

THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1922

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Cheltenham Findings. WE owe our readers an apology for the late appearance of this issue of the CHURCHMAN, but we feel they will forgive us when they know that we kept it back a few days in order to get in as many as possible of the papers read at the Cheltenham Conference. The meeting of the Conference this year was of quite unusual interest and importance. The anxieties which are perplexing Evangelicals at the present time are of a very serious nature, and it was hoped that by a clear, quiet, dispassionate examination of some of the questions at issue, some solid contribution might be made by the Conference towards the solution of the problems and so help forward the cause of unity among ourselves. And so, after the opening address of the Chairman, which skilfully diagnosed the situation, papers were read on "Evangelicalism in the Modern World," "The Authority of the Bible," "The Interpretation of the Bible," "The Atonement" and "Evangelization." It was not to be supposed that individual readers or speakers would necessarily express the mind of the whole Conference, and some striking divergences were apparent, but when the Friday morning came and the Conference as a body had to decide upon the Findings, a wonderful degree of unanimity was felt and expressed. It was, however, distinctly agreed that the Findings 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. Bearing well in mind this important qualification, we invite the careful attention of readers to the Findings as finally passed by the Conference :—

" 1. While modern thought tends to emphasize what is corporate rather than what is individual, and is reluctant to accept traditional

modes of expression, human nature remains unchanged. The necessity for a personal relationship with God and for the witness of individual saintliness persists. Man still needs the same Gospel, though the phraseology of its presentation must always be adapted to each successive age. Where the Gospel is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Ghost with conviction and a passion for souls, it proves His ever-present power to transform lives and bring men to God.

" 2. The Conference reaffirms its belief in Holy Scripture as the uniquely inspired record of God's revelation of Himself to man. This revelation has been progressively unfolded through patriarchs, priests, and prophets, and brought to its fullness in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and is the supreme authority for faith and conduct. As a revelation of the living God Holy Scripture is, and in all ages has proved to be, the bread of life to the soul of the believer, who through it is brought into living contact with his Lord and Saviour.

" 3. In the course of our discussion there has appeared a divergence of view on the interpretation of our Lord's references to Holy Scripture. Some of us hold that our Lord's utterances set the seal of His Divine authority upon the truth in detail of the books of the Old Testament ; others believe that through the necessity of His true humanity he expressed Himself to His contemporaries in the forms of thought and habitual language of the day. We gladly recognize that all alike affirm the essential Deity and true humanity of our Lord, and accept the authority of His teaching as the final revelation of God to man.

" 4. We affirm that the salvation of men from the guilt and power of sin is the essential purpose of the Gospel and rests solely upon God's gift of His Son, who took upon Himself our nature, was obedient unto death, and made upon the Cross one perfect and complete propitiation for the sin of the world. The Atonement, with its appeal to the heart and conscience of man, should occupy the forefront of all Evangelical teaching.

" 5. The Conference, while recognizing the widespread sense of corporate failure and sin, deeply laments the lack of a sense of individualism and of responsibility before God, which causes so much indifference to the truth of the Atonement. It, therefore, all the more urgently presses upon all Evangelical Churchmen the preaching of the Gospel with conviction, and with confidence in its undiminished power, and the employment of every opportunity for presenting its truth by personal dealing with individuals. In view of the unevangelized masses in our own country, in the great Dominions and amongst the heathen, the Christians in our churches should be constantly reminded of their obligation to take their share by word and example in proclaiming salvation through Christ.

" 6. The Conference rejoices in the manifestation of the Power of the Holy Spirit in Evangelistic movements throughout the country, and urges Evangelical Churchmen to co-operate in a campaign to lead their fellow-citizens to God."

A Criticism and a Reply. These Findings were made known through the Press and it was not long before they were subjected to criticism. They had been commented upon also in private, but the main complaint in public came from the Rev. F. Jansen, who challenged the use of the word "uniquely" in reference to the inspiration of Holy Scripture ; and the expression "true" Humanity used in reference to our Lord, and urged that the more usual word "perfect" should have been employed ; and he professed to diagnose the reason why the word "true" had been used. His surmise, however, was beside the mark, and Dr. Mullins, as Chairman of the Drafting Committee, explained the position in the following terms :—

1. The adjective "true" as applied to our Lord's humanity was certainly not selected in distinction to the word "perfect," but practically as equivalent to it. My impression is that every one present would have accepted unreservedly the definition of our Lord's personality contained in the Athanasian Creed : "Perfect God and perfect man."

2. The Holy Scriptures were said to be "uniquely" inspired in order to assert that their inspiration differs in character, and not merely in degree, from the holiest of utterances found elsewhere. It puts them in a category by themselves, as other suggested adverbs would not do.

Dr. Mullins also explained the meaning of clause three of the Findings, in regard to which some doubt has been felt and expressed :—

The third clause [of the Findings] was meant to imply our belief that there are amongst us devout and loyal men who refuse to impute to our Lord either ignorance or error, even though they do not admit that His references to passages of the Old Testament settle finally all such questions as their authorship and historicity. Such men believe that as a perfect man of His time, speaking to His contemporaries, he could do no other than speak in terms of their language and forms of thought. Whether we agree with such men or not, we must distinguish between them and the Modernists.

We give these explanations as they tend to remove any difficulty that may be felt regarding the doctrinal position of the Conference in its corporate capacity.

The Cheltenham Papers. It is not necessary to comment upon the papers read at the Conference. Seven of them are reproduced in our pages, and we ask for them the careful study of the reader. They represent contributions of the highest value to

the discussion of important questions, and our regret is that we have not been able to include the others. In regard to the Rev. G. E. Ford's thoughtful and suggestive paper on "The Atonement," we may say that we shall hope to insert at least the substance of it in a future issue: its great length will, we fear, preclude its appearance in full. But over and above the "papers" there were the carefully prepared addresses of "selected speakers" to which reference must be made. Thus on the subject of "Evangelicalism and the Modern Mind" nothing could have been finer than the addresses of Mr. Stephen Neill (Trinity College, Cambridge) and Canon Morrow:

Mr. Neill deeply moved the Conference by his frank description of the apathy that he finds among his contemporaries, which he attributed to reaction after the war. He is convinced that immediate personal experience of Christ as our Saviour through belief in the Atonement is the greatest need of the age. Modern preachers do not preach with conviction, and are disturbed by all kinds of ideas as to what criticism has discovered. Personal conversion is necessary if men are to preach conversion. Only men who have been redeemed by Christ and sanctified by His Spirit can manifest the sainthood that must be shown to a world in search of reality.

Canon Morrow said the modern man stood on the Everest of the world's knowledge and civilization and as such he was able to scrap out-of-date systems and traditions, but he was able to rescue from the past ideas and principles and positions. If Evangelicalism is to have any message for the present day it must (1) be capable of adaptation to new conditions, and (2) have the power to communicate vitality. But the presentation of the message will depend on the man himself. He will win the modern mind not by the force or extent of his rhetoric, but by his personal experience of Jesus Christ.

On the question of "The Bible" we regret that, whilst printing three of the papers, we have been unable to obtain a full report either of Professor Beresford Pite's contribution or the speeches of the Rev. T. W. Gilbert and the Rev. H. Montague Dale, but the all too brief summaries, appended, will be read with interest:

Professor Pite developed the idea that all Scripture must be interpreted in terms of Christ. The Old Testament is the microcosm of Hebrew genius, and the revelation of God in Christ lies hidden in it, whereas in the New it lies open. The Old Testament prepared the way of the Lord; the Lord came and interpreted its meaning, and the Apostles and New Testament writers looked at everything from His point of view. We can only understand Scripture aright if we grasp the fact that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The Rev. T. W. Gilbert, speaking on the authority of the Bible, said it was significant that the position with which we were faced to-day was parallel with that which faced the Reformers from three different quarters: (i) They were urged to follow the Inner Light and let Reason be their supreme authority; (ii) they were also urged to follow the teaching of the Church; (iii) they were urged to follow the literal teaching of the Bible regardless of Reason or the Church. But the Reformers put them all aside. They took what was true from each of the three points of view, and Articles VI and XXI were the result.

The Rev. H. M. Dale quoted Dean Inge's remark that Evangelical belief in verbal inspiration is the greatest obstacle to Evangelical progress. It is our duty to read the Bible with open minds and discover what it says of itself and what it really teaches. He has found the new knowledge of the Bible a great solvent of difficulties and the means of appreciation of the message of the writers. Revelation is progressive, and to-day we are learning more of God's ways, which lead us into a truer appreciation of His truth as revealed in Holy Scripture.

Although we hope to give a fuller account in a subsequent issue of the Rev. G. E. Ford's paper on "The Atonement," we must, in order to make the narrative complete, briefly indicate here the main point of his paper:

What [he asked] was the significance of Christ's death? His teaching on this point was seen in the Parable of the Good Shepherd, wherein He put the emphasis upon the fact that the laying-down of His life was not something forced upon Him from without, but that it was a purely voluntary act on His part. And with equal definiteness must they draw from His words the inference that His suffering and death were in no sense whatsoever a punishment inflicted upon Him by God the Father. His death was the cause of a fresh access of Divine love for the Sufferer: "*Therefore* doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life." On the positive side of Christ's teaching as to the significance of His death, Mr. Ford explained it as showing that it was the supreme manifestation of the holiness of God and the fullest manifestation of God's love for sinful men; and that it was calculated beyond everything else to arouse in all who would consider it a deep and salutary dread of sin and of its consequences, and make them feel their need of salvation.

Following Mr. Ford there were two Selected Speakers who, in spite of the restrictions of time, expressed themselves very happily, Mr. W. Guy Johnson emphasizing that it was the Atonement and not the doctrine of the Atonement which reconciled us to God; and the Rev. W. Dodgson Sykes showing that Calvary is not a school for theologians, but a refuge for sinners.

At the session which dealt with Evangelization, a pointed and practical paper written by Canon Lillingston, of Durham, was read, and this we hope to print in our next issue. The Bishop of Chelmsford followed with a characteristic address full of suggestion and power.

He urged that Evangelicals must concentrate upon the things that really mattered, just as Christ concentrated upon the accomplishment of the task for which He came into the world and for which He died. Were they as Evangelicals getting in more outsiders than other sections of Churchmen? He confessed he felt heart-broken when he thought of the position of the scattered sheep. Our Lord told of the ninety and nine in the fold, but the Good Shepherd did not stay with them; He went after the one that had strayed and was lost. To-day the position was reversed. There was one in the Church, and the parson remained with him, but what of the ninety and nine who were outside? Above all, let them concentrate upon the manhood of England. In the endeavour to win the men they must be prepared to give of their very best and not be content with the weak and ineffective preaching.

Then as to visiting. Before the clergy went out how much time did they spend in prayer? What did they go out to do? To save souls? That ought to be their aim in pastoral visitation. When clergy visited they should strive to leave behind them a spiritual impression. Another defect in their present methods was that they were not teaching their communicants to be soul-winners. He hoped that members of the Parochial Church Councils would give themselves to soul-winning. Evangelization, said the Bishop, must be the main subject of the ministry. When they were called up higher and saw their Lord face to face the question would not be how much money had they raised or how many churches had been built. No; all the Lord cared about was the men and women for whom He died.

Mr. A. G. Pite and Canon Cole followed as Selected Speakers. At the following session the Findings were discussed and settled.

But the Conference was not yet over. Cheltenham has always stood for unity, and it was felt to be most desirable that something should be done to allay the present unrest and to promote a greater unity among Evangelical Churchpeople. The matter was discussed at a private meeting and the next day, after the Findings had been agreed to, it was determined to issue an appeal to Evangelical Churchpeople in the following terms:

The Cheltenham Appeal.

“ The Seventh Cheltenham Conference ventures to address an appeal to all Evangelical Churchmen.

“ There has been borne in upon us the deep conviction that God is calling us to a united effort of Evangelization, that He has opened doors at home and abroad for the entrance of the eternal Gospel, and we humbly thank Him that by His Grace He has made us to know His saving truth. We frankly acknowledge that we are not in entire agreement upon several questions, and we see no way at present for a complete solution of our differences. We are humbled before God and distressed beyond measure to realize that the Evangelization of the world is being gravely retarded by our dissensions.

“ First of all, therefore, we appeal to all our Evangelical brethren to concentrate upon the one objective of preaching Christ Crucified to a lost world, to go forward with unanimity to do the work our Saviour has called us to perform.

“ And, secondly, we invite all Evangelicals to exercise towards one another every possible forbearance, charity and love, believing that thus alone we shall be led by the Holy Spirit into all truth, and, refraining from any hasty action, leave the questions at issue to be dealt with by the operation of the Spirit of God, Who will surely be our Guide in this hour.

“ So, forgetting all things but the one great object of preaching the Gospel to all men, we shall fulfil the prayer of our Blessed Lord ‘ that they may all be one.’ ”

The Appeal has been well received, and we believe that its influence will be of a growing character. It was borne in upon the Conference that something of the kind was needed and it may well be that once again Cheltenham has taken a step which will have the most beneficial effect upon the position of Evangelicals and indirectly upon the Church at large.

Cheltenham has made large demands upon our **Prayer Book Revision.** space, but there is one other important subject to which reference must be made—the proposals for Prayer Book Revision embodied in the Report of the Committee of the National Assembly. It is not certain that these proposals will come up for discussion and adoption at the next session, but the National Church League leaves nothing to chance, and it has accordingly issued to its members and friends an urgent call to take the matter into its consideration at once:

The matter [it says] derives additional urgency and importance from the fact that the Committee state: “ We do not claim finality for our work. Indeed, we have clearly indicated

that further revision not only may, but will be needed in future." (Page 6.)

It is, of course, obvious that the results of such future revision will depend on the treatment of this Report. In many cases the proposals have much to commend them, but there are others, such as the permission of Reservation and of the use of the Vestments, the inclusion of prayers for the Dead, and, it may be added, the attitude taken towards Holy Scripture, which imply a reversal of principles on which the Prayer Book was drawn up; and if they are allowed to pass unchallenged, it will be more difficult to resist other demands of a like nature at a later stage.

The Minority Report issued by Mr. Athelstan Riley, moreover, indicates that proposals were made which did not find favour with the Revision Committee, and the possibility of these and others finding advocates in the Assembly should not be overlooked. It must not be assumed that the points in the Report to which objection may be taken are the only ones to be guarded against.

There is, then, no time to be lost if the general body of Churchpeople are to become acquainted with the nature of the proposed changes so as to be able to make their opinions known before the stage of final approval is reached. We suggest, therefore, that you should bring the matter before a special meeting of your parochial Church Council *at the earliest possible date*, and that a general parochial meeting with a lecture or address on the subject be also arranged for. If Resolutions are passed at these meetings, copies should be sent to the Bishop of the Diocese and to the Representatives (clerical and lay) of the Diocese on the National Assembly. We should be glad if copies were also sent to the Secretary of the National Church League for collation and reference.

The League has issued a carefully-prepared summary of the principal changes, from which it is seen that the proposed revision is of a more moderate character than was at one time expected. "But" (it is pointed out) "there are several points to which serious objection must be taken, such as Reservation of the Sacrament, the use of the chasuble at Holy Communion, the removal of the rubric requiring at least a minimum number of communicants ;

Prayer for the Dead in public worship ; the Commemoration of All Souls, so closely associated with the doctrine of Purgatory ; and the general attitude which appears to be taken with regard to Holy Scripture. In many points of detail the wording requires amendment, but these do not stand on the same footing as the foregoing. The number of alternatives in Prayers, Psalms, Lessons, Forms of Service, etc., may give some ' elasticity,' but are likely to cause much confusion in the minds of an ordinary congregation." Copies of the Report of the Committee can be obtained (*1s. 2d.* post free) from the Church Book Room, 82 Victoria Street, S.W.1.

The Church Congress, Sheffield. The Church Congress is meeting this month at Sheffield. It will consider "The Eternal Gospel."

The choice of this subject is due, we believe, to the criticisms which were passed upon last year's Congress, when economic, social and even sex questions received too much prominence. There is a general feeling, which found expression even in the secular press, that a Church Congress should concern itself mainly with spiritual matters. Among the numerous branches of the general subject which will be discussed, "The Gospel and Conversion" will, we hope, receive very clear and direct treatment. We associate ourselves with a recent comment on the Congress programme, which ran as follows : "No doubt many interesting things will be said on the meaning and psychology of conversion, but too much must not be conceded to exponents of psycho-analysis, and it is important to stress the fact that, after science has had its last word, it remains as a matter of simple experience that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. It is to the ministry of conversion that the Church needs to pay good heed. Not always does it occupy the place it demands, yet the ministry which does not aim at the personal conversion of souls to God is impotent as a spiritual force." Other branches of the general subject are : "The Gospel in History," "The Natural and the Supernatural," "The Gospel and the Person of Our Lord," "The Gospel and the Bible," "The Gospel and the Creeds," and, finally, "The Coming of the Kingdom." The discussion of these important questions will be awaited with interest. Sheffield has set an example in choosing a spiritual subject for its Congress, and we hope it will be followed in future years.

The Near East.

Among the many comments on the crisis in the Near East the best we have seen comes from the Bishop of Truro. He does not join the critics, but he says quite plainly and effectively that world-peace can only be assured on two conditions: First, the men who make it must be men of good-will, men who recognize that God and His righteousness have a place both in individual lives and in the life of the world; and secondly, the methods by which they make it must be the methods of the Kingdom of God. But his main point is that of personal responsibility. Governments have failed, he says, because they have not had behind them the compelling influence of a public opinion based on the principles of the Kingdom of God. "We cannot lay the blame upon the shoulders of any Government, for it rests upon our own." If anyone thinks this lies in the realm of theory, he answers that it is the business of those who hold the Christian faith to show the world how it is to be put into practice. There are four things, quite simple and practical, which we must begin to do and go on doing until the Church has fulfilled its task of helping God to bring His Kingdom. These four things he thus expounds:

First, we must pray. There is much prayer in our modern Church, and we are learning to make it plainer and more definite, but there is not enough belief in the efficacy of prayer. May God give us the faith to believe that His Spirit moving in the world will and does bring answers to prayers.

Second, we must live. An individual Christian whose life contradicts his creed is adding to the world's chaos. An individual act of malice, of meanness, or of selfishness, adds fuel to the fire which bursts out at last in the flames of war. The Spirit of Christ in one individual is additional help to the peace of the world. . . .

Third, we must teach. I have put life before teaching, because if the life, corporate and individual, is wrong, the teaching will be unavailing. The teaching of the Church is given in two ways: we teach in the pulpit and with the pen, we teach also in our common conversation, how manifold it is, with individual men. There needs to loom larger in both the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Christ's Gospel is one Gospel, but we think of it both in terms of the Cross and in terms of the Kingdom. . . .

Last, we must use all our influence to further those movements, man-made, and therefore, perhaps, faulty, which make most for the ideal of the Kingdom.

These are wise counsels, and if the Bishop's words were acted upon we should soon see a different temper in the discussion of public affairs.