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THE CHURCHMAN

March, 1915.

The Month.

The Revision
Muddle. WE have read with respectful attention the debates on Prayer-Book Revision which took place at the February session of the Convocation of Canterbury, and confess we are puzzled. No doubt the Bishops themselves know what they have done and what will be the effect of their action, but ordinary people will find it difficult to declare with any preciseness what is the exact position to-day. The debates arose on the presentation of a Report from the Joint Committee which had been considering the recommendations submitted by the two Houses of Convocation, with a view to harmonizing the various proposals and suggesting how the alterations could best be carried out. The Report is somewhat voluminous, and deals with no fewer than 162 recommendations. On 143 of these agreement has been reached; the remainder are to be dealt with by further consideration, a joint conference, or in some other way. The point, however, is not material for the moment. What is important is that the Bishops, before entering upon the consideration of the Report, discussed what is to be done with the alterations when they are all agreed to. Should they be inserted in the Book of Common Prayer? or should they be issued separately? The Committee expressed their view that it was not desirable to seek to introduce them into the text of the Prayer-Book, but that they should be embodied in another volume, "to be sanctioned by authority for optional use for such period as may hereafter be deter-

mined." The Bishop of Gloucester, as the Committee's mouth-piece, moved a resolution to that effect. The Bishop of Ely dissented, and proposed an amendment to embody the changes in a draft Prayer-Book to be laid before the Church, not for use, but for review and criticism, for a period of at least a year. After the criticism of the Church had been fully considered, parliamentary sanction should be sought for the changes officially recommended. The amendment was lost, and the Bishop of Gloucester's proposal was carried by seventeen to five, with the addition of the words "or schedule" after "another volume." This is fairly clear so far as it goes, but one statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury has introduced an element of mystery which at present is altogether unexplained. He said that his own view was that, when they came to compile the supplementary paper or schedule, they would find that the actual changes were very small, and that the vast majority of the 162 recommendations before them would disappear. The Bishop of Lincoln expressed surprise at the statement, but the Archbishop quietly replied: "I mean it." At present there is no sign of any of these "changes" disappearing—indeed, the reactionary party in the Lower House are steadily contending for them all. Further light may be given to us at the April group of sessions. For the present we feel that the CHURCHMAN may at least congratulate itself on one point. We called for a policy of "hands off the Prayer-Book," and it would seem that even the Bishops have seen the wisdom of such a policy. Whatever may happen eventually, we are sincerely glad to find that the Prayer-Book itself is to remain untouched. But whether there is to be an alternative Prayer-Book, or a supplement, or an appendix, or a schedule, has not yet definitely emerged.

A Vigorous
Protest.

It would be idle to deny, however, that the position has suddenly become one of great gravity. Many of the changes are of no doctrinal importance; but in regard to others, which have been accepted by

both Houses, it is not too much to say that, if they were finally authorized, they would change the character of the Church of England, and change it in the Romeward direction. The Dean of Canterbury, who, all through the Revision debates has steadfastly resisted the Romeward drift, has uttered a strong warning in the columns of *The Times*. In a letter to that journal which appeared on February 17 he referred to the vital disputes respecting ritual by which the Church has been distracted for fifty years, and which the Royal Commission was appointed to appease, and said :

“The use of vestments, the transformation of the present Communion Service, Reservation—these are the chief occasions of the disorders which have prevailed. Convocation was invited, on the advice of the Commissioners, to propose a settlement of these disputes. It has refused to do so. All these matters of bitter controversy are now thrown back as bones of contention in every parish in the country for at least a period of some years. Every clergyman, and any party among his parishioners, are thus invited to promote experiments with the various changes which are to be made optional. The authorities of the Church had two courses open to them. They might have required obedience to the existing law, or they might have obtained a definite alteration of the law. They have done neither. They have not had the courage to take responsibility themselves. They have only proposed to set up a ring within which the parties in the Church are authorized and invited to continue their fights, the Bishop becoming the referee.

“It aggravates the scandal of this proposal that it should have been brought forward, with scarcely any notice, at a time when it was hoped, and understood, that there would be a truce to all such controversies in the Church. The resentment with which it will be received by a large section of Churchmen will be embittered by the indecency—for it is nothing less—of reviving such disputes at an hour when the minds of all serious laymen, at all events, are absorbed in the really solemn realities of the war.”

Nor does the Dean stand alone. He is without much support in the Southern Province, but in the North the cause he espouses is championed by the Bishop of Manchester and others, both in Convocation and out of it. Bishop Knox, speaking at a Church Pastoral Aid Society's meeting at Liverpool, hinted at the possibility “in a very short time” of an Act of Parliament being passed “which would side-track completely their beloved Prayer-Book, won for them by the blood of martyrs.” This warning should be kept steadily in mind, but

we believe that there is much yet to be done before the time is ripe for going to Parliament. When, it may be asked, are the laity to have an opportunity of expressing their views upon these "Revision" proposals? The Church has two Houses of Laymen, one for the Southern and the other for the Northern Province, and these are entitled to be consulted. It will not be enough for the scheme to be brought before the Representative Church Council, of which the Houses of Laymen form an integral part. There ought to be separate and independent consideration by the laity in their own Houses.

"No Truce." We agree entirely with the Dean of Canterbury that it is deplorable that so controversial a question as Prayer-Book Revision should be pressed forward at the present time. The prelates and clergy who are showing such mad haste to get this matter settled are the very men who, only a few months ago, were complaining—and in our view quite rightly complaining—that the Government were taking advantage of the war to force the Welsh Church Act into law at a time when, as they knew perfectly well, loyalty to the principle of national unity would prevent opponents of the measure from offering any effective opposition. The action of the Government, however, fades into insignificance beside that of the Houses of Convocation, which are using their majorities to force through a scheme of revision which, if it were ultimately accepted in its present form, might conceivably rend the Church of England in twain. Their action seems to us to be as tyrannical as it is inexcusable. The war offered a splendid opportunity for parties in the Church of England to call a truce in matters of religious controversy. No individual and no cause would have suffered by it—on the contrary, the cause of religion would have gained immensely from it; and who can tell but that, when the war is over, it might have proved itself the stepping-stone to a larger measure of unity than any of us has yet seen? But the dominant party in Convocation have by their actions—which always speak louder than words—

declared "No truce." War or no war in Europe, the warfare within the Church is to go on to the bitter end. A pretty spectacle the Church will present to the outside world! And for this we have to thank, not the opponents of the present scheme of Revision, but those who are pressing it forward. They seem fairly confident of victory. We are not so sure. Much has yet to be done before Parliament—which alone can legalize the proposed changes—can be approached; and it is quite certain that the Dean of Canterbury and his friends will use the interval for so organizing their forces that when the final tussle comes Parliament will be made aware that there is within the Church of England a strong and compact body of clergy and laity who will resist to the utmost the imposition of any changes which tend to assimilate the services and worship of the National Church to the services and worship of the Church of Rome.

The Welsh Church and Convocation. When the Welsh Church Bill was under discussion much was heard of its "dismemberment" clauses, which found opponents even among those (*e.g.*, the Bishop of Oxford) who were favourable to the main purposes of the measure. Now that the Act has been passed, the question becomes acute: Are the Welsh Bishops and Welsh clergy to continue to sit, or are they to be excluded from Convocation? The wording of the Act is precise: "As from the date of disestablishment the Bishops and clergy of the Church in Wales shall cease to be members or be represented in the Houses of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, but nothing in this Act shall affect the powers of those Houses so far as they relate to matters outside Wales and Monmouthshire" (Clause 3, Section 5). Upon this clause a great controversy has arisen. It is argued, on the one hand, that the enactment violates a fundamental principle of the Constitution, which has always recognized the inherent independence of Convocation; and, on the other, that Parliament, being the supreme authority, has the right to interfere in the way it has

done. The existence of any such "right" may be, and is, seriously contested, but of the absolute "power" of Parliament there is only too much evidence. The Lower House of Convocation at the February group of sessions passed a resolution representing to the President the "urgent need" of a short Amending Bill for the purpose of preserving for the Bishops and clergy of the four Welsh dioceses "their full rights in relation to the Provincial Synod of Canterbury." This proposal was duly communicated to the Upper House, which, it is significant to note, did not express a direct opinion upon the proposal, but appointed a committee to consider "what action, if any," should be taken in regard to it, and to take the necessary steps, "if action seemed desirable." The extreme caution shown by the Upper House at least suggests a doubt whether the Bishops feel the proposal for an Amending Act to be practicable.

The resolution of the Lower House was based upon a Report of the Committee on the Relations between Church and State, which set out the facts of the case from the point of view of Convocation. A few passages from this Report will make the position clear :

The Case for Convocation.

"All the best historical authorities are agreed that 'Convocation' is identical with 'the Provincial Synod.' The Southern Houses of Convocation are, not only in essence, but in fact, 'the Synod of the Province of Canterbury.' Thus, *e.g.*, Bishop Stubbs states that he knows no difference in meaning between a Provincial Synod of Canterbury and Convocation of Canterbury. . . .

"Provincial Synods date back to at least the fourth century. The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) enacted that the Synod of every Province should be summoned twice every year.

"The four Welsh dioceses have never formed an independent Province. They have from very early times—certainly before the Conquest—recognized a supremacy in Canterbury. . . .

"Welsh Bishops are known to have attended the Synod or Convocation of Canterbury ever since early in the twelfth century—*e.g.*, in 1102 and 1127. . . .

"The regular representation of the clergy by Proctors in Convocation was finally established by Archbishop Peckham in A.D. 1283. . . . Welsh Proctors appeared in Convocation two and a half centuries before any Welsh member appeared in Parliament.

"Prior to the Submission of the Clergy Act, A.D. 1534, a King's writ was issued for the summoning of Convocation when a subsidy was desired. On other occasions the Archbishop summoned them *proprio motu*.

"The Submission of the Clergy Act was passed with the consent of Convocation—it was passed in the arbitrary days of Henry VIII.—and even this Act, though it restricted the power, did not alter the constitution of Convocation.

"Since this Act the King has always issued a writ; but Convocation is not summoned by that writ, but by the Archbishop's mandate issued in accordance with the writ.

"Thus, Convocation is older than Parliament; and Convocation and Parliament have been always independent of one another.

"Convocation conducts the business of the Church with complete independence, subject to the Archbishop's control, and, except when a new canon is to be made, needs no licence from the King.

"Parliament has never interfered with, or assumed any right to interfere with, the constitution of Convocation. . . .

"In answer to the question whether the four Welsh dioceses would still be part of the province of Canterbury, the Home Secretary at first said 'No,' and afterwards said 'Yes.' Evidently, however, they are; and while the Archbishop is bound to summon them to the Provincial Synod, their membership in it is declared by the Act to have ceased. As members of the Province of Canterbury, they have a spiritual allegiance to the Archbishop, and an obligation to attend his Synod, from which they cannot discharge themselves, and from which no secular authority can discharge them. An *impasse*, therefore, has been created."

It is to remove this *impasse* that the Amending Bill is now desired. But on the practical side it is clear that the Government show no sign of willingness to make any concession at all to the Welsh Church. If, therefore, no relief can be found in that quarter it would seem to be certain that the Welsh Bishops and clergy will lose their seats. It has even been suggested that their presence, in the circumstances, would invalidate the proceedings of Convocation. The position must be borne patiently until the time comes—if ever it does—when Churchmen will be able to secure the repeal of the Act as a whole.

Confirmation
and
Communion.

The current number of the *Church Quarterly Review* contains an able article on Confirmation and Communion from the legal point of view.

Unfortunately the paper is not signed—a fact which detracts somewhat from its interest, if not from its value. It is designed

as an answer to the "A. C." of the *Spectator*, and it must be admitted at once that the view of the rubric for which that distinguished lawyer contended is shown to be untenable. The writer of the *Church Quarterly Review* article sums up his own contention thus :

"From 1281 down to the present day a direction (with or without qualification) that no person not confirmed be admitted to Communion has formed continuously part of the written law of the Church of England. The enactment has not been blindly or mechanically continued. On the contrary, at each opportunity of revision it has been materially altered ; in 1549, in 1552, and in 1662. On the last occasion it was modified, in deference to those who objected that as it stood it was too drastic, so that no one comes within its operation who is willing, when called upon, to submit himself to what is unquestionably one of the regular ordinances of the Church. Against this formidable continuity of definite and unambiguous legislation there is really nothing whatever to be set except the general *prima facie* duty to communicate, as to which we have already said enough, and the alleged practice of the Bishops in the latter part of the sixteenth, and earlier part of the seventeenth century. It would be a sufficient answer to the latter point that the legislation now in force is of later date, and was drawn up by those who must have known of this practice, if and so far as it existed. But apart from this, it is obvious that law embodied in actual statutory enactment cannot be abrogated by the negligence of Bishops or anyone else in enforcing or observing it. The question of law, therefore, appears to us to admit of but one answer—namely, that a clergyman of the Church of England is legally justified in refusing Communion to a person who is neither confirmed nor willing to be confirmed."

As an answer to "A. C." the article is effective ; but the writer would have done more useful service if he had referred more explicitly than he has done to the argument advanced by *The Times* writer—another very distinguished lawyer—who last summer also answered "A. C." The real question is whether "the law" as stated above admits of sufficient relaxation to allow of Christian Nonconformists being received at the Holy Communion in the Church of England, and upon this point the writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* offers no direct guidance. It may be inferred that his answer would be in the negative, but we should have preferred an explicit statement. *The Times* writer, it will be remembered, dealt with this question most ably. He upheld the view that the rubric requiring Confirmation as a condition of Communion does not

apply to "persons professing the Christian faith who have been baptized and grown up outside the Church of England," but is confined in its operation to those who have been baptized in the Church of England. "There is no trace of any canon or rubric which lays down the same rule for others." He declared that "the law of the Church of England leaves the question as it affects devout and Catholic-minded Nonconformists thus frankly open"; and we admit that the generosity of this view appeals to us more forcibly than does the hard-and-fast legal rule contended for by the writer in the *Church Quarterly Review*.

A Question of Morals. Among the moral questions which have arisen in connection with this war, few are more important than that which relates to the allowances made to the dependents of the men who have gone to the front. At first, we believe, no distinction was drawn between the wife and her children, and the woman who had lived with the soldier unmarried and had had children by him. Both women were granted the same allowance. This was felt in many quarters to be a grave scandal, and undoubtedly it called for the most serious consideration. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in the name of the whole episcopate, wrote to the Prime Minister to urge upon those in authority their view that, in acting generously towards the dependents of soldiers, there must be the utmost care taken not to break down the distinction between married and unmarried mothers, which they regarded as vital to the country's well-being, and precious beyond measure to those who were the real wives of the soldiers themselves. As a result of this intervention a distinction has now been drawn between the soldier's wife and children and the other dependents of soldiers. In the case of the wife, relief is obtainable, according to the scale set forth, as a matter of right. In the case of the other dependents who claim relief, a test is applied by a tribunal created to investigate each case. There is thus no longer any possibility of confusion between the married woman,

who comes as a matter of right to claim her allowance, and the other dependent, who has to pass through the sieve of the Pensions Committee before relief can be obtained. The arrangement is far from ideal, but it seems to be the best that could be obtained. The point is not free from difficulty, as men who respond to the call to fight for their country are entitled to ask that those who are really dependent upon them, whatever the relationship may be, shall be provided for. What we regret is that the State did not take the opportunity to bring pressure to bear upon the men to discontinue the illicit character of the intercourse. Each man should have been urged to marry the woman with whom he was living, and we are confident that in a very large number of cases the advice would have been taken. The influence of the woman would certainly have been in that direction. We believe that this view obtains favour among Commanding Officers, some of whom, at least, look with disfavour upon even the present arrangement.

