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THE CHURCHMAN

March, 1920.

THE MONTH.

**The Bishops
and the
Changes.**

A FRESH turn has been given to the discussion on the proposed Changes in the Communion Service by the decisions lately arrived at by the Convocation of Canterbury. It will be recalled that the original proposals evoked the most determined opposition on the part of Evangelical and Moderate Churchmen, culminating in the presentation to the Archbishops of a Memorial signed by nine bishops, upwards of 3,000 clergy, and considerably more than 100,000 of the laity, praying that the changes might not be proceeded with. In consequence of the strong feeling thus manifested the Archbishop called a special Conference to examine the question afresh, and in this Conference representatives of different sections of the Church were invited to take part. The result of the Conference was the substitution of other changes for those previously agreed upon by Convocation (see CHURCHMAN for January last). The decision of the Conference was not unanimous, but there was a substantial majority for the changes proposed. When these became generally known there was a readiness on the part of many Evangelical Churchmen to accept them, not because they approved of the alterations, but rather that, if they were accepted by High Churchmen, they might possibly bring about a measure of peace. On the other hand, some of our Evangelical leaders—notably the Bishop of Manchester—and a considerable body of the rank and file objected absolutely to the changes proposed. All sections of the party were, however, agreed in this, that they would infinitely prefer that the Communion Service should be left untouched. In the meantime it became clear that the proposed changes would not be acceptable to the extreme wing of the High Church Party, who made no concealment of their view that the alterations did not go far enough, and that even if

they did acquiesce in them it would only be that they might use them as a lever to force upon the Church the changes that they desired to see carried into effect. Such was the position when the Convocation of Canterbury met for the February group of sessions. It might reasonably have been expected that a body like the Convocation of Canterbury would have taken some note of outside opinion, but the Upper House went cheerfully on its own way, and by a majority of seventeen to two adopted the proposals of the Conference. The minority was composed of such essentially moderate men as the Bishops of Oxford and Worcester, who were evidently more in touch with Church opinion than were their episcopal colleagues. The one outstanding feature of the debate was that the Archbishop of Canterbury said that though he personally preferred that there should be no alteration, he was willing loyally to abide by the outcome of the Conference—a very significant admission which must not be lost sight of in future discussions. We imagine that the same spirit animated the Bishops of Chelmsford and Truro; on the other hand, the Bishop of Peterborough, who appealed for a unanimous vote, thought the proposals, if adopted, would become the main type of service. The vote was not unanimous, and that fact alone ought to be sufficient to give pause to those who are seeking to introduce changes which very few people want, and which, if persisted in, will cause unnecessary distress to many thousands of loyal Church people.

A Narrow Majority. In the discussion in the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury the members came to much closer quarters with the real questions at issue. Representatives of the High Church party showed their hand, and made no secret of their intentions. On the Evangelical side the Dean of Canterbury made an important and weighty contribution to the debate, which was the more notable from the fact that he had previously shown his willingness to agree to the proposed changes if they were likely to promote peace. All such hope must now be abandoned, and the Dean, therefore, spoke and voted against their adoption. So strongly was the case presented against the changes that they were only carried by a majority of eight, the figures being sixty-two to fifty-four. It is likely that the vote in the Lower House, even more effectually than that in the Upper House, will

seal the doom of the proposed changes, for it is now seen that, so far from these offering a basis for agreed settlement, they are only likely to add fuel to the fires of controversy. In the Upper House of the Convocation of York the proposals were agreed to by the casting vote of the President, the Archbishop of York. It would be interesting to know the views of experienced chairmen upon his Grace's most unusual action; for on the very rare occasions when a chairman's casting vote is required, is it not generally assumed that it will be exercised in favour of maintaining the *status quo*?

What then must be our attitude in view of the new position created by these decisions? It cannot be better stated than in the following words of the Dean of Canterbury, which we quote from his article in the *Record* of February 19. After saying that he voted in Convocation against any change at all, he added:—"It is indeed to be hoped that a resolution to oppose, henceforth, any change whatever in our Communion office may be generally and finally adopted, at least on the Evangelical side of the Church. It would seem plain, from these debates, that this is the only basis on which the Church can be held together. Evangelical men do not desire any change in the office, and High Churchmen acknowledge that it is at least sufficient for the validity of the Sacrament. But changes which would satisfy High Churchmen would render the position of Evangelical men in the Church so intolerable that it would be difficult for them to remain in it. The existing office, in fact, may be regarded as neutral ground, on which all schools may meet, and the recent discussions have shown that no changes can be devised which would not destroy this neutrality. There is a further consideration, which was urged by one of the Bishops, as to the effect of allowing an alternative service. That permission, which was much relied upon in favour of the proposals, is really a fatal objection to them. The chief practical controversies in the Church centre round the Holy Communion, and consequently the allowance of alternative services would involve the danger of renewed controversies in all parishes of the country, upon any change of Incumbency. If ever there were hope of 'an agreed settlement' such as the Archbishop hoped to attain in his Conference, so that one and the same service would everywhere be adopted, a change would be practicable. But

A New
Rallying Cry.

until that can be obtained, let us be content to remain as we are. Last week's decisions in Convocation cannot be regarded as final. In its last week's session the House of Laity claimed a voice in Revision ; and now that the National Assembly is in existence, the whole of the Revision must be submitted to its decisions. Meanwhile Evangelical men are justified, after what has just passed, in finally resolving to resist any change in our Communion office, as well as in objecting to the permission which is proposed for the practice of Reservation and for the use of the Roman Mass Vestments." These are impressive words, and should prove a rallying cry for Evangelical Churchmen. They cannot allow the matter to remain where it is ; that they should now acquiesce in the decisions of Convocation is unthinkable.

The Dean of Canterbury's reference to the vote in
 The Voice of the House of Laity—to give it its new title—calls
 the Laity. attention to a matter which may have far-reaching consequences. In all the twelve years that Revision has been under discussion the Houses of Laymen have been regarded by Convocation as a negligible quantity. It is true that time and again it has been said that before the scheme is presented for authorization it will be submitted to the Lay Houses, and, strangely enough, the members of those Houses so far accepted this position as not to trouble themselves to inquire under what conditions the scheme will be presented to them, or what time will be allowed them for discussing the several proposals. They took action promptly enough upon the much less important matter of the Revised Lectionary, with excellent results ; and it now seems to have dawned upon them that they ought formally and officially to assert themselves in regard to Revision generally. Accordingly, at the sitting of the House of Laity on February 11, Dr. Brysson Cunningham moved the following resolution :—

"That this House is of opinion that in a matter of such fundamental importance as the revision of the Prayer Book, and particularly as regards the structure of the Order of Holy Communion, the laity should be directly represented on the Revision Committee."

Moreover, it was carried unanimously, which is, in itself, a very strong indication of the feelings of the laity of all schools upon the question. We should, of course, expect that in a Lay House the

majority of the members belong to the Evangelical and Moderate sections of the Church, but the point is that it was not a sectional, but a unanimous agreement that was come to. It is a little difficult to see how the precise proposal of the resolution is to be given effect to, as the work of Revision is now almost completed; still we welcome the resolution—tardy though it be—as the assertion of a right which will be very difficult for Convocation to ignore.

It may be hoped that the Bishop of Manchester's *The Epiklesis*. powerful speech in the Upper House of the York Convocation on Wednesday, February 11, dealing with the proposed changes in the Communion office, will be reprinted for general circulation. It constitutes the most damaging attack upon the proposals of the Conference that has yet appeared, and will undoubtedly do much to weaken the position of those who were inclined, for the sake of peace or from any other motive, to acquiesce in the compromise. Specially important is his treatment of the Epiklesis. "What," he says, "is proposed for our use is an invocation of the Holy Spirit as Lord and Giver of Life upon the worshippers and upon the elements. It is important to note this, because the vaguer forms are often quoted in defence of the use of this particular form." The Bishop establishes the fact that this particular form is admittedly an innovation which cannot be attested earlier than the middle of the fourth century, the passage from Irenæus on which an earlier origin was based having proved a forgery. Then as to its doctrinal significance, the Bishop shows that it was associated with a belief in the change in the elements effected by the Holy Spirit. This invocation cannot be officially adopted by our Church, even as an alternative, without involving an assimilation of Eucharistic doctrine to that of the East, which affirms that the change "takes place through the Holy Ghost in exactly the same way as our Lord became flesh from the Holy Virgin through the Holy Ghost." Moreover, its adoption would lay us open to the imputation that "having been rebuffed by the Latin Church as to the validity of our Orders and Sacraments, we are seeking to rectify them by overtures to the East." But the speech must be studied in its entirety: no summary of it can be adequate. It appears in full in the *Record* of February 12.