

she can ever gauge to the intense spirituality and great intellectuality of St. Paul. In those first days in order to increase efficiency, to perfect their organisation and administration, and to keep everything in true perspective, the apostles appointed seven men, whose qualifications were that they were of "good report, full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts vi. 3). Well will it be for the National Church Assembly if these qualifications are possessed by each of its members.

We desire to see elected men and women who are not merely Protestants (as that term is usually used) but who are witnesses for Truth—the Truth as it is in Jesus. We need not merely clever speakers, skilled in all the arts of dialectic, but folks who are filled with the spirit of that wisdom which is from above, and infilled and overflowing with the Holy Ghost. We want as our elected representatives not simply the student or the master of Church History, but men and women who humbly and constantly sit at the feet of Jesus and seek at all times to do His will. In a word, the necessary attributes of each should be—God-given wisdom and deep spirituality.

Above all the greatest need of to-day is Prayer. The Church at large should be roused to this work; nothing—neither conferences—nor scheming—not even the best-laid plans can prevail without it. The Parochial Church Councils, the House of Laity—indeed, the three Houses of the National Assembly, if they are to accomplish anything of permanent value to the life of the Church and her main duty—viz., the hastening of the coming of our Redeemer's Kingdom—must be backed up by earnest, continuous, persistent prayer.

If we would make full use of this Act of Parliament let us remember that our work is but just begun—the road is a long one—sustained interest and effort, and self-forgetting service are vital, but that prayer, humble and full of faith—prayer which continually seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the discovery and the doing of God's will, is absolutely essential to success.

IV.

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WHILE the Enabling Bill was before the country, and being debated in the Houses of Parliament, it met with opposition from men of all schools of thought, some of our most devout and earnest Evangelicals being amongst them. Now that it has been placed on the Statute Book by large majorities in both Houses, and, above all, was approved, all but unanimously, by our Convocations and the Representative Church Council, it behoves us all to set aside our opposition. We must take our places—all we can get—in the Church Assembly, the Diocesan Conferences, and the Parochial Church Council, and do our utmost to make them effective in the development of our Church and the increase of the cause of Christ in our land. The part Evangelicals played in some of the

developments of the last century is not altogether to our credit, and, indeed, I think I may truly say has injured the Evangelical cause. When the Convocations were revived, and the Church Congress, Diocesan Conferences, and the Lambeth Conference were started, Evangelicals, as a body, stood aloof, and the few who did join in them—great and good men as they were—were sneered at, and their faithfulness to our cause all but doubted. We must not make such a mistake now. We are not embarking on a scheme for which we have no precedent and nothing to guide us.

We take the Bible as our guide, and the Church Assembly Act is a reversion to the Church government of the earliest times. In Acts xv., we read of the first Council of the Church, in which a doctrinal question of the highest importance to the Church had to be settled. Archbishop Benson says: "It was determined by the Apostles and the Elders, together with the whole Church, unless this is thought to be mere rhetoric."

Again we have the example in modern times of the Disestablished Church, in Ireland, and the unestablished Churches in all our Dominions, whose constitutions are very similar to that which has been accorded to us. How has the system worked with them? The leaders in all these Churches speak in the highest terms of the working of their Church Councils, and are especially loud in their praises of the influence of the laity, which, they say, has been all for good. The laity are the conservative element, who will not agree to any change unless clearly convinced of its necessity. They are impatient at the desire to revert to mediæval practices, and look at matters from the present-day need, of which their knowledge of men and things enables them to be good judges. The majority of the laity belong to no extreme section of the Church, and their presence in the Councils has lessened the bitterness of party strife, and restrained excesses. Now, why should Evangelicals take their place in the Church Assembly?

1. We believe that the laity, as well as the clergy, are a "Holy Priesthood," and, therefore, should have their rightful place in the government of the Church. We were the first to use the ministrations of Laymen, and thereby aroused much opposition, although events have proved that we were pioneers in a movement which has so developed that we have Diocesan Lay Readers' Associations all over the land. Our Evangelical Societies have always had many laymen on their committees, and the work has given them a greater knowledge of the teaching of the Church and a deeper interest in her welfare. May I not also truly say that their presence has led to more practical views and a greater dispatch in business. Thus we cannot but rejoice that we shall now be able to have their counsel and help in the great Assembly of the Church.

2. We stand by the Reformation Settlement, and accept the Prayer Book and Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church. Articles 20 and 34 tell us that the Church "has authority in matters of faith, and power to decree or change rites and ceremonies, according to the diversities of countries, times and

men's manners." Now, this is our firm belief. We are not averse, as is sometimes said, to all change. We wish to have our Prayer Book revised and enriched by the addition of much-needed forms of service, but we maintain that the doctrinal standard should not be altered. Professor Vinet said: "We want no new Gospel, for that which is new is not true; but, on the other hand, whatever is not, in a sense, new—that is, is not adapted to the thought and development of the age—is not wholly true either." Again, the Preface to the Prayer Book exactly expresses our views when it says: "As on the one side common experience sheweth, that where a change hath been made of things advisedly established (no evident necessity so requiring), inconveniences have ensued, many times more and greater than the evils intended to be remedied; so on the other side, the particular forms of Divine Worship, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as, to those that are in place of authority, should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient." This is our attitude, and in the Church Assembly we shall have the support not only of those laymen who are Evangelical, but of the vast majority of the lay members.

3. Again, most Evangelicals are as dissatisfied with our Ecclesiastical Courts as are the members of any other school of thought. We kick at decisions based on appeals to laws and regulations made in mediæval times, when conditions were utterly different. But no sensible man could dispute the decisions of the living Church of the day. Evangelicals, both clergy and laity, should be prepared to contribute their part to both the framing and administering of these regulations. We must admit that there are many abuses in the Church which ought to be removed.

4. While Evangelicals must never waver from their belief in the necessity of personal holiness in the individual, we cannot but rejoice at the deepening of the idea of the corporate life of the Church. The whole framework of the Church Assembly Act is built upon this idea. The laity have recognised this, and are entering into the working of the Act with real interest and enthusiasm. The Parochial Church Councils, Diocesan Conferences, and Representative Church Council—all voluntary bodies with no legal powers—have done much to prepare men to take their part in the new Councils of the Church with their statutory powers. The members of these bodies have learned to look at matters from other men's point of view; to realise that we must be tolerant to whatever comes within the limits of the doctrine and practice of our Church. They have learned the difficulties of the work of their ministers, and are more ready to help; they realise the inadequacy of the finances of the Church, and are seeking to remedy it. With added powers and responsibility there cannot fail to be added interest, and added interest always leads to increased effort.