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THE CHURCHMAN

June, 1916.

The Month.

"The New Religion." The Bishop of London in his public utterances generally manages to use some phrase which "catches on," and his statement in Convocation that "the Young Men's Christian Association had formed a kind of new religion" has excited widespread attention. We do not gather from the report of the Bishop's remarks that he gave any very clear indication of what this "new religion" consists; and we should imagine that the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. would repudiate very strongly the suggestion that there was anything "new" in the religion which is being propagated by their workers among the troops in the home training camps, and at the Front. What, perhaps, is "new" is the way the precepts of Christianity have been put into practice, but even this is no markedly fresh departure. It has ever been the aim of the Y.M.C.A. to bring Christian principles and the Christian spirit into every part of a young man's life. It has cared for the needs of his body; it has sought to cultivate his intellect; it has provided for his social aspirations—in fine, it has taken the young man as he is, viewed his life and viewed it whole, and has sought to provide for his every need upon Christian lines. It had proved its capacity for such service to the young manhood of the nation long before the war broke out, as witness the highly successful work at the new headquarters in Tottenham Court Road, and at different large centres throughout the country. Its beneficent influence has spread also to all parts of the Empire, but for our present purpose we are thinking only of the homeland. When, therefore, war was declared and young men were volunteering for service in hundreds of thousands, what more natural than that the Y.M.C.A. should determine to apply and extend the principles

which have always characterized its work to the young men who were embarking upon an altogether new experience—life in the Army. There is no need to dwell upon the tremendous success which has attended the War Emergency Work of the Y.M.C.A. ; all we are concerned with now is to show that this “ new religion ” is only the adaptation of old principles to modern needs.

The Bishop of London went on to say that “ the Church
 “ The Old,
 Old Story.” must be prepared in some similar ways to adapt itself
 in the future to the changed conditions ” ; and others are
 taking up the same theme, although not always very intelligently.
 Thus a writer in the *Guardian* says of the Y.M.C.A. that “ they
 practise without professing ” while “ the Church has lazily professed
 without practising.” The contrast is smart enough ; but it is
 based upon a fallacy. The writer, like many others, is apparently
 under the impression that the Y.M.C.A., being an undenominational
 organization, has no creed to profess, but in this he is very decidedly
 mistaken. The creed it “ professes ” is at the root of all its under-
 takings and gives life to them all. The Y.M.C.A. is governed by
 no denominational standard, but it is essentially Christian in its
 basis, in its work and in its outlook. So far from the religion it
 teaches and professes being “ new,” it is very old, as old as the New
 Testament itself. It is “ the old, old story of Jesus and His love,”
 which Y.M.C.A. workers tell out to all whom they can influence,
 and it is this proclaiming of the Gospel in all its simplicity which
 has won the hearts of men in camp and trench. If, in the words of
 the Bishop of London, the Church is to adapt itself in the future to
 the changed conditions, it is before all things necessary that it
 should give the people the old Gospel, the Gospel of salvation from
 sin—sin’s power, sin’s punishment, sin’s curse—through our Lord
 Jesus Christ. This the Church has largely ceased to do : hence its
 failure to reach men or to retain them. There ought to be no
 misunderstanding on this point. The mere imitation of Y.M.C.A.
 social methods will not effect much, unless the movement has
 behind it the life-giving principles of the Gospel of Christ. The
 Bishop of London related the story of a young man who came back
 from the trenches, and, finding the Church “ as dull as ever,”
 exclaimed, “ This is not the place for me. I’m off to the Y.M.C.A.’
 What made the Church “ dull ” to the young man? Lack of

ornateness in the service? Bishops and clergy make a great mistake if they imagine that a florid service is enough to satisfy men who feel a spiritual need. It is much more likely that the young man found the Church "dull" because it had no message for his soul; and we are convinced that the secret of the success of Y.M.C.A. meetings and services is to be found not so much in the bright and hearty singing, or in the atmosphere of true fellowship which ever characterizes them, but chiefly in the fact that they appeal to men's deepest spiritual instincts. Men are made to realize their sin and they are pointed to Him Who came to take away their sin, and this "old, old story of Jesus and His love" retains and ever will retain its fascinating power.

A most interesting Report has been presented to *After the War*, the Convocation of Canterbury from a Committee of the Lower House, upon the question how the Church may best be prepared to meet the spiritual needs of sailors and soldiers returning to their homes and civil occupations when the war is over, especially with respect to worship, public and private. The Report goes into the question very thoroughly, and, except in one important particular, its suggestions are calculated to be of the utmost service. They are grouped under four heads. The first deals with the importance of the teaching work of the Church. It points out that men nominally Churchmen have forgotten most of the elementary religious teaching which they received as children; yet they are ready to learn, but "the teaching must be simple, direct, real and thorough." The Committee lay stress upon the importance of sermons which should be so planned as to ensure that the whole of Christian faith and duty is dealt with in proper order. They add this very important clause: "The teaching, if it is to be of real value, must deal with *vital religion*. It will, for example, serve no useful purpose if it merely explains the Creeds in a hard, dogmatic manner, or concerns itself with facts which are only of literary or historical interest. The aim should be to help men to think in order that they may know how to act and how to love." Other useful suggestions are offered (e.g. that there should be instruction in the difficult art of prayer), but the point of the greatest interest is the emphasis the Committee lay upon *reality*. The second heading relates to Christian Fellowship, a matter in

regard to which the Church in so many parishes comes far short of the Christian standard. The following suggestions are much to the point :—" Church officials should be encouraged to do all that lies in their power to remove anything like an atmosphere of aloofness and coldness from the Church, and to extend a welcome to all who attend the services irrespective of their social position and the amount of their contributions to parochial funds. . . . Every communicant should be encouraged to undertake some definite piece of Church work, and the clergy should carefully avoid the appearance of regarding the workers as people who are under their orders." These last words are full of significance, particularly when it is remembered that the Committee consisted entirely of clergy. The third matter—" Public Worship "—will be dealt with separately. The fourth relates to the Prayer Meeting, and the Committee express the view that the devotional needs of the people will not be fully met unless frequent opportunities are given for united prayer outside the liturgical services of the Church.

" The Church of apostolic days was not afraid to give to the congregation considerable freedom in the matter of prayer. In the prayer meeting men waited on God ; they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance, laymen taking their full share in the offering of prayer ; and in answer to these prayers the congregation learnt what fresh duties God was calling them to undertake. We have lost much of the freedom which the apostolic Church enjoyed. The layman has for the most part to be content to listen while the clergy pray, and the prayers offered by the priest are generally some fixed form ordered by authority, and not the spontaneous utterance of his own heart."

The Committee recommend the revival of the prayer meeting, and we are persuaded that there could be introduced into any parish no better reform. The importance of this Report is self-evident : we only hope it will not be pigeon-holed, but will be acted upon.

Where so much is excellent, we the more regret finding ourselves in complete disagreement upon one important point. The section on Public Worship urges that much might be done to raise the level of our present services, and in this we entirely concur, but the passage on other changes which should be made " if a real enthusiasm for public

**Public
Worship.**

worship is to be created in the hearts of the people" fills us with alarm. The Committee quote the words of the Archbishop of York : " We must try everywhere, patiently, gently, hopefully, to restore that holy service [the Eucharist] to its rightful place as the central act of the Church's worship," and then go on to say that " any change must, of course, be made with the consent and goodwill of the people, or it will defeat its own object. If the Eucharist is to become the chief service of the day it should be celebrated at a time which is not too early for those who have been tired by a heavy week's work, or too late for those who may wish to come fasting." They add that " no change in the customary ritual of the Church need be made," and that the change which they desire to see would, in their opinion, lose most of its value " unless the communion of the people forms an essential part of the Eucharistic act. Unless this is so, the great Sunday service will be incomplete, and fail to take its place as the chief service of the day." They also express the view that " the service speaks, as no other can do, of the love of God, revealed in the Cross of Jesus Christ, coming down to meet every need of men. It has a *converting* power which is all its own, and expresses far more completely than Matins or Evensong the joy of worship and of fellowship." They accordingly recommended and the Lower House adopted the recommendation by fifty-four to eight " that no arrangements for worship should be regarded as satisfactory which do not provide for a Celebration of the Holy Communion as the principal Sunday service, at an hour when the greatest number can be expected to communicate." This recommendation suggests a change which, if it be widely adopted, may have disastrous results.

"Principal Sunday Service." We observe, first of all, that the phrase used by the Committee, " the principal Sunday service," is not the same as that used by the Archbishop of York, who spoke of " the central act of the Church's worship." The Archbishop of York may have meant what the Committee have apparently understood him to mean, but, strictly construed, his words do not necessarily carry that effect. We may, however, let that pass, and ask what is meant by this recommendation that the Holy Communion is to be the principal Sunday service? Is the celebration of Holy Communion to take the place now occupied by Matins? Is atten-

dance at it to be confined to those who intend to communicate? Or, on the other hand, is non-Communicating attendance to be encouraged? Convocation might have cleared up all these points, but it chose to ignore the practical side of the question and to content itself with the use of a phrase. The Committee lay stress on the act of communicating, but it is notorious that in Churches where the Holy Communion is celebrated as "the principal service," very few, if any, communicate at it; the service, to put it quite bluntly, is changed into a Mass. Is this the type of "reform" Convocation wants to foist upon the Church? If so, there can be but one answer: it will be resisted to the last by those whose love and reverence for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and all that it means to them, make it impossible that they could ever be parties to a scheme for so completely changing the character and purpose of the Lord's own service.

The Dean of Canterbury made a speech at the **The Problem of Criticism.** Bible League meeting on May 10, which was specially valuable as showing the true attitude towards Biblical Criticism of those who are not prepared to accept as accurate or conclusive all the much-vaunted "assured results." He frankly and freely admitted that modern criticism had conferred benefits upon the Bible: it had strengthened the position of the Bible in very many ways, and he instanced the discovery of the antiquity of the art of writing, and the work of Professor Ramsay,

To put it quite plainly (said Dr. Wace), we have no objection to criticism, but we have a great objection to false criticism—and, in our opinion, an immense amount of German criticism is thoroughly false criticism. I should be very sorry to say anything at all to disparage the invaluable work German scholars have done contributing to the understanding of the New Testament. But I will be frank about German criticism, and what I say will be better understood now than it would have been three years ago. The great fault of German criticism is violence. The German gets hold of a theory and immediately thinks it is going to explain everything. The method is revolutionary, and there is that violence of disposition which we know animates Germans in other departments of life. It seems as if they can do nothing moderate.

The reference to the "revolutionary" methods is, of course, of high significance, and it may be hoped that it will receive more and more attention.