

# Anglican World Commentary

## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN AUSTRALIA

BY THE VERY REV. S. BARTON BABBAGE, PH.D.

**K**ENNETH HENDERSON, in a recent article on "Anglicanism in Australian Life", quoted some descriptive words addressed to Bishop Perry, Bishop of Melbourne, in 1873 on the 25th anniversary of his Consecration: "Among a people singularly independent in thought, restless in action, and impatient of restraint, who had broken away from home and home associations, it was our work to stand upon the old paths, in a new world to rear up the ancient time-honoured church of the old country." These words can be given a wider application than their particular historical context: they can appositely be applied to the contribution and work of the Church of England as a whole in relation to the life of Australia. During the past 150 years, in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, the Church of England in Australia has endeavoured "to rear up the ancient time-honoured church of the old country." This has involved necessary adaptation and experimentation. In the early days the church was virtually an established church and the chaplains were appointed by the Governor. At that time the church came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Calcutta until the first Bishop of Australia was appointed in the person of Bishop Broughton. By a series of legislative acts the established position of the church was gradually altered, and to-day the church, while numerically the largest, has no peculiar position or prerogatives.

The church has been entrusted with the task of proclaiming the everlasting Gospel in Australia. Her achievements and failures must be considered in the light of the background against which she has been called upon to work. Australia, as a nation, is still immature and undeveloped, both culturally and economically. There is little Christian tradition, although there is a splendid ideal of comradeship and of mutual enterprise and adventure, which is typified by the word "Anzac." To-day, among the younger generation there is little conscious attachment to the church, and still less understanding of the function of the church in the life of the community as the instrument of God's redeeming love. This is partly due to the lure of the wide open spaces, the seaside, and the long hours of sunshine, all of which encourage an outlook which, while healthy, is nevertheless largely pagan. Further, in the national life, militant Communism and political Roman Catholicism are both highly organised, and both present a serious challenge.

During recent years party strife has weakened the life of the church. Some dioceses have developed an ecclesiastical tradition which is narrow and extreme. This development has been due to the wide dispersal of the population and the consequent isolation of certain areas from the life of the whole. The vast distances have led to a multiplication of dioceses, so that now there are some 25 in all with

some 1,400 parishes. A few of the dioceses cover enormous areas which are staffed by a handful of clergy. As a result of isolation and dispersal, and other factors, there has been much suspicion, intrigue, and bitterness. This has prevented any final agreement on a domestic constitution for the Church in Australia. Successive drafts have been produced over a period of years, but all have proved abortive, because there has been insufficient mutual trust and confidence.

The situation that exists in Australia may be illustrated by a significant legal case which has recently been fought. Twenty-three laymen in the Diocese of Bathurst brought an action against their Bishop in respect of the use of an order for the administration of Holy Communion contained in a Red Book issued under the authority of the Bishop. The relators complained that the Red Book contained doctrine contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England, in that it incorporated large portions of the Roman Catholic Mass, and excluded receptionist views of the Sacrament. They also complained of the use of the Sanctus Bell, and the ceremonial use of the sign of the cross. After a lengthy case, the Chief Judge in Equity pronounced judgment against the Bishop and declared that the Church of England in Australia is an integral "part of the Church of England in England and is bound by its laws, its articles, its liturgy and formularies. The Bishop has now appealed to the full court against this judgment." The case has, of course, caused great distress to the church as a whole, and it is only hoped that the result of this judgment will end misunderstandings and confusions regarding the legal position of the church and that it will promote the spirit of law and of peace.

Another source of controversy has been the Primacy. Sydney has enjoyed the Primacy from the beginning, and it was not until recent years that it went elsewhere. At the time of the election of the present occupant of the See of Sydney, the House of Bishops departed from precedent and elected the Archbishop of Perth as Primate of Australia. This election was an expression and result of the contention that exists within the life of the Church. The transfer of the Primacy to Perth was a political move to diminish the pre-eminence of Sydney. Last year the office of Primate again became vacant and the Archbishop of Sydney has been elected Primate. The traditional position has therefore been restored, and it is hoped that this expression of confidence in Sydney will lead to happier reciprocal relationships.

It would be wrong, however, to give an impression which is wholly negative. There has been much positive achievement and much faithful evangelism. The Gospel has been proclaimed, and the church has shown remarkable zeal in fulfilling the Dominical commands. The Bush Brotherhood and the Bush Church Aid Society have both demonstrated in action a fine spirit of self-sacrifice and of heroic endeavour, especially in the more forbidding and remote parts of the Continent. These Societies have used flying doctors, nurses and itinerant clergy in an endeavour to evangelise those in the back-blocks. The church has also shown much pioneering zeal in relation to education. There are many first class church schools, especially for the middle classes.

Sydney is the traditional home of Australian evangelicalism. Within its borders are one quarter of the Anglicans in Australia and the Diocese is making an increasing contribution to the life of the church in Australia as a whole. There is still a dearth of scholarship and of real leadership, but some of the younger men show promising capabilities in different directions. During the present Principalship of the Rev. Canon T. C. Hammond, Moore Theological College has made considerable progress, and there are now seventy-nine students in residence, while the College itself has largely been rebuilt. Youth work within the Diocese is strong, and most parishes have impressively large young people's fellowships, and these fellowships succeed, as a rule, in holding their members till they reach their early twenties. Most parishes are understaffed, and clergy find it difficult to seize all the opportunities which present themselves. The clergy, by statutory provision, have the right of entry into state schools for scripture instruction for one hour each week, and there are many other fields of opportunity.

The situation before the Church in Australia to-day is therefore challenging: on the one hand, while the outlook of many is pagan and materialistic, it is not unsympathetic nor hostile to the church; and on the other hand, there is much conscientious and devoted service from Christians, both clerical and lay, and a heartening response from youth.

## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN CANADA

BY THE REV. T. W. ISHERWOOD, M.A.

**I**T may be well to begin these notes with the merely factual statement that the Church of England in Canada is made up of twenty-seven dioceses organised in four Ecclesiastical Provinces. Each Province has its Metropolitan. Over the Church as a whole is the Primate, himself also a diocesan bishop, in the Province of Canada, as it happens. The Primate is appointed by action of an Electoral College of our General Synod, the House of Bishops having nominated to that body three diocesan bishops from whom the final choice is made.

The most important single event in the history of the Church during the past year was the election of a new Primate. The election was necessitated by the sudden death, on April 9th, 1947, of Archbishop Owen, an effective leader greatly beloved by the whole Church. The vacancy was filled by the appointment, last September, of the Bishop of Nova Scotia. Archbishop Kingston, as he now is, can be said, without impertinence, to possess the qualities and capacities which our Church needs at the present time. He is still a relatively young man, with vision and vigour blended in good measure. He is one of the three outstanding scholars on the bench—the others being the Archbishop of Quebec and the Bishop of Saskatoon—but there is nothing abstractly academic about him. Under his wise, strong, and, not least important, sympathetic leadership there is good reason to hope that the Church will make substantial progress and maintain a