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CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine

*CONDUCTED BY CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN  
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

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and purified by trouble. Bishops and clergy would not be the least likely to forget their duty to their native land, nor their faith and duty to their Divine Head, nor their care for the poor, nor the great privilege of still being the ministers of an Historical Church, which has, with all her faults and shortcomings, done good service to England for more than 1,200 years. But they would be working with lessened numbers, and straitened revenue, and (being men) with a very sore heart. It is to be doubted if she could remain as wide and deep and Catholic as she is now. Her tendency would be to Sectarianism. She would be in danger of imperfect sympathies with the intellectual movements of the time, and of isolation from the outside national life. . . . Space does not remain for me to indicate, as the occasion requires, all the methods by which this attack can best be repelled. The duty of circulating by tens of thousands short, readable papers on the actual facts of the case, and of controverting by clear and full statements the preposterous fictions that are being continually propagated by those who ought to know much better, as to the incomes of the clergy, and their mode of payment, and the origin of tithes, and the meaning of a National Church, cannot need pressing on you. The Church Defence Institution has already done admirable work, prudently as well as boldly, by public meetings, where circumstances called for them. . . . Let it never be said of us, that we did not think it worth while to master the facts of our case, or to be at the pains of explaining them to others, or of stoutly contending for our magnificent inheritance. . . . On no political party, on no clever intrigues, on no favour of man will we for one moment stake our victory. Only in God above us will we trust, and in the justice of our cause; in the purity of the truth we declare, in the consistency of the lives that we live among our fellows.

Mr. Osborne Morgan, Q.C., M.P., who held the office of Judge-Advocate-General in the late Government, addressing a meeting of his constituents at Rhos Ruabon, referred to the question of Disestablishment. He said there was no doubt that Disestablishment was in the air, and no one but its most sanguine opponents could believe that it could be kept out of the range of practical politics (loud cheers). There were forces at work, both without and within the Church, which were steadily pushing into the front the growing independence of religious thought, the levelling spirit of the age, and the disposition to judge all institutions on their own merits.



## THE CHURCH AND THE MASSES.

**A**T the recent meeting of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences, a paper was read by Mr. W. Egerton Hubbard, supporting a resolution "that the distinct interests of the masses in the preservation of the National Church is a subject worthy of special attention by Diocesan Conferences at the present time." Mr. Hubbard said:

The first difficulty of writing a paper in support of this resolution is, that it admits of so little argument. The object aimed at is so self-obvious

as to amount almost to a truism. A really National Church provides that the poor who constitute the masses should have the Gospel preached to them ; that this should be done is then their distinct interest in the preservation of the Church, for if it be neglected, they can have very little other interest therein. But the resolution proceeds to say that the recognition of the distinct interest of the masses in the Church is of special interest at the present time. This signifies, I take it, that it is of special importance to the Church that the interest of the people therein should be recognised and satisfied at a time when a large proportion of them are to be entrusted with political power. The present time does not render the Church of especial importance to the masses, for no particular period can diminish to them the importance of their spiritual preparation for another world ; but it does render them of especial importance to the Church, for if they do not feel her value and influence now, they may add to the power of those who think other forms of worship, other ecclesiastical constitutions, are equally good, or better. It is, therefore, of importance for Churchmen to see that, as far as possible, the Church should be rendered capable of carrying out its divine mission ; and the present time is specially suitable, not only for setting forth the strong points of our National Church, but also for considering her weak points, and the best means of making her at every point potent for her work. It would be impossible within the scope of this paper even generally to indicate the many phases of Christian charity which Church-work represents. In the present day—thank God for it!—the Church is alive, and every loving impulse to mitigate the effects of sin and suffering finds an outlet in her manifold organization. Whether it be the work of conversion or of edification ; whether it be the work of teaching or of ministry ; whether it be the ministry of the Word and sacraments, or the ministry of temporal benefits to the needy ; whether it be aid to sick and suffering, or instruction to the ignorant, to old or young, to Christ's creatures at home or abroad—it cannot be denied that every phase of Christian work is being undertaken and executed with a zeal and devotion unparalleled since the primitive age of the Church. But this is true not only of the English Church ; it is true in varying degree also of other Christian bodies. It is in part, at least, an outcome, for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful, of the unprecedented development and activity of the present age, in which all phases of life are being pushed and extended in a manner impossible in past times. We may be sure, however, that the powers of evil are not less active ; we may fear lest they should even be in advance of the march of religion and virtue, and extending with even more rapid steps over the kingdoms of this world. We should, then, be false to our colours if, while we sought to advertise the blessings which a National Church may bring to a people, we tolerated for one instant longer than necessary any known imperfections of human origin which are marring the perfect beauty and efficiency of the Divine Institution. It will not be enough to call attention to the activity and zeal of the Church in Christian work, either of a spiritual or charitable character. Even if the value of that work be not denied, Nonconformists may say, "We do the same ; and, in our opinion, do it better." It will be necessary to point out advantages to the masses *peculiar* to a National Church ; we must be able to show what these are in theory, and to maintain that they are offered in all their fulness by the Church of England at the present time. The value of a National Church may be viewed under two aspects : its value to the nation as a whole, its value to the nation as a number of individuals. We maintain that the Church of England presents to the people the most authentic and purest form of religious worship presented by any Christian body. We can assert that it is geographically universal in England, and that every English man, woman, and child has a legal right to its ministra-

tions if it chooses to accept them. The recognition of the Divine power of a spiritual community, of a form of worship by the State, marks that State as a religious body—as a body not trusting and acting only in its own strength, but seeking inspiration and aid from a higher Power, which is everlasting, unchangeable, almighty. The State in England recognises as its Church officially that spiritual community which is coëval with, or even of greater antiquity than, itself.

Mr. Hubbard then touched upon the recognition of Divine authority by the State, and proceeded as follows :

The recognition of the Divine by the temporal power is, however, not an advantage solely for those who are designated in the resolution by "the masses." Citizenship of a religious country is a privilege and a blessing to all alike, and to no class, however large, exclusively. We are asked, however, to-day to consider especially the present position of the Church with regard to the democracy. Times are changed in the last two hundred years : the masses of the people were then ignorant and superstitious, they are now intelligent and partially educated ; they are not credulous or very submissive ; and if their distinct interest in the National Church is to be accepted and endorsed by them, it must be supported by the clearest of proofs. If Church is to be better to them than Chapel, they will want to know the reason why. The advantages of an Establishment must have something more substantial to stand on than tradition or precedent. If the new electorate are to be asked to refuse any rupture of the union between Church and State, now twelve hundred years old, some solid reasons must be given for preserving the present state of things. If the present constitution of the Established Church be faulty or obsolete, its imperfections must be remedied by the spontaneous action of Churchmen from within, lest the whole temporal fabric be swept away by unsympathetic hands from without. The Church of England is not in that stagnant condition which could cause the most hasty revolutionist to say, "Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?" It occupies its ground in most instances with profit ; it has a crop of previous fruit to show as the result of its life, a result worthy of its earlier days : but, at the same time, it feels still, and still shows the effects of the blights which have from time to time paralyzed its life and cankered its fairest branches ; some of its limbs are withered and sere, and if closer examination be made some of the choicest fruit is borne not by the ancient stock itself, but by seedlings of the same lineage, but which have sprung spontaneously into being in recent times, and have been nourished, not by the parent tree, but by their own life, flourishing in some instances in spite of, rather than by virtue of, the ancient stock itself. If then the ecclesiastical constitution of the Church of England is to be accepted by the masses, it must, in my opinion, be reformed. It must be pruned, regulated, and cultivated fairly and impartially ; Churchmen must decide, and decide promptly, what is the substance and what is the shadow of a State Establishment. The great mass of the people of England desire, I believe, that the State should be based on religion, on religious belief, as well as on the principles of justice and morality. The people will not be unjust in the matter of the rights of property unless they are blinded by the abuse of property by those in possession. They desire that their rulers should be men of piety, but I fear that they will not exert themselves to any extent to ensure that any proportion of their temporal rulers should necessarily be Bishops of the Church. While desiring to maintain the recognition of religion they may acquiesce in the title of the Church to be the most ancient of the religious bodies which now claim their right to worship God without let or hindrance, and the official exponent of the religion of the land ; but they will resent

too great an admixture of temporal power and social rank with the spiritual office of pastors in the Church. They will not tolerate any disadvantage or inequality ensuing from differences of religious belief, and scandals, whether arising from lax discipline, or the spirit of insubordination or idleness, or glaring inequalities in the distribution of remuneration, will make them impatient of the existence of a body which assents to such a state of things, and will eventually cause them to range themselves with those who clamour for its overthrow rather than with those who urge its reform. The ministrations of the Church are, indeed, geographically universal; but they are not universally efficient, nor are they by any means sufficient. The want of means will be pardoned, but the misapplication of them will not. The endowment of the Church will not be safe as long as sinecures exist, or so long as incumbents, secure in their own freeholds, irremovable so long as they discharge a wretched minimum of duty, are able to take the wages of the Church, while, defying alike the admonition of their Bishop, the requirements of their people, and the warnings of public opinion, they neglect the most urgent and valuable parts of their pastoral work. Working people will also require an explanation of why the purchase of the nomination to a cure of souls is still permitted in the Church when the purchase of the command and care of the bodies of men was, by a great struggle, abolished in the Army. It seems to me, then, that if we are to enlist the masses on the side of the Church, the consideration of the conferences cannot be too promptly or too seriously given to the removal of any proved defects in the term and constitution of the temporal union between Church and State in this land, that whatever therein is unjust, impracticable, obsolete, or impolitic, may be abolished; and so the Church may be rendered capable of carrying on her warfare untrammelled by conditions suited only to a time very different from the present, and absolutely detrimental to her welfare. It is not the time now to discuss what are the necessary, or what are the most urgent, reforms required in the present crisis of the life of the Church; but I hope that the acceptance of the resolution I am about to move may be taken to convey a suggestion of the Conferences that they should consider how the Church may be made more generally an institution of distinct interest for the masses, and how best to bring home to the minds of the people the interest they have in her preservation in a vigorous and healthy existence.

In urging the expediency of reforms in the temporal constitution of the Church, Mr. Hubbard in concluding, said: "I cannot but think that the interests of the masses, as distinct from that of people more able to help themselves, would be increased by the adoption of changes which would free the Church from bonds which in some places hinder her action, and cause charges to be brought against her of which as a rule she is innocent; and if the Conferences do feel that the distinct interests of the masses in the Church is worthy of their special consideration at the present time, I must respectfully submit that they can do no more faithful, valuable work, than by boldly facing these difficulties, freely discussing their solution, and so prevent revolution by the acceptance of a timely reform."