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THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1917.

The Month.

The Evangelical Position. THE "Modern" Churchmen have had their Conference at Cambridge, and now "Evangelical" Churchmen are in Conference at Cheltenham. The meetings are being held just as we go to press and we must reserve until next month any detailed comment on the proceedings. But there are one or two things in connexion with the Evangelical position which may be said here and now. We hope—indeed we feel confident—the Conference will prove of much greater usefulness to the Church at large, than did the Conference of the Modernists. The Cambridge utterances—or most of them—were very unsatisfying. Where they were not nebulous, they challenged opposition, and some of the things which were stated—*e.g.* that it did not really matter what our Lord said with regard to marriage, except that one was naturally influenced by what so great a soul thought and said—were distinctly painful. Whatever else it may be, or may not be, the Cheltenham message, we may be sure, will not contain anything so offensive as that. Nor will it give forth any uncertain sound on Foundation Principles. That is not the trouble with Evangelicals just now. There can be no doubt at all but that the Evangelical School of Thought is thoroughly sound upon Fundamentals; indeed we are persuaded that there is no School of Thought within the Church which holds more firmly, more devotedly and more loyally all the Essential Truths of the Christian Faith. And yet the party—the word has slipped through almost unconsciously—is sadly riven by internal differences and internecine strife, which weaken its witness and paralyse its influence; and men everywhere are asking what is to be the end of it all? If some of the

younger men appear to the seniors to be provokingly aggressive, it must in fairness be remembered that the seniors appear to the younger men to be perverse and obstinate in setting up as essentials what they (the younger men) regard only as accidentals. It is sad; it is pathetic, it is almost tragic when we see the superb opportunities for witness and service which lie ready, to their hands, and are being slowly but surely lost. No other School of Thought has a message to the Church and the world at all comparable in magnificence and power to that which Evangelicals could proclaim on the strength of the eternal principles enshrined in Evangelicalism; and the times are calling to them to step out into the conflict against the world and the devil. Why, then, should men, with such a power in their hands, spend their time and energy and strength over unhappy domestic controversies? Is there no remedy? Is the breach between the young and the old never to be healed? Is unity—real unity—impossible of attainment? If the answer to these questions were to be in the negative it would not need much prescience to discern something of the nature of the disaster which would follow. But we have good hope that some remedy *will* be found; that the breach *will* be healed, and that unity *will* be attained, because we believe that there is still much work for Evangelicals to do which must be done by them and can be done by no one else.

The Cheltenham Conference, though not called primarily, as far as we understand, to deal with internal dissensions, must exercise a most wholesome influence upon the fortunes of the party. Men cannot meet together for prayer and Conference "in view of the urgency"—to quote the words of the official invitation—"of arriving at a Common Platform on such subjects as the 'Kikuyu problems' and the Church and State Proposals of the Archbishops' Committee" without being drawn nearer to each other, and that, as it seems to us, is the real question of "urgency" for Evangelicals at the present time. We could have wished indeed that the Cheltenham Conference had been called more directly for that purpose; yet, perhaps, it is better as it is, leaving to another time—not too far distant we hope—the holding of a Round Table Conference for the express purpose of coming to a working agreement. But now to

come to closer contact with the Cheltenham programme. The principal papers arranged for were as follows:—

“ ‘ Christ’s Church Militant here in Earth.’ Its Mission : Its Message : Its Ministry ” (the Rev. J. R. Darbyshire). “ The Historical Attitude of the Church of England Towards other Churches ” (The Rev. H. A. Wilson). “ Practical Steps Towards Unity ” : (1) “ Fundamental Beliefs ” (the Rev. F. S. Guy Warman, D.D.), (2) “ The Mission Field ” (G. A. King, Esq.), (3) “ Church Organization ” (the Rev. W. H. Green, LL.B.), (4) “ Intercommunion ” (the Rev. C. H. K. Boughton, B.D.), (5) “ Interchange of Pulpits and Social Work ” (the Rev. F. C. Davies). “ Our Attitude Towards the Report of the Archbishops’ Committee on Church and State ” (the Rev. Dawson Walker, D.D.).

These are important questions ; they are urgent questions, and we are justified in believing that the Cheltenham Conference will offer a wise and reasonable solution of the many problems involved.

We are able to refer to two of the papers as they appeared in full in the *Record* of September 20. The Rev. J. R. Darbyshire, dealing with “ ‘ Christ’s Church Militant here in Earth ’ ” emphasized the fact that the Christian religion is one :—

There are religions many, making peculiar claims of divine revelation. Christians believe that a supreme revelation came by Jesus Christ, and separated as they are unhappily from one another, yet they claim to belong to one religion ; nay, more, to one Church. But while we cannot rightly speak of varying Christian religions we can speak of Churches in the plural without falsity, for though the Church is one, its unity includes many elements or parts. The Church of Christ is one because we have one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, yet it is manifold because the limitation of time and space differentiate the Church militant from the Church triumphant, and the varieties of nationality and temperament demand varieties of worship and organization. There must be Churches as well as the Church. Much thought has been spent upon the problem of finding the principle of unity beneath this unavoidable multiplicity and variety. Controversy has raged around the terms the Church visible and invisible. I venture to submit to you that hopeful discussion will rather start from and be constantly mindful of the Church indivisible. We shall discover the *mission, the message, and the ministry* of the Church militant here on earth, and arrive at some just assignment of the functions of local and national Churches by aspiring in reverent thought to the sublimity of the divine idea and viewing the Church in its magnificent totality. We shall do well to let our every thought re-echo the tones of those ancient phrases whose very form and history unite us with ages long past and experiences widely different from our own—“ *Sursum corda : Habemus ad Dominum.*”

Then in a wonderfully suggestive passage he drew a contrast between the unity of the Church triumphant and divisions of the Church militant :—

The Church triumphant is what it is because its members are tasting the fruits of the victory of that for which they long contended. The struggle involved for them, as it still does for us, a multitude of tragic skirmishes in the mists during which the hosts of darkness snatched many an undeserved success because in the obscurity brother turned against brother, and the ranks that should have been united mistook each other for the foe. But such mistakes should become less frequent. They can only become so as we cultivate the consciousness of the great cloud of witness all about us, and remember that we do not fight alone. They that are with us are more than they that are against us. If, as we know, the Christ by His victory and enthronement makes prevailing intercession for us, is it not further true that the triumphant host of His faithful saints is an ever-increasing auxiliary force, assisting us in ways beyond our comprehension, inspiring us not only to hopefulness but to clear-sighted recognition of the character of our conflict ?

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars :
 It may be in yon clouds concealed,
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
 And but for you, possess the field.

The unity of the saints triumphant is the unity of a company arrived at the City of God—a city that is at unity with itself ; a company to whom the question as to which of the twelve ever-open gates gave them entrance is indifferent : the divisions of the Church militant are the disputes as to which of the twelve gates afford a valid entry. To change the metaphor, the unity of the Church triumphant is the possession of a common experience of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord ; the divisions of the Church militant are the quarrels as to the legitimacy of the bodies in which that life is manifested here on earth.

Dr. Guy Warman's paper on Fundamental Beliefs contrasted Essentials and Accidentals. Quoting the **Evangelical Principles.**

Dean of Westminster he referred to these three principles to which Evangelicals owe special allegiance : (a) Holy Scripture is the one absolute standard of Christian doctrine and conduct. (b) Complete liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment are the prerogatives of the believer in Christ. (c) The National Church is independent of all foreign control. From these three principles Evangelicalism, he said, proceeded to postulate three others as typical of and essential to its position in the Church : 1. The direct access of every soul to God through Christ. 2. The all-sufficiency of Christ as the Saviour of every one who comes to Him. 3. The gift of the Holy Spirit to all who thus accept Him. These three points Dr. Guy Warman elaborated with much illuminating power, but we can only quote the concluding passages of his impressive paper :—

Evangelicalism must stand firm upon its fundamentals ; it can afford to be generous about accidentals. I believe, perhaps I am biased, it will

endanger its fundamentals if it arrays itself, as a whole, against either Church Reform or Prayer Book Revision. Our assurance of the priesthood of the whole Church should make us anxious that the laity should have a real voice in the government of the Church, and although I do not ask for acceptance of every detail I do crave a "second reading" approval of the Report on Church and State. Our proclamation of a Gospel for all should make us anxious that our service book should meet the needs of the day. Individually we all revise the Prayer Book, corporately we should be on the side of such an authorized revision as shall maintain the doctrinal balance, and at the same time meet the felt needs of both the man in the street, the loyal High Churchmen, and the cultured and thoughtful laymen. Moreover, an authorized revision will make it much easier to deal with unauthorized disloyalty. With our own preferences as to ritual we can be patient of the preferences of others like-minded with ourselves in matters of fundamental truth. Although I normally take the north end myself, I confess I have little sympathy with those who would regard the Eastward Position as disloyal to the Evangelical school. Ritual can never of itself be fundamental.

Finally, with reference to our Nonconformist brethren, while we hold to the historic episcopate as both scriptural and primitive and Catholic, it does seem to me that our principles almost compel us to recognize the ministries of our separated brethren, though they be ordered on other lines than ours. We recognize Roman orders, why not Presbyterian?

We want the Church to be fully Catholic. Fidelity to fundamental truth is an essentially Catholic principle, and we must see to it that we do not obscure our fidelity by prejudice or narrowness. We must abide by the Word of the Lord, but we must not go beyond it. For it still seems to lay upon the Church no greater burden than those necessary things. I would close with a word of appeal—of appeal for unity among ourselves, for mutual understanding and considerateness. Ours is a splendid opportunity, but we must show a united front. I stand perhaps between youth and age. I respect and reverence those who have borne the burden of the day before me; I love, and I think I understand the younger men who with real earnestness and true spirituality are facing the problems before us. We cannot all think alike. God has given us reason and conscience, a real right, within the limits of truth, of private judgment. It is not for us to ignore or condemn or exclude. It is for us to pray, to work, to teach, to live in happy harmony, "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

If only this appeal for internal unity were responded to the whole outlook would be quickly changed.

An agitation is being set on foot in the name of
 Divorce Law Reform. "Divorce Law Reform," in support of the following
 draft Bill which *The Times* tells us some people wish
 the Government to adopt—

1. This Act may be cited as the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1917.
2. From and after the passing of this Act, all decrees for judicial separation and all orders for a separation by any Court of Summary Jurisdiction shall, after a period of three years from the date thereof, have the same effect and force as a decree absolute for dissolution of marriage; provided always that either the husband or wife so separated shall make application therefor to the Court which has made the decree or order in question, and satisfy the

said Court that cohabitation has not been resumed during the said period of three years.

3. It shall also be lawful for any husband or wife to present a petition to the High Court of Justice, praying that his or her marriage may be dissolved on the ground that they have been continuously separated for the said period of three years, whether by mutual agreement or for any other reason.

This is an amazing proposition, and we associate ourselves with the *Church Times*, which pungently points out that so far as legal recognition is concerned, "this Bill reduces marriage to the level of concubinage. It makes the union of man and woman practically terminable at the will of either party. Husband or wife has but to go apart; the law will not compel cohabitation; after three years the legal union will be dissolved. But the power to determine the connection at will is precisely what distinguishes concubinage from marriage. The Bill is therefore a Bill for the abolition of Marriage."

The "reform" proposed by the draft Bill is warmly championed by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Lord Gorell, but not content with discussing the practical side of the question they have ventured to enter into the historical aspect of the matter. But history, apparently, is not their strong point. Professor Whitney, the great Church historian, has completely pulverized the contention that Christian tradition supports their advocacy of divorce. He points out that the Report of the Royal Commission says (p. 12) that in the Middle Ages there was a rule "abolishing, theoretically at least, all absolute divorce from the Western Church." Then (p. 13) the Council of Trent "finally settled the Canon Law of Divorce," "preserving the essential features of that law." In England (p. 20) "from the Restoration onwards to 1857 the Legislature alone granted the complete divorce." That is, the English Church would have nothing to do with it. After the Commonwealth (p. 22) "the mind of the Church of England was at last convinced that there could be no divorce *a vinculo*," a view amply supported even for an earlier period by Sir Lewis Dibdin in his "English Church Law and Divorce." "There is," he adds, "no ground for supposing any departure by it from the general Christian teaching." Nor is this the extent of his exposure. Against Sir A. Conan Doyle's contention that "all Christian nations are more liberal than ourselves in dealing with this subject," Professor Whitney sets the following facts also taken from the Report :

In Italy no divorce is permitted (p. 22) ; in Austria it exists only for Protestants and Jews (p. 21) ; in Newfoundland there is no law of divorce, and in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, and the newer Provinces it is possible only by private Acts of the Dominion Parliament (p. 19). It is not often that misstatements are so promptly and so effectively disposed of.

Canonical Obedience. The following Note by the Bishop of Oxford is of great interest—

I have always interpreted the oath of "canonical obedience" to the bishop which is taken by the presbyter as meaning "obedience according to the rules or canons of the Church," to which the bishop also is subject. This comes to much the same thing as the interpretation of the words given by the Courts of Law (see Phillimore, *Eccl. Law*, vol. 1, p. 103): "The oath of canonical obedience does not mean that the clergyman will obey all the commands of the bishop against which there is no law, but that he will obey all such commands as the bishop by law is authorized to impose." But I prefer the interpretation given above. It has, however, been objected to me that Bishop John Wordsworth (see his *Life*, p. 169) defined canonical obedience as "obedience such as befits a canonical person. It is not obedience to the rules and canons of the Church as some, rather trivially, explain it. . . . The word 'canonical' is, in this sense, derived from *κανών* signifying a roll or register, rather than from *κανών* in the sense of a rule. Canonical obedience is that due from a man on the clerical roll to him whose name stands at the head of it, under whom he chooses to place himself." I have the greatest respect for John Wordsworth's learning; but in this case I believe he was mistaken. Thomassin *Vetus et Nova Ecclesiæ Disciplina* (De Beneficiis lib. ii., capp. 44-46) discusses the origin and meaning of clerical oaths and gives many references. I think that, though these chapters contain no definition, they show conclusively that the term "obediencia canonica" or "canonice obedire" means obedience according to the canons and rules of the Church.

A The unfortunate omission from Mr. Fisher's Education Bill of all attempt to deal with the religious instruction question may have serious results. Already the Rationalist Press Association has passed a resolution which, while welcoming the education proposals of Mr. Fisher, goes on to express the view that "the only just solution (of the religious difficulty) is to confine instruction in all State-supported schools to subjects now officially described as secular in the English educational code." This, however, is not the sort of "solution" which would be acceptable to the country, and it is worthy of note that this Association, which represents, we imagine, a very small fraction of the population, seeks to force its views upon the great majority of the people, who are anxious that religious education

should form a definite part of a child's training. Its proposal, were it adopted, would strike a blow at the cause of freedom, and would be bitterly resented. It is, however, no new experience in the education controversy to find strong partisans endeavouring to coerce others by imposing their views upon those who are diametrically opposed to them. During the struggles of a few years ago a section of Nonconformity, which has always opposed the definite Christian instruction for which Church schools have ever stood, was keenly anxious that, if there were to be religious education at all, it should be of only one type, undenominational in tone and character, quite regardless of the fact that such a system would not only be unsatisfying to a very large section of the community, but would be regarded also as a direct violation of the most cherished religious convictions of those who desired that their children should be educated in the faith which they, their parents, professed. But, happily, the plan failed.

**What is the
Solution?**

It is obvious that a righteous solution of the religious education difficulty must be found; and if the question were only faced with courage and resolution, agreement ought not to be impossible. It will never be arranged on the lines of the programme of the Rationalist Press Association, for the country has always been against the secular solution; and now, more than ever, since it has seen in the case of Germany the appalling results which must ensue whenever moral sanctions and moral restraints have been thrown to the winds, it is determined that religion must enter into the education of the young. As the Bishop of Carlisle recently said, without religion both individual and national life is incomplete; in its absence there is neither sanction nor security for morals, neither cement nor stability for domestic or social life; and we feel persuaded, therefore, that Mr. Fisher will find himself compelled to deal with the problem if he desires his scheme of education reform to be of real service to the country. The broad principles which must govern any settlement of the question are apparent. Provision must be made for equality of opportunity for all, and there must be coercion for none. The rights of Church parents must be safeguarded equally with those of Nonconformist parents. The policy so long advocated by Churchmen is the only one which will meet the difficulty equitably and

justly. The key to the situation is to be found in the whole-hearted recognition of the rights of parents to have their children educated in the faith which they themselves profess, and that, too, by teachers qualified by conviction and faith to give such education. The adoption of such a policy would satisfy every legitimate aspiration and would infringe upon the liberties of none.

