

THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1924

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Recent Sessions of the Church Assembly.

THE November Sessions of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the Church Assembly were anticipated with interest. They were to deal with the most important part of the Prayer Book revision proposals—the changes in the Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. There was considerable speculation as to the results of their deliberations. Several courses were open to them. Sir Thomas Inskip and Mr. Albert Mitchell, in the House of Laity, and Canon Grose Hodge and Prebendary Sharpe, in the House of Clergy, were to move that the Communion Service should be omitted from the revision scheme. The English Church Union representatives were to endeavour to secure the adoption of the "Green Book" form. Representatives of the anonymous company of compilers of the "Grey Book" were to propose the form in that book. There was also the official form in N.A. 84 to which general approval had already been given. There was the form in the "Orange Book," and there was a possibility that the form in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI might be brought forward, as the Archbishop of York had pronounced himself in favour of it. There was plenty of scope for intelligent anticipation as to the course likely to be adopted.

Decisions on the Communion Service.

All such anticipations were doomed to disappointment. It is difficult to state the significance of the conclusions reached. Judging from the statements of members of both Houses, from letters in the Press, and from the leading articles in the Church papers, diverse opinions are held as to the effects of the resolutions passed.

As far as we can gather, the following are the facts of the case. Both Houses refused to omit the Communion Service from the revision. The House of Laity decided after long discussion that an alternative Prayer Book should not be permitted, but that variations should be allowed in the present form. When the time came to consider these permissible variations they decided to postpone the discussion of them until they had an opportunity of consultation with the House of Clergy. In this latter House a further stage was reached. Informal conferences of the representatives of the variously coloured books were held, apart from the formal sessions. As a result it was decided at first that one alternative form of the Prayer of Consecration should be allowed. A little later when it became evident that the alternative likely to be put forward would not be acceptable to a considerable number of the members, it was decided that a second alternative should be allowed. These forms, representing practically the Green Book and the Grey Book—with some modifications—have been printed in the Church papers. The official form in N.A. 84 has thus for the present been ignored, and the suggestion as to the First Prayer Book of Edward VI has not been considered.

The Significance of the New Forms.

It is to be remembered that these decisions are by no means final. The whole subject will be reopened—probably at the February sessions. The House of Laity has still to express its views. Mr. Albert Mitchell, one of its leading members, is of opinion that there is a fundamental divergence between the two Houses. The House of Laity, he thinks, is aiming at the maintenance of our present form as the norm with a variation on the lines of N.A. 84, while the House of Clergy appears to desire a new Book as the norm “with the retention of the old Book as a safety-valve for Evangelical Clergy.” He regards both of the new forms provisionally accepted as “doctrinally defective and liturgically inept,” and inferior to our present Order in doctrinal explicitness, literary diction and liturgical effectiveness. The Dean of Canterbury opposed the adoption of either of the new forms. He regarded them as placing on record the fact that the Church of England is divided by a deep cleavage. They make a fundamental difference in the doctrine of the Church of England. In an article in *The*

Record the Dean explained his view at greater length. He showed that the words in the Green Book form, "bless and sanctify these thy gifts and creatures of Bread and Wine that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ" . . . would justify the claim of a Romanizing priest to treat the consecrated Elements as being, for him and his people, the actual Body and Blood of our Lord, and worthy of adoration accordingly. and that the expression to make "with these holy gifts the memorial which Thy Son hath willed us to make" involves a cardinal point in the Romanizing doctrine. He adds that "the Roman doctrine of the Eucharist has now effected an official lodgment in the ramparts of the English Church." Of the Prayer of Consecration in the Grey Book he says it is "a lamentable enfeeblement of the simple, profound, and evangelical character of our present Prayers of Consecration and Oblation." It weakens "the stress laid in our present canon on the Death and Passion of our Lord as the one supreme object of this Sacrament."

Future Steps.

As to future developments, it is difficult to predict the ultimate decision as to the Communion Service. The discussion will no doubt be resumed in February—the important question of Reservation has also still to be considered. It is very doubtful if both the Houses will complete their debates until the Summer Session in July. Representatives of the Houses of Clergy and Laity are then to meet to endeavour to produce a synthesis of their reports. If this is presented to the Assembly next November, the Bishops will then have to consider it. They will then have to issue the final revision scheme. It is just possible that this may be presented in February, 1925. The Convocations will then have to pronounce judgment on it. They will be permitted either to accept it or reject it, but they will not be allowed to make any alterations in it. The Church Assembly—possibly voting by Houses—will then give their final opinion on it, and if adopted it will be sent forward to the Ecclesiastical Committee. By that time the present House of Laity will be approaching the time of its dissolution. It was elected on a temporary basis. The new House will be elected on the new franchise based on the numbers on the Electoral Rolls

in each diocese. It is doubtful whether the House at that stage will consider itself the proper body to deal with so important a matter in view of the change in the character of the election.

A Severe Test for the Church Assembly.

This question of the character of the Houses raises another point of interest. It has been very difficult to follow the course of the discussion—especially in the House of Clergy. Some strong opinions have been expressed on the method of conducting the debate. Prayer Book revision was a very important subject for the Assembly in its early years to settle, before its order of procedure had been tested and it had settled down to smooth working. The Bishop of Norwich in an important article in *The Times* pointed out some of the difficulties of the position. He said that the Assembly had only been in existence four or five years. Officially it is the organ of the Church of England. "But however well it may have already filled its part, it naturally has not by the present time attained such a full and widespread recognition as to carry with it the understanding support of the generality of the members of the Church; there is very much that is good and saintly, Christian and Church-loving, which is still outside its range. The responsibility of revising the Prayer Book now rests on its young shoulders; are they strong enough, are they broad enough for the burden?" Many others are asking the same questions. Doubts are freely expressed as to the capacity of the Houses at this early stage to deal with such serious problems affecting the whole future of religion in this country. Judging from the proceedings so far, it is not without reason that these questions are being asked.

"Failure in Statesmanship."

The Bishop of Gloucester has raised the same question in another form in a letter to *The Times*. Like the Bishop of Norwich, he deprecates alternative forms in the Communion Service. He feels, as many of us do, that there is no general demand for revision. There is certainly no desire for drastic changes in the Communion Service, especially after the Shorter Exhortation. All that is required is a change in a few simple verbal expressions. The Bishop is emphatic in his view. He says: "It is difficult to

conceive a more complete failure in statesmanship than the proposal to stereotype the two parties in the Church of England by allowing disunion in exactly the service in which most of all we should be united." He desires that we should "definitely refuse to acquiesce in any proposal to allow alternative forms for the Holy Communion." He proposes that a carefully chosen Committee representative of the more sober members of the different parties should meet and agree on a common form of service. Our readers will remember that the late Bishop of Chelmsford proposed that such a gathering should go into retreat and endeavour by prayer and waiting on the Holy Spirit to arrive at an agreed conclusion. We fear, however, that Bishop Knox's criticism of the proposal still holds good: "More prayer, more love may yet work wonders for us. Far be it from me to underrate the power of prayer and love. But it is only honest to point out that even prayer and love cannot make twice two five. If the Roman Mass is truth, the Protestant denial of the Mass is error. The counter-Reformation party are determined to restore the Mass." Argument and discussion are not likely to be more effective in bringing unity than prayer and love.

Evangelical Statesmanship:

If there has been a failure of statesmanship on the part of the whole Assembly, what shall we say of the statesmanship of the Evangelical representatives? They were in a difficult position. They desired to secure the omission of the Communion Service from the revision. In this they were defeated. They were then faced in the House of Clergy with the question of an alternative form—practically that in the Green Book, to which they strongly objected. When the second alternative—that of the Grey Book—was proposed, some of them decided that as a tactical move it was better to have the two forms—one of them less objectionable than the other—than to have only one. Opinion is divided as to whether this was the most statesmanlike attitude.

The primary duty of Evangelicals is to assert the principles for which they stand. They maintain certain truths from which they cannot consistently depart. These must at all costs be represented in the Prayer Book. When these are secured, their further action must depend upon the view they take of the Church as a whole.

If any of them are prepared to admit that the Anglo-Catholics, no matter how far they may go in the Romeward direction, are entitled to a place in our Church, then it seems to us the only logical attitude to adopt is to say that the Anglo-Catholics are to be allowed to draw up any form of service that they may desire and they are to be allowed to use it without let or hindrance. The Church of England will then speak as it has never spoken before, with a Protestant voice and a Roman voice, and they will contradict each other until one or other finally prevails.

But there are very few Evangelicals who will adopt this view. The great majority hold that there must be a limit placed on the toleration of the Romanizing extremists. There are a number of Anglo-Catholics who are prepared to adopt the same attitude. They say that the extreme section that looks to Rome for its authority in matters of doctrine and ceremonial ought not to remain in the Church of England. If this is so, can it be discovered where the line is to be drawn? The Anglo-Catholics have never made any serious attempt to answer the question. If they can be brought to do so, then Evangelicals might well consult with the more moderate section to see if any *modus vivendi* could be discovered, but Evangelicals must make their own position quite clear.

A Firm Policy.

They must maintain that there can be no change in the Prayer of Consecration that alters the present teaching of the Prayer Book. The idea of sacrifice must not be allowed to displace the idea of Communion. They will be in a strong position to maintain, if no change of doctrine is desired, that it is wiser to retain our present form than to strive to draw up an alternative, that may lead to erroneous teaching or stereotype disunion. They will be in a strong position in adopting this course, for the divisions among the Anglo-Catholics are becoming more marked every day. As a recent instance we may mention Mr. F. C. Eeles' book, *Prayer Book Revision and Christian Reunion*. No Protestant could denounce more vigorously the form in the Green Book than he does. He examines it in detail and pronounces it Roman of the worst type—an abject imitation of the worst forms of Roman liturgical abuses. When such divergences of view are evident among Anglo-

Catholics, it is advisable for Evangelical Churchmen to pursue a vigorous policy in favour of maintaining our present form intact. This will meet with the approval of thousands of Churchmen to whom the present Office is filled with treasured spiritual associations.

On this, as on other matters, it is the wisest course to stand firm. Lord Phillimore's declaration in the House of Laity, that if his party were allowed the use of the vestments he would be prepared to go on with the present form in our Prayer Book, shows the advisability of doing nothing to compromise the position on vesture. The argument that the Ornaments Rubric allows the vestments at present, is one that is safely used by the Anglo-Catholics outside the Church Courts. They know that they dare not use it within the reach of legal argument. Churchmen of a future generation will thank the Evangelicals for their firmness on these points in the present distress. If we yield they will condemn our weakness and our folly. We look to the House of Laity to give vigorous expression to the old truths for which the Church of England stands.

"Reservation."

The proposal for the Reservation of the elements for the Communion of the Sick, as it appears in N.A. 84, will come before the House of Laity in the early part of next session, and is certain to provoke a very full debate. An attempt was made last session to force a decision on the question before the actual proposal was reached. Lord Phillimore proposed to leave out the rubric, which orders that any of the consecrated Bread and Wine remaining over shall be consumed "except so far as is otherwise provided in the Order for the Communion of the Sick," and to substitute the following: "According to long existing custom in the Catholic Church, the Priest may reserve so much of the Consecrated Gifts as may be required for the Communion of the Sick, and others who could not be present at the celebration in Church." It will be observed that this clause goes far beyond the proposal of N.A. 84, and it was urged upon the House with firm persistence. It was ultimately withdrawn, but only after an assurance from the Chairman that the extension to "others who could not be present at the celebration in Church" might be raised when the Clause dealing with

Reservation was reached. The House, therefore, will be faced with a proposal to allow Reservation not only for the sick, but also for others. Another point that will require careful watching—if the practice be allowed at all—is the manner of Reservation, and the place where the reserved elements shall be kept. It will be remembered that the proposal of N.A. 84 has some severely limiting words: “so that they be not used for any other purpose whatsoever.” The intention of these words is perfectly plain; but whilst some of the Anglo-Catholic representatives in the House professed their readiness to rule out the service of “Devotions” before the Reserved Sacrament, they made it quite clear that they desired that the reserved elements should not be hidden away. (The actual phrase used was “To lock them up in a cupboard in the Vestry would not do at all.”) Herein lies the real danger: if the elements be reserved in the open church, or in a side chapel, to which people have access, it will be impossible to safeguard the practice from abuse.

Unqualified Opposition.

The only course open to Evangelicals is to offer to the proposal for Reservation the most unqualified opposition, and the House of Laity will do well to follow the lead of the five lay members of the Revision Committee of the Assembly who appended to the Report a Note expressing their absolute dissent on this question from the conclusions arrived at by their colleagues. In view of the forthcoming discussions we quote its terms:—

“We regret that we are unable to concur with the majority of the Committee in approving of the proposed new rubrics to the Order for the Communion of the Sick (numbered 145 in the Schedule to the Report), which contemplate reservation of a part of the consecrated bread and wine and (in the event indicated) ‘further provision to meet the needs of the sick and dying.’ Notwithstanding the care with which these rubrics have been settled, we do not think that it is possible adequately to safeguard the practice from abuse. We do not admit that the practice of reservation is either primitive or catholic; and we believe that the teaching associated with it is not conformable to Holy Scripture.”

It is much to be hoped that stress will be laid upon these closing words—“the teaching associated with it is not conformable to Holy Scripture”—for that is the one ground of appeal that Anglo-Catholics are quite unable to meet. They are not very happy

when challenged to bring forward evidence of "primitive" use; they generally fall back on Justin Martyr, forgetting or ignoring the fact that the use he sanctioned was concurrent administration—a very different thing from Reservation; and, if when they make play with the word "catholic," they are more at home with themselves, they utterly fail to convince others that the practice is "catholic" in any genuine sense of that much misunderstood term. But, "What saith the Scriptures?"—that after all is the supreme question, and the answer to it is paramount with Evangelicals. They believe it to be impossible to find a single passage of Scripture which, fairly and reasonably interpreted, can be held to justify the practice of Reservation. They believe the statement in Article XXVIII, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved," to be absolutely true, and they base their opposition to the practice upon the teaching of Holy Scripture.

The Alleged "Necessity."

It is alleged by the supporters of Reservation that the practice is necessary to the efficient working of large and poor parishes. We must confess, however, that we have very little patience with such an argument, for it is common knowledge that there are many hundreds of large and poor parishes which, to put it mildly, are worked quite as efficiently as any of those which are in the hands of the Anglo-Catholic party, and that no such "necessity" is felt and the clergy would emphatically repudiate the suggestion. As a piece of evidence in this direction we may refer to the important letter in *The Times* of November 15 last, signed by upwards of seventy Evangelical Incumbents, holding parishes in all parts of England, in which it was stated, with the utmost precision, that the signatories "have never found any need" for Reservation for the Communion of the Sick, and expressing the view that the practice "would undoubtedly tend to Adoration of the Elements." This is practical testimony of the most valuable kind, and it will carry weight with all three Houses of the Assembly when the question comes before them.

The Real Reason.

The real reason why Anglo-Catholic clergy desire Reservation comes under quite a different category altogether. It is not

concerned with the people, but with priests who object to celebrate in the manner prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer after they have broken their fast. The whole matter is bound up with the question of fasting communion. The writer was present at the Lambeth "Hearing" before the two Archbishops in July, 1899, when the question of Reservation was under consideration, and he well recalls the impression made on his mind by the vigorous cross-examination of the Rev. Edgar Lee, one of the clergy concerned. It was clear both from the tone and the substance of that clergyman's replies that the real reason why he practised Reservation was a personal one. We have just looked up the report of his evidence, and it is very instructive. We quote the following passages:—

Q.—Have you found in your ministrations in your parish a great need for the Reserved Sacrament amongst your people?

A.—We have always communicated them in that way, since the first nine months of my incumbency.

Q.—Have you found that that way of communicating them was necessary, rather than what has been called the Clinical celebration?

A.—It was absolutely necessary in my case, because I object to being called to celebrate the Holy Eucharist after my luncheon. For my own sake I should consider it necessary.

Q.—Supposing a parishioner asked you for a celebration in his room with the whole service in the afternoon, would you raise any objection to the service?

A.—It would be a very severe strain to me, and I can only say what my brother priests have said to-day, that, personally, if I had not the Reserved Sacrament, and there was such a case as you mentioned, I would rather celebrate for him than allow him to die without the Holy Communion.

Q.—Have you had many cases in your experience of such extreme urgency that there would not have been time for the Clinical celebration?

A.—There have been cases, but not a great number.

Q.—Have you ever on any occasion had recourse to what has been called the Rubric of Spiritual Communion?

A.—Never.

Q.—Am I right in saying that the real difficulty, and the most serious difficulty, with reference to this matter, is the question of fasting?

A.—That is one very great difficulty.

Q.—Does not that lie at the bottom of the whole thing?

A.—Not at the bottom of the whole thing.

Q.—Very near the bottom?

A.—It is very important indeed.

A New Movement.

The new "Movement for the Defence of the Fundamental Doctrine of the Church of England" has our warmest sympathy. The Manifesto issued in October last referred to the strenuous efforts now being made "definitely to repudiate those main principles which were enunciated at the Reformation, and which since then have been accepted as the fundamental doctrine of the Church of England." It expressed the belief "that the mass of the clergy and laity are loyal to those principles, and desire to maintain them. But they have a wholesome dread of attaching themselves to any party, and, since they possess no rallying point, they are at present inarticulate."

Disclaiming any desire to form a new party in the Church, the signatories said they felt "that means must be devised to enable the majority of English Churchpeople to give effective expression to their convictions," and they believed that this result "can best be attained by an organized movement for the Defence of the Fundamental Doctrine of the Church of England." It was hoped that such a movement would "bring together those who, while cherishing that liberty which has been so marked a feature of the English Church, are nevertheless anxious to maintain its fundamental doctrine." To this Manifesto a remarkable list of signatures was attached, including six Professors at Cambridge University. We understand that many further signatures have since been received, and that communications in regard to the Movement should be addressed to the Archdeacon of Chester, 5 Abbey Street, Chester.

The Archbishop Explains.

Some remarks made by the Archbishop of Canterbury at his Diocesan Conference regarding the power of the Bishop to authorize deviations from the law caused much uneasiness, and the Bishop of Durham brought the matter to his Grace's attention. It now appears that the Archbishop's words were misunderstood. He was referring to the fact that the promise to obey the rubrics is accompanied by a clause allowing "lawful authority" to order (*i.e.*, arrange or sanction) such deviation as may be necessary or obviously expedient. In his reply to the Bishop of Durham he wrote:—

You and I and every Bishop constantly permit, tacitly or overtly, in the "ordering" of Divine service certain deviations, and it is surely untrue to say that the incumbent is violating the solemn undertaking whenever in the Office of Holy Communion he leaves out the warning notice or the long exhortation, or when in some other service he departs in accordance with custom in some slight and reasonable way from the exact rubrical direction as printed. Of course the Bishop must not abuse the power thus placed in his hands, and the notion that these particular words in the Declaration leave the Bishop free to act as he pleases with the

Prayer Book would be, in my judgment, absurdly untenable. We have a right, as Bishops, to call upon any man who is not doing so to obey the rubrics quite literally as they stand. Of course we do not do this, and the man thus deviating (I am speaking, as I pointed out at the time, of non-controversial matters) deviates with the knowledge that he does so with the sanction of "lawful authority." What I wanted to make clear, and I think I did make clear, is that we are not in our ordinary service doing something which we have definitely undertaken not to do. To stretch what I then said into the region of controversial and defiant disobedience to the Prayer Book is to import quite a new meaning into what was taking place or being discussed, and I do not think that anyone misunderstood what I said.

"The Churchman."

We are exceedingly glad to be able to announce that with this issue the CHURCHMAN is reduced in price. It is now published at eightpence, instead of half-a-crown a quarter, and the yearly subscription post free is six shillings, instead of ten shillings. The CHURCHMAN is the only magazine of its kind that stands definitely for Evangelical principles, and it was felt that, in the interests of the cause, its circulation should be as large as possible. We have been greatly encouraged to know that the change has been warmly welcomed by many who, although in full sympathy with the purpose and policy of the magazine, were unable to become subscribers. The reduction has brought it within their reach; they are becoming subscribers, and several have promised to bring it to the notice of their friends. Thus we start our new volume under the happiest circumstances, and we venture to ask every subscriber to co-operate with us to the extent of obtaining at least one more. The wider the circulation, the greater will be the influence of the magazine, and these are times when it is of great moment that the widest possible support should be secured for the maintenance unimpaired of the great heritage which has come down to us. The Reformation position of the Church of England is being distinctly challenged even in the councils of the Church, and unless a great effort is made in its defence it is not difficult to see that the whole character of the Church of England will speedily be altered. Mere denunciation of Anglo-Catholic ways will not carry us very far; the need is for an educated and intelligent apprehension of the facts of the case, and it is the aim of the CHURCHMAN to assist in the formation of a sound public opinion, based upon knowledge, that there shall be a strengthening of the determination to hold fast to the great Protestant and Evangelical truths enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer. We appeal with confidence to our friends for an enlargement of their interest and support in this great enterprise.