

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1923

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Cheltenham Findings.

THE Eighth Conference of Evangelical Churchmen, clerical and lay, held at Cheltenham on May 23, 24, and 25 under the presidency of the Rector, the Rev. Canon H. A. Wilson, considered the general subject of Prayer Book Revision. The following Findings were agreed upon at the final Session of the Conference. They 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.

1. The Conference has approached the consideration of the Report on Prayer Book Revision with grateful appreciation of the devotion, learning, and careful and painstaking work of the Committee responsible for its production. It finds much in the Report which it cordially welcomes as supplying many real needs and promoting the depth and sincerity of public worship by bringing the Book of Common Prayer into closer relationship with the circumstances of our own day.

2. The Conference is in full sympathy with the general desire for such revision, on true Anglican lines, as will bring the Prayer Book into fuller correspondence with modern needs.

3. The Conference holds that it is the duty of all Evangelical Churchmen to make their contribution to the work of revision.

4. The Conference generally approves the proposals in the Measure (N.A. 84) with the exception of those concerning Holy Communion.

5. The Conference urges upon the Houses of the National Assembly the desirability of dividing the Revised Prayer Book (Permissive Use) Measure, 1923, into two Measures, one to consist of all clauses relating to the Offices of the Holy Communion and the Communion of the Sick, the other to consist of the remaining clauses, and urges the prior consideration of the latter Measure.

6. The Conference feels that responsibility to future generations demands that not expediency but the maintenance of truth shall be the guiding principle of revision. It would point out that Holy Scripture has always been recognized as the final court of appeal

in matters of faith and worship by Anglicans of all schools of thought.

7. The Conference holds that the doctrinal position here stated is in full accord with that of the great body of English Churchmen since the Reformation and with that of theologians of such varied types as Cranmer and Hooker, Cosin and Andrewes.

8. The Conference regards the proposal to provide an alternative book as a dangerous measure dictated by considerations of expediency alone, and urges that alternative forms, if any, should be embodied in the services of one book.

9. The Conference believes that an alternative liturgy would inevitably harden and perpetuate existing differences, and create fresh divisions among those who now use the present book.

10. The Conference would welcome some further addition to the proposals of the Measure such, for example, as special services for Foreign Missions, thanksgiving for the blessings of Harvest, forms for men's and women's services and children's services.

11. The Conference feels that while there are many proposals in the Measure which in its judgment require amendment, there are some which in their implications and cumulative effect call for the strongest opposition. Among these it would include :

The legalization of the Mass Vestments ;

The proposed changes in the Prayer of Consecration ;

The Reservation of the Sacrament, and

The Commemoration of All Souls.

12. The Conference regret that although as many as twenty-nine additions have been made to the Calendar, no Reformation or post-Reformation names, such as Tyndale, Cranmer, Hooker, Andrewes, and Butler have been included.

13. The Conference cannot forget that the Prayer Book is the heritage, not only of the Church of England, but of the British race, and would deplore changes which might raise further obstacles to re-union with our brethren of the non-Episcopal Churches.

14. The Conference, while realizing the advantage to the Church of a Revised Prayer Book, urges the paramount necessity of establishing some authority to enforce obedience to the new book when it is ordered for general use.

15. Though to its regret the Conference has been compelled to engage in this controversy, it desires to express its deep conviction that the greatest need of the world is the presentation of the Gospel of Christ in all its fullness. It recognizes with thankfulness the signs of spiritual revival which are now abundantly manifest ; and the earnest desire in all schools of thought to use the opportunity thus afforded for a renewed and more earnest effort to extend the Kingdom of God.

These Findings need no comment from us, but we
 The
 Conference. may be permitted to express our thankfulness that
 the Conference was evidently so largely in agreement
 with the Revision policy which has been advocated consistently

by the National Church League ever since the Report of the Revision Committee was published. Nor is it necessary for us to add anything on the general question of Revision. The papers read at the Conference explored so fully every aspect of the subject that we prefer our readers' attention should be centred on these ; they are printed in this number. But to make the narrative complete we must say that important contributions were made also by Prebendary C. W. Wilson, Vicar of Swansea, the Rev. R. Bren, Vicar of Christ Church, Malvern, and Mr. T. H. Hilken, member of the National Assembly, as well as by others who took part in the general discussion. It should be pointed out also that Revision did not occupy the whole time of the Conference. Each session was preceded by Intercessions, and at the opening meeting the subject of Spiritual Revival was considered, the paper being read by the Rev. the Hon. W. Talbot Rice, Vicar of St. Paul's, Onslow Square, who was followed by the Rev. J. J. Summerhayes, Vicar of St. John's, Ealing, as selected speaker. At the Holy Communion Service at the Parish Church a devotional address was given by the Rev. E. Davies, Vicar of Charles, Plymouth. Thus was the Conference spiritually prepared in mind and heart for discussing the more controversial questions.

“ Liberal
Evangelicalism.” The writers of “ Liberal Evangelicalism ” have issued a volume that has deservedly attracted considerable attention within and without the Church of England. It has been criticized as “ a soulless Modernism ” and has been welcomed as a proof that Evangelicalism has leaders, who can lead not only the members of their School but also the whole Church to a correspondence between Christian teaching and modern thought. The writers would probably disown equally both suggestions, for they are intent on putting forth a general policy, that will serve as an eirenicon between Evangelicals who are separated from one another by different approaches to and different conclusions from the study of the Truth they hold in common. The book calls itself an “ Interpretation ” and professes to be a restatement by men who have burst the shackles of a traditionalism that preserved what was falsely accepted by all as true in the past and was associated with the essential message of the Gospel. Some, who have read carefully its pages, find greater

emphasis on "Liberal" than on "Evangelicalism" and an eagerness to accept modernist ideas in contrast to a lack of adherence to the generally accepted tenets of the School. The Editor states that on two subjects especially there is uneasiness among the younger Evangelicals—the Inspiration of Holy Scripture and the Doctrine of the Atonement. Both need restatement. But the most striking feature of the book is the assertion that its presentation of theological truth will in due time pass like the presentations of the past, and that the modern Evangelical will find his own effort at interpretation replaced under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by new efforts in relation to new modes of thoughts.

We have as much faith as the writers of this book
 Permanent or
 Temporary? in the progress of critical inquiry on sound lines.

We have no desire to close our eyes to facts or really "assured results," as the most thoroughgoing Modernist. But more than once we have asked when reading a passage, "Is not this conclusion based on a theory that has no claim to permanence and is only a temporary working hypothesis?" "Is not this concession offered in the interests of peace, without regard to a historical background which teaches the exact opposite to the view of the writer?" It sometimes has seemed to us that writers placed before themselves the ideal "the age needs this and that—at least this is my opinion—how may I adapt the Gospel to give what I think the age needs?" On these principles it is possible to interpret with full consciousness that such interpretation is only temporary, but is this the right attitude for Evangelicalism—either Liberal or Traditional—to adopt? The infallibilities may have gone, indefectible certitude may be a dream, but surely Christian truth is something more than the partial adaptation of a part of the Gospel to a part of the *Zeitgeist*? We commend the book to the attention of all students, as it is an honest attempt to represent a type of approach to Truth which is prevalent in our time. With very much in the book we are in complete approval, but with a great deal we respectfully disagree as incomplete and at times something like a reversal of what Scripture teaches.