THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1920.

THE MONTH.

Mansfield Conference Report.

JUST too late for reference last month, there was issued the official copy of the Resolutions passed at the Joint Conference of Church of England clergy and Nonconformist ministers, held at Mansfield College, Oxford, on January 7, 8 and 9, and these have since aroused widespread attention. For convenience of discussion we give them in full as follows :—

We are in entire accord in our common recognition of the fact that the denominations to which we severally belong are equally, as corporate groups, within the one Church of Christ ; and that the efficacy of their ministrations is verified in the history of the Church. We believe that all dealings between them should be conducted on the basis of this recognition, which is fundamental to any approach towards the realisation of the Reunited Church, for which we long and labour and pray.

We agree that, in order to give outward and visible expression to this principle of recognition, the approach should be made along the following lines, as parts of one scheme :—

1. Interchange of pulpits, under due authority.
2. Subject to the same authority, mutual admission to the Lord's Table.
3. Acceptance by ministers serving in any one denomination, who may desire it, of such authorisation as shall enable them to minister fully and freely in the churches of other denominations ; it being clearly stated that the purpose of this authorisation is as above set forth, and that it is not to be taken as reordination, or as repudiation of their previous status as Ministers in the Church Catholic of Christ.

Taken in their natural meaning these resolutions seemed to carry us a very long way towards reunion, and we confess to having rubbed our eyes in amazement when we saw in the list of signatures attached the name of more than one prominent advocate of the sacerdotal character of the Christian ministry. It was soon seen, however, that these resolutions are to be specially interpreted. Their true inwardness is explained from the Church of England side in the covering letter to the Archbishops and Bishops, signed by Canon Burroughs, Dr. A. J. Carlyle, Canon A. W. Robinson,

Canon Temple and the Bishop of Warrington. In this they made "certain observations" as follows:—

A conference similar, though not identical, in its membership had met the previous year, and had arrived at resolutions, among which was the following:

"(iv.) We recognise, with the Sub-Committee on 'Faith and Order,' in its second interim report, the place which a reformed Episcopacy must hold in the ultimate constitution of the Reunited Church; and we do not doubt that the Spirit of God will lead the Churches of Christ, if resolved on reunion, to such a constitution as will also fully conserve the essential values of the other historical types of Church Policy, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist."

Although we were not formally committed to the resolutions of the earlier conference, it was made abundantly clear in our discussions that we were heartily at one in the conviction that the Reunited Church must be episcopal, and this fact should be kept in mind when the following resolutions are being considered.

Further, it is to be remembered that, after two days of conference and prayer, men came to something of a common mind, and that phrases tend to receive from the circumstances of their origin a colour which they may fail to carry to other minds. Great care, however, was taken in the choice of words, and the terms used must be understood as meaning only what they actually say.

Once more, it was necessary to find words that could be used equally of all the different groups affected. The phrase "due authority," for example, signifies the authority held by the denomination concerned to be the proper one for action in any given case. In the last clause the authorisation required to enable any man to exercise in the ministry freely and fully in our own part of the Church would be found, as we are persuaded, to be the imposition of the Bishop's hands.

Read in conjunction with this letter the Resolutions do not carry us quite as far as we thought. It would seem to be clear—if we may put the matter bluntly—that Nonconformists are not to be allowed "to minister fully and freely" in our churches unless and until they have been episcopally ordained. It is a triumph for episcopacy, but what do the Nonconformists who signed the Resolutions—such as Dr. Forsyth, Dr. Garvie, Dr. Anderson Scott, and Dr. Selbie—say to it? And how far does it really take us towards Reunion?

"Parts of one Scheme."

Moreover, the recommendations as to interchange of pulpits, mutual admission to the Lord's Table, and the interchange of ministrations, are not to be taken separately, but "as parts of one scheme," and so literally is this to be interpreted that Canon Lacey, who signed the Resolutions, finds it convenient to attack one of his co-signatories, Bishop Welldon, for inviting Dr. Jowett to preach in Durham Cathedral,

even though the invitation was given and accepted before the Conference took place.' But much must be excused to Canon Lacey, for he has had to endure the frowns of the *Church Times*, if not of the whole Anglo-Catholic party. He has explained his position in two letters to the *Church Times* which may, perhaps, help him with its readers, but they offer no sort of consolation or encouragement to those who hope and—in spite of every indication to the contrary—believe that the Churches are surely, if slowly, coming to realise a larger measure of unity. In his first letter (February 27) he states that as he "had a hand in drafting," the resolution, he may claim with some confidence to know what it means. This, then, is his interpretation:—

> Letters which are coming to me betray a fundamental misapprehension of its purpose. It is not an interim compromise. It contemplates a completely reunited Church, and has reference to nothing short of that consummation. It is an attempt to set out, in language familiar to those who are least in touch with the Catholic tradition, some necessary conditions of that complete reunion for which we hope and pray. I told the Conference plainly that we older men must not expect to see it bear fruit in our day; we must ask God to show us His work, and our children His glory.

His second letter is still more illuminating. A joint letter had appeared complaining that the Resolution "seems to embody the 'Kikuyu' position in an extended and intensified form," but Canon Lacey rejects that view. He writes:—

> The Mansfield College Resolution has nothing in common with Kikuyu; it is not a working compromise for our present state of disunion. I myself certainly could not put my hand to the Kikuyu compromise, nor even to the alternative scheme proposed by the Bishop of Zanzibar.
>
> Your own studiously fair comment calls for one correction. In drafting the Resolution we were careful not to give the various "denominations" or "corporate groups" the style of "Churches," for it was based on the expressed belief that there is in the implied sense only one Church. Neither did we suggest that the Church is one denomination or corporate group along with others. A diocesan bishop does not as such belong to any one group. You and I would say that he is the rightful pastor of all groups in the diocese, and that the one effective way of union is to bring all groups under his pastoral care. Much persuasion will be required to effect this, but a beginning is made. The groups are at present in schism, as you say; the one object of the Conference was to bring that state of schism to an end.
>
> I do not wonder that questions are asked about the ambiguous "authorisation." Questions were asked in the Conference, and were answered. So far as we are concerned, authorisation to minister in the congregation can be given only by imposition of the hands of a bishop with appropriate prayer. We should regard this as ordination. Others might regard it as a ratification of their former status. This divergence of view cannot be helped. It could not be helped in the case of Palmer of Magdalen when he was ordained at Rome. Firmly convinced that he was already a deacon validly

ordained, he nevertheless submitted to the rite of ordination, in what precise aspect I do not know, with a full explanation of his own position. English bishops may have to deal with analogous cases. The one thing that such an act must not be called is "reordination." I urged this at the Conference, giving reasons. Properly understood, reordination is impossible; a man is either ordained or not ordained; if he is not ordained, he obviously cannot be reordained. The Resolution, therefore, ruled out this word.

We hope we do Canon Lacey no injustice when we say that the only possible interpretation we can put upon his letter is that the policy he favours is "reunion by absorption." Again we ask, What do the Nonconformist signatories say to it? If Canon Lacey's interpretation of the Mansfield Conference Resolutions be correct, we do not appreciate their value as a practical contribution towards the solution of the Reunion problem. They have made an already difficult position still more confused.

More Practical Resolutions.

We confess our own preference for the Resolutions on Intercommunion adopted by a Conference of Evangelical clergy held in London in January. They are much more practical; they are not hedged about with "ifs" and "buts"; they are simple, direct and effective. We quote them as follows:—

1. We desire to express our conviction that it is our duty to admit to Holy Communion baptized and communicant members of other Christian Churches which accept the first three conditions of the Lambeth Statement (1888) who may desire to communicate with us, and upon that conviction we feel bound to act.

2. We believe that there is no ground in principle why such action, in similar circumstances, should not be reciprocal.

3. We see no objection in principle to solemn acts of intercommunion with the members of such Churches upon National and other special occasions, as expressions of the unity that underlies our present divisions.

4. We further believe that the time has come when authority should be given for such reciprocal action with these Churches.

NOTE 1.—We wish to make it clear that the above resolutions do not deal with the question of the interchange of ministrations between episcopally ordained ministers and those not episcopally ordained.

NOTE 2.—In regard to the first resolution above, we desire to express our regret at those cases of exclusion from the Holy Communion which have occurred from time to time, and which in our judgment form a grievous stumbling-block to Reunion.

These Resolutions when they were sent to the Bishops bore the signatures of 156 clergy, and as they have now been opened to signature by Evangelical clergy generally there is reason to believe that the number will be very largely increased. The Resolutions

were forwarded to the Bishops with a covering letter signed by the Bishop of Warrington, Prebendary Sharpe, and the Rev. A. F. Alston, who wrote :—

> They (the signatories) feel that there has been so much talk about Reunion that unless some action is taken there will be grave danger lest the Church of England should be accused of insincerity in the matter. Attention should perhaps be called to the fact that the first resolution, which speaks of immediate action, only makes clear and explicit that which has been the practice of most if not all the signatories for a considerable period ; they believe that this practice has continuous precedents in the history of the Church for the past three hundred years ; nor is it contrary to the principle laid down in the pronouncement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the "Kikuyu" case, published Easter, 1915. The steps advocated in the other resolutions have no such authority and, consequently, it is respectfully asked that authority should be given.

Changes in the Communion Service.

We revert to the question of Changes in the Communion Service in order to rectify an omission in last month's Notes. When writing we had not heard of the voting in the Lower House of the York Convocation upon the Report of the Archbishops' Conference. It now appears that in spite of Dr. Frere's earnest advocacy there was not much enthusiasm for the proposals suggested by the Archbishops' Conference. An amendment moved by the Archdeacon of Chester to amend the wording of the Epiklesis clause so as to avoid the use of the same phraseology in reference to persons and things had much support, but was eventually lost, as was also an amendment by Canon Thorpe, substituting another form of words. In the end Dr. Frere's resolution, seconded by the Bishop of Beverley, proposing the adoption of the Report embodying the Conference proposals, was only just carried, the figures being, it is believed, 41 to 38. The position, therefore, is now this : in the Southern Province, while in the Upper House the proposals were agreed to by 17 votes to 2, in the Lower House they were only accepted by 62 to 54 ; in the Northern Province, they only escaped rejection in the Upper House by the Archbishop's casting vote ; and in the Lower House by the very narrow majority of three. We are thus very far from an agreed settlement, and in these circumstances it is permissible to hope that the Archbishop of Canterbury's declared personal preference, that there should be no alteration, may prevail. We are very glad of this opportunity of printing in our pages a revised report of the Bishop of Manchester's speech

in the Upper House of the York Convocation, together with some useful additions.

Marriage and Home Life.

The discussion now proceeding over proposals for increased facilities for divorce ought to inspire Churchpeople with the desire to do everything they possibly can to exalt the dignity and sacredness of the marriage relationship, and to safeguard the indissolubility of the marriage contract. The subject received considerable attention at the recent Congress of the Northern Congress of Evangelical Churchmen held in Manchester, and as a result of the discussion a Manifesto has since been issued by the Federation in the following terms :—

"At the recent Congress of the Northern Federation and Union of Evangelical Churchmen, held in Manchester, a prominent position was given to the consideration of home and home life.

"Abundant evidence was forthcoming that home life is in special danger to-day, because of the lack of discipline and the loss of restraint, and because of the many false views which now obtain on the question of marriage. We therefore feel impelled to urge our fellow-Churchmen to guard the rite of holy matrimony with increased jealousy ; to impress on all classes its sacred nature ; to insist on its permanent character ; and to speak unsparingly of the wrongness and hideousness of divorce and separations.

"We are persuaded that to do this is after the mind of Christ, and that any interference with the sanctity of the marriage tie must prove fatal to the cause of true religion as well as disastrous to our national welfare, and will be fraught with much misery for women and children, whose happiness and comfort are dependent on the inviolability of the marriage bond."

We note with interest that the *Church Times* associates itself "heartily" with the Manifesto. There are occasions when all sections of the Church of England can act most happily together, as, for instance, when Church Schools and afterwards the Church in Wales were attacked ; and we venture to think that the present onslaught on the marriage law of the country is a call to Churchpeople of all groups and sections to unite in its defence.