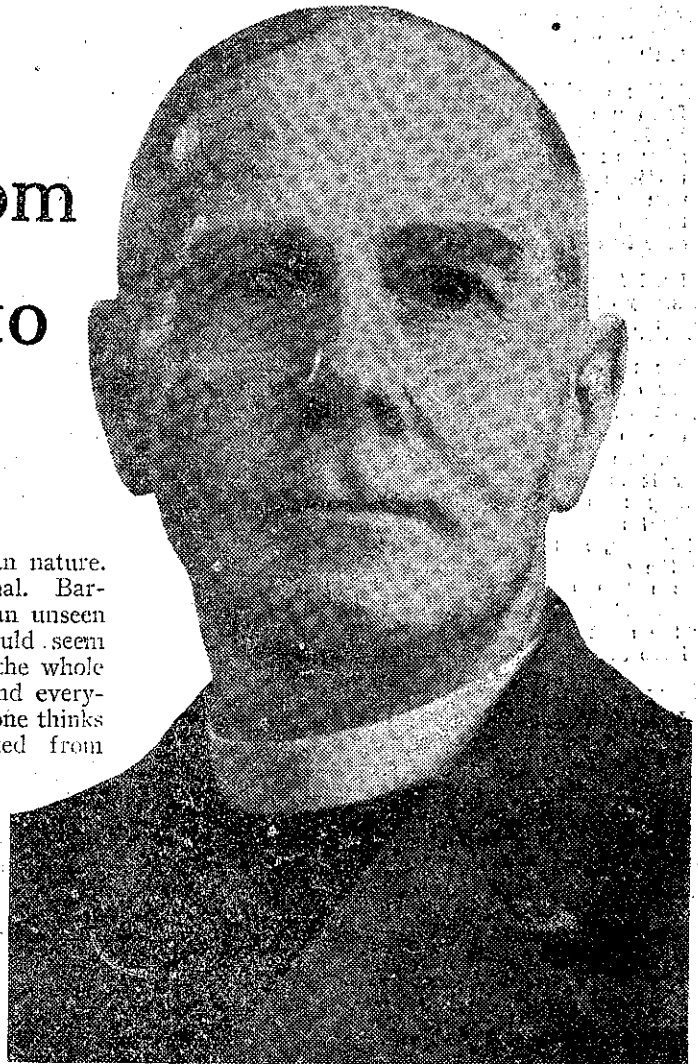


Is the Doctrine of Incarnation Losing Its Hold?

Christianity Is Not Sinking from A Conviction to A Curiosity!



—Steffano Webb, photo.

CANON CHARLES PERRY, of Christchurch, whose contribution to the "What Next?" series of articles is printed on this page. "To me unbelief has never had a chance," says Canon Perry.

THE religious faculty is a part of human nature. Man, it is often said, is a praying animal. Barbarous or civilised, all people believe in an unseen world and in unseen beings, and it would seem that the idea of sacrifice and marriage belong to the whole human race and are furniture for the human mind everywhere. All this is called natural religion. If anyone thinks that this natural religion will ever be eliminated from human nature, he speculates so daringly that he may be called fatuous. We believe the future of natural religion is as secure as that of human nature.

But revealed religion, Christianity? What of that? Now, St. John taught and Christians believe that Judaism, Buddhism and the others have all some of "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," but that Christianity alone in the complete sense is revealed religion. Our question, then, is what in face of the many changes in the modern world is likely to be the future of Christianity?

One evening at an Oxford College function, Walter Pater took into dinner a young girl who was afterward Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Wishing to ingratiate herself with the famous don she said, "I suppose, Mr. Pater, that in three or four generations no intellectual people will call themselves Christians." Turning to her, he said gravely, "Well, you see, there are those words, 'Come until Me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' They have to be explained, you know. *They always will have to be explained.*" Was He who said those words a monomaniac or God manifest in the flesh? The effect He has had upon the world, an effect which grows with the centuries, is all against the theory of monomania. There is egoism in Him, a constant use of the first personal pronoun, a self assertion far removed from saintliness. If He is only a man, He is not a good one. Christians accept the other alternative.

The future of Christianity, in short, depends on the fortunes of the doctrine of the Incarnation, that Jesus is God visiting and redeeming His world. And when I see the amazing victories of Christianity, in spite of opposition of all sorts, in India and China and Africa to-day as well as its tremendous influence all over Europe and America, I cannot think this doctrine of the Incarnation is losing its hold on the world.

It does not seem to me that the war and the economic depression have made much difference to this. It is possible to exaggerate the effect of external circumstances in the lives of souls.

Lord Mosley had opinions on the future of Christianity. It is discouraging to notice the bitterness in the words

of so noble a man. "We will not attack you," he says to Christians, "we will explain you. History will place you and your dogma in its class above or below a hundred competing dogmas exactly as the naturalist classifies his species. From being a conviction, it will sink to a curiosity, from being a guide to millions of human life, it will dwindle to a chapter in a book." That is just the sort of sentiment that the early Christians had to listen to as may be seen in the controversy between Origen and Celsus, just the sort of opposition that is to be found in the large amount of unbelief which flourished underground in the so-called Ages of Faith. John Mosley merely repeats the (Continued on next page.)

Threat to Existence of the Empire

"What Next?" Series

"The threat to the existence of the Empire" is the text of next week's specially written article in the "What Next?" series. The writer is AIR-MARSHAL SIR ROBERT CLARK HALL, whose knowledge of defence as it applies to the British Empire makes this article particularly vital.