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The Story of the Revision of the Irish Prayer Book. II: Changes Made in the Process of Revision

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THE STORY OF THE REVISION OF THE IRISH PRAYER BOOK.—II.

CHANGES MADE IN THE PROCESS OF REVISION.

The report of the Revision Committee was presented to the synod in two portions, the first in 1872, the second in 1873, and the discussion of it occupied the synods of 1872-8. It did not contain the new preface which grew out of the final refusal to make certain changes in the formularies ; this was added subsequently. The revised Prayer Book was ordered for use on 1st January, 1879.

A number of clergy having protested (under the Church Act) against being bound by any alterations made in the Prayer Book or canons, it was decided at the close of the revision not to make distinction between those who had thus protected themselves and those who had not, unless these latter had obtained promotion or change on faith of a declaration of subscription. This provision was both fair and politic.

The main interest of the revision centred round a few points—(1) The Athanasian Creed ; (2) The Communion Office and the Black Rubric ; (3) The Baptismal Service ; (4) The Office for the Visitation of the Sick ; (5) The Ordinal.

Three modes of revision were attempted. The first by direct alteration of the text ; the second by interpretative rubrics ; the third by alternative forms. None of these were ultimately approved of, and in the end, on the points chiefly in dispute, recourse was had to a new preface which was to explain “ why certain things have been altered and others retained.”

The limits of space at our disposal forbid us to notice more than the chief alterations made in the rubrics and services. This we do in the order in which they occur in the Prayer Book.

Lectionary, &c.

The lectionary follows generally that adopted by the

Church of England, but omits all the lessons from the Apocrypha, and includes the whole of the Apocalypse.

The black-letter days are omitted.

The ornaments rubric is omitted, its place having been supplied by ritual *canons*.

The three sentences after the preface concerning the service of the Church are omitted.

The archbishops and bishops are given authority to appoint days of humiliation and of thanksgiving, and to prescribe special services for the same.

In the rubric before the *Te Deum*, after the word "minister" there is inserted "or other fit person appointed by him"—a change approved by the Convocation of Canterbury, 1909. This permits laymen to read the lessons.

In the rubrics before Morning Prayer permission is given on certain occasions to shorten the services by omission of parts, and to vary them, and for their use separately or in combination.

Such permission adds considerably to the adaptability of the services, but excludes any change in the Sunday services, and might with advantage have been carried considerably further, especially in order to avoid repetitions.

An additional collect is provided alternative to "Lighten our darkness" in the Evening Prayer.

The Athanasian Creed.

The question of the Athanasian Creed was one of the chief points on which the interest of the discussion on revision centred. It proved very difficult to deal with. A few would have omitted it entirely, as is done in the American Prayer Book, but, regarding it as a creed, others were unwilling to allow it to be touched at all, although the Greek Church objected to the *Filioque* clause. On the other hand many would not admit that the damnable clauses could be in any sense part of a creed, and they regarded them with invincible dislike as giving an untrue impression of the

character of God. Others again objected to the creed itself as dogmatizing on subjects beyond the faculty of man to understand.

Archbishop Trench endeavoured to obviate the difficulty of the damnatory clauses by softening their absolute statement thus:—in verses 2 and 42, “Which faith it behoveth everyone to keep whole and undefiled,” and “This is the Catholic faith which it behoveth everyone, etc.” The suggestion was rejected, not only because it altered the text, but as meaningless and weak.

Others proposed that the use of the creed in public worship should be enjoined upon one day only in the year; that it should be left optional with the priest; or even that the priest alone should read or sing it. Another suggestion was to omit the minatory clauses when the creed was read in public worship, and append a note to Article VIII. to the effect that they formed no part of the creed proper. Again, it was proposed to place it after the XXXIX. Articles, with a note explaining that “the condemnatory clauses are to be taken as referring only to those who, possessing the means and opportunity of knowledge, reject the substance of the Christian Faith.” The subject of a new translation was mooted, but it was seen that this could not meet the objections to the creed.

As the explanatory rubric or note failed to satisfy those who objected to the obnoxious clauses, and as the proposal to recite the creed without them was met by an outcry against “mutilating a creed,” it was resolved after long discussion to leave the creed in its old place, but to omit the rubric ordering it to be recited, though it was not forbidden for use as an anthem by any so disposed.

It was resolved, however, to insert the following paragraph as to the creed in the new preface:—

“With reference to the Athanasian Creed (commonly so called), we have removed the rubric directing its use on certain days; but in so doing this Church hath not withdrawn its witness as expressed in the Articles of

Religion, and here again renewed, as to the truth of the Articles of the Christian faith therein contained."

As the creed was left in its place, this statement was weak and unnecessary. The removal of the rubric was, however, perhaps the best solution possible. It was better than the removal of the creed, and far better than the permissive use of it recommended by the Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury in 1909. The creed remains in our Prayer Book as a witness to the doctrine of the Trinity, and for use in teaching, and the compulsory use of clauses which gave offence to many pious people was avoided.

The committee of the Lambeth Conference of 1908 distinctly recognized the right of the several Churches of the Anglican Communion to decide for themselves as to the use or disuse of the creed. The decision of the Church of Ireland was thus justified, although at the time it was made a reproach against her in England, where, if she proposed to omit the damnatory clauses, she was said to "mutilate a creed," while when she kept it unaltered but omitted its public use in the Church service she was told she as good as "denied the Faith."

The Litany.

A rubric was introduced which regulates the use of the Litany as a separate service, and also in combination with the Communion Office. Permission is given to ask the prayers of the Church for sick and afflicted persons.

It was proposed to introduce suffrages for the royal forces, for the Lord Lieutenant, for the Jews, and for those engaged in missions to the heathen. The rejection of these was a loss.

Prayers and Thanksgivings upon several occasions.

Eight prayers were here introduced—(1) for unity, taken from the service for the 20th of June; (2) in time of any common plague or sickness, instead of the old one; (3) for a sick person; (4) for the Rogation Days;

(5) for New Year's Day; (6) for Christian missions; (7) for the General Synod; (8) for use in colleges and schools. The committee of the Lambeth Conference speaks of the "urgent need" of similar enrichment in the English Prayer Book.

It may be said generally of all the new prayers that, though their intention is admirable, and their introduction a step in the right direction, their composition is faulty, and their rhythm defective.

It was proposed to omit from the prayer in time of war and tumults the words "abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices," but unfortunately this was rejected.

The thanksgivings for fair weather and for peace were altered and improved, and one for recovery from sickness was introduced.

The Collects, Epistles, and Gospels.

Several rubrics were added regulating the use of the collects, epistles, and gospels on various days.

Alternative collects with epistles and gospels are provided for the first celebrations at Christmas and Easter, both collects being taken from the Sarum use.

For the epistle for the first Sunday after Easter (about the three Witnesses) another is substituted, taken from 1 Corinthians v. 6.

The Psalter.

Permission is given to substitute other psalms than those in the usual course, on occasions approved by the ordinary, but selections of psalms on the American plan are much needed.

The Holy Communion.

The obsolete rubric directing intending communicants to give notice to the minister is retained.

Instead of the old rubric requiring communion at least three times in the year, ministers are directed to exhort their people to communicate frequently, and to con-

tribute regularly to the maintenance of the worship of God. This, with the Canon directing the celebration of the Communion at least once in every month, is a notable attempt to restore the sacrament to its proper place.

The rubric about those living in open and notorious sin is somewhat altered, and in every case the minister is to refer to the disciplinary canon.

It was proposed to permit our Lord's summary of the two tables of the law to be used instead of the ten commandments, as in the Scottish and American Churches: but this was rejected.

The introduction of the verses usually said or sung before and after the Gospel is authorized.

When there is no communion the prayer for the Church militant may be omitted, and on occasions sanctioned by the ordinary the service may begin with the collect, epistle, and gospel.

The two offertory sentences from the Book of Tobit are omitted.

In the first exhortation "damnation" is changed to "condemnation," and it was proposed to omit all the words with reference to Judas after "come not to that holy sacrament" down to "soul," but this was not carried.

In the third exhortation the words "we eat and drink our own damnation" down to "sundry kinds of death" were changed to "we eat and drink judgement to ourselves."

This exhortation may be omitted with consent of the ordinary, provided it be read once in the month at least. This relaxation of the old rubric has since been approved by the Lambeth Conference of 1908.

A new rubric gives those who do not intend to communicate an opportunity to withdraw.

The *Sanctus* is printed as a separate paragraph. The Committee of the Canterbury Convocation suggests this also.

A new rubric allows the words of delivery to be said

once to as many as shall kneel together to receive the Holy Communion, provided that they shall be said separately to any communicant so desiring it. The proposal of the committee of the Convocation of Canterbury is better than this.

To the rubric before the prayer of consecration the words "standing at the north side of the table" were added. This was equivalent to the "north end," and was by some supposed to do away with the idea of a sacrifice in the Holy Communion, which was thought to be implied by the eastward position, though Archbishop Laud objected to the north end only as being too narrow to hold the Service Book, or to place the bread and wine within the minister's reach.

A proposal was made by the Bishop of Killaloe to change the structure of the prayer of consecration by transposition of some of the words. He wished also to place the Lord's Prayer before the reception, but neither suggestion was carried out. It is possible that he felt that the remodelling this part of the service after the Scottish office was at the time inopportune, though he probably desired it.

Two collects, one slightly altered, taken from the revised office for the burial of the dead, and one from the ordering of priests are added to those at the end of the communion office. This last addition, as "a brief commemoration of the faithful in Paradise," is specially commended by the committee of the Lambeth Conference.

The last collect is converted into one for use after a collection when the prayer for the Church militant is not read.

The rubrics at the end of the office are slightly changed.

The Black Rubric.

This rubric was intended to exclude the adoration of the elements, and the doctrine of a corporal presence of

Christ's natural body and blood; "the former it branded as idolatrous, the latter as physically impossible and absurd."¹ It went no further. The ultra-revisionists desired to make an addition which should prohibit all eucharistic adoration. This was attempted in resolutions of various forms.

1. One declared that "no presence of Christ, or of Christ's body and blood, is in the elements after, or by virtue of consecration." This was rejected because in the first instance it involved a denial of His omnipresence, and in the second place it seemed to imply a presence which was not in virtue of consecration, and thirdly, it left it open to teach that, though not in the elements, Christ's body and blood are along with them.

2. A second proposed to declare that "the Church doth not allow eucharistic adoration on any ground whatever." Independently of the ambiguity of the phrase, "eucharistic adoration," it was seen that it was impossible to forbid more than "outward acts and gestures" which had been already done in the canons.

3. Another proposal took the form of a declaration that the Church of Ireland did not "permit it to be taught that by reason of consecration there is in or under the forms of the elements, a presence of Christ, or of Christ's flesh and blood unto which adoration may be or ought to be done." It was objected to this that it would give an impulse to the teaching of the real presence in the form advocated by Freeman, viz., that Christ in His body and blood is really present for participation, though not for adoration. On the other hand, as already observed, a denial of a presence by virtue of consecration, i.e. by virtue of words or manual acts, would not exclude belief in a presence in or under the elements by the agency of the Holy Ghost or in fulfilment of Christ's promise, to which special presence worship would be due.

These additions to the black rubric being rejected, it

¹ *Censor Recensus*: a pamphlet by J. F. Meade (a layman of the Diocese of Glendalough).

was sought to prohibit the teaching of any presence of the body and blood of Christ other than a presence "in the soul of the faithful receiver," but this was not accepted.

All proposed additions to the black rubric having been rejected, two paragraphs were inserted in the new preface and the rubric was left unaltered:—

"As concerning the Holy Communion some of our brethren were at first earnest that we should remove from the Prayer Book certain expressions which they thought seem to lend some pretext for the teaching of doctrine, concerning the presence of Christ in that sacrament, repugnant to that set forth in the Articles of Religion, wherein it is expressly declared that the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner, and that the mean whereby it is received and eaten is faith; but upon a full and impartial review we have not found in the formularies any just warrant for such teaching, and therefore in this behalf we have made no other change than to add to the Catechism one question with an answer taken out of the 28th of the said Articles.

"As for the error of those who have taught that Christ has given Himself, or His body and blood, in this sacrament to be reserved, carried about, or worshipped, under the veils of bread and wine, we have already in the canons prohibited such acts and gestures as might be grounded on it, or lead thereto: and it is sufficiently implied in the note at the end of the Communion Office (and we now afresh declare) that the posture of kneeling prescribed unto all communicants, is not appointed for any such purpose of adoration."

This declaration closed a controversy most painful to pious minds. In a roundabout way it declared that no change had been made or was necessary, either in the Communion Service or in the black rubric. It was a sort of apology for having changed nothing. Adoration to Christ present is not, and could not be prohibited, for adoration does not consist in outward words, acts, or gestures, its seat is in the heart, its act is the act of faith.

Public Baptism of Infants.

Parents are allowed to be sponsors for their own

children, and where more cannot be had one sponsor suffices.

The Baptismal Office was practically unchanged by the revision, but the controversy over it was long and bitter for several years. The efforts of the extreme revisionists were directed in the first place towards getting rid of the words "regenerate" and "regeneration" as applied to every child baptized. In the next place, failing that, they sought to obtain a distinct recognition of the lawfulness of the interpretation which applied these words to all on what was called a "charitable hypothesis." In this they were successful.

The wording of the first address was slightly changed by the substitution of one text of St. John for another.

It was proposed to adopt this form for the declaration after baptism:—"Seeing now that this child hath received the sacrament of regeneration," instead of "Seeing now that this child is regenerate." Another proposal was to permit the use of an alternative form at the discretion of the minister. Others suggested that all dogmatic statements as to the effect of baptism should be omitted. Archbishop Trench proposed an explanatory rubric to the effect that "spiritual regeneration doth not exclude the necessity of conversion to God." The proposal, however, which for a time met with most favour was for a new rubric, thus expressed:—

"The language used to describe the grace of baptism expresses the privilege and responsibility of all who receive that sacrament, but in so far as it describes a further grace, the Church of Ireland does not require her members to interpret it as determining that such grace is received by all who receive baptism, or that they who receive that grace do of necessity receive it at the time of the administration of that holy ordinance."

This proposed rubric was at once interpreted in quite opposite ways by the critics. One said that it was "a most unbelieving rubric," and reduced baptism to a mere beggared rite, "an unblest sacrament devoid of all

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operative grace, a mere form of religious registration.”¹
On the other hand, an acute critic, after an exhaustive analysis, declared :

“ It precludes no particular views. The same men will continue to teach the same doctrines which they have hitherto taught. Only the new declaration will furnish new texts for conflicting interpretation, and offer new weapons for mutual accusations of unfaithfulness to the teaching of the Church.”²

Judge Warren, who at first supported this rubric, afterwards expressed his opinion that it would make the charitable hypothesis (for which low Churchmen contended) more difficult than before.

The difficulty was arranged, we cannot say solved, in a way suggested by the judge, viz., by recognizing the liberty of interpretation already existing, and a clause to effect this was added to the new preface :—

“ In the formularies relating to baptism we have made no substantial change. . . At the same time we desire fully to recognize the liberty of expounding these formularies hitherto allowed by the general practice of the Church, and as concerning those points whereupon such liberty has been allowed, we hereby further declare that no minister of this Church is required to hold or teach any doctrine which has not clearly been determined by the Articles of Religion.”

No material change was made in the other baptismal formularies. But it would have been an improvement in the office of private baptism if the third question had been more plainly put, thus—Was this child baptized with water ?

The Catechism.

A new question, and an answer, taken from Article XXVIII. are added :

Q. After what manner are the body and blood of Christ taken and received in the Lord’s supper ?

A. Only after a heavenly and spiritual manner, and the mean whereby they are taken and received is faith.

Confirmation.

An alternative to the last collect is provided, and a

¹ *Censor Recensus*, by J. F. Meade, p. 20.

² *Brief Forecasts*, by J. G. Scott (afterwards Archdeacon of Dublin), p. 12.

new and rather feeble rubric added instead of the old one:—

“ Every person ought to present himself for confirmation (unless prevented by some urgent cause) before he partakes of the Lord’s Supper.”

The formal presentation of the candidates to the bishop adopted in the American Prayer Book was not ordered, and indeed does not seem to have been proposed. It would have been a distinct improvement.

Solemnization of Matrimony.

A new rubric is inserted about the publication of banns.

In the opening address the words, “ to satisfy men’s carnal lusts and appetites,” are omitted, and a change (approved by the Lambeth Conference of 1908) is made in the expression of the causes for which marriage was ordained ; but Mr. Frere is in error in stating that our revision followed the American Prayer Book here. The form of the prayer for children is altered somewhat. The Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury recommends both these changes.

The concluding address, which might well have been revised, is made optional, but ends as before with “ amazement.” An additional collect follows, and after this, if there be no Communion, the “ Grace ” concludes the office.

The Visitation of the Sick.

Instead of the rubric enjoining the minister to move the sick person to make a special confession of his sins, a new rubric appoints the use of the precatory form of absolution, taken from the communion office. The minister is, however, not restrained from edifying and comforting the sick “as he shall think meet and convenient,” nor is his use of the indicative form prohibited.

Probably no question in the revision was more earnestly debated than this, owing to the fear of anything approaching the Roman doctrine and practice. It was urged against the indicative form of absolution that

it seemed to arrogate to the priest a power of forgiving sins belonging to God alone, and that the more ancient forms were precatory. In the end the form from the communion office was adopted, and a paragraph in the new preface thus dealt with the matter:—

“ The special absolution in the office for the visitation of the sick has been the cause of offence to many : and as it is a form unknown to the Church in ancient times, and as we saw no adequate reason for its retention, and no ground for asserting that its removal would make any change in the doctrine of the Church, we have deemed it fitting that in the special cases contemplated in this office, and in that for the visitation of prisoners, absolution should be pronounced to penitents in the form appointed for the Holy Communion.”

Although the change in the form of absolution was made a reproach against the Church of Ireland by many people in England, it has been recommended as an alternative by the Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury in 1909. In the American Prayer Book a form of absolution had been altogether dropped, but strange to say, English Churchmen had no difficulty in condoning that.

The Churching of Women.

A benediction was added to this office.

A Commination.

The reference to a restoration of the ancient discipline was omitted from the first exhortation, but otherwise no change of any importance was made in this office, though some were suggested, and are greatly to be desired.

Forms of Prayer at Sea.

No change of importance was made in this office, or in that for the Communion of the Sick.

The Order for the Burial of the Dead.

An improved rubric takes the place of the old one, and besides stating more clearly the cases in which the office is not to be used, allows a short service in certain

special cases, and notably for unbaptized infants, which removes a grave defect of the former office.

An alternative and shorter lesson (1 Thess. iv. 13) is provided. In King Edward's first Prayer Book this was the epistle from the Sarum use.

The form of thanksgiving is changed thus: "We bless Thy holy name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear."

The Ordinal.

No change of any import took place; but a strong effort was made to alter the words, "Receive the Holy Ghost . . . whose sins thou dost remit, etc."

It was proposed that this form should be changed to:—"Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, grant unto thee the gift of the Holy Ghost for the work of a priest in the Church of God," or, at least that these words should be admitted as an alternative form. This was urged by many revisionists who desired to get rid of anything that, as they thought, tended to exalt the office of the priesthood, and to favour the practice of auricular confession. Dr. Reichel, who was their champion, had previously advocated the omission of any form of absolution from the office for the visitation of the sick. He thought he had discovered that the words "Receive the Holy Ghost" had been retained by the English reformers through ignorance of the fact that they were not essential to ordination, and because they feared that their omission would invalidate it. He was ably and conclusively answered by the Rev. R. Travers Smith, who showed that the English reformers had all necessary information as to the essentials of ordination; that they knew that the words were not necessary; and that whereas Dr. Reichel had referred to Archbishop Whitgift as having asserted that the English ordinal was taken word for word from the Roman Pontifical, the opposite was the case, the charge having been made by Cartwright and strongly repudiated by Whitgift. He showed also that the Roman doctrine of confession and

absolution in no way depends on the use of the words "Receive the Holy Ghost," which are not by the Roman Church regarded as essential to ordination, inasmuch as in the Roman Pontifical the candidates are called "ordinati" and allowed to perform the special functions of priests before those words occur in the office.

The ordinal controversy was not settled till 1877, when, instead of making a change in the words, a long paragraph was inserted in the new preface as follows :—

"No change has been made in the formula of ordination of priests; for upon a full review of our formularies we deem it plain, and here declare, that, save in the matter of ecclesiastical censures, no power of authority is by them ascribed to the Church or to any of its ministers, in respect of the forgiveness of sins after baptism, other than that of declaring and pronouncing on God's part, remission of sins to all that are truly penitent, to the quieting of their conscience, and removal of all doubt and scruples: nor is it anywhere in our formularies taught or implied, that confession to, and absolution by a priest are any conditions of God's pardon, but on the contrary it is fully taught that all Christians may draw nigh as worthy communicants to the Lord's table without any such confession or absolution."

In this, as in other paragraphs of the new preface, the defensive or apologetic tone adopted gives an impression of weakness prejudicial to the authority with which the formal documents of a Church should speak. They were intended to conciliate disappointed revisionists, and perhaps that is the best excuse that can be made for them.

The form of prayer on the day of a sovereign's accession was only changed in some unimportant respects.

New Offices.

Four new forms of prayer were added :—

1. For the first Sunday in which a minister officiates in the church of a cure to which he has been instituted.
2. For harvest thanksgiving.
3. For the consecration of a church.

4. For the consecration of a burial ground.

These form a real enrichment to our offices.

The Revised Prayer Book also contains:—

The articles of religion approved by the synod of Dublin in 1634; these are identical with the English Articles of 1571.

The table of kindred and affinity.

The preamble and declaration adopted by the General Convention in 1870.

The constitution and canons ecclesiastical as agreed to by the General Synods held in Dublin, 1871-9, with the thirtieth English canon appended.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE DISESTABLISHED
CHURCH OF IRELAND.

The story of the revision would not be complete without some notice of the attitude of the Church of England towards her sister Church in that hour of trial.

It is not a noble or inspiring theme—not a story worthy of an ancient and powerful Church with splendid traditions. Let us not linger long over it. The attitude of the English Church was determined by the high Church party. We have already said that the word Protestant was abhorrent to high Churchmen, and more especially to the ritualistic party. Many of them, though they recognized the American and Colonial Churches, in which the lay element was prominent, with strange inconsistency were shocked that the same element in the Church of Ireland should lay claim to similar rights, though the whole episcopate of the Anglican Communion was agreed as to the lawful position of the laity in Church synods. No doubt this was in part due to the extraordinary conservatism of the English character, which can scarcely bear to give up an old custom even in order to do away with a manifest abuse.

They did not remember that what they termed Churchmanship was of comparatively recent revival in the Church of England itself, and that if it was at a low ebb here it was owing to two things—(1) the fact that

Irish Protestants were face to face with an aggressive Romanism which had identified itself with an actively hostile political organization ; (2) that for centuries the Irish Church had been ruled by bishops reared in England who came over to Ireland to enrich themselves and their families, and whose object, even when they were respectable, was to maintain the English interest rather than to advance the good of the Church. Ignorant of the injuries inflicted on the Irish Church by this policy of English statesmen, they judged her harshly and unsparingly.

There were no English Churchmen for whom Archbishop Trench had so deep a feeling of respect and friendship as Dr. Pusey, Canon Liddon, and Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford. To them he turned in critical moments, for he was profoundly attached to the English Church, and sensitive to the opinion of her leaders. But it cannot be said that he received wise advice in his difficulties. They were afraid of the laity. The two former at least were persuaded that heresy must result if laymen were admitted to Church synods ; they abhorred the idea that the laity might discuss and vote on matters connected with doctrine. This thorough distrust prejudiced their view of the Irish Church, and Irish Churchmen who strove to avert disaster received scant sympathy at their hands.

It may be admitted that many of the proposals, and some of the acts of the General Synod were unwise, and tinged by a narrow party spirit. Some of the canons, and more especially that concerning the cross, could not but be most repugnant to English, as to many Irish Churchmen. But nevertheless English critics might have seen— they ought to have seen—in the gathering of numbers of laymen year after year from distant places at personal inconvenience and expense, and in the earnest debate, and the deep interest they took in things with which they had been unfamiliar, a great element of hope for the future, and signs of a life more real than could have been manifested by a mere passive

acquiescence in things as they were. Above all, they might have had faith, and not have hastily concluded that all that was threatened was already lost.

Unfortunately while the matter was still in debate, and the event could not be predicted, Dr. Pusey assumed that the Church of Ireland was about to become heretical, and presumed to advise the bishops, clergy, and laity what they should do in that event :

“ If either of these rubrics were carried, I should, were I an Irish clergyman, betake myself to England, thinking the Irish Church heretical. . . ; were I a layman with property, I should sell my property and go to England.”

When we consider that there was a very considerable body both of clergy and laymen in the Irish Church opposed to the rubrics which he condemned, and that the existing clergy were expressly protected by the Church Act from being compelled to agree to any change of doctrine, and were free to remain at their posts and maintain their witness to the truth, such advice to abandon at once all effort and hope and to seek comfort and ease in England, must appear faithless in the extreme. Athanasius would not so have acted or advised.

The truth is that the English high Church party was incapable of understanding the position of affairs after the disestablishment. It dreamed, at least Canon Liddon who might be taken to represent it did, so late as 1875, that the Church might have gone on without lay representation :

“ The greatest mistake,” he wrote, “ was the substitution of the anomalous synod for the ancient convocations. . . . Are not the old convocations only dormant? Could they not be summoned by the archbishops? Would they not at once speak with an authority which this singular collection of clergymen, colonels, and lawyers, can never command when undertaking to deal with the truths of Divine revelation however indirectly?”

One does not know whether to wonder most at his

total misconception of the circumstances of a disestablished Church, or at the singular ignorance of human nature betrayed by such remarks. Dr. Pusey also thought that the "clock could be put back."

"Your Grace," he wrote to Archbishop Trench, "with the Bishop of Derry and the Archbishop of Armagh, have the immediate future of the Church of Ireland in your own hands, you have but to say, 'In view of all these evils which changes will produce we will have nothing to do with the changes, or with the body which makes them.' They would be dropped."

When it was proposed to omit the damnatory clauses from the Athanasian Creed, but to recite the rest of it in public worship, Dr. Pusey declared that such a course

"leaves everything as a mere matter of private opinion, except what the Arians and semi-Arians might have held on the one side, and tritheists on the other. It leaves out 'the right faith is' even as to the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . It excludes the necessity of believing the three persons to be God and Lord in any special sense. . . It makes everyone the judge as to his own faith."¹

It came to this that in Dr. Pusey's view, no creed was worth anything without an anathema, and the fact was ignored that this so-called Arian creed was placed in the same book with, and to be interpreted by that of Nicaea. All this time they were in full communion with the American Church, which had wholly expunged the Athanasian creed from the Prayer Book.

Equally unfair was Pusey's comment on the change of the absolution in the visitation of the sick. In one breath he admitted that the precatory form is as valid as the indicative; in another he declared that its use "tacitly effaced the office of the priest." Here, again, he ignored the fact that the American Church had wholly abolished the absolution in that office.

Nobody would now assert that the original draft of the new preface, nor indeed the final form, was a satisfactory

¹ *Letters and Memorials of Archbishop Trench*, ii. 199.

document. Its authors admitted as much by the changes they made in it. But even as it stood at first it was a practical acknowledgement by the ultra-revisionists that their attack on the Prayer Book had failed, that they had not been able to change any of the doctrines to which they had objected, nor even to change the language in which they were expressed. The most they had obtained was the acknowledgement of a certain liberty of interpretation which had existed before, and which was recognized by law in England itself.

One would think, in reading Dr. Pusey, that in the Church of England there did not exist, and never had existed, on what he called vital doctrines, any differences of opinion and interpretation. The truth was the very opposite of this. The liberty claimed in Ireland had been claimed and allowed in England. The opinions he objected to were as strongly held and as fully preached in the Church of England as in that of Ireland. If the Church of England had "been at one with herself," Dr. Pusey's reproaches might have had some force, but, as it was, the revisers might have retorted on him, "Physician, heal thyself. If this liberty is falsifying the truth in Ireland, is it not just as much so in England?"

But disapproval went much further than this sort of criticism. It went so far that Dr. Pusey and Canon Liddon, who might be taken as representing, not the extreme ritualists, but the sound and sober high Churchmen, wrote "offering large subscriptions" towards building a church in Dublin, "if it could be arranged that, as in many Scottish churches, only the unaltered English Prayer Book should be used in it."¹ It is difficult to characterize such a proposal without using language that might sound unduly strong. In making it they went directly in the face of their own principles, according to which such churches were unlawful intrusions into the dioceses of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, with which the Church of England was in full

¹ See *Life of Archbishop Trench*, ii. 197.

communion. Low Churchmen might not be scandalized by such a proposal; it might not even have surprised us if the extreme ritualists attempted to justify it, but for high Churchmen to do so was to renounce their own cherished principles. Here were two simple presbyters of the Church of England, of their own mere motion, without sanction of archbishop or synod, or even consulting them, planning to foster with their money a schism in a Church with which their own Church was still in communion.¹ That such a schism in the struggling Church was not begun and established, with evils that none now can calculate, was due, not to their Christian charity, or care for Church order, but to the saner judgement, and more truly Catholic principles of the Archbishop of Dublin.

But enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said on this. The bitterness is past, though something of regret must linger still. If the Church of Ireland was not altogether wise in the new and untried task that was set her, she has at least the satisfaction of perceiving that her severe critics have in many points not been too proud to follow her example. If she were taunted with desiring the "mutilation of a creed" by proposing the omission of the damnable clauses of the Athanasian Creed, and for "denying the Faith" in omitting its use in public worship, she may point to the unanimous voice of the bishops of the whole Anglican Communion in the Lambeth Conference of 1908 which has justified her in both respects, pronouncing that as to the use or disuse of this creed "the several Churches may rightly decide for themselves what in their varying circumstances is desirable." She may also call attention to the report of the Committee of Convocation of the Lower House of Canterbury which, in 1909, recommended that the use of the creed should be optional. If, again, she were taunted for having "tacitly effaced the office of the

¹ It is to be noted that the biographers of Pusey and Liddon were not proud of this escapade. They do not excuse it; nay, I believe they do not notice it.

priest " by substituting the precatory for the indicative form of absolution in the office for the Visitation of the Sick, she may point to the unanimous recommendations by the same committee that the precatory form should be an alternative. She may also regard with some satisfaction the fact that not a few of the other alterations in rubrics, and readjustments in the services made by her have since been approved and authoritatively recommended for adoption in the Church of England ; and that an English bishop who, unlike most of her critics, has taken the trouble to " make a minute study " of her Prayer Book has been candid enough to confess that such a study has raised it much in his estimation.¹

CONCLUSION.

The great and important work of the revision of the Book of Common Prayer undertaken by the Church of Ireland at a critical point in her history—undertaken with much anxiety and many questionings of heart, but yet in humble dependence on the promise of Christ—was brought to an end in 1879 when the revised book was printed and put in use.

That therein some things were done which we might wish undone, and some which might have been better done, was surely to be expected when the Church was suddenly placed in such strange and painful circumstances. That much was left undone which experience has shown to be desirable is a thing comparatively easy to correct. That, upon the whole, many changes that were made have been proved wise and wholesome is a thing to make us rejoice and take courage, with thankfulness to the Divine Spirit without whose help and guidance human wisdom can provide nothing rightly.

It was a wise discretion which guided the Church of Ireland not to call to her councils at this crisis the assistance of liturgical scholars from outside, much as that assistance may have appeared desirable. To have done so would have been to increase the multitude of

¹ Visitation Charge of the Bishop of Salisbury, August, 1909.

councillors who, however wise and learned, must needs have been ignorant of the peculiar circumstances of the case, and thus to have enlarged the chances of controversy and division at a moment when it was absolutely necessary to reduce these to a minimum.

Thankful must we be to Almighty God that the double danger of a schism in the Church of Ireland, and of separation from the Church of England was avoided, that no change was made which affected doctrine, and that our national Church remained reformed, but no less catholic and apostolic, faithful to the charge committed to her, and free to do her work untrammelled by connexion with the State.

LAUS DEO.

W. SHERLOCK.