

THE CHURCHMAN

May, 1918.

The Month.

**Clergy and
Conscription.** THE Government have done wisely to exclude clergy from the Man-power Bill. Hitherto they have been exempt from the operation of the Military Service Acts; and this is no time for doubtful experiments. As originally drafted the Bill provided that they should be called up for non-combatant service only, but when the measure was in Committee an amendment was proposed to remove this limitation and to bring the clergy into line with the rest of the community. The Government did not at once accept this, and on the Home Secretary's assurance that the Government would deal with the question on Report the amendment was withdrawn. This they did, but from the very opposite point of view of the amendment. Instead of conscripting the clergy for combatant service they have excluded them altogether. The question of taking clergy for the Army, under any conditions, is a very difficult one. No one body of men has rendered more signal service to the National cause than the clergy; and we doubt not that they will be ready—joyfully ready—as we all are, to respond to any calls that the country may impose upon them, so long as the special nature of their calling is recognized. But to take them for combatant service would be another matter, and one which demanded the most careful consideration. We are not prepared to say that it is wrong, under any circumstances, for a clergyman to take up arms—and if ever there were a cause in which an ordained man might honourably and rightfully draw the sword it is the cause in which the Empire is now engaged in its struggle against the greatest tyranny the world has ever known—but there is a widespread feeling that it is not in keeping with his calling, nor in accordance with his ordination vows. Hitherto the Bishops, with the acquiescence of the Government, have refused permission to their clergy to become combatants, and although some individual clergy—

all honour to them—have felt the call of the war to be too strong to be resisted, the thoughtful opinion of the country has, on the whole, supported the restraint imposed by the Bishops. There are many who would view the conscription of the clergy for combatant purposes with grave misgiving; and it would certainly seem more properly to meet the case if episcopal restrictions were withdrawn and it were frankly left to each clergyman's conscience to determine whether he should offer for combatant or non-combatant service. The Archbishop of Canterbury's speech in the House of Lords implied that this would be done; and we are glad that he made it clear that it was not at the wish of the clergy the Government had made the change. Clergy are ready to serve their country in any way that may be resolved upon.

But the question must be faced what, if the clergy were withdrawn, would become of their parishes? The question was only briefly referred to in the Prime Minister's speech. Mr. Lloyd George said that care would be taken that "in every denomination an adequate staff will be reserved" for work at home, but are the spiritual forces of the country "adequate" to the needs at the present time? The question requires the most careful consideration, and we are glad to see a trenchant and timely letter from the Bishop of Chelmsford on the subject. He expresses so fully and so powerfully the convictions of many minds that we venture to quote the following passages from his letter which appeared in *The Times* of April 15:—

May I suggest various points which ought to be carefully considered before clergy are withdrawn in any large numbers from their present work? (1) The position of the boy and youth to-day. On every hand we have evidence that the absence of fathers from their homes, together with the high wages paid to youths, has resulted in the growth of lawlessness and defiance of authority. One serious counteracting factor in the situation is the splendid work done by the Church Lads' Brigade and the Scout movement. To-day, owing to the absence of men at the front or to the strain of work at home, the clergy in many districts are the only persons available for the work, and their withdrawal at the present time would lead to disastrous results.

(2) The need of wives, mothers, and children. The fatal telegram comes into almost every parish, week by week, and in one parish over fifty were received in a day. Can any one estimate the value to the broken-hearted family of the visit of the parish priest, and his message of comfort? On seeing recently a party of men off to the front, I said, "We will help the wife," and immediately a man cried out, "Yes; we don't say anything, but we are all thankful that the wife and kids will have the padre at home if we don't

come back." There was a general shout of "Hear, hear." Is this help to be lightly stopped?

(3) The life of the nation. Napoleon was surely right when he said that in a great national emergency things spiritual counted as four to one. One would have wished that this great fact had been more strongly emphasized in the debates of last week. In the midst of this gigantic struggle and in the days of uncertainty before us, the nation will need every ounce of moral and spiritual power which it can possess. The piling up of spiritual munitions is a work of national necessity if we are to weather the storm, and, therefore, although I am convinced that the clergy are anxious and willing to do anything, to go anywhere, or to suffer anything, if only they can do their "bit," I venture to ask that the question should be carefully considered before they are moved away from their present sphere as to whether, in any other, they can really render more effective aid to the national cause than that which they are now rendering.

**Towards
Christian
Unity.**

The second Interim Report of the Sub-Committee appointed by the Archbishops' Committee and by representatives of the Free Churches' Commissions in connection with the proposed World Conference on Faith and Order, is a most valuable contribution to the discussions on Reunion and marks a long step forward towards Christian Unity. We do not wish to exaggerate its importance, for it commits only its signatories; but when we find that acknowledged leaders of the English Church and the Free Churches such as the Bishops of Bath and Wells, Winchester, and Oxford, Dr. Davison, Dr. Garvie, Canon Goudge, Dr. Scott Lidgett, Principal Selbie, the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, Dr. Eugene Stock, the Rev. William Temple, the Rev. Tissington Tatlow and the Rev. H. G. Wood putting their signatures to the large conclusions set out in this Report, we feel that distinct progress has been made, and that Reunion is not quite the chimera that so many have assumed it to be. We are still a long way—a very long way—from its realization, but the outlook is decidedly more hopeful than it was before this Report appeared. The first Interim Report was issued just over two years ago, and it is necessary to the right understanding of the present position to trace the steps that have so far been taken. This the Report does for us in the opening paragraphs:—

A movement has been initiated in America by the Protestant Episcopal Church, which has been widely taken up by the Christian Churches in the United States, to prepare for a world-wide conference on Faith and Order with the view of promoting the visible unity of the Body of Christ on earth. In response to an appeal from those who are co-operating in America a committee was appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and commissions by the Free Churches to promote the same movement in England.

This Joint Conference has already issued a first interim report prepared by a Joint Sub-Committee, consisting of: (1) A statement of agreement on matters of Faith; (2) a statement of agreement on matters relating to Order; (3) a statement of differences in relation to matters of Order which require further study and discussion.

In further pursuit of the main purpose the Sub-Committee was reappointed and enlarged. After mature and prolonged consideration it is hereby issuing its second interim report under the direction of the Conference as a whole, but on the understanding that the members of the Sub-Committee alone are to be held responsible for the substance of the document.

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In issuing our second interim report we desire to prevent possible misconceptions regarding our intentions. We are engaged, not in formulating any basis of reunion for Christendom, but in preparing for the consideration of such a basis at the projected Conference on Faith and Order. We are exploring the ground in order to discover the ways of approach to the questions to be considered that seem most promising and hopeful. In our first report we were not attempting to draw up a creed for subscription, but desired to affirm our agreement upon certain foundation truths as the basis of a spiritual and rational creed and life for all mankind in Christ Jesus the Lord. It was a matter of profound gratitude to God that we found ourselves so far in agreement. No less grateful were we that even as regards matters relating to Order we were able to hold certain common convictions, though in regard to these we were forced to recognize differences of interpretation. We felt deeply, however, that we could not let the matter rest there; but that we must in conference seek to understand one another better, in order to discover if even on the questions on which we seemed to differ most we might not come nearer to one another.

In all our discussions we were guided by two convictions from which we could not escape, and would not, even if we could.

It is the purpose of our Lord that believers in Him should be one visible society, and this unity is essential to the purpose of Christ for His Church and for its effective witness and work in the world. The conflict among Christian nations has brought home to us with a greater poignancy the disastrous results of the divisions which prevail among Christians, inasmuch as they have hindered the growth of mutual understanding which it should be the function of the Church to foster, and because a Church which is itself divided cannot speak effectively to a divided world.

The visible unity which answers to our Lord's purpose must have its source and sanction, not in any human arrangements, but in the will of the One Father, manifested in the Son, and effected through the operation of the Spirit; and it must express and maintain the fellowship of His people with one another in Him. Thus the visible unity of the Body of Christ is not adequately expressed in the co-operation of the Christian Churches for moral influence and social service, though such co-operation might with great advantage be carried much further than it is at present; it could only be fully realized through community of worship, faith, and order, including common participation in the Lord's Supper. This would be quite compatible with a rich diversity in life and worship.

There is much in this statement for which we are deeply thankful. The spirit of it is excellent; in every line we discern the honest

desire for the healing of our unhappy divisions. "A Church which is itself divided cannot speak effectively to a divided world"—a clear declaration which English Christians need to take to heart, for the divisions which exist among them are paralysing their efforts and weakening their witness before the nation. "The visible unity of the Body of Christ is not adequately expressed in the co-operation of the Christian Churches for moral influence and social service"—another most excellent *dictum*. We agree with the Report that such co-operation might be carried much farther than it is, but what we object to is that men should so deceive themselves as to suppose that when the parish clergyman and the Nonconformist minister join hands, let us say, in helping to get a bad drain-pipe removed, it is a striking indication of Christian unity. This, of course, is putting an extreme case, but in its essence it is typical of the kind of spirit which prevails in many quarters. "By all means unite when we can in social work"—so runs the common argument; but when we get to religious work the old spirit of aloofness from each other quickly reappears. The Report goes to the root of the matter and puts the case on a firm foundation. "The visible unity of believers which answers to our Lord's purpose" can "only be fully realized through community of worship, faith and order, including common participation in the Lord's Supper." Until that is reached there can be no "unity" worthy of the name.

It would be idle not to acknowledge, frankly and unequivocally, that, in any proposals for the unity of English Christians, it is Episcopacy which blocks the way, and we are glad to find that this Report faces the difficulty with an intelligent appreciation of the real position, which has not always been the case. Moreover, this is done with the honest desire of finding a solution. We quote the following very important passage:—

In suggesting the conditions under which this visible unity might be realized we desire to set aside for the present the abstract discussion of the origin of the Episcopate historically, or its authority doctrinally; and to secure for that discussion when it comes, as it must come, at the Conference, an atmosphere congenial not to controversy, but to agreement. This can be done only by facing the actual situation in order to discover if any practical proposals could be made that would bring the Episcopal and Non-Episcopal Communions nearer to one another. Further, the proposals are

offered not as a basis for immediate action but for the sympathetic and generous consideration of all the Churches.

The first fact which we agree to acknowledge is that the position of Episcopacy in the greater part of Christendom, as the recognized organ of the unity and continuity of the Church, is such that the members of the Episcopal Churches ought not to be expected to abandon it in assenting to any basis of reunion.

The second fact which we agree to acknowledge is that there are a number of Christian Churches not accepting the Episcopal order which have been used by the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightening the world, converting sinners, and perfecting saints. They came into being through reaction from grave abuses in the Church at the time of their origin, and were led in response to fresh apprehensions of divine truth to give expression to certain types of Christian experience, aspiration, and fellowship, and to secure rights of the Christian people which had been neglected or denied.

In view of these two facts, if the visible unity so much desired within the Church, and so necessary for the testimony and influence of the Church in the world is ever to be realized, it is imperative that the Episcopal and Non-Episcopal Communions shall approach one another not by the method of human compromise, but in correspondence with God's own way of reconciling differences in Christ Jesus. What we desire to see is not grudging concession, but a willing acceptance for the common enrichment of the united Church of the wealth distinctive of each.

Again we say we are thankful for so strong and faithful a pronouncement. We do not desire to place upon the words of the Sub-Committee a greater burden than they will legitimately bear, but to our mind it is a fact of tremendous significance—when we recall some previous utterances on the question—that we have this clear declaration that non-Episcopal Churches “have been used by the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightening the world, converting sinners and perfecting saints.” This goes to the root of the whole question. Can the claims of an Episcopal Church be placed higher? Let us, therefore, hear no more disputes as to whether Nonconformist bodies are Churches: plainly this Report recognizes them as such, and it is a great gain that they should be so. Moreover, this declaration goes far, as it seems to us, to settle the long-debated question of the *esse* or the *bene esse* of Episcopacy. Clearly it cannot be the *esse* of a Church, when Churches which know it not are used by the Holy Spirit to do the essential work of the Christian Church, viz., enlightening the world, converting sinners and perfecting saints. To those who accept and, as we do, rejoice in this admission it is impossible to conceive of Episcopacy as being of the *esse* of the Church.

But a mere academic recognition of the true position of Episcopacy is not enough; there must be discovered some means whereby differing views may be reconciled. The Report does not leave us in doubt upon the matter; it offers what should prove a thoroughly practical solution of the difficulty, thus:—

Looking as frankly and as widely as possible at the whole situation, we desire with a due sense of responsibility to submit for the serious consideration of all the parts of a divided Christendom what seem to us the necessary conditions of any possibility of reunion—

1. That continuity with the historic Episcopate should be effectively preserved.

2. That in order that the rights and responsibilities of the whole Christian community in the government of the Church may be adequately recognized, the Episcopate should re-assume a constitutional form, both as regards the method of the election of the bishop as by clergy and people, and the method of government after election. It is perhaps necessary that we should call to mind that such was the primitive ideal and practice of Episcopacy, and it so remains in many Episcopal communions to-day.

3. That acceptance of the fact of Episcopacy and not any theory as to its character should be all that is asked for. We think that this may be the more easily taken for granted, as the acceptance of any such theory is not now required of ministers of the Church of England. It would no doubt be necessary before any arrangement for corporate reunion could be made to discuss the exact functions which it may be agreed to recognize as belonging to the Episcopate, but we think this can be left to the future.

The acceptance of Episcopacy in these terms should not involve any Christian community in the necessity of disowning its past, but should enable all to maintain the continuity of their witness and influence as heirs and trustees of types of Christian thought, life, and order, not only of value to themselves but of value to the Church as a whole. Accordingly, we hope and desire that each of these communions would bring its own distinctive contribution, not only to the common life of the Church, but also to its methods of organization, and that all that is true in the experience and testimony of the uniting communions would be conserved to the Church. Within such a recovered unity we should agree in claiming that the legitimate freedom of prophetic ministry should be carefully preserved; and in anticipating that many customs and institutions which have been developed in separate communities may be preserved within the larger unity of which they have come to form a part.

We do not complain that the Report does not carry us farther; we are content to go one step at a time, and certainly the suggestions offered in the Report should make it easier for Nonconformists once again to discuss the Reunion question with some hope of agreement. They have refused—and rightly refused—to consider

proposals which to all intents and purposes involved their "disowning" their past. Now they are offered a more excellent way.

In a final paragraph of real strength and beauty the Sub-Committee makes the following appeal:—

The Sub-Committee's Appeal.

We have carefully avoided any discussion of the merits of any polity, or any advocacy of one form in preference to another. All we have attempted is to show how reunion might be brought about, the conditions of the existing Churches and the convictions held regarding these questions by their members being what they are. As we are persuaded that it is on these lines and these alone that the subject can be approached with any prospect of any measure of agreement, we do earnestly ask the members of the Churches to which we belong to examine carefully our conclusions and the facts on which they are based, and to give them all the weight that they deserve.

In putting forward these proposals we do so because it must be felt by all good-hearted Christians as an intolerable burden to find themselves permanently separated in respect of religious worship and communion from those in whose characters and lives they recognize the surest evidences of the indwelling Spirit; and because, as becomes increasingly evident, it is only as a body, praying, taking counsel, and acting together, that the Church can hope to appeal to men as the Body of Christ, that is Christ's visible organ and instrument in the world, in which the spirit of brotherhood and of love as wide as humanity finds effective expression.

It remains to be seen how far this Report will be accepted by the parties most intimately concerned. So far as Evangelical Churchmen are concerned we are persuaded that they will be most grateful for it, as not unnaturally they will feel that it inspires them with a new hope. It fully justifies the position they have consistently held upon this question; and, at least by inference, equally condemns the narrow and exclusive view held by some of the more extreme High Churchmen. Those Evangelicals who were responsible for the Cheltenham Conference and its Findings especially will rejoice that the principles for which they contended are so generously recognized. It is true that the Findings went a great deal farther, and offered a policy for present-day action. The Report seeks only to create an "atmosphere" for future discussion, and this it will help to do. If, when the question comes before the World Conference on Faith and Order, it is approached in the spirit which marks the Sub-Committee's Report, there will be every reason to hope that some arrangement may be made for healing "our unhappy divisions," so that Christians may once again become "all one in Christ Jesus." Meanwhile our duty is clear. Every

opportunity must be taken to promote true spiritual fellowship between the Episcopal and non-Episcopal Churches.

**Church
Finance.**

There is plenty of criticism abroad concerning the finances of the Church, but constructive proposals are by no means so numerous. The pity is that when they do appear they receive so little attention, and one can only hope that Dr. Headlam's volume, *The Revenues of the Church of England* (by the Rev. A. C. Headlam, D.D. London : John Murray, 2s. 6d. net), briefly referred to in our review pages, will fare better than others have done. Speaking broadly, Dr. Headlam is in favour of grouping parishes. He gives a concrete example—that of six parishes in his own locality. The total population of these is 1,300 and the incomes amount to £1,196. As he says, "three active, earnest, capable clergymen could manage the work and the endowments would provide them with adequate incomes and pensions." There are two grounds upon which objection might be raised. First, there is the difficult question of patronage, and secondly, the lessening of the number of benefices and so reducing the chances of men obtaining settled spheres of labour. The sentiment of the English people demands a married clergy, and how can a man bring up a family on £200 a year? Dr. Headlam tells us there are 3,275 parishes with incomes less than £200. He thinks that at least twenty new bishoprics are urgently needed, and seemingly approving of an income of £2,500, shows that £50,000 a year is needed for their endowment. But we cannot see that he proposes to pool the incomes of the older sees to secure this sum! Dr. Headlam criticizes the proposal to do away with deans and make each bishop dean of his cathedral—an "ill considered policy," he calls it. But for deans and canons, as for all other clergy, he wishes to see a retiring age fixed and a pension to be provided. There are some strong points urged in connection with the training of the clergy and some fairly close criticism of the "too cautious finance" of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and we think with him that a more effective use could be made of their income. Is it too much to hope that the suggestions made in these interesting pages will bear fruit?

