

## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY THE REV. PHILIP E. HUGHES, M.A., B.D.

**A** NGLICANISM in South Africa has had an unfortunate history, beginning with the arrival at the Cape just one hundred years ago of Robert Gray, the first African Bishop. Gray was a man of great application and will-power, and he threw himself with the zeal of a pioneer into the immense task of the organization and extension of the Anglican Church in South Africa. He was, however, an ardent Tractarian, and it displeased him to find upon his arrival that the churchmanship of the Cape Province was prevailingly Evangelical and that his "high church" views were by no means generally popular. As the years went by, Gray found the ties with the home-country increasingly irksome, and several adverse decisions of Her Majesty's Privy Council, coupled with the lack of practical sympathy generally on the part of the English episcopacy towards his headstrong career, finally led him to such a state of exasperation that in 1870 he snapped those ties and formed his own separate organization. This he called the "Church of the Province of South Africa."

It was little wonder that the Evangelical congregations, who had always maintained their loyalty to the Protestant and Reformed faith from years long before the appointment of Bishop Gray, should have been unwilling to sever their bond with the Church at home in order to join this new organization, which was in effect to be ruled by bishops and in which the laity were to be an unimportant majority. They chose rather to continue their identity as the "Church of England in South Africa," few in numbers though they were. Their small numerical strength was of course due to the fact that, in extending the Anglican Church, Bishop Gray had pursued a policy of appointing Anglo-Catholic clergy to such an extent that by 1870 he had succeeded in building up a work which was predominantly Anglo-Catholic in character. It was because of this too that, in districts where there was no Evangelical church, many who were at heart and by upbringing staunch members of the Church of England reluctantly sought a spiritual home in other more Evangelically-minded denominations outside the ranks of Anglicanism. However, the Evangelical Church of England congregations were not lacking in vitality and happy unity inspired by their common loyalty to the doctrines and practices of the Reformation, as enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer. Despite the experiencing of many difficulties and trials, they battled on cheerfully as a faithful "remnant," refusing to allow the candle of the Reformers to be extinguished.

It has been necessary to give this brief review of the past hundred years in order that the present situation of Anglicanism in South Africa may be understood. The Church of the Province of South Africa, an extensive organization today comprising no less than fourteen dioceses, is permeated with Anglo-Catholicism and the excesses of ritualism which accompany it. A great part of its missionary work

is conducted by members of the Community of the Resurrection and the Cowley Fathers. The Church of England in South Africa, still a relatively small body, is, by a great injustice, denied the right, so clearly belonging to it, of having its own bishop. Yet it is a unity, constitutionally governed by its annual Synod, with, as its ecclesiastical head, a Vicar-General—an office which will continue necessary until such time as it has its own bishop. The Vicar-General has not, of course, the powers of a bishop to ordain and confirm. By him, however, candidates who have been prepared for confirmation are admitted to the Holy Communion, in accordance with the rubric at the end of the Confirmation Service which instructs that those who are "ready and desirous to be confirmed" may be "admitted to the Holy Communion." These candidates are confirmed whenever the visit to South Africa of a sympathetic bishop affords an opportunity. Since the beginning of this year, for instance, Archbishop Mowll, the Primate of Australia, and Bishop Houghton, the Field Director of the China Inland Mission, have both been in South Africa and have confirmed some hundreds of members of the Church of England in South Africa who had been prepared during the interval since the last confirmation of this nature. Such gracious acts are naturally the source of much encouragement and inspiration.

The European work of the Church of England in South Africa is centred in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban, but it also has an extensive missionary work chiefly amongst the Africans in the Provinces of Natal and the Transvaal. The present Vicar-General is the Rev. Canon R. F. Pearce, M.A. Recent recruits to the ranks of its ministry in Johannesburg are the Rev. A. H. Warner, M.A., formerly Vicar of Cudham, Kent, the Rev. W. Hooker Rowdon, M.A., formerly Vicar of St Paul's, Cambridge, and the Rev. John Oliver, M.A., formerly Curate at Gorleston-on-Sea, Suffolk. During the forty odd years since the building of Christ Church, Hillbrow, Johannesburg (where Mr. Rowdon is now in charge), there has been a remarkable succession of Rectors in the persons of the Rev. Canon Digby Berry, M.A., the Rev. George Grubb, M.A., and the Rev. Norman Bennet, M.A.—men who have been respected and looked up to as spiritual leaders in this great metropolis. In Cape Town the Rev. Stephen Bradley, who is Rector of Holy Trinity Church (which celebrated its centenary not long ago), is giving an outstanding lead in evangelistic work amongst the youth of the capital. He is at present the mainspring of the great "Youth for Christ" rallies which are overflowing the largest meeting-places available. A little over a year ago he organized teams of witness composed of Christian ex-servicemen, who not only drew packed congregations wherever they went, but exercised a unique ministry over a wide area through a series of weekly broadcasts lasting over a period of five months. Thus the Gospel net is being cast, and is catching many.

Ecclesiastically speaking, it would seem that the chief lack in South Africa is a Bishop for the Church of England there. How much longer will it be before this is remedied?