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THE CHURCHMAN.

MARCH, 1908.

The Month.

The Vestments. THE Report of the Sub-Committee of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury, which was presented to Convocation last month, is a document of the very gravest importance. It represents the opinion of the five Bishops who composed it: the Bishops of Salisbury, Bristol, Exeter, Gloucester, and Ely. Their conclusion, broadly stated, is that "Vestments cannot rightly be regarded as expressive of doctrine," and that therefore "all questions of legislation in regard to them are questions of expediency rather than of principle." While the Bishops are careful to say that their Report binds no one, and is only to be regarded as an expression of their own opinions, they state very clearly their judgment that the Ornaments Rubric refers to and legalizes the Ornaments of the First Prayer Book of Edward VI. If this is true, then the Vestments are now, and have been since the sixteenth century, compulsory on all clergymen, all who wear them are keeping the law, and the great mass of clergy who do not wear them are breaking the law. Not only so, but it also naturally follows that any legislation that may be contemplated under the Letters of Business can only be to make the use of the Vestments permissive! The Report admits that until within fifty years or so ago "there is no evidence whatever of the wearing of the chasuble," and also that "no attempt whatever was made to enforce the use of any other vesture in the Service." So that we have the curious anomaly of a law absolutely ignored from the very outset, and never enforced to this day. Let

those believe it who can. When we think of the way in which Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., and Charles II. enforced obedience to the Law, it will require a great deal of proof that the finding of the Report represents the true view of the Church of England in regard to the Vestments. It is well known that such a position has not commended itself to the highest legal minds of our country, and Lord Selborne's judgment, in spite of all that has been said from time to time, still stands unaffected by any supposed "new light." The Report brings more prominently than ever into consideration the one question whether the Vestments are authorized by the Church of England. If they are, their use should be enforced, and all Evangelical and Moderate Churchmen made to obey the Law or accept the alternative. We do not suppose for an instant that the theory of a minimum use, regarded as contemplated by our present Rubric, is likely to survive in the face of the very insignificant and inconclusive proofs adduced in support of it in this Report. The question is narrowed down to the interpretation of the Rubric as authorizing or not authorizing the Vestments. If the Law is as the five Bishops say, then Evangelicals who have been so loud in their charges against Ritualists for breaking it must themselves be brought to book and compelled to observe it. To mention this is to show the impossibility of the situation created by the Report. Evangelical Churchmen are not prepared to pay any regard to a merely permissive use of the surplice. The surplice is either right or it is wrong. If it is wrong, we ought to know it on irrefragable evidence that admits of no question.

It may be questioned whether the framers of the

The Present Situation. Report have fully realized the consequences of the conclusions to which they have come. Meanwhile, let us see how it is regarded in various quarters. The *Guardian* expresses its great satisfaction with the findings of the Sub-Committee, and considers that the opportunity for toleration is a golden one, and that "the present opportunity for peace

cannot be neglected without grave peril to the Church." Its conclusion is that the surplice and the chasuble should be equally permitted according to the desires of individual parishes. The *Church Times* quotes from the Report the opinion of the Bishops that the Ornaments Rubric is to be prized because it exhibits "our continuity with the past life of the Church," and it pleads for the Rubric to remain unaltered or "elucidated" by any addition, while freedom is allowed to those who are not prepared to obey the order of the Rubric. The *Record* points out that the wearers of Vestments will claim the Report as fully vindicating their position, and "will quote the language of the Report as making the present Rubric mandatory, and so stamping as disloyal all clergy who do not wear the Vestments." It will be seen from these three references how varied and different are the attitudes of Churchmen to this momentous Report. It behoves all Churchmen to read and study it with the greatest care. We have to be cautious about speaking of any document as "epoch-making," but it is hardly too much to say that the present Report is likely to partake of this character. According to the five Bishops, "Vestments are visible symbols of the antiquity and the unity of the Church," and everything will depend upon our view of unity, whether we are prepared to accept or oppose the Vestments. It seems somewhat unreal to say that "if all English clergy wore the chasuble there would be no feeling about any special type of doctrine attached to it." This entirely begs the question at issue. It is because the chasuble has never been worn by the great body of English clergy that such a view is quite untenable. We are thus in the presence of two incompatible positions, and it is essential that the issues shall be squarely faced and settled along the line of principle, not expediency; for, whatever the Report may say, the question does involve principle. This is evident from the article in the *Church Times*, and it is far better to know the truth from those who insist upon the Vestments than from those who do not wear them, whether they be High Churchmen or Evangelicals.

It is probably true to say that in connexion
 with the Vestments controversy everything, or
 almost everything, will depend upon Evangelicals.
 It is truly astonishing that anyone can fail to see that the
 question, as the Dean of Canterbury truly says, is not what the
 Vestments were originally or in themselves, but what is their
present use; and who can doubt that

“their present use in the Church of England is avowedly expressive of doctrine, and that their explicit authorization or permission by Convocation would be still more expressive of doctrine, and that that doctrine is neither more nor less than the Roman doctrine of the Mass?”

If, according to the Report of the five Bishops, the Vestments stand for the antiquity and unity of the Church, then they must necessarily have a definite doctrinal meaning, for unity involves a very real doctrine; and thus the question at once becomes one of principle, and not merely one of expediency. If the Vestments are, to use the technical term, the “Mass Vestments” of the Roman Church, they must in some way or other be expressive of the Roman doctrine of the Mass; and since the Anglican doctrine of the Holy Communion is on this side of a “line of deep cleavage” between the Churches of England and Rome, how is it possible to use Vestments without to some degree appearing to approximate in doctrine to the Roman Church? How can the clergy of both Churches wear the same Vestments, and yet hold doctrines flatly opposed to each other? We can, of course, understand the wearing of Vestments in our Church by those who hold a doctrine of the Holy Communion almost identical with that of Rome; but this is not the view of the Prayer Book, or of the Articles, or of our English Church history since the sixteenth century. Why may we not look at facts as they are, and not endeavour to live in cloud-land? We wish to call very special attention to the able and convincing paper by the Dean of Canterbury in the *Record* of February 14. It is a trenchant and conclusive criticism of the main points of the Sub-Committee’s Report. One point more may be noted. The Report says that it is not unreasonable that the dress of

the clergy should differ somewhat in their ministration of the Sacrament from their dress in reading the common prayers. It is somewhat curious that they have entirely omitted a reference to the position of the minister as described in the Prayer Book as "the minister of the Word and Sacraments." If, therefore, it is reasonable to have a distinctive dress in the ministration of the Sacraments, why should there not also be a distinctive dress when they are ministering the Word? Yet, so far as we can see, the Report makes no recommendation for the reintroduction of the black gown or any other distinctive preaching Vestment. As the Dean of Canterbury very rightly says, a distinction between the dress of the clergy when administering the Sacraments and when reading ordinary prayers was not found in the Church for nine or ten centuries at least; and even now, though the Report uses the plural number, we have not yet heard of any serious proposal for a distinctive dress for the Sacrament of Baptism. Again we plead for a consideration of this subject along the line of practical politics, and not of mere theory.

This Bill stood condemned before it was debated in the House of Commons. Its very drastic character was utterly alien from the spirit of the House of Commons, and, indeed, from the spirit of our time; and it was in reality no service to the cause of true Churchmanship to introduce such a Bill into the Commons, for it was foredoomed to failure. At the same time, the amendment in favour of Disestablishment was not a fair or straightforward way of meeting the Bill, but raised an entirely false issue, which enabled a combination of High Churchmen, Non-conformists, and Labour Members to triumph, and score a great victory, through the utter want of tactics on the part of the promoters of the Bill. No doubt there is an increasing number of Churchmen who with no desire whatever for Disestablishment are coming, almost against their will, to the conclusion that only through Disestablishment will the Church be enabled to legislate for herself, and settle these Ritual questions. But

The
Ecclesiastical
Discipline
Bill.

those who advocated Disestablishment on February 14 could hardly have believed that the question was a practical one, or, indeed, would be for a long time to come. Their immediate object was to get rid of an awkward subject, and this they did by putting the Protestants in a dilemma. Meanwhile, the disorders in our Church, which were admitted by speakers on both sides, go on unchecked, and apparently there is no immediate redress. It remains to be seen whether anything will be done in connexion with the proposals which are being drawn up in reply to the Letters of Business. The *Times* considers that the upshot of the debate is "that the Church of England can look forward to a breathing space," and it quotes a Labour Member, who said that Disestablishment was not within practical politics by half a century. We are not at all so sure that the breathing space will last anything like this time. Events have a curious way of hastening towards a conclusion which not even the wisest politician or editor can readily foresee; and it does not require any great degree of foresight and prophecy to predict that the present state of disorder in our Church cannot go on for an indefinite time. We shall see before very long what action is taken on the Letters of Business; and, unless we are greatly mistaken, this action is more likely to precipitate a crisis than anything else.

The deputation to the Prime Minister and the
Simple Bible
Teaching. Minister for Education elicited a noteworthy response on the subject of religious education. The deputation was representative of all parties in the Church and of both great political parties in the State, and the words of the Prime Minister and of Mr. McKenna in response to the deputation were full of hope and encouragement to all those who are striving to prevent the catastrophe of secularism in national education. As the Prime Minister very truly remarked, "When one hears the Bible spoken of as 'corrosive' and 'poisonous' one rubs one's eyes, and wonders whether the type is being read correctly." He may well say that "it goes to one's heart to hear such language." Mr. McKenna was equally plain in

expressing the opinion that "there is no alternative to secular instruction except simple Bible teaching." The deputation was followed by a noteworthy letter in the *Times* from the Bishop of Carlisle. We wish that the entire letter could be circulated throughout the country, for it is one of the most faithful and truly Christian and statesmanlike utterances that we have seen for many a day. We are unable to quote it in full, and must content ourselves with the following extract, which speaks for itself, and needs no comment :

"The English nation is a Christian nation ; and surely the time has now come for it to declare definitely, and with resistless resolution, that in its system of education simple Bible teaching shall be incorporated as an indispensable permanent factor. The experience of thirty years has demonstrated the facility and effectiveness with which this can be done. We hear too much about tests for teachers, too little about trust in teachers. In our teachers of every grade we have a vast host of earnest Christian men and women devoted to the training of children, and loving them with deep, tender, Christian love. No other country in the world can show such a host as ours. Let us cease to suspect our teachers, and learn to confide and glory in them. Throughout the length and breadth of the land we have County Councils and local Education Authorities moved with a consecrated purpose, as their syllabuses prove, to do all in their power to bring Christian inspiration to the help and uplifting of children. Why should we throw this grand educational asset to the winds ? No sound of religious difficulty worth mentioning is heard in the schools themselves. It comes neither from teachers, parents, nor education authorities. We all know where it comes from ; and when we think of Christ and the children the knowledge of its source is a poignant sorrow. Can we not, for the sake of the children and Him who died for them, lay aside our differences and unite together around the footstool of the Divine Fatherhood, whose all-pitying love sent His Son to seek and to save the lost ? If this plain issue of simple Bible teaching can be placed before the nation, who can doubt on which side the verdict would be given ?"

Parents' Rights. It has been very interesting to observe the public attitude on the new question of parental rights. The correspondence in the papers during the past month has proved conclusively that its advocates have not yet progressed very far beyond the formulation of the principle. Its specific applications are still far to seek. The Bishop of Manchester's plan is not regarded as entirely satisfactory by the *Guardian*, which speaks of it as "a little difficult to understand." The *Church Times* will not allow a majority

of parents to settle the question of the religious teaching to be given. Canon Cleworth has his own view of the subject, while other well-known Manchester clergymen like Canon Scott and Canon Nunn have shown with remarkable clearness the difficulties, if not the impossibilities, of the situation. It is perfectly evident that the Bishop of Manchester is not carrying with him some of the leaders of education in his own diocese. All this goes to prove the truth of our quotation in January from the *Westminster Gazette* that "This is a case in which the formula must fit the facts, instead of the facts being evaded by the use of the formula." It is impossible for those who are hostile to the Church to overlook the frankness and significance of the Bishop of St. Asaph's letter to the *Times*, in which he said that the insistence upon parental rights would "take the sting" out of the demand for popular control. No one can have read Canon Nunn's forcible letter in the *Guardian* without being conscious of the striking force of his objections to the principle of parental rights, so far as that principle has been up to the present explained by its supporters. As another correspondent of the *Times* very truly said, it will be necessary for the Church to decide between the maintenance of the Trust Deeds and the insistence upon parental rights, for it is plainly impossible to champion both policies. Once again, then, we ask Churchmen to think out their position a little more clearly, in order that we may know what is involved in this advocacy of parental rights.

Everything that comes from the Bishop of Southwark demands and receives the careful consideration of Churchmen, and it goes almost without saying that his recent Charge is full of good and wise things, to which all Churchmen can give hearty assent and consent. But this makes it the more incumbent upon us to indicate what we are unable to accept. We find a difficulty in the following words of the Bishop as to the Holy Communion :

"I believe that He does there give to us with truest, because ineffable, truth His Body and Blood for food ; and that we rightly think and speak of the bread and wine which are given to us as being that Body and Blood."

We venture to ask, with great respect, whether these words are expressive of anything found in the Church of England formularies, or in representative utterances of English Churchmen prior to the Tractarian Movement. If the words mean what they say, they identify the sign with the thing signified, which our Prayer Book never does. We receive "these Thy creatures of bread and wine," and in the Words of Administration the sign and the thing signified are kept apart even while they are associated. The Body of our Lord "*was given for*" us, the bread and wine *are given to us*. This distinction is surely vital to a true understanding of the sacred ordinance, and we believe it can be proved that in none of the great writers on this subject, from Cranmer, Ridley, and Hooker, to Waterland, Vogan, and Meyrick, will the virtual identification of the outward and inward be found. It is no part of the teaching of the English Church. The gift of the Body and Blood runs parallel with, and is bestowed at the same time as, the bread and wine, but they are never identical. In the Lord's Supper there are two givers, the Lord and the minister. The Lord has never delegated the gift of His Body and Blood to any minister, and when the minister gives the bread and wine, the Lord Himself gives His Body and Blood to the faithful recipient who "does this in remembrance" of his Master. It is imperative that we should have clearness of thought and statement on this important subject, and that we should keep strictly and closely to the language and teaching of Scripture and the Prayer Book.

A Step in Social Reform. In a recent article the Bishop of Birmingham makes the following suggestion :

"We must make our voices as loud and as united as possible in claiming Wages Boards, established with statutable powers, to fix a minimum wage. In my judgment this step is actually the most important step at present in social reform. I would give it the very first place."

It is often asked what can be done to give practical effect to the desire for social reform which is becoming more general almost every month. Here is one answer, and a very definite

one. We entirely agree with the Bishop that the appointment of Wages Boards, with powers to fix a minimum wage, would go very far towards the solution of the great problem of sweating. The demonstration held in London at the end of January, organized by the National Anti-Sweating League, at which the Bishop spoke, was a striking testimony to the imperative need of reform. We must take steps to prevent the middleman from continuing to grind down the poor while reaping splendid profits from their labours. It is of no use whatever complaining of the prices charged by tradespeople, for the secret of the trouble lies, not with the tradesman who sells the goods, but with the middleman, who is the medium between the worker and the tradesman. We hope that Parliament will soon give facilities for the discussion and enactment of the Sweated Industries Bill. When we have obtained Wages Boards, it will soon be seen what a magnificent step forward we have taken in the pathway of true social reform.

Such is the title of an article in the *Church*
 "Fencing the Font." *Times* discussing the question raised by the resignation of the Rev. Roland Allen, to which reference was made in our January number. The article rightly says that "those who advocate the indiscriminate baptism of all children who can be gathered to the administration of the Sacrament have lost touch with the most essential feature of the Church's discipline." Then come these significant words:

"If they are to grow up in ignorance of Christianity, they had far better grow up unbaptized. Conversion will then be for them a more definite thing; how much fuller and richer than if they had a forgotten baptism in their past is known to those who have dealt with souls so placed."

This is admirably said, and should carry all the greater weight because of the quarter from which it comes. The indiscriminate baptism of children is causing serious misgivings and grave concern to not a few earnest clergymen, and is probably the cause of accessions to the ranks of the Baptists, which are utterly unwarranted on the true idea of infant baptism as taught in Scripture and the Prayer Book.