

SOME DISCURSIVE REMARKS ON THE PRESENT POSITION IN THE CHURCH.

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THE present time is an extremely difficult period for the great body of Churchmen who have been, all their lives, under the impression that the doctrinal position of the Anglican Church is sound, and that her liturgy is not only unsurpassed in its literary form, but that it breathes the spirit of Christianity, as revealed to us in the New Testament. This is probably true of the great mass of the clergy, as well as of the laity.

Looking back over a quarter of a century, one notes that controversies were mainly concerned with questions of Biblical Criticism, Education, and Disestablishment. Party spirit was not sufficiently acute to prevent the old-fashioned High Churchman and the Evangelical working together and exchanging pulpits. In the diocese to which the writer belonged, he cannot remember any instance where there could not have been an exchange of pulpits without any fear of serious doctrinal differences.

We knew of Bell Cox, Machonochie, Dolling, St. Michael's, Shoreditch, and the happenings at Brighton. But they were regarded, by the old-fashioned High Churchman and the Evangelical, as very disturbing phenomena which would pass away.

To-day, the party spirit is, if not bitter, more intense; and those who never thought it necessary to label themselves, now find that, with the utmost reluctance, they are compelled to take sides.

What has brought about the present conditions of strife?

With our genial sentimentality it has become almost a tradition to speak of Newman with admiration. He was undoubtedly a charming personality. But when we consider his mentality, especially his chameleon-like changes, we cannot wonder that he led his party to disaster. He tells us himself that he was no theologian. He was more than sceptical as regards the value of reason in the sphere of religion. With all his courage there was an effeminate side to his nature. As Archbishop Tait said, he made up his mind first, and then used his subtle intellect to prove that he was right. If he chastised Kingsley for his charge of dishonesty, nevertheless his own statement, that the Articles were to be read in their *non-natural sense*, gave honest men a shock. According to Dean Church, his admiration for Rome was based on his knowledge of the first four centuries and his ignorance of Mediævalism. His followers were never weary of railing against the Reformers. But the early Reformers knew what they were discussing, because they had been born and bred in mediævalism. They not only

knew the popular religion of the day, but they were perfectly conversant with the official teaching.

It appears that the section of Churchmen who are really the cause of most of our present troubles possess some of the characteristics of Newman. Their leading men have a great knowledge of liturgiology, but they do not appear to take kindly to the theology of the New Testament. When they declaim against the Reformation, can they show one single theologian among themselves who can be classed with the great divines of the Anglican Church of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries? *They* knew Rome; and Rome never changes, except to add new dogmas to the Catholic Faith. The great theologians of the last fifty years were thoroughly loyal to the fundamental principles. They would have echoed Archbishop Benson's words to the effect that the Reformation was, next to the founding of the Christian Church, the greatest event in history.

No one would deny that many unchristian things were done in the working out of the Reformation. But it is, at least, some palliation to remember that these methods had been a part of the Church policy for centuries, and that habits of thought which had prevailed for centuries under Papal rule, were not likely to pass in a day. It cannot be denied that the average Churchman to-day knows less about the Reformation than his grandfather knew. For a generation, or more, there has been a persistent propaganda (which has been partly Roman and partly Anglo-Catholic) the object of which has been to bring into prominence every mistake made by the Reformers, and to paint the Mediæval Church in glowing colours. The mass of the clergy, being overwhelmed with parish organizations and finance, have no time for theology and history, and, consequently, the people are ill-informed. Many Churchmen to-day who are educated men have no real knowledge of the splendid succession of divines from 1552 to 1662. So long has insidious propaganda been at work and so persistent has been the cry that "the Reformation was a mistake," that many men vaguely wonder whether, after all, there may not be some truth in it. Henry VIII is made to be the central figure of the Reformation. The anti-Reformers, apparently, are unaware that, for centuries, the best men of the Mediæval Church cried out most earnestly for reform, that many monastic bodies had been suppressed, that the Reformation began on the Continent eleven years before England joined it, that Luther had no idea of breaking away from the Church, that he only asked, like many of his predecessors, and many men of his day, for reform. Henry himself was an opponent of Luther.

For personal reasons Henry repudiated the Pope, but he remained a Mediævalist, and that might account for his poor standard of morals. Theologically, Henry's position was not unlike some of our extreme men to-day, who, while they repudiate the Papacy, cling to Mediæval doctrine.

The representation of a righteous Pope withstanding the licentious

claims of a powerful monarch is not a little discounted when we find that Lord Acton declares that this same Pope, Clement VII, in order to escape his unhappy dilemma, suggested that Henry should marry Anne, without a divorce, while Katherine was living ; i.e., that Henry should have two wives. It would be an excellent thing if our Bishops would demand of their ordinands a knowledge of Coulton's *Five Centuries of Religion*, and Acton's *Lectures on Modern History*.

The greatest foe of the English Church, to-day, is the ignorance of her history ; and it is because of that ignorance that our anti-Reformers have won their position.

We are told that, when Dean Church saw friend after friend go over to Rome, and was himself much perplexed, he was saved by his knowledge of history. Newman saw only the faults of the English Church ; Church saw that the faults of other Churches were much greater.

For a long period Newman's idea has permeated the minds of many Anglicans, who have lost no opportunity of pouring scorn on their Church, its liturgy, and its theological position. Fascinated by Mediæval Catholicism, they follow their sentiments, rather than reason. Newman's mentality, rather than Church's knowledge, is leading them away from the standards of the Anglican Church. The Holy Spirit will guide us, but, surely, we must use all our intellectual powers as well, and seek, not what our hearts may desire, but what truth demands.

It is impossible to deny the earnestness, organizing powers, and propaganda work of the men who are looking " East " or " West " for their inspiration. They have caught the Church, as it were, at a disadvantage, because, generally speaking, it is ignorant of its own history. The clergy, are in the main, non-party men. They have been content to do their work quietly, without advertisement or ostentation. They avoid notoriety. The consequence is that the impression has got abroad that the people who are the real workers are the men who have made themselves, or have been made by their party, conspicuous. Episcopal discipline is now called persecution, and the Bishops find they have, unwittingly, been producing martyrs. The non-party men are, rather late in the day, beginning to awake. They are perplexed and disturbed by the present strife, and, although thoroughly loyal to their ordination vows, are willing to yield a great deal for peace. These are the men who, for peace, have passed the Revised Book. But there are signs that they are bestirring themselves, and are beginning to see that the trend of the present movement is not true to Anglican standards, and moreover is not bringing peace. They are not, for the most part, historically minded, and not knowing the historical connexion, dislike the word Protestant. They have always believed that the Church of England was Catholic in doctrine and order ; that, because she was Catholic, she made Scripture the source and test of her standards of Faith : that, while willing to sit at the feet of the Early Fathers, she refused to acknowledge them as infallible.

Hooker said of Jewel that he was "the worthiest divine that Christendom had bred for some hundreds of years." This is one of Jewel's mottoes: "Præjudicatum est adversus omnes hæreses: id est verum quodcunque primum; adulterum quodcunque posterius." His attitude to the Fathers was clear, "Non sunt domini sed duces nostri." This was the position of Anglican divines from 1552 to 1662. This to them was the true Catholic position. At the Vatican Council 1870 one of the Protesting Bishops in an able and eloquent speech made his final appeal in these words: "Stop, stop, my venerable brethren, on the odious and ridiculous incline on which you have placed yourselves. Save the Church from shipwreck which threatens her, asking, from the Holy Scriptures *alone*, for the rule of faith which we ought to believe, and to profess. I have spoken: may God help me" (*A Warning Voice in the Vatican Council*, p. 20). It is interesting to find the Anglican dictum of the sixteenth century confirmed by a Roman Bishop in the Vatican Council in the nineteenth century.

Dr. Kidd tells us that the Anglican appeal "is not to the authority of the Bible and Bible only, but to that of Scripture and the undivided Church."¹

Dr. Kidd will find it difficult to support this assertion from any authoritative documents of the Church of England, or from our great Anglican divines.

Nor can any support (either in our formularies or our great Anglican divines) be found to support the assertion made by Dr. Darwell Stone, that our Rule of Faith is to be determined by "the Scriptures and the Creeds, Conciliar decisions, and the common teaching of representative divines."²

These statements may indicate the principles of Dr. Kidd and Dr. Darwell Stone, but they are not based upon the formularies of the Church of England. Certainly their Catholicity is not the Catholicity of the Anglican Church, nor have men who hold such views any just claim to be called Anglo-Catholic. We hardly think that the real Anglo-Catholics of the English Church, such as Cranmer, Jewel, Field, Hooker, Sancroft, or Jeremy Taylor, would have acknowledged them as fellow-helpers in defence of the English Church.

The men who are upholding doctrinal standards of the Church of England to-day appear to be in line with the true Anglo-Catholics.

As we review the last few years, while sympathizing with the Bishops in their difficult task, would it be unfair to say that their staff work has been defective? Have they not been putting the cart before the horse? The Bishop of Durham, at the beginning of the debates on Prayer Book Revision, declared that the Assembly was not representative of the Church of England. Would it not have been wiser to have sought some way of making it representative?

Again, the Bishop of Durham made a powerful speech in which he pointed out the need of revising the Ecclesiastical Courts, before

¹ "Introduction to Thirty-nine Articles," p. 12.

² "The Faith of an English Catholic," p. 22.

proceeding with the Revision of the Prayer Book. He was strongly supported by the late Bishop of Chelmsford. But the assembly was deaf to their appeals. We are told that an important Committee of theologians is occupied at the present time in dealing with the subject of doctrine. Would it not have been wise to have set up this Committee before revision?

In our present confusion would it not have been wiser for the Bishops to have asked for a readjustment of the present relations between the Church and State, rather than to appear, as they do appear to many men, to be resisting the law? The questions put to the Clergy at the Synods are as difficult to answer as would be the question, "Have you ceased beating your wives?" Some of them, apart from the difficulty of saying "Yes" or "No" are inconsistent with each other. One at least is inconsistent with itself. If we remember Lightfoot's dictum concerning the use of history, and at the same time remember to take the "long view," we need not despair. Nor is there need for undue haste. We still have the old Book, of which no Christian man, scholar, or theologian, need be ashamed. It can hardly be said with truth that there is any real enthusiasm in the country for the New Book.

Would it not be wise to stabilize the Book for a time? The clergy and people are studying and thinking over the New Book. It has taken a long time to produce it, but it has come quite suddenly before the mass of Churchpeople. The late George Russell in his *Life of Dean Church* wrote (p. 109): "The Tractarians were saved by the practical immutability of the Prayer Book, and the immutability of the Prayer Book was secured by the connexion with the State. To put an end to this connexion was impossible, and though, so long as it was impossible, much must of necessity remain unsettled, there was comfort in the thought that the Church was, at all events, protected against changes in the wrong direction."

George Russell was thinking of his party. Would not this immutability be good for *all* parties in our present confusion?

In "The Golden Harvest Series," Mr. Robert Scott issues two admirable selections of passages in prose and verse. *Apples of Gold*, selected by E. H. (1s. 6d. net), takes its title from the verse, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver." Ancient and modern writers are laid under contribution, and the passages placed under appropriate headings such as Wisdom, Love, Duty, Humility. *To-day is Yours*, arranged by J. C. Wright (1s. 6d. net), is a collection in many respects similar. The passages selected are suggestive and helpful. Among the authors represented are R. L. Stevenson, Ruskin, Henry Drummond, Whittier, E. B. Browning, Frances R. Havergal, and Christina Rossetti.