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Faith and Order.

TWO important congresses have met in recent years, at Stockholm and at Lausanne. From the former, interest in the life and work of Christians has been excited; the latter deals with matters which are not at first sight so attractive or useful, faith and order. Yet while a child can appreciate at once the beauty of the flower and the taste of the fruit, even that child can soon be led to understand that flower and fruit must be upheld by a stem, must be nourished through leaf and root. For Church life and Church work, there must be Christian faith and some order.

As there is such variety in Christendom on all these points, conference is now taking place on them all; and it seems probable that every five years a few hundred people will come together to consult frankly on one or other pair of these four topics. The method adopted at Edinburgh for missions, and at Birmingham for Copec, is likely to be used again, so that considered reports may guide the discussions. Therefore careful preparation is needful, to see that the enquiries shall not evade real issues, and shall be conducted with wisdom and frankness. Already the International Critical Commentary has shown that there can be profitable literary co-operation between scholars of different nations, and of different ecclesiastical groups. And this method has been improved by the Lausanne promoters, in bringing such scholars face to face after preliminary mutual criticism.

Thus, for two years past, a band of teachers has been organised to study together the doctrine of Grace. They have been drawn from many countries and confessions; the Eastern Orthodox Churches have contributed two Russians and a Greek; Lutherans have been represented from Denmark, Hanover, Alsace, and Hesse; Calvinists have appeared from Hungary, Switzerland, France, Scotland; Episcopalians from Oxford, Cambridge and New York; a Congregationalist from Mansfield, a Presbyterian from New York, and a Methodist from Ohio have given Free Church views. An outsider has been good enough to say that such an assembly of theologians is most distinguished; and our readers will be able within this year to judge the value of their thinking and discussion, in a volume to be published by the Student Christian Movement.

Hitherto, only a Report is available, to which the whole band

has set its signature. As this will be included in the volume, it will be easy to see how much unanimity has been achieved. The first report at Lausanne, three years ago, evinced a full agreement on what was the message of God to His world, to be delivered by His Church. Man is so quarrelsome that we are far too prone to rush hastily past agreements, to fasten on differences; we ought to recall with thankfulness the clear statement of the Gospel, as apprehended in every quarter consulted. The Report from the theologians at Gloucester to the Continuation Committee at High Leigh now considers one subject that has been a veritable apple of discord for over fourteen centuries; it will introduce a series of studies both expository, historical, and constructive. Two general conclusions deserve attention.

First, there seems to have been over-definition, at least twice, when lawyers got to work on Christian doctrine. Augustine of Africa contradicted nearly all previous Christian thinking on the subject of Grace, and led the West down an avenue which the East utterly neglected, and still refuses to explore. Calvin, pursuing the lines laid anew by Luther and Zwingli, systematised the experiences of the apostle Paul and of Augustine, in a way that legalised Grace itself, and at once evoked hearty dissent from the Anabaptists and the Dutch, then presently from the Church of England and the Methodists. To-day, our theologians imply plainly that these great theologians of earlier days have been wise beyond what was written, have generalised as if their experience was universal and their logic impeccable, and have riveted a yoke on the neck of some Churches which many are unable to bear. They suggest that within one Church there ought to be room for Whitefield and for Wesley, for Gadsby of Manchester and for Clifford of London; and that no statement of Faith which would trouble either extreme of true evangelicals, ought to be made binding on any Church.

And secondly, much definition was in terms of a philosophy that is obsolete, while the discussion was on lines now regarded as illegitimate. It is an effort to understand what the Scholastics were talking about; while mastering their dialect of Nominalism, Realism, Conceptualism, does not open the door to much profitable thought. Moreover, while they professed to follow Aristotle, they did not follow him in his search for facts, or his testing theories by facts. Much of the dogmatic teaching, not only of Aquinas and Anselm, but also of Cyril and Leo and Augustine before them, of Luther and Calvin after them, is vitiated by a method now abandoned in all other departments of learning. Formulas drawn up then, might well be, not re-examined, but set aside; and the problems might well be thought out by modern methods, with results stated in modern terms.

In effect, this is what the Gloucester theologians have done with Augustine, Luther and Calvin; they have had the courage to face the facts afresh, and while well aware of what those classic leaders thought and said, they have regarded them like David who served his own generation by the will of God, then fell asleep. The average intelligent man can read the Gloucester Report, and find it couched in language not highly technical, not fifth-century nor sixteenth-century, but twentieth-century; and he will find not an awe-stricken phrase about Inscrutability, but a plain confession that here is a problem which has baffled the wisest men for thousands of years, and is not likely ever to be solved: meantime we have to accept the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

Two problems, however, did emerge, which seem quite possible of solution. Both were plainly stated at High Leigh, and it is to be hoped that the new Committee of Theologians will face at least one of them promptly. Here is one: Is there anything special about Grace when it is mediated through a man ordained by a bishop in the apostolical succession? Here is the other: As it is agreed on all hands that the benefit of the Sacraments can be appropriated only by faith, what is the good of infant baptism?

There are questions about Order, to which we may return again, but there is one very practical issue that needs attention by Baptists. Whether at Lausanne, at Maloja, at Mürren, at High Leigh, Baptists have hardly been represented. This is not fair to ourselves, to other Christians, to the special truths we uphold.

Be sure as to the facts. Baptists were invited to be represented, and at one stage Dr. J. E. Roberts of Manchester and Glasgow did attend from the Baptist Union. We allowed him to be left without a colleague, with credentials so dubious as to disquiet him. Baptists across the Atlantic were equally hesitating, some declining altogether to send, others adopting the familiar American attitude of sending to observe but not to participate. It is doubtful whether at any meeting of the Continuation Committee three Baptists have been present; while Anglicans, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Methodists, Orthodox, have responded freely to the invitations. We have risked being thought impervious to ideas, self-sufficient, suspicious, indifferent to brotherhood. We have put one or two Baptists in the awkward position of having to be constantly on the alert lest they should be thought acquiescing, so that they risked being deemed captious and self-assertive.

On the other hand, we have greatly misled other communions as to the relative importance of Baptists. One intelligent lawyer

had real ground for thinking that Seventh-Day Baptists were a very numerous body. A high Anglican dignitary thought that there were seven thousand Baptists in America, and it took three minutes to convince him that the statement was seven millions. Is it fair to let false impressions persist? Is it not wise to insist on the fact that Baptists are found in every country of Europe, and to illustrate the fact by sending Baptists from every country to Lausanne at the next full Conference? If 500 members are to be there, representing all Christendom outside the Roman communion, what should be the Baptist quota? Three?

Abstention last time led to the natural result that Baptist testimony was hardly heard, and was not read. We put in a long document, too long as it may now appear, and it was filed away without being read aloud, and was not printed for others to read. By this time most people know what Anglicans believe, and on what terms they want to unite. How many people know what Baptists believe, and how we would unite? Do the Lutherans know? or the Greeks? or the Moravians? Nay, do even the Scotch know, or the Anglicans? If not, we have a fair opportunity to state our views, and to claim attention to them. Perhaps our own statesmen will draw up a compact statement, and courteously invite explicit attention. It is for such purposes that the Lausanne Conference was called, and that its Continuation Committee is working.

W. T. WHITLEY.

KIRKBY WOODHOUSE church was founded in 1754. Early members were from the Booth family, and Abraham Booth was in charge from 1760 till he changed his views as to Election. A pewter cup was used for the communion service till individual cups were introduced this century. The old cup passed into the possession of John Topham, born 1833, secretary of the church, who occupied the house which had been used by the Booths. In 1908 he gave it to Bernard Booth Granger, of Nottingham, descended from the family. In 1931 it is presented by him to the Baptist Historical Society, and will be lodged in its library.

JOHN CRAGG was born of Baptist parents in 1688. At the age of seventy-five he was bedridden in Thurlaston, three miles from Earl Shilton, where a Baptist church had existed since 1651. Elder Richard Green and his people apparently, did not look after this outlying member, and he was christened in bed on 19 November.