

THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1926

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Coal Strike.

THE Coal Strike has engaged a large share of public attention during the past quarter. Its immediate effects are so imperceptible that its disastrous nature is likely for a time to pass unnoticed. Life for most of us has seemed to go on much as usual, yet the cessation of work in the mines has surely and steadily been sapping our national resources. More suffering will probably be ultimately caused to those engaged in other industries than to those actually employed in the coal trade. The families of the miners, in spite of many reports to the contrary, seem to have been well cared for by the local authorities in the mining areas. It is regrettable that additional bitterness was given to the dispute by the exaggerated statements made as to the prevalence of starvation and want. Those familiar with the districts concerned have stated that apart from a decrease in the consumption of tobacco, and a lessening of the numbers attending cinemas—in some measure attributable to the summer weather—there are few signs of change in the usual mode of living. It is stated that the health reports in some mining areas have shown an improvement during the strike period. We are all thankful to see that there are signs of a return to work, and we hope that conditions will be improved and a happy solution found for the present difficulties.

The Bishops' Intervention.

The well-meant intervention of a number of Christian people, including some sixteen of our own Bishops and several ministers of the Free Churches, has led to much unfortunate criticism. The use of the words "Representatives of the Churches" gave occasion for severe comments on the representative character of the group. It was certainly open to any body of Christian men, actuated by Christian zeal, to endeavour to secure some settlement between the Mine-owners and the Miners. Mismanagement of the publication of the outcome of the meetings with the miners and misunderstanding as to the real purpose of the intervention seem to have added fuel to an already kindling fire. We hold no brief for any of the parties in the dispute, and desire to see fair play all round. The various interpretations given to such terms as "moral issues" and "economic

conditions" added confusion to problems sufficiently complex to all but the most expert. Probably the Bishops' proposals, as they have been called, would have formed an adequate basis for further arbitration if there had been no reference to the continuance of a subsidy. This, we have been told, was all that the Bishops desired. They wished to keep open an avenue for approach on both sides, and the continuance of the subsidy was not an essential part of their scheme. Abuse will not help to decide differences of opinion as to what is moral and what is economic, and however useful sentiment may be for many purposes it cannot solve problems of supply and demand.

The Legislation of the Church Assembly.

The Church Assembly continues to come in for a large measure of criticism. It has certainly left itself open to unfavourable comment on the character of some of its legislation, the method adopted in securing its enactment, and the number of radical proposals brought forward in the brief course of its career. We appreciate much that the Assembly has already been able to accomplish, but as we have already pointed out to our readers, the tendency to centralization is growing with a rapidity likely to produce unforeseen and dangerous results unless it is firmly and consistently restrained. *The Daily Telegraph* has recently given prominence to a glaring case of the consequences of hasty and insufficiently considered legislation. A correspondence in its columns pointed out that an Act of the Assembly, shortly to be presented to Parliament—the Benefices (Ecclesiastical Duties) Measure—will deprive any clergyman accused of negligence in the discharge of his duties as incumbent of a parish "of the right of every accused person to know the charge brought against him, to answer it in a court of law, and to have the verdict of his peers on the case submitted to them." We cannot believe that this was the intention of the Assembly in passing the measure, but it is a warning of the autocratic and tyrannous powers that may be conferred upon the central authorities of the Church, without adequate safeguards for the rights of individuals.

The Independence of the Clergy.

The same journal points out in a leading article that "a large proportion of the legislation carried through the Assembly has been directed against the independence of the parochial clergy." This is a further outcome of the process of centralization. A great statesman had a favourite expression when accused of wishing unduly to accelerate reforms—that he preferred to be the engine rather than the brake. This is a laudable desire which we all share, but it ought not to blind us to the fact that a brake is essential, and that without it there are occasions when disaster is inevitable. It has been unkindly suggested by one of the older clergy that the Church authorities have so little confidence in the type of men who are now being admitted to orders, that they desire

to restrain their freedom of action as much as possible, and so render the Church—as it has been effectively if crudely expressed—“fool-proof.” This may be a desirable aim, but it must be remembered that in future years the Church will not necessarily be bound by legislation adopted now. The Church Assembly will be free in days to come to alter or rescind any or all of the measures now put into force. In fact, one of the objections raised to the revision of the Prayer Book is that whatever decisions are settled, steps will be almost immediately taken by those disagreeing from them to secure alterations at the earliest possible date.

Reforms Needed.

These conditions, we are told, are not due to any defects in the constitution of the Assembly, but to the method of working it. Too much is in the hands of the official element. There is no organized opposition. The proposals are drafted in Committees and “members in charge of measures are in a position of advantage much greater than that of Ministers in the House of Commons, for as a rule they alone have the facilities for acquiring and marshalling relevant facts. It frequently happens, indeed, that the text of measures is circulated so shortly before their introduction that the rank and file have extremely little opportunity of studying them carefully. Lately, the speed of legislation has been accelerated by the practice of taking a division or ‘final approval’ immediately the revision stage, corresponding to Committee stage, is complete.” Another “serious difference from Parliamentary custom is the method of appointing Committees of the Assembly to examine measures. Instead of including members known to be opposed to the measure concerned, as is the case with the appointment of Grand Committees of the House of Commons, it appears to be rather the practice to exclude them.” These obvious defects ought to be remedied at once. We are not convinced that the proposal to have all measures concerning the clergy considered first in the Lower Houses of Convocation and then introduced into the Assembly would be altogether advisable. It would be much better to secure more deliberate discussion and less hurried procedure in the Church Assembly itself.

Psychology and Religion.

It was anticipated by many students of theology, philosophy and human nature that a great effort would be made to enlist the theories and the methods of the New Psychology as allies in propaganda work on behalf of Roman and Anglo-Catholicism. A recent correspondence in a provincial paper shows that the views of a section of the new psychologists are being used to secure proselytes to the practice of private confession, by endeavouring to put forward a new scientific basis for it, and then founding an intellectual appeal on the theory set out. The theory is that “repressions” can only be eliminated and normality restored by bringing them

to expression in the conscious mind. This is used as an argument in favour of the constant and habitual use of private confession as a means of securing peace of conscience when troubled with a sense of guilt. The two may have an apparent outward resemblance but are far from being analogous. One is an exceptional remedy which may be of use in exceptional circumstances. The other is to be a regular habit of life. No one questions the usefulness of the confession of a sin when a burdened conscience can secure peace in no other way. It is an entirely different matter to make habitual confession and the necessity of receiving absolution from a priest an ordinary part of the routine of the spiritual life.

The Place of Confession in the Prayer Book.

It is, furthermore, a complete travesty of the teaching of our Church to say that the Church of England preserved "the sacrament of penance, as anybody can see who reads the first long exhortation in the Communion Service of our Prayer Book." Just the reverse is the case, as anyone can see who compares the terms of the present exhortation with that in the first Prayer Book of 1549. It has been frequently shown that the words in the later form of exhortation were subjected to several significant changes. "A learned priest" becomes "a learned minister of God's Word"; "confess and open his sin and grief secretly" becomes "let him open his grief"; "that of us as of the minister of God and of the Church he may receive comfort and absolution" becomes "that by the ministry of God's Word he may receive comfort and the benefit of absolution." To this must be added the fact that secret confession was allowable as a regular practice in 1549, but in the later Prayer Book it is clearly indicated that it is to be an exceptional practice only to be adopted in the case of those whose consciences are troubled and can be quieted in no other way. It must not be forgotten that the direct form of absolution is not found earlier than the eighth century, and was then only used by bishops in the readmission of penitents to Church privileges. It did not come into any kind of general use until the latter half of the thirteenth century. There is nothing primitive in it. It must also be observed that when the form occurs in the Visitation of the Sick, it is immediately followed by a prayer for forgiveness: "Impute not unto him his former sins," which would be obviously unnecessary if the priestly absolution was of the effectual character claimed for it by the advocates of priestly absolution.

The Growth of the Anglican Communion.

A recent sermon published in one of the Church papers contained a glowing account of the progress of the Church of England during the past ninety years—practically since the Tractarian Movement began. It was satisfactory to read of the various elements in that development, the increase in the number of bishoprics—seventeen in England and Wales—and the large sums raised for them,

the increase in the number of theological colleges—thirty-six—and two colleges at the Universities. “Could anything,” it was asked, “more clearly manifest the life and energy and devotion of the Mother Church of this land?” Abroad there has been similar growth. Ten bishops at the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign; to-day one hundred and twenty-nine. On this the comment was: “Think of that! I wonder if any such record as this could be found in any period of the Church’s history in any part of the world.” We may well be thankful for such progress, but we may also question whether it is as completely satisfactory as the preacher seems to think. The actual numbers are impressive, but it is necessary to see whether they are in proportion to other factors, e.g. the increase in the population of the various parts of the world, and the increase of other religious bodies in the same period. The Roman Catholics are supposed to have made great progress in this country since 1850, and there is constant evidence of their activity, yet careful statisticians point out that any real growth of that Church in proportion to the increase of the population would require it to have several million more adherents than it actually has at the present time. We do not know the figures in the case of our own Church, but the growth of the Free Churches would seem to indicate that our Church does not number among its members as large a proportion of the people as it did ninety years ago. The Electoral Rolls do not give grounds for much satisfaction.

Religious Education in Secondary Schools.

The religious teaching in our elementary schools has been a subject of prolonged and bitter controversy, and no completely satisfactory solution has even yet been reached. Meanwhile, the equally important problem of the religious education given in the secondary schools is treated with apparent indifference, except for the spasmodic efforts of those who know the actual state of affairs to secure some improvement by endeavouring to arouse Church opinion. The late Bishop Burge felt very strongly on the neglect of religious training in the majority of secondary schools, and frequently strove to bring about some much-needed improvements. Probably not more than three-quarters of an hour a week are given to any kind of scripture lesson in the greater number of the secondary schools under the control of the educational authorities throughout the country. In some schools there are probably numbers of the pupils who do not receive even this modicum of instruction. The teachers naturally plead that the pressure of other work, and especially of the subjects required for examinations, crush out the Scripture lesson. Those who regard the religious basis as the most important element in education cannot be satisfied with this treatment of the Bible. It may be urged that the whole of the educational work is conducted in a religious spirit. But even if this is the case, it cannot make up for the lack of a sound knowledge and a good understanding of the Old and New Testaments.

Editorial Note.

We are able to offer our readers in this number a careful estimate of the real significance and value of the principles of the Reformation in an article, "Reformation Principles—Are they worth Preserving?" by Canon V. F. Storr of Westminster Abbey. Canon Storr has taken a leading part in "The Call to Action," and this article helps to strengthen the appeal made in it to the great body of church-people. Miss Kathleen N. Gardiner was one of the lecturers to the Reformation Study Brotherhood at Dean Wace House. Her subject was "The Elizabethan Settlement of the Church." We are glad to be able to print a full report of her interesting lecture on this important subject. During the past year the four hundredth anniversary of the translation of the New Testament into English and its introduction into England has been commemorated, though not as extensively or as fully as such an epoch-making event deserved. Mr. W. Guy Johnson pays a well-merited tribute to the heroic labours of William Tyndale in his full and interesting account of "William Tyndale and the English New Testament of 1525." In his treatment of "The Marriage of Cana and Its Symbolism," Dr. W. H. Rigg, Vicar of Beverley Minster, gives one of his studies of a portion of St. John's Gospel, which many readers have already learned to value for the wide and accurate knowledge of the literature of the subject which they display. The Ecclesiastical Courts will shortly be a subject of keen discussion in the Church Assembly when the Report of the Commission on them comes up for consideration. There are a number of difficult problems in connection with the proposed changes. Some of these, and especially those concerning the alteration of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the final Court of Appeal, are subjected to expert examination at the hands of Mr. W. T. Lawrance, K.C., in his article "Ecclesiastical Courts." Dr. Sydney Carter, Principal of the B.C.M. College, Clifton, is well known to our readers as a capable writer on historical subjects. His analysis of the teaching of the Caroline divines on the Scriptures and the Rule of Faith is one of a useful series explaining the teaching of some of our great divines, who were regarded until the latest phases of the Anglo-Catholic movement began as the authoritative teachers of the Anglican position. The early publishing season this year was probably affected by conditions arising from the Coal Strike, and the autumn season has scarcely begun at the time when we have to enlist the services of our reviewers. We have, however, tried to make up for the more restricted range than usual by the importance and interest of the books reviewed.