

Lausanne and Stockholm.

THESE two towns are becoming famous for international conferences and treaties. We are thinking of the World Conference on Faith and Order which met in August last at Lausanne, and of the Baptist World Congress which met in 1923 at Stockholm. The former was convened after seven years preparation, to study and discuss the differences of doctrine and organisation among the Churches, with a view to preparing the way for unity. Baptists met to evince our actual fellowship, to learn more of one another, to consider actual work and envisage desirable progress.

From Lausanne there will be issued five Reports: the first is unanimous, on the Message of the Church, the Gospel; the others are simply "to register the apparent level of fundamental agreements within the Conference, and the grave points of disagreements remaining; also to suggest certain lines of thought which may in future lead to a fuller measure of agreement." These four deal with the Nature of the Church, the Common Confession of Faith, the Ministry, the Sacraments. A sixth was drafted on Unity, in Relation to Existing Divisions; but it was not even received, and was remanded to a Continuation Committee. From Stockholm four years ago we issued only one similar document, a Statement of Baptist principles and purposes to the Christians and peoples of the world. When the Lausanne reports are available for the careful study they deserve, we shall be able to compare better.

Yet even now it is possible to note certain broad facts. At Lausanne there were official representatives of many churches. The *Church Times* special correspondent wrote that the preponderant element numerically consisted of delegates from the Protestant Churches of America and Great Britain, of every type from the Methodist to the Congregationalist and the Quaker—only the Baptists were absent—together with the Lutherans from Germany and the Nordic lands, and French Calvinists. We have gone through the lists as available, and we note also an important group from Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, Athens, Georgia and Armenia. But we wish to emphasise that at Stockholm native Baptists came from Austria, Burma, Finland, Holland, Italy, Lithuania and Spain—none of which countries appeared at Lausanne, even by missionaries. It is an obvious fact that Baptists were represented from many more countries than were found at Lausanne.

On most of the subjects discussed in Switzerland, Baptists have

made up their minds long ago, and have spoken clearly. Our own Baptist Union responded at Leeds last year to the Lambeth Appeal quite unmistakably, and we saw no object in going to talk over the same things again. The one thing that might have been gained would be to compel attention to our views; we know the Catholic views already, and know that they are irreconcilable with ours. The Roman Catholics were quite as clear and honest, and they also refused to send any representatives, for the same reasons.

The action of the Orthodox Churches commands equal respect. Last quarter we called attention to the impregnable historic position of the four Greek patriarchates, as well as to their numerical insignificance. The Most Reverend Metropolitan Stefan, of Sofia, Bulgaria, issued a careful statement in the name of all the Orthodox Churches, quite at the beginning, to say that they could not decline to bear their testimony and to point out the road of salvation, but to say that they did not hope to do more in co-operative work than to prevent the de-Christianisation of European society. The various Orthodox Churches did send delegates on that understanding. We cannot but note in passing that the Œcumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was represented by two Greeks from London, one from Leipzig and one from Lausanne itself. They were by no means satisfied; Stefan himself left, and every other delegate signed a declaration from which we take a few sentences wherewith most men will concur:—

“Reports on the Nature of the Church and upon the Common Confession of the Faith of the Church. The drafting of these two latter was carried out on a basis of compromise between what, in our understanding, are conflicting ideas and meanings, in order to arrive at an external agreement in the letter. . . We cannot conceive how agreement can be made possible between two conceptions which agree that the existence of the ministry of the Church is by the Will of Christ, but differ as to whether that ministry was instituted by Christ Himself in its three degrees of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. In the same way we judge there to be no practical value in an agreed formula as to the necessity of Sacraments in the Church, when there is a fundamental difference between the Churches, not only in regard to their number, but also as to their general significance, as to their particular essential nature, and as to their particular effects. . . We should view with satisfaction a partial re-union of those Churches which share the same principles, as a precedent to general re-union.”

With that very explicit statement, the Orthodox representatives practically withdrew. Verily extremes meet; Baptists and

Orthodox and Catholics see clearly enough that Union is impossible on a grand scale; that Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, heal their internal divisions is quite feasible; and the process may go further, as in Canada and South India. But there are quite opposite views on fundamental questions: it is dishonest to cloak them in ambiguous formulas, as Mr. Athelstan Riley declared: and the Orthodox delegates voiced our own conviction, "in matters of faith and conscience there is no room for compromise."

That is a lesson that might be taken to heart by many Anglicans. Some of the sharpest repartees were between Bishop Gore and the Archbishop of Armagh. And if some Anglicans flattered themselves that their communion was going to be accepted as a bridge between two parties, they were politely reminded by a Congregationalist that in America they numbered barely a million, whereas there were twenty-six million non-episcopal Protestants who were linked by fellowship which they desired their Episcopalian brethren to share. And a Methodist bishop from India less politely said he was not going to have his orders tinkered with by any Anglican bishop.

We would rather bring to remembrance our own clear-cut convictions. While we in Britain have expressed them more recently, and the "Faith of the Baptists" was well set out at Leeds, and has been well expounded and illustrated in a book by the president of our own Historical Society, yet it is better to quote from an utterance that is international—not to say "Ecumenical." For at Stockholm in 1923 there assembled 2,384 Baptist delegates accredited from thirty-seven different countries; and the Message was sent out with only one dissident.

"We rejoice that the spiritual unity of all believers is a blessed reality, not dependent upon organisation or ceremonies. . . . Baptists cannot consent to any form of union which impairs the rights of the individual believer. We cannot unite with others in any centralized ecclesiastical organisation wielding power over the individual conscience. We cannot accept the sacerdotal conception of the ministry which involves the priesthood of a class with special powers for transmitting grace. We cannot accept the conception of ordination made valid through a historic succession in the ministry. . . . Christian unity, therefore, can only come through obedience to the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament, which Baptists must ever take as their sole, sufficient, certain and authoritative guide. . . . Primarily, their duty is to make known the will of Christ and secure the willing submission of men to Him, as set forth in the gospel of the grace of God."

W. T. WHITLEY.