

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1918.

The Month.

The Cheltenham Conference. WHAT is the Cheltenham Conference? Whom does it represent? What are its powers? These questions, and such as these, have been much in the minds of Churchmen during the last few weeks, and it may be well to offer some sort of answer to them as far as we are able to do so. (1) The Conference had its origin in a strongly expressed desire on the part of some of the younger Evangelical clergy for some means of discussing together current Church problems in order, if possible, to arrive at a policy with a view to united action. The matter was carefully considered and it was ultimately arranged that the Rector of Cheltenham should convene such a Conference and that it should be held in that delightful town. Hence the name of the gathering. The first Conference was held in June, 1916, and immediately proved successful. A small Committee was afterwards formed, with headquarters in London, to arrange for future meetings. The second Conference was held at Cheltenham in September, 1917, with a larger attendance, and the interest manifested was so great that it was evident that it met a need not provided for in any other way and that it must become an annual event. The arrangements for this year's Conference presented some difficulty. The restrictions on railway travelling, coupled with the food problem, made a meeting at Cheltenham almost impossible. It was decided therefore that the Conference, still retaining its original title, should meet in London, under the presidency of the Rector of Cheltenham. Accordingly it met in London on June 5 and 6, but the Rev. H. A. Wilson was unable to attend owing to a domestic bereavement, and his place was taken, and his opening address read, by the Chairman of the Committee, the Rev. George F. Irwin, B.D. The attendance was large, over 250 acceptances having been received from clergy and laity largely, but by no means

altogether, belonging to London and the district. Such is the Cheltenham Conference. (2) The second question, Whom does it represent? is more difficult to answer. Strictly speaking it represents only those who attend it, but from a wider point of view it may be said to voice the views of a large and growing body of Evangelical Churchmen, laity as well as clergy, who, in the words of the Rector of Cheltenham, "stand for a progressive Evangelicalism" which they believe "must issue in a firm and fearless policy." There are, however, certain limitations for, even in the matter of the Findings, it is always clearly provided that they are to be taken to express "the general sense of the Conference and not as completely representing in detail the views of individual members." This is an important safeguard, enabling all in general sympathy with the aims of the Conference to attend it, without in any way compromising their liberty of thought or of action. (3) There remains the third question—What are its powers? In the ordinary sense of the term it has none. It has no executive or administrative functions; yet it is no mere debating society. It is a deliberative body brought together for the express purpose of coming to certain conclusions, and on the questions under discussion it helps to create an atmosphere and to formulate a line of policy. It will be seen, therefore, that its moral "power" is great, and the more widely its "Findings" are made known the more widespread will be its influence. Not that its conclusions will always and everywhere carry conviction in detail; there must always be allowed room for honest differences of opinion, but it is something gained to have the views of a deliberative assembly, composed of clergy and laity sincerely attached to Evangelical principles, upon current Church problems in regard to which definite guidance is most clearly needed.

The Cheltenham Conference, while not excluding
This Year's Findings. other questions from its purview, has centred attention chiefly upon the Reunion problem. In 1916 and in 1917 certain aspects of it were discussed; this year it was considered more fully and certain conclusions were arrived at. The "Findings" stand by themselves; but special interest attaches, also, to the papers read at the Conference. We are glad to be able, by the courtesy of the writers, to print some of these this month, and we are sure our readers will value the opportunity of reading

the Chairman's impressive address, and the clear and masterly expositions of each of the points of the Lambeth Quadrilateral contained in the papers by Dr. Harden (Holy Scripture), the Rev. H. B. Gooding (The Two Creeds), Canon Barnes-Lawrence (The Two Sacraments: On Baptism ¹) and the Rev. C. Sydney Carter (The Historic Episcopate). Dr. Eugene Stock's paper on "The Historic Episcopate" and the paper by the Rev. George F. Irwin and the address by the Rev. Dr. Garvie on "Possibilities of Reunion" will appear next month. But the full text of the "Findings" agreed to at the final session of the Conference must be given at once. They are as follows:—

(1) That the ultimate goal at which to aim is the union of all believers in Christ in one visible society.

(2) That the four points of the Lambeth Quadrilateral present a sufficient preliminary basis of future reunion.

(3) That the acceptance of the authority of Holy Scripture is to be taken as "the general and loving acceptance of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith." (Lambeth Conference Committee, 1897, p. 109.)

(4) That the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, "both in their statements of historical fact and in their statements of doctrine, affirm essential elements of the Christian faith as contained in Scripture, which the Church could never abandon without abandoning its basis in the Word of God. There is no contradiction between the acceptance of the miracles recited in the Creeds and the acceptance of the principle of order in nature as assumed in scientific inquiry, and we hold equally that the acceptance of miracles is not forbidden by the historical evidence candidly and impartially investigated by critical methods." (First Interim Report, Sub-Committee of the United Conference on Faith and Order.)

(5) That the acceptance of these Creeds should be an expression of corporate belief on the part of the churches concerned.

(6) That the administration of the Sacraments of the Gospel—namely, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—is essential for such an united Church.

(7) That Episcopacy appears to be that form of Church order on which it is practical to look for reunion. The approximations to episcopal systems which have made their appearance in more than one non-episcopal Church are an evidence of growing acceptability of some form of Episcopacy.

(8) That acceptance of the Historic Episcopate as an order of the ministry without any theory as to its origin or character should be sufficient.

(9) That no proposals for reunion which would discredit the present ministry or status of recognized ministers of the non-episcopal Churches should be contemplated.

(10) That pending the consummation of a visible unity, those churches which accept the first three articles of the Quadrilateral should be fully recognized as branches of the Church of Christ, and their members admitted to Holy Communion in the Church of England, and reciprocally.

¹ We regret that no report is available of the perfectly admirable address given by Mr. G. A. King on the Holy Communion.

(11) That members of the Church of England should not be discouraged from partaking of Holy Communion with members of such non-episcopal Churches in their places of worship.

(12) That the action of those clergy is to be supported who have accepted invitations to preach in non-episcopal places of worship or have united with non-episcopal ministers in evangelistic and devotional efforts on common grounds, and that legal barriers which prevent the parochial clergy from inviting recognized ministers of such non-episcopal Churches to preach in parish churches should be removed.

It is not to be supposed that these "Findings" will be adopted in their entirety even by Evangelical Churchmen. It is not pretended, as we understand the position, that they in any way bind "the party" as such; but they do offer, for general guidance, lines of policy on Christian unity which all sections of Churchmen, and not Evangelicals only, may well consider with a view to acceptance and adoption. It will have been noted, as at least significant of the way feelings are being moved on this question that the *Church Times* of June 14 referring to the "Findings" said: "Without committing ourselves to the approval of the Conference's proposals in detail, we welcome them as showing that Evangelicals cling to the historic episcopate, and as encouraging the hope that the feeling of loss is prompting many in the non-episcopal communities to make some sacrifices in order to repair it. We may still be a long way from reunion, but it is something to have planted the feet in the path towards that goal."

Changes in the Communion Service. Before parting with the Cheltenham Conference proceedings, it must be noted that at the final session the following resolution was adopted unanimously: "That this meeting of Churchmen desires to place on record its determined opposition to the proposed changes in the prayers in the Communion Service, as being calculated to support a doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper which this Church rejected at the Reformation, and as constituting a grave hindrance to reunion with other reformed Churches." No more important question than this is before the Church at the present time and every opportunity should be taken of registering a protest against the proposal. The gravity of the issues raised by the suggested change was fully explained in articles in the *CHURCHMAN* of May and June, and evidence is not wanting that if the change is persisted in it may possibly rend the Church of England in twain. If the Bishops want to

“hold the Church together” this proposal must be dropped. Nothing during the whole course of the twelve years’ discussion on Prayer Book Revision has aroused such deep feeling among Evangelical Churchmen, and the Bishops may rest assured that under no circumstances will the change be assented to. The sooner the proposal is abandoned the better it will be for the peace of the Church.

Dr. A. C. Headlam’s inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford struck a new and welcome note. His theme was “The Study of Theology,” and laymen certainly will thank him for insisting as strongly as he did that if it were not to be a barren study it must be the interpretation of a deep and simple religious experience. Shall we be going too far if we say that much of what passes for theological exposition has become a real danger to the spiritual life of the people? Some modern theologians—but by no means all—have seemed to think so much about scientific “exactness” and “accuracy” that they have obscured the splendour of Him Who is the heart and the centre of all true theology, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Or, to put it another way, they have given the impression that they care more about the husk than the kernel of religion. Dr. Headlam expresses so exactly what we have long been feeling on this subject that we venture to quote his words:—

It had to be confessed that, to a certain extent, our academic theology and the religious teaching of our clergy had been found wanting in the present crisis. Our theology had been too much concerned with subordinate questions, and too little with the fundamental facts. Our minds had become absorbed in the history of the ministry, or the dislocation of the canon, or the Chalcedonian Christology, and we had forgotten to speak and think of the being and nature of God, of life and death, and judgment. Interest in the details of worship or current controversy or ecclesiastical business had prevented us from being conscious of failure in deeper things. Yet, what availed all the subordinate concerns of religion if the fundamental faith were obscured? Religion, again, had become confused with the conception of material progress, which was the creed of the Victorian era, and we had begun to think that sin had no real existence. Christianity had become confused in many minds with the shallow contemporary political thought, and when the breakdown came, the disillusionment was terrible. People thought that God had failed. It was not the Christian religion which had failed, but the popular version of it, which had been profoundly influenced by the utilitarian and progressive ideas of the times, and the official presentations which had largely got out of touch of reality.

“Out of touch of reality.” It is a serious charge, but it is largely

true of much of what passes for religious teaching in these days, and until we get into touch with the greatest realities of all there will continue to be failure, absolute and complete.

Canon Glazebrook's Reply. As the Bishop of Ely's letter to Canon Glazebrook was quoted in last month's CHURCHMAN it is right to mention here that the Canon has addressed to him a reply in which he claims that, in regard to the resurrection, the Bishop has seriously misrepresented his position. He says that it is "the resurrection of the flesh that modern Churchmen claim may without heresy be regarded as symbolical," and that the Bishop's letter "has naturally given some readers, who were not acquainted with the book, the false impression that I have denied the reality of our Lord's Resurrection." Canon Glazebrook then enters upon what we hope we may without offence call a subtle analysis of the Lambeth Conference declaration with a view to showing that it cannot be understood in its natural sense. How then, he asks, is it to be understood? He replies: "We must take 'the historical facts' to mean such of the statements as appear in the light of our present knowledge to be historical: and regard the other statements as symbolical." But "since they have left it doubtful how far their principle of symbolical interpretation may be carried, their followers have in some measure to judge for themselves." This is not a very satisfying explanation and we shall await with interest the fulfilment of the Bishop's intention to challenge the Canon's arguments.



[NOTE.—In order to make room for the papers read at the Cheltenham Conference, which are of pressing importance, we have been compelled to hold over the continuation of Dr. Griffith Thomas's "Studies in St. John" and of Archdeacon Moule's "Exposition of Isaiah xxiv.-xxvii." Further papers will appear in the series on "The Office of Lay Reader" and in that on "The Training of Candidates for Holy Orders."]