

The Church and the Intellectual Revival

By CHARLES HERBERT HUESTIS

THE Church of to-day has entered upon a sea of troubles. Two things are a source of anxiety to her. One is the worldliness of her people, and the other is the spirit of Modernism in her preachers and teachers. As these two things occur together, the conclusion is that they are connected as effect and cause. The Church is losing spirituality because her leaders are dominated by the spirit of intellectualism. Hence Modernism must be combatted.

Is the conclusion correct? In seeking an answer to this question we turn naturally to the history of the Church in the past. The answer we get is immediate and conclusive; namely, that periods of spiritual revival in the past have sprung out of times that were characterised by intellectual affluence, never out of times of intellectual frugality. This is a fact that was recently pointed out by Professor Peabody. "Protestantism, Methodism, Tractarianism," he says, "were movements of religious revival, but they began within the precincts of universities. It is suicidal to anticipate a revival of religion which shall be dissociated from a revival of theology. The only practical choice is between a theology that gives chains, and a theology that gives wings."

The present age is characterised by a great intellectual revival which has influenced almost every department of human thought; and is now inspiring theology. There are two phases of this revival that concern the Church. One is critical, and is marked by a determination to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. The other is dominated by the principle of development, of which there has never been a better definition than that of Jesus: "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The former is represented by the historic criticism of the Old and New Testaments; the latter by the "New Theology," as it has been called. The essential difference between this new theology and the old may be stated in this way: the theology of the past thought of religious truth as fixed and unchanging—that an unchanging theology was the only standard of truth. The new theology sees progress in all things, and a movement towards ends that are not yet. According to the old view, when God made the world He made it all at once, when He created man He made him perfect, so that the only possible change in his status must be a fall from his perfect state; when He revealed Himself to man, He confined that revelation to the Bible. The new theology sees the world still in the making, man slowly rising out of the animal and the savage into his divine inheritance, God still

inspiring His children with His thought and leading them out into ways unknown.

It would be impossible within the limits of this article to indicate the greatness of this change, difficult to exaggerate its importance. What concerns us is the attitude of the Church towards this intellectual revival in theology. There are three ways in which she may conduct herself in the presence of modern critical thought in theology. She may put herself in opposition to the movement, and frown upon and crucify her ministers and teachers who espouse the same; or she may treat it with indifference as only a passing phase of intellectual development having nothing to do with the chief business of the Church, which is saving souls; or she may welcome the new thought, and use its forces to stimulate her own spiritual life.

Which of these three courses she is following there is no need for the present writer to point out in view of recent happenings, for he who runs may read. It must be remembered, however, that a Church cannot maintain itself upon the principle that there is no such thing as history; nor can a Church maintain its leadership over the conduct of its people indefinitely upon the principles of moral purpose and the idea of service, important as these things are. There must be added another factor, and that is the *power to think straight*. Anything in the Church which threatens this power is fraught with danger. While it is the duty of the Church to guard jealously the traditions that were delivered to the fathers, in so far as they hold within them divine truth, it is also her duty to sympathise with those within her communion who swing in orbits eccentric to the traditional one. Because the Anglican Church failed to do this she lost John Wesley; for the same reason the Roman Catholic Church lost Luther, and the Wesleyan Church William Booth.

It is the duty of the Church to interpret truth in the language of living men, and give to her youth the best thought of the day upon matters that concern her functions; for only in this way can she preserve them from indifference on the one hand or despair on the other. What is the Church doing to-day to adjust her young people to the mighty changes that have taken place during the past half-century? Only by such adjustment can she rob of its force the sceptical appeal which must come to them sooner or later. If the Church had been wise fifty years ago in her interpretation of the Bible, she would have saved thousands of young men from spiritual distress and loss of faith through the sophistry of Ingersoll. Instead she girded herself in defence of traditional views of the method of

creation, until at last, too late, she found herself beaten, and science holding the field. Professor Gregory of Leipzig says acutely that when God makes nuts the point is not the outer husk, but the kernel. It would be wise for the Church to develop a like divine sense of values.

* Not only for the sake of her youth, but for the sake of her ministry must the Church show a sympathetic attitude towards the new intellectual movements. Recent studies of the subject would indicate that not only are fewer and fewer cultured men entering the ministry, but in many cases where men have entered college with a view to the ministry, they have abandoned the idea during their college course. They do not see how it is possible for them to adjust the new views of the world order they get in college with the theological conceptions they learned in their youth. Is it not the duty of the Church here to assist her young men to attain unto a view of things broad enough to embrace the facts of nature, of man and of God in such harmonious relations as will satisfy the demands of the enquiring intellect and the yearnings of that human heart by which we live?

The writer believes that the Church should deal sympathetically with her young men, especially in view of the work she has to do in Western Canada. He may repeat here what he has said before. What is needed in the West is the Gospel mediated by men of strong intellectual power, who have force of mind and character to apply Christian ideals to the life of the people. This is all the more necessary because there are climatic and other influences at work in the West which favour the growth of an emotional type of religion, and a corresponding shallow type of manhood. This means a people of unstable equilibrium, open to all sorts of social and religious vagaries. This is clear from a study of the religious conditions of the Western States, from which most of these obsessions take their rise. The type of man who mediated Christianity to the pioneers of the Western States was chiefly the emotional. They were men, for the most part, of great zeal and aggressive force, but lacking the power to think straight. If we would guard our West from this type of manhood, and also from that bondage to the common and inferior in tastes and ideals which holds sway in the Western States to-day, we must see to it that religion is represented in the Canadian West by men who will command the respect of the settlers by virtue both by the nobility and spirituality of their lives, and by the strength and liberty of their thinking.

Red Deer, Alberta.

An Easterner in a Western Town

Prince Albert the Picturesque

By JOSEPH P. DOWNEY, M.P.P.

A FEW years ago here in Ontario we took Canada's Last Great West on trust. We believed, with St. Paul, in the evidence of things not seen. Now we extend our vision. Via the palace car route we reach those places which were civilisation's outposts a short time ago. We see for ourselves. We enlarge our ideas. We find cities instead of muskrat houses, twentieth century commerce cheek by jowl with the Indian, awaiting its chance to push him off the map.

"Prince Albert enjoys the distinction of being the oldest settlement in the Province of Saskatchewan"—so reads the opening sentence of a recently published historical review of that picturesque western town. Old, Prince Albert is, as places go in this part of the Dominion. Its citizens may look with justifiable disdain on the mushroom developments of other settlements, remembering that antiquity has a claim to recognition that newness, however striking, can never possibly offset. But when one puts on his eastern spectacles and begins to analyse Prince Albert's plea for the veneration that comes only with years he is impressed, not by its age, but by the budding youth of the place. The records say that the first white settler established himself here as a trader in 1864. Then followed two years later the well known Presbyterian missionary, Rev. James Nisbet. The Mission House in which Dr. Nisbet established himself, on the corner of River Street

and Central Avenue, is now giving place to a modern commercial building, but the work of which he laid the foundation at the cost of so much labour and privation is being zealously continued in the new Presbyterian Church, one of the finest edifices in the province.

But its age is not Prince Albert's only claim to greatness—it has become known through its publicity bureau as "Prince Albert the Picturesque," and it certainly has substantial claims to the title. The northern branch of the Saskatchewan, always muddy, always majestic, makes one of its most graceful sweeps past the front door of the city, retaining on the opposite bank, as far as the eye can see, its natural fringe of poplar and willow. Neapolitan patriotism found vent in the words: "See Naples and die." Here the local enthusiast recalls the Indian's tribute to the swiftly flowing river that he loved—"Once drink of the waters of the Saskatchewan and to it you must return."

They tell us, the people of Prince Albert, that the same is true in the present day. People leave this section for the East and for the West, and for the prairies, but back they invariably come to renew their youth on its banks and slake their thirst in the waters of the old Saskatchewan.

The natural beauty of the place has in recent years been intensified by the steady march of expansion. The hill at the back, overlooking the busi-

ness centre of the town and the river beyond, is becoming the residential section and boasts some beautiful homes. On Centre avenue and River street, imposing business structures have been erected. Already building permits aggregating a million dollars have been issued this year. The great railroad and double driveway bridge built by the Canadian Northern Railroad for its branch to North Battleford is one of the sights of the province. It is an eight-span structure with a swing section in the centre for the boats, and is over 1,000 feet in length. Across this bridge on the banks of the river lie hundreds of acres of land owned by the city. This area will in time be converted into a park.

But though the people of Prince Albert love it for its beauty, it is not for that alone. At present prosperous and progressive, it has, they claim, splendid possibilities for future expansion. One of the outposts of civilisation, it is also a gateway to the great country northward, incalculably rich in lumber and with fine mineral prospects. The timber resources at Prince Albert's back door are certainly no dream. Down the river, three miles from the centre of the city, one sawmill is turning out 100,000 feet of lumber per day. In summer they drive the logs for many miles on the Little Red River and other branches of the Saskatchewan. In winter they employ a unique method of transportation. From the city northward to the limits an ice-