

CHURCH AND STATE.

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THE Christian Faith is universal in its implications. We believe that this is true because God broke into history in a unique manner at Our Lord's birth. In Him, God gave a fuller revelation of Himself than He had previously communicated to His creatures. Christ's call was to "whosoever willeth." He would compel no one, but there was a confidence in His heart that His mission would not fail. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."¹ St. Paul was fully aware of the universal implications of faith in Christ. He saw that it would leap over all barriers both of race or status. "Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus."² This Faith incorporated all men into a fellowship, and as Canon Barry has said, "fellowship is, in the nature of it, inclusive; for it is essentially God-centred, and, as centred in the Universal, embraces all mankind in its horizons."³ From this point of view, a hasty glance would seem to exclude any thought of a vital connection between a national state and the Church. Indeed, should a search be made through the New Testament, no trace of any notion of a National Christian Church will be found. One wonders how St. Paul would have acted under Constantine after the Edict of Milan, A.D. 313, when Christ, or Cæsar, ceased to be alternatives.

The aims of Church and State are not by their nature opposed to each other. "Salus populi suprema lex"—"The well-being of the people is the highest law"—is a maxim which both can accept. The Christian aim for "the development of a society composed of perfected men and women"⁴ is not hostile, but complementary to that of the State. History and the development of mankind have shown us the beneficent effects in a state which has sought to recognise the supremacy of Christ's religion.

In a consideration of the relationships of Church and State within the bounds of our own land, it is impossible to fix any definite date which marks the commencement of that connection. There is a chain of connection, linking the two together, throughout English history. It is found alike in the British, the Saxon, the Norman, the Medieval, the Reformation, and the Modern periods. No act can be traced which first brought them into connection, for the two have grown together side by side. Our Church's heritage dates from antiquity, and of its connection with the State Canon Carnegie says that "during the earlier and more formative period of its history its life was conterminous and closely intervened with that of the English people."⁵ The conversion of these islands to

¹ S. John xii. 32.

² Gal. iii. 26.

³ *A Philosophy from Prison*, p. 89.

⁴ Inge, *Lay Thoughts of a Dean*, p. 359.

⁵ *Anglicanism*, p. 5.

Christianity differed in process from that of the ancient world. The Report on Church and State plainly states that our "Christianity . . . spread downwards, not upwards, as in the Roman Empire."¹ The normal procedure was the conversion of the kings, as kings, and their subjects usually followed. At a very early period, dioceses were usually co-extensive with the Kingdoms. "Bishops sat as civil magistrates on the same bench as the ealdormen and sheriffes, the priests along with the reeves. The Church was not regarded either as servant or master of the state; indeed we find no mention of the terms 'Church' and 'State'; for these were but regarded as two functions of the same body."² This idea of the dual functions of the same body has been maintained from the earliest times. By State, then, we mean the nation as a political organisation, and by Church we mean the nation as a religious organisation. In a nation where the basis of life and administration is Christian, it is not unreasonable to look upon Church and State as one and the same thing, for they are but different parts which belong to one complete whole. A nation with its conscience thus quickened and its worship thus directed will be able to play its part in the extension of Christ's universal kingdom, contributing to the Fellowship in Christ which must be the rallying-point of Christian endeavour.

There have been other programmes promulgated for the regulation of the relationship between Church and State. The Roman Catholic is Theocratic in ideal, insisting on the Church having a large part in temporal affairs. This ideal largely evolved through the legacy of the Cæsars falling to the lot of the Bishop of Rome at the breaking up of the Roman Empire. At one time, it seemed that the joint rule of spiritual and temporal power might succeed, but the human element, and the growth of national consciousness in Europe contributed to its collapse.

Under the Erastian programme, the Church is conceived of as a state department, being almost entirely under the dominance of the secular power. The Russian Church under the Tsars was an instance of this method in working order.

Independency maintains that the Church should be entirely apart from the State. It is claimed that her life should be free and unfettered and that she should legislate solely for the ordering of her own life and that of her members.

The English Church adopts neither of these three theories. The first implies a supremacy of the clergy over the laity, a theory which Englishmen have stoutly contested. The second is equally objectionable, for it but reverses the order of the first. Independency implies isolation, and such an ideal cannot be effective if a Church is to touch national life at every point and express that national life in its religious capacity. In the pursuit of the complementary aims of Church and State, each have mutual obligations. Hence it cannot be expected that the Church should be free to act independent of the will of the nation.

English Church History shows that the Church has shared the

¹ p. 6.

² Harwood, *Disestablishment*, pp. 18-19.

life of the nation. The partnership of St. Aidan and St. Oswald is not an isolated instance of the co-operation of Church and State for national well-being. It occurs again in King Alfred in his work of restoration on the conclusion of the Peace of Wedmore. This is emphasised in his code of law which began with the Decalogue. "In this code of laws the essential religious nature of the man came out; the Teutonic customs were given a Christian colouring; crime was identified with sin; justice meant for him not simply the old Teutonic custom, but moral right."¹ Another instance is in the work of St. Dunstan and King Edgar. The decision of the Synod of Whitby modified this work, and gradually, under foreign influence, the Church began to look to Rome for leadership in spiritual matters. The English Church accepted the principle of the spiritual headship of the Pope, but no student of history could say that the extravagant claims made in the name of that headship were meekly accepted. Englishmen knew the difference between deference and obedience. Many measures aimed at minimising Papal power, foreshadowed the ultimate severance of the English Church from the Papacy. The issue was finally settled by the Act of Supremacy which swept away every vestige of authority previously accorded to the Papal See. "Rome and England went apart absolutely as from that day, and it cannot be wrong therefore to say that the constitutional difference between the two Churches lies in this—the Christian Prince recovers the place of rule and exercises the authority of rule theretofore exercised (we say usurped) by the Pope."² Great as was the change initiated by Henry VIII, he created no new Church. His leaning was toward the old faith in which he died. What he did was to assert the Royal Supremacy of the Christian Prince, as against the Papal Supremacy previously exercised from Rome. It was thus that he brought "the spirituality" and "the temporality" under one headship. The language of the statutes of the period make this plain, speaking as they do of "the Realm and Church of England." These changes were wrought by King and Parliament together, Convocation accepted the Act of Supremacy which established the monarch as "Supreme Head of the Church of England," adding the qualifying clause, "as far as the law of Christ permits." The procedure may seem a strange one in these democratic days, but the unquestioned political theory of those days was that "the state, as represented by the monarch, parliament, and convocation had an absolute right to determine the national faith and impose it on every Englishman."³ The inevitable doctrinal reformation which followed could not have transpired without the support of the Royal Supremacy. It is an important fact to bear in mind, and it must "never be overlooked that the English Reformation was pre-eminently a movement of the laity, as expressed by Parliament." The successive stages of the Reformation right up to the

¹ Patterson, *A History of the Church of England*, p. 46.

² Dibdin, *A Christian State*, p. 9.

³ A. F. Pollard, "Cranmer," *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

time of Queen Elizabeth, as expressed by Parliament, show "that the laity all along have taken a very definite part in the Reformation Settlement."¹

Article XXXVII defines the meaning of the Royal Supremacy, whether it be under the name of "Supreme Head," as used by Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary (until her marriage to Philip of Spain), or "Supreme Governor," as used by Elizabeth. The sovereign performs no strictly spiritual act. "We give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments," states the Article. Their prerogative is "that they should rule all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal." On her succession after the Marian reaction, Elizabeth established no new Church under the changes which were made, she merely re-established the old principle that the Sovereign should be the fountain of law in his own realm. The basis on which the assumption was made is that the Nation and the supreme authority in the Nation are alike Christian. The Nation does not give a mere external recognition to the Christian Faith, but implicates itself with that Faith and professes to be guided by its standards. This is to be noted in various connections. The Coronation Oath and the conditions of succession to the Crown have Christian safeguards. The actual ceremony of Coronation is full of Christian meaning. It is performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury who is the first Peer of the Realm. Parliament begins each sitting with prayer. The King's speech asks for Divine help and guidance. The implication is noticeable in the Churching of the Judges. In these, and in many other ways, the Realm is committed to Christian principles, and the presence of non-Christians in Parliament does not affect this. Consequently, if the State is so implicated with the Christian Faith and its standards, it is not inconsistent for the State to express its faith in one set form as it does in the Church of England.

With a National Established Church, Church and Realm alike have mutual ties and obligation. Each accepts what limitations may be involved, for the sake of the mutual advantages which both enjoy. The Church exists for the service of men, and the Realm as a whole reaps the benefit. By this system there is no risk of a supremacy of the clergy over the laity, nor that of the laity over the clergy. The rights of both are maintained under the Royal Supremacy. This is most desirable, for the New Testament shows us that the government of the Church is vested in the Christian community, which is the principle underlying the doctrine of the Priesthood of the Laity. In this maintenance of the rights of both Clergy and Laity under the Royal Supremacy, it seems that "it is not the Princedom, but the Christianity, which is the point of the Royal Supremacy."² The voice of the Clergy is heard in Convocation, which is exclusively their province. The Laity has a partial voice in the work of the Church Assembly. But, as the

¹ Griffith Thomas, *Principles of Theology*, p. 466.

² Dibdin, *ut supra*, p. 17.

Bishop of Norwich says, "Our Prayer Book sets the English style of outlook and access towards God and the English standard of duty to God and neighbour. And it does all this not only for Churchmen. It marks the type of English devotion and English character over a far wider range."¹ This being so, the Laity has a right to be heard, and the Church of England upholds this in assuming that the nation professes the Christian Faith. As Sir Lewis Dibdin says, "the will of the people . . . is to be heard, sometimes by way of veto, sometimes by way of consultation, whether that will be expressed by a King, or Parliament, or by any other form of Government."² The Crown is the administrator of matters both ecclesiastical and civil. There is no question of the State making and publishing Church Laws. Its duty is to interpret and administer the laws as they are stated in Statute and Canon—a function of rule. All that the Crown claims is "the power of preventing the Church from being compelled to accept anything that a majority of the clergy might sanction, and also to prevent the laity being compelled to accept an interpretation being put upon the formularies of the Church which is regarded as untrue to the doctrinal and national position of the Church."³ The Royal Supremacy is valuable as being the focus point of authority, and the ultimate court of appeal. It is true that the Church has her authority from God, but in administration it is necessary for clergy and laity alike to remain subject to the law as it stands. The law has the authority of the Parliament of the Christian State, and so in all matters of judgment and administration, ecclesiastical as well as civil, every Churchman must have the right of appeal to the King as supreme.

Following the final rejection of the Revised Prayer Book by Parliament in 1928, demands have been made in certain quarters for an alteration of the existing relationships between Church and State. It seems strange that this should be so, for Parliament acted within its acknowledged rights, as the Enabling Act fully recognises. Further, as worship has effects in the lives of worshippers, the State has a duty to discharge in determining the character of the national worship. The demands for a revision of the relationships between Church and State are a thorough policy of Disestablishment on the one hand, and on the other hand, a proposal that Establishment in England be re-modelled on the lines of that in Scotland.

There is a fundamental difference between the two establishments. Both in England and in Scotland the voice of the laity was heard in the Reformation. When the two Churches emerged from that movement, however, each had a different Church Order. Both claimed to be a part of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and both were Protestant. The English Character stands out in the English Reformation, for "institutional continuity on its outer side, intense traditionalism on its inner—these are master features of

¹ *The Nation and the Nation's Worship*, p. 21.

² *ut supra*, p. 17.

³ Griffith Thomas, *ut supra*, p. 467.

English life in all its chief aspects and activities. It is on the latter that chief stress must be laid ; the former is its outcome and expression. The Anglican Church has maintained its institutional continuity by virtue of its strong traditionalism, by virtue of the instinctive reverence with which its members have all along been disposed to regard the teachings of past experience."¹ This "traditionalism" is evident in the maintenance of the Episcopal form of Church Order and also in the Liturgy, which, whilst rejecting certain parts, incorporated so much of the old services. These were retained, because, as the preface "of Ceremonies" says, "they pertain unto edification." The same principle is preserved in the prerogative of the laity to exercise a measure of control in the Church through Crown and Parliament rather than through an exclusive department like Convocation.

The leader of the Scottish Reformation was John Knox, whose leanings were definitely towards Genevan standards. After much internal trouble and a measure of English interference, Scotland emerged from the Reformation committed to Presbyterianism, and with the self-governing Congregation as the unit of the Church. It must also be remembered that the Scottish King and the Scottish Parliament have migrated to London. Further, Establishment in Scotland seems to be a national recognition of religion rather than identification as it is in England. Perhaps, more important still, there is the large part which the Scottish laity play in their Church government. The Elders have great powers committed to them, both spiritual and temporal, such as no body of English laymen exercise. It is true that the Church is free to legislate in matters of worship and doctrine, of government and discipline, but its boundaries are rigidly defined on all sides, making it a freedom within limits. The three outstanding features of the Church of Scotland are the Presbyterian form of government ; the large part allotted to the laity in the Kirk Sessions, the Presbytery and the General Assembly ; and the self-governing Congregation which appoints its own minister. It is said that a large part of the troubles which have arisen in that Church were due to difficulties about patronage. The principle now adopted is that asserted in the *First Book of Discipline* in 1560, and which states : "It appertaineth to the people and to each several congregation to elect their minister."

Freedom within the Establishment on the pattern of that enjoyed within the Church of Scotland is not the freedom which has been demanded by some within the Church of England. Their type of freedom would reduce the Christian State to a secular body which gives a mere recognition to the Christian Faith, and at the same time would make the Church of England into a sect rather than a National Church.

Such a position is most undesirable. The Church, as the Nation on its religious side, has a great part to play. There is a large body of men and women whose names are not on the Electoral Rolls, and yet are Churchmen, and Churchwomen. The Church

¹ Carnegie, *Anglicanism*, p. 9.

has a duty towards them and must provide them with a spiritual home. It is well to remember Archbishop D'Arcy's words to his Diocesan Synod in 1928. "Some theorists, in order to throw discredit on all this, call it Erastian. Calling names is always a stupid form of argument. But Erastianism is really not the correct description. Call it organic, and the relation of Church and State in England becomes clear."

The Establishment has been a great blessing to the nation in securing the services of the Church for all people, and the Church is National because of the Establishment. Our Parish Churches are still the Churches of the districts they serve. Everyone may use them who wills to do so. Each baptised Christian is a potential member of the National Church, whether he exercises his personal privilege or no. The use of this privilege is his personal affair. At the same time it should be emphasised that the duty involved in the possession of a privilege cannot be lightly passed over. Further, the Clergy may be called upon for ministration by all. This is clear from the charge given at Ordination and on the admission to the "cure of souls."

In spite of abuses which may creep in under this system, the Establishment stands above all as a national testimony to God. The Realm needs a Church to function as a conscience for the political unit. A definite moral influence is thus brought to bear upon all standards of life. Men's minds are enlightened that they may distinguish the false from the true. Thus, they are enabled to exclude from their religion all that is base and unworthy. These are no mean principles, but weighty ones in the administration of the affairs of the Realm. They help in striving for the ideal that all Christian people within the Realm should assist in making the State in every detail a truly Christian Realm.
