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The League of Nations
and the Churches

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THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND THE CHURCHES

WHAT DO THE CHURCHES SAY?

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

'The Conference, heartily endorsing the views of its Committee as to the essentially Christian basis of the League of Nations, is of opinion that steps should be immediately taken, whether by co-operation or concurrent action, whereby the whole Church of Christ may be enabled with one voice to urge the principles of the League of Nations upon the peoples of the world.' (*Resolution 3, Lambeth Conference, 1920.*)

'That in view of the continued anxieties in regard to international affairs, particularly in Europe, this House emphasises the urgent duty of the Church to leaven public opinion with Christian ideals of righteousness and peace, and to secure a more whole-hearted support for the League of Nations as the best available instrument to this end.' (*Resolution passed by the Upper House of Convocation, April, 1925.*)

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

'I have always supported and upheld the League of Nations because I believe that it is an honest attempt, and the only attempt yet made, to carry out the repeated injunctions of the Apostolic See. While the League of Nations is far from perfect, we, as Catholics, and especially as Catholics in the Empire which has had so much to do with the creation of the League and is so closely engaged in directing its activities, have a very special responsibility

regarding it.' (*Cardinal Bourne at the Triennial Catholic Congress, Manchester, September, 1926.*)

THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES

'(1) The Federal Council believes that the position now attained by the League of Nations as the recognised instrument for the achievement of those reasonable methods of adjusting international differences by which the weapon of war may be successfully superseded calls for the support of all who, by the Grace of Christ and in obedience to His teaching, would be numbered among the peace-makers of the world.

'(2) The Council desires to enlist the sympathy of all Christian people within the reach of its influence in the proposal for a general reduction of armaments which finds a place in the Covenant of the League of Nations and in the Treaty of Locarno.

'(3) The Council therefore commends this aim to the consideration of all Christian congregations, and urges them to seek entrance into corporate membership with the League of Nations Union, and to use every opportunity of inviting the co-operation of local Members of Parliament in furthering the purposes of the League.' (*Resolution of the Federal Council of Evangelical Free Churches of England, September 22, 1926.*)

Similar resolutions affirming faith in the League of Nations and pledging support have been passed by the Congregational Union, the

Baptist Union, the Presbyterian Church of England, the Methodist Ecumenical Council, Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Primitive Methodist Church, the United Methodist Church, the Scottish Churches, the National Brotherhood Council and other religious bodies.

WHAT IS THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS?

The League of Nations is an association of fifty-four States pledged to work for the peace and welfare of the world.

It came into being on January 10, 1920, with the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles of which the Covenant of the League forms the first part. It works through:—

1. THE ASSEMBLY, consisting of representatives of all nations members of the League, meets at Geneva once a year.
2. THE COUNCIL, representing 14 Nations (Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Germany and nine others elected by the whole League), meets at least three times a year and more often as need arises.
3. THE SECRETARIAT, a body of world civil service at Geneva who prepare the business and execute the decisions of the League.
4. THE PERMANENT COURT OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE of eleven Judges and four Deputy Judges elected by the League.
5. THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION, includes representatives of Governments and of employers and employed.
6. SPECIAL COMMISSIONS concerned with various activities of the League, *e.g.*, Limitation of Armaments, Minorities, International

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Transit, Health, Finance and Economics, Mandates, Suppression of Opium Traffic and of the Traffic in Women and Children, Child Welfare, etc.

WHY SHOULD THE CHURCHES WELCOME THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS?

Because the fundamental conceptions of the Covenant of the League express the ideals of Christianity

A common purpose and a common loyalty for all men—seeking first the Kingdom of God—combined with comradeship and goodwill; upon these essential principles of Christ's Teaching the League of Nations is based.

1. Its object is the promotion of international Co-operation, and the achievement of international Peace and Security. (*Preamble of the Covenant.*)
2. It has established the Permanent Court of International Justice for the settlement of international disputes. (*Article 14.*)
3. It is pledged to the Reduction of Armaments, military, naval and air. (*Article 8.*)
4. In its system of Mandates, as applied to ex-German and ex-Turkish territories in Africa and Asia, it regards the welfare and development of backward races as 'a sacred trust of civilisation.' (*Article 22.*)
5. It is making effective and extending the provisions of earlier conventions for preventing the opium traffic and the traffic in women and children. (*Article 23.*)
6. It concerns itself with the prevention of

- disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world. (*Article 25.*)
7. Through the International Labour Organisation, which is an integral part of the League, it is pledged to secure fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children in all countries, and has already done much to improve these conditions in countries where they were most unsatisfactory. (*Article 23.*)
 8. It stands for the principle of open diplomacy and the publication of all treaties. (*Article 18.*)

The League has also

- (i) prevented war between Poland and Lithuania (1920), between Jugo-Slavia (Serbia) and Albania (1921), between Greece and Bulgaria (1925),
- (ii) repatriated 427,000 prisoners of war from Siberia and Eastern Europe;
- (iii) created an International Health Office to fight diseases, such as cancer, tuberculosis and malaria, and to prevent the spread of epidemics, *e.g.*, of cholera, plague or typhus.
- (iv) registered over 2,000 treaties between members of the League;
- (v) secured the financial reconstruction of Austria and Hungary;
- (vi) encouraged by the success of its Brussels Conference, 1920, which laid down the broad principles of sound finance, held the first World Economic Conference, 1927, laying down a policy of 'freer' trade, and aiming at removing economic causes of war;

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- (vii) settled more than one million Greek refugees from Anatolia (Asia Minor) and enabled them to start life anew in various parts of Greece.

The sphere of influence of the League is world wide and co-extensive with the overseas Mission Field of the Church. By its guarantees and operations it will remove many of the obstacles to the work of the Church in non-Christian lands and prove a valuable ally of Christian enterprise.

No other organisation exists to do this work to which the League of Nations is pledged. Every one of its objects and activities may be claimed as fulfilling the will of God as made known in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

WHY SHOULD THE CHURCHES SUPPORT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION?

The League of Nations Union is a British society, which works to support and strengthen the League. Over eight hundred thousand members have enrolled. The League can only succeed if it is supported by the people of the world; the representatives of Governments may arrive at unanimous decisions at Geneva, but when they return to their own countries they are often unable to ratify those decisions, because they do not know whether they have the support of public opinion behind them. The League of Nations Union therefore endeavours to enrol members in sufficient numbers to give the Government the assurance which it needs that the whole

nation is in favour of a League policy. The Churches have a great part to play in forming this essential public opinion; they can appeal to their 5,000,000 adult members, whose united voice would be irresistible. It is for these men and women to give the lead to the nation by declaring their conviction, as shown by their membership of the Union, that support of the League, not only by Governments, but by the people as a whole, will rid mankind of the fear of War and bring peace and goodwill throughout the world.

'If any such League is to have success it will need enthusiastic and intelligent support of millions of men and women. It is not enough that Governments should agree to it, or statesmen work for it. The hearts and minds of the people in all countries must be behind it. In all nations a great change is needed and is needed *now*. This great change requires a miracle, but it is a change that can be wrought by the one Spirit of Fellowship, which is the Spirit of God. We must subject our wills and open our hearts to His influence that He may work that miracle in the world.' (*Lambeth Conference (1920) Report, p. 20.*)

'Ready to hand is the League of Nations Union, the recognised organisation for the propaganda of the League which should have in every place the Church's active co-operation and support.' (*Lambeth Conference (1920) Report, pp. 57 and 58.*)

'It would be vain for statesmen to diminish armaments and contrive treaties if the world were determined to fight. More is required and

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that "more" the Churches must help to provide. It is their duty to raise the ideals of the community and create an atmosphere in which these ideals can flourish.' (*The Earl of Balfour, December 14, 1921.*)

'With whatever authority belongs to the office which I hold I would, on this its Tenth Anniversary, call upon all my fellow-Churchmen to be foremost in their support of the League of Nations, and of the Union which in this country exists to strengthen its cause.' (*The Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Paul's Cathedral, November 11, 1929.*)

Nor has the Church less opportunity in the education of her children. The formation of the mind of the coming generation lies largely in her hands, and if she is to fulfil her duty, she must take care that those who will be leaders tomorrow shall be taught to-day to think rightly of the peoples of other countries and their own obligations towards them.

HOW CAN THE CHURCHES HELP THE LEAGUE?

The League of Nations Union is organised throughout the country by means of local branches, groups of which form 'districts.' To these, direction, suggestion and support is given by the Headquarters of the Union, 15 Grosvenor Crescent, London, S.W.1.

(1) SUPPORT THE LOCAL BRANCH OF THE UNION; if a branch does not exist, write to headquarters about forming one.

(2) USE THE EXISTING MACHINERY OF THE

CHURCH WITHOUT INCREASING YOUR CHURCH ORGANISATION to bring the League of Nations frequently before Church members, by sermons in Church, and addresses and discussions at the usual meetings of clergy and ministers, of guilds and other sectional church associations. Information about the League, outlines of sermons and addresses, and, whenever possible, preachers and speakers will be provided on application to Headquarters.

(3) APPOINT A REPRESENTATIVE IN EVERY PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OR CHURCH COMMITTEE who shall be the centre of information about the League, and who shall recruit individual members for the League of Nations Union. (For conditions of membership see below.)

(4) LET EACH CHURCH JOIN THE UNION AS A 'CORPORATE MEMBER' and thus give the League its united and corporate support.

A Christian congregation which recognises the spiritual significance of the movement for international friendship and co-operation through the League of Nations, and by a corporate act takes its place in that movement by becoming a Corporate Member of the League of Nations Union, undertakes—

(a) To make prayer for the League of Nations a regular part of the worship of the Church;

(b) To set forth the aims and work of the League of Nations on at least one Sunday in the year;

(c) To make other opportunities to give regular and definite information

concerning the League to the members of the congregation, and to urge them to become individual members of the Union;

(d) To appoint a representative to be a link between the congregation and the Union, to make the Church's obligations as a corporate member of the Union his special care, and to receive for the use of the Church the Union's journal, *Headway*, and such other publications of the Union as are sent to foundation members; and

(e) To pay an annual minimum subscription of £1.

(5) MAKE REGULAR USE OF THE LITANY AND PRAYERS for the League which are issued by the Union.

The following are the terms of membership of the League of Nations Union:—

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION:

Foundation Members £1 Registered Members 5s. Ordinary Members 1s. minimum.

Foundation Members are entitled to receive HEADWAY, the journal of the Union, monthly by post, and as much as they desire of the pamphlets and similar literature issued by the Union. Registered Members are entitled to receive HEADWAY monthly by post, and occasional important notices. Ordinary Members subscribing not less than 3s. 6d. a year are also entitled to receive HEADWAY by post.

Those who are able and willing to help the Funds of the Union are begged, if possible, to become Foundation Members or, failing that, Registered Members.

For further information apply to the Secretary of the League of Nations Union, 15 Grosvenor Crescent, S.W.1.

