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THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1920.

THE MONTH.

The Cheltenham Conference. THE annual Conference of Evangelical clergy and laity who forgather at Cheltenham under the presidency of the Rector, the Rev. H. A. Wilson, was held on June 2 and 3, being preceded by a public meeting at the Town Hall in the evening of June 1. The promoters of the Conference have every reason to be satisfied with the result. The attendance, perhaps, was not up to the level of some recent years, but the papers read reached a high standard of excellence, the discussions showed remarkable grip and vigour, and the conclusions reached as embodied in the Findings were of singular weight and importance. The Cheltenham Conference is inseparably associated with the cause of Christian unity; indeed, it has been the pioneer in all proposals for intercommunication, and we hope that when the Lambeth Conference comes to make its report, at least some reflection of the Cheltenham Findings may be found in its recommendations. It is interesting to find that in the pamphlet just issued by the S.P.C.K. (2s. net), *Documents bearing on the Problem of Christian Unity and Fellowship, 1916-1920*, are included the Findings of the Fourth Cheltenham Conference (i.e. the one held last year) so far as they relate to Christian unity. The main subject on this year's programme was "The Fellowship of the Churches," considered from the three-fold point of view of the Homeland, the Dominions and the Mission Field; and the consideration of these aspects was preceded by a more general discussion on "The Position of the Anglican Communion in the Christian world." In view of the widespread interest in the questions discussed and the uniform excellence of the papers read, we are giving up practically the whole of this number to their insertion.

The Cheltenham Conference discussed also the question of "The Self-Government of the Church" in the light of the Enabling Act, but we are compelled to hold over until next month the four papers which were read concerning it.

There were one or two notable incidents of the **Bishop-designate of Hereford and Reunion.** Cheltenham Conference, outside the appointed papers, which call for a word or two of notice. The first was the magnificent speech at the Public Meeting by the Bishop of Warrington (Dr. M. Linton-Smith), whose appointment, since announced, to the Bishopric of Hereford has given such wide satisfaction. It is to us no small pleasure that one so intimately and so sympathetically associated with the Reunion movement should have a place among English diocesan bishops, and his appointment gives added interest and importance to his Cheltenham speech, of which we give an abstract:—

Speaking of reunion, he indicated some difficulties which must be faced, and then went on to mention points that must be made clear.

(1) Reunion would never be brought about by expediency; they must go deeper than that. There could be no reunion without conviction, and conviction was based on principle. It would never come about without a high doctrine of the Church, one which set great value upon the Christian society as such. They needed to realize that the "broken fragments" were no fit organism through which Christ could work. Nothing less than devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and loyalty to His purpose would bring His people together.

(2) It was said that there must be agreement on doctrine before reunion could be brought about, but, as Principal Tulloch had pointed out, dogma divides. Reunion would be brought about, not by agreement, but by agreeing to differ and yet to live in common loyalty to their common Lord.

(3) Any union or fellowship which was partial or sectional would defeat its purpose. There were two opposite poles in religion—the Protestant and the Catholic; and for good or ill their Church embraced them both. They needed to practise fellowship within their own communion.

Continuing, the Bishop said that when once the difficulties of the task were faced, there were certain practical lines of advance which would contribute in varying degrees towards the desired goal. There must be—

(1) A full and frank discussion of differences, without reserve and without bitterness.

(2) There must be some measure of common worship.

(3) There must be the recognition of that which Nature—the Spirit in action upon matter—teaches by analogy—*e.g.*, that function precedes and creates organ, and that organisms which fail to respond to their environment are doomed to death, life finding expression in other forms.

(4) There must be insistence on the principle that the presence of the Spirit is not guaranteed by the validity of the ministry, but the validity of the ministry is guaranteed by the presence of the Spirit, and that where the works of the Spirit are manifest there the validity of the ministry cannot be questioned.

The forces arrayed against them were great, but (said the Bishop in conclusion) if there were behind the movement the Spirit of God working out

the purpose of Him Who died for His Church, then they might be assured that "they which be with us are more than those that be with them."

Nor must we omit to mention the illuminating and altogether helpful speech of the Rev. D. C. Lusk, Presbyterian Chaplain at Oxford, who, following the Bishop, said that the spirit or attitude in which we must approach this question must be that which is entirely Christian.

The Chairman of the Conference, in his opening address, made a palpable hit when, pointing to the progress made towards the solution of the reunion problem, he said that there was only one quarter in the Church where there had been no response to the appeal for fellowship. High Churchmen as a whole had nothing to contribute, only the weary reiteration of outworn and obsolete tags which sounded even more strangely out of touch with modern needs and present-day thought. He submitted that it was a very grave thing indeed for a great body of Christians to stand in the way of a movement admittedly so desirable and so sadly needed at home and abroad. "If," he concluded, "this chance be lost, which God forbid, the responsibility will lie at their door." Another difficulty in the way of reunion—certainly in some localities—was indicated by the Rev. H. J. Carpenter, whose very interesting paper on the Home aspect of the problem is not, unfortunately, available in the form necessary for publication.

Are we willing (he asked) to divide our parish with our brethren of other communions? He very much doubted whether any of them would be willing to agree to such a course. Why not? Because they differed widely from many of the brethren of other denominations in matters too important to forgo. As a Chaplain to the Forces he had been present at many Conferences on reunion, and he mentioned one from which three Nonconformists retired as they did not accept the Deity of Christ. Mr. Carpenter proceeded to mention other instances of Nonconformists whom he had come across at home which afforded terrible examples of defectiveness in doctrine. "Are our creeds," he asked, "of no importance to us, or are they everything?"

The Findings were drawn up by a specially appointed Committee, and after full and free discussion by the Conference were ultimately adopted in the following form:—

A.—THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES.

1. The Conference reaffirms that reunion can be contemplated only with such Churches as accept "(a) the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testa-

ments 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."

2. In view of recent discussions it affirms its belief that Episcopacy is not only agreeable to the Word of God and primitive practice, but, rightly adapted to local needs, is the form of Church order most likely to command general assent in a reunited Church.

3. It reaffirms its conviction that, as preliminary steps and as a witness to the fact of spiritual unity, interchange of pulpits between the accredited ministers and reciprocal inter-communion of members of Episcopal and Evangelical Free Churches are desirable. It is convinced that in the Mission Field this mutual recognition is even more urgent than at home. The Conference claims that such inter-communion would be a return to the practice common in our own Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It respectfully appeals to the Lambeth Conference to give definite approval to these steps.

4. In view of the growth of the spirit of nationality in India and other parts of the Mission Field, and of the prospect of the formation of local Churches, any ecclesiastical isolation of Anglican Native Christians would tend to exhibit their type of Christianity as alien. On the other hand, the proportion of Anglican converts to the whole number of native Christians makes it unreasonable that they should necessarily expect to impose their Church order upon the majority, while if they seek to combine with other Communions their position will give them great influence in framing the polity and constitution of native Churches. The Conference therefore urges that Anglican Missions should be officially encouraged to join in local efforts for reunion.

5. In view of the fact that in the Dominions existing divisions between the branches of the Anglican Communion and the Evangelical Free Churches lead to wasteful overlapping in some districts and a deplorable lack of spiritual ministrations in others, the Conference pleads that the approaches towards local reunion now being made in more than one Dominion should also be encouraged.

6. The Conference calls upon Churchmen to pray that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit all professing Christians may be led into such unity and concord as may enable the Christian Church to bear adequate witness to the faith of the Gospel. It respectfully supports the appeal already issued by authority that daily prayer may be offered during their sessions for the Lambeth Conference and its Committees. It trusts that the Spirit of God may so guide their deliberations that they will manifest to the world the oneness of the Body of Christ while preserving the unity of the Anglican Communion.

B.—SELF-GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCHES.

1. The Conference urges all Evangelical Churchmen to co-operate whole-heartedly in promoting the efficient working of the self-government scheme.

2. It reaffirms its support of the Baptismal franchise, and its desire for the withdrawal from the electoral declaration of the clause "and do not belong to any religious body which is not in communion with the Church of England."

3. Owing to the variation of methods in compiling electoral rolls, these rolls do not at present furnish an adequate record of Church membership. The Conference therefore urges that the forthcoming Census Bill should include provision for ascertaining the religious beliefs of the people of England.