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CATHEDRAL STATUTES : A GROUND OF REVISION.

BY THE VEN. A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A., Archdeacon of Norfolk
and Canon of Norwich.

THE Cathedrals Measure is law. Some, therefore, who opposed it in its first and most imperfect form, have now to consider its application to their own Cathedrals. But there may still remain others who wonder why the regulations under which the ancient Cathedrals are understood to be governed need revision. The Statutes of one Cathedral are no sure guide to the conditions of another. Nevertheless the example of Norwich¹ may suffice to show that changes are imperatively called for. Whether the setting up of a costly Commission was the best way of obtaining these changes is a point which it would be useless now to discuss. But at least it may, in due season, have the advantage of saving the Dean and the Canons from regular violation of solemn oaths publicly taken. For at Norwich the Dean has to swear that he will "in all things observe the Statutes of this Church, in so far as they shall concern me"; and the Prebendary (Canon Residentiary) that he will "keep all the Statutes, laws, rites and laudable customs of this Church which shall concern me." There is reason to believe that one Canon felt himself bound to oppose the Cathedral's Measure because in his oath he had sworn to "resist counsels, assemblages, conspiracies, wiles, deeds or words of other men, which may cause damage or discredit to the Church." But imagination staggers at the prospect of what might happen if these oaths were well and truly kept.

The general character of the Measure is by now very widely known. A body of Commissioners is appointed, charged with power to produce schemes embodying statutes or regulations for the control and administration of any of the cathedrals except Christ Church, Oxford. But a scheme can become operative only with the consent of the Dean and Chapter and of the Bishop. The new regulations to be framed may cover all leading features of cathedral life and administration whilst saving the rights of any persons at present in office. The Measure is so far pacific as to make no suggestion that cathedrals are mismanaged, or to do no more than mildly hint by projected changes that their duty might have been more generously discharged. And if anyone had asked why, in that case, new laws for their administration were needed, the answer is that the existing statutes of ancient cathedrals are largely out of date, unworkable, and by custom freely ignored.

Take the case of Norwich. We are technically ranked as a cathedral of the New Foundation. This, of course, does not mean

¹ The substance of this article was delivered as part of a Charge to the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Archdeaconry of Norfolk in May, 1931.

that we go with such modern establishments as Liverpool, Truro, Bradford, and the like. In its misleading fashion it imports that Norwich is one of the cathedrals which had existence, but were associated with monastic foundations, before the Reformation, and were refounded, with Deans and Chapters, at the Reformation. The cathedrals of the Old Foundation did not suffer this reconstitution. They existed with their deans and prebendaries before the Reformation. This distinction has led to some curious contrasts; for, whilst York is of the Old Foundation, Canterbury is of the new, and whilst Lincoln is of the old, Norwich and Ely are of the new. Our own charter is from Edward VI, our Statutes from James I, ratified and modified by Charles I; slightly modified also by Acts of Parliament. It can readily be understood, then, that arrangements made 300 years ago do not agree well with the conditions of cathedral life to-day. It could not be expected that they would. But the requirements of the Statutes are clear enough, if sometimes embarrassing.

For example, our Norwich statutes enjoin for the dean and the prebendaries (canons residentiary as they are now called) and other *ministri* of the cathedral a sort of community existence. A prebendary, who has not "from other sources besides the stipend of the Church, forty pounds a year of fixed rents," is not compelled to maintain his family separately, but is to be granted the choice of lodging with the dean or with any one of the prebendaries whom he shall select. In the same brotherly spirit it is ordered that the minor canons, organist, lay clerks, and choristers "eat and feast together in the common hall." This custom, the Statute says, had "by the carelessness if not impiety of certain persons," become obsolete, but was firmly re-established. By Statute the stipends of the Dean and Prebendaries are—perhaps not unwisely or unfairly—to depend largely on their regular attendance at the daily services. The Minor Canons (six is the proper number; we now have only one and two Assistants) are to be fined a penny if they come into service after the *Venite* at Morning Prayer or after the first Psalm at Evening Prayer. The Precentor is charged with the duty of noting "truly and without any malicious deceit"—a most unpleasant reflection on Precentors—any absence of the Dean and Prebendaries from services. He is also to cast a careful eye over the conduct of lay clerks and singing boys, particularly to "rebuke and calm those who make a disturbance, and those who run up and down the Choir in a disorderly fashion."

Community life of course demanded a domestic establishment. Accordingly the Statutes ordain that "there shall be perpetually," not only a Dean, Prebendaries, and Minor Canons, but also "six Poor Men to be nourished at the expense of the said Church," two cooks, one butler, one caterer, and other helpers, including a keeper of the ferry. Many of these laws have long been neglected. There is no common table, no cook, no butler, no caterer; but the six Poor Men are still "nourished," and the keeper of the ferry survives. The six Poor Men have one advantage over the Dean and

Canons. The imposing document which confers on each of them his office bears the sign manual of the King himself and not that of a mere Secretary of State or other official. Possibly this stimulates them to the more careful discharge of their duty to "pray sedulously for the King's Majesty."

There are other and more serious details in which the Statutes need amendment along the lines laid down in the Cathedrals Measure. The position of the Bishop must be dealt with. At present the relation of a Bishop to his cathedral church is one of difficulty. With us the Bishop cannot claim the right to hold an ordination or any other service in the cathedral. He has no control over the services, ceremonial, or ornaments of the Church. He has, however, the unusual privilege of appointing the preachers at all of the morning services save those which are expressly reserved by Statute. But for the courtesy of the Bishop, the Dean would preach on only two Sunday mornings, and the four Canons only on the Sundays in Lent with an additional Sunday for the Archdeacon-Canon. The Bishop has, it is true, some powers as visitor, but those seem only to touch the composing of strife or failure in morals and in duty on the part of the clergy. There is no record of the exercise of these powers in recent times; but I understand that at another ancient cathedral the Bishop as visitor was called in solemnly to adjust a dispute as to whether a silver mace should be borne before the Dean only or before the Canons also.

The position of the Dean justly receives attention in the Measure. For the actual facts at any cathedral rarely agree with the popular conception of his powers and authority. Our own Statutes confer an unusual degree of responsibility on the Dean of Norwich, for he can of his own motion choose the Minor Canons, the organist, and some others of the Cathedral staff. But, as not the Dean but the Dean and Chapter fix and pay their stipends, the privilege is severely limited. Possibly it is for this reason that the Measure contemplates the transfer of such appointments to the Dean and Chapter. Another change is obviously needed. By Statute the Dean should be "adorned with a title of learning, that is, a Professor of Sacred Theology or Bachelor of the same." The older Universities have now fully recognized the low esteem into which the degree of D.D. had fallen by their kindly conferment of this "title of learning" upon many a person who could hardly be described even as "mediocritur doctus." But to-day there are other "titles of learning" which suggest as fit a qualification for the modern Dean. Perhaps, also, it should be stipulated that a Deanery is a "whole time job"; a law which might also apply to Bishops.

The position of the Prebendaries, or Canons Residentiary, also calls for some clearer definition or readjustment, particularly as to the one who is "in course" or as is commonly said, "in residence." Here also it should be enacted that no benefice be held with the Canonry. No such requirement at present exists at Norwich, but not so many years ago some of the Canons were also incumbents of important parishes. The Hon. Canons do not appear in the

Statutes. They are a modern invention, created under an Act of Parliament of 1840. Any scheme prepared under the Measure will doubtless bring them into closer relations with the Cathedral and its administrative Chapter. At one time it looked as though changes proposed in regard to the position and powers of the Hon. Canons might, if effected, lead to strife, and tend to impair rather than strengthen the administrative life of the Cathedrals. There was a danger also lest the fanciful notions of joyous idealists, full of zeal, but themselves unacquainted with the working of Cathedral life, should sow the seed for a crop of new perplexities. Even as the Measure now stands a new Scheme might easily provide for a waste and not an economy of the Cathedral endowments. But since no Scheme could come into operation against the will of the Dean and Chapter, we may assume that such perils will be avoided, and that reforms or readjustments will be directed mainly to the removal of such anomalies as have been indicated.

There are many other details, some of great importance, in Norwich Statutes which can apply only to the conditions of other days. But possibly enough has been said to show that changes are needed unless Cathedrals are to be governed by variable custom and not by law.

THE LITTLE BOY OF NAZARETH. By Edna Madison Bonser.
London: *Student Christian Movement Press*. 6s. net.

This interesting and instructive book was published in America in 1930 and the first British Edition appeared in April 1931. Psychologists tell us that the very early years of a child's life are of almost inestimable importance in shaping his character, which, in its essential tendencies, is formed by the time he is six years old. Presuming this to be true, it goes without saying that intelligent attention should be paid to his early social, economic and religious environment. This is precisely what the writer of this book has tried to do with the childhood of Jesus. The stories contained in it make no claim to be true in the sense that they actually occurred, but yet they are true in the sense that the life of Jesus must have gone on in some such fashion as this. The author deals with her subject in a fresh and sympathetic way, and she has certainly succeeded in making of the childhood of Jesus a very real and living picture. She has certainly given us a charming book in which young people will simply "revel." Parents and teachers will discover in it a delightful gift-book, and we rather suspect they will want to read it themselves before they part with it. The suggestions to teachers at the end of the book contain much that will help them to use the book in a practical way.