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prepared to accept that solution of the problem to be solved which the Royal Commission of 1906 has recommended.

Whether it would make our Ritual disputes to cease, or even to assume reasonable measure and place, we very much question.

The history of the past two generations of Anglican Church life seems to teach that, as long as the present combination of differing parties exists in the State Church, there can be no long-continued peace between the extreme wings of those parties. The fact that the ideals and aims of each are in the main antagonistic necessarily means conflict.

It remains, therefore, for the centre men of all the parties in the English Church to make the best of the situation by keeping in check the controversial spirit, and by being prepared to tolerate, even if they cannot endorse, the distinctive ideas and aims of each school, so long as such ideas and aims are not challengingly disloyal to our Lord and "repugnant to the plain words of Scripture."

The Poor-Law Commission Report.

By the Rev. W. EDWARD CHADWICK, D.D., B.Sc.

"THE Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress"—the full title should be remembered—has now been before the public for nearly four months. During this period a great number of opinions on the Report as a whole, and upon particular sections of it, have been expressed. Some of these opinions have quite evidently been based upon an inadequate study of its contents; also, I venture to think, upon an equally inadequate conception of the difficulties connected with the various problems on which the Commissioners have been called upon to give advice. On the other hand, some judgments of the Report, especially those of experts in the various subjects dealt with, will demand serious consideration side by side with the Report itself.

There have been widespread expressions of regret, seeing upon how much all the Commissioners are agreed, that a unanimous Report was not possible. But while it is true that we do find a large measure of agreement (especially in regard to what they condemn) between the "Majority" and the "Minority," it is equally true, especially in regard to what they believe should take the place of the present system, that the two Reports show a divergence of opinion which does not appear to become less the more carefully we try to understand their different plans.

The Report is the result of an enormous amount of labour expended with both thought and skill. The Commission held 209 meetings, of which 159 were spent in hearing evidence: 452 witnesses were examined, and the questions answered orally exceeded 100,000. In addition to these, statements of evidence were received from about 900 other persons. The "Report" itself consists of 1,238 folio pages, of which 718 contain preliminary matter, the report of the Majority, and certain appendices; while the other 520 pages contain the report of the Minority. As one who gave evidence before the Commission, and who was asked for two special reports on definite subjects, I can bear personal testimony to the extreme care with which the questions were framed—both those asked in the committee-room and those upon which the reports had to be based.

The so-called "Report" is, of course, only a volume of conclusions and recommendations drawn, first, from the evidence heard and the special reports presented (which together will fill an additional forty volumes), and, secondly, from the impressions formed by the Commissioners from a large number of visits paid by them to various Poor-Law institutions in different parts of the country.

The "summarising" of a summary is generally a difficult task, and it is the necessity of attempting this which makes all articles upon the Report to some degree unsatisfactory. The chief object of such articles—*e.g.*, I hope, of the present one—

must be to send all who care for the welfare of the poor to a study of the Report itself; for this, whatever its issues in the way of legislation, must for a long time remain the standard authority upon, first, the actual conditions of the poor, and, secondly, the nature of the causes and processes by which these conditions have come into existence.

It might be supposed that we could at once divide the Report into three parts: First, a description of the actual conditions, including a survey of their causes; secondly, the recommendation which the Majority propose for their amendment; thirdly, the recommendations of the Minority. Actually this is not so, because the Majority and Minority are not even agreed as to the nature of the various causes which have produced the evils from which we are suffering. It is only those who have had long experience in social work, and who have studied its problems deeply, who realize how manifold and how intricate the causes of poverty are, how almost impossible it is to disentangle them, how difficult it is, even in thought, to isolate them. The standing witness to this disagreement upon causes is the existence of the Individualist and the Socialist side by side. These represent two different conceptions of society and its functions. They certainly advocate different remedies; at the same time, they attribute present evils to very different causes. We must also remember that, while we are engaged in applying remedies, we are not necessarily removing causes. Now, the Minority (who advocate what is practically the entire abolition of the present Poor-Law system) assert that their method, because it advocates dealing with poverty *before* it becomes destitution, would to a far greater extent prove socially beneficial than would the method of the Majority, who, while advocating very great changes in the administration of the law, would still make destitution the real plea for public assistance. It is in their much stronger advocacy of preventive measures, quite as much as in the particular methods which they propose shall take the place of the present system, that the Minority of the Commissioners differ from their colleagues.

There is much to be said for both sides. It is only too easy to tempt people to turn too readily to public assistance, and so to weaken the incentive to self-effort. On the other hand, social *hygienics* are far more efficacious than social *therapeutics;* and if, even by public aid, we can prevent a man and, still better, a family from coming to destitution, we may prevent much future moral and physical, as well as economic, loss to the community.

It must be remembered that we have learnt a great deal during the seventy-five years which have elapsed since the passing of the Act which forms the foundation of the present Poor Law. Among other things, we have learnt the necessity both for specialization and for much more careful classification. In those days it was possible for a man to claim to be an expert in the Poor Law as a whole. Could such a claim be substantiated now? Many of our present Poor-Law inspectors are as excellent officials as will be found in any section of the public service. But, work as hard as they can, it is clearly impossible for them to be specialists in all the present branches of Poor-Law administration. One reason why to-day the service is breaking down, is owing to men being required to be experts in at least half a dozen different fields of knowledge and administration, each of which is enough to tax to the full the energies of a man of more than average capacity.

Seventy-five years ago the services of Public Health and of Public Education, as we know these to-day, were practically non-existent; the same is also, to a great extent, true of the present machinery for Local Government. Since then a vast and intricate, yet on the whole an admirably administered, Local Government Service—one applying to almost the whole life of the people—has gradually become more and more developed. Connected with the different branches of this service we have an army of paid officials, each of whom is a specialist in his own department. Again, during these seventy-five years, the public conscience in regard to the right treatment of the poor has been growing sharper, because it has become better educated. What has actually happened is that, on the one hand, the administration

of the Poor Law has grown more complex, because it has been realized that paupers, like other human beings, need special treatment; while, on the other hand, side by side with this development of Poor-Law agencies, other special agencies, which, as they are charged with the needs of the whole population, deal with the non-pauper poor (to some extent, indeed, even with those who are paupers), have come into existence.

Take the case of the children of the poor. For those who are not paupers, and for those whose parents are simply in receipt of out-relief, we have the whole machinery of the Local Education Authority. The case of the latter class of children is at present often most unsatisfactory. Frequently they are underfed (all the Commissioners agree on the general tendency to give inadequate out-relief); frequently they are in vicious home surroundings. For these evils the Guardians usually, in practice, disclaim all responsibility. But, besides all these children, there are those in the workhouses and other Poor-Law institutions, for whose education the Guardians (who, in this respect, are another Education Authority) are responsible. Thus we have two Education Authorities—one specialist and one non-specialist—working side by side; surely a most illogical arrangement! The basis of the Majority scheme is that the final responsibility for all pauper children shall rest with the Public Assistance Authority, through its various committees, which will then continue to do a certain amount of educational work, both direct and indirect. One reason given by the Majority for refusing to hand over the entire charge of pauper children to the Education Authority (the scheme of the Minority) should be carefully noticed: "We have received evidence from all parts of the country, and especially from the rural districts, as to the incompleteness and unsuitability of the education in public elementary schools in preparing children for their after-life" (p. 196). If these words are true, as I believe to a great extent they are, they form a very strong argument, not for maintaining first, a non-useful, and secondly, a useful set of elementary schools, under two different Authorities side by

side, but for making *all* schools suitable for "preparing children for their after-life." The scheme of the Minority, however it would work in practice, seems far simpler; it has also the immense advantage of obliterating any distinction between pauper and non-pauper—a most desirable reform so far as the children are concerned. Briefly, it is to "make one Local Authority in each district, and one only, responsible for the whole of whatever provision the State may choose to make for children of school age (not being sick or mentally defective)." They point out that a highly organized educational system with specially trained experts in every department of the work already exists. The duty of this Authority must be to see that every child is supplied with all that is necessary for its proper development—physical, intellectual, and moral. Having discharged their duty, the Authority must be put into a position "to recover the cost from parents able to pay, and for prosecuting neglectful parents."

When we turn to the subject of sickness among the poor, we find a parallel existence of want of simplicity and uniformity; indeed, the number of agencies at work side by side is almost bewildering. Some of these are under the Public Health Authority; for some the Poor Law is responsible. In both cases the development in recent years has been remarkable. Those who are acquainted with the Poor Law of 1834 know that one of its chief defects was any adequate provision for the treatment of the sick. By Local Government Board orders and circulars this defect has been to a large extent remedied, and, at any rate in large towns, the treatment of the sick under the Poor Law, so far as this goes, is fairly efficient. I say "so far as it goes," because there are many activities which are outside its sphere of operations—for instance, those connected with seeing that property is in a sanitary condition; also those dealing with infectious diseases. In both these cases the responsibility devolves upon the Public Health Authority, which is now also responsible for the health of children attending the public elementary schools, whether their parents are, or

are not, in receipt of relief. Then, at any rate in theory, medical relief under the Poor Law is still supposed to be deterrent, and destitution is nominally the condition for claiming its help. Once more, there are still a large number of very poor people (if fewer than formerly) who put off asking for medical relief far longer than is wise. In consequence, we have an immense amount of suffering and prolonged poverty, arising from sickness, which might have been prevented by early medical treatment. I have for many years been a chaplain to two general hospitals; during this time I have seen an immense number of cases of serious and prolonged illness which were largely due to want of attention in the first stages of ill-health.

I know of no part of the Report in which it is more difficult to adjudicate between the rival schemes than in their proposals with regard to the treatment of sickness. The longer one studies them side by side, the more clearly one seems to see the advantages and disadvantages of both. The scheme of the Majority would appear to provide for a wider representation of the medical profession, and apparently would be far more incentive to thrift—a valuable moral discipline. On the other hand, the Minority scheme has, again, the advantage of simplicity; it would prevent the existence of parallel Authorities, each doing a part of the work; and it would seem to be more likely to attack sickness at its source or in earliest stages. Yet there is this great objection to this scheme: that, so far, the work of the Public Health Authority in rural districts has been far from an unqualified success. What would it be if even greater responsibilities were thrust upon it?

I have chosen these two subjects—viz., children and sickness—to show how wide is the divergence between the views of the two bodies of Commissioners on some of the most important problems connected with the relief of the poor, also to show how much may be said both for and against the proposals of each.

I dare not enter upon the treatment of the able-bodied (which is, of course, that of unemployment) in the Report; for

the briefest account of the two sets of proposals would more than fill the space of an article like this. The sections dealing with it, and the recommendations of both the Majority and the Minority, demand the most careful study. The problem is one which must be resolutely faced, but it must be faced in the light of the completest knowledge available. In the volume before us, and in the special reports yet to be published, will be found the largest body of trustworthy information on the whole difficulty we as yet possess.

One subject treated at great length in the Majority Report is of special interest to the clergy and their parochial helpers—that is, the important position these Commissioners would assign to voluntary agents and agencies. The encouragement of these, the desire to enlist their co-operation, and their employment in conjunction with the various statutory bodies, is the great feature of almost every section of this Report. By the Minority, apparently much less importance is attached to them. For this reason alone the Majority Report is sure to claim much sympathy and support from voluntary helpers of all kinds. Now, is the importance therein given to these justified by the experience of either the past or the present? On a small scale, I am inclined to say "Yes"; but on the scale which would be demanded, were the recommendations of the Majority accepted, I should answer without hesitation, "No." The supply of really efficient voluntary social workers outside the great towns and certain exceptional localities is really very small. For a long time, upon almost every Board of Guardians throughout the country, we have been suffering from the rule of the amateur, to whom, as we fear would generally be the case, were the plan of the Majority accepted, would the treatment of the poor again be assigned. The weak point in the Act of 1834, as is well known, was the unfortunate decision of Parliament to place the chief power in the hands of the elected amateur workers, and to make the paid officials subordinate to these; whereas the Commissioners themselves recommended that they should occupy exactly the reverse positions. Are we to repeat this mistake? Had there been in every union a well-paid and thoroughly

efficient Stipendiary Guardian—a trained expert, free from all local and political interests—to preside at the Board Meetings, and whose decision was final, I believe the administration, and so the effects, of the present Law would have been entirely different from what they actually have been.

One of the weak points in the Minority scheme in practice would, I fear, be the frequent need for recovery of costs from those to whom some form or other of public assistance had been rendered, and where circumstances justified their being called upon to contribute towards the help they had received. It is true that the Minority insist most emphatically upon the need of stringency in this matter, both in the law itself and in its administration. They recommend that the Registrar of Public Assistance, upon whom this duty of recovery would devolve, "should be an officer of high *status* and practical permanence of tenure. . . . As it is essential that the Registrar should be entirely independent of the Committees concerned with the grant of home aliment, we propose that he and his staff and his receiving house should be placed under the General Purposes Committee of the County or County Borough Council."

This is excellent in theory, only, unfortunately, experience teaches us how the best arrangements may fail in practice, if public opinion is not in their favour; and I fear that frequently strong pressure would be brought to bear in order to render the means for recovery less effective. I do not say that this plan could not be made to work satisfactorily, but I do assert that, if such a law was passed, it would have to be administered without fear or favour.

In what I have written I have been able to touch upon but a few of the many interesting points in this most important Report. But, as I said, my object in writing is to send my readers to the Report itself. I know that several summaries of its contents, as well as a certain number of briefs for and against its rival schemes, have been published. Some of these are useful and informing, but they are not in any way adequate substitutes for the official document itself.