

THE CHURCHMAN

July, 1925

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Final Stages of Prayer Book Revision.

THE revision of the Prayer Book is drawing near to its closing stages. The general effect of the changes adopted has become more clearly recognized. The result is a development in appreciation on all sides of the significance of the proposals adopted, and a consequent warmth of feeling on the part of their supporters and opponents. This was to be expected. As the general tendency of the changes pointed more and more to a movement in the Romeward direction, it was natural that those who objected to this process should express their objections more definitely and directly. It was equally natural that those who looked upon the changes as a victory for the cause for which they had long contended should be prepared to defend their gains more vigorously. The issues have become so clear that even the most indifferent Churchman cannot plead ignorance of them. The final stages before us seem to involve a fierce contest, and those who have seemed so near success in securing the adoption of their teaching and ritual are not likely to abate their claims though they involve the Church in the bitterness of party strife.

Neither Geneva nor Rome.

The issue really is the maintenance of the historical character of the Church of England. There are two widely different conceptions of Christianity. They have in the past for convenience been associated in a general way with Geneva and Rome. There are many intervening stages between the extreme Reformed and the ultramontane ideals. The Church of England has for nearly four centuries

been definitely among the Reformed Churches. In the earlier period succeeding the Reformation the connection with the foreign reformers was close, and the sympathy strong. With Laud a new phase began, yet the Caroline divines were as definitely Protestant as their predecessors. Even the Non-Jurors, with their high doctrine of the Church, were strongly opposed to the Church of Rome and its claims. The great Evangelical movement of the eighteenth century was strongly on the side of the Reformation. The earlier Tractarians were also opposed to Rome, but many of them did not appreciate the tendencies latent in their teaching. These are now making themselves evident, and have produced a School unknown in the Church of England since the sixteenth century. This looks to Rome for its model. It repudiates the Reformation. It desires to set up an authority apart from the National Church. It aims at a complete change in the religion of which England has been the chief representative for several centuries.

A Call to Action.

The claims of this new School to dominate the Church of England have become clear during the process of Prayer Book Revision. The adoption of the alternative forms in the Communion Service, the legalization of the chasuble and the permission of Reservation were steps towards this end. The declaration that Reservation should be allowed for purposes of adoration, and the acceptance by the House of Clergy of the festival of Corpus Christi, under another name, as well as the rejected proposal to adopt the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin, also under another name, finally indicated the ultimate designs of the Movement. The result has been an awakening of Churchpeople hitherto dormant, and an expression of their resistance to such proposals in "A Call to Action," recently issued under the signatures of upwards of 130 Churchpeople of prominent position in the social, political, and educational life of the nation. This is one of the most significant events in the recent history of our Church. It represents a movement on the part of those who have not hitherto been associated with any of the so-called party organizations. It marks the resistance of the "sober, peaceable and truly conscientious Sons of the Church of England" to the attempt to force the doctrine and practice of an alien religion upon our Church.

The "Catholic" Appeal.

The Call is a clearly worded and moderate document. It deserves careful study on the part of all Churchpeople. After stating the facts to which we have referred, it calls on English Churchmen "to read the signs of the times and rouse themselves from their supine tolerance" in order to save the Church from the disaster which now threatens to overwhelm us. In carefully reasoned statements it shows that the cardinal issue is one of authority. The authority of the Church of England is overridden by an appeal to "the Catholic Church." This is neither the Roman Church, nor the Greek Church, but a "nebulous something which is not represented by any community." It means ultimately that the "Anglo-Catholics" are claiming to be a law unto themselves, and as a result they have introduced—each following his own fancy—miscellaneous rites gleaned from various ages and countries. These have no authority from "the undivided Church before 1054." The darkest period in the history of European Christianity gives them some support in their cult of the Madonna and the Saints. But compulsory auricular confession, the festival of Corpus Christi, the exposition and extra-liturgical adoration of the Host are of later date, and they have even adopted some of the extravagances of modern continental Catholicism.

The Historic Character of our Church.

The Call emphasizes the comprehensive character of the Church of England. It is Evangelical in its assertion of the soul's direct communion with God through Christ, and Catholic in its maintenance of the Ministry and Sacraments. It is able to enrich its faith with the truths gained from the study of science and history, while restraining extravagances of speculation by a steadfast appeal to Scripture. A clear statement is given of the position of our Church, as standing "upon the principles of the Reformation, putting truth before tradition and testing later developments by the standard of New Testament teaching." It is the main position of our Church which is challenged by the attempt to restore Mariolatry, the Mass, and the control of the priest over conscience. The majority of Churchpeople, however widely they differ on minor points, desire to maintain the historic character of the Church. The Call closes with a stirring appeal: "If Englishmen wish to enjoy the privileges of their historic Church, they must show the spirit of their forefathers, who

made it what it is. They must awake from their torpor ; they must care more for truth than for peace ; they must waive lesser differences and unite in defence of basic principles." This appeal will meet with a hearty response from all loyal Churchpeople and all other lovers of freedom and truth.

"The Times" on Anglo-Catholicism.

The Call to Action has made a profound impression both by its carefully reasoned and moderate expression of views, and by the position, weight and learning of its signatories. The only reply that has so far been made to it on the part of the Anglo-Catholics is to question the inclusion of the name of Colet among representatives of the comprehensive character of our Church—a detail of little significance. It has received widespread notice in the Press. *The Times* devoted a remarkable leading article to its support, and condemned the spirit and method of Anglo-Catholicism in vigorous terms. It described the supporters of Anglo-Catholicism as "a determined and well-organized group, recklessly set upon transforming the outward face of the English Church after the pattern of a supposed 'Catholicism,'" and spoke of "their complete failure to put forward any intelligible theory of what they mean by Catholicism," while they display a total absence of the Catholic virtues of "obedience and respect for constituted authority." Of their claim that "obedience was only to be rendered in so far as the Bishops themselves obey the Catholic Church," it says: "It is impossible to characterize such an attitude in rational terms at all."

Such condemnation from the leading organ of the Press in the country ought to make people realize the extent and significance of the law-defying methods of this section of the Church.

"Ecclesiastical Bolshevism."

There are however still stronger terms of condemnation which ought to receive the widest publicity, for they describe the position exactly. Those who think in the way just described "are fanatics who know what they want, and are determined to get it, at whatever cost to the body to which they belong, with cynical forgetfulness of the obligations they have undertaken and recklessly indifferent to the complete absence of justification in tradition or history for their subversive methods. If this is really Anglo-Catholicism, then Anglo-Catholicism is sheer ecclesiastical Bolshevism." This is

the simple and appalling truth of the present situation in the Church. The spirit of Bolshevism is at work and will produce as devastating havoc in English religion as the same spirit has produced in the organized life of Russia. Constant appeals are made—and apparently without effect—to the more moderate Anglo-Catholics “to separate themselves from those who desire to wreck the ship by persistent and organized mutiny.” At a time when morality in every sphere requires to be strengthened, a section of the English Church is showing itself recklessly careless of solemn promises and obligations, the very foundation of any form of corporate life. In the name of one particular theory of authority they are hastening disaster to the great safeguard of English character and progress, and bringing the Church to chaos. A terrible responsibility rests on those who are acting in this way.

The Facts of the Situation.

Of the correspondence in the papers to which the Call has given rise, it is impossible to give here any adequate account. The silence of the Anglo-Catholic leaders is significant. They have made no attempt to repudiate the extremists. They know that their appeal to an authority outside the Church of England does not bear examination, for the clergy took their orders in the Church with their eyes open to the facts, and made their solemn promise of obedience with that knowledge. Some of the Anglo-Catholics have raised the cry of persecution, and refer to the days of the Public Worship Regulation Act, and its failure to restrain the advance of their party. The maintenance of order is a primary duty in any institution, and in the Church it rests ultimately upon the Bishops. It is absurd to speak of persecution in regard to the preservation of the known constitution of an organization from which members can withdraw if they are dissatisfied. As to the P.W.R. Act, it is a matter of profound regret that imprisonment should have been the punishment assigned for the clergy who disobeyed it. It gave opportunity to the rebels to cry persecution. If suspension and deprivation had been the punishment of the recalcitrant clergy; their places would have been filled, and they would have been left to their fate. The Church would thus have been freed from the rebellious elements; its true character and due comprehensiveness would have been maintained, and its legitimate development would have been fostered.

Letters from Two Bishops.

Some of the Bishops have, however, expressed their views on the situation—notably the Bishop of Winchester in a long letter in *The Times*. He wrote “not indeed to attack or to defend the document,” but to point out that in his opinion “the great body of Anglo-Catholics are honest men loyal to their Mother Church,” and that “they have an assured position in our Church life,” yet he says that the more extreme wing is somewhat in the position of an army which by forced marches has made a swift advance and not paid sufficient attention to its communications with the base. This he infers is due to “the chaotic conception of authority in the Church.” He goes on to suggest that the controversies of the sixteenth century are out of date and that there must be a new synthesis. Sir Thomas Inskip recently pointed out that these controversies are as little out of date as those of the first century. The Bishop of Durham took the Bishop of Winchester severely to task. “What is he driving at?” he asks. It is not his optimism that lies most open to criticism but his irrelevance. Dr. Henson gets to the heart of the situation when he points out that “Some of the Anglo-Catholics . . . do not acknowledge the authority of the Church of England, and announce in advance their determination not to accept its decisions.” That is the point the Bishop of Winchester does not face. The Bishop of Durham says truly: “The system of English religion is being changed almost beyond recognition, and the fact that the revision of the Prayer Book is actually proceeding has proved an excellent plea for allowing the innovations to advance unhindered.”

The Election to the House of Laity.

It is obvious that the electors to the House of Laity have recognized the serious nature of the situation. They have shown that they are determined to put a stop to the use of Prayer Book revision as a means of revolutionizing the worship of the Church. The election has considerably altered the character of the House. A number of the most prominent Anglo-Catholics have lost their seats. It has been stated that the Evangelical representation has been increased by upwards of sixty-five per cent, and that the Moderates, who are in general agreement with the Evangelical representatives on the subject of revision, have also largely increased in numbers, so that together they constitute considerably more than half the

House. This is an excellent result, and we hope that the new members will make their influence felt from the outset in securing the maintenance of the true teaching and worship of the Church. We are not opposed to the enrichment of our Prayer Book, or to its adaptation to the needs of to-day. We are in favour of greater elasticity, and we should welcome heartily any changes that would enable us to approach our fellow-Christians in the Free Churches of England, and enable them and us together to join in the fellowship of common worship. The changes so far in our Prayer Book have only served to alienate them, and to make us the laughing-stock of Romanists, who sneer at the attempts of our Church Assembly to adopt their rites.

Unity of Action.

The chief need of the moment on the part of Evangelical and Moderate Churchpeople is unity. There can be no doubt that the Anglo-Catholics will make every effort to produce division in the ranks of those opposed to them. They are adepts at devices of this kind and unfortunately Evangelical Churchmen only too frequently in the past have succumbed to their wiles. By flattery or threats, by accusations of inconsistency and of associating with the unorthodox, by some means or other, they will endeavour to divide the majority, which if united will defeat their schemes. It is of the utmost importance that the Evangelical representatives in the House should be prepared for these efforts. It is also essential that they should be on their guard against votes being taken when the Anglo-Catholics think they can snatch a victory in the House. Regular and constant attendance throughout the sessions will be necessary during the debates on revision.

The Unity of Evangelicals.

The present occasion emphasizes also the need of unity among Evangelical Churchmen. The future of religion in England depends largely now upon the action of the Evangelical School. It is a subject which demands the most prayerful consideration. No Evangelical of any section should allow personal considerations or personal prejudices to stand in the way of unity. The differences between the various sections of the Evangelical School are not so great as those between them all and the sacerdotal party. The quarrels between the members of a family are often the most difficult to settle, very

largely because no one will take the first step. The Conference at Cheltenham showed that the Committee arranging the gathering were sincerely anxious to provide some method of harmonious working. We hope that their efforts will meet with the happy success which they deserve and for which in the interests of the religious life of the country we earnestly pray.

Dean Wace House.

Dean Wace House in Wine Office Court off Fleet Street has been opened as the Headquarters of the National Church League, and its useful adjunct the Church Book Room. It is also intended to make provision for the accommodation of various Evangelical organizations requiring a meeting place, and as a Rendezvous where Evangelical Churchpeople can arrange to meet, or write letters, or hold interviews. The building is well adapted to its purpose, and will as time goes on prove increasingly useful in the development of all that is associated with Evangelical teaching and organization. To maintain Evangelicalism strong in all parts of the country is essential for the future of our Church's work both at home and overseas, and Dean Wace House will prove a valuable centre for all such efforts.

The Cheltenham Conference Papers.

The present number of *THE CHURCHMAN* has been enlarged in order to give our readers the opportunity of studying the papers at the recent Cheltenham Conference. These papers are written by representatives of the various sections of the Evangelical School. They serve several important purposes. They are important statements on the great fundamental principles of Christianity as interpreted by members of the Church of England who are proud to describe themselves as Evangelical. They also serve to show that amid diversity of opinion on matters of secondary importance there is unity on the basic principles of the Divinity of our Lord, the authority of Holy Scripture and the reality of the Atonement. We look for a great united movement in the proclamation of the Evangel as a result of the Conference, and we congratulate the conveners on the success of the gathering.
