

THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1929.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Decisions of the Bishops' Conference on the rejected Prayer Book.

SINCE the last issue of *THE CHURCHMAN* the Bishops have met in conference, and have set out their decisions as to their future line of action consequent upon the second rejection of the Deposited Book by the House of Commons on June 14, 1928. They declared that during the present emergency and until further order be taken, and having in view the approval given by the Houses of Convocation and the Church Assembly to the proposals for deviation from and additions to the Book of 1662 set forth in the Book of 1928, they "cannot regard as inconsistent with loyalty to the principles of the Church of England the use of such additions or deviations as fall within the limits of these proposals; for the same reason they must regard as inconsistent with such loyalty the use of any other deviations from or additions to the Book of 1662. Accordingly the Bishops, in the exercise of their legal or administrative discretion, will be guided by the proposals approved in 1928 by the Houses of Convocation and the Church Assembly, and will endeavour to secure that practices which are consistent neither with the Book of 1662, nor with the Book of 1928 shall cease." They further resolved that the use of the alternative form of Consecration in the Holy Communion should only be allowed "provisionally and in exceptional circumstances." A Committee of Bishops was to be appointed to consider the rubrics for the reservation of the Consecrated Elements, and pending their report existing permissions for reservation were to hold good, but in the case of new applications permissions should, if granted, be only provisional.

The Status of the Sacred Synods.

During the past three months most of the Bishops have called together the clergy of their dioceses to consider these proposals. These gatherings of the clergy have been described as "Sacred Synods," and attendance at them has been in some dioceses made "a matter of obligation." The nature of this obligation has been widely discussed, as it is a new application of the oath of canonical obedience which every clergyman licensed in a diocese has to take

to the Bishop. These Synods form no part of the constitution of the Church of England. They have no legislative or administrative power. In fact, it has been definitely stated that "the Bishop alone has the power to make decisions, and he merely summons the clergy to take counsel with him. The latter may express their opinion by voting ; but it remains an opinion, and not a decision." No one has any objection to a Bishop summoning the clergy of his diocese for consultation, but a Synod summoned as a matter of canonical obedience is quite another matter. Some have pointed to the existence of Synods in the Church of Ireland and in some of the dioceses overseas as a counterpart of this new movement in England. It has been pointed out that these Synods form part of the constitution of the respective Churches, that the laity are represented in them, and that they possess legislative and administrative powers. In fact, they are on quite a different footing from "the Sacred Synods" which are now being summoned.

The Voting on the Proposals of the Bishops.

When the Synods met, the clergy were presented with a series of questions based on the proposals of the Bishops. These were almost identical in every diocese, and the only answers allowed were a direct affirmative or negative. The form in which they were drawn up placed many of the clergy in difficulties, as they found it impossible to vote without giving explanations of the meaning which they attached to the questions. The result was that the voting in the various dioceses represented widely differing interpretations of the proposals of the Bishops. The issues were so confused that it is impossible to say that any accurate or definite result has been reached by means of the method adopted. Different sections of the Church gave the same vote with quite opposite intentions, while members of the same School gave opposite answers while desiring to express the same intentions. Out of the confusion thus created the Bishops profess to draw the conclusion that their proposals have been widely accepted by the Church. The question upon which the largest majorities in most of the dioceses was secured was : "Are you willing to support the Bishop in endeavouring to secure that practices which are consistent neither with the Book of 1662 nor with the Book as amended in 1928 shall cease ?" This question was open, like the others, to various interpretations, but the large majorities in favour of it were evidently due to a desire that the practices of 1662 should be the standard of the Church's teaching and worship. It was only in this way that the determination of many to secure that the character of our worship should be maintained could be expressed.

The Possibility of an Agreed Book.

It is clear that there is no hope of either peace or discipline in the Church through the adoption of the rejected Book. The conditions in the Diocese of London show how little hope there ever

was of securing order by sanctioning its use. Parliament recognized the two chief facts in connection with the Book, first that it involved a departure from the old standards of faith in the Church, and secondly that there was no guarantee that the Bishops would be able to secure obedience to its requirements. There is a general desire for a revision of the Prayer Book. There are large portions of the Revised Book which would meet with general assent. It should not be difficult to omit the controversial elements and to produce an agreed Book which would contain the non-contentious portions. This would readily receive the consent of Parliament, and would afford a constitutional means of meeting the difficulty of the present situation. Some of the Bishops profess to regard this as an impossible solution on the ground that every part of the Book is regarded as controversial by some section of the Church. We have no doubt that such a view is incorrect, but it cannot be shown to be true until the attempt is made. It would then be discovered that the chief controversial matters are concerned with the alternative Communion Service and the permission to reserve the Elements. It ought not to be difficult to hold these and one or two other matters over, and to arrange that the Church should have the benefit of the changes which are almost universally desired.

The Bishops and Illegalities.

The proposals of the Bishops have been received with widespread dissatisfaction, and have been condemned by many who had hitherto given their support to the Deposited Book in the hope that it would bring peace and discipline to the Church. The opinion of the average Englishman as represented in the Press is that the Bishops "meditated sanctioning the use of the revised Prayer Book in spite of Parliament's decision against it." It has been observed that the claim to exercise "legal and administrative discretion" by the Bishops is a new one. It is the claim to the *jus liturgicum* which has been a frequent subject of controversy. The claim has never been made in this bold fashion before. The Royal Commission Report of 1906 was quite emphatic that such a claim was inconsistent with the constitutional relations of Church and State in England. Strong expressions have been used to describe the action of the Bishops. It has been represented as flouting Parliament, as ignoring the settlement agreed to in the passing of the Enabling Act. It has been pointed out that a similar course of action by any other body of men would receive strong condemnation, probably from the Bishops themselves. One of the Bishops, who has accused all sections of the Church as being equally guilty of committing illegalities, has been met with the obvious retort that illegalities are apparently to be regarded as ceasing to be illegalities when committed by the Bishops. There is an earnest hope that the Bishops will retire from the untenable position that they have taken up, and will adopt a constitutional method of procedure.

"Catholic Emancipation."

In April, 1829, an Act of Parliament was passed which enabled Roman Catholics to become members of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons. The passing of this Act is frequently referred to as "the Catholic Emancipation." In connection with the celebration of the centenary of the event there will no doubt be a considerable output of Roman Catholic books and pamphlets mainly for propaganda purposes. There will probably be an extension of the re-writing of history which has become one of the favourite methods of Roman Catholic propaganda in recent years. Already a Roman Catholic writer has described the condition of Romanists in England under the penal code as one of tyranny and degradation that could scarcely be paralleled in any other country. This writer has conveniently forgotten such familiar facts as the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, the Massacre of the Vaudois by papal emissaries when "young children were torn from their mothers' arms and dashed against rocks; sick persons were burnt alive in their homes or mutilated in horrible ways; women and girls, after being outraged, were impaled on pikes and left to die or were buried alive." He also ignores the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition, and the persecution following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when "French Protestant ministers were being put to death or condemned to the galleys." We have no desire to recall these barbarities of past ages, but in the interests of truth it is necessary to be on our guard against the methods of modern Romanist propaganda. The activity of one or two well-known Roman Catholic writers is devoted to this re-writing of history with a Roman bias.

The World Call—Sixth Volume.

The sixth volume of *The World Call* has been issued, and was heralded by a great Convention in York Minster when over three thousand people from every diocese in the British Isles and from many of the overseas dioceses, as well as "invited visitors representing the foreign missionary departments of various other Protestant Churches," spent two days in prayer and in the consideration of the work to be done to respond to the world's needs. This last volume deals specially with the Jews, other Oriental Dispersions, the native races of Central and South America and the population of the West Indies, and the island peoples of the South Pacific Ocean, thus completing the world survey begun in the previous publications. It is unfortunately true that the response by the Church to the World Call has been altogether inadequate, and that this can be traced in large measure to the controversy over the revision of the Prayer Book. Various appeals have been made to Christian people to lay aside all other matters and to concentrate on the chief work of the Church—the evangelization of the world. This would be quite easily brought about by the cessation of the efforts of those who are seeking to change the whole character of our Church, by altering its doctrine and worship. A return to

unity in the maintenance of the Scriptural character of our Christianity would be a great step towards the ultimate unity of Christendom. We cannot go forth to the work of teaching our Faith unless we are agreed at least upon the Truths which are to be taught as the foundation of Christian life and character.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Enthronement Appeal.

In his sermon at his Enthronement, the Archbishop of Canterbury made an appeal for unity to meet "the compact, self-confident, ever-advancing force of material civilization." He described the plight of the Church as "divided, cumbered with old controversies, broken with schisms," and went on to say: "Unless it can become one body, how can it give witness to the one Faith and face the one world-task? Thank God, a strong desire for unity is moving through the broken ranks. Within this Cathedral to-day are representatives of many Christian Churches from many Christian lands. Their presence, welcomed and honoured, testifies to the width and depth of the desire. God grant that it may become to all of us the constraint of a Divine call." We must all rejoice at the presence of these representatives of other Christian communions on such a great occasion, and of the courtesy which extended the invitation on the one side and accepted it on the other. The leading organ of the Free Churches represented the spirit in which the official representatives of the leading Free Churches of the country were present when it said, "From whosoever lips the suggestion came it must assuredly be taken as an expression and an encouragement of a kindlier intercourse between the Churches . . . and may we not look upon it as a working of none other than the Spirit of God drawing the hearts of Christian people closer to one another." But something more is needed than this pleasant exchange of courtesies if the work of the Churches is to be vigorously carried out. The Lambeth Conference of 1930 will give an opportunity of practical action in unity of work. We must all pray that the obstacles which have prevented unity in the past may be removed in view of the Call and the opportunity.

Editorial Notes.

In the present number of *THE CHURCHMAN* we are able to present to our readers some pronouncements on subjects of importance by well-known and representative writers. The Rev. J. P. S. R. Gibson, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, writes with long and unique experience of the Mission Field on one of the chief problems of reunion—"Intercommunion." The growing tendency to increase the bureaucratic element in Church and State gives special point to the sermon by the Bishop of Norwich on "Centralization in the Church of England." Archdeacon Thorpe's well-known exegetical powers are used for the benefit of our readers on the difficult text, Hebrews xiii. 10. A special welcome must be given to the Rev. G. E. Phillips, of the London Missionary Society. He dealt with the problems of unity in South India at the Church Congress in

Cheltenham, and kindly acceded to our request to deal with the subject in *THE CHURCHMAN*. As the South Indian movement will probably be the test question before the Lambeth Conference in 1930, light upon it from every source is valuable. Canon Brooke Gwynne deals with the Present Position in the Church. He notes the causes of our chief difficulties and suggests some remedies. Mr. John Knipe continues his useful study of the life and times of John Wycliffe. The Rev. T. E. Edmond writes an inspiring account of one of the great pioneers of missionary work—William Carey, "One of God's Greatest Englishmen." In "A Liturgical Essay," Mr. Albert Mitchell makes some important suggestions as to a form of Service suitable for morning worship "which would combine the essential elements of Morning Prayer and the Order of Holy Communion and be free from liturgical reproach." This form is drawn up for use in parishes where it is possible to hold only one forenoon service, and is designed to meet the growing desire for shortened services and at the same time to obviate the inert practice of "truncating 'Mattins' by passing to the Order of Holy Communion after *Benedictus*." We have endeavoured to give some account of a number of important books which have been published during recent months. We regret that the large increase in the output of the great publishing firms and the limitations of our space prevent us dealing adequately with all that we should like to bring to the notice of our readers. We have been obliged to hold over till our next issue a number of reviews. Our Notes and Comments have necessarily been largely devoted to recent events in connection with the rejection of the Deposited Book and with the movement towards unity, which is the most important question before the Church at the present time.

With this first number of a new volume of *THE CHURCHMAN* we give our hearty thanks to our readers for their past support. We desire to increase our already growing number of subscribers, and we invite the co-operation of all our readers in bringing *THE CHURCHMAN* to the notice of those likely to be interested in the maintenance and strengthening of Evangelical Churchmanship.