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CORRESPONDENCE.

THE PHRASE "IN CHRIST."

To the Editor of "The Churchman."

SIR,—

We are all immensely indebted to Archdeacon Paige Cox for his magnificent service in the matter of Prayer Book Revision. But some of us may find some hesitation in agreeing with part of what he says in his article which applies the phrase "in Christ" to the doctrine of the Atonement, and with the conclusions he draws regarding the application of his view to the Communion Service.

The objections which I venture to suggest are the following:—

1. His argument practically implies (although not in so objectionable a form as some other views) that something remains to be done by the sinner in regard to the reconciling work of the Atonement. It is, of course, true that the sinner has his part to play; and to that extent it is right enough to speak of "man's part" as well as "God's part." But the part of simple and passive acceptance with the empty hand of helpless faith is a very different thing from the part of active self-surrender and self-dedication; although self-renunciation is perhaps an essential element in the passive acceptance of the gift. I have long felt that a weakness in Evangelical preaching, which possibly helps to explain the comparative paucity of decisive spiritual results in many an Evangelical ministry, is the emphasis laid on "giving oneself to Christ" rather than on "receiving Christ," upon which, St. John tells us" (i. 12), He confers the "right to become children of God." Some may feel that the distinction is subtle; but may it not be vital? In some cases it may not be so in practice; but in others it may mean the difference between helpless acceptance by faith and a lingering idea of something which the sinner can do to help himself. Incidentally, one may point out that "receiving Christ" in helpless faith involves that union with Christ which satisfies the phrase "in Christ," upon which the Archdeacon lays stress.

2. Arising directly in connection with this is the point that self-surrender is the grateful response of the sinner to the gift already received, as distinguished from the idea of an essential step towards obtaining the gift. Till the sinner is reconciled, he has neither the power nor the will to give himself. The representation of the matter for which I plead does not belittle self-dedication: it only puts it in the right place.

3. The Archdeacon practically reproduces the current libel on the "old-fashioned" Evangelical view of God! His picture is a travesty of that view, at least in so far as it is too sweeping a generalization. The Fatherhood and love of God can be as fully taught under it as he could possibly wish: there is by no means the essential misrepresentation which he implies. In fact, many of

us may feel that God's goodness and love are more fully emphasized when absolutely everything in the reconciling process is ascribed to Him. I shrewdly suspect that our Evangelical forefathers knew much more about the love of God, and preached much more about His Fatherhood, than some current representations of their beliefs allow. I will add that though I am quite certain the Archdeacon does not mean to hurt anyone's feelings, his adoption of the modern catch-phrase "Sultan-God" is unfair and disturbing. That phrase is one of the most objectionable in all modern question-begging terminology.

4. So far from the Archdeacon's view assisting a true interpretation of our present Communion Service, I believe it might hinder it. Self-dedication, in that service, follows naturally as the grateful *response* to renewed appreciation and appropriation of the merits of the one "full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice." It thus falls into its right place. The Archdeacon himself, in fact, refers to it as "this complete surrender of the self in response to God's forgiving Love." My point, all through, is that this surrender, literally and solely, "*in response.*" Moreover, renewed appreciation of union seems to be a truer idea than being "reunited to Christ" in that service, and one still further removed from the Roman idea of renewed sacrifice and reconciliation. Nevertheless, these points, as thus amended, are helpful suggestions for which I should like to thank the Archdeacon.

One of the most prominent of our leaders in the present crisis, only a few days before I write, has suggested that a certain point (of a different kind) in the proposed Prayer Book shows "a lack of faith, a lingering idea of some sanctity of our own—which is to be added to the righteousness of Christ, by way of completing it." He characterizes this as an idea almost blasphemous; and adds—"Can a Protestant nation go back on the doctrine of justification by faith?"

Archdeacon Paige Cox, I am sure, does not want to do that. Nor do I suggest that he feels it necessary to "complete" what our Lord did, in that sense. But I question whether his argument may not have the logical effect of diminishing the sense of the completeness of that finished work, and encouraging a subtle form—a "lingering idea"—of reliance on self.

Yours faithfully,

W. S. HOOTON.

HARROGATE,

February 6, 1928.

Through the courtesy of the Editor I have been allowed to see Mr. Hooton's letter before its appearance in print, and thus I have the opportunity of making one or two comments upon it.

I desire to thank Mr. Hooton most warmly for his more than kind personal reference to myself. I am sorry to find myself differing, even though slightly, from one with whom I have obviously so much in common.

Mr. Hooton quite misunderstands me when he speaks of my reproducing "the current libel on the old-fashioned Evangelical view of God," and when he refers to my use of the term "Sultan-God" as though it were a slight to Evangelicals. What I had in mind was the popular medieval conception of God the Father, and my words were, "The prominent feature of the service of the Mass was the propitiation of the 'Sultan-God' by the offering to Him of the Body and Blood of Christ." It has been admitted by "Anglo-Catholic" scholars that this semi-pagan element entered into the conception of God in the Middle Ages and tended to give its peculiar character to the Mass. I certainly would have included Evangelicals in the "we" of the following sentence,—“Most happily for the English Church we recovered in the sixteenth century the true conception of the Fatherhood of God.”

Mr. Hooton and I agree in our wholehearted adhesion to the doctrine of justification by faith. If he demurs to some language I have used in reference to our acceptance of the benefits of Christ's redemptive work, he will hardly differ from me when I say that the faith by which we are justified is not static but dynamic—a faith "which worketh by love."

Mr. Hooton has, I think, overlooked the words in which I spoke of "the entirely satisfying view of the Atonement which magnifies the holiness and love of God, *attributing all the merit of our salvation to Him*, and at the same time commends itself to our moral sense by insisting on the surrender of the whole man to Christ in joyful faith."

Though my language might be in part open to misconstruction, it is something of a surprise to me that Mr. Hooton should apparently not hold that general view of the Atonement which I have endeavoured to outline. I had thought that the whole trend of present-day scholarship was in that direction. Since writing my article I have been reading Dr. Anderson Scott's *Christianity according to St. Paul*, perhaps the most important book on St. Paul's theology which has appeared recently. I am more than content to adopt Dr. Anderson Scott's words in setting forth the points I desired to emphasize.

"When reconciliation is spoken of in St. Paul, the subject is always God, and the object always man. . . . We never read that God has been reconciled. He was engaged in Christ in reconciling the World unto Himself."

"The faith that saves is something which along with other characteristics has this which is of vital import, namely, that it attaches the subject of it to its object; it attaches one moral personality to another, in the bond which is called love. In a word, it sets up what is called a 'mystical union' between the believer and Christ."

"This is the key-note which we may hear sounding through all the Apostle's letters, in which he is constantly depicting his relation to the Cross of Christ. It is never a relation of mere objective theory, but always and at the same time a relation of the

subjective union of the inmost feelings with the Crucified, a mystic communion with the death on the Cross and with the life of Christ risen." ¹ May I just add this? The old popular doctrine of the Atonement has been a stumbling-block to many in these days. It has been a relief to such persons to note that there is no *theory* of the Atonement in the Prayer Book, just as there is no theory of the Inspiration of the Bible. This is not the case with the Deposited Book. In the alternative canon there occur the words, "We do celebrate and set forth before Thy Divine Majesty with these Thy holy gifts the memorial which He hath willed us to make." This implies that the object of the memorial which Christ instituted was to placate God the Father by bringing to His remembrance the sacrifice of the Son. If this is not intended by some who have accepted the canon, the words suggest it, and could be quoted in favour of it. That is one of the reasons why many of us have opposed the Deposited Book. There may be varying views of the Atonement, but a Book of Common Prayer should be neutral in such matters. It should not dogmatize about things that are not revealed or give dubious or equivocal interpretations to the language of Holy Writ. If the alternative canon is finally authorized in its present form it will, I fear, not only divide Church worshippers at the Holy Communion, but will tend to widen the gulf between us and that already large number of thoughtful people who are drifting away from institutional religion, though they are sincerely Christian in disposition and will.

W. L. PAIGE COX.

¹ Pp. 79, 107 and 112.

Messrs. Seeley, Service & Co. have issued a useful volume for amateur gardeners: *Gardening Without Worry*, Simple and Comprehensive Information for the Amateur Gardener, by George Barlow (3s. 6d. net). A simple account is given of soils and their properties, of manures and their various uses. Garden structures and their fittings are described and illustrated by diagrams. Instruction is given as to the formation of new gardens, and the best classes of flowers and shrubs to use in them. Garden tools and their use, including the best methods of digging, are adequately dealt with, and the practice of gardening described in detail. A special chapter is devoted to the herbaceous border, and careful instruction given for its formation. Various classes of flowers are considered in detail, and hints are given on greenhouse management. The chief foes of the gardener are described and pictures given of the worst pests. The growing of vegetables with the best succession of crops, and the care of fruit trees receive full attention. A good index completes a volume that will be a useful guide to those who are beginning the fascinating employment of their leisure time in the cultivation of flowers and vegetables. All the advice is practical and definite.