

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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

THE CHURCHMAN

December, 1918.

The Month.

WITH hearts full of thankfulness to God, "the only Giver of all Victory," the people of this nation and Empire learnt on Monday morning, November 11, that Germany had accepted the terms of the Armistice proposed by the Allies and that hostilities ceased forthwith. It was glorious news. The strain of the last four years had been very great, yet there was no sign of weakening: indeed the resources and power of the Allies were getting stronger almost daily; and the Allied armies were determined to fight on until the purposes for which they drew the sword were finally accomplished. But the plain fact is that Germany could not go on. As one of the German delegates is reported to have said to Marshal Foch, "The German army is at your discretion, Marshal. Our reserves of men and munitions are completely exhausted, and it is, therefore, impossible for us to continue the war." Thus the collapse of Germany was as complete as it was sudden.

To what is this great event—one of the most momentous in the world's history—really due? There can be but one explanation: it is in answer to prayer. The turn of the tide, as Mr. Bonar Law has reminded us, set in on July 18, just one day after the Houses of Parliament had resolved that, as representing the nation, they would attend an Intercession Service at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on August 4, the Day of National Prayer, and there commend the nation's cause to Almighty God. The conjunction of the dates furnishes one of the most striking examples in all history of the truth of the divine promise, "Before they call I will answer and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Men everywhere watched the progress of affairs at the Front with feverish expectation. They

remembered the position in March when it seemed possible that the dash of the enemy for the Channel ports and for Paris might succeed; they saw with joy unspeakable the failure of the new enemy offensive and the retreat of the German armies almost day by day; and when weeks and months went by without a single reverse to the Allied armies they were compelled—even some of those least interested in religion—to admit that this was indeed a “miracle” traceable to the prayers of a united nation. The Christian explanation is the only possible one, “It is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” This is not to disparage the splendid work of Navy or Army, rather does it emphasize the never-to-be-forgotten fact that God in working out His purposes is pleased to use and to bless material means when they are put forth in a righteous cause—a cause which may reverently and humbly be called His own. As the Bidding in the Thanksgiving Services of November 17 had it, from Him “have come the skill of captains, the valour of sailors and soldiers and airmen, the wisdom of counsellors, and the steadfast patience of the people,” and it has now pleased Him “to crown these His gifts with the blessing of a great and final victory.” “Yet,” as the Bidding added, “in the midst of our thanksgivings for these tokens of the good hand of our God upon us we do well to remember that they are given not for any merit of our own, but only of His mercy.” Indeed the moral of the events of the last few weeks is writ clear and distinct, “Seeing these things are so, what manner of men ought ye to be?” That is the whole question for the future. God in His mercy grant that nation and Empire henceforth may live for Him and seek to do Him service. This will be the true thanksgiving—the thanksgiving of our lives.

The Dissolution and the Church. The dissolution of Parliament carries with it the dissolution of the Convocations, and some interesting questions at once arise. It was expected that, if Parliament had survived and the Convocations were still in being, their next meeting would be one of vital importance to the Church. As far as we understand the position the last stages of Prayer Book Revision were to be completed and the scheme was then to be submitted as a whole to be accepted or rejected. But the best laid plans go awry sometimes, and whatever may be the ultimate effect, the coming of the Dissolution at this stage should give us

a little breathing space. New Lower Houses of Convocation will have to be elected, just as a new House of Commons has to be elected; and while we can hardly dare to hope that the work of revision will have to be begun *de novo*, it is tolerably certain that what has been done will have to be submitted for endorsement—or otherwise. We hope, of course, that the “otherwise” will prevail, but everything will depend upon the results of the procuratorial elections. Clearly, therefore, it is more important than ever that every possible seat should be contested in the Evangelical interest, and a really strong effort made to break down the present over-representation of the extreme Anglican party in Convocation. It may not be possible to reverse what has been done, but the return of a strong party pledged to maintain the Reformation Settlement and to resist all innovations in a Romeward direction would do much to make difficult, even if not altogether to prevent, the legalization of Vestments, the Reservation of the Sacrament, and the contemplated changes in the Communion Office.

The opposition to the proposed changes in the Communion Service has grown to what the Convocation authorities have rightly come to regard as formidable proportions. The strong Committee appointed at the Conference called by the Bishop of Manchester in the summer got to work as soon as the holidays were over, and steps were taken to bring to the attention of Churchmen all over the country the substance and significance of the proposed changes. A Manifesto signed by nine Diocesan Bishops, issued in opposition to what Convocation has done, is a unique event in the modern history of the Church. Their Lordships of Durham, Bath and Wells (who endorsed “at the present time”), Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, Carlisle, Llandaff, Sodor and Man, and Chelmsford, united in such a Declaration and invited signatures to a Memorial to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, protesting against the proposed changes. The Memorial called upon their Graces, “as those whom our Church has entrusted with the grave responsibility of maintaining her sound doctrine which is agreeable to the Word of God, so to use your authority as not to increase our unhappy divisions, especially since there is no evidence in the King’s letters of business that any authority was given or intended to be given to the Con-

**A Formidable
Opposition.**

vocations to tamper with the doctrinal settlement of the Prayer Books of 1559 and 1662." This Memorial has been very extensively signed, especially by lay people, and the number of influential and weighty signatures—including those of members of both Houses of Parliament, Privy Councillors, University professors, Baronets, Knights, members of the learned professions, etc.—is very remarkable, added to which upwards of two thousand clergy—many of them holding positions of distinction—have, we believe, signed the Memorial. At the time of writing no date has yet been fixed for the presentation of the Memorial, but it may be hoped that when the Archbishops receive the deputation presenting it, they will be able to offer some assurance that the changes will not be pressed. Nothing short of this will serve to re-establish the confidence of loyal Churchpeople which, it would be folly to deny, has been very rudely shaken by the action of the late Convocations.

The Bishop of Manchester, to whom the whole Church is greatly indebted for his leadership in this matter, closed the remarkable paper he read at Leeds on October 29 with a grave warning. It had been advanced in favour of the proposed changes that they are only permissive. Upon this the Bishop remarked:—

Let me impress upon you with all seriousness that while we are to suffer for a time from all the evils which alternative uses entail, it is not intended to perpetuate alternatives. The two books, the old and the new, are to be tested by experience. After a period, at present not determined, there is to be one book and only one. Which will it be? Remember the Ornaments Rubric is not to be altered. Remember that the Church will sanction an interpretation of it which the law has not sanctioned. Remember that it commands whatever it does command, and that it will now be supposed to command the Mass vestments. Remember that strenuous efforts will be made to introduce these on the ground that the Church really commands the use of them. Remember that tabernacles will certainly be erected to contain the Reserved Sacrament, and that it will be ceremonially escorted through the streets.

Churchmen who object to all these changes will live for a time on a footing of toleration, reminded constantly that they are defective, narrow-minded Churchmen. When the day of alternatives is over what will happen to them? Those who now ask for permissive use will certainly demand compulsory use of all that they have introduced. The Church will be stripped of its Protestant character, and will be so many stages nearer to conformity with Rome.

For while much is said of reunion, nothing has been done to facilitate reunion with Nonconformists, as far as the Prayer Book is concerned. The Confirmation Rubric and the Preface to the Ordinal are unchanged. I am

aware that there are other forces at work, and that interchange of pulpits is being strenuously advocated. But I am not aware of any real effort to establish intercommunion. Greater freedom to preachers will do little if our Communion Office is made less acceptable to Nonconformists. We shall become more sacerdotal at the Holy Table, while the pulpit will be more on a level with the platform. Is this a sound policy of reunion?

We have at present a Communion Office which is unique for its Scriptural purity and liturgical correctness. It is acceptable to all Protestant Churchmen, though some take offence at kneeling to receive the consecrated elements. Many of those who wish to alter it do not pretend that the contemplated changes will satisfy them. They accept them only as an instalment. By accepting them we accept the principle of a sacrifice in which the Bread and Wine are associated with the glorified Humanity of the Lord, the Table becomes an altar, and the minister a sacrificing priest. If we submit to such changes knowing what they mean, we and our children and children's children must reap the fruit of them for all time. My brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath set us free, and be not again entangled in a yoke of bondage.

We could wish, indeed, that in facing the problems of natural reconstruction, in which the Church ought to be able to take a large part, we could present a united front. What the Church needs is a policy and the power to carry it out, but in this matter the Convocations give us no help at all; on the contrary, they have multiplied our difficulties. A disunited Church must ever be an impotent Church. The Convocations, by their proposals on Prayer Book Revision, have deepened the spirit of division; and if those proposals should be carried into effect in their entirety they must inevitably lead to something approaching disaster. It is sheer madness to ignore this fact, as some of the Bishops are inclined to do, although we are glad to know that some of the wisest among them, upon whom the chief burden of responsibility lies, are apprehensive of the coming storm, and it may be that by their action the position may be saved. But is it not deplorable that, at a time like this, when the Church has an opportunity of unparalleled magnitude of serving the nation, it should deliberately throw it away, and devote its best efforts to the promotion of internecine strife? We do not wish to speak too harshly, but who among us, who has read with any degree of care the debates in Convocation during the last four years, could imagine that the Church is a great spiritual institution with a spiritual mission to the people of this nation? It is time that these questions of high controversy were laid aside and that the Convocations, as representative bodies of the Church,

First Things
First.

should give themselves to dealing with the spiritual problems now urgently calling for attention. We emphasize the word "spiritual" because spiritual work is of the first importance. Questions of machinery, organization, and administration could well be dealt with later. The Church's first duty is to promote the evangelization of England. This would give strength and stability to those schemes of material reconstruction—to which the Church cannot be indifferent—while without it measures of social reform must lack that spiritual foundation which alone can make them really effective.

The Honorary Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in his Monthly Statement to the General Committee on November 12 made an impressive reference to the position in Japan which we quote as follows:—

Position
in Japan.

A startling picture is drawn in the August *Japan Evangelist* of the rapidly changing social conditions in Japan. Ancient Japan has given way to Modern Japan, and in no case is this more striking than in the growth of Industrialism. Fifty years ago the Japanese people were living the free and quiet life of agriculturists, to-day the population is flocking into factories. In the past ten years the population of Tokyo City has increased 29 per cent., while in the same period that of her industrial suburbs has leapt up by 425 per cent. A vast industrial centre is linking up to the two cities of Tokyo and Yokohama. Last year 2,000 new factories were opened in this district alone. The cities of Osaka and Kobe are being linked up in the same way. To-day Japan has 25,000 factories employing two million people.

These factories are of mushroom growth. The result is that from the standpoints of sanitation, ventilation, and everything that concerns the welfare of the employees the conditions in the majority of cases are most vicious. The crowded living conditions under which these people exist is described as appalling. The lack of sunshine and air, and the filthy surroundings furnish unparalleled opportunity for the spread of disease and the propagation of vice. Drink, gambling, and immorality are said to be the only recreations open to the majority of the young men.

In some factories the women workers, most of them mere girls, exceed the number of men employed. Throughout Japan there are 500,000 women workers, and 300,000 of these are under twenty years of age. The factory, however, is not the only aspect of the situation. The tremendous increase in the number of young women who are being forced out of the sheltered life of the home and thrust into the soulless competitive life of modern commercialism is alarming. Government Departments, the Telephone Exchange, and the Post Office are gradually exchanging women for men in their establishments. On every hand the home is being bled.

There is still a darker side of this picture when account is taken of the number of registered women and houses of ill-repute, and of the many homes even where vice has been allowed to intrude in the attempt to solve the problem of soaring prices and a small income.

But the saddest aspect of all is reached when the irreligious state of the masses of the people is examined. An investigation carried out by the

Government discloses the fact that in Tokyo 80 per cent. of the working people have absolutely no religion whatever. And in Osaka 90 per cent. of the working people make no profession whatever of having a religion. The labouring man has thrown religion overboard. He has no ideals, no standards, no moral barometer. Self-interest and dire need are the only forces of which he is conscious. The writer of the article draws a very dark picture ; but he floods it with light when he avers that a worthy presentation of Christ and His Gospel is the only dynamic that can cope with the situation.

We have quoted the above extract mainly for the sake of the last paragraph. There is a dark side to English life and every now and again we get unwelcome glimpses of it. While we are firmly convinced that many of the stories of vice and wickedness circulated during the war were greatly exaggerated, if not altogether fictitious, there is only too much reason to know that all is not well with us. We are impressed, for example, by the similarity between the statements in the above quotation that "in Tokyo 80 per cent. of the working people have absolutely no religion whatever" and that "in Osaka 90 per cent. of the working people make no profession whatever of having a religion," and the allegation often heard at home that 80 per cent. of the population stand outside all forms of organized Christianity. We do not ourselves accept responsibility for the correctness of the estimate, but one fact is so clear that all may see it, viz., that "Christianity is not in possession." And how are the Churches dealing with the problem? It is recognized in Japan that "a worthy presentation of Christ and His Gospel is the only dynamic that can cope with the situation." Let the Churches in England learn the same lesson and then proceed to give effect to it.

