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THE CHURCHMAN

August, 1917.

The Month.

**Convocation
and the
Nation.** THE Convocation of Canterbury has not improved its position by its proceedings at the July Session. Indeed when we recall the doings of this body during the last three years we feel that it would have been no loss—it might even have been an advantage—to the Church if its sittings had been suspended for the period of the war. We find it difficult to understand its attitude towards the War and National Questions. Members of Convocation, in their individual capacity, no doubt, feel as strongly and as deeply as the rest of us the gravity of the crisis through which the nation is passing, but, collectively, and in their corporate capacity, they seem to be altogether remote from the actualities of life. Will it be believed that although the agenda paper of the Lower House contained several motions relating to matters of national importance, no time could be found for the discussion of any of them? Yet the House sat for four days. The Revision of the Prayer Book, the Expurgation of the Psalms, the whittling away of the Divine authority of Holy Scripture—these were the things which the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury seemed to consider of the greater importance in this the third year of the great war. Is it any wonder that the nation is out of touch with the Church? The gulf between the Church and the nation, or, as some would prefer to put it, between the nation and the Church, is becoming wider and wider, and our great fear is that unless something is done soon to bring Church and nation more closely together the gulf may become unbridgeable. That there are faults on both sides we are well aware, but the clergy

of the Church—and in particular those in Convocation who have a special responsibility resting upon them—ought to be eager above all others to serve the nation and to lead the people along lines that will make for the nation's highest welfare.

But the Lower House is not alone to blame. The "The Man in the Street." Upper House has laid itself open to very severe criticism, from which it has been impossible to escape. To take one subject only, it is evident from some of the secular newspapers that the way Convocation has treated parts of Holy Scripture has shocked even "the man in the street." Thus the *Evening Standard* of July 9, *à propos* the controversy on the omission of Psalm lviii., asked the President of the Convocation these three questions, but we eliminate the direct personal reference as being alike unworthy and unfair, and apply the questions to the general body of Convocation: "1. Did they not, when ordained deacons of the Church of England, profess unfeigned belief in 'all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament,' and also undertake to 'diligently read the same unto the people assembled in the church'? 2. Do they not, on the Second Sunday in Advent, recite the Collect beginning 'Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning'? 3. Whence do they derive authority to repudiate their ordination vow and go back on the Collect'?" These questions are sufficiently direct, and that they should appear where they did is a fact of the utmost significance. The manner in which the Question to Deacons was treated was simply deplorable.

This question came down from the Upper House in the following form: "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament *as conveying to us in many parts and in divers manners the Revelation of God, which is consummated in Jesus Christ?*" The words in italics are an addition to the Question as it stands in the Prayer Book. The Dean of Christ Church moved and the Archdeacon of Gloucester seconded a motion that the Lower House concur in the recommendation of the Upper House. The Dean of Canterbury moved as an amendment that the Question be as follows: "Do you acknowledge that the Holy Scriptures of

the Old and New Testament were given by Divine inspiration ? ” but he found only four supporters, the amendment being rejected by sixty-three to five. Then Canon Wood moved to insert the words “ by Divine authority ” after the words “ as conveying to us. ” He received a larger measure of support, but on a vote being taken the amendment was rejected by fifty-two to thirty-one. The House, however, accepted an amendment to substitute the word “ fulfilled ” for “ consummated ” ; but it rejected by fifty-two to twenty-one, an amendment by Canon Wood that the last words should read “ in our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God ” ; and it also rejected by forty-five to nineteen a proposal that the final words should be “ fulfilled in the Incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. ” Finally it agreed by seventy votes to five that the concluding words should be “ in our Lord Jesus Christ. ” We make no comment upon this haggling over a form of words to express the Divinity of our Lord : we simply state the facts. Next a proposal was made to omit the words “ in many parts, ” but the amendment was rejected, and finally the question as sent down by the Bishops was concurred in by seventy-four votes to four. The suggested object of the change is to relieve tender consciences in the case of men hereafter to be ordained ; it does not seem to have any weight with Convocation that the new form of words will deeply wound the consciences of thousands of loyal Churchpeople of the present generation.

Having thus finished the consideration of the latest Psalm lviii. Report of the Joint Committee on the Royal Letters of Business, the Lower House entered upon the Report of the Joint Committee on the use of the Psalter, and expressed its approval of the omission of Psalm lviii., and of portions of other Psalms as follows : Psalms xiv. 5-7 ; lv. 16, 24, 25 ; lxxviii. 21-23 ; lxxix. 23-29 ; cix. 5-19 ; cxxxvii. 7-9 ; cxxxix. 19-22 ; cxl. 9, 10 ; cxliii. 12 (adding the final words “ for I am Thy servant ” to verse 11) ; the reason alleged for these omissions being unsuitability for use in public worship in these days. The Dean of Canterbury and some others protested, but in vain. The action of Convocation has excited widespread opposition in *The Times*, the controversy raging round the omission of Psalm lviii. Archdeacon Hobhouse rushed to the defence of the majority of the Lower House, claiming that the “ true cause of objection to such Psalms is that, when the

Psalmist wrote, men did not as yet discriminate between moral indignation against sin and personal vindictiveness against the sinner." In support of his plea he quoted what the late Dr. Driver said in a "striking sermon" on Psalm cix. : "The foes of the Psalmist may have been hostile to a *cause*, but they have also attacked and persecuted a *person*: and the personal feeling thus aroused is what finds expression in the imprecations which have been quoted. And it is just this feeling of personal hate and personal animosity which, judged by the standpoint of Christian ethics, stands condemned." The Archdeacon continued: "Can 'H. C.' [the correspondent whom he was answering] really defend the use of such expressions in Christian worship? Does he really wish to see the teeth of the ungodly broken in their mouths, or their children dashed against the stones? If we are to repeat such expressions without meaning them, it makes our public worship unreal; and if we are to repeat them *ex animo* it will make it vindictive and un-Christian." To this letter the Dean of Canterbury promptly replied by pointing out that the statement which is quoted from the late Dr. Driver "gives the lie direct to the Psalmists, and is an inexcusable libel on them." "He alleges" (the Dean continued) "that the personal feeling, aroused by personal attacks on them, is what finds expression in the imprecations which have been quoted. On the contrary, the uniform language of the Psalmist is that of verse 21 of Psalm cxxxix. : 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee, and am I not grieved with those that rise up against Thee?' So in Psalm lviii., it is not the Psalmist personally, but 'the righteous,' who shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. If people like the Germans make themselves in body and soul the champions of evil we are bound to hate them in that capacity." The Dean, however, saw some compensating advantages in the action of Convocation. "They have given a prominence to Psalm lviii. which it would not otherwise have enjoyed, and have thus put into the mouths and hearts of thousands of Englishmen and Churchmen one of the grandest expressions of the righteous indignation by which we ought to be animated." It is this aspect of the question which has impressed the imagination of the people, and it is difficult to say they are not right. The constant recollection and repetition of Psalm lviii. will assuredly help us all to place the barbarities of the Germans in their right perspective.

The laity have no power of government in the Church of England, and it is one of the strongest advantages of the scheme put forward by the Report of the Archbishops' Committee on the Relations of Church and State (which has our cordial approval), that under it the laity are to be given a statutory place. It is to be hoped that whatever may happen to other portions of the scheme, there will be no whittling away, but rather a strengthening of the status and powers of the laity. A tremendous change will be effected if ever the scheme become a reality, and it may be hoped the laity will use their powers wisely and well. It will take them some time to accommodate themselves to the altered circumstances, for, as things are at present, they are practically ignored in many matters affecting the welfare of the Church, although there are voluntary Houses of Laymen already in existence. Take, for example, the question of the Revision of the Prayer Book, in regard to which the laity are most deeply concerned. It has been said that before the work is finally disposed of the proposed alterations will be submitted to the Houses of Laymen. No doubt this will be done, but in what form, and what length of time will these Houses be allowed for considering the many intricate and difficult questions involved? The question is not unimportant. Convocation has been at work on Revision for ten years: will the Houses of Laymen be given even one year in which to go through these changes seriatim and see whether or not they approve of them? If Convocation really desired to give the laity a substantial voice—such as, even under our present system, they are morally entitled to have—in the work of revision, they should have called the laity into consultation long ago, and submitted the proposed changes to them one by one. If that had been done it would quickly have been seen how completely out of touch Convocation is with general Church opinion on many points of vital importance to the Church of England. As it is, if the proposed changes are to be submitted *en bloc* and the Houses of Laymen are asked to take them or leave them, it is to be feared they will take them rather than that the labours of Convocation should be thrown away. But that will be no fair index of genuine lay opinion. Revision of the Prayer Book on wise and reasonable lines is greatly needed. But much of the work of Convocation has been neither wise nor reasonable; it has simply pandered to the reactionaries.

Not the least interesting feature in the Forms of **The Nation's Cause.** Prayer issued by authority (through the S.P.C.K.) for use on August 4 and 5 in connexion with the Third Anniversary of the War, is the Address to the People provided for delivery by the Minister in Church or at any service in the open air. It is short, but very much to the point, and may be commended to careful attention. After re-stating the motives with which three years ago we entered upon the War, and declaring that our record is clear before God and man, the Address proceeds:—

The events of the past three years have more than justified our entrance upon the war. The action of our enemy has been such as to make the issues at stake increasingly plain. We are fighting for truth, for justice, for decency in warfare, for the world's freedom from oppression, for the very possibility of its progress in the future. And the conviction that this is so has now brought to our side the great Republic of the West, to share in the same struggle and thereby to confirm our faith in the righteousness of our cause.

As we look back we thank God to-day for the spirit of unity which He gave us at home, for the loyal co-operation of our brothers from beyond the seas, for the harmony which has existed between ourselves and our Allies, and for the measure of success which He has already granted to our arms.

As our thoughts go out to those who are facing the perils of war, and to those who bear the burden of work at home, we are bound to ask ourselves plainly whether we are doing all that in us lies, by self-restraint in the matter of food, by the limitation of our expenditure, by contributions of money, and by acts of personal service, to show our gratitude to those who are defending our national honour and protecting our very lives. Is our conscience clear as we kneel to pray for God's blessing on their efforts? We are here before God this day to dedicate ourselves afresh to the task which we have undertaken, to reaffirm our unalterable determination, to renew our strength as we wait upon Him.

Lastly, with bowed heads we reverently salute the dead who have given their lives in this sacred cause, humbly thanking God for their courage and devotion, and solemnly resolving in His Name that we will not leave their work unfinished, nor suffer their great sacrifice to have been made in vain.

There is the true ring about these words, and it is of the highest importance in view of the activities of so-called "pacifists" and other cranks that we should ever keep to the front the fact that we are fighting for truth, justice and freedom.

At a great meeting at Queen's Hall, held on Monday, **Life and Liberty.** July 16, under the presidency of the Rev. William Temple, the following resolution was adopted with only one dissentient: "That whereas the present conditions under which the Church lives and works constitute an intolerable hindrance to its spiritual activity, this meeting instructs the Council, as a first

step, to approach the Archbishops, in order to urge upon them that they should ascertain without delay, and make known to the Church at large, whether and on what terms Parliament is prepared to give freedom to the Church in the sense of full power to manage its own life, that so it may the better fulfil its duty to God and to the nation and its mission to the world." It seems to be clear that this new Movement will speedily become a force to be reckoned with. The speeches at the meeting did not afford very much light upon the methods by which the promoters hope to gain their objective, but those who want to learn more about the Movement should read *Life and Liberty*, a pamphlet by the Rev. William Temple, published by Macmillan & Co., Ltd., price 3*d*. The Movement is designed to secure Self-Government for the Church, and Mr. Temple sets forth some of the causes for which it is necessary. These relate to finance and administration—parochial, capitular, diocesan, and provincial and ecumenical. How ambitious is the programme of reform let the following extract suffice:—

My proposal is that there should be a great subdivision of the Province of Canterbury, and also of York if that be thought necessary. The division might work out as follows [the asterisk denotes new dioceses], though no importance whatever is attached to these details:—

Province.—Canterbury. *Dioceses.*—Canterbury, Rochester, Chelmsford, St. Albans (4).

Province.—London. *Dioceses.*—London (the City), Stepney, Islington, Willesden, Kensington, Southwark, Croydon (6).

Province.—Winchester. *Dioceses.*—Winchester, Chichester, Salisbury, Oxford, Guildford,* Southampton * (or Portsmouth) (6).

Province.—Exeter. *Dioceses.*—Exeter, Truro, Bath and Wells, Bristol, Gloucester, Hereford, Plymouth,* Barnstaple * (8).

Province.—St. David's. *Dioceses.*—St. David's, Llandaff, Bangor, St. Asaph (4).

Province.—Lichfield. *Dioceses.*—Lichfield, Southwell, Peterborough, Worcester, Birmingham, Stafford,* Derby,* Coventry,* Leicester,* Shrewsbury * (10).

Province.—Ely. *Dioceses.*—Ely, Lincoln, Norwich, St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich (5).

The Province of York (11 dioceses) might remain for a time as at present, or a new province might be created for Lancashire, Westmorland, and Cumberland. Thus there would be eight or nine provinces. Each would have its Council or Synod to determine questions of special concern to itself. . . . There would also be a Council or Synod for the Church as a whole, and the Archbishop of Canterbury would preside over it, having the functions of a Patriarch.