

THE REAL PRESENCE AND THE GREEN BOOK CANON.

BY THE REV. T. W. GILBERT, D.D., Rector of Bradfield, Berks.

THE discussions on Prayer Book Revision have developed a keenness about liturgical history and kindred studies which all thoughtful Churchmen will welcome. The present stage of Prayer Book Revision is obviously merely a temporary and experimental one which looks forward to a further revision some few years hence. During this present and transitional period, therefore, it is essential for all of us to "read, mark and learn" the history which is behind our Prayer Book, for it is on an intelligent grasp by Evangelicals of Prayer Book teaching that their own future in the Church of England depends.

Nowhere is it more true than of the history surrounding the compilation of our Holy Communion office. Whatever difference of view there may be as to the significance of such matters as abbreviations of services, omission of certain Psalms, and the like, it is clear that the central point of importance will be found in the proposals for altering the Communion Service. This is inevitable, because upon the views held about the Holy Communion depend many other views about the Church and Ministry, and in the long run differences of view about the Holy Communion tend also even to different conceptions of God. It is not too much to say, therefore, that differences about the Holy Communion have the tendency to produce very different conceptions of religion altogether.

A single illustration will make this clear. We hear very often nowadays that "Christ is present in certain churches and not in others," and on asking for the elucidation of this statement we are told that Christ is present in certain churches where the Sacrament is reserved, and not in those where the Sacrament is not reserved. The implication is—the explicit teaching also—that the Presence of Christ is localized in the consecrated elements which ensure the Presence of Christ so long as the consecrated elements are reserved.

Now it is clear that this view, if left unchallenged, will bring about very serious consequences, for such a conception of the localization of the Presence of Christ in the Bread and Wine was

the rock on which the mediæval Church split, and the Reformation was the outcome.

The matter has been further pressed upon the attention of Church-people by the discussions in the House of Clergy on the alternate canons promoted by the Green Book and Grey Book supporters, and a certain amount of mystification has resulted from that discussion. Many Evangelicals, for example, have been surprised to read statements by some of their number in the House of Clergy that they could without hesitation use the alternate canons which are being put forward. It is quite true that those alternate canons could be used by Evangelicals, but it is only true in the same sense that Evangelicals could also use the canon of the Roman Mass. The really important consideration is the method and interpretation of the canon. The interpretation of the Roman canon is governed by the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the interpretation of the new alternate canons offered to us by the House of Clergy will be governed by other criteria than those used by Evangelicals.

What those criteria are will not be far to seek, and one of them is contained in the Declaration of the English Church Union sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople in May, 1922. Article 8 of this Declaration runs as follows: "We affirm that, by Consecration in the Eucharist, the bread and wine, being blessed by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, are changed and become the true Body and the true Blood of Christ, and as such are given to and received by the faithful. We hold, therefore, that Christ thus present is to be adored. . . ." This authoritative declaration by the promoters of the Green Book enables us to see quite clearly the import of various expressions used in the Green Book canon, and with this declaration in view it is obvious that the new canon is drawn up for the purpose of teaching a doctrine quite other than that held by Evangelicals. What we have to face is the possibility of the legalization of a new canon of the Holy Communion which is designed to teach the localization of the Presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine, with the logical corollary of the adoration and worship of Christ in the consecrated elements.

There are, therefore, at least three things which Evangelicals should consider in view of the attempt to introduce into our Prayer Book this view of a localized Presence of Christ in the consecrated elements.

The first is the evidence of the past with regard to such a doctrine. So far as the early Christian Church is concerned it seems clear that the great majority of the primitive writers held the view of a mystical participation with Christ in the Breaking of Bread. Their teaching is that the bread and wine always remain bread and wine, but that their use in the Holy Communion is a means of grace appointed by Christ, and they are therefore "instrumentally a cause" of grace to the believer. No doubt there is a considerable variety of expression about the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and it would be easy to isolate statements from some of the Fathers to support theories of Consubstantiation, and even an incipient form of Transubstantiation. But the general position seems to be an absence on the part of the early Christian writers of expressions referring to Christ as present in the bread and wine. Waterland's considered judgment on this point is that the early Fathers "all intended to say, that the elements keeping their own nature and substance, and not admitting a coalition with any other bodily substance, are symbolically or in mystical construction, the body and blood of Christ; being appointed as such by Christ, accepted as such by God the Father, and made such in effect by the Holy Spirit, to every faithful receiver." Such is the primitive teaching, and this is the point of view of Evangelicals at the present time, and, until recently, the generally accepted teaching of the Church of England. But, as has been already hinted, there were many varieties of expressions used by primitive writers with regard to the Presence of Christ in the Holy Communion, and some of them not unlike those in the English Church Union Declaration quoted above. For instance Cyril of Jerusalem, when writing about the changing of the water into wine at Cana, says, "Let us therefore with full assurance receive Christ's Body and Blood: for His Body is given to thee in the figure of bread, and His Blood in the figure of wine . . ." And again: "Look not therefore as on bare bread and wine, for they are according to the Lord's saying, His Flesh and Blood." Now such statements present no difficulty to Evangelicals who understand the figurative and symbolical language of the Fathers, and they are moreover safeguarded from misinterpretation by St. Cyril's own explanations. But the isolation of such statements as those of St. Cyril and the neglect of his spiritual interpretation, led on to the literal acceptance of such passages, until we get the bald

assertion that the consecrated bread is " changed, not in form, but in nature." This latter statement is attributed both to Cyprian and to Arnold of Bona Vallis, a contemporary of St. Bernard ; and the assertion again is patent of more than one interpretation. On the one hand there is Cranmer's interpretation, " that the bread doth show unto us that we be partakers of the Spirit of God, and most purely joined unto Christ, and spiritually fed with His Flesh and Blood : so that now the said mystical bread is both a corporal food for the body, and a spiritual food for the soul " ; but on the other hand the words are taken by many others at their face value and used to uphold a view of a change in the bread itself. So we get the teaching of Paschasius in the ninth century, and he declares on the one side that Christ " has left to us this visible Sacrament for a figure and image of His flesh and blood, that by these our mind and our flesh may be more fruitfully nourished to lay hold of invisible and spiritual things by faith " ; but in addition to such statements he declares that " after the consecration (the elements) are believed to be nothing else than the Body and Blood of Christ," and that it is the " true flesh and true blood, in a mystery."

It is not the purpose of this article to unfold in outline the various developments of the views of the mediæval Church on the Holy Communion ; the only object of the writer is to invite Evangelicals to notice how the figurative and symbolical language of the early Fathers becomes changed in the effort to define the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Paschasius may or may not have taught what is generally known as Transubstantiation ; opinions differ on this point, but he is a landmark in so far, that from his time onward Churchmen began to give increasing attention to defining the Presence. The Schoolmen philosophers began to teach that the " substance " of the bread and wine was changed after consecration into the " substance " of the body and blood of Christ, and that the " accidents " of the bread and wine remained : bread and wine were seen by the eye of the worshipper, but they were in reality the body and blood of Christ. The position taken up at the Lateran Council of 1216, however, was that " Christ's Body and Blood are really contained under the species of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into His Body and the wine into His Blood."

During the later Middle Ages, therefore, the views of the majority of Churchmen ranged from the philosophic view of the Schoolmen,

which in its way is not unlike the view which is being pressed on the Church of England to-day, and the purely materialistic view which was later embodied in the decrees of the Council of Trent. For all practical purposes, however, the materialistic view was the view taught officially by the Church and the view held by the ordinary Churchman, and it is summed up by the Council of Trent in the following terms: "If anyone shall say that in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains together with the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood, the appearance only of the bread and wine remaining, which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most fittingly calls Transubstantiation, let him be anathema."

This brings us to the consideration of the second point which we must be clear about, and that is the way in which the English Reformers met this perversion of the primitive teaching. This can be seen in the evolution which took place in the Prayer Book, but the whole movement can be summed up as the effort of the Reformers to revert to the primitive teaching which carefully safeguarded the Holy Communion as a real means of grace in spiritually feeding upon Christ, but equally carefully abstained from forms of expression indicating the localization of Christ's Presence in the consecrated elements.

The truth of this can be seen first of all in the 1549 Prayer Book. The canon of the Holy Communion in this first Reformed Prayer Book followed along the lines of the Roman Missal, and amongst many things which may be noticed occurs the prayer that the bread and wine "may be unto us the Body and Blood of Thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ." The form of the words, if taken at their face value, conveys a perfectly legitimate truth, but the interpretation placed upon the words shows how a form of words may carry two vitally differing meanings. Bishop Gardiner, for example, found full support for the doctrine of Transubstantiation in these words, and to use his own expression about the canon of the 1549 Prayer Book, "we require of God the creatures of bread and wine to be sanctified and TO BE TO US the Body and Blood of Christ, which they cannot be, unless God worketh it and make them so to be. . . . Cranmer, on the other hand, says in reply to this, "we do not pray

that the creatures of bread and wine may BE the Body and Blood of Christ ; but that they may BE TO US the Body and Blood of Christ, that is to say, that we may so eat them and drink that we may be partakers of His Body crucified, and of His Blood shed for our redemption." The two quotations are worth pondering over, especially as they are a fair comment on the similar form of words proposed in the Green Book canon which is going to be interpreted in the light of the English Church Union Declaration of 1922. The fact remains that the difference between the two interpretations comes from the confusing by Gardiner of the thing with the thing signified, and in particular localizing the Presence of Christ in the elements, whilst Cranmer sees in the elements an instrument of grace as the primitive Fathers had done. It cannot be insisted too strongly that Cranmer had given up the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and had also given up the belief in a " Real Presence " in or under the form of bread and wine by the time of the issue of the 1549 Prayer Book. This can be seen in the Great Parliamentary Debate of 1548, and in Cranmer's treatise of the Holy Communion published in 1550.

This was the reason, therefore, for the drastic changes which took place in the 1552 Prayer Book. So far as the wit of man could devise Cranmer deliberately broke up and rearranged the canon for the express purpose of removing ambiguities with regard to the Presence of Christ in the Holy Communion. Students of liturgy may regret the change, but it was inevitable if the service was to be freed from the mediæval conception of a localized Presence contained within the bread and wine. Cranmer's whole purpose was to avoid any form of words and any construction of prayer in the Communion office which would lend themselves to the perversion of primitive teaching.

Cranmer's point of view at the time of the revision of the 1549 Prayer Book may be seen in the following extract from his Answer to Gardiner in 1551. He writes : " The old writers many times do say that Christ and the Holy Ghost be present in the Sacraments, not meaning by that manner of speech, that Christ and the Holy Ghost be present in the water, bread, or wine (which be only the outward visible Sacraments), but that in the due ministration of the Sacraments, according to Christ's ordinance and institution, Christ and His Holy Spirit be truly and indeed present by their

mighty and sanctifying power, virtue, and grace in all them that worthily receive the same. Moreover when I say and repeat many times in my book, that the body of Christ is present in them that worthily receive the Sacrament, lest any man should mistake my words, and think that I mean, that although Christ be not corporally in the outward visible sign, yet He is corporally in the persons that duly receive them : this is to advertise the reader that I mean no such thing, but my meaning is that the force, the grace, the virtue and benefit of Christ's body that was crucified for us, and of His blood that was shed for us, be really and effectually present with all them that duly receive the Sacrament. But all this I understand of His spiritual presence, of the which He saith, I will be with you until the world's end ; and wheresoever two or three be gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them ; and he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him."

Such is Cranmer's clear and unmistakable teaching. There are no subtle refinements of language which would allow his meaning to be misconstrued, but, as far as words could permit him, he definitely repudiated the localization of a Presence of Christ in the bread and wine, and brought the English Church back to the primitive teaching that Christ was "present in the due ministration of the Sacrament," that He was "present in all that worthily receive the Sacrament," and that the consecrated elements were instrumentally a cause for the realization of His Presence.

The same clear and unmistakable teaching is found in Hooker, and the following extracts are sufficiently indicative of the point of view of this great Anglican divine. He says, for example, in Book V, lxvii. 5, that "the bread and cup are His body and blood because they are causes instrumental upon the receipt whereof the participation of His body and blood ensueth . . ." and this statement is in itself a reversion to the teaching of the Fathers. In further explanation he says in the chapter following the above: "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament . . . I see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ, when and where the bread is His body, or the cup His blood, but only in the very heart and soul of him which receiveth them. As for the sacraments, they really exhibit, but for aught we can gather out of that which is written of them, they are not

really nor do really contain in themselves that grace which with them or by them it pleaseth God to bestow . . ." These passages could be reinforced by many others from Hooker, and the Anglo-Catholic divines of the seventeenth century bear witness to the same teaching. The general position is quite clear, therefore, and bears out the truth of the judgment of the Privy Council in the Bennett case (1872) that the Church of England does not teach a Presence of Christ in or under the form of bread and wine in the Holy Communion.

This brings us to this third consideration. Granted that the primitive Fathers did not teach the localization of the Presence of Christ in the bread and wine, and that the Reformation in England was an endeavour to recover the spiritual teaching of the Fathers, and that the divines of the Anglican Church have consistently followed the primitive and Reformation teaching, what is to be said for the policy of acquiescing in the new alternate canon as suggested by the Green Book?

The answer lies surely in the outline given above. The Green Book canon, with the English Church Union Declaration as the standard of interpretation, falls into the category of definitions of the Presence of Christ in the Holy Communion which have brought disaster to the whole Church in the past. That it has revived some of the old superstitious usages of the Middle Ages is only too clear by the way in which the Presence of Christ is presupposed in the churches where the Sacrament is reserved, and by a corresponding sense of the absence of Christ when the worshippers have left these churches. By whatever refinements of language it may be attempted to prevent the belief in a purely materialistic change in the consecrated elements as was done by the mediæval schoolmen, or by refusing to define the method of change as the English Church Union Declaration does, the error and the danger remain the same. Those who are at all familiar with the present-day teaching of the Roman Catholic Church know how many of the more educated Romanists endeavour to avoid the materialism of Transubstantiation by reverting to the position of the mediæval schoolmen. This does not, however, save the position so far as the popular and official views are concerned. The ordinary view of the average Roman Catholic is materialistic, and it is the obvious corollary from the Tridentine decree which enunciates the doctrine of Transubstan-

tiation. The same holds good of the English Church Union position. It may be feasible for some of those who hold that position to localize the Presence of Christ in the elements and yet at the same time to disbelieve in a material change in the elements. The position is a dangerous one, however—even if it was a true one—and the inevitable result is a confusing of the spiritual Presence with a material Presence in the bread and wine. Moreover, for all practical purposes the emphasis upon a spiritual Presence in the elements is no proper safeguard from a wrong use of the Sacrament, because the demand for adoration is the logical sequence whether the Presence is looked upon either as spiritual or material. The three “new Tracts for our Times” sent to the members of the House of Clergy during its last session are a painful reminder of these warnings.

My conclusion, therefore, is that acquiescence in the proposed new canon of the Green Book, whether by permitting it as an alternate use or any other way, is a repudiation of the position taken up by the English Church at the Reformation and a repudiation of the position consistently followed by the great Anglican divines since that time. Moreover, it belies the teaching of the Church of the early years, and merely takes up a point of view developed in a corrupt age. Fundamentally the aim of the new canon is to commit the Church of England to the doctrine of a localized Presence in or under the forms of bread and wine, a doctrine which is a perversion of the truth for which the Reformed Church of England stands.

