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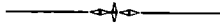
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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

the University of Cambridge, who as Third Wrangler solved in his day many a hard problem of another nature, and who has for so many years shown his deep interest in all matters which affect the social well-being of the people—as an undergraduate he made his first speech in the Cambridge Union upon a social subject—we leave the solution of the harder problem discussed in this paper, satisfied that at his hands it will receive as satisfactory a solution as the conditions allow.

C. ALFRED JONES.



ART. IV.—WHAT MAY THE IRISH CHURCH DO FOR CHRISTENDOM?

THE mission of any given Church in Christendom, that is, the office it may be adapted to fulfil in the Catholic system—it does not follow that it will fulfil it—is likely to differ from that of other Churches. Here, as in other relations, all members have not the same office. But in meeting certain needs, witnessing to certain principles, reconciling in varying degrees the claims of general loyalty and of local independence, there will be scope and need for many forms of Church life. So far it will be only a truism to say that the Irish Church may be expected to afford lessons of instruction or warning to others of its own communion, and that in so far as it differs in history and present relations from the rest—and it does—it will be as an object-lesson unique.

But is it only in this obvious way that the Church of Ireland may help us? Or are there any specific and peculiar ways in which it might be of service to Christendom generally? Or is it the inept thing some recent writers would represent, who can suggest nothing better than that it should lose itself in the Nirvana of Canterbury; become, to change the figure, a country branch of the great Anglican house of business? It is surely a pregnant illustration of what theological prepossession can do when well-informed and serious writers seem to determine the historical question of the succession in the sixteenth century by the wisdom or otherwise of some act of the nineteenth; and deploring, say, an isolated ordination in Spain, suggest the intrusion by the Church of England of a great organized schism into Ireland—for this, from their standpoint, would be what it would amount to.

But we are not dealing now with the Irish succession, or the merits or demerits of the revised Prayer-Book. Supposing the succession admitted, and the right to revise recognised, even if

its exercise were deplored, what could the Irish Church, if it would, do for Christendom?

Take four points—without saying they are all—two which concern practical work, and two, the great Reunion question. One thinks of the wonderful missionary record of the Irish Church in ancient times. Why not a missionary record now? There is more culture and ardour in the Irish Colleges than the home ministry can use. Why not emulate the old spirit, gather men together from the other British islands, study in convenient places near to where some practical work needs doing, and instead of a cloistered life in English villages or village-cities, where every old woman is over-visited, relieve and help the life of study by pastoral and teaching work among the scattered ones of the South, or the industrious but often unspiritual North? For Colonial missionary life it would be just the training. Dare we add, that the Irish Prayer-Book—it is not our ideal—might at all events protect this form of common life from much suspicion, or much danger of monasticism, and that the position in it of the Athanasian Creed (not a very effective missionary document) might be a consolation to some missionary spirits. Then there is the diaconate. At first this would seem to be far more an English than an Irish question. But it is an Irish one in some important ways. Those who have ministered in Ireland must often have felt how it weakens our case as towards Presbyterianism, that when we tell Presbyterians they have only two orders out of three, they can reply that practically we have only two. We may say that the one they lack is the most important; they can reply that the one we have practically abolished is as necessary as it ever was, that we have to supply its want from outside the ministry, while they supply what the episcopal office gives us, from within it. But there is a more practical side to the question. There are two very different directions in which a real working diaconate could be very useful in Ireland, and, at the same time, be an object-lesson of value to other communions. We hear of churches closed in some parts; certainly there is a lessened number of clergy and of ministrations, the scattered groups of Church Protestants might almost as well be in the colonies, and the maintenance of churches and clergy either by them or for them, that is, by, or for, handfuls of families here and there, miles apart, is obviously impossible. There is no normal remedy, nor likely to be. We cannot say to them, “*Do*” anything; we can only say, “*Don’t* go to the Roman Catholic chapel.” They manage, no doubt, to get married, christened, confirmed. But we all know what Sunday after Sunday without worship means, and, for the young, without Sunday-schools. But many of the gentry are really religious

men, members, perhaps, of Synods, and such like; many farmers very intelligent; many schoolmasters ready and capable. Why not make such as these deacons? Let them call together their neighbours and dependents, not to Plymouth Brethren meetings in drawing-rooms, but to Church services in licensed rooms, with simple but fitting appointments; catechize the children, baptize if need be, visit the sick, hold prayer-meetings in such groups of houses and with such frequency as would be quite out of the question for the regular clergy. The whole ground would be covered in this way. Better free-lance ministrations than none; but better Church ministrations than either volunteer or none. Then turn to the populous Protestant North. Do you want your deacons there? Well, let us take one district the writer has reason to know well. Ten miles long, several good-sized villages, many hamlets, very many groups of families enough to supply small congregations; altogether, thousands of inhabitants; one very moderate-sized church, two clergy. But how of the Roman Catholics? Well, they take off some hundreds only. The rest, mostly Presbyterians; some large meeting-houses, several ministers. Yes; but their people don't care to go unless they pay "steepence," pew-rent, and, if they do, they often take turn about to economize; numbers go but rarely or, practically, never. It is not a question of proselytism, and there is no occasion for friction. Many don't want you, but many do. They welcome Church ministers and ministrations. The writer had many a farm kitchen full of Presbyterians on a Sunday morning, surplice, Prayer-Book, and all. We are simply throwing away opportunities, of helping souls, we mean chiefly, of enlarging our own borders, if you like to add that. With a sufficient supply of deacons—the material is more abundant than it would be in England in most parts, and there are Presbyterian tradesmen even, who would make willing ones, and teach better Church doctrine than many Churchmen, too—hundreds of congregations could be created and sustained.

To come to the great question of Reunion. In a recent paper Mr. Price Hughes maintains that the true line of solution lies in the gradual working of what may be called the federation of likes; the different bodies of Methodists drawing together, the different bodies of Presbyterians, Congregationalists with Baptists, and so on; implying that after that, if there be no undue haste, or mere proselytizing and leakage, we may hope that the gravitation of the now larger and larger bodies may become too strong to be resisted, and the "larger hope," so to speak, in the way of union, be realized. Now, in ecclesiastical as distinguished from physical geo-

graphy, how do the different communions stand to each other? The body which in England comes nearest to the Church in culture and intelligence, breadth of horizon, sympathy with Church ideas, even in the development of the liturgical spirit in worship, is just the one which in polity is farthest removed, and least able to be dealt with in any corporate way—the Congregational. That which is nearest in polity, in the ecclesiastical genius, with antiquity, discipline, standards, claim of a sort of succession—the Presbyterian—is in England inconsiderable in numbers and little more than a Scottish colony (the original English Presbyterians having become Unitarian). In Scotland the conditions are reversed, and the Church is to the eye a sect, or an English colony, overshadowed by a great territorial system, fully equipped with its Church and collegiate organization, rooted in the soil, identified with the national history. Union would seem like either the absorption of the Church into Presbyterianism, or the surrender of Presbyterianism to an exotic sect. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, and if union is to come it may come in unlikely ways; but both the ways hinted at *are* unlikely.

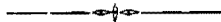
What is the situation in Ireland? The frontiers of the Church and of its nearest neighbour in the ecclesiastical sense, not only approach, but merge. There hardly are frontiers. Churchmen and Presbyterians have for the most part a common origin, history, traditions, ideas, sympathies. Protestant in all these ways, they have become not only similar, but mixed and intermixed, in blood, in worship, interchanging in different generations. Many have received the first sacrament in one communion, the second in another; many a funeral party comes to church for the Burial Service and then goes to the Presbyterian graveyard for the interment.

There is yet another reunion bridge, connecting yet wider portions of European Christendom, which the Irish Church, probably better than any other, could build. Our isolation from what may be roughly called the Lutheran world is the greater scandal in that there is no such irretrievable committal to vital error, no such official *non possumus*, as seem to bar the way in the direction of Rome. But here, too, if the heart of the Continent, so to speak, seem inaccessible and even uninviting, as German Lutheranism no doubt is, there are points of contact much nearer and more feasible. There is that fine example of a missionary Church, the Moravian, and there is the Scandinavian, and more especially the Swedish. Both these, it is believed, claim the succession, and in the case of the Swedish, the evidence is very strong, has been well sifted, never determined, at all events, adversely, and the friendliness of the relations such, that it ought not to need much delicate diplo-

macy to convert presumption into certainty by the consecration, for instance, of a bishop or bishops. What Church shall fulfil this friendly office? It is natural and honourable that it should be a European one. The Church of England is half strangled with red tape, and long before we should get letters patent authorizing a commission to appoint a committee to instruct a secretary to ask someone to prepare a schedule of a thousand questions (with half a guinea to pay on each) there might be no England or Sweden to deal with. But there remains by its side a yet more venerable Church, sharing its history and greatness, but unfettered by its bureaucratic traditions, from whose veins no communion need scorn to receive an infusion of Apostolic blood; kindred in origin, in history, in institutions, in ideas, the British and Scandinavian peoples need no longer be alien in faith and worship, and no longer without hope that the bridge thus made may lead to highways and byways of the religious system of Europe, as the short sea passage from Larne, which seemingly only enables Antrim to shake hands with Dumfrireshire, really grasps also Orkney and Land's End.

The days that see the revival of a true Diaconate and of Celtic missionary enterprise, the reinforcement of the Church's "evangelic faith and apostolic order" with the statesmanship of Presbyterianism and the zeal of Methodism, and a *modus vivendi* with Protestant Europe, may or may not be in sight, and the Irish Church may or may not be ready to hasten them. But they are days worth hoping for and praying for; and if the enlargement and deliverance do not come from thence, we may yet feel they might well have done so, and say to that Church: "Who knoweth but thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

J. S. JONES.



ART. V.—WALES, EDUCATIONALLY, POLITICALLY, AND RELIGIOUSLY.

WALES does not suffer at the present moment from want of attention, counsel, and patronage. Religious leaders, politicians, and educationalists are vying with each other in paying their homage and offering their services to a people numbering less than two millions of souls. Besides the old Welsh Church, which is the representative of primitive Christianity in this island, and has conferred more benefits on the Welsh people during its long and chequered career than all its rivals combined, we have the Roman Catholic Church,