

THE TROUBLES OF AN ANGLICAN BISHOPRIC

The last Catholic Bishop of Hereford, Thomas Reynolds, died a prisoner for the Faith, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth (writes A. Hilliard Atteridge in *America*). He was the last of a line of prelates extending back to the days of the Mercian kingdom in the seventh century. One of the Norman bishops, Losinga, the friend of St. Wulstan, laid the foundation stone of its cathedral, whose great central tower was erected in the days immediately before the Reformation. It has been in Protestant hands for more than three centuries. It has been disfigured by the wretched restoration work of ignorant eighteenth-century architects. The shrine of St. Ethelbert has been swept away, and the Lady Chapel, as usual in the old English cathedrals, turned into a place for the erection of monuments to men of local fame. And the Anglican clergymen who have usurped the see of Losinga, of St. Thomas of Hereford and of the confessor, Reynolds, have in later years numbered in their line of succession bishops who have held and preached doctrines that are not merely un-Catholic but can only be described as un-Christian.

In the days of the Tractarian movement, when the Church of England was staggering under the shock of Newman's conversion and the abandonment of Anglicanism by a host of its most brilliant supporters, there was a new crisis provoked by Lord John Russell's appointment of Dr. Hampden to the see of Hereford. Hampden in his Bampton lectures, and in a pamphlet written in defence of them, had questioned the full revelation of the Scriptures and taught doctrine that was near akin to Unitarianism. Half the bishops of the day addressed a protest to the Prime Minister; Manning, then Archdeacon of Chichester, was the chief speaker at a great indignation meeting of the clergy in London; but the protest had no effect. Hampden entered into possession of his see, a few Anglicans took the logical course of leaving a Church that had ceased to defend the elementary doctrines of Christianity, but most of them made up their minds to bear with this "new trial" of the introduction of a semi-Unitarian prelate into the episcopal bench.

Dr. Percival, who has been Bishop of Hereford since 1895, resigned his see this summer on account of age and ill health. His peculiar views had always been another "trial" to the advanced Anglicans who flatter themselves that they represent the Catholic Church of old England. Percival, a Liberal in politics and theology, held the old Protestant views that the High Churchmen repudiate, and he frankly protested against their theories. In an ordination sermon in Hereford Cathedral at the Christmas of 1908, he told the candidates for orders that the "Kingdom of Christ had no sacerdotal system," and went on to say: "This absence of any sacerdotal order from the Christian Church, rightly understood, is deserving of all the more careful attention because of the tendency of a section in our Church of England to drift back towards the erroneous and misleading Roman doctrine of a sacrificing priesthood."

The High Church party deplored Dr. Percival's views, but consoled themselves with the hope that sooner or later he would be succeeded by a more "Catholic" prelate. They have been most bitterly disappointed. Mr. Lloyd George has promoted to the see of Hereford Dr. Hensley Henson, Dean of Durham, and the promotion is a curious index of the condition of the Church of England.

Dr. Henson is an Oxford man, in his 55th year. He is described as "a Broad Churchman of independent views to which he is not afraid to give the frankest expression." So one of his admirers writes about him. His clerical career began in the London district. In 1900 he was given a canonry at Westminster Abbey and the rectorship of the parish church of St. Margaret's attached to the Abbey. Here it was that in his sermon on the Christmas morning of 1911 he told his fashionable congregation that the story of the

Nativity in St. Luke was probably nothing more than a beautiful poetical legend. There were of course some protests in the Anglican press, but Dr. Henson accentuated his strange attitude in the following Lent by inviting an Oxford Professor who had written a book on "Christianity Without Miracles" to deliver a course of lectures at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on the same theme—the miracles eliminated being amongst others the Virgin Birth of Christ and the Resurrection, as usually understood by Christians.

Instead of incurring any official censure Dr. Henson received promotion. In the same year (1912) Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, appointed him Dean of Durham, where there is a minor university for the training of candidates for the Anglican ministry. While Dean of Durham Dr. Henson has more than once addressed Nonconformist bodies, on two of these occasions in defiance of protests from bishops who are now to be his colleagues on the episcopal bench. He has taken a frequent part in newspaper controversies. He opposes disestablishment, and holds that the "National Church" should have room for men of a great variety of opinions. He has written that of course a clergyman must accept the Apostles' Creed, but he adds that there must be a wide freedom as to the interpretation of it. Judging from his Westminster sermon he himself interprets it in a sense that is neither Catholic nor Christian.

Already there are protests against his appointment to the see of Hereford. A meeting of clergymen at Oxford has called upon the Dean and Chapter to refuse to accept him as their bishop. It is quite certain that they will obey the law and make the best they can of the new appointment. The protests will be as futile as those that were made against Dr. Henson's predecessor, Bishop Hampden, in 1848. It is unhappily true that numbers of both clergy and laity in the Church of England no longer have any real belief in the Divinity of Christ. Dr. Henson represents a large party. His promotion is a new illustration of the "comprehensiveness" of the Church of England. Even the episcopal bench itself represents every variety of belief. Probably some few Anglicans may be forced by this new manifestation of the nature of the Church of England to realise that such a Babel cannot be the Church of Christ which, guided by the Holy Spirit, is to teach God's truth to the end of time. Others will go on lamenting the "trials" of the Church, and protesting that her real mind is "Catholic," despite the imposition of an unorthodox prelate on what the *Church Times* describes as "the unfortunate see of Hereford."

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