

# THE CHURCHMAN.

*JULY, 1906.*

## The Month.

**The Education Question.** As we are writing this at the time of the discussion in Committee on Clause III., it is, of course, impossible to do more than register the results of the debate during the past month. The fundamental principle of popular control, according to Clause I., was asserted in the House of Commons by a large majority, and, what was very much more remarkable, the policy of secularism was decisively rejected by a majority of nearly eight to one. In view of the advocacy of this policy as a solution of the religious problem by High Churchmen on the one hand and Labour members on the other, it is surely significant that the support it received was practically the same as it had in 1870. For this result we cannot but feel profoundly thankful. The present House of Commons, at any rate, is determined that the Bible shall retain its place as an essential part of our national educational system. Now that this result has been obtained and the will of Parliament declared so unmistakably, it ought to be accepted, and all amendments should be framed in the light of this great fundamental principle. The essential points of the situation at present are: (1) Popular control, according to Clause I.; (2) Bible teaching, as shown by the defeat of the secular amendment. The question now is whether it is possible to frame an educational policy which shall observe these two principles and at the same time do justice to all the interests concerned. We are bold enough to believe that such a policy is still possible if all parties approach the subject in the right spirit.

During the past month there have been several gratifying indications of definite efforts after peace by means of proposals for the amendment of the Bill. Of these efforts, the most important, weighty, and representative has been the lay memorial to the Archbishops, transmitted through Mr. G. A. Macmillan. The memorialists plead that Churchmen should accept the Bill as providing a basis of settlement, and then press upon the Government amendments of the kind suggested in these columns last month. We rejoice to find such widespread support for a policy of moderation as is indicated by this memorial. It is evident that the advocates of peace are a much stronger and more influential body than was at first supposed, and also that the extreme opponents of the Bill have no right to be regarded as expressing either the entire or the true voice of the Church of England. The Archbishop of York, in replying to the memorial, seems to us to express the true line for Churchmen to adopt :

“From the first, while keenly conscious of the serious defects in the Education Bill, I have felt that our wisest course was to seek for its amendment rather than its destruction, and I hope that this may yet be possible.”

With Dr. Maclagan's hope we associate ourselves to the fullest possible extent. In our columns this month will be found three papers discussing the situation from different standpoints. While, for ourselves, we adhere as firmly as ever to the views stated in our notes of the last two months, we should welcome any proposals likely to lead to a settlement satisfactory to the majority of the nation. After the prayer for unity at Whitsuntide, is it not the bounden duty of Christian men on both sides to bring this about?

It is evident from the concessions made by the Government on Clauses II. and III. that the *Spectator* was right in speaking of “the evident willingness of the Government to meet reasonable proposals in a reasonable spirit,” and we cannot help calling attention to the words of the same article, in which the writer speaks of

Counsels of  
Peace.

Signs of  
Compromise.

“the folly of attacking the Bill *in toto*, and speaking of it as though it were a measure of impiety and confiscation, deliberately designed to injure the interests of religion. Upon such a foundation of unjust paradox nothing can ever be built, but if once the good intentions of the Government are admitted, we have little doubt that a sound compromise can ultimately be arrived at.”

With the *Spectator*, we believe that a true settlement can be reached, if only each side will show a willingness to believe in the *bona fides* of the other. It is no question of Nonconformist victory over the Church or Church victory over Nonconformity. The interests of the nation are at stake, and what is needed above all things is an attempt to understand the position of the opposite party and to credit the other side with as much sincerity as we claim for ourselves. The words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, at his Diocesan Conference, indicate the right spirit in which to approach the problem :

“There were difficulties whichever way they looked. He thought he could without trepidation undertake to find plausible objections to any and every scheme which had from any quarter seen the light. If that were so, it should make them chary about the epithets they used either about motives or about men.”

Public opinion has been growing in volume during the past month in favour of Church schools being permitted to contract themselves out of the present Bill and to return to the *status quo ante* 1902. Not only leading Nonconformists like the editor of the *British Weekly*, but Churchmen like the Dean of Ely and Professor Michael Sadler, are in favour of it. The educational disadvantages which have been feared can surely be provided against by Government inspection, while the relief to Churchmen who do not wish to relinquish that control of the school which necessarily follows rate-aid would be immediate and thorough. We hope, therefore, that in connection with the discussions on Clause IV. it may be possible to make the provision for these cases in the Bill. Such an enactment would go far to disarm opposition and to give those Churchmen who require it their old freedom to manage their schools in their own way.

Contracting  
Out.

Two fundamentally opposite positions are taken up with regard to the relation of the State to religion. On the one hand, there are those who urge that the State goes beyond its province in saying what religious teaching its young citizens should receive. On this account freedom is demanded for each religious body to enter the school and give its own teaching. The opposite view contends that the State has a perfect right to lay down the principles upon which the life of its citizens should be founded. The following words of Canon Beeching in a recent sermon in Westminster Abbey put the latter view very clearly :

Is the State  
Secular?

“It exists, no less than the Church, in order to promote the good life. Why should it not lay down the principles upon which, as a Christian State, it believes that life to be based? If the State is secular, why does it go beyond its province and prohibit Sunday trading? Why does it concern itself with the moral conduct of the citizens and punish drunkenness and other forms of vice? Such action on its part would suggest to us, not that the State is secular, but that it concerns itself with those practices of the good life upon which the large proportion of its citizens are agreed. If that is so, the same rule would apply to the teaching of the principles of Christianity in the elementary schools. So far as Christianity is common to all English Christians, the State is justified in prescribing it to be taught; nay, it would be guilty of suicidal neglect of duty if it did not so prescribe it; of course with safeguards for conscientious scruples.”

Surely this is the true view of the function of a Christian State. If the State has nothing to do with religion, how can we justify an Establishment, and how are we warranted in having chaplains in our prisons, our army, and our navy? The only question is whether there is such a thing as a common Christianity which the State can advocate and teach.

Is there a  
Common  
Christianity?

Canon Beeching rightly said that if there are no Christian principles upon which the majority of Christian Englishmen are agreed, then we shall have not only to de-christianize the State, but also the English people. He goes on to say that there is no need to do this, for there *is* a common Christianity :

“The ‘Free Churches,’ as they are called, have recently put forth a common statement of their faith, and most English Churchmen could subscribe to the greater part of it. If then the leaders of the several religious societies would

confer together, it would be perfectly possible for them to prepare a scheme of teaching which the State could prescribe in its schools, with whatever special additions and exemptions might be found necessary. But if, for practical reasons, this should be impossible, at least the State could appoint a central representative committee which should be responsible for the religious teaching of its elementary schools, instead of leaving so important a matter to chance local majorities. The theory that the State is secular is not scriptural, nor is it Christian, nor does it answer to the facts. It seems to me a thing in itself worth making sacrifices for, that religion should be taught in the State schools by the State teachers; for that very fact would be a declaration, which the simplest child could understand, that there are acknowledged to be in life unseen ends, by which he is to shape his course in the world, and that his country imposes upon him a duty to God as well as to itself. Such teaching would bless him that gives as well as him that takes. . . ."

The existence of the Apostles' Creed, to say nothing of the Societies like the Bible Society, the Tract Society, and the Evangelical Alliance, all testify to a Christianity common to the vast majority of English people. Canon Beeching's suggestions in connection with the Education Bill are therefore deserving of the most careful attention. Canon Christopher's pamphlet, "An Example from India," has already shown what can be done by means of a union among Christian men, and there is surely no reason why something similar should not be attempted here. Very truly did the Bishop of Carlisle say in a recent letter to the *Times* :

"There is not a single tenet of religion essential either to the good conduct of the present life or to the radiant hopes of the future, which is not common to the vast majority of the Christians of our nation. This essential religion is now being taught in most of our schools, to the great advantage of the nation."

**Catholicism  
and  
Protestantism.** A well-known writer, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in a letter to the *Westminster Gazette* on the Education Question, puts the essential points between Roman and Anglo-Catholicism and Protestantism in a characteristically clear way :

"A powerful Anglican section thinks itself Catholic. The issue between Catholics and Protestants has largely been whether the Bible by itself is of supreme importance. You put the Bible by itself as a thing of supreme importance, and then you call that a common ground. Briefly, the Catholic (including the Anglo-Catholic) resents what he thinks the idolatry of the

Bible almost exactly as the Protestant resents what he thinks the idolatry of the Virgin Mary. . . . The Anglo-Catholic says: 'To teach the Bible alone is to teach Protestantism.'

There is a refreshing definiteness and frankness about this which is most welcome. Quite apart from any question of the Education Bill (for the issues are far wider than this), we wish to call attention to the admission that "to teach the Bible alone is to teach Protestantism." What a testimony this is in favour of Protestantism! What an admission, too, as to Catholicism, for it clearly implies that Catholicism in the writer's view of it cannot be taught from "the Bible alone"! This means that from the records of the first fifty years of the life of Christianity, the records of the truly primitive Church, it is impossible to find and teach Catholicism. No wonder, therefore, that Catholicism needs the Church to be theoretically co-ordinate with the Bible, though practically supreme over it. No wonder, too, that Newman had to propound his theory of development to justify Catholicism. And no wonder that Article VI. lays down the principle that Holy Scripture is supreme. In the last resort, all the differences between Roman and Anglo-Catholicism and Protestantism are centred in the question of the supremacy of the Bible or the Church. Whoever puts the Bible first cannot be a Roman Catholic or an Anglo-Catholic. Whoever puts the Church first will never know what primitive Christianity is in its purity and power.

We desire to call attention to a very valuable pamphlet entitled "Evening Communion: Reasons for its due Recognition in the Church of England," which has recently been published by the National Protestant Church Union. It is especially valuable for its six appendixes, which include such subjects as "References to the Time of Communion in the Works of the Early Fathers," "Proceedings of the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury, 1893," "Clerical and Episcopal Testimonies," and a bibliography on the subject. The paper rightly remarks that the two questions of Fasting and Evening Communion have much more to do with

one another than appears at first sight. In this connection we may refer to an article on "Fasting Communion" which appeared in these pages in December last. The question of Evening Communion is continually coming up in one way or another, and it is essential that the facts connected with it in the New Testament, the early Church, and in the Church of England should be thoroughly and widely known. We believe this pamphlet will do much to spread reliable information, and we therefore commend it to the notice of our readers. It need hardly be said that those who practise Evening Communion simply seek for liberty to do what they believe to be at once clearly scriptural, truly Catholic, perfectly legal, and manifestly useful. They are more than ready to give to others the same liberty they claim for themselves, and they only desire to fulfil the spirit and the letter of the Twenty-first Canon, and have the Holy Communion at such times as may be most convenient for the greatest number of the parishioners.

This is the question asked by the *Record* in connection with the new Year-Book of the Church which has just been issued by the S.P.C.K. While no one can help being profoundly impressed with what our Church is doing, as shown by all these figures, it remains true that the population untouched and unreached is something awful to contemplate. Whether we look at the figures for Sunday-schools or communicants, or, indeed, for almost any other department of Church life, we see no striking gains, while often there are distinct losses. The *Record* concludes that "we are holding our own, but not doing much more." When someone was told of a certain congregation that it was "holding its own," he replied: "But who is holding *the rest*?" We may well ask this concerning our own land. Making every allowance for all other Churches, the problem remains grave and heart-searching. We still need that revival of spiritual religion for which so many are praying, and we must persevere until it comes in power and blessing to the whole country.