

AN AUSTRALIAN CONTROVERSY

Anglican Inventions: A Critical Examination of the Controversial Methods of the Anglican Bishop of Bathurst, N.S.W. By Very Rev. M. J. O'Reilly, C.M., President of St. Stanislaus' College, Bathurst. E. J. Dwyer, 705 George street, Sydney.

We can honestly and unreservedly recommend this publication. Father O'Reilly is cultured and scholarly, as would be expected from a priest occupying such an important position; and he is the possessor of a brilliant and breezy style, which carries the reader on with the minimum of effort, and which enables him to handle a subject which under other treatment would be dry and tedious in a way that is fresh, original, and interesting. Father O'Reilly is one of those fortunate controversialists who will always be read. If he were to engage in a public discussion on conic sections or the binomial theorem the man in the street would read and enjoy him, though knowing little enough of either. It is a great gift, and Father O'Reilly makes the most effective use of it.

The main subject of the brochure is the rickety claim which is still occasionally put forward on behalf of Anglican 'continuity'; but the work deals also, briefly but adequately, with a host of minor questions, such as 'Rome and Father Tyrrell,' Pope Honorius, the Clementine Romances, the Pseudo Isidorean Decretals, the Petrine Claims, the Primacy and the Holy Scriptures, Protestants and exclusive salvation, etc., etc. It might have been thought that the controversy on 'continuity' had already been worn threadbare; but Father O'Reilly, while stating the old facts and arguments in a new and always interesting fashion, is able at the same time to bring to the discussion much fresh matter of a particularly valuable kind. He gives, for example, a splendidly lucid exposition and an unanswerably cogent application of the Privy Council decision in the case arising out of the recent union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Here is a final and authoritative definition of ecclesiastical 'continuity,' which may serve as a touchstone whenever and wherever such a claim is advanced. 'The identity of a . . . Church,' said the Lord Chancellor, Lord Halsbury, 'must consist in the unity of its doctrines' (p. 612). And Lord Davey, another of the Judges (p. 644), said: 'It is not in the power of individuals having the management of that institution at any time to alter the purposes for which it was founded, or to say to the remaining members: "We have changed our opinions; and you, who assemble in this place for the purpose of hearing the doctrines, and joining in the worship prescribed by the founder, shall no longer enjoy the benefit he intended for you, unless you conform to the alteration that has taken place in our opinions."' The least learned reader may apply that definition for himself; and with its application the Anglican claim crumbles to the dust.

Father O'Reilly writes for the most part with a light and genial touch, but when necessary he can take the gloves off, and when he does he is very deadly. Here, for example, is an impeachment of the Anglican Church which no Catholic controversialist would have written except under extreme provocation—provocation such as the arrogant and somewhat insulting Bishop of Bathurst gave to a degree that left the Catholic apologist no alternative but to strike hard in self-defence and teach a much-needed lesson: 'To those who reject all definite teaching and rebel against all legitimate authority, Anglicanism is a veritable Cave of Adullam. It is liberal in respect of dogma, and, when it pleases, can "make the bounds of freedom wider yet"; it is conservative regarding endowments, because it considers them worth preserving. "Come to me," she says, "you who celebrate daily Mass, and you who regard it as a "blasphemous fable"; come to me, you who honor the Blessed Virgin, and you who treat her suicidally, "with cold neglect"; come to me, you who pray for your dear departed, and you who brand the practice as superstitious; come to me, you who venerate

the Crucifix, and you who discard it; come to me, you who believe in the supernatural, and you who aver that "miracles do not happen"; come to me, you who hold to the Bible, as did your fathers before you, and you who have cast the Holy Book into the alembic of the "Higher" Criticism; come to me, you who practise confession of sins, and you who deem it an impeachment of the one Atonement; come to me, you who stand by two Sacraments, and you who believe in seven; come to me, you who fast, and you who make merry—and I will refresh you.' The Chameleon is no parallel, for its hues, though varied, were limited; Janus does not resemble her, for he faced but two ways. There is nothing like her in heaven above, on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. The medicine-man of the Choctaws had a creed; the Buddhist, the Confucian, the Theosophist, know in whom they have trusted; of Anglican teachers alone, as of the idols spoken of by the Prophet, can it be said: "They have mouths and speak not . . . neither shall they cry out through their throat." If, in the course of this impeachment, I have hurt the feelings of any believing Anglican, I am sincerely sorry. But the necessity was thrust upon me. Let him send the bill to Bishop Long. He began the controversy, and, like those who begin an unjust war, is responsible for the injuries inflicted on non-combatants.'

The book abounds in good things, and we might quote many sparkling and incisive passages; but we prefer that our readers should sample them for themselves. To priests, who may be called upon to defend the Catholic position, the work will prove of real value; while the laity will find it not only illuminating and instructive but—what is sufficiently rare in works of controversy—at the same time entertaining and enjoyable. The book is not provided with an index, but is very well worth one; and the omission might be made good should a second edition be called for. Price 1s. A limited number of copies are obtainable from the Manager, N.Z. Tablet Office, Dunedin.

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