

THE CHURCHMAN

October, 1929.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Bishops and the Prayer Book.

THE policy of the Bishops in regard to the Revised Prayer Book, although not altogether unexpected in view of their previous deliberations, has caused widespread disappointment throughout the Church. Hopes had been entertained after the decisions of the House of Commons, which indicated so clearly the belief of the representatives of the people that the doctrine of our Church was being altered by the alternative service for the Holy Communion and by the legalisation of the practice of Reservation, that it would have been found possible to omit these retrograde portions of the revision and provide the Church with a Prayer Book suited to the needs of the twentieth century. There is ample evidence that there is no demand for the alternative Communion Office, and it is equally clear that the desire for Reservation is not merely to meet the needs of the sick, but is a step towards the use of the reserved elements for purposes of worship. Portions of the revised Book have been printed obviously with the intention of providing for their use in Church. There would have been little difficulty in securing the sanction of Parliament for the use of most of these portions. It is regrettable that the Bishops should place themselves in a false position by giving their administrative consent to the illegal use of portions of the revision which most church-people would be glad to employ, when there was open to them a simple method of securing full sanction for them.

The Bishop of Exeter has been one of the severest critics of the decision of the majority of the Episcopate. He describes it as practically a declaration that the Church's agreement with the State is "a scrap of paper." He adds, "We fought for the maintenance of a scrap of paper in the Great War; all law-abiding citizens abide by their signature to a scrap of paper—and it is left for the Bishops, in the words of one of their number, to tear up a solemn document as if it were nothing more than a mere scrap of paper."

The Change of Doctrine in the Revised Prayer Book.

As the revised Prayer Book is more thoroughly studied it becomes clearer that it involves a change in some of the fundamental doctrines of our Church. The departure from "the sure warranty of Scripture" as the accepted basis of doctrine—one of the essential principles of the Reformation—has opened the way for the introduction of teaching and practices unknown in our Church for the last three hundred years. Some of these doctrines have been either actually pronounced to be false or have fallen into desuetude as bringing the purity of our Church's teaching down from a high level of spirituality, to a form of reduced Christianity associated with materialistic conceptions. The Bishop of Norwich was quite emphatic in his view that the Deposited Book of 1928 did alter the doctrine of the Church. A similar declaration has been made on more than one occasion by the Bishop of Worcester. The Bishop of Birmingham has drawn special attention to the materialistic conceptions contained in the Book. The Bishop of Exeter has been quite definite in his view that the revision has opened the way for many abuses, and that the changes "are in sympathy with an aggressive and successful movement like the Romeward movement in the Church of England." The opinion of the laity of the Church is on the same side, and they are opposed to any innovations which will restore medieval ideas or methods of worship. At a time when there is a determined movement to introduce the Mass and the doctrine associated with it, and thus to destroy the Protestant character of our Church, it would be fatal to allow our Prayer Book to be made a subtle means of subverting the truth.

The South India Reunion Proposals.

The Proposals for Church Union in South India are assuming a greater importance as the time approaches for them to be submitted to the Lambeth Conference of Bishops. Strenuous efforts will be made by the Anglo-Catholic section of the Church to secure their rejection. We have already pointed out the serious position in which the missionary work of the Church in South India would be placed by the refusal of the Bishops to give their approval to the movement. The only theoretical ground on which the proposals can be rejected, is that of the rigid theory of Apostolical Succession accepted by those who follow the errors of the Tractarians. This excludes the recognition in any way of non-Episcopal ministries. But the past history of our Church shows that such ministries have been recognized, and the Bishops at the last Lambeth Conference adopted the view brought into prominence, we may point out, by the first Cheltenham Conference that "these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace." They also acknowledged "the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the Episcopate." This is in harmony with experience and common sense. We may also add that scholarship supports

this view, and we recommend to the careful study of our readers Canon Streeter's recent book, *The Primitive Church, studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry*, which is reviewed in this issue of THE CHURCHMAN. It destroys any assumptions of an exclusive single type of ministry based on Apostolical Succession, and shows that it had no place in the Primitive Church.

The Interpretation of Scripture.

The doctrine of the Church of England is based on "the warranty of Scripture." The exact translation and accurate interpretation of the Bible has therefore always been one of the chief aims of Protestant scholarship. It has generally been accepted that our great Protestant scholars have sought to reproduce the exact meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew without bias or prejudice. No one could associate with the names of such scholars as Westcott, Lightfoot and Hort any intention of manipulating texts to support already accepted ecclesiastical theories. In a number of crucial texts the interpretation of Protestant divines differs from that of the Roman Church which is based on the Vulgate version. Until recent years the scholars of our own Church were in general agreement with other Protestant scholars as to the meaning of these passages and against the Roman authorities. A tendency has appeared with the growth of Anglo-Catholic influences to seek to find some means of either smoothing out these differences or of boldly adopting the Roman renderings. One of the best-known examples of this tendency is found in the interpretation of the Lord's Supper: "Do this" in the passage on the institution of the Lord's Supper: "Do this in remembrance of Me." Anglo-Catholics with the Romanists endeavour to make it signify "Sacrifice this," although all the great Protestant scholars of the past were agreed that there was not sufficient evidence throughout either the New Testament or the Septuagint to show that the word "do" when used by itself in this way could bear such an interpretation.

The Misuse of Scripture.

In a pamphlet recently issued—*The Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord*—the Archdeacon of Chester has exposed an attempt to deal in the same way with several important passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews in a commentary issued some time ago under Anglo-Catholic auspices. He first refers to the difference between the significance of "repent" in our Authorized version, and the mechanical "do penance" of the Roman version. Then he deals with Hebrews i. 3. In our version it runs "When he had himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The translation of the Vulgate is "making purgation of sins, he sat." Westcott pointed out the error in the Vulgate, but the new Commentary suggests the Vulgate rendering as a possible alternative to that in our version. Again in Hebrews x. 12, "When He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right

hand of God." The Douay Version renders it "But this man offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God." These and other passages are, in the hands of Anglo-Catholics, made to bear the interpretation that "Christ is continually offering Himself to the Father and that the Holy Communion is the earthly counterpart of that offering." The Church of England, as the Archdeacon points out, knows nothing of such a doctrine, yet the new Anglo-Catholic Commentary attempts to find Scriptural authority for it, and the commentator on the Epistle seeks to make it bear this interpretation. The whole tenor of the Epistle is against it. It is one of the most puzzling signs of our times to note the decline of some Anglican scholars from the height reached in the pure research of the great scholars of the past, to the mental condition produced by the biassed efforts to bring the doctrine of our Church into some resemblance of harmony with that of the Church of Rome.

Editorial Note.

Dr. G. G. Coulton, who is our greatest authority on the medieval ages, contributes to this number of *THE CHURCHMAN* an address which he recently gave on "The Reformation and Reunion." He views reunion from a fresh angle and he deals with some difficulties which must be considered when practical proposals are put forward. Mr. H. P. Palmer, who has given the results of his researches into the past history of some of our English institutions and customs in previous issues of *THE CHURCHMAN*, gives an account of the use and abuse of the ancient privileges of "Sanctuary" in sacred buildings. "The Future of the Ecclesiastical Courts" will soon be one of the most important problems before the Church. Mr. William Marshall Freeman gives our readers the benefit of his legal opinion on recent proposals. Dr. Harold Smith contributes one of his characteristic historical studies dealing with Giles Firmin: *A Puritan Divine of the Seventeenth Century*. Mr. G. Wilson Knight, of Dean Close School, Cheltenham, has made a study of Shakespere's plays on special lines which deserve the attention of students of literature. He deals with the tragic movement in the story of Timon of Athens in an article on "The Pilgrimage of Hate: An Essay on Timon of Athens." An old contributor, the Rev. Charles Courtenay, M.A., in his treatment of an obscure rubric, under the title "Light from an Old Rubric," brings out in an interesting way a number of facts which need special emphasis at the present time. The pages devoted to notices of books will, we hope, help our readers to estimate the value of recent publications, especially of those likely to be of special interest to Evangelical churchpeople.