

[Cheltenham Conference Paper.]

## FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES.

### (a) PROBLEMS OF THE HOME CHURCH.

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IF Reunion or steps thereto were not in our minds we should probably all agree in the opinion that the Evangelization of England is our first and greatest Home Problem. To draw England to Christ, to save it from the scourge of a selfish and materialistic Syndicalism, to displace the Gospel of Marx on the one hand and of Smiles on the other by the Gospel of Christ, to create a spirit of Brotherhood and righteousness amongst all classes, this surely is the problem of problems.

And though it is not before us to-day, may we not say that what we are to discuss is so related to it that we can never hope for its realization until we have found a practical solution of the question under discussion. England refuses to be evangelized by a divided Church; and a divided Church is incapable of England's evangelization.

The National Mission of 1916 emphasized a National indifference to religion. True, it was notably successful in many parishes in drawing large and interested congregations of devout people to Church, but it produced no effect on the country; it left England as ignorant and as wicked and as careless as it found it. The Bishops, always yielding where pressure is strong, influenced by a narrow and reactionary party in the Church, refused the generous offer of the Free Churches to mobilize their forces in alliance with ours; and so we lost the war; as France would have lost the war had she refused the aid of England and America.

"That is our case" for Reunion. The Salvation of men; the honour of Christ; the establishing of His Kingdom are very much more to us than the views of an eminent bishop of Carthage of the third century, whose Church principles, however useful and even necessary in his age, are quite impossible in ours. "It does not follow," writes that wise man John Selden, "we must have bishops still, because we have had them so long. They are equally mad who say Bishops are so *Jure Divino* that they must be continued, and they who say they are so anti-Christian that they must be put away." Nevertheless it is not Bishops but certain disputable and even discredited theories about Bishops that is our chief stumblingblock in the road to Reunion.

The first Home Problem then from the viewpoint of an Evangelical and Liberal English Churchman is the problem of relating Episcopacy to the general movement towards Reunion; that is assuming our aim to be corporate Reunion. There is, of course, the alternative policy of maintaining the *status quo ante* in all

the Churches on the principle of equality of ministrations and inter-communion. This alternative has much to commend it, and would possibly be readily accepted by the Evangelical portion of the English Church,—as a matter of fact Cheltenham has accepted it; but it is morally certain that High Churchmen would reject it; and on the other hand, if Free Churchmen persist in their demand that they must have unity with the whole of the English Church or with none of it, in itself a demand just and reasonable, we should have reached a deadlock along this road, that is if we are, as I presume we are, bent on immediate action. All the same the matter is not one that we should dismiss from our minds, for it is quite possible that one day the Free Churches may modify their views with regard to it, as they certainly would do in the case of the disruption of the National Church—a contingency which may be nearer than many of us realize, but which it is our wisdom to oppose with all our resources.

For the present, however, we may be well advised to keep to the consideration of some form of Episcopacy, which our Free Church brethren could cordially accept. As to this it must be made clear, once for all, that no form should even be presented to them for their acceptance which would involve their Ministers in a repudiation of their present standing as fully authorized Ministers of Christ's Church, in the respective communions to which they belong. In our judgment their position is sufficiently covered by our Church Article 23, which recognizes the validity of Ministers who have been duly called and sent by men who have public authority in the congregation to do so. Richard Baxter was without exception the greatest and most representative of the Puritan divines. James Usher, Archbishop of Armagh, was possibly the most learned bishop in Europe. It may not be known to all of you that these two friends arrived at a perfect understanding with regard to a National Church, Episcopally governed, and embracing all the Christians of England. As Bishop Lightfoot took up the Epistles of Ignatius and practically restored them, after their many mutations, to where Usher left them, is it, we may well ask, beyond the bounds of possibility for the successors of Baxter and the successors of Usher, to take up this question at the point where the good intentions of those ripe and holy Scholars were frustrated by the fury of Jeffreys and the selfishness and obstinacy of the Stuarts?

I am of opinion that Free Church Scholars would find the best of our English divines eminently reasonable. We should not be wrong in claiming Jewell and Hooker as the best exponents of the English Church position. A broad-minded Free Churchman would find little to object to in their writings. Hooker stands to us in a somewhat similar relation to that of Aquinas to the Church of Rome. I have read his immortal fifth book some seven times, and having with great pains (being slow of thought) read myself into his position, I discovered that so far is he from endorsing the Cyprianic conception of Episcopacy, or claiming an exclusive position for it, the whole weight of his powerful argument is concentrated on

proving that there is really after all no great harm in Episcopacy, and that the system is not nearly so black as some of its Puritan adversaries had painted it. This reasonable and moderate position is the real secret of Hooker's massive strength.

I have mentioned these circumstances to show that it is by no means impossible that, working on the lines of our English Reformers and later divines, a form of Episcopacy agreeable to Scripture and acceptable to our Free Church brethren may in time be worked out.

Should we then have reached the end of our differences? By no means, I fear. In dealing with some of the Free Churches, we shall find that we and they are poles asunder on the subject of the relations of Church and State. The true Anglican position is that of Hooker, and later of Thomas Arnold, both of whom maintain that the English Church is the English State viewed from its religious side, that every English citizen who professes and calls himself a Christian is a member of the English Church in virtue of his citizenship. This noble conception has received almost its death-blow by the much be-lauded Enabling Act; and we have now the comforting assurance of some of the bishops that at the earliest moment they will move the substitution of the Confirmation test for the Baptismal. Yet this is a measure which had the support of some highly popular Evangelicals. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you! To some of our minds the worst service the Tractarians rendered the country was the making war on this position; but the difficulty I anticipate arises from the fact that while Tractarian opposition was by implication—involved in its teaching—Free Church opposition is explicit, open and undisguised. Hooker's idea meant something more than a partnership, for in his mind Church and State were one; to the modern Independent and the Scotch Free Churchmen this is Erastianism to be abhorred of all faithful Christians; sharply dividing Church and State they will countenance no right of State interference with the affairs of the Church. For them the Church must be self-contained and all-sufficient for all the purposes of teaching religion and for Ecclesiastical legislation. To the English Churchman, who really knows the mind and genius of his Church, this attitude is unacceptable. He cannot regard the State as hostile, pagan or godless. He knows that in the long and glorious history of this land Church and State grew up together; that the Church is less the creation of the State than the State is the creation of the Church; that to tear them asunder would, in the words of Mr. Gladstone, leave England a bleeding and lacerated mass. The separation of Church and State would therefore in his judgment be too high a price to pay for even so desirable an object as union with the Free Churches. In this connexion it should be mentioned that the modern Free Churchman has departed widely from his great Puritan forbears, Cromwell, Baxter, Selden. Cromwell stoutly maintained that the care of religion is the duty of the State, and that if any whosoever denies that their interests are one let not, he says, my soul enter into their secret. John Selden goes so far as to say with regard to Church affairs, "All is

as the State wishes." It would help matters in no small measure if this reasonable state of mind, or something approaching to it, possessed our Free Church brethren to-day. There is something unreal and even sophistical in the argument that since the British Parliament is now composed of men of all religions and of none, it is an unfit place for the discussion of questions affecting the Church. As a matter of fact the British Parliament is a vastly more moral and righteous body to-day than it was in the days of George III, and the House of Lords is an assembly of Saints compared with the immoral gamblers and winebibbers who tenanted the gilded chamber in those days.

Moreover, the members who take part in debates on Church questions are for the most part men interested in religion; and if a devout Nonconformist joins in the discussion of such questions he is quite within his right in so doing. Since the Church is the Church of the nation, even the voice of a Bottomley might not be considered out of place as showing us what men of the world think about the Church.

Amongst our Home Problems there is another matter deserving our attention. Evangelical Churchmen have no place for Sacerdotalism. It is not surprising then if they are made a little uneasy by what appears to be a steady growth in the Free Churches of sympathy with high sacramental views; and that a very considerable number of those who pass from Nonconformity to the English Church ally themselves not with the Evangelical School but with the Sacerdotalists. Are we to be blamed if we feel a little anxiety as to whether in the event of a union in one Episcopal body, with, of course, wide liberty in the matter of public worship, the weight of Nonconformity might not be thrown on the Sacerdotal side, and thus the last state of England become worse than the first?

I feel that the points I have raised to-day are more or less of an academical character, and I have dealt with them in that way.

A United Church, Episcopally governed, with diversities of worship as wide as we at present enjoy, is one solution. A confederation of Christian Churches in communion with each other is another. The difficulties presented by our very different views in the relations of Church and State call for consideration.

But all the time I have a feeling that perhaps we are following a wrong scent. God's idea of Unity may be very far removed from ours. Our different modes have not been wholly disadvantageous. England is a more enlightened, progressive and Christian country than Spain. It may be that like Maeterlinck's Blue Bird the thing we are in search of is in the home all the time, and that God's will is that we should remain as we are; and that all that is needed at present is the cultivation of love and fellowship. Work together, worship in each other's churches, including above all joint partaking of the Holy Supper, preach in each other's pulpits, gladly recognize each other's ministrations. Thus manifesting to the world that we are not divided in spirit and that there is but one Church of Christ—one flock with many folds—the world's

attention will be arrested by the sight of this great, new thing ; and seeing we are one may be led to believe that the Father has sent His Son to be its Saviour and its Lord.

Whatever lies before us in the future, it seems quite clear that this is our first step. Let us take it, courageously, in dependence upon God and wait on Him till He guide us to the next. Greater things must surely follow, but we may safely leave them in His hands.

" Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see  
The distant scene ;  
One, step enough for me."

### SOME S.P.C.K. PUBLICATIONS

The Rev. J. H. Swinstead, D.D., gives an interesting account of the *Relations between the Anglican and Swedish Churches* in a pamphlet bearing that title and issued by the S.P.C.K. as No. 4 of the " Church Historical Pamphlets " (4d. net).

Chancellor P. V. Smith's illuminating and informing pamphlet, *Church Self-Government* (S.P.C.K., 8d. net), ought to be studied by all Churchpeople, not only for its intrinsic interest, but for its clear exposition of the methods of election under the new constitution.

The Parish Cards of the S.P.C.K. are always useful. A new one lately issued (No. 170) is beautifully illuminated and can be adapted for use as a memento of almost any occasion. Ample space is allowed for localization (4d. net). Another richly illuminated card depicts Christ blessing little children, and spaces are left for the insertion of name and dates of baptism, confirmation and first Communion.

Under the editorship of Dr. Sparrow Simpson the S.P.C.K. is publishing a new quarterly, *The Christian East*, to appear in March, June, September and October (1s. 6d. a number or 6s. per year, post free). The first number secured a word of " God-speed " from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who thinks that the review will go far to remove the difficulty which now, as always, besets the inter-relations of the Anglican and Eastern Churches—" the absence on either side of accurate knowledge of the facts."

Two daintily arranged little volumes are included in the " Manuals of the Inner Life " series, viz., *The Devotions of Bishop Andrewes*. The first volume is a reprint of Newman's translation of the Greek Devotions of Bishop Andrewes made from the edition of 1675 and issued by Newman as one of the *Tracts for the Times* (No. LXXVIII) in 1840. The present edition contains an interesting introduction from the learned Professor Swete, written just before his death in 1917. The second volume is a reprint of Dr. John Mason Neale's version of the Latin Devotions of " the holy Bishop," as Andrewes is called in the original preface. Each volume is issued at 3s. 6d. net.

Three additions to the series of S.P.C.K. Tracts call for notice. *Aspects of the Eucharist* (by T. W. Crafer, D.D., 6d. net) has much in it of value on the devotional side, but we find ourselves at variance with the author on the doctrinal side, especially in regard to the " sacrificial " aspect of the Eucharist. *Varieties of English Religion* (by E. C. Hoskyns, M.C., 6d. net) contains the four addresses given in the chapel of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, each of which, but particularly that on Anglicanism, provides much food for thought. *The Child's First Ideas of God* (by A. H. McNeile, D.D., 4d. net) offers guidance to parents in the religious training of their children and will be found eminently useful and suggestive.