

THE CHURCHMAN

August, 1916.

The Month.

Church
and State.

QUITE the most important event of the month from the point of view of the Church of England is the publication of the Report of the Archbishops' Committee on the Relations of Church and State. We have given elsewhere (pp. 533-537) the official summary of the Report, but no abstract, however carefully prepared, can give any adequate idea of the wonderfully wide range of the volume or of its absorbing interest. The Report itself occupies only 67 of the 304 pages which go to make up the book, and, while the recommendations of the Committee are of the very first importance, the various Memoranda and Appendices are also deserving of the closest study. It may be questioned whether anywhere else can be found such clear and explicit statements of the constitution of Colonial and other Churches in communion with the Church of England as are given in this volume. Among the Memoranda are illuminating contributions from Bishop Browne on Church and State in English History; the Bishop of Oxford on "The Fundamental Idea of the Spiritual Independence of the Church"; Dr. Frere on "Canonical Legislation," to which an effective reply "Note" of 14 pages is supplied by Sir Lewis Dibdin; and by Lord Hugh Cecil, Lord Parmoor, and the Bishop of Oxford on "The Position of the Incumbent of a Parish in relation to the Parochial Church Council." These various Memoranda show that, while the members of the Committee are unanimous in signing the Report, there is a wide difference of opinion among some of them in relation to very important questions which cannot be ignored in estimating the value of the Report and its chances of being adopted by Parliament. The scheme recommended by the Committee for giving self-government to the Church is most ably worked out,

and if it were accepted by Parliament would go a long way towards relieving the Church of the disability under which it now labours in regard to ecclesiastical legislation. But the freedom of the Church to manage its own affairs may be too dearly purchased, and we cannot help feeling that if this scheme were to become effective the laity would lose whatever guarantee they now possess against the inroads of clericalism. As things now are the position is safeguarded, at least ostensibly, by the supremacy of Parliament in ecclesiastical affairs, but when once this scheme is adopted, the real power will pass into the hands of the Church Council which is to receive statutory authority. It is true that the Council will contain a House of Laity, but unless the members of it are chosen more largely from the general body of the laity than is the case with the present Provincial Houses of Laymen, the Lay House may easily become even more ecclesiastical than the Clerical Houses. Much would depend, of course, upon the strength of the organization the various parties in the Church were able to bring to bear upon the lay elections, and it may be hoped that those who should be responsible for work of this kind will seriously consider how far they are, or will be, prepared to deal with a situation which will need their best efforts.

But while writing thus we should be sorry if it were thought that we are hostile to the scheme. We recognize that it would materially ease the position of the Church in many respects ; it would give the Church room for expansion ; it would enable the Church more speedily to reform abuses ; it would help the Church to become more and more, in fact as well as in name, the National Church because it would be the Church of the English people. Our one anxiety is lest advantage should be taken of the liberty thus conferred to change the essential character of the Church of England. The Bishop of Manchester has warned us of the " Romeward Drift," and it would be the merest affectation to ignore the fact that there is a strong party within the Church of England which is bent upon using every opportunity of more closely assimilating the services and practices of the Church of England to those of the Church of Rome. Frankly our fear is that this party may gain very considerable tactical advantage under this scheme. If, however, the true characteristics of the Church of England, as Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed, Protestant, could be

effectually safeguarded, we should rejoice to see this scheme in action. We do not regard as of any serious value in this respect, the provision made for the examination by an Ecclesiastical Committee of the Privy Council of proposals agreed to by the Church Council, or for laying such proposals on the Table of both Houses of Parliament for forty days. These are formalities rather than safeguards; when once a measure has passed the Church Council it will probably be proof against material alteration. Whatever loyal Churchmen desire to do to protect the Reformed position of the Church of England will have to be done while the measure is before the Church Council. Hence the great importance of seeing to it that that body is loyally representative of the Church as a whole and not of one particular party in it. The formation of Parochial Church Councils with statutory powers is also an innovation of great moment, but it is one which, we believe, is well calculated, if adequately and efficiently carried through, to strengthen the parochial life of the Church of England.

Will
Parliament
Consent? The main problem to face is whether there is any likelihood of Parliament accepting the scheme which has been drawn up with so much care and ability by the Archbishops' Committee. Upon this point we cannot do better than quote the words with which Sir Lewis Dibdin concludes his Note on Dr. Frere's Memorandum on Canonical Legislation. He says that the practical importance of the historical question with which Dr. Frere's Memorandum and his Note alike deal, in connection with the work of the Committee, is very great. Dr. Frere writes: "At the present time there is a fresh opportunity for the Church to recover its powers of legislation and its authority over its own members"; and it is on this context that he seeks to show that Parliamentary dominance over Church legislation is after all a modern affair, dating in its fulness only from the eighteenth century, and belonging to a "New Georgian Settlement" rather than to "the Reformation Settlement." Sir Lewis Dibdin proceeds:—

It is essential that we should face facts. If I am right they do not support Dr. Frere's contention. Probably the Committee are unanimous in desiring to see the Church allowed to make its own laws without undue interference from Parliament. We want not only to end the mischievous paralysis of legislation from which the Church has suffered now for many years, but also that its law-making should be in more suitable hands than those of an always reluctant and often hostile House of Commons. Schemes have been put before us, and we have generally approved them, which, if adopted, would

at least have the effect of securing for the Church of England a large measure of autonomy and of preventing the House of Commons from exercising its present limitless powers of discussing and obstructing ecclesiastical Bills. And yet the Church is to remain established. That is an underlying condition to which I think nearly all the members of the Committee attach importance. We must recognize that the success of this plan is absolutely dependent on its approval by the House of Commons, and Dr. Frere advises us that "a Church that wishes to remain established had far better take a bold line than a timid one." I am not concerned to question this, but I deprecate a neglect or even an underestimate of the real difficulties of our enterprise. We have seen how extraordinarily jealous the House of Commons has always shown itself of anything like independent legislative action by the Church. In recent years, while it has shown no disposition to pass ecclesiastical Acts, it has retained all its old unwillingness to surrender its legislative power over the Established Church. Yet Parliament is to be asked to give up authority which it has exercised not merely since the beginning of the eighteenth century but ever since the Papal supremacy was abrogated, and to do this without disturbing the official recognition of the Church which we call establishment. Whether the ascendancy of Parliament in Church matters was or was not at any time defensible, it was clearly part of a system which presupposed a friendly partnership between Church and State as of two bodies united by identity of religious belief. Whatever were the difficulties and anomalies which the adoption of this theory produced in the past, and they were neither few nor small, they have been immensely increased by the gradual development of the State into a body which is external to any form of religion, not necessarily hostile to the Church, but at the best neutral as between all Churches. It would be very reckless to force on a crisis which otherwise may not come for many years, perhaps never, but it is desirable that we should appreciate the formidable character of the concession which is to be sought from Parliament. It is even open to question whether, by clinging to establishment while we ask for autonomy, we may not be giving too much regard to what Churchmen desire, and too little to what a State, organized on the new footing I have described, can grant.

This is the crux of the whole question, and we think that the general view of Churchmen will be that it would be better to bear the ills inflicted upon us by the present system—and they are grievous enough—than run the risk of bringing on a disestablishment crisis.

The Some Evangelical Churchmen have been in conference at Cheltenham under the presidency of the new Rector, the Rev. H. A. Wilson. The questions dealt with were those which are engaging the serious attention of Churchmen at the present time—the National Mission, the doctrinal aspect of the Atonement, the practice of Reservation, the Communion Office, the Principal Service, Sacramental Confession, Prayer-Book Revision, and Reunion. The following Conclusions of the Conference have been published:—

1. We warmly welcome the proposed National Mission as an opportunity

which, with God's blessing, should lead to a great and widespread revival of the spiritual life of the nation. In that Mission personal conversion should be sought, and the direct claims of God upon the individual soul, as well as upon the nation at large, should be pressed. To this end the standard of spiritual life in the Church itself must first be raised. We need a greater sense of the necessity for our souls' health of the regular devotional reading and careful study of the Word of God ; a greater realization of the obligation as well as the power of prayer ; and above all a fuller recognition and deeper experience of the work of the Holy Ghost, if the blessing we long for is to come.

2. We emphasize the completeness and finality of the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross : " Who made there (by His one oblation of Himself, once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

Arising out of this fundamental truth, we reaffirm and endorse the teaching of Articles xxviii. and xxxi. and the other formularies of our Church that in the Holy Communion there is no sacrifice for sins, nor any localized and objective presence of Christ in the consecrated elements, but that " the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith."

3. We view the practice of the Reservation of the elements as being directly contrary to the plain direction of the Articles and the Rubrics, and as tending to a dangerous revival of superstition. We do not consider that a case has been made out for the plea of necessity, and we are convinced that all genuine difficulties can be met by shortened forms of Holy Communion for the sick.

4. In other respects we are, under present circumstances, strongly opposed to any alteration of the office for Holy Communion or its rubrics, especially in any such manner as would affect its doctrinal character, whether by the authorization of special vestments or otherwise.

5. We rejoice in any legitimate means by which the whole body of believers may be brought to a fuller use of the means of grace by partaking of Holy Communion, but we are of opinion that this will not be attained by any rearrangements which, under the plea of making the Holy Communion " the principal service on the Lord's Day," will involve or facilitate the attendance of those who do not communicate. Any such arrangement would in our view be inconsistent with the character of Holy Communion and would approximate towards the celebration of the Mass. We cannot accept the plea that such an alteration will be called for by our soldiers on their return from the war, since the testimony of devout officers and of clergy who have laboured extensively among the troops goes to show that the men will rather demand simple congregational services in which they can fully join.

6. We desire that every encouragement and all reasonable opportunity should be given by the clergy to those who desire to obtain spiritual guidance, help and counsel to meet exceptional needs, and especially in cases where the sense of sin and of personal unworthiness is keeping them away from the Lord's Table ; yet in view of the character of the revisions through which the Prayer Book has passed, we cannot regard the Exhortation in the Communion Office as making any provision for sacramental confession ; and we deprecate most strongly the practice of habitual confession as a regular or compulsory discipline for communicants.

7. With regard to the Prayer Book in general we would welcome any revision which would make it better understood of the people, simplify its order, provide more variety in its lectionary, psalms and canticles, and enrich it with services adapted for occasions and requirements which have arisen

since its compilation ; but we insist that such revision should in all cases be consistent with its present teaching, founded as that teaching is upon the warrant of Holy Scripture.

8. The question of the relation of the Church of England to other Christian bodies has engaged our serious attention. We recognize the help which successive Lambeth Conferences have given towards defining such relationships, and welcome the strong encouragement which has come from the pronouncement of the Archbishop of Canterbury in regard to what is known as *Kikuyu*. To the findings of that pronouncement we heartily assent. We look forward to the time when the ties between ourselves and those who at home are our Nonconforming brethren may be drawn closer, while we recognize that their separation from our Church involves grave difficulties which will require most careful consideration in any movements towards reunion.

These Conclusions have been numerously signed by Evangelical clergy and laity, and signatures are still being received, we understand, by the Rector of Cheltenham. The document has obviously been most carefully prepared, and if it were signed by Evangelical clergy and laity as a body, and not merely by a few men, however representative they may be, it would gain immensely in importance as a considered Statement of the Evangelical Position on these great Church questions.

The Rev. W. J. L. Sheppard, a well-known Missioner and Rector of St. Thomas's, Birmingham, has devised a substitute for the Confessional, a substitute for the Confessional, and outlined his plan before a Conference of Clergy in Birmingham in a paper which has since been published in the *Church Family Newspaper*. He insists upon the primary importance of personal dealing with souls, and points out that the after-service, pastoral visitation and general invitations to personal interviews are not sufficient. He holds that what is needed is a regular method of carrying on this important part of a clergyman's work, and this, he says, is afforded by the institution, on the lines laid down in the Prayer Book, of what he has called "The Consultational." He thus explains its practical working :—

A regular time is fixed in each week—in working-class parishes in the evening—lasting perhaps an hour or an hour and a half ; at this time, although the church may always be open for private prayer, people are specially urged to come to the church for prayer, either privately or in groups ; during this same time the incumbent is announced as being in the vestry, ready and anxious to help any one who needs any kind of spiritual counsel or assistance ; a large notice, placed in some prominent part of the church, indicates whether he is engaged or not ; one of the assistant clergy, or a deaconess, should always be in the church itself for this same period, to conduct prayer groups or to give any information required. Somehow the church thus forms a kind of half-

way house to the Consultational ; people who would never come to see their clergy otherwise come to the church and pray, and then find the courage to pass into the vestry. There the interviews are of all kinds, and by no means confined to those burdened with sin or seeking salvation ; spiritual difficulties of many varieties are brought to the clergy, and a close personal touch established with many people which previously seemed impossible to obtain. The Consultational should be regularly announced every Sunday among the Notices.

Mr. Sheppard claims that while the Consultational has some points in common with the Confessional it has more points of difference. It is not for regular use, is in no sense obligatory, does not entail a suggestive interrogation respecting sin or details of sin, and does not include any formal confession to a priest. It differs also in its results :—

The tendency to moral and spiritual weakness, which follows from the constant reliance on a spiritual director, is not produced by the Consultational. Instead of teaching the person to rely on continual penance and absolution at regular periods, which so often means constant falls into sin in the intervals between such periods, the Consultational teaches not only the certainty of forgiveness, but also the possibility of overcoming sin through the indwelling Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, thus producing a strong Christian character instead of one that is weak.

We do not doubt the excellence of the motive which has prompted this suggestion, although we are a little tired of hearing about the all-importance of having a policy which is not negative but positive and constructive. It is rather late in the day to seek a substitute for the Confessional, nor are we sure that one is needed. We believe that the most successful spiritual work, hitherto, has come from the faithful preaching of the Gospel in the pulpit, in full assurance of faith that the Holy Spirit of God will bring the message home with power to individual souls. Of course every clergyman ought to be at the service of any of his people who may need spiritual counsel and advice, but the time when that is most needed and can most effectively be given is immediately after the Gospel message has been delivered. What would be the position of one whose soul was deeply moved by a sermon on a Sunday evening and was anxious for further help if he or she had to wait for it until (say) the following Saturday, when the Vicar would be sitting in the " Consultational " ? It is more than possible that in the meantime the first impression would have passed away and the soul would have grown cold, and perhaps indifferent. And it is possible that the Consultational might become a mere formality, quite as much as is the Confessional to-day.

The Ministry of Women. The soul of Mr. Athelstan Riley is much perturbed because he hears that on July 3 the Council of the National Mission on the motion of Miss Royden, passed the following resolution:—"To urge upon the bishops the importance of giving definite directions as to the best ways of using the services and receiving the message of women-speakers, whether in church or elsewhere." We confess we are surprised at this news, because we did not think the Council was possessed of a progressive spirit. Perhaps it would not have been passed if Mr. Riley had been there, for he says:—"Unfortunately some of us who would have raised the strongest possible protest against committing the Church of England to such a breach, not only of Catholic order, but of the Apostolic doctrine and fellowship, were unable to be present." But they are making "representations," and he trusts that those who, in consequence of the resolution, may be tempted to withdraw from participation in the Mission will pause, until the result is known. We hope the Council will stand firm—although we have not much faith that they will do so—for it is time that the Women's Question were fairly and frankly faced. Women are ordained to the order of Deaconess; they sing in our church choirs; they address meetings from the platforms of our great Societies; they conduct Missions in Parish Halls, etc.: why, then, may they not be allowed sometimes to deliver their message in church? Not, of course, at an ordinary service, but at one of those special services which now are becoming so common. We may be told that St. Paul's ruling as laid down in 1 Corinthians xiv. 34 settles the question; but does it? Is there any reason to suppose that he was doing anything more than laying down a special injunction for the particular circumstances with which he was confronted? Is it in the least clear that he was giving expression to a fundamental principle which should govern the ministry of the Church for all time? We find it difficult to believe it. When we remember the marked blessing which attends the ministry of women in other denominations (e.g. the Booths in the Salvation Army), we are sometimes tempted to wonder whether the Church of England has always done quite wisely in making so little use of the great spiritual powers and influence women undoubtedly possess. Most emphatically we do *not* wish to see them conducting the public worship of the Church, but, short of that, why restrict their service?