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# THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1931.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

### *The National Crisis and Religion.*

OUR country has been passing through a grave crisis during recent months. The financial stability of England since Victorian days has been regarded as so firmly established that it was probably the common opinion among us that nothing but a great revolution could shake it. Recent events have rudely shattered this confidence, and have made many realize as never before the insecure foundations on which national prosperity is based. It is not our purpose to enter into a discussion of the problems involved, but we are concerned with some consequences of the crisis which may have serious effects upon the religious life of the nation. The ultimate remedies proposed for our difficulties are the increase of taxation and more effective efforts in economy. These present difficulties to those already overburdened with taxation and practising economy in every department of life. Many are suffering severe reductions in incomes, and the financial stress is being generally felt. In these circumstances it is only natural that the great Societies which represent the activities of Christian work at home and abroad should feel the strain. Many who have been able to make large and generous contributions in previous years feel themselves obliged to reduce their gifts to religious and philanthropic organizations. The great Evangelical Societies, although they have carried economy to the furthest extent compatible with efficiency, have in some instances been compelled to adopt still further economies hurtful to the effectiveness of the work, and placing a heavy and often an impossible burden on the shoulders of the workers. There are many supporters of Christian work who strive at considerable sacrifice to keep up their contributions to the Churches and their work. But there are others who commence the practice of economy by cutting down their gifts to religious organizations. A reminder may be useful to them of the disastrous results of decreasing, especially at the present time, the power and influence of the Gospel in our own and other lands. Strength of religious life and purity of Christian faith are the greatest safeguards of the welfare of the nations. The permanent elements

in the life of any people are the moral elements which rest upon the sure foundation of the teaching of Jesus Christ. For these reasons, if for no others, it is the highest wisdom to maintain in their fullest activity at the present time all the great agencies of Christian activity. The pure teaching of Evangelical Christianity has saved our land in the past from the bloodshed and horrors of revolution. By our support of Christian work in its various branches we can assist in strengthening the basis of civilization, and in securing peace and increasing happiness throughout the world.

### The Non-Episcopal Churches and Reunion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has invited the non-Episcopal Churches of the country to send representatives to resume the Conferences on reunion which were held for some years subsequent to the meeting of the Bishops at Lambeth in 1920. The invitation has been accepted and it is anticipated that the Conferences will be held in the near future. In the previous meetings some important decisions were reached. One of the most significant was the pronouncement by a Committee of the Conference in July, 1923, that the ministries of certain of the non-Episcopal Churches were "real ministries of the Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church." It is well known that the representatives of the non-Episcopal Churches were disappointed with the practical ignoring of this pronouncement at the Lambeth Conference of 1930, and perhaps even more so with the explanations offered on behalf of the Bishops. This disappointment was accentuated by the very large share of consideration given to the representatives of the Eastern Orthodox and old Catholic Communions. The chief difficulty in the discussions has been the question of the Ministry. Members of the non-Episcopal Churches cannot accept the theories of Apostolical Succession and the sacerdotal claims of the Orthodox and old Catholic Churches. They therefore feel that little advance can be made towards any substantial measure of reunion if these theories and claims are to be regarded as those of the Church of England. They will therefore enter into the renewed discussions with quite a different spirit. They will claim freedom to review the whole question afresh and to make their position in regard to Episcopacy and the true interpretation of it more clearly defined. A prominent Free Churchman has recently indicated the new attitude of the non-Episcopal Churches. They feel that they have been too ready to accept the claims made for Episcopacy. He deals with the Bishop of Gloucester's statements that while the Episcopate was not instituted by Christ or His Apostles yet "it is the direct and natural development of Apostolic institutions and the principles laid down by our Lord." It is not, however, "the medieval bishop but the Catholic bishop of the primitive Church that the present time needs." Such a bishop, this writer maintains, has his counterpart "more truly preserved in the Moderators of Presbyterianism and the Superintendents of Methodism than in the

Bishops of the Episcopal Churches." He therefore maintains that there is no adequate justification for the claim that "for a united Church the Historic Episcopate is a necessity." It is difficult to foresee the outcome of this stiffening of attitude on the part of the non-Episcopal Churches. We can only hope that undue claims for Episcopacy will not be made, and that the truer conception of the Episcopal Office will be made clear.

### "The Birmingham Dispute."

There has been widespread astonishment among all sections of Evangelical Churchmen at the Archbishop of Canterbury's action in regard to the appointment to the living of St. Aidan's, Small Heath, Birmingham. The Bishop of Birmingham in his endeavour to reduce the number of so-called "rebel" churches in his diocese, and to bring some measure of order into the parishes under his control, refused to license the nominee of the trustees as he declined to obey the Bishop's requirements. After law proceedings which transferred to the Archbishop of Canterbury the duty of licensing a fit person as Vicar of the Parish, the Archbishop licensed the clergyman whose appointment the Bishop of Birmingham felt unable to sanction. The Archbishop's plea for his action was that he found the candidate presented to him a fit person for the post. This plea has proved singularly unconvincing to a very large number of Churchpeople. They looked to the Archbishop to support one of the diocesan Bishops in his province in the maintenance of order in his diocese. The Archbishop has failed to do so, and it is widely felt that little help is to be sought from the Primate in restraining the excesses of those clergymen who are determined to persist in teaching and practices contrary to the formularies of our Church. The Bishop of Birmingham has pointed out to the Archbishop that the practices at St. Aidan's go far beyond even what was proposed in the revision of the Prayer Book in 1928. Reservation was to have been permitted for the sole purpose of ministering to the sick. At St. Aidan's, the Bishop says, "Devotions" occur weekly. "I learn that the curtains of the Tabernacle are drawn back and with Roman forms of prayer, priests, acolytes and congregation bow in adoration before the consecrated elements." The Archbishop has stated that he is not himself in favour of these forms of devotion, yet he fails to assist the Bishop of Birmingham in his endeavour to fulfil the promise which every Bishop makes at his Consecration, that he will be ready "with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word, and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to the same." A great number of the laity are specially concerned at this action of the Archbishop, and it is widely felt that the prestige of his high office and the future welfare of the Church have suffered severely by his failure to use this opportunity to secure a due regard for loyalty to the definite teaching of our Church and to its standards of worship.

### The Doctrine of the Real Presence.

An even more serious question has been raised by the correspondence between the Bishop of Birmingham and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Do the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer teach that there is a presence of Christ in, with or under the forms of Bread and Wine in the Holy Communion? Since the Tractarian Movement a section of Churchmen have taught that at the words of consecration in the Holy Communion a change is effected in the elements and that a presence of Christ is brought into them. They claim that this is "Catholic" doctrine, and although some of them decline to denominate this change by the Roman Catholic term "Transubstantiation," for all practical purposes the teaching is the same. Those who believe in such a presence are logically justified in their claim to go on to use the elements for purposes of worship and adoration paid to Christ as present in them. It has been pointed out that this differs little from the idolatry which is condemned in the Articles. The Bishop of Birmingham definitely declares "that a spiritual presence is to be found in the consecrated elements of Holy Communion is regarded as a superstition properly rejected at the Reformation." The revised Prayer Book was disallowed in large measure "because of a fear that continuous reservation would open the way to erroneous belief in a miraculous change in the consecrated elements and to forms of worship based on it." Such a belief was practically unknown in our Church from the time of the Reformation until recent years. Eminent scholars have shown that it is not sanctioned by any of the formularies adopted at the Reformation, that it has no place in the Book of Common Prayer, that even Anglican Divines who were regarded as the High Churchmen of the Stuart period, such as Laud, Andrewes and Jeremy Taylor, did not hold the views that are now put forward. Finally, by the persistent misrepresentation of the Bennett Judgment it is claimed that this doctrine of a real presence in the elements was declared to be allowable, while it has been clearly shown that the decision in that case definitely repudiated the doctrine. This is asserted with distinct emphasis in the Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, and it is only by the constant repetition of this and similar misstatements that Churchpeople have been led to believe that our Church sanctions any other belief than the doctrine maintained by Hooker that the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion is to be sought in the hearts of the faithful recipients of the Sacrament.

### The Future of Religion in Spain.

The revolution in Spain has wrought a vast change in the position of the Roman Catholic Church in that country. In the past the Roman Church was the Established Church of the land. Under the dictatorship the Church was supreme, and exerted a tyrannous and persecuting power over the groups of Protestant and Evan-

gical Christians who ventured to meet for worship according to the dictates of their conscience. The new constitution under the Republic has declared that the State is to have no official religion and that all religious Orders shall be dissolved and their property nationalized. It has also been declared that liberty of conscience and the right to profess and practise any religion whatever are guaranteed on Spanish territory, subject to the respect due to the demands of public morals. It is hoped that the freedom of worship now accorded will lead to a great forward movement in the Reformed Churches in Spain. An appeal is made for prayer and support for the Spanish Reformers in order that they may be guided in the use of the fresh opportunities thus afforded them for the furtherance of the Gospel. It is significant that while Romanism is thus losing its hold upon the peoples of the Continent, the claims of the Roman Church are being pushed with increasing aggressiveness in our own and other Protestant lands. Dr. Coulton and others have done much to expose the falsity of the Roman claims, but united action is needed to combat the organized efforts of the propagandists of Rome. Protestants on the Continent have already recognized the need for united action, and a Union has been formed of which a Branch for this country is being organized. When full particulars of the organization are announced we hope it will receive the hearty support of all who desire to see the Protestant countries saved from the subtle and insidious devices of Rome.