

duty of impressing upon men the conviction that Christianity means life (present life in all its fulness, as well as future life in all its glory), that a Christian is not primarily a man who abstains, but a man who believes and acts—this is one of the most important and urgent of the tasks which have been committed to the Church of our time.



What is the Church ?

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WHAT is the Church? It is one of the learned professions. It consists of three orders—Bishops, Rectors or Vicars, and curates—constituting together the superior and inferior clergy. This is hardly an exaggerated form of the answer which would have been given not so long ago by those who were in the habit of using the current phrase, “going into the Church.” The Church was regarded simply as synonymous with the clergy.

The present writer remembers hearing Bishop Wilberforce, of Oxford, say that whenever a candidate for Orders told him he was “going into the Church,” he always asked him to be sure to let him know the date fixed for his baptism.

The fact that the laity are an integral part of the Church seems to have been slowly arrived at. The corresponding fact that they are there not simply to be legislated for, but that they are entitled to a voice and vote in its legislature, is not yet sufficiently recognized. That it will have to be recognized universally if the Church is to maintain its hold on the laity, and prevent the drifting away of at all events the more educated and thoughtful members of it, is what, in the present paper, it is proposed to point out.

In the “Life of Archbishop Benson” (chap. i., p. 560) there is a suggestive letter from Professor Hort, in which he notes the present danger. He says: “The convulsions of our English

Church itself, grievous as they are, seem to be as nothing beside the danger of its calm and unobtrusive alienation in thought and spirit from the great silent multitude of Englishmen, and again, of alienation from fact and the love of fact." This seems a natural result of the attempt still being made to capture the Church in the interests of a party.

All history—Church history in particular—bears witness to the danger of allowing the clergy by themselves to legislate for the Church. But history seems, for some men, to be written in vain. No assembly, however, in which the lay element is not directly represented, call it by what venerable name you will, can be safely intrusted to lay down laws for the Church. The old theory was that, by an imagined Divine right, it rested with the Bishops alone to impose their own ideas on the whole Church. Well, we know the result of this. It was candidly confessed by one of themselves. The censure which Gregory of Nazianzus passed on Church Councils consisting only of clergy is worth considering. It may not be amiss to call attention to it here. It forms part of his letter to Procopius, in which he states his reason for declining to attend a certain Council at Constantinople: "If the truth must be told, I feel inclined to shun every gathering of Bishops, for I have seen no good come of any Synod—no diminution of evils, but rather an increase of them."¹

Subsequently, however, the Bishops found it impossible to exclude Presbyters altogether from their counsels. But still the idea remained, and in some quarters remains to this day, that a Synod of the Church means simply an assembly of the clergy, who alone are to decide what the laity are to believe and do. These latter are to obey laws which they have had no share or voice in making.

When the late Bishop Moberly started the Salisbury Synod, composed of both clergy and representative laymen, great pressure was brought to bear upon him by certain persons to

¹ Ἐχω μὲν οὕτως, εἰ δεῖ τἄλληθὲς γράφειν, ὥστε πάντα σύλλογον φεύγειν ἐπισκόπων, ὅτι μηδεμίας συνόδου τέλος εἶδον χρηστὸν μηδὲ λύσιν κακῶν μάλλον ἐσχηκίας, ἢ προσθήκην ("Ed. Par.," 1630, tom. i., p. 814).

change the name to Council or Conference. The Bishop, however, stuck to the name. He maintained it was a correct one. He regarded elected laymen as assessors with the clergy. His words are worth remembering. In answer to the objection that such a course would be against the custom of the Church, he said: "As far as regards the practice of the early mediæval Church, I cannot deny the allegation, but I venture to assert that it is otherwise with the principles of the best ages. And I further venture to say that the gradual usurpation by the clergy of the entire government of the Church, going on and becoming complete in the proclamation of the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome, was the early germ which has led to the gradually developed perfection of the Roman corruption of the Church. We cannot go back to mediæval times, but must look to the future. No one can imagine that the clergy are ever again to become the sole rulers of the Universal Church. Theory forbid it. History is full of warnings against it." Bishop Moberly, in his Bampton Lecture, says also: "The real and ultimate possessor of all spiritual power and privilege under Christ is the Church itself—the Church entire; not Apostles, not Bishops, not clergy alone, but the entire body of Christ, comprising Apostles, Bishops, clergy, and lay-people." This principle has been put in practice in some of our colonial Churches (see "Life of Bishop Selwyn," pp. 115, 117, 119, 208, 210).

When it is objected that, anciently, decrees were promulgated by the Bishops, it must be remembered that, anciently, the Bishops were elected by the laity, and so, in some sense, might be regarded as representative of the laity. But even Cyprian we find firmly asserting his resolve, from the very beginning of his episcopate, to do nothing of his own private judgment without the counsel of the clergy and the consent of the laity.¹

¹ "Quando a primordio Episcopatus mei statuerim, nihil sine consilio vestro, et sine consensu plebis, mea privatim sententia gerere" (Ep. v., "Presbyteris et Diaconis," "Ed. Par.," 1666). So in Ep. xxvi.: "Consultis omnibus Episcopis, Presbyteris, Diaconibus [*sic in orig.*], confessoribus, et

The words of the immortal author of the "Ecclesiastical Polity" (VIII., chap. vi., p. 8) may still have weight with those who have not abandoned themselves to a baseless theory: "Till it be proved that some special law of Christ hath for ever annexed unto the clergy alone the power to make ecclesiastical laws, we are to hold it a thing most consonant with equity and reason that no ecclesiastical law be made in a Christian commonwealth without consent, as well of the laity as of the clergy."

Even Newman, whose authority one would think might have some weight with those who take the mediæval rather than the real primitive Church for their pattern, has said: "I think certainly that it—*ecclesia docens*—is more happy when she has such enthusiastic partisans about her . . . than when she cuts off the faithful from the study of her Divine doctrines . . . and requires from them a *fides implicita* in her word, which in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition." ("On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine." *Rambler*, vol. i., new series, p. 230.)

The Bishop of Edinburgh, who has made a special study of the question, turns the tables on those who, while admitting presbyters, would exclude laymen from the Councils of the Church, by asking: "What ancient precedent have we for the admission of *priests* to a decisive vote in an Ecclesiastical Synod?" So the argument from antiquity falls to the ground; and "freedom slowly broadens down, from precedent to precedent."

We have lately inaugurated here, in Scotland, a Consultative Council, in which the laity are at last represented. It is too early to judge how it works; but some of us fear that the compromise arrived at, viz., that no subject may be brought forward for discussion without the consent of the Episcopal Synod—*i.e.*, the College of Bishops—who may thus burk inquiry at the outset, may to some extent neutralize its usefulness.

The revival of the preposterous claim of a clerical despotism,

ipsis stantibus Laicis." And again (Ep. xxviii.): "Cui rei non potui me solum judicem dare . . . non tantum cum collegis meis, sed et cum plebe ipsa universa." So in that first Synod described in Acts xv. 22, 23.

which would place all legislative action in the hands of the Bishops, or even of the Bishops with the rest of the clergy, leaving to the laity the attitude of simple submission, seems to have been one of the fruits of what is called "the Oxford Movement." We wish to be fair to the remarkable men who were the leaders in that movement. We will not condemn them wholesale. No candid person will deny that there have been some general gains to the Church from their studies and researches. There is "a soul of goodness" even in things evil. Nor can it be denied that there were deficiencies among those who claimed to be "the Evangelical party" to which their censurers could unanswerably point. This will be admitted by all but those who are blinded by theological partisanship. Many of those who were, with good reason, opposed to the Oxford Movement have profited by the amount of truth it contained. The marked improvement in churches and services, the general attempt to realize a more or less neglected ideal, bears witness to this. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there has grown up a class of clergy who are carrying out the principles of those whom they profess to be their guides to an extent, or in a manner, which would startle some of those guides themselves. Hence the extreme development of ritual, the lawlessness which masquerades under the misleading name of Catholic customs, the sustained effort to exclude the laity from their fair share in the government of the Church.

Many of the old Tractarians, as they were called, came from Evangelical homes. With all their errors they were learned and devout men. Ritual, as such, had small attraction for them. Can the same be said of those who claim to be their followers? A generation of ecclesiastics is now being sent out from some of our theological colleges who are all of one type, who have been trained up from the first on what is called the Sacramental system,¹ who seem scarcely aware that there is any other worth

¹ "The theological colleges, presided over, for the most part, by very High Churchmen, are rapidly turning out a number of young *seminary priests*, all moulded on the same pattern, set up with about the same amount and

considering. They have not had, as their leaders of a former generation, at least another training to begin with. They have never breathed any other atmosphere.¹ They have had no experience of "an ampler ether, a diviner air." And they seem to have no misgiving as to their position. What is it to them if their manuals and little books of devotion go beyond the Prayer-Book? It is easy to have the "Priests' Prayer-Book," or some other compilation, beside it on the Holy Table to supply its alleged deficiencies. They even venture to take to task those whom it is to be supposed they would at least have listened to. In Archbishop Benson's "Life" (chap. ii., p. 353), there is an amusing instance of this. The Lincoln case produced a crop of silly protests. People were pestered with requests to sign a remonstrance. The Archbishop notes in his diary: "The first people were the students of the Theological College at —, who expressed their regret that the Archbishop should not have adopted a course more consonant with the principles of Church history. I ordained four of those little gentlemen at Advent, and their knowledge of all the rest of Church history has yet to be acquired." We can hardly suppose that these youths wrote *proprio motu*. Their protest must have been inspired by their teachers, who ought to have known better, or it must have been the result of the one-sided teaching to which they had been subjected.

No wonder we hear the perplexed Archbishop exclaiming ("Life," chap. ii., p. 243): "Full tilt we go to alienate all the laity we can." Elsewhere (p. 538) he speaks of pretensions which "the well-read and experienced layman cannot and will not stand." We need not, therefore, be surprised at the opposition of extremists to the admission of the laity into the Synods of the Church, or that a few ecclesiastically-minded laymen have

kind of reading, and using the same party shibboleths. . . . All this bodes a rapid growth of young, hot-headed, and ignorant sacerdotalism, to be followed ultimately by sceptical reaction" (Archbishop Magee, "Life," ii. 60).

¹ A sentence or two is taken here from an article entitled "Via Media," contributed by the present writer some years ago to the *National Review*, which the Editor kindly allows him to reproduce.

allowed themselves to be persuaded that their exclusion is consonant with ancient and immutable custom, as binding as any law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not.

We have but to look at the advertisements in some of the clerical newspapers to note the difference between the modern ecclesiastic and the old historic High Churchman. "Assistant Priest" takes the place of "Assistant Curate." The advertiser signs himself "Catholic." We know what that means. For "Catholic" we might read "mediæval." "The Holy Sacrifice will be offered" for this or that purpose. We can hardly imagine Bishop Andrewes or, indeed, any of the great Caroline divines, or even their later successors, using language of the kind.

The Church, then, in its legislative capacity consists of clergy and faithful laity. Neither can do without the other. To use a Scriptural analogy—these two, in a spiritual sense, are one; and what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.



Why are Daily Services a Failure ?

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THE justice of the question may possibly be disputed. "Daily Services a failure!" exclaims a reader of this paper. "They are nothing of the kind. To the clergy in this parish they are of the utmost value, as securing a time for daily meditation and worship amid the distracting duties of parochial life, while several of our lay people also show their appreciation by constant attendance. And if even only one or two come to form a congregation, who can estimate the benefit for these one or two souls? Or, indeed, if none of the laity come at all, do not they value the fact that their parish priest is known to be daily interceding for them before the Throne of Grace?"