

DECENNIAL LETTER.

The following letter sent by the Bishop of Niagara, a few months ago, to each of his clergy, speaks for itself. It is well worth careful reading.

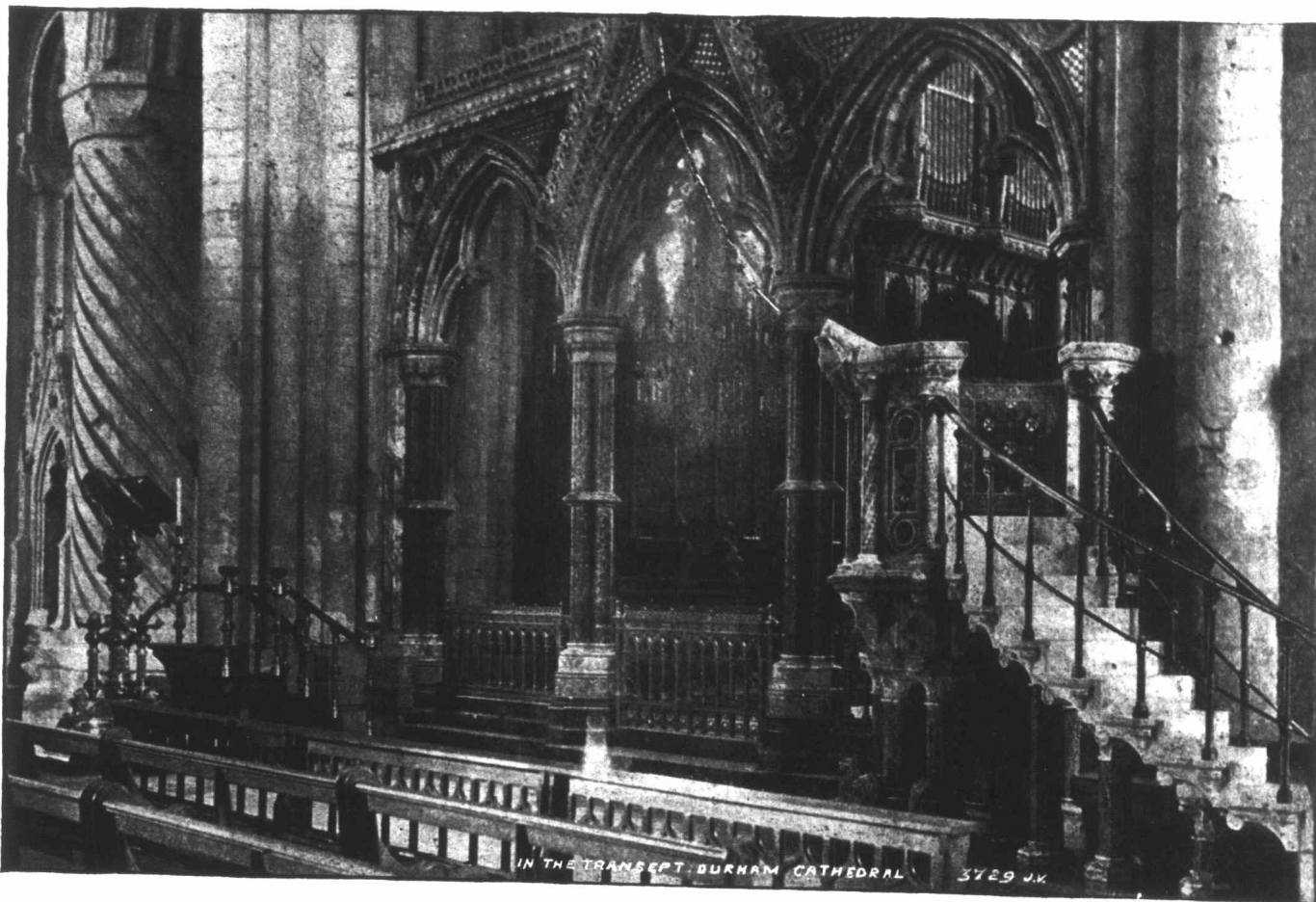
TO THE REVEREND CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA:

The following letter, drawn up under my supervision, and adopted by the Synod of the Diocese, is issued with my sanction. It is my desire that you should read it to your congregations on Sunday, July 7th. Your faithful friend and Bishop,

CHARLES NIAGARA.

Ten years have elapsed since our present Bishop was canonically elected and consecrated to preside over this diocese. On this tenth recurrence of the anniversary of his consecration, we who, each in his own order, are fellow-labourers with him, may recall the fact as one of solemn and far-reaching significance, both for our Bishop and for ourselves. In the home the day of marriage and the birthdays are kept from year to year with rejoicing, and the common joy strengthens, as nothing else can, the natural bonds that link the members of the family together. In the state, while, as citizens of a world wide Empire, we celebrate the birthday of our Queen, yet none the less, as Canadians, we keep our own Dominion Day. So, in the Church, while with all Christendom we commemorate the fasts and the festivals of the Christian year—yet, as a diocese, which is, indeed, a little kingdom within the great Catholic Church, nay, which is in some sense a family, with its own needs, its own tasks, its own history—shall we not gladly avail ourselves of the opportunity afforded by the close of this decennial period, and examine our records to see what cause we have for thanksgiving; what grounds for hope and courage; what need for system and principle, for diligence and devotion in our individual, our family and our Church life? On looking back what is it that we see? Change, but not decay, change, but on the whole, progress. First, change. Of the 58 clergy who welcomed our bishop at his coming, 27 have ceased their labours amongst us; 15 of the 27 are at work still, but in other dioceses: 2 are disabled and superannuated; 10 are at rest. In ten years, then, nearly half the working staff of the clergy has been changed. We have seen changes, too, in our ways of ordering our affairs when in Synod assembled—changes, additions, improvements, we believe. We have remodelled our Constitution; we have recast our Canons and By laws, and have added others, as need required. We have created new funds: the Special Episcopal Endowment Fund, the See House Fund, the Pension Fund, and we have devised new safeguards for our trust funds and for our other investments. What signs of progress are there? From a careful examination of the statistics of the past nine years, it appears that while the Dominion census gives us credit for a Church population of 48,616 and shows a decrease in the decennial period of barely one per cent., our diocesan statistics point to increased pastoral care and show an increase in the Church population of the diocese of 23 per cent. There has been an increase in the celebrations of the Holy Communion of 71 per cent.; communicants, 81 per cent.; licensed clergy, 15 per cent.; stipends

of the clergy, 16 per cent.; teachers, 9 per cent.; scholars, 18 per cent.; collections for parochial objects, 43 per cent.; collections for extra-diocesan objects, 57 per cent.; and in the E. E. fund (including special), 100 per cent.; six new parishes have been formed; seventeen new churches have been erected and ten churches have been consecrated. Against this encouraging report, we have to place a decrease in Baptisms of 19 per cent., and of contributions to diocesan objects of 25 per cent. The decrease in the number of Baptisms may be accounted for by the fact that the whole of the diocese has been so diligently gone over by the clergy that it is now no longer possible to find families with several of the children unbaptized. With regard to the decrease in our gifts to diocesan objects, when we remember that our contributions have increased for extra diocesan objects of 57 per cent.; for the Episcopal Endowment Fund 100 per cent.; that new funds have been created and supported, and that, in the meantime, the population, and therefore the number of contributors, has increased only 23 per cent., we have little reason for discouragement. The liberality of the diocese has not decreased; on the contrary, it has increased; but it has been turned into new channels. We may wish, perhaps,



DURHAM CATHEDRAL—IN THE TRANSEPT.

that the older funds had met with more support, especially the W. & O. Fund, which has suffered most of all, but we cannot forget that new claims have been pressed upon the diocese with new vigor and success. The addresses sent forth from the Board of D. & F. Missions have aroused and have sustained interest in the Church's work in Algoma and the North-West, and in foreign lands. Year after year appeals have also been made on behalf of the E. E. Fund. All these have been successful, but at the cost of temporarily diverting attention from the claims of our other Diocesan Funds. These, however, will again, we trust, be treated with a generous liberality. Our retrospect, then, shows us change, and, on the whole, progress. There is a progress, moreover, which can neither be tabulated in journals nor gathered from statistics; a progress which has its root in the sympathy that spontaneously arises when men of good will meet often together, as in our enlarged committees and in our Ruri-Decanal Conferences; a progress which is most real and for which we are most thankful, an increase of confidence in each other, in each other's sincerity and good will. Though, as yet, we cannot all be of one mind, we can be, and we are more and more becoming, all of one heart, united in one holy bond of peace and charity. Therefore let us look forward with courage to the unknown future that

lies before us. What we do will soon become what the work of the past ten years has become—history. But history—yes, even the history of one little diocese, for one brief decennial period—history is God's commentary upon human actions. And, in that commentary now before us, who is there that can fail to discern the care, the guidance and the blessing of our Heavenly Father? To Him we commend our Bishop, ourselves and our work, in the name of the Lord Jesus. And, let us comfort one another with these words of St. Paul: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain with the Lord."

DOGMA AS A SOCIAL FORCE.

BY CANON H. S. HOLLAND.

On this subject the Rev. Canon said: "Orthodoxy is my 'doxy' is a very common saying, and yet orthodoxy could not be claimed in any sense as the outcome of private opinion." He then went on with epigrammatic force to work out an argument, by which he showed eventually that the Church, as a bond of social unity, must give expression to that which welded the unity, even dog-

ma itself. Religion, if it has abandoned the effort to raise man, has almost foresworn itself, and a religion which cannot name its God, cannot produce that brotherhood which is necessary to elevate man; it does but win peace at the cost of finding a solitude. So Christianity was bound to gain the power of speech; that is, language, and as the faith of Jesus Christ only existed in a corporate form, and had not the means or will to adopt adventitious means of combination, it relied on the purest spiritual acts which constitute the common speech of a united people. That speech was the sacramental speech to be found in the acts of common worship. It was the primary lan-

guage, in which human needs became articulate. Hence the Liturgy, the Eucharist, were the forces which welded together the body corporate of believers. Outward ritual was not enough for the purpose, since the society was bound to use a fixed and intelligent form of words expressive of a common faith. And it was a unique note both of Judaism and of Christianity, for no form of paganism insisted upon it. Moreover, the Church had to define precisely what she meant by her language, and this gave rise to dogma, which simply asserted facts, verified through the collective experience. Dogma was indeed the declaration of what faith meant by its faith. It did not pretend to claim authority over the unbeliever. It simply supplied the answer to the question, what did the Church mean by its worship of Jesus Christ? The dogmatic creeds presented the mind of the Church in its attitude of worship, and to deny the right of the Church to dogmatize for its members was to deny to the Church the right to say what it believes. It denied to the Church its right of combination, its power as a social force. A society, such as the Church is, cannot base itself on such an elimination, for otherwise it could not cohere, it could not show a common faith, expressed in a common speech,—the faith, the speech of Christ.

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