THE CHURCHMAN

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The Month.

The Claim of the Faithful.

AMIDST all the unhappy controversies which are now proceeding over the historic truth of certain articles of the Christian faith, there is one class of people who deserve consideration, but who receive little or no attention. We refer to the faithful laity—that innumerable body of men and women who in simple faith have staked their all upon the truth of the Gospel story. It is, of course, perfectly obvious that they who can say with St. Paul, "the life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God," will not suffer themselves to be moved by any speculations of New Testament critics; but the question remains whether it is right that Christian believers, without any pretensions to scholarship, should be exposed, as they are now, to having the very fundamentals of their position undermined by those who still profess and call themselves Christians. The critics apparently do not know how vast are the issues involved. They do not seem to realize that, if they were to succeed—which may God forbid!—in shaking the faith of believers in the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, they would necessarily weaken faith in the Christian revelation as a whole. Are they prepared to face the position? For ourselves, we can only say that the man who first sows the seeds of doubt in the mind of another incurs a most awful responsibility. We are well aware of the excuse the critics make. It is urged that the

educated, thoughtful laity are already so seriously perturbed over what are called "Nature miracles," that, unless the alleged events can be "spiritualized," there is danger that these people will be lost to the Christian faith altogether. We believe the danger is greatly exaggerated. The number of church-going laity who independently have adopted the Modernist position is very small, although we admit that the number of those who have been led into it by the rash statements of "Liberal" clergy may be considerable. But even reckoning both classes together, they are infinitesimal compared with those who still hold fast by the Christian Creed. And it is these who claim consideration at the present time. We sincerely trust that their natural guides —the parochial clergy—will take every possible opportunity to reassure them, and to strengthen and deepen their faith. Thank God there is no reason to apologize for the Christian Creed! The things which have been most surely believed amongst us are eternally and unalterably true.

Convocation and Modernism.

We are thankful for the debate in the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury, which ought materially to have cleared the air. Yet even there the voice of uncertainty made itself heard. Was it necessary to make any pronouncement? Was not the view of the episcopate perfectly well known? Would it not be thought that they were imposing limits on honest study? These questions, and such as these, were raised by one or two prelates, who seemed to deprecate the publication of any declaration by Convocation. But the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the really great and statesmanlike speech with which he summed up the two days' debate, answered all objections, and showed that, as great unrest existed, the Church had the right to look to the Bishops for some statement which would allay anxiety. It would indeed have been a grave dereliction of duty on the part of Convocation—at least, so it appears to us—if they had passed by the matter in silence. For what was the position? Convocation was face to face with a large number of petitions

dealing with these three things—Modernism, Kikuyu, and Rubrics. The last two were practically left out of count, for, as the Archbishop said, they are being dealt with otherwise; but the anxiety shown by the petitioners in regard to Modernist attacks upon the Creed left Convocation no option but to make some pronouncement. Nor were the petitions all from one side. Indeed, by far the most influential and the most numerously signed—45,000 signatures—was that presented by the National Church League. (Parenthetically, we desire to acknowledge that we made a mistake last month in under-estimating what the response to that petition was likely to be.) There was also a petition from a number of Members of Parliament expressing their conviction "that it is essential to the interests of the English Church that our rulers should not allow it to remain in doubt whether or not an ordained minister of the English Church is free to continue to exercise his ministry after he has deliberately come to the conclusion that any historical statement of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds is not true." There was also another petition—that from the Churchmen's Union—to which we shall refer later.

The Resolution. In these circumstances, the Bishop of London brought forward the following resolution:

"Inasmuch as there is reason to believe that the minds of many members of the Church of England are perplexed and disquieted at the present time in regard to certain questions of faith and of Church order, the Bishops of the Upper House of the Province of Canterbury feel it to be their duty to put forth the following resolutions:

"1. We call attention to the resolution which was passed in this House on May 10, 1905, as follows:

"'That this House is resolved to maintain unimpaired the Catholic Faith in the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation as contained in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and in the *Quicunque Vult*, and regards the Faith there presented, both in statements of doctrine and in statements of fact, as the necessary basis on which the teaching of the Church reposes.'

"We further desire to direct attention afresh to the following resolution, which was unanimously agreed to by the Bishops of the Anglican Communion attending the Lambeth Conference of 1908:

"'The Conference, in view of tendencies widely shown in the writings

of the present day, hereby places on record its conviction that the historical facts stated in the Creeds are an essential part of the Faith of the Church.'

"2. These resolutions we desire solemnly to reaffirm, and in accordance therewith we express our deliberate judgment that the denial of any of the historical facts stated in the Creeds goes beyond the limits of legitimate interpretation, and gravely imperils that sincerity of profession which is plainly incumbent on the ministers of Word and Sacrament. At the same time, recognizing that our generation is called to face new problems raised by historical criticism, we are anxious not to lay unnecessary burdens upon consciences, nor unduly to limit freedom of thought and inquiry, whether among clergy or among laity. We desire, therefore, to lay stress on the need of considerateness in dealing with that which is tentative and provisional in the thought and work of earnest and reverent students."

There was a third section of the resolution, dealing with episcopacy; but with this we need not now concern ourselves. The resolution was seconded by the Bishop of Norwich, and it received the support of nearly the whole House. One of the most interesting speeches was that of the Bishop of Chelmsford, who pointed out that it was not the weakest men, but the strongest men and the most saintly living persons, who were affected this time by what was going on in the Church. They had to consider how recent literature was affecting the working classes, and, secondly, the effect which it was having upon the preaching power of the clergy. The Bishop of Hereford proposed an amendment deprecating the issuing of any fresh declaration at the present time; but he found only two supporters for it—the Bishop of Southwark and the Bishop of Lincoln—and it was defeated by 24 to 3. The resolution was carried *nem. con.*, 25 voting for it. The decision is of immense importance at the present time, and should lead those who are the cause of the present disquiet to reconsider their position as ministers of the Church of England. In this decision we have a practical illustration of the meaning attached by the Bishops to the obligation laid upon them at the most solemn moment of their lives: "Are you ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word?"—"I am ready, the Lord being my Helper." We trust that this decision of Convocation will be

followed, whenever necessary, by action on the part of individual Bishops.

"Gravely Misleading."

The value of the petition presented by the Churchmen's Union has been seriously discounted by what has happened since. Among its several statements was the following: "While asserting without reserve our belief in the Incarnation and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we submit that a wide liberty of belief should be allowed with regard to the mode and attendant circumstances of both." In the course of the debate the Bishop of Gloucester pointed out that among the signatories was Professor Kirsopp Lake, "who had published a volume on the Resurrection, in which he asserted in most explicit terms that he did not believe in the bodily Resurrection in any sense at all." The Bishop went on to say that "the memorialists asserted without reserve their belief in the Resurrection of our Lord. Was that compatible with the conclusions of the gentleman in question? It was certainly calculated to be misunderstood, and was gravely misleading." Professor Kirsopp Lake has challenged the Bishop's position, and in a public letter to him says: "If your lordship will look at my book on the Resurrection, you will find that it does not deny the resurrection of a spiritual body, but maintains that a resurrection or resuscitation of the flesh and blood of our Lord was not held by St. Paul." The Bishop of Gloucester has "looked at the book," and in a letter to the *Times* makes the following reply:

"Judging by his book on the 'Resurrection of Jesus Christ,' what he means by 'resurrection' is merely 'the manifestation of a surviving personality.' Indeed, he expressly says so on p. 274; and again, on p. 265, he writes as follows: 'What we mean by "resurrection" is not resuscitation of the material body, but the unbroken survival of personal life; and the uninterrupted continuance of life excludes an interval of even three days, just as certainly as the resuscitation of the body demands it.'"

"Further, he refers in his letter to me to St. Paul's belief in the resurrection of a spiritual body, and it would be a natural inference from his words that his belief is similar to St. Paul's. It is clear, however, that he does not mean by 'resurrection' all that St. Paul meant, for he tells us in his book

(p. 242) that 'the affirmation of the belief that the Resurrection implies the resurrection of the body in such a manner as to remove all traces of it from the tomb . . . was undoubtedly made by most early Christians—*almost certainly by St. Paul*' (the italics are my own)—whereas he himself appears to hold that the true explanation of the empty tomb is that the women on the morning of Easter Day made a mistake and visited the wrong tomb (p. 250); and, if I am not doing him an injustice, he holds that the Saviour's body was all the time lying mouldering in the (unvisited) tomb, in which it had been laid on the Friday evening, and that it 'saw corruption,' as the bodies of mankind in general do."

We imagine there are not many who will think that the Bishop's words in Convocation were too severe.

Dr. Sanday's Development.

Dr. Sanday's pamphlet ("Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism." Longmans. 6d. net) is sad reading. He has travelled very far since the days of his Bampton Lectures, and there is nothing in his later books at all comparable to what he now defines as his present position. He has undergone "development" within the last two years, and he intended to explain the nature of it, but the present discussion has precipitated his pronouncement. He kept back his pamphlet, which is an apologia for Modernism rather than a reply to Bishop Gore, until after the Convocation debate. Dr. Sanday was opposed to the Bishops making any declaration, but he readily admits that, if they were to say anything at all, they could not do other than they have done. There are two points in Dr. Sanday's pamphlet which especially claim attention. One is his contention that the recitation by the clergy of the Creeds in public worship is a corporate act, which must be broad and comprehensive, and cannot be made to serve at the same time as a minute criterion of the faith of individuals. The Bishop, he urges, omits entirely one argument which seems to be really decisive—the argument from the difference of times. Creeds composed fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen centuries ago cannot possibly express with literal exactitude the mind of to-day. Our conception of the Bible, he says, has been profoundly affected by modern criticism, and our conception of the Creeds must be affected equally. We cannot accept these dis-

tinctions. We do not understand how a man can say in a corporate capacity what he has ceased to believe as an individual; and as to the changes of time, they cannot possibly affect the truth of an historic fact. Facts cannot be affected by criticism, which is concerned with interpretation. Dr. Sanday's apologia is not clear in all its points, but the following statement is sufficiently definite:

"Two things I would ask leave to do. I would ask leave to affirm once more my entire and strong belief in the central reality of the Supernatural Birth and the Supernatural Resurrection. No one believes in these things more strongly than I at least wish to believe in them. . . . But I must in candour add that, although I believe emphatically in a Supernatural Birth and a Supernatural Resurrection, and in all that follows from these beliefs, I know that is not all that the Church of the past has believed. I must not blink this fact. I hope that I believe all that the Church's faith has stood for; but I could not, as at present advised, commit myself to it as literal fact."

Dr. Sanday thus clearly associates himself with those whom the Bishop of Oxford had in mind in his "Open Letter."

Evangelical "alliances."

In the confusion which has arisen over doctrinal and ritual matters, it is perhaps natural that Evangelical Churchmen should be considering whether it would not add strength to what they believe to be the cause of truth if they were to join forces with one of the other Church parties in defence of the general position. We hope, however, they will do nothing of the kind. To join hands with the Bishop of Oxford's group in defence of the Creeds would be to weaken their own position in regard to the Kikuyu and Ritual controversies; to join hands with the Broad Church party in defence of the Federation of Christian Churches and in opposition to the Romanizing of the Church would be to weaken their witness to the truth of the articles of the Christian faith. The Evangelicals occupy a strong, an impregnable position in the Church of England. They have the strength, if only they have the courage, to stand alone.