for very many years. If, as the Dean of Westminster said, "we are not united amongst ourselves," and that "must come first," would

it not be possible, availing ourselves of such a measure of agreement as does exist, for Churchmen of various shades of opinion who have the sympathetic spirit to meet around a table and see if it is not possible to extend the area of agreement and to formulate some definite line of policy? This would be extremely helpful to the spiritual life of the Church; it would also be a measure of justice to the Non-episcopal churches for, as more than one distinguished Nonconformist has pointed out, the reunion they desire is not with a section, but with the whole Church:

The petition presented to the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury on July 10 may be regarded as the earnest and considered protest of large numbers of clergy and laity, representative of almost every school of thought, against the Modernist interpretation of certain Articles of the Christian creed. The petition bore no fewer than 54,324 signatures, including many of the most distinguished Churchmen; and a petition in identical terms was presented at the same time to the Upper House of the Convocation of York with a large number of additional signatures. Bearing these figures in mind and weighing well the terms of the petition, it will be seen that a feeling of real distress is widely prevalent at what is held to be an attack on the Christian Creed. The petition recited "that grave disquiet, anxiety, and confusion of mind have been and are being caused to many of the faithful of the Province by the position maintained by divers clergy of the Church of England, to wit: That divers Articles of the Creed, and in particular those concerning the birth of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ from a pure Virgin without any earthly father, and His bodily Resurrection, on the third day, are not revealed truths to be constantly held by all faithful Christians as matters of supernatural Faith set forth in the written Word of God and as part of a Christian man's duty to God, but are only religious opinions, not binding upon any man, whatsoever his order in the Church, but such as may be abandoned without blame." The petitioners accordingly prayed "most humbly and earnestly" that the House would use such means "by Synodical Act or otherwise" as to its wisdom might seem best and most fitting "to make plain to the glory of God and the good of souls, that all the said Articles are part of the revealed truth taught by the whole Catholic

Church of Christ, and as such to be held constantly by all faithful Christians." The exceeding plainness and moderation of the terms of the petition will command universal respect and admiration among all who hold to the literal interpretation of the Articles of the Creed. For ourselves we heartily welcome the petition, for, as we pointed out in a previous number, the growth of the Modernist interpretation of the Creed is causing widespread havoc among those who come under its influence. But welcome as such protests are, it is not by petitions that the evil will be most effectually met. What is needed is a regular and systematic campaign of instruction by means of sermons and lectures in order to strengthen, stablish and settle Christian souls in their most holy faith. The "teaching sermon" has gone out of fashion, but the trend of events demands its revival. Parochial clergy make a great mistake if they imagine that their people are unacquainted with these Modernist views. They meet with them in magazines, novels and other forms of popular reading, and they come across them in religious newspapers, religious pamphlets and religious books; and if they never, or only rarely, hear their parish clergyman put the positive side of these truths, some at least are apt to imagine that there is no answer to the Modernist, whereas there is a perfect answer if clergy will only take the trouble to study the question.

The Upper House of Convocation cannot be congratulated upon the way they dealt with the petition.

The Bishop of Chelmsford's Speech. The petitioners asked the Bishops to "use such means by Synodical Act or otherwise" to reassure the faithful, and all they received in reply was a resolution referring them to what the House did in the matter four years ago, and to the Archbishop's reply to the House of Laymen's resolution passed in February last. No doubt there were good reasons for not reopening the subject in its entirety, but we should have been glad if the House had passed a resolution more definite in its terms and more clearly in line with the admirable speech which the Bishop of Chelmsford made in presenting the petition. From that speech we quote the following opening passage:—

Those who present this Petition are in favour of honest research, but they wish to state clearly that, in their opinion, that which is revealed in Holy Scripture, definitely stated in the Creeds and thus accepted, not by a part of,

but by the whole Catholic Church, cannot be regarded as an open question. Such is more than a mere religious opinion. It is, and must be, regarded ever as a fact. The petitioners draw your Lordship's special attention to two Articles—those relating to our Lord's Birth and Resurrection. Their own view is that He was incarnate and that He is alive in spite of His Death, *but* also they hold that the Church definitely teaches that He *was* conceived by the Holy Ghost, *born* of the Virgin Mary, and that the third day He did actually rise from the dead. That there are difficulties connected with these assertions they admit, but these are those of the natural man. Your petitioners regard their religion as primarily one of Faith. They recite their Creed—the Belief founded upon the sure warranty of Holy Scripture. They recite their Belief with awe. They think that the words of St. Gregory of Nazianzus are not out of date, "Speculate not upon the Divine Generation, for it is not safe. The Doctrine is to be honoured silently. It is a good thing for thee to know the fact: the mode we cannot admit that even angels understand, much less thou."

They honestly believe that if the reliability of the narratives of the Miraculous Birth and of the Physical Resurrection be denied that such denial would undermine the Faith itself. They understand St. Paul's declaration to include such a view when he says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is vain." They contend that the facts as stated in the Gospels, affirmed in the Creeds, dealt with in the manner which they are by the great Apostle, cannot mean any other kind of resurrection than that which is so clearly defined by Article IV., "Christ did truly rise again from death and took again His body with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature." They hold that those words interpret the mind of the Church Catholic upon the words in the Creed, and that *no* other meaning can be put legitimately upon them than that of the Article quoted.

We are persuaded that that is the right line to take. A perfect cloud of contentious interpretations has been created, whereas the real issues are very simple. Our Lord was either born of a Virgin or He was not, and those who affect the Modernist position should answer this question definitely and straightly in one way or the other—for there is no middle course—and we should then know where they are. So, too, with the Resurrection, our Lord's body—the body which "was crucified, dead and buried" either rose from the tomb, leaving it empty, or it did not. Again there is no middle course, and Modernists ought to let us know definitely on which side they stand. Before they attempt to explain their views, let them deal honestly and straightly with the question of fact.

Bishop Hen-son's Position. We cannot leave this subject without expressing our deep regret that the Bishop of Hereford should have made the speech in Convocation attributed to him in the *Guardian*:—

The Bishop of Hereford said he had had some intention of moving that the discussion should be postponed until the next session. It seemed to him

a subject of such complexity and difficulty that it ought not to be discussed without very adequate notice. A matter of this kind, cutting so deeply into the most sacred interests of religion, could not decently be discussed without very adequate notice and preparation. The circumstances in which the subject had been introduced to the House were so extraordinary that common equity required he should have been given ample notice before what was nothing more nor less than a gross repeated attack should have been made against himself.

The Bishop of Chelmsford protested that he had not the slightest idea of attacking the Bishop of Hereford in any way whatever.

The Bishop of Hereford said he did not wish to dissociate himself from Dr. Sanday and from all those divines and thinkers who had devoted their lives to the study of these sacred and difficult questions, and whose contributions to the discussion were of the utmost value to the cause of religion, and demanded, not the denunciation of the Bishop of Chelmsford, but the generous acknowledgment of that House. It was clearly undesirable that discussion should continue, and he acquiesced in the Bishop of Chelmsford's speech passing without criticism. He accepted no responsibility for the resolution passed on the former occasion, and he retained full liberty in the future to bring such contributions as he desired to the discussion.

It would be a good thing if some personal friend, to whom he would listen, would point out to the Bishop of Hereford how gravely he is prejudicing his position by always assuming that actions such as the Bishop of Chelmsford on this, and the Bishop of Oxford on a previous occasion, felt it necessary to take, are directed against himself. Apart from every other consideration the attitude he takes up tends to keep alive the feeling of bitterness aroused by the controversy over his consecration which ought by this time to have been laid to rest.

