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

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

THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1916.

The Month.

“THE National Mission of Repentance and Hope has In Preparation. now definitely begun.” So writes the Archbishop of York in his letter to his diocese. It is clear, however, that he is referring to preparation for the Mission rather than to the Mission itself. Yet there is a sense in which the work of preparation may be said to be part of the Mission, for upon it depends the success or otherwise of the great autumn effort to which the Church is now being called. What is the nature of the “preparation” that is looked for? In the York diocese it began with a “solemn assembly” of the clergy in the Minster, and this will be followed up by days of prayer and retreats. It is probable that other dioceses will make similar efforts; indeed some have already done so, but up to the time of writing such a movement seems to be by no means general. It could be wished that the Bishops would give the Church a stronger lead in this matter, for we are convinced that the clergy are only waiting for guidance and direction. Time is running on, and there is yet much—very much—to be done before the Church will be fitted to engage in the Mission, whatever form it may take. It is good to see that by universal consent it is agreed that the stage of preparation must begin with the clergy, for they will be the leaders of the Mission and they hold the key of the position. It goes almost without saying that in

such work of preparation emphasis must be laid upon the essentially spiritual side of the clergyman's office, a fact which stands in special need of being emphasized at this juncture. There is noticeable among large sections of clergy of all schools of thought a falling off in spiritual aspiration and spiritual power. They are losing the sense of Apostolic ministry—the ministry which had as its outstanding characteristic a passion for souls. No doubt many excuses can be offered for this failure. The work of the modern clergyman, at least in a town parish, is so beset with the perfecting of machinery, the development of organizations, and the mere serving of tables that it is not always easy to secure time for that quiet thought and meditation and communion with God by which alone the spiritual life can be fed and fostered, with the result that many men grow first lukewarm, then indifferent, and some go under altogether. It is time that our methods were changed. Much of our parochial machinery and organization should be "scrapped" if it cannot be carried on by lay people, so that clergy might have time and opportunity to give themselves more wholly to the spiritual work of the ministry. If there had not been this loss of spiritual effectiveness these months of preparation for the National Mission might not have been necessary. Indeed it may well be questioned whether even the Mission itself would have been needed, for we cannot help thinking that if, during the last twenty or thirty years, the ministry had been spiritually effective, the condition of England to-day would have been very different from what it is. But the past is gone, and cannot be recalled. It needs to be repented of, and if in facing the future there will be a strong determination on the part of Bishops and clergy to give their main attention to spiritual things—the things that really matter—the outlook is full of hope. These months of preparation will, we trust, help the clergy to get back their sense of spiritual vocation and so enable them to become qualified to be the spiritual leaders and helpers of the people in the National Mission.

Bishop Montgomery in his inspiring volume for *Some Details*. Lenten reading ("Life's Journey": Longmans, 2s. 6d. net) has a chapter on a National Mission which, though written before the Archbishops' proposals had taken definite shape, is full of suggestiveness regarding steps that may be taken to make

the witness of the Church more effective. The details he enumerates are so practical that we venture to quote the following passage, which, although rather long, will well repay careful attention—

“Let every church in the United Kingdom be open from morning till night. If in every place it needs a guardian, let it be provided as an honourable occupation. Let every church be free and open for the next twelve months, all pew rents put on one side, and the money found by other means. Let the clergy and workers freely use the church for their private prayers at all hours. Nothing helps a shy man so much as the sight of others at prayer. Let plenty of aids to prayer be provided. Let no confession of sin in any church or cathedral be said “on G” for the whole of twelve months, and let the natural voice be used as much as possible; if possible for all prayers for twelve months. Let us see to it that no prayer or service is gabbled for twelve months. I apologize to the clergy, who may rightly be insulted by this imputation. It is made for their sakes. Let solemn silences be introduced into our services, and by those who know how to utilize silence.

“Let services be held on Sundays and on weekdays at hours which may be most unconventional but yet as fitted as possible to the needs of all. Let sermons be short and devoted to the most fundamental truths, and preached from the heart; if possible written so that they may not suffer from diffuseness. Let the reading of the lessons be made a subject of prayer by the clergy, so that these passages of Scripture may be riveted on the attention of the people. They can be made such intense sermons that no other sermon seems needful. Let the administration of the Sacraments—Baptism and Holy Communion—be made overwhelmingly solemn and understood by all. Let humble and unaffected visitation become for twelve months the duty of all the clergy, as also the faithful teaching of children on weekdays. It seems to me that even such details open out before us a vista with a bright light upon it and boundless hope for the future. But all depends upon the spirit that is in us. I believe the United Kingdom is ready to respond to the highest spiritual call that can be made upon it, but not to anything less than that. I believe confirmations might be doubled or even trebled.”

We commend these suggestions to our readers. It is easy to find fault with them, to say that they are impracticable—which they are not—or to put them on one side as being too drastic. Drastic they are, but the times call for drastic measures. There has crept into our Church services an air of unreality, and until we recover the sense of reality no real progress will be made. Reform on the lines sketched by Bishop Montgomery would do much towards the attainment of that end.

Towards
Christian
Unity.

The report of the Sub-Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order is an interesting sign of the times. It does not carry us very far “towards Christian unity,” but it is distinct and valuable evidence of the desire of English Christians to come more closely together. The

origin of the report may thus be explained: Soon after the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, a movement was 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 by Commissions of the Free Churches to promote the same movement in England. The originators of the whole proposal recommended in their outline of methods to be followed that "informal conference and other interchanges of views between members of different Christian Communion be encouraged and promoted in order to prepare the way for the achievement of the purpose of the proposed Conference." Accordingly a Conference of the Archbishops' Committee and of certain members of the Commissions of the Free Churches chosen for this purpose met on different occasions for mutual counsel. This Conference appointed a Subcommittee to draw up propositions alike of agreement and of difference; and those so appointed, after considerable discussion, agreed upon a Report which sets out (1) a statement of agreement on matters of faith, (2) a statement of agreement on matters relating to order, and (3) a statement of differences in relation to matters of order which require further study and discussion. The Report is signed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who acted as Chairman, the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Eugene Stock, and the Rev. Tissington Tatlow, on the Church side, and the Revs. W. T. Davidson, A. E. Garvie, J. Scott-Lidgett, J. H. Shakespeare and C. Anderson Scott as representing Nonconformity. The points of agreement are of great interest, and, if in some respect the exact wording is less definite than we like, there is yet abundant ground for believing that there is a larger measure of agreement among Churchmen and Nonconformists than we had dared to hope for on such subjects as God's revelation to man through the written Word, the essential doctrines of Christianity, the Church as a visible Society, the Sacraments, and the unity and continuity of the ministry. But the area of differences is very large. Says the Report—

"Fidelity to our convictions and sincerity in their expression compel us to recognize that there still remains differences in respect of these matters—

"(1) As regards the nature of this visible Society, how far it involves uniformity or allows variety in polity, creed, and worship.

"(2) As regards the Sacraments—the conditions, objective and subjective, in their ministrations and reception on which their validity depends.

"(3) As regards the ministry—whether it derives its authority through an episcopal or a presbyteral succession or through the community of believers or by a combination of these."

These "differences" are vital, and we cannot imagine that any "further study and discussion" by the same Sub-Committee would lead to any very definite results. These "differences" represent the old difficulties, viz., the nature of the Church, the validity of the Sacraments, the authority of the Christian ministry. They form, we believe, an unbridgeable gulf between the Church and Nonconformists. It may be that the next Lambeth Conference may show us the way out of such difficulties on the Church side, but, frankly, we do not expect much from that Conference in this direction. If the Kikuyu issues could be satisfactorily settled there might be some hope, but every one knows the enormous efforts that will be put forth to prevent even the Report of the Consultative Committee from being accepted. Still the "Faith and Order" Report has done good if only in directing the minds of men to the great importance of Christian unity, and we hope the Sub-Committee will continue its labours.

We were all looking forward to a great reduction ~~Drink in 1915~~, in the National Drink Bill for 1915. There were several factors which should have made themselves felt in that direction. There was, first of all, the King's Pledge, which came into prominence in April. It is true that large numbers of men and women, from whom better things might have been expected, had not sufficient loyalty or patriotism to follow the King's noble example, but there were thousands who did, and cheerfully gave up the use of alcohol for the period of the war. The effects of their abstinence, of course, should in ordinary circumstances have been seen in the drink bill. Then, in the second place, many thousands of men were out of England, serving King and country at the front. Their absence should also have been felt in the bill. Then, thirdly, there were the Drink Restrictions, which in some form were in force for the greater part of the year, and in the later months were particularly stringent. These restrictions, every one thought, would have severely reduced the amount. But these things not-

withstanding, the amount expended on alcoholic liquors in 1915 is estimated by the Secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance at £181,959,000, as compared with £164,463,000 in 1914, being an increase of £17,496,000. We do not forget, of course, that the price of drink has gone up, but making due allowance for every consideration and explanation, the fact remains that in a year when the country was engaged in the greatest war in history the drink bill was still prodigious. If abstinence mean efficiency, then, on the lowest ground, statesmen are bound to give the drink problem their best attention. The Christian Church, which has the higher interests of the nation in view, is also bound to deal with the question. At present, however, neither the State nor the Church seems able to rise to the occasion.

**Zeppelin
Menace.**

A remarkable letter appeared recently in a provincial paper in connexion with Zeppelin raids. The writer, complaining that prayer for protection against the Zeppelin menace was seldom heard, expressed the view that the time was come for special petitions throughout the land that God's protecting hand may be over us to shield the innocent and helpless from this awful peril. He had a practical suggestion to offer. The Mayors in the Midlands have been meeting together to devise plans of defence; "would it not be possible," the writer asked, "for these and other Mayors, each in his own town, to call together the clergy of all denominations and suggest the observance of a day of special prayer, either unitedly or separately, in their different Churches?" This proposal has been submitted, we understand, to the Mayors of towns supposed to be in the danger zone, for their consideration, but we have not yet heard whether it has borne fruit. Yet the suggestion is in every way excellent.