

THE CHURCHMAN

February, 1919.

THE MONTH.

The Memorial.

THE Memorial promoted by nine bishops as a protest against the proposed changes in the Service of Holy Communion has been most numerous and influentially signed. Upwards of one hundred thousand lay signatures have been obtained as well as those of three thousand clergy. The number of Diocesan Bishops whose names it bears will soon be increased to ten, for within the last few weeks one of the signatories, the Rev. Canon Pearce, of Westminster Abbey, has been appointed Bishop of Worcester. It was originally intended that the memorial should be presented to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York long before this, but the dissolution of Convocation, following upon that of Parliament, necessitated a postponement. It is expected, however, that the presentation to the Primates will not be much longer deferred. It is yet uncertain to what extent the election of new Convocations will affect the general issue of Prayer Book Revision : it ought to tell heavily in favour of those who, while fully prepared to acquiesce in a reasonable orderly and loyal adaptation of the Prayer Book to the needs of to-day, are prepared to resist to the utmost any and every attempt to alter the doctrinal balance of the Church of England. This is a point upon which Evangelical Churchmen have insisted again and again, and it was very emphatically insisted upon by the speakers at the National Church League's Meeting at the Church House on Monday, January 13.

N.C.L. Meeting.

The meeting convened by the National Church League for the evening preceding the Islington Clerical Meeting is always one of great importance, and this year it was assuredly no exception to the general rule. The attendance was large, and was composed principally of representative clergy. The subject set down for consideration was " The Proposed

Changes in the Communion Service," and the speakers took occasion to express their deep regret that a subject of such acute controversy should have been thrust upon the Church at this juncture in our national life. Thus, Sir Edward Clarke, who presided, pointed out that these proposals were making deeper and deeper the divisions between Churchmen. "He was quite sure that the proposals could not be carried into effect, for, whatever happened elsewhere they would have to be submitted to the Houses of Laymen, who would have no tampering with the service, and would not submit to any mischievous suggestions of alternative services for optional use. He hoped that this element of discord would be withdrawn." So, too, Dr. Guy Warman, Vicar of Bradford. He spoke of the challenge of the Evangelisation Report and said:—

It was a pernicious thing that the response to that challenge should have been interfered with by the resuscitation of a controversy which many of them thought to be dead and buried three years ago. The presentation of the Gospel to the people was an even more important thing than the present controversy, but at the same time they could not do their duty with regard to the more important thing until they had got the less important out of the way. He himself was a whole-hearted Prayer Book revisionist. But he was quite clear that Prayer Book revision must not be made at the expense of tampering with the essential doctrines of the Church. Both those who supported and those who opposed the new proposals did so on the ground of doctrinal significance, save for a very few who preferred the altered order for archæological or æsthetic reasons. The Bishops of the Northern Province had not yet made up their minds, or at any rate had not expressed them, and when they did express them they would probably save the Bishops of the Southern Province from having anything further to say.

Finally the Dean of Canterbury stated the position with all his customary clearness and force. He said:—

The proposals had at least the advantage of showing beyond all doubt what the ritualistic party meant. It was clear now to everybody that they intended nothing less than the Romanisation of the Prayer Book. It might be that this particular alteration was compatible with the holding of Protestant doctrines. But there was no question at all now as to the meaning behind this alteration. It was one thing to accept a form of words which had come down with a comparatively neutral meaning and another to alter the existing canon of the Church in a distinctly Roman direction. A writer in the *Church Times* had recently stated quite boldly that the ritualistic party were now in the majority, and intended no longer to plead for toleration, but to take the offensive. It was incumbent upon those who would resist these proposals to show—what recent discoveries tended to demonstrate—that the present canon of consecration of Holy Communion was more primitive than the Roman. In point of fact, the English reformers, with a far deeper learning than many gave them credit for, penetrated through the mists of ancient history and put into the Prayer Book perhaps the most primitive form of consecration that ever existed. The proposals of the ritualistic party were

not merely anti-Protestant, but anti-English. If the party which was now dominant in the Church could obtain its way, there would be a great gulf created between the Church of England of the present time and the Church, not merely of the early reformers, but of Beveridge, of Pearson, of Bull, and of Laud, Jewel, and Hooker—that century and a half which produced what he might venture to call a true English religion.

In face of these facts it is clear that loyal Churchmen can make no compromise on the proposals in question.

The Bishops seem really determined to make a stand at last. They have yielded so long and so often to the pressure of the extreme "Catholic" School that one almost despaired of their ever doing anything to stem the onward rush of Romanism in the Church of England. The episcopal "line" seems to be drawn at the Service of Benediction with the Sacrament! In some dioceses Reservation of the Sacrament for the purpose of communicating the sick is allowed; in others it is even permitted to pay visits to the Sacrament and say prayers before it; but no bishop has yet sanctioned "Benediction," although it is quite impossible to say what effect a little further pressure on the part of the extreme clergy may have. They may break through the "line" at its weakest spot. That time, however, is not yet, and we will not anticipate trouble. For the present "Benediction" is forbidden—even in the diocese of London. It is not clear, however, to what extent the episcopal prohibition is faithfully observed. In one diocese—Birmingham—it is being openly and flagrantly defied by a prominent clergyman, who has expressed his determination to continue the practice and not to budge "for the whole bench of bishops." It is too early yet to say whether the Bishop of Birmingham will demand obedience and see that he gets it, or, whether, following the more ordinary episcopal example, he will be content with merely putting the church under discipline—which usually means that the church will not be visited by the Bishop or receive any diocesan grants. Now, if the Bishops really mean to make an effective stand they will have to do something more than this. Past experience has shown that such "discipline" is regarded very lightly by offending clergy, and there are not wanting instances where, after a time, the Bishop—not the offender—has grown tired of the isolation and has gradually withdrawn the ban. This is very bad for all concerned. It is bad for the Bishop—it weakens his

authority ; it is bad for the offender—he proves that if he can only hold out long enough the Bishop will yield ; it is bad for the parish—it creates the impression that the Vicar is right after all ; it is bad for the Church—it establishes the fact that Bishops will not rule and that clergy need not obey. In the case of a thoroughly disloyal and disobedient clergyman there is only one thing to be done—he should be proceeded against according to law. So long as the Bishops decline to fulfil this very obvious duty, so long will they be disobeyed and defied.

The service of Benediction with the Sacrament is
 What is Benediction? so foreign to the Church of England system that a large number of people have no idea of what it really consists.

It is essentially Roman in its construction and suggestion, and whenever it is used the service as set out in the Roman Missal is more or less closely followed. Slight variations there may be, but in substance the service is essentially the same. Only one such service was reported to the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, but the details of it, as given by the witness, show so clearly the character and intention of the service that we venture to quote the following passage from the *Minutes of Evidence* :—

Evensong was sung at 7.30 p.m., at which a sermon was preached by one of the curates, in which he insisted upon the absolute identity of the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrifice of Calvary. They were, he said, one and the same thing, and in this fact was to be found the answer to all objections urged against the Sacrifice of the Mass. The congregation, which at the beginning of Evensong was very small, had by this time reached a fair number, and it seemed evident by the way people kept coming in that another service was to follow. After the collection of the offertory a priest wearing a magnificent cope and escorted by two acolytes carrying aloft two portable lights, and by the thurifer and incense boat bearer, came rapidly from the vestry and passed into the little chapel on the south side of the chancel, where the Sacrament is reserved in a tabernacle on or above the altar. The congregation hurried to the chapel, which, however, does not accommodate more than about fifteen or twenty persons. The remainder of the congregation knelt round the entrance to the chapel and in the south aisle. The altar was a blaze of light, all the candles having been lighted. The priest knelt in front of the tabernacle with an acolyte on either side of him, while immediately behind him knelt the thurifer who kept the censer swinging throughout the service with the result that clouds of incense filled the neighbourhood of the altar. The Roman Missal provides that at the service of the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament the priest shall open the tabernacle and cense the Sacrament. At St. — the tabernacle was not opened, but in every other respect the service was substantially the same as that provided in the Roman book for that service. The hymn, " O Saving Victim," as suggested in the Roman Missal, was sung, after which the Litany of the Holy Ghost was sung. This in turn was followed by the singing of the hymn, " Bow we, then, in veneration," also

in the Roman book, and the people made a profound obeisance in the earlier part of the verse, as provided in the Roman book. Afterwards some versicles were said, followed by a prayer beseeching God to grant us so to venerate these sacred mysteries that we may ever feel within us the fruit of redemption. Some more versicles followed, and the Benediction brought this service to a close. With the exception above stated, the proceedings were a close imitation of the Roman ceremonial.

“A Very Serious Cleavage.” It was probably the knowledge of the trouble with the Birmingham Benediction case that led the Bishop of that diocese to write as he did in his January letter to his people. He had just come back from a visit to America:—

I return to find that there has been some ferment even in Episcopal circles, and I see that we may be nearing a very serious cleavage in our ranks, dangerous at all times, but most of all just when we ought to be united in our efforts for the home-coming soldier. We shall lose him, not only for the Church but for Christ, Who is greater than any earthly expression of Him, if there is strife instead of peace, estrangement in the place of love. Broadly speaking, it seems to me that courage is the need of the moment. This courage may demand self-sacrifice, and what is rarer perhaps in our ranks of the clergy, humility in judgment. We have, broadly speaking, three schools within our Church, and all of them must beware lest they claim to be the only right pronouncers of shibboleth. They are:

(1) Those who for the sake of winning souls wish to force upon the Church of England practices, some of which it has rejected, others which it has let fall into disuse.

(2) Those who for the sake of winning souls think it all-important that there shall be no obscuring of the vision of a personal Christ, and who cannot approve of teaching and of ceremonial which they believe to be not only contrary to the teaching of the Church of England, but also calculated to make people depend upon something outside Christ for their spiritual healing. A goodly number of this school would sanction such association with Nonconformity in religious services as is in ordinary judgment not contemplated by the Church.

(3) Those who for the sake of winning souls wish a more critical attitude adopted towards not only Church teaching, but even to the accepted version of the Scriptures, pleading that inaccuracy is the enemy of truth. This school has adherents and foes in both the other classes.

For some time these schools have borne one with the other, mainly because each knew that the intention of the rest was to win souls. They respected the motives, they disapproved of the methods. But things are coming to a head. One section talks of forcing the hands of the Bishop by indulging in the unlawful but helpful, another says that it must sever its connection with Church management until all extravagances are put down, the third is gradually leavening the teachers of the Church with ideas which if expressed in the pulpit, shock the elect, but attract those who love the new and the startling.

How are these sections to be dealt with? The **The Difficulty of Authority.** Bishop thinks any plain man would demand that “authority should express itself, and that obedience should be rendered, or that those who cannot submit to order should

withdraw"—in other words "obey or retire." But "the difficulty" is, so the Bishop expresses it, that a divided Christendom destroys definite authority, "the nearest approach" to which in the Anglican Communion is the united voice of the episcopate, "but that cannot mean only the forty Diocesan Bishops who form the Upper Houses of Convocation." Even if these were to be the final court of appeal the Bishop questions "whether we should be much nearer a perfect solution." He believes the best thing for the moment to be "the loving persuasion of the man in close association with his people, viz., the particular Diocesan Bishop." No doubt in many, perhaps the majority, of cases this "loving persuasion" is all-powerful, but what of those where it meets with no response? They are the cases which test a bishop's capacity to rule, and too often he is found wanting. Of course he will be told that he is "by no means of infallible judgment," but this, the Bishop of Birmingham points out, "can also be said of the voice of the united episcopate," and he urges that "surely some account must be taken of the fact that he is the man in all the world who is most interested in the welfare of the Church of Christ in the particular area he administers," and he is "bold to say that he is the person who has the deepest and most tender affection for his clergy of every shade of religious thought." The Bishop of Birmingham has determined, therefore, to rely upon his personal influence:—

I believe (he adds) that in asking you to consult me, whether you are clergy or laymen, and in begging you to try to render willing deference to my honest judgment, I am doing that which will make most for the welfare of the Church in our midst. If it is true that I am over patient with much that I think unwise, I am not sure that this is a great fault, but that there must be a limit placed upon private judgment by the clergy in several directions I cannot deny. The times are critical. Are we going to combine for God and Christ, or are we going to steer towards separation? In all love I ask you to consider this alternative, and to decide so to act as shall bring a greater, fuller, and more active union to fruition in our Church.

Apart from every other consideration the letter is important as showing that at least one bishop realizes that in the present chaotic state of the Church we are drifting "towards separation."

Reformation
or
Revolution? In the effort after Reconstruction great care will be needed lest much that is useful in national life is "scrapped" for no other reason than that some change is necessary. It is a day of programmes, but the various proposals

that are brought forward should be tested in the light of cool collected common-sense argument, rather than by the pressure of what may prove to be merely transitory conditions. If this is true of national life, it applies with ten-fold force to the affairs of the Church. Just now the Church is suffering from the too persistent efforts of over-zealous reformers—men who see, or think they see, clearly enough what is demanded and are in a great hurry to carry their plans lest the opportunity should pass. But much that is presented to us as a considered scheme of reform is in reality revolutionary in its tendency and would be disastrous in its results. It is not a thankworthy task even to seem to want to damp the ardour of enthusiasts, but it is clear that the time has arrived when some one should have the courage to utter a warning note based upon the philosophy of experience, and it is good to find that the Bishop of Hereford has done so with impressive effect. In his January letter to the clergy and laity of his Diocese, Dr. Hensley Henson writes :—

We find ourselves in front of changes, profound in character, far-reaching in effect, which we cannot resist, and ought not if we could. Reconstruction is as much a moral obligation as a political necessity. But this necessity does not invalidate the teachings of experience, or exempt us from the penalties of ignoring them. Perhaps the main difference between Reformation and Revolution consists in the degree of authority which those teachings are allowed to wield over the process of change. Frankly, both as a citizen and as a Churchman, I am for Reformation and against Revolution.

The Church of England cannot possibly lie outside the general Reconstruction of our national system, to which the course of events has committed us, for of all the institutions which we have inherited from the past none is more precious in itself, and none is more embarrassed in its working. There are many among us, especially among the younger clergy in the great towns, who allow their indignation at the practical defects of the existing Establishment to blind them to its substantial merits and large possibilities. I beg them before taking irreparable decisions to make sure that they have duly appreciated all the factors of the problem which they aspire to solve. For my part I feel with respect to the National Establishment what the prophet felt about his nation : "DESTROY IT NOT, FOR A BLESSING IS IN IT." I would aim at strengthening the Church of England by removing those defects in its practical system which experience has proved to be spiritually enfeebling, but I would be slow to embark on a policy, however alluring on paper, which is properly inconsistent with the Establishment, and must needs, therefore, precipitate the very disaster which I desire to avert.

It does not appear to me necessary, I am sure it is very unfortunate, to raise large questions of ecclesiastical theory, when the reform of the national establishment of religion is in debate. There is no general agreement among English Churchmen on those questions, and there is never likely to be any. The circumstances of the English Reformation were unfriendly to internal agreement. The Church of England has always been the least united of the

Reformed Churches in point of ecclesiastical theory. It would be a vain task to attempt to prove identity in this respect between CRANMER, PARKER, LAUD, SANCROFT, TILLOTSON, TAIT, and BENSON, to mention but a few outstanding names from the illustrious line of the English Primates. The episcopal succession of every see in England, of Hereford conspicuously, points the same moral. The fact is that, while English Churchmen have commonly agreed in accepting the practical system established by law, they have always differed widely in ecclesiastical theory. That difference cuts deep, and its consequences are considerable and apparent, but even those who most regret it will admit that it has hitherto been consistent with practical co-operation in a spiritual service of the English people which has been of priceless value. Certain it is that, unless we can count in the future on the same subordination of ecclesiastical theory to practical religion which has existed in the past, the maintenance of the Church of England as an Established National Church will have become impossible.

The Bishop of Hereford's wise and weighty words will not, we hope, be without their effect. We see in some of the so-called "reforms" now being pressed upon the Church, a real danger to the Church's national position. It is quite easy to talk glibly about the blessings of "freedom" for the Church, but the dark spectre of disestablishment is never far away. The Bishop of Hereford promises to discuss more fully in his Primary Charge the questions he has raised in his letter, and his exposition will be awaited with keen interest.

