Ceylon C. M. S. Conference.

The half-yearly Conference of the Missionaries connected with the C. M. S. in Ceylon was held at Christ Church, Colombo, from Thursday July 2nd until Friday July 10th, and was presided over by the Rev. W. E. Rowlands. The sermon was preached on the first day by the Rev. W. G. Shorten, who took as his text Psalm 73: 28, and devotional meetings were conducted each morning in the Conference Room, when addresses were given by the Revs. W. E. Rowlands, A. E. Dibben, and W. J. Hanan. In addition to the review of the work at the different Stations of the Society in Ceylon, several important matters connected with education and the Mission Policy generally were considered.

During the Session of Conference, a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Women’s Conference was held, when recommendations regarding women’s work were made.

Ceylon Association of the C. M. S.

The Annual Meeting of the Ceylon Association of the C. M. S. was held on Monday July 6th, the Chairman being the Rev. W. E. Rowlands. This event was preceded by an “At Home” when by the invitation of the Rev. A. E. Dibben the members of the Congregations and friends of the C. M. S. were afforded an opportunity of meeting the Missionaries assembled for Conference.

At the Annual Meeting, the Committee’s Report for 1907 was read by Mr. J. W. Ferrier, the Hon. Secretary, and Mr. Stephen Brown, the Hon. Treasurer, made detailed references to his financial statement. Copies of the Report and Balance Sheet are appended.

In his opening remarks the Chairman referred to his connection with the Association, when in a previous term of service he had the charge of the Tamil work in Colombo. The speakers of the evening were the Rev. J. Ilsley, who gave an account of the work assisted by the Association’s grant in the Colombo Tamil District; and the Rev. J. G. Garrett, who gave a description of several branches of the Sinhalese work supervised by him in the Kandyan Central Itineration.

A collection amounting to Rs. 55 was taken at the annual meeting.

The Annual Pastoral Aid Meeting of the Cotta Pastorate was held on the 27th of June at 3 p.m. The Rev. A. E. Dibben M.A. was in the chair. There was a large attendance. A very encouraging report on the work done during the year was read by the Rev. G. B. Perera. The Rev. F. L. Beven, who had specially come down from Kurunegala, made a very interesting and instructive speech, which was greatly appreciated by every one present. He said that no man who was neither actually engaged in Mission Work, nor helped others to do it, had any right to be called a Christian. The Rev. J. J. Goonesekera, of the Baptist Mission, was the next speaker. He dwelt on the great necessity of Christians living pure Christ-like lives amongst the heathen if they were to be won for Christ.

At the close of the meeting every one present, went over to the Fancy Bazaar which was nicely arranged in the side verandah of the Boys’ English School. The amount realized was a little over Rs. 250.

The monthly gathering of the Gleaners for July was held on the 16th at 4 p.m., when a good number was present. A very interesting paper on work among the poor in the East end of London, prepared by Mrs. R. W. Ryde, was read by Miss R. E. Perera. One found it strange to realize that there was so much Evangelistic Work to be done in Christian England itself. There were several instances given of how the poor were fed, clothed, and helped and the drunkards and poor sinners were turned from darkness to light through the untiring and unselfish efforts of a minister of God, and a noble army of his willing helpers. A paper on “Alexander Mackay of Uganda,” was also read at this meeting.

A. E. Dibben.

Cotta.

Missionary Gleaner.

To say that the morning hour is more delightful and more suitable for the reception of this Sacrament, is to set up a purely subjective impression, as a rule for others who feel the opposite. Personally, I prefer the Morning Communion; I prefer it so much that I should only go to a Communion in the evening, if I had been prevented from going at some other hour. But there are multitudes who feel Christ nearer to their souls when the cares of the day are over, and that Saviour breathes on them an evening blessing. Every Christian brother—in spite of tyrannous dogmatism—is perfectly free in this matter, and ought to stand fast in this liberty wherewith Christ Himself has made him free.

Nor in questions of Christian liberty are we to be bound because at the present moment the Archbishop of York discourages Evening Communions. His two able, learned, and eminent predecessors approved of them. The Archbishop of Canterbury has not forbidden them in his Diocese, and his individual dislike to them is but an individual dislike, which was not shared by his predecessor, Archbishop Tait, and was not shared by other wise, learned, able, and holy Bishops of the English Church.

The Archbishop of York seems to think it desirable to say, “We have no such custom, neither the churches of God;” and the text is echoed by others who evidently mistake phrases for solid reasons. For the quotation is in every respect inapposite and inconsequential.

In the first place St. Paul did not apply this to Evening Communions, but to women praying uncovered.

And as applied to Evening Communions the very reverse was the fact. St. Paul had such a custom, and in his day the whole Church of God without exception. And the custom continued in the Church of God for centuries. And at this day we, as a matter of fact, have such a custom in scores of Churches; and not only we but other Churches of God. Is the Presbyterian Church, for instance, to be excommunicated by this
dictum? That great and holy branch of the Universal Church has such a custom now, and has had, I suppose, ever since the Reformation.

"Oh, but the Fathers are against it!" As a matter of fact that is entirely false. They are not against it. Till the close of the fourth century, when many gross abuses had already crept in, and many false opinions were already fatally rife in the Church, not one single authority can be quoted against Evening Communions. Not even the late fourth century Fathers can be quoted as condemning it as a sin; nor even if they did is their authority in the slightest degree final, nor is the custom of that or any other century as to open questions any fetter to our free judgment. They do not condemn Evening Communion half as emphatically as they condemn Second Marriages, which, one of them describes as "specious adulteries." If the Church of England and her Bishops absolutely discard and set aside their authority in the one case, why are we bound by their obiter dicta in the other? Nothing is more common than for High Churchmen to bandy about the supposed authority of "the Fathers" when, as I have heard one of them openly avow, all that some of them know of the Fathers is some party snipping provided for the purpose at a theological college. Not even St. Cyprian—a saint and martyr, but intellectually in many respects a most inadequate and erroneous guide—condemns Evening Communions, except on grounds that no longer have any existence; while his incessant insistence that we should do exactly what Christ did, tells directly the other way. "Nunc adhuc fiat a nobis," he says (Ep. Ixiii. 2), "quaeis quod Dominus prim orditer fecerit"; and again, (id. 17), "Nunc adhuc quam quod ille fecit, fecere dehmemus." It does, indeed, seem to strike him that in that case we ought to communicate in the evening; but he can only make the very poor shift and erroneous reply that it was fitting for Christ to offer His sacrifice—it need hardly be said that in the New Testament there is not so much as a hint that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice—at evening "to show forth the sunset and evening of the world," as in the verse of the Psalm, "The lifting up of my hands shall be an evening sacrifice": but that we celebrate the Resurrection in the morning. But the Lord's Supper is not a memorial of the Resurrection. We celebrate Christ's Resurrection on Sunday morning, because on Sunday morning He arose. By Cyprian's own showing, we ought to celebrate His Supper in the evening.

Still more fatal to the cause for which it is adduced is the supposed authority of St. Chrysostom, and that on several grounds. It is true that he repudiates with strong asseveration the charge that he had given the Holy Communion to some after they had eaten—by which (as seems to me abundantly proved in his 27th Homily on 1 Corinthians) he meant not after they had merely broken their fast, but after a full meal; but he adds with yet stronger emphasis in his 125th letter (to Cyriacus), "But if my enemies persist in this their contentious charge let them also depose Paul, who baptised the whole household after having supped; yea, let them even depose the Lord Himself, who gave the Communion to His Apostles after supper." Here, then, it appears that the custom of the Church at that particular date declared itself quite as strongly against the administration of Baptism except when the Presbyter was fasting, as against the administration of the Lord's Supper. Yet no Ritualist has as yet treated it as a "mortal sin" to do what most clergymen, including themselves, do constantly—namely, baptise children in the afternoon. St. Chrysostom (and the fact is studiously suppressed by those who profess to adduce his authority) repudiates the charge of going against the existing custom, but says that even had he done so he could not possibly have been committing a sin since the Lord Jesus Christ and St. Paul did the very same thing that he was charged with having done.

I have not entered into the question whether it is or is not absolutely impossible for multitudes to receive the Lord's Supper at any other hour than in the evening. If it be really impossible, it is, at any rate, extremely difficult, and in parishes where that difficulty may be felt by thousands, I should regard it as not only inexpedient, but reprehensible, to surround an ordinance of grace with every species of difficulty and obstacle, instead of imitating the example of our Lord Himself, and furnishing the freest access in our power to all who desire to obey His tender invitation and fulfil His last command.

C. M. S. Ceylon Shilling Fund.

In 1905 the Authorities of the Church Missionary Society in England suggested the establishment of some permanent fund to which regular contributions in aid of the C. M. S. might be made by considerable members of the Church of England throughout the world. In response to the suggestion a number of friends in Ceylon promised to give the equivalent of cents 50 per mensem, and their contributions have shown each year since it the Ceylon Mission Report.

Up to 31st March 1906, the end of the first year, the sum of Rs 295 was sent to London; in the second year Rs 280; and in March 1908 the sum of Rs 371 was sent.

In acknowledging receipt of this last amount, Mr. Maconachie the Lay Secretary, writes:—"I am glad to acknowledge receipt of your ... remittance (£24. 14. 7. ). The Committee... heartily acknowledge their obligation to those loyal and willing helpers who at a distance of nearly half the globe feel with them the burden, and at the same time the privilege, of God's work. What a wonderful inspiration that idea brings—Co-workers!"

Extract from a Letter from the Rev. C. C. Fenn.

The following extract from a letter from the Rev. C. C. Fenn is well worth pondering over at the present time when there is so much tendency to hint, if not to teach, that the superstructure of the religion of Christ can be built upon the foundation of the atheistic philosophy of Buddhists.

"All Buddhists whom I have known, (from Pundits to unlettered peasants), who have become Christians have been led to the faith by those elements in Christian belief which are most unlike to Buddhism. They have not been attracted by finding that the best things in Buddhism are better taught in the Gospel, but by finding in the Gospel truths of which Buddhism knows nothing, and which when grasped were welcomed by the "testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae" as filling up an aching void."

Bishop Moule, of China, and Business Men.

The Right Rev. George E. Moule, D.D., the English Bishop of Mid-China, who has resigned his see after a residence of about fifty years in the Empire, tells of an
interesting experience he once had with some English business men living in Shanghai. He was dining with a number of them at a friend's house. The conversation turned upon the Church's work among the Chinese. Without a single exception, these English Merchants scoffed at the idea that anything of value was being done, or that any permanent influence could be exerted upon the life of the Chinese. The Bishop quietly asked how much the objectors knew of what was actually being done? One by one they admitted a rather surprising lack of acquaintance with mission stations and missionaries.

"As Englishmen," said Bishop Moule, "I know you believe in fair play. Are you willing to look into the facts a little? Thursday is a day when there are no foreign mails coming or going, and when even the busy man can get away for an afternoon. Will you join me for the next six or seven Thursday afternoons on a tour of inspection among some of the missions in Shanghai?"

This programme was agreed to. One Thursday the Bishop led his friends out to St. John's University. There they saw the educational work of the American Church Mission, and learned the significant fact that St. John's is reaching young men from all but one or two of the eighteen provinces of China. Another week some of the evangelistic work was inspected, and these English business men were made acquainted with the method of meeting Chinese in the Church guest-rooms and answering their questions about the Christian doctrine. The third expedition was made to St. Luke's Hospital, where so much is done to care for Chinese injured in the manufacturing establishments which are multiplying so rapidly in Shanghai under the impetus of foreign enterprise. Another time a tour was made among some of the smaller village out-stations within a few miles of Shanghai, where the evangelistic work among the people and the simple day-school work among the children was inspected.

So the weeks went on until, in accordance with their agreement, the same company of gentlemen met again for dinner to compare notes and render their verdict. They had only one statement to make. They asked Bishop Moule's pardon for their previous indifference and criticism, admitted that they were based on an almost total ignorance of the facts, and said that what they had seen under his leadership convinced them that the Church's work for the Chinese was real in character, sensible in method, and productive in results.

The Dean of Canterbury, at the annual meeting of "The Bible League."

The Dean of Canterbury, at the annual meeting of the Bible League, in Caxton Hall, said that a view of the Bible was being diligently spread over the world to-day which was inconsistent with the view held from before our Lord's time till about fifty years ago. The papers on the critical study of the Bible which were to be read before the Pan-Anglican Congress contained such statements as that "things did not happen exactly as they were written," and that science was at variance with the description of the creation in Genesis, while one writer, using intensely repulsive words, spoke of our Lord's "firm grasp of critical principles," not of His omniscience. Another, a distinguished divine at Oxford, assumed that the prophetic period of Israel's religious development was anterior to the legalistic period. Such statements were absolutely unjustifiable, in face of the facts now being brought to light. It was incredible that Jewish writers, when the Old Testament canon was formed, did not know their own history. Until the last thirty or forty years there was an idea that the art of writing was unknown in the time of Moses. To-day we had a whole code of laws admittedly dating from Abraham's time. In fact all the nations among whom Israel lived were in the habit of inscribing history, and it was in the highest degree improbable that the Jews should not have possessed written documents from Abraham's time downwards. Moses might now be regarded as in St. Luke's position, with documents before him from which he selected and compiled. Discovery followed discovery to confirm our faith. For instance, we

Professor A. MacAlister, M. D., F. R. S., who was at the great Shanghai Conference in China, gave at the Religious Tract Society's Meeting a masterly record of the present situation in China in a brief address. Touching on the awakening which is everywhere so apparent, he remarked that for years the missionaries labouring in China had seen their message received with apathy, very often with hostility. Now, suddenly, almost without warning, that indifference was changed to a condition of agitated expectancy, and China was demanding to be taught. She was asking to be given knowledge which for a long while she had despised, and which now she found she could not do without. And what a humiliation that she had to ask for instruction at the hands of those whom for so long she had regarded as barbarians! The Apostle Paul came to Europe upon the invitation of one Macedonian, whom he saw in a vision. The Church of Christ to-day was asked by the collective call of a quarter of the human race to go over to China. To that call she must respond if she had any thought of reason in the petition, "Thy kingdom come."

They need not deal with the reason of the awakening, the speaker continued. What was their concern was the programme that the Chinese Government put forward. It was a great programme of educational reform. Briefly, China wished to establish a University in the capital of every province: a high school in every large town; an elementary school in every village: and the kind of education that was proposed was literary and scientific. This programme was so vast that it would be a long time before it could be carried out. Three things were required in the development of this educational system—buildings, teachers, books. As far as the buildings were concerned, they had provided these in many towns by ejecting a number of Buddhist monks from their monasteries, and then using the buildings as schools. To provide teachers was a greater difficulty. The only place where Western education had been given hitherto was in the mission schools; consequently they had taken from the mission schools as many teachers as they could persuade to go, by giving them double the salary paid by the missionaries. And the strange fact was this, that so many of the best teachers had gone from the mission schools that the Chinese Government had made the concession that there was to be no teaching on the Seventh Day. 

The Situation in China.

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found a record of a Jewish community in Egypt petitioning for relief from a persecution which kept them from observing their religious ordinances, ordinances exactly corresponding with those in the book of the law of Moses. That incident dated from 500 B.C., or before the time of Ezra, when the law, according to the new assumption, was compiled. It was to be regretted that not one of the papers prepared for the Congress presented the traditional view. The effect of all this was that the historical truth of the Bible from beginning to end was being systematically undermined, and not by those whom they knew as sceptics, but by leading teachers of the Christian Church. This was a matter of the gravest consequence, and there was great need of such a society as the Bible League which perpetually brought the other side of the matter before the people.

"I press on."

Phil. 3.12 (part) R.V.

Notes of a Conference Address by the Rev. A. E. Diben

He who is called to be an instructor of others in spiritual things is in a position of peculiar danger with reference to his own soul's health and progress. He is supposed to be an expert in the matters which he has to handle and is liable to imagine that he knows all that he needs to know. Has he not been through a theological course? Has he not attended many special Missions that have been held in his own or other Churches and been present at many Holiness Conventions, and perhaps taken a leading part in some of each of such? Therefore there is nothing new for him to learn concerning anything from the Bible, anything of spiritual truth that is put before him. He says to himself, "I have heard it all before." To put it in another way, he has labelled passages of Scripture, doctrinal and ethical, with certain meanings, forgetting that there are other stand-points from which truth may be viewed and hidden depths of meaning in the Scriptures which he has never fathomed. He has moreover made up his mind as regards the standard of holiness which the Lord ought to expect of him and, perchance, thinks he has attained it: he has carved out a certain line for himself with reference to his attitude towards the world and worldly things, which has become a deep rut: the measure of exertion and self-denial to be put into his work for the Lord and the good of the souls over whom he has been set has become a fixed and unalterable quantity and, in short, his condition throughout is a stereotyped one.

The effect of taking such a position is disastrous upon his life and ministry. Whilst he is so self-complacent others are grieving over faults and failings which they see in him; whilst he is flattering himself upon the quality of his sermons and the value of his work, those to whom he ministers are complaining that the most precious of Christian truths are uttered by his lips with a lack of unction and a smack of staleness, and that there is a disagreeable air of professionalism in every act of his ministry. Little or no blessing rests upon his work, the Lord's people are not fed and fresh souls are not being won for Christ.

"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself."

The remedy for such a sad state of things is for the spiritual teacher to cultivate a tenderness of heart and conscience, to pray that he may know himself, may be clothed with humility and may have a keen appetite for spiritual food. He must be careful to compare himself not with others but with Christ. He must remember that in some mysterious sense even the Lord Jesus when on earth as man "advanced in wisdom" (St. Luke 2.52) and was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2.10) and that therefore there must be the greatest need for himself, perfect in nothing, to "press on". Let him think again of the perfect holiness of his Lord and Master, the stainlessness of His life and character, and then remember that no lower standard than this is set before him in the Scriptures, that he is to be pure even as his Lord is pure. And surely the thought of his shortcoming in this respect will call him down in the dust for very shame. Then let him bring his service to the same test. Let him remember how "the Son of man" ministered, how for example he took the weary journey on foot to put the water of life to the lips of that sinful woman of Samaria whom he would probably have passed by on the other side: let him call to mind that journey across the Lake for the sake of the two Gadarene demonaics, with the fore-knowledge that His presence would be unwelcome to the whole of the rest of the people. Let him reflect upon the yearning for souls which must have prompted the recital of such parables as those of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, and the spiritual earnestness which led to His getting up a great while before day, yea to His spending whole nights in solitary prayer, after full days of fattiguing work, and there will surely remain but little self-satisfaction about his own service. Brethren, let us be personal. What about ourselves and our service? To what extent have we a yearning for the souls of men which leads to self-denial and labour at all like that of our blessed Lord? But does such exist in His disciples at the present day or can it be expected? Christian biographies and the lives of some earnest Christians whom we know indicate that it does exist. Think for example of Christian Evans, the humble Welsh preacher of last century, who always kept an overcoat on his bed and who expressed surprise that any Christian could spend the whole night in bed and prayerless; or of the worker in the Jerry McAuley Mission in New York who repelled the embrace of the drunken, filthy "Old Colonel" who had deceived him so many times that most people would have given him up as a hopeless case, but who was so struck with remorse at his un-Christian-like conduct in thrusting the poor drunkard away that he could give himself no rest by day or night till he had prayed that hardened sinner into the kingdom. I ask again, what do we know of such yearning love for souls? What is our attitude towards those whom the Lord has committed to our care? How much prayer and labour are we in the habit of spending on them? Let us go over each one of the subjects I have mentioned, knowledge of divine things, holiness and service, each one for himself, let us examine ourselves in the light of God's Word and by the example of our blessed Lord and Master, let us overhaul in this connection the subjects of professionalism, spiritual stagnation, allowed inconsistencies in our lives, and surely under such a process all self-complacency will vanish away, we shall realise how far we have come short of what the Lord's call is; and shall resolve with the apostle of old that it is our solemn duty to "press on."