

HIGH CHURCH: WHAT IS IT?

By Rev. Vernon W. Hutton, in the Church Eclectic, for October.

We look upon the Church as resting upon Christ, not upon the Queen and Parliament; but the real reason why we feel compelled to hold aloof from the Dissenters is because we believe that their societies are human societies set up by men within the last three centuries, separated from The Church, and that therefore they have in a great measure cut themselves off from the grace of Christ, because by leaving the Church they have lost the power of ordination, and therefore lost the full force of the Sacraments.

This is, I hope, a tolerably clear statement of what all its controversy is about. It is, as you see, a deep theological question, not one which is to be disposed of by a one-sided lecture, or by a mere objection to a few petty details, or a sneering paragraph in a newspaper. The question is really this: For what purpose did Christ found that society of believers, which He called sometimes the Church, sometimes the Kingdom of Heaven? And never let it be supposed that in thus giving high powers to the Church, we are depreciating Christ; how can we be depreciating the head, exalting the body? Christ is no more depreciated by exalting the Church than by exalting the value of preaching or Bible reading. He must work by some means or other, and we are in reality exalting Him when we exalt His appointed means. Christ is all in all; the Church without Christ is a body without a head—dead, worthless; but with Christ it is a living, working body, living not in his own power, but in His. Christ is in everything: in the Church, in the Sacraments, in the Ministry. It is Christ that baptizes, Christ that consecrates the Holy Communion, Christ that absolves. We are but the instruments in His hands; the poor earthen vessels to whom, for His purposes, He has committed the stewardship of His Mysteries.

Ceremonial has very little to do with the question; it is at most quite a secondary part of it, although popularly it is looked upon as the chief. We can have high Church worship with four whitewashed walls for our Church, and a deal table for our altar; or we can dispense with a building altogether; give us the unbroken rock for our altar, the birds for our choristers, the branches of the trees for our chancel roof, and then we can plead the Christian Sacrifice as effectually as in the most splendid of churches with the most elaborate ceremonial.

The reason why there is all this controversy about ceremonial, is because ceremonial follows almost naturally upon the belief in Church doctrine. As a man believes so must he speak and so act. If he believe he is engaged in the worship of his Creator, he cannot but bend the knee and bow the head; if he believe, as I believe, that Christ is really present in the Holy Communion, he must treat that Sacrament with reverence, external as well as internal. Those who profess to object to ceremonial, yet use it in what they consider to be the chief part of the Christian worship; when the sermon time comes the vestment is changed, an introit is sung, and a procession is formed from the vestry to the pulpit. Why not the same ceremony at what we believe to be the chief Christian service, the Holy Eucharist?

The real matter of difference is not the practice of ceremonial, but the deeper question I have already alluded to. External behavior follows upon internal belief. When I celebrate the Holy Communion I believe that I am then joining my own dear Lord in pleading His Sacrifice before His and our Father, and believ-

ing this I can no more act when I am celebrating that service, as if I was administering a mere memorial supper, than a man at a friend's funeral can behave as if he were at his wedding. Ceremonial is nothing in itself, but only valuable as expressing the inward faith; and therefore great care should be taken that the faith should come first, and not the ceremonial first; the latter is only a mockery where the faith is absent. The more we appreciate, the more our belief will show itself in our actions. Ceremonial must express the general faith of the worshippers; it cannot, any more than the prayers, be adapted to the taste of each individual. And by the worshippers of course I mean the communicants, who alone have a right to be consulted in these matters. In external as well as internal doctrine we must stand upon the higher level, not sink to lower power.

Perhaps it may be objected to these doctrines, that although they may be all very plausible in theory, yet that they are not the doctrines of the Church of England, and that therefore a person holding them has no right to remain a member of that Church. What are and what are not the doctrines of the Church of England we must decide, not from what are popularly considered so, but from what that Church herself lays down in the Prayer Book. Read that book, read the Baptismal Services, the Communion Office, the Catechism, the Visitation of the Sick, the form of Ordination of Priests, and you will see there enumerated the very same doctrines I have expressed my belief in. It is a popular cry that we who believe and preach these doctrines are unfaithful to the Church. One statement is all very well until another is made. I have no wish to make charges against any one. My principal is, let each party work for God in their own way, as long as that way is not inconsistent with the teaching of the portion of the Church to which they belong; but it is just possible that we are more faithful to the Church than those who have service only one day in the week when the Church tells them to have it on every day; who ignore the fasts and holy days which the Church tells them to keep; who leave out portions of the service, and alter the Lessons when they do not approve of them; who administer the Holy Sacrament to a whole railful at once, when the Church says they are to do so to each person individually; who introduce the entirely unauthorized innovation of evening communion; who say that baptism does not regenerate, when the Church says that it does; who never invite, as the Church directs them to invite, those of their own people who cannot "quiet their own conscience" because it is "troubled with some weighty matter," to "make a special confession of their sins," in order that "they may receive the benefit of Absolution."

I have now expressed freely what opinions we hold on this great Church question. They are not, I assure you, opinions taken up lightly. I was as prejudiced against them as any one could be before I understood them; but the more I studied, and the more I thought, and the more I prayed, the more I became convinced that they were true. I am not ashamed of them; nay, I glory in them. When I return thanks to God for the many undeserved mercies which He has bestowed upon me, I include amongst those mercies that He has taught me this faith.

There are many who have grown up in quite different opinions to these. If they are earnest in their faith, let them continue so, and let them not think we preach these doctrines to censure them. We who are called upon to teach must not be content to teach only what will please, but we must look forward to the future, and we must teach what we believe is true and therefore will last. And I do not think that the popular theology will last. I think that it must be held responsible (although unconsciously) for a great deal of the infidelity of the present day; first,

because its common objection to these Church doctrines is not that there is no authority for them, but that they are super natural, which objection might be applied equally well to Christianity altogether; secondly, because it accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God, without giving any reason for so doing, except that to them it appears to be so, which leads to the obvious conclusion that those to whom the Bible appears to be not God's Word, are at liberty to reject it; and thirdly, because by allowing each person to frame a religion for himself by his own interpretation of the Bible, it makes God the author of confusion, not of peace. The history of popular Protestantism proves that before long it develops into infidelity, and that this development would be much more speedy were it not for the influence, felt but not acknowledged, of the Church with her unchanging creeds.

NEWS FROM THE HOME FIELD.

AMHERST.—Rev. D. C. Moore, Rural Dean, Rector of Stellarton, spent last Sunday here and assisted at the services in Christ Church, delivering two able sermons.

The little band of energetic churchmen in Fort Laurence held a supper last week in aid of the building fund for St. Alban's Church, which proved quite a success notwithstanding the bad roads, and wet weather.

AVON.—The 52nd meeting of the Avon Rural Deanery was held on Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 1st and 2nd. Owing to the isolated position of this parish the previous Deanery meetings held in it have not been at all satisfactory there being but a small number of the clergy able to attend. But on this occasion the hearts and hands of the Rector and parishioners of Rawdon were gladdened and strengthened by a goodly representation of the clergy; only one parish of the Deanery not being represented. The successful meeting at this time was particularly due to the popular young Rector of Newport, Rev. K. C. Hind, who kindly met us at that station and conveyed the whole party, five in all, to Rawdon and back, entertaining us on the way at the Rectory, where we sat down to a bountiful spread, and on the road by many a joke and song. Arrived in the parish we drove to the Rectory, where we were welcomed and entertained by the Rector and his family. The first service of the session was held at the parish church, St. Paul's, on the evening of our arrival, Tuesday, at 7 o'clock. The clergy present were: the Revs. W. J. Ancient, R.D., Rector of Rawdon; Canon Brock, D.D., Rector of Horton; F. J. H. Axford, Rector of Cornwallis; Dr. Mockridge, Rector of Windsor; K. C. Hind, M.A., Rector of Newport, and J. M. C. Wade, B.A., Vicar of Aylesford. Evensong was said by Mr. Hind; first Lesson by Canon Brock, and 2nd by Mr. Axford. The appointed preacher being Dr. Mockridge; he gave an earnest, simple and forcible discourse from St. Matt. xiv, 28.

The Chapter assembled again the following morning at 11 o'clock for the regular Deanery service. Mattins were said by Mr. Wade; first Lesson by Dr. Mockridge; second by Mr. Hind. The Holy Communion was celebrated by the Dean, assisted by Canon Brock, who was also the preacher, taking for his text St. John iii, v. 5: with reference particularly to the beginning of spiritual life. The subject was treated by Dr. Brock in his usual scholarly manner, and the sermon was filled with matter that will give food for thought to those who listened for some time. Besides the clergy present twenty-nine of the laity drew near to receive the Lord's Body and Blood.

The clergy dined at the Rectory, and at two o'clock assembled for business. The Dean said the special office. The reading of the minutes of previous meeting, and of the office of "The