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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, 1917.

The Month.

At Last! AT last the Government has seen fit to recommend His Majesty the King to publish a Royal Proclamation appointing Sunday, January 6, as a National Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving in connection with the War. The long delay—for which, of course, the King was in no way responsible—has been much regretted; and, perhaps, some day we may learn exactly where the difficulty lay. But let us forget all that for the time being; and, whatever our own feelings regarding the terms of the Call to Prayer, let us put them aside, in order that we may do everything possible to promote the fullest and deepest observance of the appointed Day. The King's Proclamation calls the nation—and not the nation only, but the Dominions—to devote a special day to prayer "that we may have the clear-sightedness and strength necessary to the victory of our cause," and then, in words as strong as they are true, he says that "this victory will be gained only if we steadfastly remember the responsibility which rests upon us, and in a spirit of reverent obedience ask the blessing of Almighty God upon our endeavours." His Majesty calls the nation to acknowledge its dependence upon God, Who is "the only Giver of Victory," and in Him is our trust. With prayer will also be joined thanksgiving. The nation has been granted many mercies, and these demand the most thankful recognition, for it is "the Divine guidance which has led us so far towards our goal." But if this Day of National Prayer and Thanksgiving is to be rightly and fully observed it must be adequately prepared for, and we trust that steps may soon be taken to bring home to the nation the greatness of the opportunity. It will be for central authority to give the necessary guidance and directions. The December issues of the Diocesan Maga-

zines will doubtless contain Letters from the respective Bishops to the clergy and laity of their dioceses, but what is needed is a Joint Manifesto from the whole episcopate to the English people. The Archbishop of York in his mid-monthly letter makes a brief yet very hearty reference to the question. The Proclamation was issued just as his Letter was going to press and his Grace says :— “ I have only time now to say that I rejoice with all my heart that at last this step has been taken, and that next month I hope to be able to make suggestions as to the ways in which we can make our response to this call.” But why wait a day longer than is necessary? Preparation for the observance of that Day ought to begin at once.

The Church Missionary Society has been passing through troublesome times, but as the result of the discussion at the meeting of the General Committee on November 13 there is reason to hope and believe that it will emerge all the stronger and the better for the upset. It is unfortunate that the C.M.S. should be made the storm-centre in the struggle between the representatives of the Older and the Newer Order among Evangelicals. It has its own distinctive work to do, and that work is not helped by party controversy. It is not necessary or desirable to refer at length in these pages to the questions raised; it is enough to say that a Memorial, signed by a large number of influential friends of the Society, was presented to the Committee by the Bishop of Chelmsford, who moved that it be received and entered upon the minutes. To this the Bishop of Manchester moved an amendment, and the forces were set in battle array. But the wise and statesmanlike action of the President saved the situation, for “ by the decision arrived at ”—we quote the *English Churchman*—“ the whole matter was referred to a select committee composed of seven members to be nominated by the Bishop of Manchester, seven by the Memorialists and seven by the Patronage Committee of the C.M.S.” “ This solution,” adds the *English Churchman*, “ only postpones the inevitable rupture which the Modernist and Sacerdotalist movement will inflict upon the C.M.S.” We do not in the least agree. If there are men on either side who are bent on bringing about a “ rupture,” let them come out into the open and definitely say so, and we shall know where we stand.

But we believe better things of the Memorialists and of those who oppose them. There is on both sides an honest loyalty and love for the C.M.S. and still more for the cause it represents, and that being so we cannot but believe that this Select Committee of twenty-one—if they begin, continue and end their work in a spirit of absolute dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit—will find the right way out of the difficulties which have arisen. Rupture indeed! These are not the days when religious men can afford to talk of, or think about, “rupture.” These are great days, days of opportunity, and they call for a joining of forces and for unity.

**Church
Franchise.**

The feeling is growing that the franchise proposed in the Report of the Archbishops' Church and State Committee is too narrow. We believe the criticism to be quite unreasonable. One would imagine from the arguments advanced that all control of Parliament is to be taken away. But this is not so. The legislative power of the proposed Church Council is to be “subject always to a veto on the part of the Crown and of Parliament.” How, then, can it be urged, as a “Correspondent” of *The Times* has done, that in assenting to this scheme Parliament would “hand over its interests in the National Church to an electorate entirely restricted to communicants or those who have the status of communicants, that is, those who are baptized and confirmed”? The attack upon the franchise suggested by the Committee is clearly made under a misapprehension. It would obviously be incongruous for the electors to a “Church” Council to be other than Church-people, that is, those who have been baptized and confirmed, and the franchise agreed upon by the Committee is the one that has the best chance of general acceptance. To open the door more widely would be to court disaster. The rights of the “unconfirmed” Parliamentary elector are by no means infringed by the Report. What those are now, they will continue to be after the Report becomes effective.

**Progress in
Palestine.**

The progress made by our brave troops under General Allenby against the enemy in Palestine is of the most gratifying character, and it may be hoped that it will soon be possible to send relief to the many thousands of victims of Turkish misrule. Dr. Rennie MacInnes, Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, who owing to the war has not yet been able

to set foot in the city with which the name of his See is associated, writes :—

Tens of thousands have already died, but though it is impossible to realise what appalling suffering this means, we can at least stretch out a helping hand. . . . Until Palestine is once more open it is of course impossible to administer relief as we should like to do, but much preliminary work has to be done, and during the past six months active preparations have been going on in Cairo. The Syria and Palestine Relief Fund is managed by a strong London Committee, with offices at 110 Victoria Street, S.W.1, of which Sir Henry McMahon, G.C.M.G., etc., late High Commissioner in Egypt, is Chairman. . . . Though we cannot yet take relief into Palestine as a whole, we are getting opportunities of giving welcome help to a number of those who have already suffered much privation in the south. It is well to add that none of this work could have been done but for the kind and willing assistance of the military authorities concerned. Valuable information and experience have thus been gained, in regard both to the provision of clothing and also that of medical assistance, so that plans can now be worked out for the proper equipment of relief parties who will carry on similar work, though on a larger scale, when Palestine is once more open. May the day soon come !

We all re-echo the Bishop's wish. In the meantime we can show sympathy and interest by subscribing to the Syrian and Palestine Relief Fund.

A Great Movement. The Pocket Testament League is described as "a world-wide, soul-saving and Bible Study movement," and it is undoubtedly doing a great work. The chief interest of its operators just now is among the troops both in the camps at home and on the various battle-fronts. The simple conditions of membership are embodied in the League Pledge :— "I hereby accept Membership in the Pocket Testament League by making it the rule of my life to read at least one chapter in the Bible each day, and to carry a Bible or Testament with me wherever I go." Thousands upon thousands of men in the Army have joined the League, and, what is better, have been led to sign the "A.C." (i.e. Accepted Christ) Declaration. Particulars and membership cards can be obtained free of charge from Miss E. Wakefield MacGill, Hon. Secretary, Pocket Testament League Headquarters, 24, 25, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.4.