

### BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER ON BROTHERHOODS.

New proposals are strange revealers of human character," observes the Right Rev. Dr. Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, in the opening of a thoughtful article on "Brotherhoods" he contributes to the current number of *Contemporary Review*; and his lordship says "The proposal for the establishment of brotherhoods is no exception," as shown by the variety of the comments evoked by the proposal. And he emphasises the fact that "Extremists are never right, though they are always zealous." In justice to those who made the proposal he recalls the fact that "it arises out of a great and confessed need," and if new methods are demanded, any proposal emanating from experienced men is entitled to sympathetic attention. It is a mistake to suppose that community life is the exclusive practice of any one portion of Christendom for institutions of the kind are possessed by religious bodies which cannot be suspected of Ultramontane leaning; and it is also a mistake to suppose that only one party in the English Church favor religious houses or brotherhoods. The Bishop mentions facts as proof of his assertions, but while he deprecates unreasoning alarm he shows that there are risks to be considered, as disclosed in the records of the old monastic institutions. He disavows referring to the evils of the old monasteries for controversial purposes.

The lessons which such facts suggests are the common heritage of all Christian bodies; they shed light on the laws and conditions of human nature. It is interesting in this connection to recall a parallel from Oriental experience. In the East, as in the West, the risk arising from a disregard of simple principles is illustrated. The organisation of the cloister was a powerful aid in the advancement of Buddhism, but only so long as the spirit of missionary zeal existed. When that ceased monasticism became a hindrance instead of a help. In proportion as the "tendency to expansion of the Buddhist Church grew fainter, monasticism became a barrier in the way of every sound development, and thus the cause of utter stagnation."

Thus the forgetfulness of the conditions of life avenges itself sooner or later. There is a Quixotic disregard of laws which is sometimes called zeal. A man may run full tilt against a windmill with impunity, but the probability is that he will get the worst of the encounter. One man, or one group of men, may achieve what would be hopeless for others to attempt. The rule observed by one may be disastrous to the thousands who, under the influence of some passing excitement or eager emotion, take upon themselves a burden which experience may show was too grievous for them to bear.

*Lifelong vows* appear to me to be of this nature, when the vow involves that which is not necessary for righteousness sake. The Convocation of Canterbury has realised this danger, and has pronounced against a system of lifelong vows. There is wisdom in this decision. To make a lifelong vow in a matter which is neither within the survey of experience nor in the statute book of universal righteousness is (if I may use an old fashioned phrase belonging to an age of greater faith and less fussiness than the present) to tempt Providence. We may be asked if there is not such a thing as a call to celibacy. I have no doubt of it. Our Lord's words are sufficient for me on the matter; but he who is so called needs no vow; the call will be evidenced in the fact of his life. And it is to be remembered that a man may be called to be a father of saints who does not know of his calling till he is far advanced in life. To make a vow which antici-

pates or prevents the calling of Providence savours of little faith, not of large faith, and has in it a flavour of self-will rather than that spirit which waits on the will of Him who, though He orders the whole life, yet veils from us His leadings from period to period.

To put the same thought from another standpoint, it is an unquestioned law of man's development that his powers, capacities, and necessities do not ripen in every man alike, in the same fashion, or at the same time. There are men who are boys in some of their qualities and powers till they have passed two-score years. Such do not waken to the consciousness of power or the possession of their complete manhood till they have reached perhaps, the middle arch of life. To bind a man with a lifelong vow on matters which are hardly yet within the range of his own self-consciousness appears to me to be an act of at least doubtful wisdom.

But here it is urged that these exceptional cases may be met by exceptional means—the vows may be made *dispensable* by proper authority. Against this I entertain the very strongest objection. To do this is to weaken the sense of the *sanctity* of a vow, by dangling before the eyes of him who makes it the possibility that what is said to be lifelong need not be so in reality. To do this is to throw upon another a responsibility which, in the nature of the case, he cannot bear. To do this is to trifle with the most sacred thing on earth—the *sanctity* of a man's own conscience.

Might we not say that the very suggestion of *dispensable* vows bears strong witness against the proposal to make vows lifelong? The same difficulty does not exist when a time limit is introduced into the agreement, so long as the limit is not a very distant one. If a society is to have sustained and continuous life in its work those who join it ought to give a *definite length of service*. This seems both wise and needful. There ought to be no objection and no difficulty in the introduction of common-sense and business-like agreements as to the length of service. There are thousands who sign agreements to serve in particular places at special work for a specified period. An agreement of this sort, by whatever name it is called, ought not to arouse suspicion or jealousy. If the work is religious the promise might well be made during some religious service. In any case the promise to do religious work might surely be viewed as a promise to be religiously kept, and as having an obligation at any rate as binding as that which binds men in the military and civil service. It is unfortunately too much the custom to regard a promise in matters of religion as something which is only binding as long as it is convenient. Opposed as I am to *lifelong* vows, and disposed to regard vows of all kinds as indicating not a higher, but a lower, stage of religious life, I should be thankful to see a sterner sense of the nature of the obligations of religious service, and a sturdier determination to discharge such obligations, come fair, come foul, at home and abroad.

#### ORGANISATION.

But this leads to another lesson which the history of religious movements most surely teaches, and which our own experience must, I think, confirm. We are in danger, nevertheless, of forgetting it. The value of organisation in one sense cannot be exaggerated, and it has been argued that the power of such institutions depends on their being recognised as part of the organisation of the Church. This has been urged recently. "These institutions flourished as long as their discipline was maintained; they drooped because they depended on individual exertion and piety. So writes Mr. T. Gambier Parry. What was wanted, says Mr. Huntingdon, was recognition and authority. (See *National Review*, No. 70, p. 597.)

There is doubtless truth in this view; but the other side must not be forgotten. Organi-

sation is not everything. Alone it is entirely valueless. We touch here a question which lies at the root of many problems. It has constantly been misunderstood, and misunderstanding is perilous. We organise free institutions, and we are disappointed to find that happiness is not secured to mankind by their existence. We organise Church work; and we are pained to find that organisation does not always mean effectiveness. Pain and disappointment might have been avoided if we had been more ready to learn the lesson of history. Organisation may afford great scope to life, and richer results to energy; but organisation will not produce saints, nor the establishing of brotherhoods create piety. Law made nothing perfect; rules cannot make evangelists. The order and the rule come after saintship, and rarely, if ever, do they precede it. The heavenly flame rests on some human soul. It burns within him, and when the prophet feels the fire of God; he yearns to work some deliverance upon the doubters. Like the Apostle, a noble necessity is laid upon him; the worst woe which can befall him is disobedience to a necessity which, like all the higher passions of life, is often a torment and a delight. While such a man lives the life which he has chosen is noble and real. The same is true of all those in whom a kindred spirit lives. The spirit finds its own organisation. The rules which are laid down are the expression of the life which is in them and of the spirit into which they have been baptized. Their zeal, like a river, makes its own banks by following the course of its own nature. But even in the most favoured conditions the gentler life which gathers round the holy spires is not all that hope painted it—

The potent call

Doubtless shall cheat full oft the heart's desire.

The favourable conditions, moreover, cannot last always. The generation will rise which retains the form, but which has lost the animating spirit. There comes a time when the noble river runs dry; deadness and dryness take the place of freshness and murmuring life. Then because the spirit which gave vital force to the movement is no longer there, the rules lose their force and value; the commandment becomes the means of death; the organisation sinks beneath its own weight. When Saul is gone it will not do for David to wear his armour; when Achilles has passed away lesser men may but wound their heads and snap their muscles in striving to bend his bow. The spirit may inspire rules. When we have the men we shall have the organisation; but it is ill hoping that by adopting organisations we shall be in the possession of the power to work them. Above all, let us avoid the belief that we can ever be great or achieve great things by imitation. Those who play the frog woo disaster. If the spirit which is in our midst be a true spirit it must adapt its organisation to the needs of our own age. It will draw useful hints from the past, but it will avoid all slavish and mechanical imitations of it. By virtue of its own real life, it will quicken, arouse, and direct all kindred zeal. Wherever a man in whom the true spirit dwells arises to work among the sons of men brothers like minded will gather round his standard, and the work of such men can never be in vain.—*The Family Churchman*.

#### ROMISH PROFESSIONS FROM AN AMERICAN STANDPOINT.

*The Churchman* of N. Y., under the caption "A Flagrant Contrast" says:—

Dr. Corrigan, the Roman Catholic Bishop of New York, has gone to Rome, according to his oath, to make his report to his master, the Pope, and to obtain the renewal of his permit to exercise his functions. This illustration of alienism, in flagrant contrast to the professions