

THE CHURCHMAN

September, 1918.

The Month.

The Fifth Year. THE observance of Sunday, August 4, as a Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving in connection with the War does not call for detailed notice in these pages, but we may, perhaps, be permitted to express our great satisfaction at the large amount of real attention the Day seems to have received, and that, too, not alone from ordinary Church-going people. Congregations were larger—in many places very much larger—than usual and the extra meetings and services arranged in numerous centres were responded to in such a way as to suggest that the fundamental idea of the Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving had really gripped a considerable section of the population. In a sentence, we believe that the nation has entered upon the fifth year of the War with a deeper realisation of its dependence upon God; and, if we are right in that view, it affords the strongest ground for encouragement and hope. The large number of “united services”—held, as they were, in nearly every part of the country—must also be noted with satisfaction. The War, which has welded the several sections of the nation so strongly that we may justifiably claim to be an united people, is certainly drawing together the various branches of the Church. It is of good augury when episcopalian and non-episcopalian meet each other for the purpose of united prayer, and there is every reason to hope that such a coming together will have results for which the Churches and the nation will have every reason to be thankful.

President Lincoln. There has been much discussion amongst us regarding national penitence and national prayer. We do not propose to revive it just now, but it may be useful to place on record three pronouncements, leaving our readers to compare them and to draw their own inferences. The first is

Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of a Day of National Humiliation and Prayer in America, on April 30, 1863—fifty-five years ago:—

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

It behoves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do by this my Proclamation designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer. And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope, authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

To come now to the present day. On April 2, 1918, the Congress of the United States passed a resolution appointing May 30 as a Day of Humiliation and Prayer, in accordance with which President Wilson issued the following Proclamation:—

President
Wilson.

Whereas, the Congress of the United States, on the second day of April last passed the following Resolution:—

“Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it being a duty peculiarly incumbent in a time of War humbly and devoutly to acknowledge our dependence on Almighty God and to implore His aid and protection, the President of the United States be, and is hereby, respectfully requested to recommend a day of public humiliation, prayer, and fasting, to be observed by people of the United States with religious solemnity and the offering of fervent supplications to Almighty God for safety and welfare of our cause, His blessing on our arms, and a speedy restoration of an honourable and lasting peace to the nations of the earth.”

And Whereas, it has always been the reverent habit of the people of the United States to turn in humble appeal to ALMIGHTY GOD for His guidance in the affairs of their common life;

Now, therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, the thirtieth of May, a day already freighted with sacred and stimulating memories, a day of public humiliation, prayer, and fasting, and do exhort my fellow-citizens of all faiths and creeds

to assemble on that day in their several places of worship, and there, as well as in their homes, to pray ALMIGHTY GOD that He may forgive our sins and shortcomings as a people and purify our hearts to see and love the truth, to accept and defend all things that are just and right, and to purpose only those righteous acts and judgments which are in conformity with His will; beseeching Him that He will give victory to our armies as they fight for freedom, wisdom to those who take counsel on our behalf in these days of dark struggle and perplexity, and steadfastness to our people to make sacrifice to the utmost in support of what is just and true, bringing us at last the peace in which men's hearts can be at rest because it is founded upon mercy, justice, and good will.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

The third pronouncement is that made by the
 Mr. Prime Minister of England. When on July 17 he
 Lloyd George. moved that the House of Commons do attend the
 State service at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on August 4, Mr.
 Lloyd George said—

When millions of our young fellow-countrymen are daily hazarding their lives so that right and justice should prevail on earth; when the fate of our country and the destiny of the world depend upon the issue of their efforts and the efforts of their comrades from many lands, it requires no words from me to commend to the House of Commons the motion that on the fourth anniversary of this terrible struggle the representatives of the nation should attend a special service to invoke the Divine Blessing on our just cause and on the brave men who are upholding it.

We do not propose to offer any comment upon the contrast afforded by a comparison of these three utterances, although others have done so, but it is useful to place them on record.

The visit to England of Archbishop Meletius,
 Christian Metropolitan of Athens, for the purpose of "drawing
 Rapprochement closer the bonds between the Greek Orthodox and the
 Anglican Churches" has naturally caused some comment, being noted as an event of not a little importance. And so it is, but it is at least doubtful whether there is sufficient similarity between the two Churches as to warrant any expectation of a working unity. At present the exact nature of the Archbishop's mission has not been disclosed, and until more is known about it comment would be out of place. The chief interest of the visit seems to be in the evidence it affords of the growth of the movement towards unity which is manifesting itself in various quarters, and Bishop Welldon, now Dean of Durham, writing in connection with the

visit of Archbishop Meletius, points out in a letter to *The Times* three objects which he thinks the Church of England may deliberately set before herself at the present time : " The first, to establish peace within her own borders ; the second, to recognise by some formal action the growing spirit of co-operation and in the end of reunion between the Church of England and the non-episcopalian Churches ; the third, to set the Church, as so confederated or united, in some definite relation to the Orthodox Church or Churches of Eastern Europe. Bishop Welldon argues his case thus :—

It may be hoped that, by a wise revision of the Prayer Book and by the collective action of the Episcopate, Churchmen and Churchwomen who are loyal to the spirit of the Church of England will soon or late be all enabled to work and worship side by side in mutual good will. That the Church of England and the other reformed Churches in Great Britain have been sensibly drawn together of late by many events, and above all perhaps by the experience of their chaplains at the front, is a cause of deep thankfulness to all Christians, and there is some reason to hope that they may in the end agree, if not upon a precise theory of the Episcopate, yet upon the acceptance of episcopacy as the historical system of government in the Church. It is only when the Churches are in some sense re-united at home that they can effectively hold out the right hand of fellowship to the national Churches of the East, which, however widely they may differ from the Church of England or from the other reformed Churches in faith and practice, yet have risen above such intolerance as would forbid all community of participation with them in the public or private offices of religion. The goal is far off ; it may seem to be unattainable—so easy is it, as ecclesiastical history shows, to create divisions, and so hard, when they have been created, to repair them—but the war has breathed a new spirit into the heart of Christendom ; and, so long as Christians keep the goal in view, they may sensibly, however slowly, draw near to it.

Upon each of these three points we desire to offer

Some Necessary what seem to us to be some necessary comments.
Comments.

In the first place, if by " a wise revision of the Prayer Book " Bishop Welldon means the revision upon which the Convocations have been engaged for the past ten or twelve years we are bound to say that that revision will need itself to be " revised " before it offers any sort of hope that it will enable Churchpeople " to work and worship side by side in mutual good will." The Convocations have not yet actually finished their task, and it may be that at the Joint Conference to be held in the autumn some important changes will be made, but so far as the work has proceeded it is clear to all who will face facts that, instead of promoting unity, it has immeasurably intensified our divisions, and that unless some way out is found the result will be to promote a

wider and deeper feeling of anxiety and unrest than has ever before been experienced. It needs to be frankly and honestly recognised that a large number of Churchpeople are now seriously alarmed at what they regard—and quite justifiably regard—as the Romeward tendency of not a few of the proposals which have passed one or other or both Convocations, and that if those proposals are persisted in there is anything but a period of peace before the Church of England in the near future. Members of the Convocations, apparently, are so enamoured of their work that they are all too ready to discount the importance and strength of the opposition to their proposals. If they regard it as “a fire of straw” we can assure them they are grievously mistaken, and we can only hope, for the Church’s sake, that they will realise their mistake before it is too late. Moreover, it is not the Church of England in its domestic concerns that will alone be affected; much of the discussion which has taken place between Churchmen and Nonconformists has shown that one real—perhaps the chief—obstacle to Home Reunion is the existence of this Romeward drift within the Church of England, for it must be remembered that Nonconformity is essentially and unalterably Protestant. We agree with Bishop Welldon that there has been a sensible drawing together of the Church of England and the Reformed Churches of Great Britain, which we hope will become closer and deeper as time goes on—as we are sure it will do if pains be taken to emphasise the Protestant and Reformed character of the Church of England—but we doubt if Bishop Welldon has quite gauged the real feeling of intellectual Nonconformists on the question of episcopacy. Our own pages this month afford strong reason for serious reflection upon the present state of Nonconformist opinion on the subject. Dr. Forsyth’s address needs to be carefully pondered. Referring to the Second Interim Report of the Faith and Order Committee he remarked: “That document says that the Free Churches are not asked to accept any theories of episcopacy, but just the fact of episcopacy, the historic fact. That really will not do. I know how admirably it is meant, but I am quite sure of this, no fact as a mere fact could be held to justify such a monopolist claim except for the theory that was in it or under it.” We do not say that Dr. Forsyth is right; but his views are shared by many other Nonconformists and they have to be reckoned with. Bishop Welldon thinks that some measure of

reunion at home must precede the effective holding out of the right-hand of fellowship to the national Churches of the East, and to a large extent we agree with him; but we venture to add our solemn conviction that the Churches of the East must go much farther in the work of reformation both in regard to doctrine and practice before anything in the nature of real union with them can be effected.

The important Conference of leading Evangelical Churchmen held in London on July 11 in relation to the proposals of Convocation for altering the Service of Holy Communion marks a new departure. An impression is supposed to prevail in some influential quarters that Evangelicals can be persuaded or coerced into accepting almost anything; that they will protest and protest, but ultimately they will yield. The results of this Conference should quickly dissipate such an impression wherever it exists. The resolution adopted by the Conference was as follows:—

“ This meeting of Churchmen affirms its strong opposition to the use of alternative forms of celebration of Holy Communion, as it is convinced that such use would tend to emphasise differences of doctrine within the Church in such a way as to lead eventually to serious bitterness and disruption, and to destroy that ‘ great charter of unity ’ which is now possessed.

“ This meeting also resolutely protests against the proposed alteration in the Prayer of Consecration on the ground that it is a departure from the distinctively Scriptural character of the office of Holy Communion, and also involves a definite disturbance of the doctrinal balance of the Book of Common Prayer, and is thus a breach of the understanding in which Prayer-Book revision was undertaken; and believes that persistence in this alteration will unite a large body of loyal Churchmen in demanding that in the revision of the Prayer Book the office of Holy Communion shall remain untouched.”

A strong Committee was afterwards appointed (with power to add to their number) to determine how best to give effect to the resolution. The seriousness of the proposals has been more than once pointed out in our pages, and the Conference had the advantage of hearing from the Bishop of Manchester a very careful exposition of their significance and an impressive appeal for definite action in order to prevent these proposals becoming realities. The action of the Executive Committee will be awaited with interest: they may certainly rely upon the unqualified support of the whole body of Evangelical Churchmen.