

ARCHBISHOP DAVIDSON

SOME few weeks before Archbishop Davidson died the present writer met him by his own gracious arrangement at the house of the late Lord Lovat in Bryanston Square. It was a wild rain-stormy afternoon sufficient to make younger men than the Archbishop find excuses for keeping indoors. Knowing his four score and two years, I awaited a telephone message telling me that the Archbishop dare not venture to leave home. But punctually almost to the minute of our prearranged time the old man arrived—with no complaints about the weather! His biographer was to let me into the secret of the old man's contempt for our national weather at its worst. I was to learn that an old man's fortitude which had instantly impressed me had been taught by a sport-loving father on the moors and hills of south-east Scotland.

I could not help feeling, and perhaps manifesting, that I was in the presence of one of the most noteworthy men of the day. Again his biographer by a sober presentation of the facts was to justify my feelings. Yet the prelate who had crowned an English king and had strengthened, as few of his predecessors had strengthened, the Church of England, became at once my fellow-wayfarer into the hill-country of the soul. Many a man of less note and position than he would have felt the need of condescending to a simple friar. Their condescending would have been of the nature of humility. But there was no condescension in the man whose words and attitude were all humility, yet whose humility was not an attitude but a quality of soul.

I should be doing this humble soul wrong if I said that at once and unartfully he made me feel his equal. Before many words had been exchanged he seemed to rank himself in matters of the soul not as the equal of me with whom he could discuss, but as the inferior of one whom he would consult. Though much that passed between us has been forgotten, I can recall how humiliated I felt at the old Arch-

¹ *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury*. By G. K. A. Bell, Bishop of Chichester. (Oxford University Press; 2 vols.; pp. 1,428.)

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bishop's childlike humility. In that supreme art I soon took him to be my master.

Throughout our talk I kept saying to myself: "This is a humble soul. This is a holy soul."

Our last words were an agreement to meet again; and again to speak of the things of God.

When next we "met" I was kneeling by his dead body in his Chelsea home; and, out of the depths of a deep human grief, I was crying to the Lord to let perpetual light shine upon this His servant whom He had beckoned from our world of shadows and misunderstandings into the fulness of truth.

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I have set down this impression of the dead Archbishop that my readers may make up their mind whether I am, or am not, a fit critic of the Archbishop's biography. I will further set down that the Archbishop's biographer has no greater gift for me than to authenticate with infinite detail the impression made by the Archbishop himself.

In making this personal avowal about the work of the biographer we do not mean that he has no greater gift for his readers. Indeed unless we are much mistaken this sober, well-documented history of a man who took a foremost place in the England of the last forty years will itself take a foremost place amongst the histories of contemporary England.

But a Catholic reviewer of the life of a contemporary Archbishop of Canterbury may be expected to say how such a life strikes a contemporary Catholic. All students of this book must in the end proclaim that Archbishop Davidson deserved well of Catholics. For the moment let us say that we ground this conviction of ours on two facts, which Bishop Bell's biography simply proves. First, in no public utterance did Archbishop Davidson use words which embittered the relations or widened the estrangement between Catholics and their separated brethren.

Secondly, no Archbishop of Canterbury (and, we believe, no diocesan Bishop of England) has been at such pains to sound the possibilities of renewed diplomatic relations between Canterbury and Rome.

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That these two facts are undeniable will justify some, if not all, students of his crowded life in reckoning him amongst the strong men and not the weaklings of his England.

Let us not be misunderstood. Bishop Bell does not withhold from his readers certain courses of action which he implicitly characterizes as weak. I do not know whether in these rare implicit judgments he is "the valet misjudging his hero-master." But those of us who live within the liberties and mercies of the Christ-appointed shepherd of the flock can more accurately judge the shepherd weakness of Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury. For us his sometimes shifting or inconsistent action was not a weakness of character but a weakness of position. His inconsistencies and failures were not personal but official.

To understand this distinction between the personal and official weakness of an Archbishop of Canterbury we must bear in mind the official character of the Church of England which he served as chief ecclesiastical officer. By a series of legal enactments the corporation legally known as the Church of England has been given a statutory position unparalleled amongst English and perhaps all national institutions. Not even Magna Charta gave the pre-Tudor Church the statutory position and national stability of the Established Church. So closely are the legal rights and activities of the Church knit with the Crown, in giving unity to the kingdom and nowadays to the Empire, that to endanger one is to endanger the other. Indeed so closely has the Church of England been legally knit with the political unity of England that, whereas to disestablish the Church might destroy the Crown, yet to abolish Monarchy might not endanger the Church.

To realize this legal (though not necessary) link between the Church of England and the unity of England is to realize that an Archbishop of Canterbury as a loyal churchman and a loyal Englishman must look on the unity of the Church of England as his chief concern.

But the ecclesiastical unity which was achieved when the existing Church of England received its unique national and legal position is no longer possible. Past are the days when

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a national clergy could be one in accepting a Book of Common Prayer and a quasi-creed of Thirty-nine Articles. The Tractarian movement on one side and the Modernist Unitarian movement on the other demand nowadays a wrist of steel in the charioteer who would guide the existing Church of England into ways of unity.

But it was this task of keeping or re-making the unity of the Church of England which Archbishop Davidson found himself officially bound to undertake. That because of the inherent contradictions, and therefore weakness, of his material he failed in his undertaking, should not conceal the strength of mind which undertook, and the strength of purpose which persevered in the undertaking. Before we pass judgment on the alleged weakness of this Archbishop of Canterbury we should remember that the soldier who for love of his country tries to defend a position that is indefensible is commonly honoured as a hero—and never condemned as a weakling or coward. The Church of England which was so charged with anachronisms and contradictions was none of Archbishop Davidson's construction. He did not make it, but he made a most gallant and intelligent attempt to keep its unity, lest with its disunion and deace the unity of his country might die with its Church's death.

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That Archbishop Davidson was a man of strong purpose is written in every year of his life. For example, there is little weakness but almost superlative strength when as Dean of Windsor, in his thirty-sixth year, he counsels Queen Victoria not to bring out a second volume of her *Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands*. Frank literary criticism for the eyes of the author is sometimes a hard task to set a critic. But when the writer is a queen and the critic is a young ecclesiastic whom the queen can make or mar, frank criticism reaches the heroic. It is to the credit of this young Dean of Windsor that, casting aside all human hope of preferment, he accentuated his criticism by an offer of resignation. Queen Victoria was not often met with such strength even from politicians. Beaconsfield won his place in her confidence by ways foreign to Davidson's straight-

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forwardness. And if other politicians than Beaconsfield imitated the strength of Davidson rather than the courtly astuteness of Beaconsfield, these politicians depended for their career not on the Queen of England but on England.

Another exercise of the Archbishop's strength of character in the settlement of the Irish difficulty is authenticated by the following letter of the present Bishop of Pella to the Archbishop:

ST. ANNE'S, VAUXHALL.
11th December, 1921.

. . . Writing to-day to the Bishop of Killaloe . . . I have recalled how you spoke out boldly against outrages in Ireland when few voices were raised in defence of the suffering people in the affected districts. . . . I have never hesitated to point out the value of your timely intervention at a time when prominent persons in our own Church here were silent about the excesses; and now that Peace has come I gladly congratulate your Grace on the part you played so manfully in the dark hours of irregular warfare.

Again, his attitude during the General Strike in 1926 was so far-seeing and at least so resolute that it won the thanks or anger of men of all the political parties.

In giving these instances of the Archbishop's action in the matter of Ireland and the General Strike we must not be taken to approve or condemn his action. We are only minded to insist on the obvious fact that it was the action, not of a weak man who has no opinions or no strength to support his opinions, but of a strong man whose opinion, wrong or right, is supported by unflagging purpose.

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A last example of the Archbishop's strength of will, dealing with the delicate relations between Canterbury and Rome, may need time to reveal its true character and effect. The "Malines Conversations" are perhaps too recent to allow any treatment except what would be natural to an old Catholic who stands outside the national aspects of the question. But it has often seemed to the present writer that some Catholic critics of the matter have not realized that even "to praise is to criticize" (and the present writer rejects the subtle criticism of praise!), still more is condemnation the

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extreme of criticism. Now the Catholic writers who condemned and still condemn (rightly or wrongly) the Malines Conversations might expect that such a master of *savoir faire* as Cardinal Mercier would not have undertaken such an important matter without remembering his duty as Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. That duty lay upon him as an especial servant of the Holy See. It was unthinkable that a Cardinal of his fine instinct for the right word and the right action should undertake any communication with a Church outside his own jurisdiction without the approval of the Holy Father. As that approval was fully and freely given, the Catholic critics of the Malines Conversations find themselves no doubt unwittingly as the critics of our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI.

Again, let our readers bear in mind that we are neither approving nor disapproving of those Conversations—we are referring to them in order to show Archbishop Davidson's strength of character in a matter whose apparent failure may one day lead to success.

What strength of character was needed in an Archbishop of Canterbury even to undertake the conversations with Roman officials may be gauged by the following words written by Archbishop Davidson after the House of Commons had finally rejected the Bishop's Prayer Book:

One kept asking as the talk went on, what are really the facts or motives which will affect the issue? I think they are not to be sought within the House of Commons but in the country at large.

I suppose there is no force on earth so determined and so uncompromising as the "No Popery" cry in England, and it does not need any knowledge of history for backing it except the general sense with which England is impregnated. We suffered so much from Rome that everything which can be depicted, however unfairly, as having a Romeward trend is condemned *ipso facto* without need of argument. I honestly think that that spirit is much more answerable for our defeat than any detailed attacks upon the Prayer Book in its various parts. The purveyors of literature on the subject and especially the Protestant Alliance played down to this prejudice in the literature they produced, and they were wise in their generation [p. 1,354].

Bishop Bell adds: "The fear was strong enough: it

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showed the deep Protestantism of the English people; but it was very irrational" (*ibid.*).

When two years and three Conversations had made the matter of acute interest, Archbishop Davidson boldly justified his approval of the Conversations in what is likely to be regarded as a historic letter to the Archbishops and Metropolitan of the Anglican Communion, tragically dated Christmas, 1923. It contains the following courageous words unheard at Canterbury since the days of Cardinal Pole:

You will agree with me in regarding that subject as separate from other spiritual problems, not only by the history of centuries of English life but by present day claims and utterances. And the plain fact confronts us that in relation to that . . . subject there exists both at home and in the Overseas Dominions passions dormant or awake, which are easily accounted for, but which when once aroused are difficult to allay.

I have myself been repeatedly warned that to touch that subject is unwise. Men urge that even if "the opportunity be given" it is easier and safer to let it severely alone.

This may be true, but you and I are party to the APPEAL TO ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE² and I, at least, find it difficult to reconcile that document with an attitude of apathy or sheer timidity³ as to our touching the Roman Catholic question.

Our readers will accept our statement that we feel no mandate or wish to reopen the matter of Malines. But we may be allowed to think that the successor of Matthew Parker who, realizing the unparalleled force of the No Popery cry, fully approved and finally justified preliminary negotiations with a representative of the Pope, was a man of strong purpose. Time, that reveals so much unsuspected greatness, will one day show that Randall Davidson in his

² The words of this APPEAL from the Lambeth Conference of 1920 were: "Your Committee feels that it is impossible to make any Report on Reunion with Episcopal Churches without some reference to the Church of Rome, even though it has no Resolution to propose upon the subject. We cannot do better than make our own the words of the Report of 1908 which reminds us of the fact that there can be no fulfilment of the Divine purpose in any scheme of reunion which does not ultimately include the great Latin Church of the West, with which our history has been so closely associated in the past, and to which we are still bound by so many ties of common faith and tradition.

³ The Archbishop's contempt for timidity!

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own quiet unsuspected way had served the cause of Reunion by a courageous step without parallel since the unhappy years of the Elizabethan Settlement.

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It remains for us to conclude by painfully calling attention to the necessary official weakness of this strong character.

Whilst Davidson, then thirty-four, was chaplain to Archbishop Tait, the Rev. S. F. Green was imprisoned for contempt of court in a ritualist controversy. The young chaplain in a letter to Mr. Green laid his axe to the root of the matter. As the letter has never been surpassed in its clear statement of the point at issue it must be given in full:

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter, just received, makes it clear, if I understand you rightly, that no authority, ecclesiastical or civil, exists to which you would feel yourself at liberty to defer with respect to the practical action which you found upon your own interpretation of the Ornaments Rubric.⁴ If I am mistaken in this, please set me right, in order that the Archbishop may clearly understand your position.

His Grace now directs me to ask you further: Does any authority exist, ecclesiastical or civil, at the command of which you would be willing, under protest, if necessary, to abstain for a time from officiating in the Church of Miles Plating, if you were now at liberty?

You will, I am sure, excuse the formulating of the question in this abrupt form, with a view to the clear understanding of your position.

RANDALL T. DAVIDSON,

[P. 45.]

Chaplain.

Seven years later when he was still Dean of Windsor the matter of the Bishop (King) of Lincoln called forth a public restatement of the principle privately pressed upon Mr.

⁴ Was the young chaplain implicitly quoting Lord Macaulay's famous statement in his Essay on Gladstone on Church and State: "The Protestant doctrine touching the right of Private Judgment—that doctrine which is the common foundation of the Anglican, the Lutheran and the Calvinistic Churches—that doctrine by which every sect of Dissenters vindicates its separation—we conceive not to be this, that opposite opinions may both be true, nor this that truth and falsehood are both equally good; nor yet this that all speculative error is necessarily innocent; *but this, that there is on the face of the earth no visible body to whose decrees men are bound to submit their judgment on points of faith.*"

Green. A long decisive letter to the *Times* ended with the significant words:

The strife such as it is turns less, after all, upon ritual than upon authority. Once let us secure somewhere an unchallenged jurisdiction and the ritual problems will be quickly and quietly solved [p. 137].

The same clear vision of the central question of Authority finds expression thirty-four years later when as Archbishop of Canterbury he exchanged letters with Cardinal Mercier on the Malines Conversations. A letter to Cardinal Mercier (24th March, 1923) contains the following:

I do not doubt that your Eminence will agree with me in thinking that, after all, the really fundamental question of the position of the Sovereign Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church must be candidly faced before further progress can be made. The ambiguity of the term *Primacy* is well known to us. . . . It would not, in my judgment, be fair to your Eminence or to others that I should encourage further discussion upon subordinate administrative possibilities without expressing my conviction that such a doctrine of papal Authority is not one to which the adherence of the Church of England could be obtained [p. 1,267-8].

For the old experienced Archbishop of Canterbury dealing with a world-wide issue as for the young Archbishop's chaplain dealing with a provincial issue, the central question was seen to be what it is and must always be—Authority.

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But the legally protected and administered Church of England placed its chief Archbishop in an impossible position. On the one hand it gave him statutory rights of no mean force. On the other hand it asked him to claim continuity with a Hierarchy which for a thousand years had acknowledged that ultimate ecclesiastical Authority (whether *de jure divino* or *de jure humano* hardly mattered) was resident in the Bishop of Rome.

As chaplain to Archbishop Benson he had very decidedly urged that the case of Bishop King of Lincoln should be taken out of a purely civil court and tried before the Archbishop of Canterbury to whom Bishop King was suffragan. In the end this course was taken.

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Strangely enough we can find no mention in Bishop Bell's volumes of the case of the Dr. Major, the frank supporter of Modernism. As Dr. Major had quite publicly denied the Resurrection of the Body, the Rev. C. E. Douglas appealed for a condemnation to Dr. Major's diocesan, the Bishop of Oxford. After investigation the Bishop of Oxford declared that he saw no reason for taking action against Dr. Major. Whereupon Rev. C. E. Douglas appealed to the Bishop of Oxford's Metropolitan, Archbishop Davidson. The result must have been surprising to those who could recall the Archbishop's eagerness, as chaplain, to have the Lincoln case tried in the Canterbury Archiepiscopal Court. In the *Church Times* of 2nd February, 1922, Rev. C. E. Douglas wrote:

In response to my appeal against the Bishop of Oxford's refusal to hear my complaint, the Archbishop of Canterbury gives judgment as follows:

"The main point before me is a simple one. The Bishop of Oxford has with great care and after taking competent advice exercised a discipline which belongs to him as diocesan.

"I have neither the RIGHT nor the wish to interfere with the Bishop's action in the matter."

Of course the matter was not one of discipline, nor even of ordinary dogma, but of a great central dogma to be found in the Apostles' Creed!

If Archbishop Davidson could remember the clear, uncompromising letter he had written to the Rev. S. F. Green, he might have asked himself what he had once asked the imprisoned Ritualist: "Is there, then, any court that you will acknowledge as competent to decide central matters of faith?"

Again, Bishop Barnes's views on the Sacrament of the Eucharist were so opposed to the traditional doctrine not only of the common body of Christians but even of the existing Church of England that their trial in the Archbishop's Metropolitan Court would not have been a startling finale. Yet they merely finished with a clever, humorous letter to the *Times* which ended significantly with an invitation to the Bishop of Birmingham "to help the unity of the

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Spirit in the bond of peace." For an Archbishop of Canterbury as a loyal churchman and a loyal Englishman, this meant that nothing must be done to endanger the unity of the Church of England in itself and in its legal relations to the English State.

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One last example must be given of the official weakness of a man who was possessed of unusual strength of purpose.

The anti-papal views of Archbishop Davidson, whether personal or official, were held very strongly and uncompromisingly. Indeed there is a humorous element in this typical Scotsman's appeal, *as an Englishman (sic!)*, against Papal methods of action (p. 233). He would naturally claim an Englishman's courage to withstand any Papal control of what he (rightly) considered to be the divinely given powers of the Episcopate. And if such an attitude in an English Bishop might argue a certain lack of ecclesiastical history, it did not necessarily argue a lack of ecclesiastical courage. To withstand a higher power in defence of one's official rights has sometimes, as with à Becket, the quality of heroism.

Yet the Prayer Book Measure was an outward, visible, tragic sign of weakness which we must attribute to the official Archbishop of Canterbury because nothing in the life of the man allows us to attribute it to Randall Davidson.

The Archbishop was in his sixty-fifth year when groups of his co-religionists, especially of the younger sort, pressed his Grace to lead a movement for loosing Parliament's stranglehold on the Church of England. The Archbishop was too essentially an ecclesiastic not to be wholeheartedly in sympathy with the proposal, yet his long acquaintance with public affairs, outside and inside Parliament, had made him too experienced a leader to be hustled into something like panic legislation. The six years of leadership which finally resulted in THE ENABLING BILL of 1919 showed a force of character and mastership of policy which seemed to deny his years.

But as if his ecclesiastical life and liberty had just begun, and at an age when most men enter a second childhood, the

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veteran Archbishop seemed to begin a second more adventurous manhood. For him the Enabling Bill was fitly named, as it appeared to enable him to realize his life-long dream of "securing somewhere an unchallenged jurisdiction" so that "the ritual problems will be quickly and quietly solved" (*cf. sup.*).

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Bishop Bell's plain narrative of the death of the Prayer Book Measure (and the Enabling Bill?) allows us to see the chief actors and the stage in a historic tragedy worthy to be ranked with *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. The chief actor in that grim death-struggle to release modern Englishmen from the religious servitude of Tudor Totalitarianism was the quiet, logical, shrewd, loyal, God-fearing Scotsman whose sterling gifts of mind and soul had made him "spokesman of the Church of England," as he called himself to his fellow peers in the first act of the tragedy.

When the Commons rejected the Measure and the two Archbishops issued a Statement agreeing that "the House of Commons had the right to reject the Measure" and proposing to reintroduce it after its amendment, the official weakness of the legally-established Church was manifest.

It was to little purpose that in the same statement the two Archbishops on behalf of the Bishops used the following brave words:

Mere acquiescence in its [House of Commons] decision would be, in our judgment, inconsistent with the responsibilities of the Church as a spiritual Society.

The Bishops fully recognize that there are circumstances in which it would be their clear duty to take action in accordance with the Church's inherent spiritual authority [p. 1,347].

Authority! the Archbishop's life-long dream. But the brave words incorporating this dream issued in nothing more courageous than a second appeal to a House of Commons which was largely composed of legislators who were neither of the Church of England nor of England.

Men within the Church of England who could not withhold admiration for the brave relevance of words in the Archbishops' statement, could hardly keep their lips from mutter-

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ing, not in anger but in grief, Dryden's couplet on the Church of England of his day:

To foreign lands no sound of her has come
Humbly content to be despised at home!

When the Commons with a still more emphatic majority rejected the Prayer Book Measure, the cup of humiliation was at its full. We leave to others the question whether the already full cup of humiliation did not brim over when the only definite reply to the action of the Commons was another "Statement" of the Bishops:

It is a fundamental principle that the Church—that is, the Bishops with the Clergy and the Laity—must in the last resort when its mind has been fully ascertained retain its inalienable right in loyalty to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to formulate its Faith in Him and to arrange the expression of that Holy Faith in its forms of worship [p. 1,351].

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It was a scattered, broken-spirited, discordant, defeated army that this Archbishop in his eightieth year was called upon to rally. Had he been merely Randall Davidson and had the crisis been a mere personal difficulty demanding bravery, his father's training on the Scottish moors would have made the hero-way seem obvious. But his official duty of not endangering the unity of his country and of his Church by breaking the link uniting both, made it impossible to let the man master the Archbishop. In his last address to the Church Assembly (July 9, 1928) he said he refused to believe that the House of Commons "was arrogantly claiming to take in hand the absolute control of the belief and worship of the Church of England" (p. 1,352). But, waiving aside the ambiguous word "absolute," the House of Commons, having now obtained the ultimate power once vested in the Tudor Crown, was very consistently exercising the *ultimate* control over the belief and worship of the Church of England.

This was his last public act as Archbishop of Canterbury. On 12th November, the day of his golden wedding, Randall Davidson, successor of Matthew Parker, offered his resigna-

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tion to His Majesty, King George V, successor of Queen Elizabeth.

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Thoughts of a profound character cluster round the following incident. During the days between the first and second rejection of the Prayer Book Measure I was speaking with a high, influential and well-informed dignitary of the Church of England. Our conversation finally and perhaps designedly fell upon the Prayer Book crisis.

Not knowing what answer I might expect, I asked quite frankly: "If Parliament finally rejects the Prayer Book and your Bishops, ignoring Parliament, chose to administer the Book, whom will you follow—Parliament or the Bishops?"

To my surprise he answered—and answered at once—"The Bishops."

Then with a smile I asked again: "Why did you not do that under Elizabeth? *We* did."

That was the end of our talk on the Prayer Book Measure. And, for better or worse, we have not had speech together ever since.

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Of the many thoughts begotten by the life and life's work of Archbishop Davidson three are uppermost.

(1) Though personally a strong, even at times a headstrong, character, the weakness of his official position made him a Samson shorn of Samson's locks.

Because the official position of Canterbury was immovably anti-papal Archbishop Davidson never displayed anything but official strength in his courteous legal attitude towards Cardinal Mercier. The Lion of Flanders and the Bulldog of England met on terms of equal directness and strength.

Yet when a Parliament composed of men who were of many nations and of ephemeral political influence rejected a Ritual officially presented by the Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Church of England he meekly accepted his defeat and even absolved his victors of any attempt at "arrogantly claiming to take in hand the absolute control of the belief and worship of the Church of England."

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This official weakness of a strong man recalls the fatal words of Archbishop Warham under Henry VIII: *Ira Regis mors.*

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(2) Another thought is of another and more heartening character. Strangely enough it seems to have escaped notice—at least it has escaped mention. Even the Archbishop's biographer, so observant of valuable facts, has not called attention to it. But perhaps the present writer is giving certain facts a historical significance not justified by history. Be that as it may, the present writer is persuaded that no Archbishop of Canterbury since Elizabethan days has made the attempts at lessening the distance between Canterbury and Rome that have been made by Archbishop Davidson. Bishop Bell in calmly summing up the reason for the defeat of the Prayer Book Measure judges that "the First and most strong was the ancient fear of Rome" (p. 1,354).

We have already seen the Archbishop's very emphatic endorsement of this judgment. What makes that endorsement all the more significant is that the "No Popery" cry, as the Archbishop said, was directly largely against himself; and that it gained in vocal and voting power because the Archbishop would not give way on the matter of Reservation!

Again, the Malines Conversations, so fruitful in disappointments to men on both sides, have set out a course for ecclesiastical peace without precedent in post-Elizabethan England. Historians and churchmen have yet to realize the significance of the dossier of official letters between on the one hand an Archbishop of Canterbury, once Dean of Windsor under Queen Victoria, and on the other hand a papal-accredited Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church.

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(3) Our last thought has almost the quality of prayer.

Archbishop Davidson's life-long quest was for a spiritual authority of such unquestioned jurisdiction that matters of worship and faith might be settled with the finality of a Church divinely commissioned and commanded to teach.

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The first successful stage, as he thought, in this quest was reached when under his final leadership the Life and Liberty movement had obtained the Enabling Act and had given legal powers to the Church Assembly.

The second successful stage in his life-long quest was reached when, again under his leadership, so long unprecedented co-operation between the Bishops and Clergy and Laity of the Church of England had resulted in an unprecedentedly concordant acceptance of a Prayer Book for final approval of Parliament.

But the third—and fatal—stage of that quest was reached when (to quote the words of the biographer) “In a single hectic night the House of Commons had apparently destroyed the work of twenty years” (p. 1,347).

There was another night still more hectic—still more disastrous; and the old Archbishop’s quest must have seemed, even to him, fruitless.

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Some nineteen hundred years before those two hectic nights in the old precincts of St. Peter’s, Westminster, the Son of God had said to Simon, son of Jona: “Thou art Rock; and upon this Rock I will build my Church. And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against thee.”

But less than four hundred years before the two hectic nights a Parliament of a Tudor Sovereign gave to a woman the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England and declared that no successor of Simon, son of Jona, had jurisdiction in England!

Sunt lacrymae rerum!

But we who, by no merit of our own, are within the liberties of the God-founded Rock can only pray that no sins of ours may lessen the clearness with which that Rock stands up as the end of all those whose quest is for a God-given teacher to lead their feet into the way to peace.

VINCENT MCNABB, O.P.