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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1928.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Making Church History.

DURING the last few months the Church of England has been passing through a series of events unparalleled in the experience of any of us. After twenty years of discussion on the revision of the Prayer Book by various bodies representing the clergy and laity of the Church, both before and since the passing of the Enabling Act, the Bishops drew up the final forms in which the proposals were to be presented to the Houses of Parliament. These proposals received the approval of the Church Assembly and of the two Houses of Convocation, but some changes made at the last moment in their form seemed to indicate that there was even then an element of haste in the final presentation of the Measure for the acceptance of the nation in Parliament. Most careful preparations had however been made to secure the support of the Press and to influence public opinion throughout the country. Everything seemed to point to the success of the plan. "All the great organs of opinion in the United Kingdom supported the Book, the recognized leaders of non-Episcopal Churches took the line of neutrality, two-thirds of the House of Lords were in its favour and it was confidently held that a majority of between fifty and a hundred was assured in the House of Commons." Prominent leaders of the Government in both Houses were supporters of the Book, and nothing apparently stood in the way of its receiving the Royal Assent before the end of the year.

The Prayer Book Measure in the House of Commons.

The House of Lords accepted the Measure by 241 to 88 votes. On December 15 it came before the House of Commons, and after one of the most memorable debates in the history of that House, to the surprise of nearly everyone, the voting resulted in the defeat of the Measure by 238 to 205 votes. Many efforts have been made to minimize the significance of this decision. The opposition to the Book was led by the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, in an impressive speech. His great interest in Church affairs, his long and intimate acquaintance with the intricacies of the theological problems involved, the depth and sincerity of his own religious convictions combined to raise the discussion to a

high level and to produce a profound effect upon the House. He was ably supported by members from all sections of the House. Sir John Simon, Sir Martin Conway, Colonel Applin, Sir Douglas Hogg, Sir M. Macnaghten, Sir Thomas Inskip were among the speakers who on various grounds spoke against the Measure. Sir Thomas Inskip presented the case in particular against the alternative Communion Service and the permission of the reservation of the elements. He voiced the opinions of many who were prepared to accept the greater part of the Book, but were opposed to those portions which they believed make a fundamental change in the doctrine of the Church.

Press Opinion on the Debate.

No thoughtful person has paid any attention to the prejudiced partisans who described these speeches as "No-Popery rhetoric," or as the outcome of "Protestant ignorance." Not even the view of the Bishops that they were due to "avoidable misapprehensions" is applicable. The Press of the country formed a more correct estimate of the debate.

The *Manchester Guardian* said: "Some of the speeches made against the Measure were indeed brilliant and produced an unmistakable effect, but their appeal lay not in the compelling force of argument or rhetoric, but in the fact that they touched some deep chord in the very make-up of the average Englishman—his common sense, his independence, his dislike of all extravagance or pretentiousness, particularly in matters of religion; above all, his sturdy adherence to the Protestantism of the Protestant religion."

The *Daily Telegraph* said: "The House of Commons, despite all that may be said to the contrary, is in touch with popular feeling, and that feeling showed itself in an astonishing resurgence of deeply ingrained Protestantism."

The *Morning Post* in describing the debate said: "Admittedly there has not been in our time, in either House, a debate more entirely worthy of Parliament, and there has not been an occasion on which men have spoken with greater eloquence, and voted with more sincerity, and with clearer conviction."

Quotations such as these could be multiplied. They show sufficiently that those who seek to belittle the supporters of Protestantism only succeed in rendering themselves absurd.

The Significance of the Vote.

The House of Commons was clearly convinced that the new Prayer Book meant a change in the doctrine of the Church—in spite of the declaration of the Bishops that they intended no such change. The vote also indicated distrust of the Bishops. The Bishops claimed that the Book was necessary for the restoration of order in the Church. In view of the fact that the Bishops had done little in the past to restrain the law-breakers, but on the contrary had promoted them or secured their promotion to positions of emolument and influence, and that the chief effect of the passing

of the disputed portions of the new Book would be to render legal the illegalities which the Bishops had failed to put down, and also that there was no guarantee that the position gained by the legalizing of these practices would not be used as a starting-point for further advances in a Romeward direction, the House of Commons recorded its decision. No responsible person has questioned the right of the Commons to express its opinion on the character of the Book submitted to it, nor has anyone whose judgment on the subject carries weight in the country sought to ignore the decision as a determination to resist the return to medievalism in the Church of England. Any sincere straightforward effort to adapt our Prayer Book to the needs of the twentieth century would, we are convinced, have met with the hearty support of all sections of the House of Commons.

The Future of Religion in the Country.

It is obvious that the issues presented to Parliament were no mere trifles about the position of an aumbry. They touched the very foundations of the religious life of the country and the future character of its religion. As Professor Burkitt said in *The Cambridge Review*: "It was evident to all persons except the promoters of this new Book that the express legalization of the practice of Reservation sanctioned the belief that a peculiar virtue and sanctity clung to consecrated bread and wine, even apart from the Communion Service: such express legalization made very difficult the position of those English Churchmen who have all along refused to believe that this peculiar virtue and sanctity ever was in the bread and the wine. For myself I do not much mind. . . . But I am thinking of my grandchildren. I do not wish to sanction legislation the effect of which would be that, when they were of age to be confirmed, if they did not bow before the Red Lamp they would be regarded by their contemporaries as irreverent, and if they presented themselves for Holy Communion after breakfast, they would think themselves sinful. Or—to put forward a still more probable alternative—knowing that such was the opinion of 'good Churchmen,' if the young folk were unwilling to comply that they would absent themselves altogether, even from 'attendance at Mass.'" These sentences indicate some of the future effects of the proposed legislation.

Narrowing the Church.

The Bishops, in the fresh proposals which they have adopted since the House of Commons rejected the previous Measure, have not receded on any material point from their former position. Perpetual Reservation, the Alternative Communion Services, Prayers for the Dead, the observance of All Souls' Day, and the opening for the keeping of the festival of Corpus Christi are retained. A few modifications have been made by the Houses of Clergy and Laity. The Houses of Convocation will have met before these notes

are published to consider the final draft which the Bishops have arranged to submit to them on March 28. The intention is to hurry the revision through, in order that it may be again submitted to Parliament before Whitsuntide. The Bishops are evidently hopeful that they will be able to secure the passing of the Measure in its new form. Yet there is evidence that the feeling of Church-people and of the Country against the Measure is steadily growing. The plea of comprehensiveness is seen to be a specious one, for the ultimate result of the revision would be to narrow the Church and to drive a wedge between it and the great mass of the people. The introduction of the Epiclesis into the canon of the Communion Service has been shown by the Dean of Wells to be a narrowing of the teaching of our Church. The same process is evident throughout. The new Prayer Book departs from the old principle of our Church—to maintain the minimum of requirements in public worship, whatever latitude might be allowed to private opinions.

Misrepresentations.

So many statements have been circulated about the misrepresentations made by the opponents of the Book, it may be well to indicate that some of the supporters of the Book can be convicted of most flagrant indulgence in the same offence. Here is an example that can be illustrated briefly and effectively. In a letter in *The Yorkshire Post* the following statement was made:—

“In the discussion for general approval, the Opposition appeared to be somewhat acrimonious, but after the most conclusive speeches of Lord Phillimore and Sir Lewis Dibdin, two of the greatest legal authorities, who declared that Reservation was not illegal, and admitted the present-day need for it—all argument seemed to collapse.”

The following two passages from the reports of the speeches of Sir Lewis Dibdin and Lord Phillimore show the character of this statement.

Sir Lewis Dibdin : “I speak with diffidence on this because I am the Ecclesiastical Judge; but so far as I am aware, there is no doubt at all really as to the unlawfulness of Reservation at the present time in the Prayer Book. You will see the delicacy of my position. It has been a matter of repeated dicta and of a judgment in recent years of which I can say no more than that I delivered it. As far as I know, and I have had very ample opportunity of studying the subject (I argued the case at length before Archbishop Temple and Archbishop Maclagan, and I at any rate ought to know about it), there is no doubt whatever about it. There has been no conflict of authority that in the Prayer Book as it is now it is unlawful. . . . I do not think my friend, Lord Phillimore, will seriously differ about that. At the present moment it is unlawful.”

Lord Phillimore : “I want to say, because he (Sir Lewis

Dibdin) rather appealed to me to say whether I agreed, that I agree with him that at this moment there is no question, that, as a matter of pure positive law Reservation has been held by the only authorities that have dealt with it to be illegal."

The Malines Conversations.

From beginning to end there has been an air of mystery about the Malines Conversations. They began in secrecy. They were continued under conditions which gave rise to many questions as to their real character. There was uncertainty up to the end as to the exact relation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope to the Conversations. When the Report of the meetings was drawn up and was ready for publication early in the year 1927, its issue was postponed. Lord Halifax gave as the reason for this delay that "the Archbishop of Canterbury wished the publication postponed till the Revised Prayer Book had been submitted to Parliament." Lord Halifax added that "another postponement of uncertain length has been occasioned by the rejection of the Prayer Book Measure," and he therefore issued a booklet of *Notes on the Conversations at Malines*. In this he told of an interview which he had with the Pope. The Roman Catholic press questioned the accuracy of some of the statements made as to the Pope's dealings with Lord Halifax. This did not tend to dispel the cloud of doubt which hangs over everything connected with these meetings. Almost immediately after the appearance of the pamphlet by Lord Halifax, the Report was released for publication. Its importance was however completely neutralized by the appearance a few days earlier of an Encyclical by the Pope on the whole subject of reunion. In this he declared that the Apostolic See cannot on any terms take part in any assemblies (of non-Catholics) that would treat with Rome on equal terms, nor is it lawful for Catholics to support or work for such enterprises. "The union of Christians can only be furthered by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who have separated from it." Thus, as it has been expressed, the Pope has "banged, bolted and barred" the door against reunion.

Malines and the Revised Prayer Book.

The Report of the Conversations showed that the Anglican representatives were prepared to go to great lengths in their concessions to the Romanists, while the Romanists, true to their character, would not yield an iota of their claims for the authority of the Pope or the necessity of accepting the distinctive doctrines of their Church. The Thirty-Nine Articles were apparently represented to the Romanists as negligible, so that they could say in their Report that the Articles "are not the insurmountable obstacle in the way of an understanding between the two Churches which the Roman Catholics had feared might be the case. In fact, some theologians believe that these Articles are susceptible of an interpretation which would reconcile them with the teaching of the

Council of Trent." Bishop Knox in a pamphlet, *The Malines Conference and the Deposited Book*, has examined the significance of these amazing admissions and has shown their bearing on the doctrines contained in the Deposited Book. He shows that the Anglican representatives unchurch all non-episcopalians, teach the presence of Christ in the elements, represent the sacrifice of the Eucharist as the same as that of the Cross, but offered in a mystical and sacramental manner, declare the Church of England practises the Sacrament of Penance, requires the Church's interpretation of Scripture, is willing to acknowledge "a primacy of honour" in the papacy. In the new Prayer Book "many of the concessions and surrenders made at Malines are found to have been confirmed at Lambeth." This will be used later to further reunion with Rome—that must mean submission.

Editorial Note.

In this number of *THE CHURCHMAN* several subjects of special current interest are presented to our readers, as well as others with an indirect bearing on problems of to-day. In view of recent discussions on the meaning of the word Protestant, Professor W. Alison Phillips shows, from the historical point of view, the correct interpretation of the term, and its application to the Church of England. In a study of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians Bishop Knox brings out in a fresh light the significance of the personal references to the Apostle, and also shows the value of the conception of Atonement and Grace contained in the Epistle. The Rev. Thos. J. Pulvertaft's account of the Malines Conversations will be found a useful history of these mysterious conferences and a summary of their significance for our Church. Richard Hooker was regarded until recent years as the representative English Churchman. Canon Dawson-Walker's study of his writings will serve to indicate their value as a corrective of various extravagances of doctrine which have developed in our Church. The Rev. Alfred Fawkes considers the Danger of Disestablishment which some believe to have arisen through the rejection of the Deposited Book by the House of Commons. The Church Assembly recently appointed a Commission to report on the reform of the Ecclesiastical Courts. The findings of this Commission are the subject of a careful examination by Mr. H. F. Walker, in which he points out some of the results that the recommendations put forward will produce. The Archdeacon of Chester's article on "In Christ" in the January number of *THE CHURCHMAN* aroused lively interest. We have given an opportunity for the discussion of some of the points raised by a Correspondent. We are sorry that the pressure on our space has curtailed the number of our reviews of books.

