

THE CHURCHMAN.

AUGUST, 1906.

The Month.

**The Royal
Commission.**

THE report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline is likely to prove a document of far-reaching importance. The Committee was appointed by Mr. Balfour in May, 1904, the attention of the Conservative Government having been directed to what was alleged to be the widespread prevalence of ritual irregularities in the Church of England. Not the least remarkable feature of the Commission is that, in spite of their widely differing Church views, the Members have been able to agree upon a unanimous report, which must be unique in modern annals of ecclesiastical inquiry. And this agreement does not seem to have been arrived at by any narrowing of the scope of the inquiry. The Commissioners have faced the facts with courage, and they have certainly been unsparing in their criticisms. The Report discloses a state of things existing in the Church of which the general public can have had very little idea, and assuredly the Evangelical and Moderate Churchmen have proved their case. The Commission held 118 sittings and examined 164 witnesses. The witnesses presented reports of services they had witnessed in 559 churches, and more evidence was available, but the Commissioners considered that for the purpose of their inquiry "sufficient evidence of this class had been given." It is pointed out in the Report that the large proportion of the witnesses were non-parishioners, and the Commissioners expressly dissent from the view that such persons had no right to attend the services in question. "The nation," they say, "has a right to expect that in the

National Church the services shall be conducted according to law." The Commissioners, moreover, are satisfied that "the great mass of the evidence," which they have received, is "trustworthy."

The distinction made in the Report between "Breaches" and "Breaches," breaches of the law which have, and those which have not, significance is very striking. It is evident that there is no real comparison between them, and while it is essential that obedience to the rubrics by Evangelical Churchmen should be as full and literal as possible, these cases of omission cannot be for an instant regarded as in the same category with positive breaches of the law, which involve Roman Catholic doctrine. This is shown by the fact that breaches of the latter kind are described by the Commission as "practices which lie on the Romeward side of a line of deep cleavage between the Church of England and that of Rome" (par. 299). Evangelical Churchmen could wish no fuller or clearer justification of their contentions than that which is found in paragraphs 397 and 398, in which "defiant lawlessness" is spoken of as going on unchecked. In the same paragraphs ten or twelve practices are mentioned and described as "clearly inconsistent with and subversive of the teaching of the Church of England as declared by the Articles and set forth in the Prayer-Book." They are also characterized as "illegal." As to these breaches, nothing could be more significant than the following remarks of the Commission: "We desire to express our opinion that these practices should receive no toleration; and that if episcopal directions for their prevention or repression are not complied with, the Bishops should take or permit coercive disciplinary action in the Church Courts for that purpose (par. 398).

The First Task. Immediately after the publication of the Report the Archbishop of Canterbury appealed to the members of Convocation and the House of Laymen with reference to the proposed "Letters of Business" to

enable Convocation to proceed with the consideration of the new rubric suggested in Recommendation 2. There is, however, something before this—what the *Record* rightly calls “the first task”—and that is, to carry out Recommendation 1, which speaks of some ten or eleven practices as being “plainly significant of teaching repugnant to the doctrine of the Church of England, and certainly illegal,” and on this account should “be promptly made to cease by exercise of the authority belonging to the Bishops and, if necessary, by proceedings in the Ecclesiastical Courts.” Nothing must be allowed to set aside this fundamental recommendation. The Commissioners say that all their recommendations are to be regarded as a whole, and consequently the first link in the chain is of great importance. The practices included in this condemnation are criticised in the plainest language, and in the light of the very definite recommendation that they should be “promptly made to cease,” it is hardly possible to think of new rubrics until this is done. Besides, the carrying out of this first recommendation would go very far to make the proposed new rubric about the vestments entirely unnecessary.

The Supreme Court of Appeal. One of the recommendations of the Commission would give the assembly of Archbishops and Bishops the final voice in the settlement of questions of doctrine and ritual. The precise bearing of this proposal is not altogether clear, but according to one of the Commissioners, consulted by the Dean of Canterbury, the question seems to refer to any points of difference between the Prayer-Book, which is a schedule to an Act of Parliament, and the Articles, which have no such statutory authority. According to this, Dean Wace says that “while offence against the Prayer-Book would be judged by the Court without consulting a Bishop, offence against the Articles would require such consultation.” The result would be that the Bishops would become the final Court of Appeal for the interpretation of the Articles. It is pretty certain that such a position as this will not be accepted by

Evangelical and Moderate Churchmen. It is not difficult to see that, as Dean Wace says, "the ultimate principle of the Reformation might prove to be involved," and certainly the position of the Church of England as an Established Church would be very materially modified. The proposal is also entirely out of harmony with the best Church thought of the day which welcomes the counsel of clergy and laity with the Bishops. Although the Commissioners quoted the statement of Bishop Blomfield about "the inherent and inalienable right of the Bishops of the Church of England to be judges of the questions of its doctrine," it may be fairly asked where such inherent and inalienable right is to be found within the history of the Church of England since the Reformation. It can easily be seen what a vital issue is here raised.

The quiet but very definite language of the **Episcopal Authority.** Report about the exercise of episcopal authority will be welcomed by a very large body of Churchmen. For a long time it has seemed clear that the key to the situation lay very largely in the hands of the Bishops. This Report entirely bears out that contention. Bishops are plainly charged with ignorance of what is going on in their dioceses, as well as with weakness in administering the law as it stands. As a consequence there are some plain words about the necessity of greater firmness in asserting episcopal authority. All this is surely of the greatest significance, and the fact that this language about episcopal authority is used in a Report signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Oxford and Gloucester gives it additional weight and meaning. It is not too much to say that the whole Church will be watching closely during the next few months to see whether the Bishops are alive to the issues so definitely raised by the Commission.

Churchmen are naturally asking, What is to **The Outcome.** come out of the Report? It is already being suggested that the Report is based on a series of compromises, and on this account unlikely to be of permanent

influence. The Broad Churchman is to be met by the relaxation of the rubric about the Athanasian Creed, and the High Churchman by a new rubric making vestments optional. It is not clear what Evangelicals are to receive ; probably they are to regard themselves as placated by the strong language and stern recommendations about Romish practices. We hope, however, for something very far more and other than this. We prefer to regard the Report as the harbinger of those "drastic measures" which the Church has been plainly promised by the Archbishop of Canterbury. We shall, of course, return to this subject later, since the recommendations are many and varied and require careful consideration. Meanwhile we urge our readers to purchase the Report (which can be obtained for 9d.), and to give it their careful study. The volumes of evidence will be forthcoming shortly, and we shall then be able to understand still more clearly the recommendations of the Commission. We end as we began, by expressing our belief that this Report will prove an epoch-making document in our Church.

**The
Education
Bill.**

The Education Bill will have passed through the House of Commons before these lines are in print, and all interest is now centred on the action of the House of Lords. The new Clause IV. seems to us to be an honest attempt to meet the various interests by its somewhat complicated proposals, but we are sorry the Government did not see its way to make religious instruction compulsory and to allow teachers permission to give denominational instruction. We believe these proposals would have gone far to modify opposition, and would not have done hardship to anyone. In view of the amendments that are certain to come from the House of Lords, we again plead for counsels of moderation. We are profoundly thankful that the Representative Church Council, while opposing the Bill, rejected the contention of the Bishop of Manchester that the Bill was past amendment. The Archbishop of Canterbury's words in this connection were those of wisdom, for any extreme policy would be fatal to the truest

interests of Church schools. The lay movement, headed by Mr. G. A. Macmillan, has been gathering fresh strength since we wrote last, and we notice, too, with great satisfaction that meetings have been held between some well-known Liberal Churchmen and leading Nonconformists with a view to a policy of peace through some honourable compromise. Meanwhile we would again endorse with all possible heartiness the words of the Bishop of Ripon at a meeting held on July 17 :

They had met to advocate, not what they each desired in regard to education, but a statesmanlike compromise on a great and important national question. There were only three ways of settling the education question. In regard to the first—denominationalism—the country had decided against anything like levelling up. As to the second—secularism—80 per cent. of the country would not have it, and hence the third solution—compromise—became a necessity. Consequently, it was the duty of all who had the interests of religion at heart, no matter to what denomination they might belong, to ascertain the common ground, the common Christianity, which was possible. . . . He was in favour of compromise, because that was the only way in which they could deal with the question and avoid that which would be a national calamity—the prevalence of secularism.

Lord Hugh Cecil proposed a resolution at the meeting of the Representative Church Council to the effect that if the Cowper-Temple Clause should become the general and normal rule governing the religious instruction in elementary schools it “would be unjust and oppressive to Churchmen, and injurious to the religious welfare of the people.” In a letter to the *Westminster Gazette* he also said that “the Church of England regards the tendency of the operations of the Cowper-Temple Clause as hostile to her teaching, and ultimately subversive to Christianity.” The main argument on which this contention rests is that, according to Lord Hugh Cecil, Cowper-Temple teaching differs from historic Christianity in its view of sin and grace. Yet this clause has ruled the system of religious teaching in Board Schools since 1870, and by it many splendid results have been obtained in London and elsewhere. Not only did the Church sanction the clause in 1870, but from time to time warm words have been spoken by leading prelates in commendation of the religious

The Cowper-Temple Clause.

teaching in Board Schools. Not a word was said against the clause in the Parliament of 1902, and even in the present House of Commons the Opposition voted the other day for making this very teaching compulsory, Mr. Balfour "attaching great value to it." Surely these facts are more than sufficient to show that when properly administered the Cowper-Temple Clause is capable of providing for very genuine religious instruction, and it is perfectly certain that many who voted for Lord Hugh Cecil's proposal did not do so on the grounds alleged by the mover. Indeed, Sir John Kennaway, while accepting the proposal because it expresses his opposition to the Education Bill, frankly disagrees with Lord Hugh Cecil's arguments and his view of the Cowper-Temple Clause. We cannot believe that truth is furthered by the union of such really opposing forces. We have no wish whatever to minimize the united opposition of High Churchmen and Evangelical Churchmen to the present Bill, but it is a simple fact that they do not and cannot mean the same thing by religious education, and their union is much more apparent than real, and mainly the result of circumstances. It remains to be seen whether the strategy of Lord Hugh Cecil in framing a resolution which will include almost every shade of opposition to the Bill, will in the long-run be for the true spiritual advantage of the Church and the children.

At the Representative Church Council the
The Habitual Bishop of Birmingham proposed that a person
Worshipper. who regularly attends the Church of a parish in which he does not reside should be regarded as "permanently connected" with it, and entitled to vote there. The motion was rejected by 176 to 143, the laity alone showing a majority in favour of it. We profoundly regret this decision, which seems to us to be against the best interests of the Church. It is surely a simple fact that in London and many of our great cities and towns the parochial system has broken down for all practical purposes, and from various reasons men do not (often cannot) attend their parish church. Are they then to be disregarded altogether, especially when by their presence and financial support

they are attached members of a particular Church? We cannot ignore facts, and all the efforts in the world will not alter the present state of affairs. Men will continue to go to the churches which suit them best, and to allow them to remain without any legal status is to create a grievance which will do much to destroy the interest of the laity in congregational matters. The proposal only desired to recognise patent facts without doing anything beyond that in the direction of destroying the parochial system. We heartily endorse the following comment of the *Guardian*, and we sincerely hope that the decision may be altered before very long :

“The decision is regrettable not only because there is a touch of obscurantism about it, but still more because it may deter many people from taking an active interest in the affairs of the parish of their adoption, but not of their residence.”

The East
Anglian
Episcopate.

The plans for rearrangement of the dioceses of East Anglia are making satisfactory progress. The diocese of Ely is to consist of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, the diocese of Norwich of the county of Norfolk, the diocese of St. Albans of the counties of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, and new dioceses are to be formed for the counties of Essex and Sussex. We hope the necessary funds will soon be obtained and the changes effected. The gain to the Church will be immense, for at present effective episcopal supervision is impossible for the diocese of St. Albans, and only in a less degree for that of Ely. In this connection we desire to call attention to a valuable little book by Mr. C. E. A. Bedwell on “The Increase of the Episcopate” (Longmans and Co.), in which the whole subject is ably dealt with. The book forms a convenient little manual, and should be read by all Churchmen. We welcome all possible discussion of a subject so fraught with important consequences for the life of the Church. We believe that it only needs such an extension of the episcopate by which dioceses become manageable and Bishops real Fathers in God, to bring about some of the best spiritual results in the corporate life of the Church.