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THE CHURCHMAN.

JUNE, 1907.

The Month.

What is
Truth?

ORDINARY people must have been greatly puzzled by some ecclesiastical events of the past month. On two successive evenings the Church House has been used for the advocacy of two systems, each professing to belong to the Church of England, and yet characterized by doctrines and practices which are diametrically opposed to each other. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided at one of these meetings, which was on behalf of the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield; and though we are grateful to His Grace for his frank words about some of the Mirfield manuals, we cannot think that his utterances are at all adequate to the facts of the case. To say, for instance, that in these publications "he thought he could find some few expressions, to say the least, really inconsistent with any reasonable view of the Church of England position," and that "that was, perhaps, not wonderful," is certainly puzzling to those who have studied these publications with great care. The extracts given in the *Layman*, with other similar ones that could have been added, are hardly to be described in the qualified terms used by the Archbishop. We wish to speak with profoundest respect, but we cannot help expressing our keen regret that the Archbishop should have seen fit at the present juncture to countenance the work done at Mirfield. It is difficult to reconcile this with the "drastic action" promised by His Grace shortly after his accession to his present office, to say

nothing of the strong language of the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The very next evening the Dean of Canterbury spoke in the same building on behalf of the National Church League, and gave expression to what many Moderate Churchmen are feeling when he spoke as follows :

“The Society as such had no quarrel with the historic High Church school. What they existed to oppose was the Romanizing of the Church of England. The Royal Commission had declared that there was a line of deep cleavage between the Churches of Rome and England. Some wanted to obliterate that vital fact ; the League stood for maintaining it. He welcomed the very remarkable speech by the Bishop of St. Albans, reported in the *Times* that day. If other Bishops declared in equally imperative language that practices contrary to the Church’s teaching must cease, they would cease, without prosecutions. Other evidence as to confession had been furnished by a recent correspondence in the *Times*. Yet the Bishop of Stepney had said he was not aware that anything had been done that was not natural in the circumstances. If a Bishop could publicly defend such conduct, things had gone very near to becoming an outrage. The high motives of such clergy did not alter the fact that the practice they advocated was essentially mischievous. The founder and chief supporter of the Community of the Resurrection was the Bishop of Birmingham. If a community supported by a Bishop taught doctrine that the Archbishop had to denounce as inconsistent with any reasonable view of the Church’s teaching, was it not a duty to organize resistance ? The danger had till lately been serious ; it was now acute. The attempt to revise the Ornaments Rubric was clearly being made in order to admit some such Eucharistic vestment as would satisfy those who were introducing the old vestments. He had been willing to make some concessions ; he was not pledged against every change in the Prayer-Book ; but such a concession as this would be giving up the independent Protestant position of the Church of England. With great grief, but in all seriousness, he had to say that, if such a concession were made, a great many laity and clergy could no longer feel the Church of England to be their spiritual home. What action that might involve he hesitated and dreaded to think of. Were they unreasonable in asking those who desired such a change not to put their fellow-Churchmen in such a dilemma ?”

We have quoted these words in full because of their serious import. Coming from such a man as Dean Wace, they are in the highest degree weighty and significant, and we are confident that they represent the feeling of a large body of loyal and devoted Churchmen who are in no sense narrow and obscurantist. The line of cleavage is becoming wider and wider, and what the end is to be it is not very difficult to prophesy.

During the past month there has been not a little discussion on questions connected with the Report of the Royal Commission. The Canterbury House of Laymen and the London Diocesan Conference have passed different resolutions with reference to the Letters of Business. In the latter gathering Lord Halifax and Prebendary Webb-Peploe united (though, of course, from different points of view) to oppose any attempt to revise the Ornaments Rubric, on the ground that it would further disturb the peace of the Church. In the course of a letter to the *Record* commenting on this alliance of Lord Halifax and the Prebendary, Mr. Eugene Stock writes as follows :

“The sight of Lord Halifax and the doughty Evangelical leader in effusive alliance so captivated the Conference, that no one had the courage to point out the hollowness of the alliance. . . . I deplore the alliance between the Evangelicals and Lord Halifax. I never object to common action by parties that differ, if that common action is for a good object, which can best be attained in that way. But in this case the object of Lord Halifax is for his party to be let alone to do what they like. That is not an object to attain which I am willing to take any action, common or otherwise. Of course, it is not Prebendary Webb-Peploe’s object, but it will be the result of the alliance. . . . The beautiful unity so earnestly pleaded for by my honoured friend is illusory.”

We commend these words to all who think that this common action between men holding opposite opinions is likely to prove satisfactory. We ourselves would oppose any “elasticity” which tends in the direction of the permissive use of vestments that are significant of Roman doctrine, though we would welcome heartily any “elasticity” that would enable our Church to adapt her worship and work more thoroughly to present-day needs. But unity can only rest on truth, and any attempt to unite extreme Anglicans and Evangelical Churchmen on a subject of this kind is foredoomed to failure. With Mr. Eugene Stock, we deplore any such alliance, for the simple reason that the object of the two parties is entirely different. Meanwhile, as Mr. Stock very truly says :

“Two thousand clergymen are now using the vestments, believing (rightly or wrongly) that the Prayer-Book requires it, and no one ventures

to prosecute any one of them. How hollow, then, is the cry 'We will never tolerate the vestments!' No wonder Lord Halifax is content."

The Bishop of Birmingham, in his addresses on
 The Basis of our Church. the New Theology, to which reference was made in these columns last month, said that the Church of England stood in a position of great advantage in regard to these controversies :

"They were in a position of great advantage because they stood so simply upon the Creeds, on the ancient structure of the Church, and on the Canon of Scripture—the three great elements on which the Church had stood from the first. This position gave them a great advantage over the more fragmentary and sectional parts of Christianity in the Nonconformist denominations. They stood on something which was central, and they were in unbroken continuity with the ancient Church."

We believe as heartily as the Bishop does in the great advantage of the Church of England, though we cannot accept his account of that position as the true one. It will be seen that he apparently co-ordinates the Creeds, the Church, and Scripture (this is the Bishop's order) as the threefold basis of the Church of England. The first question that arises is how this agrees with Article VIII., which accepts the Creeds, not because of their antiquity or universal use, but because of their agreement with Scripture. Does not such a statement imply that Scripture is fundamental? Again, it is difficult to reconcile the Bishop's statement about the Church with Article XX., which clearly subjects the Church to Scripture in all essential matters of faith and practice. Surely this, again, clearly teaches that Scripture is supreme, and, to use the Bishop's own phrase at the Bristol Church Congress, that "Scripture is the final testing-ground of doctrine." If once we co-ordinate Scripture, the Church, and the Creeds, it will be impossible logically to stop short of the Roman Catholic position, as Dom Chapman, in his reply to Bishop Gore on the Roman claims, showed with, in our judgment, absolutely convincing force. The position of the Church of England, as laid down at the Reformation, was an assertion of the supremacy of Holy Scripture, and an entire refusal to co-ordinate the Church and the Creeds with it. It is

only in the insistence on this position that safety lies for both Church and theology. In our view Bishop Gore's statement of the position of the Church of England is inaccurate both in the light of the Reformation and also in the face of plain statements of the Prayer-Book and Articles.

The Laity
of the
Church. The Bishop of Birmingham went on to speak of the advantage of the Church of England in contrast to the Church of Rome, which had encumbered itself with a number of dogmas like the Immaculate Conception. He then added—

“To be without encumbrances of that kind gave them a great freedom and advantage. The Church of England in effect said to the laity, ‘Make use of my services, join in my worship at your own discretion.’ It laid on them no specific requirements. He hoped it would always continue to possess that excellence.”

We hope the Bishop's promised book on this subject will show that the above report is incorrect, for surely it is not true that our Church insists “no specific requirements” on its lay members. Is not the Apostles' Creed a very “specific requirement”? and does not the teaching associated with all Confirmation preparation involve a good number of “specific requirements”? The view that the laity have no “specific requirements” imposed on them, and yet that the clergy must show honest allegiance to the fundamental Creeds, is inaccurate, and in danger of being misleading. We have been struck with the likeness of this position to that of the medieval Church as pictured in the new and valuable work on the Reformation by Professor Lindsay :

“The medieval Church always regarded itself, and taught men to look to it, as a religious community which came logically and really before the individual believer. It presented itself to men as a great society founded on a dogmatic tradition, possessing the Sacraments, and governed by an officially holy caste. The pious layman of the Middle Ages found himself within it as he might have done within one of its great cathedrals. The dogmatic tradition did not trouble him much, nor did the worldliness and insincerity often manifested by its official guardians. What they required of him was implicit faith, which really meant a decorous external obedience. That once

rendered, he was comparatively free to worship within what was for him a great house of prayer" (vol. ii., p. 480).

It is obvious that this is not the Prayer-Book idea of the position of the laity in the Church of England, and yet it will be seen that it very largely corresponds with the Bishop of Birmingham's description of the relative position of clergy and laity in the Church to-day. It was against this view that the Reformation made its protest in teaching that is enshrined in our Prayer-Book and Articles. There is scarcely a doctrine more distinctive of the Reformation than the Reformer's view of the Christian Church as compared and contrasted with the view of the Church which was held by the Roman Communion in the Middle Ages.

The Church
and
Economics.

The Report of the Committee of the Canterbury Convocation on the subject of "The Moral Witness of the Church on Economic Subjects" is a valuable document, which is worthy of the careful attention of all Church-people. It was presented to the Upper House of Convocation by the Bishop of Birmingham in a weighty and valuable speech. The Report endeavours to restate the Christian principles of society, and to emphasize the duty of the Christian as an individual and as a citizen. The Report also dwells upon the importance of Christians endeavouring to press upon society the need for readiness to bear public burdens. The Bishop of Birmingham, in presenting the Report, pleaded that the present opportunity for exercising moral influence should be utilized to the full by the Church. He said that—

"The opportunity was now afforded for increased energy in the matter by rising trade in many parts of the country. There was a stirring of the public conscience, and he felt that if the Church could throw itself at the present time with something like unanimity into the pressing of these great moral considerations upon the conscience of the community, it might do a work which would not only in itself be the work of the Christian Church, but would also serve more than anything else to bring together and consolidate the Christian forces of the country into something like real unity both inside and outside their own communion."

The Report is to be published by the S.P.C.K., and should be pondered earnestly by all Churchmen. We hope that the speeches and the resolutions of the Bishops in Convocation will be included in the publication. Scarcely any duty can be much more pressing than the resolute and constant application of the great principles of the Gospel to the various social and economic problems of our day.

The recent celebration of the Newton-Cowper
 Centenary has called renewed attention to the great
 principles of eighteenth-century evangelicalism which
 produced such remarkable results in the Church of that day.

John
 Newton. In a characteristic and beautiful sermon by the Bishop of Durham the preacher spoke of John Newton being visited very near the end of his life by William Jay, of Bath, and of the old warrior's fine remark: "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things—that I am a great sinner; that Christ is a great Saviour." The Bishop's comment on these words has special point at the present moment, when we hear so much of a New Theology:

"In those words we have, in just its profoundest elements, the Christian message, authentic, unique, divine. There we have man, in a spiritual disorder, whose greatness is measured only by the glory for which he was created. And there we have the sublime antithesis and antidote to man's mortal need. Christ fills the vast and sombre sphere of the soul's ill with the effulgence of His grace, His love, Himself; a Saviour great with an immeasurable 'pre-eminence in all things,' but above all in this, that 'He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.'"

This is the Old Theology which is ever new—old in its unchanging reality, new in its ever fresh application and realization. It is this that made our Church in the sixteenth century, revived it in the eighteenth century, and that alone can keep it pure, true, strong, and growing in the twentieth century.

