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

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

THE CHURCHMAN

December, 1909.

The Month.

The
Divorce
Commission.

A ROYAL COMMISSION has been appointed to inquire into the law of divorce and its administration. Lord Gorell is its chairman, and Churchmen are particularly glad to know that among its members are the Archbishop of York, the Dean of Arches, and Sir William Anson. The *Record* and the *Guardian* seem to view the appointment of the Commission with concern, more particularly because there are only too many influences at work at the present time tending to weaken and destroy the marriage tie. Whatever else may be necessary in modern life, it is certainly not the increase of facilities for divorce. The main issue to be raised by the Commission is the administration of the law of divorce with reference to the position of the poor, and the redress of any hardship the poorer classes may suffer under the existing law. The *Guardian* thinks that the argument that we have no right to maintain one law for the poor and another for the rich and well-to-do is "so specious as to seem almost cogent." But we believe there is very much more in the contention than is here allowed. Even the *Guardian* admits that the working of the existing Acts has been unequal, and there does not seem to be any question that poor men and women are unable to obtain divorces, though their circumstances are exactly the same as those of the rich and well-to-do. It is manifestly wrong and unchristian to allow the rich to have what the poor cannot, and we are certain that the conscience of the nation will not much

longer tolerate this evident inequality. By all means let us make divorce as difficult as we possibly can, but let us also see that all men have equal rights in the English Church and State. The practice of granting separation orders to-day is often connected with conditions that are nothing short of intolerable, and unless Churchmen are prepared to say that divorce is not permissible under any circumstances whatever, it cannot be worse to grant divorce rather than separation orders for the one cause for which such orders are now available. The findings of the Royal Commission will doubtless have to be watched very narrowly, and it is quite possible that its recommendations will have to be opposed resolutely. All that we are concerned with now is the need of absolute equality and strict justice for rich and poor. This is the only logical, and certainly the only Christian, attitude for the Church to take.

**Significant
Action.**

The Dean of Canterbury has resigned his position as a member of the Committee for Revising the Prayer-Book which was appointed by the Canterbury Convocation. His argument is that the decision of the Lower House of Convocation in favour of permitting the use of the medieval Eucharistic vestments destroys all hope that the contemplated revision will restore peace to the Church. The Dean has no further interest in the revision of the Prayer-Book, and is doubtful whether it is practicable or desirable. The one fact that dominates the situation, in the opinion of the Dean, is that the decision of the House on the question of the vestments "has destroyed the only basis on which the work of the Committee could lead to a satisfactory result." We welcome this characteristic candour, for it will do much to clear the atmosphere. Proposals for revision of points on which all are agreed should not be united with other serious and far-reaching proposals on which there is the acutest difference between Churchmen. Very many Churchmen, like the Dean of Canterbury, would welcome serious and material revision of parts of the Prayer-Book which do not involve doctrinal

controversy, and it is deplorable to think that the freedom and variety which we need for our modern Church life should be imperilled by the association of proposals touching fundamental doctrine. The position is almost intolerable, and unless the present proposals are dropped in their existing form, we shall soon be face to face with a really serious crisis in the English Church.

Home
Reunion.

Our columns have testified during the past year to the importance of the subject of Christian Reunion, and we observe with interest that the *Church Quarterly Review* has provided its readers with articles written by scholars of various non-Episcopal Churches. The October number has an article by an American Moravian scholar, in which the answer of the General Synod of the Moravian Church to the proposals of the Lambeth Conference is very ably discussed. The article is admirable in tone and decidedly able in argument, and among other special points it calls attention to the way in which the Moravians regard the proposals emanating from the Lambeth Conference. Professor Schwarze says that the Anglican proposals really mean the subordination, or at least the assimilation, of the Moravian Church to the Anglican model, and it is abundantly clear that such a position would be firmly and finally rejected by the Moravian Church. It is essential for Churchmen to realize these facts, for, as an American Bishop has recently said, it would seem as though most of our Church-people think that the Episcopal Church is to swallow all the others, and that all are to become Episcopalians. We entirely agree with our contemporary, the *New York Churchman*, that unity cannot be won that way, and that the real Catholic Church

“will never be attained by attempts to realize—in the felicitous phrasing of Dr. William James—the stagnant felicity of an unbridled unity.”

Dr. Stalker's article in our September number clearly pointed out that it will only be on the footing of perfect equality that we

shall ever get Presbyterian and other non-Episcopal Churches to give adequate consideration to the question of Reunion. Would it not be well to face this fact at once, and frame our policy in accordance therewith ?

Dr. Stephen Paget has recently been doing splendid service to the cause of truth by his incisive and convincing criticisms on what is called Christian Science. Both in his book "The Faith and Works of Christian Science," and also in his papers read before the Church Congress and the Congregational Union, the subject has been stated with admirable force and cogency. In the *British Weekly* for November 11 Dr. Paget replied to an article in the October number of a Boston magazine which criticized his book. The entire article is worthy of careful study, but we desire to call special attention to its closing words :

"It is in vain that Christian Science appeals to Christ and His Apostles, to Greek philosophers, or to any such authority. They will not come when she summons them. All such appeals are words, not works. It is on her works that she raised her Church. And many of them are remarkably successful. Come, let us be honestly glad of that. She has helped, comforted, strengthened, so many of us. Never mind the fact that she has carried off her honey from other hives ; that she plays fast and loose with Christianity, appropriating the sweets of it, and refusing its element of bitterness. Let us be honestly glad that she has enabled many invalids to be active, restful, healthy. Only under it all are her victims, her "failures," the cases with which she impudently meddled when she could do nothing for them—thousands of them. And she says that they suffered or died from want of understanding ; yet she is not above treating a sick dog across a thousand miles of space, and that, not by prayer, but by contemplation of the unreality of the dog's case."

It behoves Christians to make themselves well informed on this important subject, and to let it be known, with no uncertain sound, that Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific.

Whenever the Bishop of Birmingham deals with subjects of practical Church life and work, he almost invariably commands the hearty sympathy and warm approval of many who are as a rule unable to agree with him

on purely doctrinal and theological subjects. Thus he spoke at Bethnal Green one Sunday last month to a body of working men on the important subject of Church Reform. The main point of his message was that Reform must come from Churchmen themselves, as the result of the pressure of a strong body of opinion, determined as far as possible to remove everything which was to the discredit of the Church. Bishop Gore specially referred to the facts of poor livings and of pew-rents, and on each of these he had much to say which was bold, true, and forcible. It is a serious and solemn consideration that so many clerical stipends are miserably inadequate, while the cost of living seems to be ever increasing. Patrons are demanding private means as one of the essentials of their appointments, and it is difficult to blame them when the state of the livings is known. Then, again, as to pew-rents, it is well known that there are many churches where the incumbent's stipend is necessarily supplied from this source, because of the almost entire absence of endowment or other appropriate provision. These are not by any means the only anomalies which discredit our Church in the eyes of thoughtful and earnest men of all classes. The Bishop of Birmingham believes that they can only be got rid of by obtaining a body of Churchmen who will make "a new moulding force within, so that the Church Councils shall really represent the mind and heart of the workers, and not the mind and heart which would approach the workers in a spirit of patronage from above or without." There is no doubt that up to the present our Church has not had an adequate representation of what are generally understood as "the working classes." But we believe that this difficulty is now being remedied in several ways, though we should much like to see the process accelerated. And the Church Reform League is doing admirable service in calling attention to the matters which distress the minds of Churchmen, and at the same time is using its influence to bring about certain measures of Church Reform. All these processes are particularly slow, and meanwhile the anomalies press upon us

and cause concern, in view of the criticism levelled at our Church by those outside its borders. There seems, however, nothing to be done but to create such a body of strong opinion in favour of Reform as will compel action, and lead to the removal of all those glaring inequalities and excrescences which prevent the Church from making the progress it should. It would help considerably in this direction if all Churchmen became members of the Church Reform League, and in this and other ways brought the pressure of intelligent interest and practical information to bear upon all these questions.

In expressing our cordial thanks to all our
 About
 Ourselves. readers for their hearty support during the past year, we desire to call attention to the prospectus for the coming year, which will be found in the present number. We hope and believe that the CHURCHMAN for 1910 will not be found inferior in interest and value to volumes of preceding years. Everything that concerns Churchmanship will, as far as possible, find a place within our pages, and we confidently ask a continuance of the support of our readers in the endeavour to maintain and set forward those ideals of Churchmanship which we believe are at the basis of everything that is true, noble, and lofty in the life of our Communion. The publisher will be glad to send specimen copies to any address that may be given to him, and if our present readers would thus interest themselves in obtaining fresh subscribers, our opportunities of usefulness would be considerably enlarged.

NOTE.—Owing to great pressure, we are compelled to hold over two or three important articles, including one on "Home Reunion: a Wesleyan View," by the Rev. Dinsdale T. Young.

The Editor will be glad to supply names and addresses of workers at home and abroad to any readers who are willing to post their copies each month. The magazine should *not* be sent to the Editor.