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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

# THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1929.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

### *The Future of the Revised Prayer Book.*

**O**WING to the illness of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the discussion by the Bishops of their future course of action in regard to the revised Prayer Book has been postponed. It is said that they will not meet until June. This period will give an opportunity for a fresh consideration of the whole situation. We are all desirous of a happy solution of the difficulties which have been created by the endeavour to secure the use of the Book after its rejection by Parliament. We hope that no attempt will be made to continue the disregard of law which has led to so many strong protests against the proposals of the Bishops. The revised Prayer Book has never been popular, even among those who voted for it, and we still urge the policy of endeavouring to secure a compromise so as to secure the use of the large portions of the Book which will be generally acceptable to the great majority of Churchpeople. The revisions of the Prayer Book which have been adopted by other portions of the Anglican Communion show that it is not impossible to secure general agreement in the adoption of those moderate changes which are necessary to bring the Book into harmony with present-day requirements. This quiet period of reflection will, we hope, be fruitful in the production of some plan to provide the desired elasticity in our worship while maintaining the principles of our Church, as a Church of the Reformation.

### *The Disestablishment Campaign.*

Meanwhile a number of proposals have been made which demand the careful attention of Churchpeople. The Bishop of Durham, with more than his usual impetuosity, has endeavoured to launch a violent campaign in favour of disestablishment. His plea is that Parliament cannot be allowed to fetter the spiritual freedom of the Church. There might be considerable force in this plea if Parliament were endeavouring to do so, or were exceeding the powers of which the Bishop was himself one of the most eloquent defenders when, as recently as 1923, he wrote the words :

“ There is nothing unworthy or invidious in the fact that the Prayer Book is a schedule of an Act of Parliament. Parliament is no contemptible or incongruous source for the system of national Christianity. There can be no more august exponent of Christ's religion than Parliament. No lesser authority would suffice for the purpose of establishing any system as legally binding on the entire community ; no more venerable authority is in existence.”

The endeavour to arouse enthusiasm in favour of disestablishment has failed. Churchmen realize the disastrous effects which it would have not merely on the Church of England but on the religious life of the country, especially in the country districts, and in the slum areas of our large towns, where the ministrations of the Church are only maintained with difficulty at present. The situation does not demand disestablishment.

#### Sir Lewis Dibdin on “ A Christian State.”

Sir Lewis Dibdin has issued in a pamphlet entitled *A Christian State* two letters which appeared in *The Times* dealing with facts of English history that show the true nature of the Establishment of the Church and at the same time reveal the indefensible character of the proposals of the Bishops. He lays down the principles governing a Christian Church in a Christian State. He shows the extent of the control which the State can exercise in the affairs of the Church. He answers effectively the objection that the English State may no longer be regarded as a Christian State, and then deals with the claim that the House of Laity represents the Christian laity of England. He says, “ As one who has been throughout identified with the business of the Church Assembly, I think, and I hope I am justified in saying, that we do represent the most instructed laymen of the Church of England, but that we represent that laity as a whole is simply not a fact.” The point, however, with which he chiefly deals is “ whether the condition contained in the Enabling Act that no measure should pass without the assent of the two Houses of Parliament should be disregarded by the Bishops,” and in regard to that he is emphatically of opinion that the conscience of the country is shocked by the thin and futile arguments used “ and not less so by an open flouting of the conditions of the Enabling Act to which Bishops along with other Churchmen joyfully agreed.” He has little sympathy with the effort to raise a campaign in favour of disestablishment.

#### The Precedent of the Church of Scotland.

A small group of Churchmen have set themselves to secure the removal of the conditions accepted by the Church when it agreed to the Enabling Act. They think that “ spiritual freedom ” can be obtained without disestablishment, if Parliament will grant to the Church of England the terms recently granted to the Church of Scotland. They plead for “ a Free Church in a Free State ” and say

that if the Church of Scotland since 1921 can be both established and free the same principle is applicable to the Church of England. This claim has been examined by several writers from different points of view. Lord Cushendun pointed out the difference in the position of the laity in our own Church and in the Church of Scotland. Professor Carnegie Simpson, in a criticism of the scheme, has shown several important differences in the situation of the two Churches. He noted that a mass of English Churchpeople feel that "some kind of Parliamentary control, however criticizable in theory, is the only available safeguard against an uncontrolled Clericalism." He did not think the movement would "take on" with the Church generally or with the nation, unless in it the voice of the laity were given full constitutional place. He also thought that "if the Church of England expects Parliament to meet it reasonably and understandingly in this matter, then it should act constitutionally towards Parliament." The fact is, that both the plea for disestablishment and this revolt against any Parliamentary control are striking evidence of the failure of our Church, especially in recent years, since the development of Anglo-Catholicism to maintain its hold on the people of England. The advanced Churchmen cannot convert the people to the ecclesiasticism which they call Christianity, and they resist the authority of the laity of the country which demands Christianity in the National Church.

#### "Lambeth and Reunion."

Recent events have shown that the problem of reunion with the non-Episcopal Churches is now one of practical importance. Some decisions will have to be made by the authorities of the English Church within the next year or two. Lord Hugh Cecil's theory that our Church is more nearly allied to the Orthodox Church than to any other body of Christians, will not be accepted by any large section of Churchpeople. Events in the Mission field point to union with the Evangelical Communion, with whom we have much in common. Evangelical Churchpeople have a special interest in this question, and it is well that they should make their views known. The Cheltenham Conference has in the past given a strong lead in the reunion movement. It is therefore altogether fitting that those responsible for the Conference should make arrangements for expressing the views of Evangelical Churchmen on the present situation. The Committee has therefore arranged for a meeting of the Conference to be held at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, on April 10, 11 and 12, under the chairmanship of the Rev. C. M. Chavasse, Principal of St. Peter's Hall. The general subject will be "Lambeth and Reunion." The Programme has already been drawn up and issued. It covers the main points on which controversy is strong. The Speakers are well known and representative of the chief interests involved. We hope that a large number of our readers will arrange to be present. We also hope to be able to print a number of the papers in next quarter's issue of THE CHURCHMAN.

### Editorial Note.

In the present number of *THE CHURCHMAN* we are able to present a number of interesting subjects. The use of "Voluntary Clergy" has recently been strongly advocated. The Rev. J. D. Mullins, D.D., considers the problem in regard to the Prairie and the Bush, and gives our readers the benefit of his long experience in connection with the work of the Colonial and Continental Church Society. The Rev. F. Montgomery Hitchcock, D.D., is well known to our readers as a writer of interesting points of scholarship. His *Historical Parallel between the Trials of St. Paul and Apollonius* will be of special interest to students of the classics. Canon French's account of Church Life in Ireland during the "Troubles" is a revelation of the conditions under which the Irish Clergy carried on their work during a period of exceptional difficulty. Mr. John Knipe concludes the interesting study of John Wycliffe and His Times, which have thrown into strong relief the character and work of the "Morning Star of the Reformation." The Roman Catholic Church is making the utmost use for propaganda purposes of the Centenary of "Catholic Emancipation," as they describe the repeal of the laws restricting their civil rights. Mr. J. W. Poynter points out the real significance of the restrictions placed on Roman Catholics, and the grounds for their removal. In recent years Sunday School Work has received widespread attention. New methods have been adopted, and many changes made for the more efficient training of teachers and the practical application of the results of psychological study. The Rev. F. Boreham deals with "The Origin, History and Aims of the Sunday School" from several points of view. A re-statement of the position of Evangelical Churchmen is needed at times. A refreshing reminder of "What Evangelicals stand for" is given by Canon Bothamley of Durham. Our article on Parochial Work this quarter is by the Rev. H. A. Eyton-Jones, Vicar of St. John's, Walthamstow, who tells of some of the results produced in his parish by the power of prayer.

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SPARROWS IN THE ORGAN. Thirty-eight talks with Boys and Girls.

By the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D.D. London: *H. R. Allenson, Ltd.* 3s. 6d. net.

Dr. Alexander has already established his reputation as a preacher who makes an appeal to the children. After the Scottish custom he gives them five minutes on Sunday morning. He certainly maintains his reputation, for here are nearly forty delightful "talks," short but very much to the point, and the point always a good one, and be it noted not half a dozen points, just one and no more. Splendid! Every preacher should forthwith possess himself of this useful bundle of material.