Editorial

The Church Assembly at its session this month is to consider the Report of its Commission on Church and State, which was reviewed in the May issue of Theology by the Bishop of Durham (now of Winchester). We hope that the Assembly will adopt the resolutions that are to be proposed, with something like the unanimity that was reached by the Commission. It is reasonable to hope that the recommendations of the Commission in regard to Prayer Book revision may break the deadlock which has existed since the rejection by parliament of the Deposited Book in 1927-8. We are particularly glad to see the emphasis on the requirement of the consent of the House of Laity to proposed changes; for the time has passed when it could be supposed that they are unconcerned in the public worship of the Church.

The only one of the Commission’s recommendations which falls below the wisdom and common sense that are characteristic of the Report is that concerning the suggested committee to advise the Archbishops with regard to vacant bishoprics. This suggestion has justly been criticized not only by the Bishop of Winchester,¹ but also by the Bishop of London² and by Sir Ernest Barker.³ We observe that the Commission’s recommendation of this committee is optional, at the discretion of the Archbishops, and not to be binding on their successors. We may therefore hope that the Church Assembly will give to the Archbishops a lead in this matter by indicating its preference for the continuance of informal consultations to the proposed institution of a formal committee. As Sir Ernest Barker says, this proposal “magnifies machinery, and turns quiet and confidential conversations into semi-public negotiations”. There are committees which are a necessary evil, but there is no necessity whatever for this committee; the purpose it would be designed to serve can be far better secured without any elaborate machinery and therefore without the need for safeguarding that machinery from abuse.

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Father Herbert Thurston, S.J. (1856–1939) was a notable savant and an attractive personality. It is a pleasure to read Father Crehan’s well-constructed memoir of his life and labours.⁴ Father Thurston had the straightforward interests of an historian and an insatiable

¹ See Theology, May 1952, p. 165.
⁴ Father Thurston. By Joseph Crehan, S.J. Sheed and Ward. 10s. 6d.
appetite for unearthing facts, and in consequence he often offended
the devout. He had no interest in ideas as such or in metaphysical
speculation. He was in this respect the English counterpart of Mgr
Duchesne, though he lacked Duchesne's genius and devastating wit.
Like Duchesne he did not attempt to deal with Biblical history. But
his researches and published work covered an extraordinary range of
topics in liturgiology, hagiography, the highways and byways of
ecclesiastical history, psychic phenomena, and fancy religions. He
wrote no magna opera, but he was an indefatigable writer of articles
for periodicals and in much demand as a contributor to encyclo­
pedias: the bibliography of his writings occupies nearly forty pages
of the memoir and will serve as an index to a vast amount of curious
information. The chapters of the memoir, despite the outward un­
eventfulness of Thurston's life, are never monotonous and are often
diverting, partly because of the controversies in which he was almost
incessantly engaged with his co-religionists as well as with others.
The chapter on Thurston's friendship and relations with Father
Tyrrell suffers from the fact that Thurston's letters to Tyrrell have
not survived; and it does not yet seem possible for a book bearing the
imprimatur to show a deep and close sympathy with Tyrrell's mind
and experience. On the other hand, the chapter on Thurston as "The
Counsellor of Souls" is very perceptive and reveals how much more
he was than a mere savant.

The Theological College in a Changing World

Theological colleges are now round about a century old. It is not
enough to define their function as "training for the ministry" with­
out further qualification, since this was carried on centuries before
they were ever thought of. If it were simply a question of equipping
men for the priesthood, they would probably never have arisen.
Their emergence was bound up with the fact that "training for the
ministry" has historically included two very different undertakings:
(a) the supply of men technically equipped to carry out the specific­
ally ministerial tasks of the Church, prophetic, pastoral and priestly;
and (b) the supply of men capable of exercising leadership in the
Church's name in the social order of their day. The requirements of
the first differ from age to age only in externals (though the ex­
ternals are vitally important), being governed by the abiding de­
mands of the Christian gospel. Moreover, the recruitment of men for
the priesthood should in theory cut right across the shifting class­
structures of society, men from all strata being equally needed to
meet the Church's responsibility to the different sorts and conditions
of men within it.

The second task, that of providing the Church's leadership, must,
on the other hand, be constantly changing with the social order
within which it has to be exercised, and it is intimately bound up
with the supply of men from that section of society which does in