

THE CHURCHMAN

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Autumn Session of the House of Clergy.

AT the session held in November the House of Clergy resumed their consideration of the Prayer Book revision proposals. Some of the Occasional offices were under review. Popular interest in the revision seems to be more centred on the proposed changes in these, than on the larger issues involved in the more serious alterations in the Communion Service. The creation of a loophole for the introduction of the doctrine of the Mass is a far more important matter than any of the changes suggested in the Baptismal or Marriage services, yet the secular press devoted much more attention to the retention or omission of the word "obey" in the latter.

The course of the discussion in the House at this session has deepened the widespread regret that a subject so important and far-reaching in its results as Prayer Book revision should have come up at such an early stage in the history of the Church Assembly. The debates gave an impression of want of proportion. There seemed to be considerable difficulty among the members themselves to understand the course of procedure. To the casual visitor in the gallery the gathering had an air of ineffectiveness, and he might well be pardoned for thinking that the members did not realise that they were engaged in legislating for the great historic Church of England.

A Want of Sense of Proportion.

When the discussion came down to some of the smaller points in the services, it was possible to understand the somewhat vigor-

ously expressed indignation of the writer of a letter to *The Times* who said, "I speak for many laymen and clerics when I say how very puerile and futile are these discussions in the Church Assembly on chrisom and chrisom, and candles and the duty of obedience in a wife. When there are really important and live questions before the Church, such as reunion, Prayer Book revision, Church schools, etc., which are not yet settled (one wonders if they ever will be!). To debate such tomfool puerilities, and whether a wife shall perjure herself by promising to obey her husband, does seem to us a wicked waste of time. . . . No wonder laymen, and a few sensible clergy, lose heart and patience and despair of the Church of England."

When the demand is ever growing more persistent that the Church shall recognise its great mission and "get on with its work" it certainly appears to indicate an incomprehensible lack of the sense of proportion to find some of the ablest intellects and busiest men engaged in efforts of amazing ingenuity to put forward reasons for the adoption of practices that will not help to win a single soul for Christ, or strengthen and deepen the faith of believers, or build up their spiritual life. We often hear complaints of controversy being carried on while the great realities are neglected. Those who occupy the time of the Houses of the Church Assembly with these proposals show a deplorable example.

Uncertainty and Confusion.

At the outset the Chairman had to remind the House that they were discussing N.A. 84, and that there were some 200 amendments to be dealt with. He referred to the multiplicity of books—Grey, Green, Orange, etc., before them. To these another was added—a Blue Book apparently containing some compromise adopted in the Jerusalem Chamber with regard to the Baptismal service. There were also some papers referred to as Clergy 1, 2 and 3, and some reports from the House of Laity were expected. We may be pardoned for observing that this confusing complexity of documents seems to indicate some want of business capacity and good management somewhere. The Chairman also stated that provision was made in the measure for the House of Bishops and the Convocations to issue from time to time supplementary services. The uncertainty, confusion and vacillation apparent in these

matters seem to indicate that even at this late hour it would be better for the Church if the whole scheme were dropped. In view of the want of permanency in the revision, the prospect of minor changes being constantly brought forward, and this newly indicated power of the Bishops to authorize additional services, together with the total absence of any guarantee that obedience can be secured to the Prayer Book or its numerous alternative forms, many are seriously asking if it would not be well for the Bishops to postpone the whole scheme, or failing that, if it would not be advisable for Church people to appeal to Parliament to reject the measure.

"Dumb and Dark Ceremonies."

When the Baptismal office came up for consideration some hoped that a shortened form would be adopted for use in the course of Morning or Evening Prayer, but the proposals were of quite a different character. The chief point of interest seems to have been the adoption of the ceremonies of anointing the child, of the putting on the child of the chrisom after reception, the priest saying, "Take this white vesture for a token of the innocency given unto thee," etc., and also the presentation of a lighted candle either to the child or the godfather, the priest saying, "Receive the light of Christ, that when the bridegroom cometh thou mayest go forth with all the saints to meet Him," etc. One of the speakers described these as "dumb and dark ceremonies" in spite of the lighted candle. He pointed out that these had once been in use in the Church but had been deliberately rejected by our forefathers. The general wish we believe was that the Baptismal service should be simplified and made more intelligible to the mass of the people. These innovations would on the contrary render it less intelligible and would add an undesirable element of "fussiness." We are told that the purpose of their introduction is to add dignity to the service. Even the *Guardian* speaks of the acceptance of the chrisom and lighted candle (the chrisom was rejected) as due to a desire to add importance to the service. It is difficult to understand how they will do so. Any one who has been present at a baptism in a Roman Catholic Church in Italy will smile at the idea of dignity and importance being added to the service by the chrisom and the lighted candle.

The Dignified Simplicity of our Services.

To witness such ceremonies leads to a greater appreciation of the simplicity and dignity of the services of our own Communion. One result of the decision in the House of Clergy has been to arouse a sense of merriment and ridicule at their expense. Some of the comments expressed in lay circles, and in the secular press, were not flattering to the intelligence or sense of humour of that body, while others feel that this is another step in that rapidly developing process of driving wedges between the Church and the people of England, with the exception perhaps of the ecclesiastically-minded layman. The House very wisely rejected the proposal to follow the example of the Roman Church in anointing the candidates at Confirmation.

It would be well to take note of the recent statement of the Bishop of Coventry that "there is a real danger that the practice as well as the Liturgy of the Church might be fundamentally altered in a way which did not commend itself to the vast majority of the clergy and laity. The clergy should be certain that they were following not some fashion of the hour, but customs which held a great Catholic tradition, and which could be justified from the Scriptures." By Catholic tradition we are sure that the Bishop did not mean Roman Catholic. This is clear from his requirement that they could be justified from the Scriptures. That is the principle our Church has asserted since the time of the Reformation.

The Marriage Service.

In the discussion on the Marriage service a considerable amount of time was spent over the proposal to change the question addressed to the woman from "Wilt thou obey him and serve him" into "Wilt thou love him and comfort him." It was also proposed to change "love, cherish and obey" into "love, cherish and serve." The former was rejected by 100 votes to 69, and the latter after a recount (another instance of the peculiar methods of the house) was accepted by 86 to 78. There is no doubt that the omission of the word "obey" would have been generally acceptable. Some of the arguments advanced for its retention appeared to indicate that the speakers were completely out of touch with the actualities of life. The refusal to alter the phrase "with all my worldly goods I thee endow" seems to indicate the same want of touch with

reality. The harmless practice frequently adopted now of the woman giving a ring to the man was also forbidden. In these as in so many other matters the House of Clergy seems out of touch with the general feeling of the people. The opinion of some student of the liturgies or practices of any century between the sixth and the sixteenth seems to have more weight with them than the consideration of the practical needs and the outlook of the people of England in the twentieth century. Yet one of the first principles of the Revision of the Prayer Book when the scheme was proposed eighteen years ago was its adaptation to the life of to-day.

Reservation of the Elements Sanctioned.

One of the most important decisions was in regard to the Reservation of the Elements in the Communion Service for the use of the sick. The rubrics were so drawn as to permit first of the elements being taken on the same day to the sick, and secondly of the elements being reserved in the Church for use at some subsequent time. There were many, including some among the Evangelical members of the House, who were prepared to support the first of these proposals. They felt however that it would be impossible to support the second, especially after the declaration of Dr. Darwell Stone at the July sessions, that he and his party desired to use the reserved elements for purposes of adoration. Attempts to separate the two proposals were in vain, and the House passed unreservedly the rubrics permitting reservation. This decision with the changes already sanctioned in the Communion Service indicates the most radical change in the teaching and practice of the Church of England yet reached. Even more moderate members of the "Catholic" School recognize the dangers that are connected with the practice, and although in private some of them may express their opposition to it, yet the extremists who advocate such purely Roman observances as the Assumption of the Virgin and Corpus Christi seem to be able to get their own way over their less advanced friends.

Prayers for the Dead.

When the Order for the Burial of the Dead came before the House several significant changes were proposed. It was suggested

that new services should be introduced—"Placebo or Evensong of the Departed and Dirige or Mattins of the Departed." It was not made clear what the nature of these services was to be. The House was told that in consequence of the war an entire change of view had taken place as to prayers for the departed. It is well known that the Church of England has not had public prayers of this character since the Reformation, whatever may have been allowed as to private practice. Such prayers, Bishop Ingham pointed out, had been grievously abused in the past, and with the introduction of Requiem Masses there can be no doubt they will be abused again. If it were only desired that there should be, as one of the speakers suggested, a simple form of commemoration of the faithful departed, no serious objection would be raised, but when Dr. Darwell Stone's proposal was accepted that the Gloria should be omitted after the psalms in the Burial Service and the words substituted "Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them" it is clear that we are well on the way to the old abuses that led the Reformers in their wisdom to remove public prayers for the dead from our services. The sanctioned observance of All Souls' Day, which originated in the saying of masses for the souls in torture in purgatory, is an indication of the real significance of this movement.

Favouring the Extremists.

In the absence of the Dean of Westminster, the Dean of York acted as Chairman at these sessions. Two statements from the Chair in the course of the meetings deserve attention. One was in reply to a speaker who indicated that some of the changes proposed went beyond anything that had ever been found in any Anglican Prayer Book, and that the House was creating a serious situation for English religion as it was bolting and barring the door against Home Reunion. He added that "everything the House did seemed to favour the extremists." Many feel that all the changes are in one direction and tend towards one end, yet the Chairman interrupted this speaker to say that "extremism in any form was exactly what the House had endeavoured with considerable success to avoid in all their deliberations." Many will question whether the Dean is the best judge on this point.

The other statement was his declaration, "It was some time

since C.A. 84 was first produced. Many things had happened since then and every day that passed saw a widening knowledge and increasing interest in Church affairs. It would be a misfortune if that House submitted a Revised Prayer Book on the lines of what was required perhaps some years ago instead of to-day." This seems to give weight to our view that there is no finality in this revision. It may be re-opened every few years if in the opinion of a sufficient number in the Church Assembly the lines of a few years past are not sufficiently up to date.

The Finality of the Revision.

This question of the finality of the revision is one that ought to be considered carefully. In the Report of the Committee which drew up N.A. 60 it was stated :

" From what has been said it will be seen that we do not claim finality for our work. Indeed we have clearly indicated that further revision not only may, but will, be needed in the future. But we believe that if legal authority be given to the forms that we submit, time will show which of them really commend themselves to the judgment of the Church at large ; and in this manner the way will be prepared for a further revision some years hence, when we hope that greater uniformity of use than seems at present possible may be secured with the general consent of all Church people."

The aim expressed by the compilers of the Green Book should also be noted when they say :

" There is, therefore, in our opinion, no other course open to ' Catholic-minded ' members of the Church of England than frankly to resign themselves to an era of liturgical experimentation and ' alternative Rites,' to endure the resulting confusion and discomfort as best they may, and to concentrate their efforts upon securing permission to build up a really august and majestic English Catholic Rite."

We may fairly say that the aim of the extremists is to keep the Prayer Book in the melting-pot until the time is ripe for the exclusion of all but the " really august and majestic English Catholic Rite."

The Presentation of the Bishop Knox Memorial.

Bishop Knox, accompanied by a strong and representative deputation of the signatories, presented the Memorial against changes in the Service of Holy Communion, and against alternative

Communion Services to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth on November 27.

The Bishop had previously written an introductory letter to His Grace in which he stated the desire of the 305,000 memorialists, and answered objections raised against the form of Petition, its contents and the manner of its promotion. This Letter has been published by Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. (price 3*d.*), and ought to be widely read. It shows that the Memorial refers only to the Holy Communion. It had been represented as an appeal "from the bar of learning to that of ignorance, from sound and well-informed reason to blind prejudice; from sober Churchmanship to intolerant partisanship." Dr. Knox points out that the Memorialists are simply asking for the same decision as the Upper House of Canterbury made ten years ago. No new discoveries in liturgical knowledge have since been made, and the Bishops could not be described as "ignorant and prejudiced partisans." Several other objections are answered with the same effectiveness. The signatories sent in their names in spite of opposition and in some cases of intimidation. This opposition found expression in "Parochial Magazines—in at least one Diocesan Magazine, from Cathedral pulpits, in Diocesan Conferences and even in the Convocation of York."

"Cruel Want of Consideration."

The Memorial, the Letter goes on to say, represented the views of many who had been driven from their Parish Churches by changes "made with cruel want of consideration." The objection to alternative services was fairly and moderately stated. When examined in the light of the New Testament they were found to be less faithful to that standard, and the permission to use them would shatter our Church into narrow groups. They represented divergences on foundation principles. The Tractarians and their successors, in spite of the favour of Prime Ministers and the influence of a section of the Press, have lacked the confidence of the English nation. The Movement has not captured the Church as a whole, nor the people of England. The reason is that it has never been able to persuade the English nation that it expresses quite truthfully the faith and worship of the Book of Common Prayer, or that it is able to set clear limits to its Romeward reaction.

This letter constituted a strong apologia for the Memorial. The first speaker was the Marquis of Lincolnshire, who gave his own experience of the methods used to introduce the Mass. He appointed, on the recommendation of his Bishop, a clergyman to the old Parish Church of an important town. Within a few months Choral Eucharist without communicants was introduced and there was no redress. Lady Leitrim spoke on behalf of the country villages where similar changes were introduced, and the people ceased to attend a worship which they could not comprehend.

Sound Principles of Worship.

Sir William Joynson-Hicks, speaking not as Home Secretary but as a loyal member of the Church, pointed out the grave dangers in the proposals. He feared the disruption of the Church. They were tolerant of many changes, but they were opposed to the Mass, which would be sanctioned under the proposed alternatives, and these would also lead to reservation in the "Tabernacles" for purposes of worship. They appealed to the Bishops as they did not wish the doctrines of the Church to be discussed in Parliament, but they would be bound to fight to the last ditch on behalf of the truth. Bishop Ingham spoke of the effect of the revision upon the Church in the oversea dominions.

The Archbishop in his reply expressed his gratitude for the contribution made by the speakers to the material to be brought before the Bishops. He acknowledged the moderation and reserve with which they had spoken. He assured them that such a representation as they had made would receive the careful consideration of the House of Bishops. He was not in a position to express any opinion as to what the Bishops would do when the matter came before them. The questions at issue touch some of the profoundest elements of the Church's faith. They could rest assured that the Bishops would stand loyally to the distinctive doctrines and the sound principles of worship which characterize and are prized by the Church of England. No more could be expected from the Archbishop at that stage, and it is exceedingly unfair and ungenerous of opponents of the Memorial to seek to minimize the importance of His Grace's reply by saying that it was marked by characteristic reserve and caution. Churchmen will look to the

Bishops to be faithful and fearless in maintaining sound principles of worship.

The Patronage Report.

The second Report of the Committee on Church Patronage has been issued, but the Church Assembly has postponed consideration of it till the Spring Session. The delay is welcome, for the Report bristles with proposals of a highly controversial character, and it is important that Churchpeople should have an opportunity of expressing their views upon it before the Assembly proceeds to deal with it. The first Report recommended the preparation of a Measure making the right of patronage of a benefice incapable of sale after two vacancies subsequent to the passing of the Measure ; and so strong was the support accorded to the proposal that a Measure on those lines passed quickly through the Assembly and has since received the Royal Assent. Thus the sale of livings, involving what is euphemistically called " the traffic in souls," will in a few years be brought absolutely to an end. This fact should be borne in mind when considering the second Report, as it furnishes a key to the due understanding of the significance of some at least of its proposals. For example, if a private patron is no longer able to sell his interest in the advowson, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he will be more ready to transfer it, and the Report does not hesitate to suggest that the transfer should be to the Bishop or to the Diocesan Board of Patronage which it is proposed should be established in every diocese, of which the Bishop would be chairman. Yet the Committee accept the principle of private patronage, and " on the whole " think that its variety is productive of good results as, for one thing, " it tends to prevent the domination of any one party in the Church." There are some 7,000 benefices in private patronage, or about one-half of the total number ; it is interesting to conjecture how many of these will remain so after a few years of the working of the new system of patronage—always supposing, of course, that the proposals are given effect to. The whole trend of the Report is to strengthen the powers of the Bishops, and if these recommendations are agreed to the amount of patronage in episcopal hands, directly or indirectly, will be enormously increased.

The Rights of Parishioners.

In any new scheme of patronage the rights of parishioners must inevitably receive attention. It is a matter of real difficulty, but the Committee are clear that "the parishioners should have some effective means of expressing their views and real protection against the intrusion of an unsuitable clerk," but whether their proposals will meet the need is open to doubt. The Committee recognize that the rights of the patron must not be unduly interfered with and that the casting of an undeserved slur upon the nominee must be avoided, and so they have come to the conclusion that "the most satisfactory way of giving effect to these principles is by an enlargement of the powers of the Bishop." Their recommendations are to the effect that, on a vacancy occurring in the benefice, the Parochial Church Council may make representations to the patron and the Bishop as to the needs of the parish; and that the Bishop may, on receiving the name of the intended presentee, inform the patron that his nominee is unfitted for that particular benefice and that the Bishop would be unwilling to institute him. From this episcopal decision the patron would have the right of appeal to the Archbishop, but the parishioners, whatever may be the decision of the Bishop, are given no such right. We are glad to see that two members of the Committee, Sir Thomas Inskip and Canon Guy Rogers, add a note of dissent from this part of the Report. "There is no provision," they say, "by which parishioners are enabled to prevent the appointment of an incumbent who is entirely unacceptable by reason of his opinions on matters of doctrine and ritual to the parishioners." It will, we think, be generally agreed that unless some such provision is made the value of the other proposals will not count for much, and that amendment on these lines is absolutely imperative.

The Diocesan Board of Patronage.

The proposed Diocesan Board of Patronage would consist of the Bishop, the Archdeacon, the Rural Dean, and two beneficed clergy and four laymen elected by the Diocesan Conference. It is suggested that the Board should have the patronage within the diocese now falling to Roman Catholics, Jews, Aliens, Lunatics, Infants, Bankrupts, and persons against whom within the last ten years a conviction has become conclusive. The Board, it is hoped, would come in also for a large share of the patronage now in private hands, for the Committee "think that there are many patrons who would prefer to transfer their patronage to a Diocesan Board, if there was one, rather than to the Bishop or a party trust." The Committee make proposals for the rearrangement of Crown patronage in the interests, generally, of the Bishops or the Diocesan Boards—and Bishops, whose patronage "needs to be strengthened," are to have the appointment to the principal incumbencies in the larger towns.

Trust Patronage.

The Report shows a strong bias against what it calls "party trusts." While it is admitted that the trustees conscientiously endeavour to act in the way which they consider most beneficial to the Church, the Report adds that "patronage trusts tend to accentuate partisanship within the Church." The Committee look to the establishment of Diocesan Patronage Boards to "check the extension of this form of trust patronage," and recommend that "trustee patrons should in all cases be set free from all restrictions which now govern their choice in making appointments to benefices—they should be free in all cases to appoint any fit and proper person."

Sir Thomas Inskip's Dissent.

The best answer to the proposals of the Committee in regard to Episcopal Patronage and Trust Patronage is to be found in the note and reservation of Sir Thomas Inskip.

In regard to the former he says: "I am not prepared to assent to an extension of episcopal patronage which is already very extensive. I regret to be compelled to express the opinion that evangelical clergy of perfect loyalty and integrity as well as ability are in many cases practically excluded from enjoying episcopal patronage in the way of presentation to benefices. I am far from saying that this criticism is of universal application, for I am aware that there are many notable exceptions; but in many cases the opinion is held by Bishops that adequate provision is made for evangelical clergy by trust patronage. I do not dissent from the opinion that the Bishop is primarily responsible for the spiritual efficiency of his diocese, but I am not prepared, under the conditions which exist in the Church to-day, to see key positions placed to any larger extent in episcopal hands."

As regards Trust Patronage he says: "I respectfully dissent from the proposal that trustee patrons should be set free from any of the trusts to maintain which they became trustees. The suggestion that trustees should be free in all cases to appoint any fit and proper person is one that does not require any alteration in any trust deeds with which I am acquainted. Opinions differ as to the qualifications of a 'fit and proper person,' and undoubtedly many trust deeds contain statements of principle by which such matters are to be judged. I do not believe that trust patronage has prevented in any way the 'healthy development of thought,' and, on the whole, the continuity afforded by the exercise of trust patronage is very much welcomed by parishioners."

These are wise and weighty reservations, and Evangelical Churchmen will be thankful that Sir Thomas Inskip, as a member of the Committee, felt able to make them. They will carry conviction in the country.