

ART. II.—CHURCHMEN IN COUNCIL.

A NUMBER of Churchmen have recently associated themselves in council on the subject of the existing ritual difficulties and distresses of the Church.

With a view to their solution and alleviation they have enunciated certain principles and made certain proposals, which a member of this association purposes here to discuss.

It may be asked very properly of whom does this body consist? Prefacing that our movement must win its way and do good on account of its inherent reasonableness, and not on account of the personal attractiveness and influence of its promoters, the reply is: of a number of laymen and clergymen drawn from all sections of the Church, excepting the most extreme, together with many persons who, while sympathizing with much that both of the two great Church parties hold in common, are yet unable to range themselves under the banner of either. Thus, decided party men are on our platform, and what has been called the Silent Party in the Church seems at length to have found a voice there. To mention some representative names, Dean Bradley of Westminster, Dean Boyle of Salisbury, Dean Perowne of Peterborough, are men respectively of light, weight, and leading. Dean Butler of Lincoln, Dean Bickersteth of Lichfield, and Lord Nelson represent different phases of High Church thought. Dean Pigou of Chichester, Dean Spence of Gloucester, and Mr. Teignmouth Shore are typical Liberal Evangelical Churchmen. Mr. Kitto and Canon Jacob are parish clergymen eminent for their decided opinions. Sir Gabriel Stokes is the President of the Royal Society, Sir Richard Webster is her Majesty's Attorney-General; and in view of the particular proposals made by the association, it is significant that the prolocutors of both Houses of Convocation and the vice-president of the Canterbury House of Laymen are members of Churchmen in Council.

I do not propose in this paper to travel far beyond the leading principles of the movement.

I. We affirm the principle of the COMPREHENSIVE CHARACTER of the Church of England.

In the July number of the *Contemporary Review* there is a description of ecclesiastical comprehensiveness by a Roman Catholic layman which might, I think, be adopted with reserve and qualification as true of the Anglican position. He indeed claims it to be true of his own Church, and of his own Church only.

"The Catholic Church," says Mr. Coventry Patmore (he means the Roman Catholic Church), "instead of encouraging uniformity of thought and feeling, as all other Churches do, does

her best, in the direction of souls, to develop as wide a distinction as is consistent with formal assent to her singularly few articles of obligatory faith. She requires consent to the letter of the doctrine, but welcomes as many and seemingly conflicting ways of viewing it as there are idiosyncrasies of character in men, recommending each not to force his inclination, but to seek such good in the doctrine as best suits him." "Singularly few articles of obligatory faith!" I thought they had to assent to the Tridentine decrees, and the dogma of papal infallibility. And "formal assent!" We may smile, but I fancy his clergy will frown at this literary indiscretion. However, as I have said, I venture to adopt, with qualification and reserve, this description—a very thoughtful and refined one—as true of our own Church. She demands from her lay people not, indeed, a *formal*, rather a *heartly* assent, but it is "to singularly few articles of obligatory faith," viz., to the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. She leaves to individual minds freedom of interpretation and selection. "She welcomes as many and as seemingly conflicting views" of her doctrines as occur to devout inquiring minds. She cherishes individuality in her sons. She gives "room enough under us for to go."

"The Church of England," says Dean Stanley, "admits almost every school of theology within its pale." "There are," says Canon Bernard, "within the Church, persons who greatly differ in regard to certain definite doctrines, and in their general cast of religious opinion and habits of religious thought." And there follows, I contend, from her sanction of this variety in doctrine, her sanction of a "reasonable variety in ritual, in modes of conducting public worship." Now this comprehensiveness of our Church is a scandal to the extremes within her borders, each of which, unable or unwilling to see her doctrines and her formularies "steadily and to see them whole," claims its views and interpretations to be alone admissible; and is foolishness to the adversary without, who is never weary of decrying "the incongruity of the Anglican position," and of deriding her "midge madge of contradictory formularies."

It would be foreign to the purpose of this paper to defend at any length this comprehensive character of our Church, yet I must indicate the lines of that defence.¹ I should argue that it was in accordance with her ideal features, of the very essence of her being, foreseen and intended by those who shaped her at her most tremendous epoch—the period of the Reformation—both *necessary* and *right*. *Necessary* both on account of her descent—her connection with the past life of the nation, and on account

¹ For this projected line of argument I am greatly indebted to a paper written some years ago by Canon Bernard.

of her established position—her connection with the present life of the nation. The Bishops of the Somorsætas (as Mr. Freeman might put it) have now sat on their stools for one thousand years. Comparing the life of a Church with the life of a man, must not the aged Church have the wise toleration, the large-hearted charity, the insight into essentials, the discrimination as to accidentals, the comprehensiveness to which “old experience doth attain?” Must not years “have brought the philosophic mind?” And apart from the teaching of the past, does not her position in the present—as the Church of the English people with their varied modes of thought, their varied opinions inherited and acquired—make comprehensiveness a necessity of her being, so that to limit her comprehensiveness would be to limit her life?

And further, this feature of hers ought not to be treated as a necessary yet *morbid* growth, alluded to with regret, “with bated breath and whispered humbleness.” I should argue that it was *right*. That here we have a note of her *Catholicity*. A pure and apostolic branch of Christ’s Church must exhibit something of the comprehensiveness of that mother Church which included St. Paul and St. Peter, St. James and St. John. That here we have the true *Protestant* note, that freedom of judgment which can only exist in a Church which is comprehensive, and which some¹ of the advocates of Rome now claim as a feature of their Church, and of their Church only. That here we have a characteristic which stamps our Church as the natural home of those (and such there will ever be, and there ought to be a home for them) who are perplexed in faith, who, doubting, are anxious to believe, to whom Christian worship and Christian society ought not to be denied.

For the particular way in which I have stated it I alone am responsible, but I speak for others when I say that the comprehensive character of the Church of England is the fundamental principle of Churchmen in Council.

And here it is only candid to admit that some of the warmest advocates of comprehensiveness will have nothing to do with Churchmen in Council, *because they propose to do something*. And to do something may “upset the existing settlement and balance.” This is Dr. Wace’s position. He argues with great force that the “present standards of the Church have enabled the two great historic parties to remain together in one national Church,” and that any alteration of the rubrics might lead to a disruption on this side or on that, and consequently to a loss of comprehensiveness. I confess personally that when I come under the spell of Dr. Wace I become of “the division of

¹ Mr. Coventry Patmore is not alone in his contention; Mr. W. S. Lilly has put forth similar claims.

Reuben" of Churchmen in Council. But the recognition of our second leading principle restores my allegiance.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-ADJUSTMENT.—It may be thus argued: It follows from the comprehensive character of our Church—from the presence of the various parties within her borders—that both in the ways of doctrine and ritual there will arise from time to time difficulties and controversies crying out for solution and settlement. We are in such a crisis at the present time. The question is one of ritual—the interpretation of the Ornaments Rubric. And it is raised in a manner more sensational than could have been thought possible twenty years ago. A bishop is arraigned for violation of the law. And what is the method of judgment and settlement? The costly, and it would appear endless one of interpreting the disputed rubric by courts of law. It is not only Mr. Matthew Arnold's "plain man" who cannot understand the rubric. Doctors learned in law, doctors ecclesiological, archæological, historical are befogged; like Milton's angels, "they find no end in wandering mazes lost." It cannot be right that minds should be occupied, and time taken from the real business of the Church's life, in these interminable inquiries. They are assuming a place out of all proportion to their value. It comes upon us that our Church may lay itself open to that reproach which the Jewish Church *merited*, when its doctors, spending their time in endless discussions on the meaning of ancient rubrical directions, neglected "the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth."

"I see no prospect of permanent settlement," says Dean Plumtre, "except by the removal of that *damnosa hæreclitas* which is the cause of our present distress." Well, in that direction Churchmen in Council look. They do not, in their corporate capacity, presume to say so much as the Dean of Wells. But they contend for the principle of self-adjustment. They declare that we have had enough of interpretation; that it is the duty of the Church to restate and re-enact in cases where rubrical directions are ambiguous and obscure; they appeal to the twentieth Article: "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies"; they desire to hear the living voice of the living Church speaking through her representative assemblies—the ancient Houses of Convocation and the modern House of Laymen—rather than the uncertain echo of that of past centuries.

In accordance with these views the following petition has been adopted by Churchmen in Council, and will be circulated when it is thought that the subject has been sufficiently ventilated and discussed:

Whereas great difficulty is caused and injury occasioned to the Church by the wide diversity of opinion which exists as to the meaning of cer-

tain rubrics and directions in the Book of Common Prayer, we, the undersigned clergy and laity of the Church of England, most humbly and respectfully beg your grace the president and your lordships the members of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury (or York) to take the necessary steps to obtain, by the Constitutional action of Convocation, such enactments as shall make perfectly clear what shall be absolutely necessary and what shall be optional or permissive in the performance of the Services of the Church.

But it is said, and, to my mind, with convincing force, that these Houses are by no means representative, and have "no moral right to speak for the whole Church." Here, again, Dr. Wace is a powerful objector. "Reform your Houses," that is, in effect, his argument. "Make them really representative assemblies, and then, and not till then, place your rubrics in their hands."

It is not, in my opinion, an adequate answer to this objection to give that "the two Houses of Bishops and the two Houses of the Representatives of the Clergy, which constitute Convocation, have, as a matter of fact, always been entrusted by the Crown with the consideration of questions affecting the ritual of the National Church, before these decisions were finally ratified by Parliament; and that these Houses were under the same constitution as now, when, in 1662, they drew up the present edition of the rubrics."¹ That is true; but in 1662 Parliament was practically a Parliament of Churchmen, and so the laity in their Houses shared with the clergy in their Houses the responsibility of drawing up that edition of the rubrics. But now the representation of the laity by Parliament is only a *theory*, and we must look for other methods by which laymen and clergymen in combination—a full and fair representation of the whole body—may settle their differences. Not otherwise is any settlement likely to be acceptable and lasting. Already a step has been taken towards this consummation in the establishment of the Canterbury House of Laymen; and "there is every prospect of one being elected in the northern province as well."

But we move slowly. As long ago as 1874, Lord Alwyne Compton, the present Bishop of Ely, then the Prolocutor of the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury, in a paper read at the Brighton Congress, sketched as the changes demanded by the times:

First, some provision for the united action of the two Convocations.

Secondly, that a larger proportion of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury should be *elected*, and that all the clergy, or at any rate many besides the incumbents, should vote at the election of proctors.

Thirdly, that the laity should have a voice in the deliberations of Convocation.

¹ From paper issued by Churchmen in Council.

Churchmen in Council desire some such reformation. But they believe, and so it was argued by Chancellor Espin, Prolocutor of York, at their last meeting, that the quickest way to bring it about is to commit to these assemblies the settlement of this rubrical question. The settlement must take time; and during that time the Church will, in consequence of the importance of the issues she has entrusted to those bodies, awake to the need of reforming them on a thoroughly representative basis. "I believe," writes Archdeacon Sinclair, another of our members, "directly we went to work, an alteration in the system of representation would follow as a matter of course." And it is in that confidence that we call on Convocation as *at present composed*, with the lay assistance that is *at present available*, to *initiate* a settlement.

In this connection I must notice the proposed measure—lucidly and elaborately explained by Mr. Teignmouth Shore in the *Guardian* of 25th June—to facilitate Church Legislation through Parliament. It is what is known as the Bishop of London's Bill. It provides that when "the Houses of Convocation have passed any measure affecting any rubrics or directions in the Book of Common Prayer, such measure shall have legal force if, after having been approved by her Majesty in Council, and laid on the table of both Houses of Parliament for a definite time, no address shall have been presented to the Crown by Parliament on the subject."

Now, though all Churchmen shrink from the discussion of rubrical questions by the present Parliament, this proposal, which obviates such discussion, has met with much opposition. Lord Grimthorpe calls it "their crazy or traitorous scheme of getting Parliament to abdicate in favour of that clerical majority of a very small fraction of the Church of England." I must say myself that if I thought the Bill would pass this session, or next session, I would have none of it. I do not want Convocation as at present constituted to have such legislative powers as are proposed in this Bill. But I could see with equanimity this Bill, or something like it, winning its way *pari passu* with measures of Convocation reform. And I am not afraid to countenance the Bill now, because I feel quite sure that Parliament, even under a strong Conservative Government, would not pass such a measure unless the rights both of the laity and of the clerical minorities were secured and safeguarded in those assemblies to whom it is proposed this transference of power should be made. And this is, I believe, the view of Churchmen in Council.

It will thus be seen that Churchmen in Council have no cut-and-dried scheme—no panacea of their own to offer. The dealing with this *dammosa hæreditas*—the Ornaments Rubric—

the question of its alteration or abolition, the maximum and minimum of ritual to be allowed—these are topics it is premature for them to discuss, except in a purely tentative and academic way. Their full discussion and settlement must be the work of the whole Church; of representatives of *all* Churchmen in Council. Within their own body it is probable that there is the widest difference of opinion as to what ought to be done. But all agree that something ought to be done; and that it should be in the direction indicated, viz., legislative action to be taken by the whole Church, through her constituted and reformed assemblies.

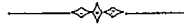
Our platform, then, is a broad one, and I think safe. One plank is the principle of comprehensiveness. The other is the principle of self-adjustment. Believing these principles to be of vital importance to the Church's life, I have been thankful to find an association of Churchmen in Council that exists for the purpose of maintaining their necessity. It was inevitable that a conciliatory movement of this character, conceived in the interests of no party, and avowedly pledged to weigh the claims of both sides, deliberative rather than combative, and with the view of the judge rather than with the aim of the advocate, should excite little popular enthusiasm, and in many powerful quarters much hearty dislike. A Falkland ingeminating "Peace, Peace!" is distasteful both to the feelings and reasonings of more fiery combatants. Of such a kind, without doubt, has been the reception of Churchmen in Council. But is not the association on this account bound to justify its existence and its policy by a prolonged career, and by such renewed activities and developments as the times may call forth? Its collapse would, in my opinion, be felt as a misfortune by a multitude of Churchmen, who are at heart in agreement with its objects, but whom a sense of difficulties which seem insuperable has withheld thus far from any active expression of sympathy. A cause which is great and growing, notwithstanding its present lack of organization and machinery, would suffer—would be put back by its fall. The very existence of such a body is an augury of peace. If Churchmen in Council do nothing more practical than bear witness to the vital necessity of principles sometimes forgotten, often misunderstood, seldom heartily embraced, they will do good work.

But, whatever the fate of this particular association, the truths to which it has rallied us must survive as potent factors in the future history of the Church.

The *principle of comprehensiveness*—variety in doctrine, variety in ritual—is the glory and the praise of the Church of England. But it ceases to be respectable if latitude degenerates into lawlessness, if variety takes its forms from individual crotchet and sectional caprice.

Hence *the principle of self-adjustment* is called for. And, remembering that as a branch of the living Church she has the power of the keys, remembering our Lord's promise that He will inform and teach her by His directing, selecting Spirit; recalling, too, her past secular activities in reforming and re-settling her affairs in still more troublous times, the Church out of very shame and agony and distress will (it is my confidence) yet find her voice and recover and use the power of self-adjustment.

CHARLES HUMPHRY MINCHIN.



ART. III.—THE SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN AS AFFECTED BY THE HIGHER EDUCATION MOVEMENT.

AT this moment, after twenty years of sowing, the advocates of the Higher Education of Women are enjoying a well-merited harvest of success. The triumphs recently won have silenced sneering critics, and almost disarmed the antagonism of opponents.

To understand the wonderful progress of the movement in England, or rather among the English-speaking race, one must look back half a century and inquire into the causes that made such an advance desirable and distinctly beneficial. As women whose lives are filled with the blessed cares and duties of home-life have little leisure for study, and are not so directly affected by the new learning, we may be pardoned if we consider it in its bearings upon the position and happiness of those of their sex whose home claims absorb only a small part of their energies, keeping in mind that what benefits even the minority must in some way react upon the rest.

The position of single women fifty years ago was more depressing and discouraging than it had been at any period since the Protestant Reformation. Before that event, convents had offered a refuge for the poverty-stricken and the desolate. Life in a convent may not have been ideally happy, and doubtless many hapless victims were forced to accept it against their will; but that the convent offered to many friendless women protection, the necessaries of life, employment and congenial society, not to speak of the halo of sanctity which surrounded such supposed self-abnegation, few will deny. Whilst we must rejoice in the clearer views of truth which have withheld from celibacy the undue honour which it had usurped at the expense of married life, we are apt to overlook the fact that a considerable section of the community lost by the change.