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THE
CHURCHMAN

JANUARY, 1904.

ART. I.—*RESPICE, ASPICE, PROSPICE.*

IN the early life of those who have reached their three score years and ten, although Newman and his immediate followers had joined the Church of Rome, the general trend of the Church was rather towards Dissent than towards Popery. Theories were broached about the interchange of pulpits between the clergy and Dissenting ministers, distinctions of doctrine were smoothed over, and there was danger of the Church forgetting to insist on those points in which its superiority to the sects consists. In the twentieth century this is all changed; the trend of the Church, so far as the younger clergy are concerned, is away from Dissent and towards Rome. This change has been brought about by various circumstances, among which are the following: (1) Some of those whose opinions coincided with Newman's were not prepared to sacrifice the position that they held in the Church of England to their views, and, instead, have made every effort to bring over the Church of England to their views. (2) When Tractarianism had run its course, there sprang from its ashes a new school, partly æsthetic, partly medievalist, to which has been given the unsuitable title of Ritualist. This school took possession of the English Church Union and other associations, and the members of these societies, encouraging one another by the sympathy given by numbers, have advocated doctrines and practices borrowed from the Medieval Church, and unknown to the Church of England since the Reformation. (3) The institution of diocesan colleges for the training of the clergy, necessary as that was after the religious and ecclesiastical character of the

Universities had been abolished, has led to a race of clergy more of the seminary type than those who had been educated and taught in the freer air of the Universities. (4) It was found that clergy, though of the new type, often devoted themselves to work in the lowest districts of our great towns, and the Bishops, knowing how little religion there is in comparison to what there ought to be, were unwilling to damp zeal by forbidding practices to which hard-working clergymen were attached. It was easier to wink and hope for the best in the future than to earn a character for unnecessary strictness in the guardianship of the fold. Accordingly, the late Archbishop, Dr. Temple, when he was Bishop of London, let it be known that, provided a man worked, he should not be exact in inquiring into what he taught or what new ceremonies he introduced. The result has been something next door to anarchy, and the Archbishop found, in his old age, that he had to suffer for the laxity which he had previously permitted, without being now able to correct the evils which had by this time grown too strong to yield to an episcopal reproof. (5) It was true that our churches had grown too cold and bare of ornament and ceremony, and some thought that this accounted for the absence of parishioners from the services, and more ceremony was therefore introduced. This was done without any ill-meaning at the first. But the ceremonies brought in were found to suggest and symbolize doctrines connected with the Mass, which were alien to the Church of England, and they led to the admission of the doctrines which they indicated. What began as an effort to do away with irreverence ended by a natural and unconscious process in a system of will-worship, which became too firmly rooted to be easily eradicated.

Owing to these and similar causes the Church has come into a very perilous state in the beginning of the twentieth century. For the first time in the later English Church there exists an organized body of men whose purpose it is to overthrow the doctrines of the Church and to restore those that were held in it previous to the Reformation. They have stamped upon their flag a demand for the reintroduction of six ceremonies, all of which are medieval, none of them primitive. These are: (1) The use of the ecclesiastical vestments, the shape of which was invented about the year 800 by the ecclesiastics and courtiers of the Emperor Charlemagne. (2) The eastward position at the celebration of the Holy Communion, which was unknown in France till the ninth century, in Spain and North Italy till the eleventh century. (3) The use of lights in the daytime, which Bishop Andrewe has declared "altogether to be a Pagan custom."

(4) Incense, the material use of which the early Christians speak of with the utmost contempt. (5) Wafer bread, made without leaven, introduced in the West in the tenth century, but never used in the East. (6) The mixed cup, when water is added to the wine, a thing that was never ceremonially done in the early Church, although diluted wine was used. But these six points are only insisted upon as a means of introducing doctrine.

The central tenet of the school is the Objective Presence of Christ in the elements of bread and wine, and following upon that, the doctrine of the Mass. The point on which the English Reformation turned was the substitution of the Communion for the Mass; and if the Mass could once more be substituted for the Communion, the Reformation would in fact be abolished. Seeing that this was the purpose of a considerable number of clergy and laity, and finding that there were societies that made it their chief object to bring about such a result, those who loved the Church of England as she had been, with whatever defects, for the last four centuries determined that it was necessary to take defensive measures—measures which they would not have thought it in the least necessary to adopt in the past generation. Consequently, societies which have a definitely Protestant tendency were strengthened by unexpected recruits, and a new society was established by Lady Wimborne named “The Ladies’ League,” now called “The Church of England League,” with the object of maintaining or recovering plain Church of England teaching and practices. This league has, undoubtedly, done much good, the more that it avoids extravagance and represents the solid sense of English men and women resolved on the one side not to curtail legitimate liberty, nor on the other to condone excesses or novel approximations to the Church of Rome.

The earlier years of the twentieth century will no doubt be disturbed by the ritual controversy, but behind it there looms another controversy of more serious import, the shadow of which is already beginning to overspread the Church. The Rationalistic criticism of Scripture, which has had its home for a long time in Germany, has been introduced into England by Professor Cheyne and Professor Driver. It is a characteristic of Eastern writings, instead of following out a subject in logical sequence, to proceed some way with it, and then to go back, and as though recommencing at a new point to go over the same ground again with some differences of expression. If we compare the style of St. Paul and St. John in their Epistles we shall see the distinction between the Western and Eastern methods. Eastern poetry, we know, takes the form of parallelisms, and Eastern prose partakes of the same nature.

This peculiarity has led Westerns to believe that more than one writer has been concerned in the composition of a treatise or book, and has induced them to make an attempt to attribute different parts to different writers. Further, ancient writers, like modern compilers, have been in the custom of making use of previously existing documents, and the difference in style thus brought about can be readily used as an argument for a multiplicity of authors. These two causes led the French physician Astruc, and after him a school of German neologians, to divide each of the books of the Bible into separate documents or narratives composed at different times and contributed by various persons. These theories have culminated in the hypothesis that our present Bible was compiled at Babylon, during the Babylonish captivity, by an unknown student who had gathered together in his library seven existing books, three of them having been composed some four hundred years before the time of the compiler, and the remainder written by his contemporaries. The later authorship thus attributed to the Scriptures has given a legendary character to them, and their inspiration as having been produced under Divine guidance is practically denied.

With the authority and authenticity of Scripture being weakened or abolished, it becomes easy for men to choose out of its contents what they will or what they will not believe. Already two essential doctrines of the creed of Christendom are being questioned, the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, and if these, how much more other doctrines! The wheel seems almost to have gone full circle, and we appear likely to be brought back to the state in which the Church was at the end of the eighteenth century, before the Wesleyan, the Evangelical, and the Tractarian movements had taken place, with this difference—that there will exist a powerful minority, carried away by a backstream in the direction of Rome (answering in a way to the later Nonjurists) and that Churchmen will not be able to appeal to the firm belief which was formerly entertained by the man in the street in the absolute truth and authority of God's written Word, on which an abiding slur will have been cast by the speculations of the Rationalistic Critical School. But we must remember that what comes in the future is not a thing fixed by mechanical or necessary laws. The future is the result of the present. It will depend, therefore, on the faithfulness and energy of the Churchmen of this generation what will be the religious state of England in the next, and what will be the fate of the English Church for all time. Will her light grow dimmer, or will it become more bright? Will she be the stay, of a mighty consolidated empire, and through her

harmony of truth and order a model to other parts of the Church Catholic, or will she be swept away into the lumber-room as an institution that has betrayed its trust and is no longer of any use in the world ?

F. MEYRICK.

ART. II.—THE SUPREME AUTHORITY TO THE
CONSCIENCE, THE STATE, AND THE CHURCH.

LET us begin with the conscience. Is there a supreme authority to which the human conscience owes deference and submission ?

If it be answered that there is such an authority, and that it is the will of God, I do not see how any Christian can refuse concurrence to this statement. But more commonly some other authority is assumed to have a right to dictate to the conscience. The Word of God, in the sense of the volume of Holy Scripture, has been held to be the authority which the human conscience is bound to consult and to obey. A Book, according to this view, has been provided which has the exceptional character of being entirely true and containing no error. This being so, what has the human conscience to do but to study this Book and to follow its dictates ? The Bible, it is contended, is the infallible guide for man's thought and belief and conduct, and therefore it is the ultimate and supreme authority to the conscience. There is another view which values the Bible very highly, but places above it the Church, the keeper of the Bible, with an infallible voice to dictate belief and conduct. Of these two views, the former places the Bible in the highest place, and would allow a subordinate and dependent right of command to the Church ; the latter places the Church in the highest place, but assumes that the Church will reverently interpret and apply the Bible. There is a third view, still more common, which regards the conscience as an authority to itself, and an authority which to the right-minded man is absolutely supreme. But I do not see how those who hold any one of these three views can decline to admit that the will of God is to the human conscience an authority superior to the Bible, the Church, or the conscience itself.

To say, "I must obey my conscience," sounds like a true and lofty morality. But I would urge that all the truth of this confession, and much more, is contained in the saying, "I must obey the will of God." The conscience in one who puts it under the will of God becomes an ear rather than a