CASUISTRY IN THE NEW PRAYER BOOK.

A STUDY IN THE METHOD OF THE DEPOSITED BOOK.

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THIS is not the first revision of the Prayer Book undertaken in modern times. The Church of Ireland and the Church of Canada have both revised the Prayer Book with great success, and with the general approval of their members. This has arisen from two, amongst other, causes. In the first place their Synods were truly representative of the members of the Church in each case. These Churches have had long experience in the work of their representative assemblies. Their members have learned to exercise their electoral rights, and thus the action of the Synod in each case has truly been the action by their representatives of the whole membership. It is not so in the Church of England. The present Bishop of Durham, in an article in the London *Evening Standard* (April 3, 1925), after a sarcastic exposure of the unrepresentative character of the Church Assembly, concluded: "It cannot be right, equitable, or prudent that the mind of the English laity should have no more effective instrument of self-expression than that which the Church Assembly affords." The other reason for the successful revisions by these Churches has been the general agreement amongst the clergy and laity as to doctrine in both Churches. Unfortunately it is not so in the Church of England. Making the fullest allowance for that comprehensiveness which is a characteristic of the Church of England, and which, be it remembered, is also of the Churches of Ireland and of Canada, the contradictions and disagreements in doctrine within the Church of England now go far beyond any comprehensiveness which can be shown as truly characteristic of the Church of England. This comprehensiveness may be summed up in the statement: "The Church of England allows interpretations of the Holy Communion which are supported by Holy Scripture, but she repudiates the Roman Mass and its distinctive doctrines because they cannot be proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture." The trouble of the hour is that some of her clergy teach, and some of the laity believe, the doctrines of the Roman Mass, and are set on revising the Prayer Book so as to make the Mass and its doctrines lawful in the Church of England. The New Prayer Book is an attempt to frame a Prayer Book which will satisfy these, stop them in their Romeward journey, and keep them in the Church of England. Of course, this is not openly allowed. But it lies behind all the special pleading and arguments by which the New Book is being pressed

forward for acceptance—really a despairing plan to restore the semblance of discipline. For discipline which legalizes opposites is no discipline at all.

The method now adopted for this end can only be described as casuistical. It does not openly approve of the things themselves, but it provides facilities under cover of which they can be practised and taught—opportunities, not sanctions. Here are some instances.

The Mass.

The central doctrines of the Roman Mass are: (1) That the elements are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ after the priest has consecrated them, so that they no longer are outward and visible signs but the Things signified. (2) That so changed Christ in them is to be offered to the Father as a sacrifice for the sins of the living and dead and worshipped, whether they are afterwards partaken of by the people or not. (3) That this can only be accomplished by a sacrificing priest, rightly ordained as such, of which the garment called the Vestment, or Chasuble, is the instrument and sign. The New Prayer Book meets this thus:—It provides in the Consecration Prayer the following new things—the Memorial before the Father made with the elements, the Invocation of the Life-giving Spirit on the elements that they may be changed, and the Vestment. It also legalizes wafers, which are distinctive of the Mass and destroy the symbolism of "the one loaf."

A Devotion.

On page 434 of the New Book there is a Devotion to be used before the Holy Communion. This is taken from the Roman Missal and uses the word Altar for the Communion Table. That word was rigidly banished from our Prayer Book at the Reformation. It is a key word and implies a complete change of doctrine from the Prayer Book. But this is not apparent at first to the unwary and uninstructed. That is where the cunning casuistry of the thing comes in.

Corpus Christi.

Arising out of the Roman Doctrine of transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Feast of Corpus Christi is one of the most important and distinctive of the whole Roman Calendar. It was established in honour of the consecrated host and with a view to its adoration. It was originated by some "lying wonders" of a Nun of Liège in 1230, and of a priest at Bolsena in 1264. It is now observed in churches of the Church of England under Anglo-Catholic control. This Roman Feast occurs on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. What does the New Prayer Book do? It provides a new Feast, "Thanksgiving for the Institution of the Holy Communion," which may be used on any day of the year, and so, of course, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday—Corpus Christi

Day. There are alternative collects, the second of which is taken straight from the Roman Missal, and fits in admirably with the Roman Festival. The Epistle and Gospel are the same. How will this work?

Holy Cross Day.

The worship of the Cross is one of the grossest superstitions in the Church of Rome and there are two Festivals in its honour: May 3, The Invention (or discovery) of the true Cross by Helena; and September 14, the Exaltation of the Cross. These also are observed in churches of the Church of England under Anglo-Catholic control. They are occasions of most unsound teaching. Good Friday is also made an opportunity for the same teaching, and the idolatrous ceremony of "creeping to the Cross." What does the New Prayer Book do? It appoints a new festival by providing a Collect, Epistle and Gospel for September 14—Holy Cross Day. It is true Holy Cross Day appears already in the Church Calendar as a Black Letter Day, i.e., a secular date having no religious use or significance. It is now made a day of religious observance providing, amongst other things, an opportunity for the annual repetition of the ridiculous old wives' fables about the material Cross which are already heard on that day in some Church of England pulpits.

Purgatory.

As the Roman Festival of Corpus Christi was the direct outcome of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, so the Festival of All Souls (November 2) developed out of the Roman doctrine of Purgatory. It owes its origin also, partly, to the silly tale of an ignorant monk who asserted he overheard a conversation in hell in which the devils complained of the number of souls rescued out of their hands by prayers for the souls in Purgatory. At the Reformation the Church of England banished the whole fabulous superstition of Purgatory from her borders as a fond thing, vainly invented and repugnant to the Word of God (Article 22). Now in churches under Anglo-Catholic control purgatory and prayers for the souls, assumed to be there, are taught. What does the New Prayer Book do? It provides a new Festival on November 2 which it calls "Commemoration of All Souls." As on the day before there occurs the Feast of All Saints, it is not difficult to see the use that can be made of this new Feast of All Souls, on the same day and called by the same name as the Roman Feast. What will honest John Bull have to say when he sees the craft in this?

These are only instances which illustrate the character of much in the New Prayer Book. Apart from direct and clear changes of doctrine by the introduction of new words and phrases, they mark a change of method which is truly humiliating. One of the ruling principles of the Reformation was the utter banishment from the Church's services and teachings of all approach to evasion, shuffling, pretence and imposition. The degree in which

these things defiled and disgraced the Church before the Reformation is incredible to those who are not acquainted with the evidence. The Reformation principle was openness, honesty, straightforwardness and clearness. That was why our reformers gave the people the Bible in English. That was why they ordered large portions of it to be read in public worship. That was why they drew up the Sixth Article. And that is why we who cannot accept this New Prayer Book are distressed that our Church should be committed to the casuistry, shuffling and irresolution displayed in it. It runs away from quite simple questions such as these: "Is fasting the Church's rule, as some clergy assert?" No direct answer in the New Book. But if you are not fasting it is "a reasonable hindrance" to communicating. "Should all present at a Celebration communicate?" No direct answer. But a Minister who has made an obligatory rule of his own to be fasting may reserve the consecrated elements in an Aumbry so that he may administer them to a sick person without partaking himself, as he is ordered to do in the present Office of the Communion of the Sick. As for the general congregation, by a faint condemnation of the practice of being present at the Holy Communion and not partaking, copied from a decree of the Council of Trent (Sess. xxii., Cap. vi. *De Sac. Missae*), the unscriptural and irrational practice is accepted. (Deposited Book, General Rubric 8, p. 203.)

As there is now no discipline over doctrine in the Church of England, and as the clergy are taught to interpret the Articles in contradictory senses, it is evident to the meanest intelligence that whatever the New Prayer Book may do, if it becomes law, it certainly cannot bring peace, order or discipline. From the foregoing it will be seen that new opportunities are provided in it for the medieval teaching which is the real source of the present disorder, discord, and confusion in the Church, and which its advocates profess the Book will enable the Bishops to "discipline."

The object of the New Prayer Book seems to be to evade decisions on such questions and to provide a sort of Ecclesiastical Whiteley's in which every one can get exactly what he wants under the same roof. Is it any wonder that the Church is scoffed at as having no mind of its own and afflicted with the spirit of fearfulness and uncertainty? What will be the value of discipline within the limits of all this casuistry?