

# THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1928.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

### Our Changing Church.

IN an article on the Church Assembly written in April 1925 the Bishop of Durham referred to the changes which are taking place in the Church of England. He was an opponent of the Enabling Act of 1919. He feared that its effect upon the Church would be disastrous. As recently as 1925 he was anxious about the nature of the legislation enacted by the Church Assembly. In this article he said: "At the present rate of law-making the entire system of the National Church will have been transformed within another five years. The Church of England will be different, so different that it may be even unrecognizable." He went on to speak of the character of the questions with which the Church Assembly was then about to deal. He described them as "extremely complicated and highly contentious." He emphasized their fundamental character and the changes they involved in our whole conception of Christianity. His conclusion was "Patronage, the appointment of bishops, above all, Prayer Book Revision, are surely matters of crucial importance, which go to the roots not merely of the established system, but also of the national religion. It cannot be right, equitable or prudent that the mind of the English laity should have no more effective instrument of self-expression than that which the Church Assembly provides." Dr. Henson, like some of the other Bishops, has apparently changed his views since he wrote these words, but they still represent the opinions of many who are anxious, as he once was, about the future of our Church.

### The Intellectual and Spiritual Basis of the Changes.

The changes taking place in the Church at the present time are even more revolutionary than the Bishop of Durham's article indicates. The external alterations in worship and organization are the outcome of an intellectual and spiritual change which has developed without being as fully recognized as it should be. It is not recognized clearly that the whole cultural background of our Church has been gradually changing and the nature of the change has not been sufficiently noted. The national character is before everything else practical. It has a large element of the simplicity which comes from a special

type of idealism. It lacks the subtilty of the casuist. It has little sympathy with mere theorists, and brings all its energy to bear on getting things done. In its religious life simplicity and idealism were the chief characteristics. These could be traced back during the past four hundred years to the acceptance of the Bible as God's Word. The English people have been the people of the Book. This in its turn was traceable to the Reformation. The work of Erasmus, the Renaissance movement, the humanism of the sixteenth century combined to provide the English Church with the cultural background which found expression in the "simplicity of Protestant worship." Even the Protestant Scholasticism which resulted in a measure of formal statement of doctrine was due to the same practical spirit which dictates one line of thought and conduct as right and true and another as false.

#### The Nature of the Reaction.

Much of this has been lost. Ingenuity and subtilty have taken the place of the old simplicity. Casuistry is being advocated, and to the ordinary mind this implies an effort to make the worse appear the better, to justify a course of thought and action of which conscience may not readily approve. Feats of mental gymnastics become necessary. Spiritual outlook alters with the change of mental outlook. New authorities are sought for new lines of conduct and new methods of worship. The Church of Rome with its medieval scholasticism, and the subtleties of a highly developed system of casuistry, is given a new position of influence. The whole character of the Church of England thus is undergoing a subtle change. The old simplicity of worship is giving way to a symbolism foreign to our Church, and based on teaching which has been regarded as false since the Reformers emerged from the bonds of medieval darkness. From the sunlight of truth we see our Church returning to the twilight of human tradition. It is a short step to the lower level of magic and superstition. Sacerdotalism and priestcraft are not remote dangers which can be safely ignored. The conception of worship which is based on them has found a lodgment again in many of our churches. Requiems, Holy Water, the use of incense, crossings, genuflexions and the whole ceremonial order foreign to our national conception of Christianity have found a place because of the medieval change in our cultural background.

#### The Deposited Book and the Reaction.

It is in the face of these conditions that the Church is asked by the Bishops to accept a revision of the Prayer Book, which many are justified in regarding as a further means of destroying the old simplicity and purity of our national religion and worship. Some speak as if the opponents of the Deposited Book wished to reject the whole of the revision, which we are told has taken twenty years to accomplish. This is far from the truth. There has been a general desire to accept those portions of the Book which really meet the needs of the twentieth century. The provision made for

elasticity and modernization has been very widely welcomed. The special work of the Bishops during the past three years has not met with universal approval, because it tends to restore medieval features and false conceptions, especially in the Communion Service. The Bishops ought not to have placed the Church in the dilemma of either accepting the Book with these objectionable elements or rejecting the whole revision, including those parts desired and approved by the whole Church. From some of the references made by Archbishops and Bishops to the ignorance, misconception, misunderstanding and prejudice of the opponents of the new Book, it might be surmised that these were the characteristics of only one side in the discussion. From some of the statements of the supporters of the Book it might easily be shown that these characteristics are to be found not only in the defence of the objectionable features in the Book, but also in the misrepresentation of those who, with equal scholarship, are unable to accept the views of the Bishops.

#### **The Assurances of the Bishops.**

A strong appeal has been made to the Church to trust the Bishops. The words of the Archbishop of Canterbury are quoted as an assurance that obedience to the new Book will be required. He said on the introduction of the measure: "You may take it from me as absolutely certain that the Bishops will require obedience, and will do their utmost to secure it." Even the representatives of the Free Churches have expressed their doubts as to the effectiveness of the assurances given. Professor Carnegie Simpson in his memorandum to the Ecclesiastical Committee said, "What has been offered on this point by the Archbishop of Canterbury is not sufficient, though of course its sincerity is not for a moment questioned. Still less is the anticipation of some future Ecclesiastical Discipline Bill sufficient. What is requisite is a pledge that the Bishops will unitedly withdraw all spiritual episcopal recognition from any plain transgressor of the limits laid down in this book. . . . The Bishops should not, in honour, present this book if they cannot or will not keep to its terms—especially those inhibitive terms without which it is certain the nation would not allow the book to pass; if they can and will keep to its terms and see that their clergy do, they need have no difficulty in giving a definite assurance to the nation on this." Professor Carnegie Simpson ultimately accepted the Archbishop's assurance, although he acknowledged that he had considerable difficulty in doing so on account of the utterances and actions of some of the Bishops even after the Archbishop's statement.

#### **A Foretaste of the New Ritual.**

Churchmen who have had experience of the lack of unity in the episcopate in the past may be forgiven for sharing in this hesitation. The introduction of the use of incense in Truro Cathedral, of which the Bishop is Dean, is an instance of the interpretation which will be put upon the rubrics of the new Book. Even more glaring are the actions of the Bishop of St. Albans at the consecration of a

Nunnery Chapel in his diocese. The Bishop was "fully vested in amice, albe, girdle, stole and white cope with his mitre and pastoral staff." When the doors were flung open "the Bishop, tracing a cross on the threshold with the lower end of his staff, said, 'Behold the sign of the cross; flee, all ye spirits of evil.'" During the ceremony "he made the sign of the cross three times in the church, including over the altar." "The blessing of the door was performed by the Bishop, who traced a cross with the end of his staff on the upper part and another cross on the lower part of the door, inside the church . . . dipping the thumb of his right hand into the blessed water he traced a cross in the middle of the altar table, and at each corner, each time dipping his thumb in the blessed water . . . he walked round the altar, and using a bunch of hyssop, sprinkled the altar tables with the water, . . . the Lady altar, the walls and floors were similarly sprinkled." He censed the altar, and with holy oil traced five crosses on it. Other parts of the church were similarly censed and anointed. Five crosses each consisting of five grains of incense were made on the high altar where he had made the crosses with water and oil. Over each he placed a cross of wax and these were lighted. Incense was burned on each altar in the same way, "the ashes afterwards being scraped off with a wooden spatula and thrown into the piscina." The last ceremony was the consecration of the altar cloths and ornaments. The Bishop sat down and cleansed his hands with crumbs of bread, washed and dried them. Holy water was then sprinkled on the ornaments. These extracts from the account of the service naturally raise the question: If this type of ceremonial is adopted before the legalization of the new Book, what will be the character of the ritual which will be regarded as allowable under its provisions? Such a service is utterly out of keeping with the old cultural background of the Church of England. What are we to think in view of it of the unanimity of the episcopate in enforcing obedience to the requirements of the new Book? It is obvious that we are face to face with an entirely new situation in our Church. However much the Archbishop of York may declare that the rejection of the Book as it stands means chaos, there is even less guarantee that a worse form of chaos will not result from the policy of expediency and of yielding to the medieval tendencies of the Anglo-Catholics which has been adopted.

#### **The Ministry and the Sacraments.**

The Bishop of Manchester's statement at his recent Diocesan Conference is one of the most hopeful evidences we have seen of a return to the true teaching of the Church of England on the Ministry and the Sacraments. He said that just because we claimed to represent the true order of the Church in this country we should be ready to welcome to our communion as a normal practice any who were communicants in any recognized Christian bodies, and while he would not approve of members of the Church of England receiving Holy Communion in other churches, if there were opportunity of

receiving it in one of our own, he did not think it was wrong that, in a place where they were unable to receive Holy Communion in their own order, they should receive it from any who were willing to give it. As the Roman Catholic Church would repel members of our Communion, the reference is obviously to the non-Episcopal churches. This is even clearer in his further statement that it seemed to him sheer stark idolatry to say that God would refuse His gift to any who obeyed faithfully what they believed to be the command of Christ. It seemed to him a shocking conception of God to say that He would withhold His gift from them. They must come to the conclusion that not only a Free Church minister but any layman, who should devoutly, and not defiantly, decide that it was right for him to celebrate the Holy Communion, would effect a real consecration, and through it the real gift would be given.

#### The Birmingham Controversy.

Surprise has been expressed that none of the Bishops has supported the Bishop of Birmingham in his defence of the Sacramental teaching of our Church, while several of them have gone out of their way to repudiate his statements. This attitude has called forth a vigorous protest from Dean Inge. While he was not concerned to defend all that the Bishop said about the Sacrament, he said "my chivalrous feelings are revolted when I see archbishops and bishops joining a mob of guttersnipes in pelting one of their own order." Those who think that there is no need to protest as the Bishop of Birmingham has done against the teaching of the doctrine of Transubstantiation in our Church would do well to remember the Dean's further statement: "Doctrines which are indistinguishable from Transubstantiation, and which have been recognized as identical with the teaching of the Church of Rome by Roman theologians, are openly preached in hundreds of Anglican churches, and are insidiously inculcated in the language of ceremonial symbolism. These doctrines are condemned in our formularies as heretical, and if a bishop who promised at his consecration to "drive away strange doctrines thinks it his duty to denounce them, we should rather admire his courage than carp at his choice of language." In reference to the Primate's statement that we are all agreed that Transubstantiation is not the doctrine of the Church of England, he adds "he has nothing to say about the 3,000 priests who in 1924 signed the declaration which a Jesuit pronounced to be in complete accordance with Roman doctrine on this subject."

#### Misrepresentation of the Bishop.

It was pleasant to find that the Bishop of Birmingham was not left entirely alone to bear the brunt of the misrepresentations with which he was assailed. The Anglo-Catholic representative who was the chief of the "brawlers" at St. Paul's Cathedral sent out a fly-sheet purporting to represent the Bishop of Birmingham's teaching. He quoted a passage from Dr. Barnes' sermon: "It is fatally easy to pass from the idea that sacraments serve to reveal

God to a belief that through them we can mechanically bring God to men. . . . Such a belief belongs to the realm of primitive magic." On this he founded several charges, and among them that the Bishop taught "no gift of the Body and Blood of Christ is conveyed to the soul by the Sacrament of Holy Communion." The Bishop of Bradford and the Bishop of Ripon united in replying to these charges. They asked if the writer believed that we can *mechanically* bring God to men, for if so, this was contrary to experience, repugnant to the Christian idea of God, and altogether deserving of the Bishop of Birmingham's description of it. They go on to say, "If you do not hold this view then you have no right to base on this passage, as you explicitly do, the series of untrue allegations which you make against him, and you are guilty, consciously or unconsciously, of misleading those 'faithful members of Holy Church' to whom you constitute yourself a guide." As the Bishop of Birmingham's views on the Holy Communion have been so widely misrepresented, it is satisfactory to find so clear and definite an exposure of at least one of his traducers.

#### Editorial Note.

The Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order was one of the most important events in the Christian world in recent years. We are glad to be able to give our readers an impression of the meetings and an estimate of the results of the Conference by the Rev. Thomas J. Pulvertaft, who was in Lausanne during its sessions. The Archdeacon of Chester's study of the words "In Christ" has an important bearing, as will be seen, upon the teaching of our Church. Canon Harden's account of the Wesleyan Methodist Movement contributes a fresh and useful estimate of the rise, development and present position of the various Methodist Churches. The Archdeacon of Macclesfield expresses in his article on "Casuistry in the New Prayer Book" an opinion which many hold as to the tendencies which are represented in the Deposited Book. The Rev. A. J. Macdonald, from his experience of life in India, and his knowledge of Eastern religions, discusses the relation of ritual to sacrifice, and the dangers to be feared from wrong ideas about both of them. Canon Lancelot's treatment of the Sadducee's question to our Lord is an interesting study of an important passage of Scripture. Another Biblical study of interest will be found in the Rev. C. C. Cooper's treatment of the words "A Jasper Stone, Clear as Crystal." Mr. Poynter's article on "The Roman Church and the Civil Power" draws attention to a pressing problem. Our Notes and Comments are again largely concerned with points raised by the Deposited Book. A large number of recent books are reviewed, and shorter notices are given of others of which our readers may be glad to know.

