

sphere, but that God acts by intervention, re-creation, personal approach. And He who transforms the individual, often in a concentrated crisis, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan into Himself, can so breathe upon the sin-slain multitudes that they shall stand up an exceeding great army.



Some Disadvantages of Establishment.

BY THE REV. C. J. SHARP, M.A.,
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A RECENT writer in this magazine¹ has set forth several advantages of Establishment. Some of his contentions would seem to contradict the actual experiences of other countries within and without the British Empire, which know nothing, except by hearsay, of an Established Church. But, nevertheless, there are a good many persons of large and generous mind, who are firmly convinced that an Established Church of the kind we possess in England has advantages, not a few of which would be lost by what is known as Disestablishment. They point to the fact that the Established Church has greater dignity and comprehensiveness than it would be likely to possess were the Church to be separated from the State. The Established Church encourages moderation and caution, and tends to render piety less particularistic and fanatical than we find it where the Church is separated from the general life of the nation. Religious people have much to learn from ordinary men and women, and an Establishment insures, although it may be in a rough, unscientific way, that their voice shall be heard. The appointment of Bishops and other important clergymen by the Crown, upon the advice of the Prime Minister, gives results which are more satisfactory than could be expected were their appointment to be in the hands of a purely ecclesiastical body.

¹ Rev. F. H. L. Millard, "Some Advantages of Establishment," April, 1910.

Such are some of the reasons which make many thoughtful people, who are not ignorant of the experience and practice of countries where there is no Established Church, dislike and fear the thought of Disestablishment. But, nevertheless, there is a growing feeling, in the Church, as well as outside, that Disestablishment is a question which will assume great prominence in the distant, if not in the near, future, and that some day or other the alliance between Church and State, in England as well as in Wales, will be severed by Act of Parliament.

If that should be our fate, will it be altogether a matter for regret? It may freely be conceded that some things will be lost by the severance which will not be regained. But will there not be some advantages to set on the other side? Are there, in fact, no disadvantages of Establishment?

In attempting an affirmative answer to that question, we must first point to the difference which exists between the modern State and the State as it existed in medieval and Reformation times. The growth of Nonconformity and of various forms of active and passive dissent has changed the position of the Established Church in the nation. The ideal of the Church as that of the nation organized for religious purposes—an ideal which has an interesting and impressive history—seems to be receding into the dim distance. The opinion once cherished by numbers of interesting people, that there might be in the future a great measure of comprehension, which would reconstitute the Church on the basis of a frank recognition of differences in the mode of public worship and in Church government, is a rare one nowadays.

What would seem to distinguish our modern champions of Establishment is the fact that they are strongly opposed to all schemes of comprehension not based upon submission to the doctrine and discipline of the Established Church. Nothing is more eloquent of this irreconcilable attitude than the way in which the disputes concerning religious education have been conducted. It has been vigorously proclaimed that, for the State to attempt to find a common form of Christianity suitable

for the instruction of young children, is an impossible task. It is the business of the State, we have been told again and again, not to prescribe a religion, but to offer every religion a fair field and no favour. If this contention is a true one, does it not do a good deal to weaken the idea upon which an Established Church rests? If in the sacred name of justice the State must not attempt to find a common form of Christian instruction for children, how can there be such a thing as a national religion? And if there is not a national religion, why should there be an Established Church?

Now, it is a considerable disadvantage for such an institution as an Established Church to cease to have a theory which shall justify its continued existence as an Establishment. And the Church of England would seem to have reached that pass. It looks as if it had abandoned the national idea, and had come to adopt a sectarian idea. The Church, it is contended, like other religious bodies, is in possession of buildings and other property and privileges. It only demands the protection of the State, just as any other religious body demands it.

But, it should be noticed, the Church has privileges which no other religious body possesses. The Church inherits property, and a status in the nation, which come from a time when Church and State were but different aspects of the organized community. Once let it be frankly recognized that the Church is on the same footing as other bodies, and the justification of its present position will be found hard to maintain. That would not necessarily involve Disestablishment and Disendowment, for institutions last longer than the arguments which have been employed to maintain them. But it would create, and has already in this country begun to create, an uneasy feeling—the idea that an Established Church which has ceased to occupy a national position is in a difficult, perhaps in a false, position. To lose intellectual self-respect is a grievous disadvantage for an institution which depends upon, or should depend upon, a lofty spiritual idea—a greater disadvantage than the loss of material privileges and honours.

It is a disadvantage of Establishment that so many of its champions care but very little for these matters of high principle, that they should be such a motley host, many of whom use the Establishment, and the feeling of loyalty it evokes, for their own purposes—purposes which cannot always by any means be deemed religious. An Established Church is almost forced to become a political Church; its members and supporters tend naturally to judge political questions not on their merits, but as they affect the privileges of the Church. On its merits a Licensing Bill may deserve the support of Churchmen, but the Party which engineers its destruction must receive the support of Churchmen, because it is the Party which favours the Church. On its merits Free Trade has for many Churchmen a more attractive appearance than Protection, if only because it keeps Parliament freer from the machinations of traders desiring some advantage for their trade. But if the Free Trade Party is also the Party which has abolished many Church privileges, and would dearly love to abolish those that remain, then that Party must be opposed in the name of the Church and of that religion for which the Church stands. When these facts are considered, is it any wonder that many Churchmen should come to the conclusion that the price demanded by the defenders of Establishment is heavier than they can bring themselves to pay? It is not that they care for a political Party more than for the Church, but that they refuse to believe it to be their duty to oppose measures in the righteousness of which they believe, for fear lest the Establishment may lose a few more of its privileges. Freedom of political action is a precious and necessary thing, and Churchmen have lost political freedom unless they have the right sometimes to change their side, and support, by vote as well as voice, measures which they believe would contribute to the general well-being of the community.

What some would deem the gravest disadvantage of Establishment must now be considered. The State, pressed by the growing complexity of modern society, is forced to adapt its laws to the changing needs of the time. It does by means of

laws what the Church, when it was the dominant power, was often forced to do by means of dispensations. The State, acting through Parliament, goes its way without waiting for the sanction of the Assemblies of the Church, although such matters as Marriage and Divorce have always had a special interest for Churchmen. The result of this is that practices are sanctioned by the State which the Church regards with disapproval, and friction takes place between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. What can the Church do under present circumstances? Is it free to denounce the State as antichristian? As long as it remains in partnership with the State, must not the Church do all it can to make the alliance workable? If the alliance should be found not to be tolerable, then ought not Churchmen to demand Disestablishment? Can we go on denouncing the State as anti-religious, and at the same time claim to be the religious organ of the nation?

The difficulty of revising the Prayer-Book is closely connected with the suspicion of Parliament at present entertained by many Churchmen. Most reasonable persons desire some changes in a book which was drawn up some hundreds of years ago. They do not believe that the compilers, however striking their success, achieved perfection, or have a right to bind their descendants for all time. A Church which was free to consider this question without the thought of Parliament, and was finally responsible for its own decisions, would adapt the Prayer-Book to the needs of the day in a more thorough way than our present Convocations are at all likely to suggest. This question of the revision of the Prayer-Book is a much more serious one than often appears, because our inaction at home affects the Colonial Churches as well as ourselves. They would do, it may be believed, what the American Church has done, did they not feel obliged to wait for the lead of the Mother Church at home. Our State connection affects our action in this matter, by preventing us from facing and discussing the question apart from the thought of Parliamentary interference.

It is a disadvantage of Establishment that the Church becomes

devitalized by losing the active support of many of the best of the laity. Is it not distressing to notice the way in which intelligent Church laymen leave the Church and its affairs severely alone? There are exceptions—men of keen intelligence as well as fervour, who take their part in our debates and even in our religious work. But the opinion is general, as is shown by the support which the Church Reform League has obtained from all sections of Church opinion, that self-government, in which the laity shall have some important share, would do at least something to introduce fresh life into the Church. Self-government may, indeed, lead to the narrowing of the Church. The kind of charming and cultured ecclesiastic, familiar with the wisest thoughts of the wisest people of all the ages, may disappear. But it does not require much observation to detect that he is fast disappearing already. What we have to look forward to is the birth of a new type of clergyman, at once more masculine and more efficient, if perhaps less courteous and polished than was once characteristic of the English clergy.

The notion that the parson's freehold encourages independence of the right sort is in face of the facts difficult to maintain. Irresponsibility does not breed independence of a kind worth preserving. Irresponsibility begets an autocratic narrowness of view, an unimaginative egotism which manifests itself in a variety of strange eccentricities. These eccentricities may masquerade as examples of independence, but it is an independence which hurts those who enjoy it and those who suffer from it. The only independence worth encouraging is an independence based upon a considerable public opinion. The Church, considered as a community, needs to have more power, and the parson to be less irresponsible. The laity should share some of the powers and responsibilities which at present many of them, unconscious of the harm they are doing to the best interests of the Church, willingly surrender to those who have been placed by the law in a position of unhealthy irresponsibility.

The first condition of a vigorous corporate life is that the

Church should rest upon a wider basis than the unchecked will of an individual.

This vitalizing of the Church would, we may believe, show itself in calling forth the generous gifts and the generous services of many of the laity, who, as things are at present, hold themselves aloof from Church affairs. There is reason to believe that our present system pauperizes the Church, that our inelastic endowments not only maintain useless buildings and unnecessary services, but are sometimes used to bolster up inefficiency. It is a disadvantage of Establishment that many of us do not know what the resources of the Church are, and have good reason to suspect that our considerable resources are not being put to the best use.

But it will be said that Church Reform is possible without Disestablishment. It may be possible, but it is not likely, for the reason that Parliament is unwilling, and will probably remain unwilling, to grant the Church those extensive powers which reforms at all adequate to the case would involve. The example of Scotland is instanced, but the Church of England, with its episcopal government and its anti-popular tendencies, not to mention the doctrinal developments of the last half-century, does not stand in the same position to the English people as the Church of Scotland stands to the Scotch people. The English people have always been jealous of what is vaguely known as "clericalism," and the fear of clericalism, while it will do something to maintain the continuance of the English Establishment, will also hinder, if it does not prevent, the concession of self-government.

As to that reunion of Christians about which we hear so much, the maintenance of the Establishment cannot really be deemed to favour its consummation. Reunion is in any case a question for the distant future, but an indispensable preliminary would seem to be the perfect equality of the contracting parties. Just as in South Africa the concession of self-government had to precede the union of the different States, so the union of the Churches in England cannot possibly be more than a dream

under present conditions. We are at present divided asunder by the need some of us feel to attack the privileges of the Church, by the need others of us feel to defend these privileges at all costs. Were the Church and Nonconformity on an equal footing, there might not be reunion, but it would be easier to understand one another and to arrange for social, and even religious, co-operation.

That Disestablishment will come one of these days many Churchmen consider not only possible, but probable. When it does come there will be many heartburnings, much bitterness, great lamentation.

But after the tumultuous passions aroused by the Disestablishment measure have subsided, the thought of the disadvantages which accompanied Establishment will help many devoted members of the Church to bear with resignation the loss of many things, to rejoice in the newly gained liberty, and to regard the future with courage and hope.



A Layman's View of the Church Services.

By LLEWELLYN PREECE, M.I.C.E., M.I.E.E.

IN some letters written by Dr. James Gairdner to the *Guardian* a few weeks ago, he insisted that the true translation of the word *salvus* is "safe and sound," "in good health," and not simply "safe." If he is right, then the title "Saviour" is synonymous with "Spiritual Health-giver." Could any title be more appropriate to our Lord? Is not this what in every sense of the word the religion founded by Christ offers us? Spiritual health, and the way to attain the same!

But if we accept this definition, we must also, I think, look upon the Church as a spiritual hospital or sanatorium, and her various rites, rules, and liturgies as virtually treatments, nourishments, and exercises, drawn up for the purpose of helping the soul to obtain perfect health—a series of spiritual "exercises"