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PRAYER BOOK REVISION.

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IT is a commonplace on platforms and in articles that the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer contained in the Bishops' Book is the fruit of twenty years' labour. It is true that twenty years have elapsed since the Royal Commission reported, but it is equally true that no one in 1906 would have believed possible the Book about to be presented for the approval of the Church Assembly. The many preliminary stages of revision show that a changed attitude was adopted, as circumstances made it seem advisable to make legal what is avowedly illegal. The war made lawlessness epidemic in the Church, and Anglo-Catholicism was the only section of religious life in England that realized to the full that the religious condition of England after the war would be determined by its condition during the war. While others dreamed dreams and saw visions of a new England called into being by a returning army of heroes christianized and sanctified by war, Anglo-Catholics seized every opportunity, and when control was slacker than usual, introduced innovations that brought their service nearer and nearer to that of the Roman Church. The grief, the uncertainties and the general concentration on great national and personal issues gave the opportunity, and this was utilized to the fullest extent.

The Bishops who helped to frame the first Revision in Committee for the most part have not taken part in the last Revision. Those who saw the Book through its final stages have not been, with a few exceptions, specially noteworthy for their knowledge of the proposals rejected or the so-called science of Liturgiology. They were more intent on meeting a situation that demanded the legalization of the illegal with the minimum disturbance of doctrine on their part. Their Lordships were in a dilemma. They knew they had to face the convinced attachment of Anglo-Catholics to certain ceremonies, and they were aware that these, in many cases, could not be brought within the range of permitted doctrine in the Church of England. They wished to restrain these, and the path they chose was to make clear the doctrines that lay behind these ceremonies, and then to restrain the expression of the doctrines in ceremonial practice. They were ready to surrender to the full to the demands of forty years' agitation on the doctrinal side—they were unwilling to allow the logical fruit of the doctrines to be displayed in our Churches.

And the Bishops did not know their own minds as to the form in which their Book should be presented. One of their number on the eve of its publication announced that it would be a schedule of permissible variations. When it was published it came as a surprise on the Church that the model of the Episcopal Church

in Scotland had been followed. The Book is a Composite Book with the old and the new intermingled, and when additions or important amendments are made, they are marked by lines in the margin. They published a measure that had a definite scheme of Rubrics and a logical outline of procedure. This has been changed into something different and the arrangement of the Rubrics has been altered in important respects. The Composite Book contained a Service for the Ordination of Deaconesses, and the Deposited Book which represents the Bishops' final thoughts knows nothing of this service. It had escaped them and their advisers that it had never been submitted to the House of Laity. So while it is technically true that Revision has occupied certain Bishops at intervals during twenty years, it is equally true that during the last weeks of crystallization the Book was rushed, and has signs of the haste that are visible to all who study the final stages.

But we are not concerned with the preparation of the Book save in so far as to comment on claims that it is the result of mature consideration as regards its form and presentation to the Church. What matters to us is its doctrinal teaching. We are ready and willing to accept great changes in the customary Services of the Church, if they meet what are known as modern needs and the altered conditions of life. The form of worship is secondary to its content. The Church exists to spread the knowledge of the Gospel and to extend the Kingdom of God. It stands for Truth and for fidelity to the Revelation of God in Christ. The Church has a history of nearly nineteen hundred years, and we see in the course of its history the emergence of almost every form of heresy and superstition. It has taken over what is innocent in Paganism and has baptized it into Christ. It has been influenced by what is untrue in Paganism, and has by syncretism adopted it as part of its message. It has met many enemies and has triumphed over them. It has also fallen a victim to the desires of ambitious men for domination over the minds and consciences of men. At the Reformation, which has been held for centuries by Churchmen of all types to be one of the greatest blessings in Church history, it was purged from Medieval accretions to the Gospel and returned to the teaching of Holy Scripture. To-day the Reformation is considered by many to have been "almost an unqualified calamity, the evil consequences of which have not yet been exhausted." And the Bishops have had in their mind when revising the Prayer Book the men who hold the latter view. It was due to them that the doctrinal changes were made, and it was a desire to do all that was possible to retain their inclusion in the Church as law-abiding men that has led to alterations that have pained many of the most loyal children of the Church. The Revision is not a surrender of the Bishops to the spirit of adaptation of services to modern needs, so much as a capitulation to men who frankly dislike the distinguishing features of our Liturgy in so far as they differ from medieval models.

We were told when the Book was introduced that there was

no change of doctrine in its pages. Later this was modified by those who wished to win support for the Book into "no change of essential doctrine." Essential doctrine has different meanings. It may imply that doctrine which is common to all who profess and call themselves Christians—doctrine that is contained, e.g., in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. Or it may mean that doctrine which was asserted by the Reformers in accord with the Teaching of Holy Writ in opposition to the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Doctrine considered essential by the Church of England has been changed in the Bishops' Book, with its Alternative Communion Service that restores what Cranmer rejected because it was capable of teaching Roman error, and on Reservation, which gives outward expression to that teaching in a manner that has been emphasized by the Church of Rome. It is easy to assert that as the Prayer of Consecration in the Alternative Order does not specify at any one point where the change in the Elements takes place, it is more Evangelical than the existing Order. But the whole question is "At a valid consecration by a duly ordained Priest, does a change in the Elements occur which attaches to the Elements a local Presence of the Saviour? Does Christ come on the Altar when the Prayer has been said, and does His Presence remain after the Service has ended?" The New Prayer, in the opinion of those familiar with the history of its various parts, implies this teaching on the surface. It is possible to employ it in an evangelical sense, by deliberately closing the eyes to history and forgetting the permissive use of Mass Vestments and the allowance of Reservation. But otherwise it is a direct concession to the forces of illegality that demanded for themselves a place in the Church of England made plain by the teaching of its formularies.

In an able pamphlet the Ven. J. W. Hunkin (who is one of those who advocate the acceptance of the Bishops' Book) tells us that the Epiklesis, whose history he traces, may be, as it has been, perfectly innocent, and may be, as it has been and is, the vehicle of false teaching, and concludes that: "In actual practice, for three hundred years Cranmer's office has been freer by far from mechanical and materialistic abuses than any other liturgy in Christendom. . . . It is, most happily, at the critical point that Cranmer's liturgical genius reaches its highest points—in the centre of the Consecration Prayer: 'Grant that we receiving these Thy creatures of bread and wine according to Thy Son our Saviour's holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood: who in the same night that he was betrayed . . .' No more beautiful form of words has ever been suggested to express exactly what should be expressed here, and no other form that has ever been suggested can be so well taken over literally and without qualification into modern thought." And the Bishops have definitely and decisively deleted this from the prayer in favour of a form of Epiklesis which in the opinion of those familiar with Eastern Liturgies marks a change in the substance of the bread and wine. Taken in connexion

with the Anamnesis restored in the Prayer, from which it has been excluded since 1552, it is impossible to deny the contention of Bishop Knox: "the new prayer is consistent with the idea that a change is wrought in the Elements by the action of the Holy Spirit, and with the idea that a sacrifice is offered by the priest for the remission of the sins of the living and the dead. This idea is reinforced by the introduction of the Anamnesis, the words of Thankful Remembrance, which are defined by liturgiologists to be the offering of the Son to the Father." Anglo-Catholics accept this interpretation of the Prayer. And the teaching of the Greek Church is that by the recitation of the Epiklesis "there is wrought the change in the Elements and the very Bread becomes the very Body of Christ, and the Wine His very Blood, the species only remaining which are perceived by sight."

And if proof were needed, that the Bishops intend that this should be a possible interpretation and a natural interpretation taken in connexion with Reservation, it is found in the position of the Black Rubric, which alone of all the concluding Rubrics in the Communion Office is not embraced in the preliminary Rubrics in the New Order but is placed at the end of the present Office. There it stands condemned by its isolation to be considered as inapplicable to the new Office—a monument of a past that has been replaced by a present which will have nothing to do with its plain implications. In the Composite Book it was possible to apologize for the position of the Rubric. In the Deposited Book no ingenuity can explain its lonely proclamation that what is taught in one Order is not necessarily taught in the other.

The outstanding feature in the Bishops' Book from the disciplinary standpoint is the great increase of Episcopal Power in regulating Services and determining parochial conflicts on the character of the Services. The Church—if the Book become law—will be episcopalized in a manner that is novel in the Anglican Communion. The powers of the Bishop extend from a possible prohibition of Evening Communion and a compulsory ordering of the Eastward position, to the direction that an Incumbent, appointed to a Parish where Vestments have been worn, should continue their use. In proof of this, it is sufficient to quote the Rubrics. "When the Morning or Evening Prayer is immediately followed by another Service provided in this Book, it shall be permissible for the Minister, at his discretion, to begin at the versicle, 'O Lord, open Thou our lips,' and to end with the Third Collect, or with the Canticle after the Second Lesson; or else after the Canticle he may say, 'The Lord be with you.' *Answer*: 'And with thy spirit.' *Minister*: 'Let us pray'; and then he shall say any of the following: the Collect of the day or the Second or the Third Collect, and so end.

"But inasmuch as it is to be desired that changes sanctioned by this Book in the customary arrangement and conduct of the Services should not be made arbitrarily or without the goodwill of the people, as represented in the Parochial Church Council:

any question which may from time to time arise between the Minister of a parish and the people as so represented, with regard to such changes, shall stand referred to the Bishop of the Diocese, who, after such consultation as he shall think best, both with the Minister and with the people, shall make orders thereupon, and these orders shall be final.

“If any doubts or diversity arise concerning the manner how to understand, do and execute the things contained in this Book, resort shall be had to the Bishop of the Diocese, who by his discretion shall take order for the settlement of the same, so that it be not contrary to anything contained in this Book, nor to any Rules for the conduct of publick worship in accordance with this Book which may be made from time to time by the Archbishops and Bishops of the Province. And if the Bishop of the Diocese be in doubt then he may send for the resolution thereof to the Archbishop.”

It is generally believed that Evening Communion is sanctioned—it never has been illegal—by the first Rubric quoted. We know that Fasting Communion has been one of the main motives for the sanctioning of reservation, and we are aware that in the past the Bishops held that teaching, implying the participation of the Communion, after breaking the fast to be sinful, is contrary to that of the Church of England. If the so-called Rule of the Church be held by any Bishop to be obligatory on all Communicants, then he may say that he has no discretion but to forbid Evening Communion, and the Minister may be brought in opposition to his Bishop on the interpretation of the discretion given him by the Rubric. And the little word “at” before “God’s Board” may be interpreted by a Bishop to mean the Eastward Position and so ordered, in spite of the evident desire of the Bishops as a whole to leave the position of the Minister open. If a Clergyman be appointed to a Vestment-wearing Parish and he cannot conscientiously wear them, then, if the Parochial Church Council be opposed to the change, the Diocesan may agree with the Council and forbid the Minister to abandon the customary use of Vestments.

It is contended that this interpretation is opposed to the Measure (2 c). “A minister shall not be under any obligation to use in public worship any orders or forms of service other than those contained in the Book of Common Prayer, or to follow any rubric, table or direction not contained in the Book of Common Prayer, except such rubrics as under this Measure are to have effect as contained in the Book of Common Prayer.” The General Rubrics of the Administration of the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion are in this class, and it is here that the alternative use of the Surplice and Chasuble is found. The permissive Rubric concerning the use of combined services is not in this position, but the history of that Rubric which followed the rejection of the recommendation that Evening Communion should be explicitly recognised makes it possible for a Bishop to declare that Evening Communion is outside the discretion of the Minister. A Church Council which

does not represent the wishes of the Parishioners may make it very difficult for a new Incumbent to introduce Evening Communion and to discontinue the use of Vestments. The Bishop's decision is final. It is of course possible for the Electoral Roll to be increased and a new Council of different views elected. But this means strife and trouble. We do not think that the Measure gives an Incumbent the protection he ought to have, and which he at present legally enjoys so long as he observes the law of the Church. The law is changed, and he is deprived not of freedom to act against the existing law, but of freedom to act within "the law of this Church and Realm" as it exists to-day.

It may be argued that no Bishop would be so foolish as to take these steps. But there are Bishops and Bishops, and it is more than conceivable that a Diocesan may hold such strong views that he feels himself bound to act in this fashion. He may have, as the Archbishop of York said before the Royal Commission, a bad time with his brethren in Council, but they cannot well restrain him. And Bishops can very easily pass strong Resolutions in their Lambeth Meetings, and individually in their Dioceses yield to strong local pressure to reverse in practice what has been collectively resolved. In dealing with things as they are, we see how the Bishops have acted, and we see no strong reason for assenting to the contention that matters will be very different when the Bishops have their Book with their new powers.

Two recent incidents throw light on what Bishops may do. The Bishop of Kensington—in the absence of the Diocesan—introduced "robing the candidate"—whatever that may mean—and handing to him the Communion paten and cup at an Ordination in St. Matthew's, Westminster. And the Bishop of Truro, who is Dean of the Cathedral as well as Diocesan, has introduced incense into the Communion Service in Truro Cathedral. And these things have been done since the Bishops issued the Composite Book. They are an index of the working of the minds of some Bishops, and they prove how the liberty that is believed to be given by the Book can be interpreted.

And this leads to the important question, "Will the Deposited Book restore order in the Church?" Bishop Knox has made a detailed analysis of the provisions of the Bishops' Book, and shows that opportunity is given for the disloyal to avail himself of the liberty given him, to introduce practically all the ceremonial of the Roman Mass. Dr. Knox says, "It is not even clear that the Measure will enable the Bishop to intervene, if the Incumbent introduces the Mass without recourse to the Deposited Book. The clause to which the Bishop of Gloucester refers (as quoted above concerning conference with the Parochial Church Council) covers only changes "authorized under this Measure." It does not touch changes of any other kind. The Mass, as we know, has been introduced under the old Prayer Book, and can be introduced again. "What will the Bishops do in that case?" It may be said that the comparison of the Changes introduced by the Deposited Book

compared by Bishop Knox with "An Order of High Mass from Prayers for Church of England People" is marked by an ingenuity that is rare among English Churchmen. Experience has abundantly proved that the ingenuity of the Bishop has been exceeded in practice by many clergymen, and there is no reason to believe that the Bishops' Book will destroy the subtlety of those who believe that every approximation to Rome is a thing for which we ought to be thankful.

To those who are profoundly convinced that the Bishops' Book introduces a change of doctrine in the Church of England the question of Order is of secondary importance. We are convinced that the teaching of the Book is such that it cannot be expected to bring the lawless to obedience. We hold that its teaching is a summons to disobedience, as the grounds of the disobedience are granted to the lawless, who can confidently hold that the Book so clearly implies a localized permanent Presence of Christ in the consecrated Elements, that Adoration must of necessity follow in the case of men and women who believe that their Lord is in the Aumbry or the Tabernacle. If, as seems probable from the Southport and Lichfield decisions, a lamp before the Aumbry will be considered legal, there is a direct incentive to worshippers to gather near the Aumbry and fix their minds upon its contents. Is there anything in the Book to prevent the spontaneous singing of hymns to the Blessed Sacrament and all the worship now given to the Sacramental Elements with their Mysterious Presence being continued? And how can the clergyman who holds the belief of his people stay outside these devotions? And when the renewal or removal of the Sacramental Elements takes place, is it possible to prevent people organizing devotions? We are told that "There shall be no service or ceremony in connexion with the Sacrament so reserved, nor shall it be exposed or removed except in order to be received in communion, or otherwise reverently consumed." The Incumbent may not arrange any service or practise any ceremonial "save that enjoined by reverence for the sacred mystery," but who is to restrain the devotions of the people, who may act without the direct guidance of the Priest? And may it not be necessary for the sake of due decorum for some one to regulate the form in which these "spontaneous devotions" find expression? As has been stated by an Anglo-Catholic publicist: "Devotions have been specifically permitted in various English dioceses. Now they are to be forbidden in all. It is obvious that the bishops cannot enforce the general ban unless they will boldly denounce Benediction, Exposition and Devotions as idolatrous. And they cannot do this while publishing a Communion Office which, with all its defects, clearly teaches the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice."

With all our heart we desire peace in the Church. Bishop Welldon has written: "The hope of the Church lies, I feel, in collective Episcopal action, and I would appeal to the Bishops to act together, for the individualism of the Bishops is an even greater

peril to the Church than the individualism of clergymen." Will the Bishops be as brave individually as they resolve collectively? We have the past to guide us, and we see how collective Resolutions have been individually violated. We have seen in recent months how a Suffragan Bishop interpreted the Ordination Service and how a Diocesan introduced Incense into his Cathedral. We find that the men, with whom some, at any rate, of the Bishops have shown sympathy, have resolved not to accept the limitations of the Book, holding them to be illogical and calculated to deprive their people of benefits that the doctrine underlying the Book provides. Under the old Book direct prohibition failed to secure obedience. What hope is there that under the new Book the strong combination of clear annunciation of teaching by revival of what was rejected in the past, the permission of what was forbidden under the old Book, and the strong emotional urge of the doctrine of a localized permanent Presence in connexion with the Elements will not prove too strong for the Bishops? We are convinced that it will, and if ever the Book be legalized, we shall be in the presence of increased opportunities for going beyond the limits that seem to lie on the surface of the Book, and for a growing approximation of our Services to those of the Church of Rome in these ceremonies that have hitherto marked the Romeward side of a line of deep cleavage. We are not opposed to Prayer Book Revision. We wish to see our Book of Common Prayer capable of meeting the devotional requirements of an age of great complexity. But the parts of the Bishops' Book, to which we find ourselves completely opposed, mark not a step forward in meeting these needs, but a step backward in restoring in the Church of England teaching associated with medieval conceptions of worship, that were deliberately rejected in the sixteenth century and have since that date been rejected by the Church of England in her Formularies and by all the Reformation Churches. And they were rejected because of their unscriptural and anti-scriptural characteristics. They have not lost what was false in them. For this reason we are forced by conscience and by our love of truth, by our loyalty to the Truth of the Gospel and by our devotion to a Faith expressing itself in rightly ordered Worship to resist the passage of a Book which would have been inconceivable to our fathers and would never have been proposed by a pre-war English Episcopate.

The Wife of Evelyn Strode, by Lucien Smith (Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 7s. 6d. net) is a novel of modern type dealing with the conflict of ideals which the ascetic life present to a young peer who is in holy orders, and the claims of a married life upon which he enters under peculiar circumstances. The story is highly dramatic but its closing scene is unconvincing.