

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

November, 1916.

The Month.

The Appeal to the Individual. THE National Mission of Repentance and Hope is now well under way, and men are already asking whether it will be a success or a failure. Whether it will accomplish all that is expected of it is difficult to say, but of this we are profoundly convinced, that it cannot fail to bring a blessing to large sections of the people. It is impossible for anyone who believes in God to do otherwise than believe that the prayer which has been offered, and the effort which has been expended will be abundantly answered—not necessarily in the way we think or expect, but according to His purposes in Christ Jesus. We have long felt, and with the development of the arrangements our conviction has deepened, that the surest way to promote the largest and most efficient results is to give prominence and emphasis to the appeal to the individual. There have been indications in some of the pronouncements of the Mission leaders that the importance of this point is not even yet sufficiently realized, but we are certain of this, that unless individuals are influenced first of all, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to move the nation. We are the more thankful, therefore, for the very clear and decided reference to this point in the Bishop of Edinburgh's new volume, *Witness: the Work of Disciples and Friends* (published by Mr. Robert Scott, 2s. net). It is an inspiration to read Bishop Walpole's pages; he puts us into touch with realities at once, and his exhortations, so clear, so simple, so sympathetic, arrest and sustain the attention of the reader. Now, on this question of the appeal to the individual he argues with telling effect. If (he says) the religious condition of the country is as elementary as some have described, then "the first need must be the conversion or awakening of our own people." Should not this (he asks) be our objective now, with

a view to the further objective of the nation after Peace and when the men return? If the present effort is only "the first push," and it necessarily implies further endeavours as the years go on, he pleads that this first push should be akin to that which Lord Kitchener made with so much success two years ago, the winning of volunteers and recruits and their training for the great offensive.

It is this that the Church is needing, and it is this that will awaken her enthusiasm. The change that has come over Great Britain in two years is remarkable; strangers from America and elsewhere notice it: sentiment has yielded to stern determination, weak enthusiasm to strong resolution. To what is it due? It has not been effected by the Press or pamphlets or platform speeches, but by volunteering and recruiting. Every man that has joined the Army or Navy, and now there are five millions, has given fresh power to the cause. If only five people are interested in each willing recruit, that means the personal interest of the entire nation. Now only in this way can the Church become strong and enthusiastic. Were but ten people in each congregation of the land quickened to make an absolute surrender of all they have for Christ and His Church, they would carry so many with them that there would be a force sufficient to change public opinion. It is this that we must strive for in the days that are coming, and for this we need the old stirring appeals that gather disciples. The Mission may be short, but three days, or it may be as long as a fortnight, the duration matters nothing so long as human wills are surrendered. There is no other path to effective and lasting national reform than this.

A more detailed review of this valuable book must be reserved till later, but we feel so strongly the importance of this plea for individual dealing—or, as we expressed it last month, the conversion of individual souls—that we lose no time in calling attention to it.

**What is
Wrong?**

The answer of the Oxford Diocesan Council of the National Mission to the inquiry "Why is the Church throughout England and this diocese not that effective spiritual force and moral witness it is meant to be?" is the most complete we have yet seen. Other dioceses are, doubtless, dealing with the question, and it may be hoped that when the answers are complete they will be published together so as to be available for more general consideration. If the inquiry is dealt with in the frank spirit which characterizes the Oxford Memorandum, the result should be of the greatest value and importance. The Oxford Reply is of a seven-fold character, and we are glad to notice that among the reasons for failure they give as the first, "Because we Churchpeople are not zealous enough in faith and works and prayer." Beyond all question this is the root of the trouble—the Church has lost the sense of its spirituality and with it the sense of its

Divine Mission. We have no sympathy with those who wish to reconstruct the Christian Faith on modern, i.e. Modernist, lines ; that—in our view—would be to court still greater failure. We long to see a more vigorous and more determined exposition of “ the faith once delivered to the saints ” ; we want to see, as we said last month and repeat to-day, a more general return to the preaching of the old Gospel which alone has the power to change the hearts of men. We are, therefore, pleased to find the stress laid by the Oxford Council on fundamentals. There are, no doubt, phrases in the Reply that we should not use ourselves, but that does not hinder us from expressing our agreement with its general purport. The following passages from it speak for themselves :—

The supernatural element of Christianity has been widely discredited, and the sense of the horror of sin has in consequence been largely lost, and a low standard of Christian worship and life tolerated.

The faith of the Incarnation—with its fruit in the Atonement, the Resurrection and Ascension, and the present working of the Holy Spirit both through the Sacraments and in all His manifold modes of influence—needs to be re-stated in its fulness, so that it may be recognized by all as something that vitally concerns their daily life, and is the foundation of any right relationship towards God or man.

It is the lack of this real faith in the supernatural which accounts for the prevalent tendency to regard the Lord's Day rather as a day of secular recreation than as the day specially set apart for the public worship of Almighty God. It is the same lack of faith which lies behind the widespread neglect of the spiritual use of Holy Scripture.

The second reason—“ Because we are not militant enough in the cause of Christ ”—is also much to our mind :—

We have largely ignored the duty of fighting against sin and the Devil corporately and publicly. Most of us have hardly wanted to know the truth about the prevalence of sexual sin, or the misuse of marriage, or the power of the drink-interest in the nation, or the awful misuse of money in luxury, wastefulness and gambling. And even when we know, we often acquiesce timidly. The great organized forces of sin in town and country do not tremble before the local church as before a vigilant, inveterate and unrelenting foe, which will use all legitimate means to defeat and hamper them. We have been sadly deficient, clergy and laity alike, in moral courage and spiritual faith. It is another sign of this lack of courage that in too many parishes the clergy have for many years failed to deal personally and individually with the souls of the people committed to their charge.

The other reasons open up more debatable considerations, yet as abstract propositions they will command a large measure of support. Who can doubt, indeed, that the Church has suffered a large measure of failure “ because we have largely lost the sense of Brotherhood ” ? The relation of the Church to the workers

presents many problems, but they will never be solved until the Church has recovered the Brotherhood spirit. Again it is true that "because of the lack of religious knowledge" the appeal of the Church has not met with adequate response, and unfortunately we see but few signs, at present, of a return to a better order of things. We are not sure that "because of the lack of corporate control" the Church has failed, as so much depends upon what use the Church would have made or will make—if the recommendations of the Archbishops' Committee are carried out—of self-government. We find ourselves in more general agreement with the last two of the seven reasons given, viz., "Because of the divisions among Christians" and "Because we have neglected the duty of Evangelizing the World." Our "unhappy divisions" continue to mock us and paralyze all our efforts, and yet there does not seem to be the smallest sign of any real attempt to bridge the gulf which exists between the Church and Nonconformity. Our neglect of foreign missions is, of course, notorious; and it finds an unhappy parallel in the long-standing neglect of the Church to deal adequately with home evangelization. All these problems must be taken in hand, but first let the Church seek the conversion of its individual members.

Canon Petit, in a letter to the *Guardian*, points out **Shortage of Clergy.** that the war is seriously affecting the number of candidates for Ordination, and for the next few years the shortage must inevitably increase. The number of men ordained in the ordination year just closed was 381, but it is well that Church-people should realize how this figure compares with the figures of the years immediately preceding the war, so that they may see the gravity of the problem with which the Church will be confronted in the next few years. Canon Petit says:—

In the year which ended with the Ordinations in October, 1914, there were 688 admissions to the Diaconate. This was practically the same as the average for the three preceding years, in which the figures had been 711, 686, 670 respectively—that is, an average of 689. In the year ended October, 1915, the number fell to 521—a figure 168 below the average. For the year now ending the number, as already stated, is only 381, or 308 below the average; in other words, the Ordinations of these two years have supplied us with 476 less than the rate of supply immediately before the war. It is a matter of common knowledge that the supply in those years was seriously insufficient, though slowly tending to improve. No long argument, therefore, is needed to show the difficulty of carrying on the Church's work now

with four hundred less clergy than we should have had but for the war. But the difficulty of the present moment, great as some already know it to be, is small by comparison with the difficulty that is coming. If the war should be over a year hence, and if we should be able to set a large number of candidates to commence a College course in October, 1917, it would be the autumn of 1921 before these men could have their place in the ranks of the ministry. In the intervening years the numbers admitted would continue to be small, and we should have the experience in the years 1918-1920 of attempting to carry on the work of the Church with between 500 and 1,000 less clergy than we should have had if the ante-war supply had been maintained.

The period of scarcity, it is expected, will extend over at least the next five years, and may be much longer if the war is also prolonged. The question of how best to tide over this period must be faced, but the problem is one of enormous difficulty.

It is good to be reminded from time to time that many of the foremost men in the British Army are men of deep religious conviction. General Gordon was widely known as a man of faith and prayer. Earl Roberts left behind him a noble example of the Christian soldier, and the happy tradition is being maintained in our own day. Of this many striking examples could be given: one of the latest comes to us in the person of General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who contributes to a little book by the Rev. E. S. Woods, C.F. (*Knights in Armour*, just published by Mr. Robert Scott, 1s. net), a Foreword which will greatly rejoice the heart of all who are concerned for the spread of the religious spirit in the Army. It is brief, but nothing could be more significant or more effective than his closing lines:—

A feature of peace manœuvres used to be the "sham fight." In war there are no sham fights. One has to deal then with stern realities, and to carry burdens which seem to be quite beyond one's powers to sustain. Especially is this the case with those in the position of leaders. In war, more perhaps than in any other business, men feel the need of something more than the mere knowledge of their profession, no matter how complete that knowledge may be. I therefore commend this little book to all soldiers, and more particularly to the younger ones, who desire to go into battle properly prepared, for I am satisfied that definite and practical religious convictions form an essential part of every soldier's equipment.

"Definite and practical religious convictions"—these are what one wants to see permeating the lives of all our brave men, and *Knights in Armour* is just the book that will greatly assist to that end. Mr. Woods has been doing excellent work among Officers

and Cadets at Sandhurst, and his little book bears on every page evidence of his military experience. In a series of short, bright, interesting chapters he treats of Courage, Chivalry Purity and Loyalty from the Christian point of view. His book is soundly and sanely Christian throughout, and his closing personal appeal to yield to the Lord is most impressive. "Christ the King would have your services and make you His Knight. He *wants* you, for Himself and for His Cause. To be wanted by Jesus Christ—who can hold back from a call such as that?" We are glad, indeed, to know that so many young officers come under such teaching; it cannot but leave a mighty influence.

The Rector of St. George's, Southwark, has raised **Attacks on the clergy.** a protest against the incessant depreciation of the clergy which now seems to be the stock-in-trade of many speakers, both clerical and lay. He does not object to wholesome criticism of the clergy, but when men speak of "failure," it should be remembered that there is another side, and this the Rector of St George's, Southwark, shows us. "I have worked in this district now," he says, "for twenty years, and in my capacity as Rector of the mother parish I have been able to see a good deal of the lives of many of my brethren. They have literally been engaged in making bricks without straw, on a wage at which the well-paid and pampered trade unionist would turn up his nose. They have lived the lives of heroes, modest and uncomplaining, just struggling on with their duty and doing their best. I have known some of them and their brave wives literally fall by the way, worn out by the depression, the discouragements, and the excessive strain of trying to make the parochial both ends meet, and at their wits' end how to pay the salaries of the staff and to keep the fabric of the church in order." It is well that this side of the question should receive attention; it is only playing into the hands of the enemy to be continually harping upon the deficiencies of the clergy, as some, who ought to know better, are doing.

