The Rise of the Anglican Laity to Place and Power.

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AMONG all the contrasts presented by the differing usages of the Anglican and Roman Churches, none is more arresting in its interest and far-reaching in its importance than the way in which the laity in each are now being treated.

In the Roman Church the Pope speaks of "that most pernicious doctrine which would make of the laity the factor of progress in the Church."[1]

In the Anglican Church we see the Bishops vying with each other in their zeal to admit the laity into their Diocesan Councils, and to share with them the conduct of diocesan affairs. Indeed, we see more than this. We see the English Church herself, through the medium of her Convocations, solemnly but eagerly opening doors hitherto closed, and bidding her faithful laity to enter in, and thus to become part of a new and powerful general assembly of the Church's representatives, whose duty shall be to assist her and to defend her and to serve her in all the new perils of new times.

Thus, while Rome sternly orders back to confinement and tutelage the rising forces of an awakened and enthusiastic laity, the Church of England is sounding out a call to her long-disfranchised lay-people, summoning them to come and use new powers, and casting herself as never before upon their love and their service.

It is a striking phenomenon. Nothing more expressive of expansive life exists in the Anglican Church. Certainly the future is hers if only she continues to thus turn to the possibilities in her lay-folk. As with the nation, so with the Church, the elements of progress are mostly in the people.

It is only of late years, however, that the English Church has learned this great truth. How she has learned it and acted

[1] Encyclical Letter of September 8, 1907.

upon it we propose to relate in what follows. The story is worth the telling. It has much human nature in it. It also reveals the working of God's Holy Spirit. It ought to be helpful for the years which are to come.

I.

The beginnings of a laity in the Anglican Church as a body conscious of itself, with ideas, and a will too, of its own, having, moreover, sufficient courage to act independently of clerical leading, if need be, may be said to date from the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century.

Before that great and epoch-making event the Church of England had laymen and laywomen, but no laity, if by that term we mean a living corporate body, conscious of itself and acting for itself. She had lay personalities like Lord Guildford, Sir H. Mackworth, Mr. Justice Hook, and Colonel Colchester, who in 1698 had initiative enough to found the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; but in their time the corporate life and service of the non-clerical members of the Anglican Church were scarcely ideals, much less were they actual. As Dean Hook put it: "At the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries successful efforts were made to stimulate the interest of laymen in Church-work by societies, but these rather gathered and dispensed funds than encouraged personal service."[1]

Even in the first movements of the Evangelical Revival it is the clergy, and not the laity, who are the outstanding workers. There were individual laymen, like George Conon, the Headmaster of Truro Grammar School, who assisted in the great awakening; but they were few and far between. Moreover, they are always in the background; they never come forward in the history with any prominence, and not often with distinctness.

It was only when the Evangelical Revival had shown that

[1] "Church Dictionary," fifteenth edition, p. 437.

it had come to stay in the English Church, and when some permanent organization became necessary in order to consolidate its results and to assimilate them to regular Church life, that the laity, as we now understand the term, began to come into conscious existence and intelligent serving.

What sort of men and women the first representatives of modern lay life in the Church of England were is seen in the oft-told story of John Wesley and his colleagues, Whitefield and Lady Huntingdon, who went out from the Anglican Church, and in the less-known story of the founders of the Evangelical school, who remained in the English Church. Among the latter were John Thornton (1720-1790), the forerunner of the modern Christian merchant, who spends himself and his wealth for the cause of Christ; William Cowper (1731-1800), the poet; Granville Sharp (1735-1813), the champion of the negro; Hannah More (1745-1833), the chief literary force for righteousness in her day; Charles Grant (1746-1823), the first great lay name which the Church of England produced in India; Lord Teignmouth (1751-1834), better known as Sir John Shore, the first President of the Bible Society, and a former Governor-General in India; William Wilberforce (1759-1833), the emancipator of the slaves; and Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838), of whom Mr. Gladstone in his early days said: "He was the unseen ally of Mr. Wilberforce, and the pillar of his strength."

To have produced such elements of a Church's laity as these would of itself win fame for any school in the Church, but to have revived the type after the Church had long been deprived of it, and to have established its succession on a practical working basis, so that other schools in the Church might produce their great lay representatives after the same patterns, and for the same commonwealth of the Church—this is to come into the rank of the immortals. The school which has accomplished thus much may fail to live up to its early brilliance; but whatever its shortcomings may be as the years pass by, it can never be said to be without claims upon men's reverence.

But although the Evangelicals who remained in the English

Church after Wesley's departure from it had struck that note of "personal independence" which Buckle shows was beginning to become vocal in English life early in the eighteenth century,[1] and although they had begun to do the work of the Church in daring methods which exasperated the clericalism of the day, yet it was only by degrees that they saw their way clear to that lay-serving in the Church which is so familiar an institution at the present time. The timidity which oppressed them in connection with the use of laymen for doing Church-work is most striking, when it is remembered how bold they had been in other ways.

Thus we find that when the first great Evangelical Church Society, the Church Missionary Society, was founded in 1799, among its first rules, drawn up by John Venn, were some which contemplated the use of native catechists, or, as they would be called in this country, lay-evangelists. The proposal was strange. Its authors knew it would encounter strong prejudice, and therefore it was carefully explained that "men not fitted by education for English ordination might yet prove good missionaries to savage men and illiterate." Appeal was also made to the usage of the primitive Church as favouring the plan, Hooker and Bingham being drawn upon for instances.[2] The time, however, was not yet favourable for the innovation. Even so stout and unconventional an Evangelical as John Newton opposed it. The proposal to use lay-preachers for foreign missionary work was therefore dropped.

It may be that John Wesley's use of lay-preachers outside the Church, and the annoyance caused by their intrusion into parishes held by Evangelicals, caused distrust of lay agency in Church work, which at first prevailed among the founders of the Evangelical School.[3]

[1] "History of Civilization in England," vol. i., chap. viii. He says: "It was reserved for the eighteenth century to set the first example of calling on the people to adjudicate upon those solemn questions of religion in which hitherto they had never been consulted."

[2] "History of the C.M.S.," vol. i., p. 72.

[3] Wesley himself had at first some difficulty in getting over his "vehement prejudice" against lay-preaching. *Vide* "History of Methodism," by Stevens, vol. i., book iii., chap. v.

Be that as it may, it was not long before the needs of the new foreign missionary work forced lay-preaching to be accepted by the early Evangelicals. They had founded their Church Missionary Society, they had also secured and prepared a few men to go forth as missionaries; but when they came to deal with the question of how ordination was to be obtained, they were unable to answer it. No Bishop would help. Because, therefore, no clergy could be sent forth to do the Church's missionary work, most of the first missionaries of the Church Missionary Society had necessarily to be laymen. During the first fifteen years of the Church Missionary Society it sent out twenty-four missionaries. Of these, seventeen were Germans and seven were Englishmen. Three of the latter only were ordained men. In the case of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which was at work before the Church Missionary Society, it was the same; all the Society's missionaries in India at this time were Lutherans.[1]

From this point onwards English Churchmen seem to have submitted to the inevitable as regards the use of lay-agents for doing some at least of the Church's teaching work. In the foreign mission-field it was a stubborn necessity. At home it became an endured irregularity, which had to bear much contumely before it was allowed to remain unchallenged.

In the beginnings of her great modern institution, the enfranchised laity, the English Church has therefore no ground for pride. It certainly was born of Divine life. Its infancy was guarded by a wondrous Providence. But its earliest service was opposed by the ignorant Mother Church herself, and was only tolerated because there was no other means for doing the work which had to be done.

The Anglican laity as a working institution in these modern times may be said, therefore, to have begun its career as a bold irregularity. It has since existed and served as a powerful anomaly; for what concord hath the lay government of the Church through societies, and the exercise of Church patronage,

[1] "History of the C.M.S.," vol. i., pp. 72, 91.

and the appointment of Bishops by Premiers, with Episcopacy proper?

To-day, as we shall see later, it is taking its place in the Church as a constitutional order and a welcomed element of ruling authority.[1] Truly, not even the British Parliamentary system itself presents a more instructive story of a people's rise to place and power in the face of official and class opposition than does the history of how the Anglican laity came to share in the service and government of the Church. The latter has not been marked by the earth-shaking events which accompanied the former; nevertheless, the shaping by Providential rule has been the same, and the issues to human life at large may in the long-run be even greater.

II.

With the advent of the Oxford Movement in 1833 there came the modern High Church type, and also the extreme Newman type of serving laymen. Of the former the outstanding examples are Mr. W. E. Gladstone and Sir Roundell Palmer, better known as Lord Selborne. Of the latter Richard Hurrell Froude and W. G. Ward were "an advance party," who showed what the company was which should come after. In their way and for their special ends these were as strenuous and successful as their Evangelical forerunners. And yet there was no consciousness in them of the greatness of their order, as representatives of the Church's laity, and consequently no eagerness to claim its inherent rights and to perform its inalienable duties. In the first days of the Oxford Movement the laymen who supported it were oppressed with the burden of the great reverence which they felt for the priesthood of the clergy. So far were they from being able to conceive of the priesthood of the laity, that when the newly formed Church

[1] The present Bishop of Southwark, in dealing with some fears expressed by High Churchmen of the present growth of lay power in the Church, has boldly said: "Nor will I meet them, the laity, on the threshold by saying that in matters of the Church's council or her witness there is any region from which they are altogether shut out" (*The Guardian*, May 25, 1904).

Pastoral Aid Society proposed, in 1836, to employ lay Scripture-readers to assist the clergy in crowded poor parishes, Mr. Gladstone protested vehemently, ceased to support the Society,[1] and proceeded with others to form, in 1837, a rival organization —the present Additional Curates Society. The grounds alleged for this action were that the Church Pastoral Aid Society refused to confine its grants to clerical assistance, and, further, that it insisted on inquiring into the spiritual fitness of its grantees, which work, said its opponents, belonged to the Bishops, and not to a committee.

Since this uprising of High Churchmen against the employment of lay agency in parochial visitation and in mission-room preaching, High Anglican laymen have got over their horror of the admission of their own class to some active share in the Church's ministrations, and may now be found doing, in some cases, admirable work, not merely as licensed lay-readers, but even as preachers in parish churches themselves.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting, if only to learn how slowly Church reform grows, that nearly forty years after the early Evangelicals had felt their scruples against lay agency in Church-work, and had been taught their folly, the new Oxford School of Churchmen did their best to stop the progress of the Anglican laity from the position of outlanders to their rightful status and their proper privileges as fully enfranchised citizens of the commonwealth of the Church of God.

In the case of the latter the opposition was more surprising than in the case of the hesitating Evangelicals, for Newman and his followers made much of taking their precedents from primitive times. And such precedents for the use of the laity in doing Church-work are numerous.

This fact has recently been emphasized with special impressiveness by the Committee appointed by the Convocation of Canterbury to consider the question of restoring an Order of Readers or Sub-deacons in the English Church. The Com-

[1] *Vide* "Church Pastoral Aid Society: Sketch of its Origin and Progress," p. 10; "Life of Lord Shaftesbury," popular edition, p. 113.

mittee was presided over by the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Wordsworth. It presented its Report on May 3, 1904.[1] The case for the Church's large use of lay agency in its ministering and teaching is made out with much detail and force.

"It is plain to any reader of the New Testament (the Report says) that the regular ministry of the Twelve, with that of the local officers called Bishops, presbyters, and deacons, was not the only equipment which the Church possessed. There was a fulness of Church life which is at once peculiar to the first two centuries, and at the same time a fruitful source of instruction as well as of direct and indirect precedents for all after ages." The Report then proceeds to give "some details of the evidence for the existence of lay ministrations" in the first two centuries of the Church. This is treated under the heads of (1) *Evangelists;* (2) *Prophets and Teachers;* and (3) *Readers.*

Of Evangelists it says: "While some Evangelists were undoubtedly ordained, like St. Philip and St. Timothy, others would seem to have been laymen like the men described in Acts viii. 4, and in Acts xi. 19, 20." There seems to be a reference to these "travelling missionaries" in 3 John. "Prophets and teachers make a greater show in early literature." "It is in connection with the greatest of Christian 'Teachers,' namely, Origen, that we find the question raised whether laymen could be allowed to preach in the presence of Bishops. The question, it will be observed, was not whether laymen could preach at all in Church (as Routh and even Bingham seem to imagine), which was not then discussed, but what they might do when Bishops were present." Readers were a lower class of lay-agents, but important. Their original duties were to "read the Scriptures and possibly homilies. They were usually local officers, but they discharged a duty of a most primitive character. They were chosen for their ability, somewhat in the same way as in the Jewish synagogues, but with more formality. Our Lord's own example in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv. 16), and the references to the duty in the New Testament

[1] It may be had at the National Society's Depository, Westminster.

(St. Matt. xxiv. 15; St. Mark xiii. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 13; Rev. i. 3), could not but give them dignity." "We find a reference to a reader, as distinguished from the president and the deacons, in the earliest detailed description of a Church service outside the New Testament" (Justin I., "Apol." 67).

In the third century there came the minor orders—*e.g.*, sub-deacons, clerks, servers (*ministri* or *ministrantes*)—all of whom were what we should now regard as authorized lay-workers.

In the early years of Queen Elizabeth, the dearth of clergy necessitated an extraordinary use of lay-readers for serving destitute cures. "The *Injunctions*, which apparently emanated from a Bishops' meeting, "required the reader to promise, 'I shall not minister the Sacraments, nor other rites of the Church, but bury the dead and purify women after childbirth.' They thus add to the duties of reading prayers, litany, and homily, the two last occasional duties, which would often come at unexpected times." When the times became more settled, and Church order assumed its normal conditions, the use of lay agency was suffered to pass almost entirely away. The Report, however, notes that until near our own times there is a continuous tradition that "the Litany down to the Lord's Prayer" may be "sung or said" by laymen.

With such a recorded past to point to for lay ministrations, it is one of the mysteries of ecclesiastical history why there should have been long lapses of use by the English Church of such service; and also why objections against any large resumption of it by the Church should linger in men and women whose zeal for the Church's ancient ways is conspicuous.

The explanation seems to lie partly in the failures which from time to time have marked the Church's employment of lay agency, and partly in an overpressed clericalism. However this may be, the fact remains that from the opening of the seventeenth century to the time of the Evangelical revival towards the close of the eighteenth century, lay ministering and

teaching in the English Church lay under a cloud. It remained unvalued and scarcely used until the new expansive life of the Church made it necessary to use it once again. And what is notable in this turning again of the Church to the use of lay agency is that it brought something more than the re-establishment of a former lay order; it gave rise to the Anglican laity as a body newly enfranchised, and really admitted to share in the rule and administration of the Church.

As we have already seen, the first of the Anglican laity to claim and use the new franchise were Evangelicals. Then came the lay representatives of the early doings of the Oxford Movement. And in both cases the Church had good cause to be proud of the fresh types of the lay-worker she had so far produced.

In 1850 the militant form of Ritualism, which clergy like Bennett, Bryan King, and Mackonochie superimposed upon the less aggressive teaching of Newman and Pusey, gave rise to a still further type of Anglican layman, which was quite different from anything we have yet seen. Out of these was born that combative body of Church opinion and effort, *the English Church Union*, which soon provoked into existence its equally warlike opponent, *the Church Association*. Both, from the beginning, have been led by lay chairmen. Both have been, in their later career, avowedly partisan. Which of these two organized forces of differing theological feeling has gone farthest in its length of lay action in the name of the Church it would be difficult to decide. The one has certainly not been meek to the Episcopate; the other has ignored the Episcopate in its efforts to conciliate the Pope. And of all the deeds attempted by laity of the English Church, this is one of the most amazing. How Lord Halifax found it to be within the compass of his extreme reverence for Episcopal authority to go unauthorized and unsent to seek Papal acknowledgment of Anglican orders is hard to understand. It is perhaps a case of a man deliberately exceeding his principles for the sake of forcing on some fancied advantage for those principles. How-

ever, the fact remains that for excess of lay zeal the classical example of present days is with those who oppose the claims made for the priesthood of the laity.

(*To be concluded.*)

The Ornaments Rubric and the Convocations of Canterbury and York.

By the Rev. CANON NUNN, M.A.

AS it is expected that the Resolutions of the Committees of the Houses of Convocation on the Ornaments Rubric will come on for discussion in November, it may be well to review the position in which the subject now stands.

The Report of the Committee of five Bishops of the Upper House of Canterbury, dated January 23, 1908 (which was reviewed in the CHURCHMAN in April, May and June, 1908), came to the following conclusion:

"We feel bound to state that our own study of the facts leads us to the conclusion that the Ornaments Rubric cannot rightly be interpreted as excluding the use of all vestments for the clergy other than the surplice in parish churches, and in cathedral and collegiate churches the surplice, hood and cope."

This conclusion was in direct contradiction of the Ridsdale Judgment. That Judgment contained the following words:

"Any interpretation of the Rubric, which would leave it optional to the minister to wear, or not to wear, these vestments, not only would be opposed to the ordinary principles of construction, but must also go to the extent of leaving it optional to the minister whether he will wear any official vesture whatever."

But the five Bishops also expressed their belief that—

"The evidence here collected indicates that they [the vestments] cannot rightly be regarded as expressive of doctrine, but that their use is a matter of reverent and seemly order."

Of course, the real question is, whether they were "regarded as expressive of doctrine" at the time of the Reformation, and