

THE CHURCHMAN

April, 1936.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Church and State Report.

THE Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Relations between Church and State was published towards the end of January. For a considerable time the Report was anticipated and various conjectures were made as to what its contents would be. Many supposed that radical changes would be suggested such as would alter the whole status of the Established Church. On the other hand, more conservative estimates held that nothing would be put forward likely to loosen the bond between the Church and State. During the brief period that the Report has been before the Church its contents have been scrutinised with considerable care, and some definite conclusions have been reached on the part of Evangelical Churchpeople. The historical introduction with which the Report opens is regarded as a tendentious document leaning to the Tractarian conception of the Church and intended to prepare the way for some of the proposals which are put forward. It is realised that the present position has been reached very largely through the divisions in the Church. It is now recognised that a revision of the Prayer Book which had the full support of all sections of the Church would have had the generous approval of the House of Commons. The rejection of the 1927-8 revision was due very largely to the realisation on the part of Members of Parliament that a large section of the Church was opposed to the alteration of doctrine implied in that revision.

The First Step.

In order to meet this difficulty it is realised that the first step must be to secure as large a measure of agreement as possible before any further legislation is put forward. To secure this agreement the first recommendation is that the Archbishops by summoning a Round Table Conference should make every effort forthwith to secure an agreement between representatives of the various schools of thought, first in regard to the permissible deviations from the Order of Holy Communion in the Prayer Book of 1662, and secondly on the use and limits of Reservation. The value of such a Conference will depend upon its representative character. If the

large body of Churchpeople who opposed the revision of the Prayer Book are ignored, as they were in the selection of the Members of the Archbishops' Commission, it will be a serious mistake. Agreement can easily be reached on the changes in the Communion Service if no forms are introduced conveying the idea that the Real Presence is in the Elements as a result of the Consecration of them, and that the idea of any sacrifice made with them is not introduced.

In regard to Reservation, the difficulty is that any permission given is immediately made the occasion of introducing some form of the cultus of the Reserved Sacrament. Whatever willingness there may be on the part of Evangelical Churchmen to assent to Reservation for the Sick is frustrated by the designs of the Romanising extremists, who will only have Reservation on their own terms, viz. the use of the Elements for purposes of adoration.

Spiritual Freedom.

One of the chief problems before the Commission was to secure the "inalienable right" of the Church "to formulate its Faith in Christ and to arrange the expression of that Holy Faith in its form of worship." In order to secure this right they set out a scheme by which, when any legislation is put forward, "the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker of the House of Commons shall certify their unanimous opinion that it relates substantially to the Spiritual concerns of the Church of England, and that civil or secular interests affected thereby may be regarded as negligible," and an assurance is given that the proposed legislation "is neither contrary to nor indicative of any departure from the fundamental doctrines and principles of the Church of England as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and in the book of Common Prayer may forthwith be presented to His Majesty for the Royal Assent." It has been pointed out that this proposal is absolutely revolutionary in character. It would in effect give the status of an Act of Parliament to a measure that has never been considered by either the House of Lords or the House of Commons. This would be an unprecedented change in the actual Constitution of the country. It would put a new responsibility upon the Sovereign, and if His Majesty's power to refuse were in any way limited it might produce a set of circumstances of an extraordinary character. It would certainly create a new relationship between the Sovereign and the Church of England.

The Evidence Before the Commission.

The substance of the evidence given before the Commission is published as a separate book and contains a large quantity of interesting matter showing wide variety of opinion. Among those who represented Evangelical opinion before the Commission were Sir Thomas Inskip, and Mr. Albert Mitchell, who represented the National Church League. We recommend our readers to study this evidence, as they will find that it presents a useful collection of statements summing up the Evangelical view of the situation. Sir Thomas

Inskip's view was expressed in the sentences: "I do not think the Church is hampered by the existing conditions of the Establishment. I think it is hampered at present by its unhappy divisions, and by giving too much attention to these political or semi-political questions. If a section of the Church feels it is hampered in getting its way by the present relationship of Church and State there seems to me to be only two alternatives. First, to submit to the inconvenience, if it be an inconvenience merely; secondly, if it be fundamental, then to say: 'We can no longer minister in the Church which submits to this.' If the section was a majority of the Church, the Church as a whole would cut itself adrift." But, he went on to say: "I believe if it were possible to take a vote of the membership of the Church, you would find that they were content with the existing legal standard of faith and doctrine in the Church." He also said: "I believe the defeat of the new Prayer Book was due to the fact that the Church was divided." The House of Commons would have passed an uncontroversial book.

The Source of our Difficulties.

The evidence of Mr. Albert Mitchell deserves special attention, as it has important historical value. He makes an interesting point in regard to the use of the words "Established Church." It is the discipline and worship of the Church that are established or stabilised by law. The phrase should be "the rites (or ceremonies) of the Church of England as by law established." In the same way, "Spiritual" is used in the sense in which it was always used by Evangelicals and not in the sense in which it is used by Medievalists. He shows how "the dice were heavily loaded against those who conscientiously opposed the Bishops' disastrous proposals" in the Prayer Book revision. Two important articles contributed by Mr. Mitchell to the *Protestant Dictionary* on "Ecclesiastical Courts" and "Royal Supremacy" are included in the evidence. In his oral evidence Mr. Mitchell stated quite frankly: "I have no hesitation in saying that the real cause of all our difficulties to-day is a decay in spiritual life which needs a further revival of spiritual religion, and that that revival of spiritual religion can only come from the more faithful proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the unique message of God to man as recorded and enshrined in what the old men of the sixteenth century were accustomed to call 'God's Word Written.' My point is that there is nothing in the present external relations of the Church which hinders that revival." He regarded the existence of so much indiscipline in the Church as due to the sympathy shown by some of the Bishops to the breakers of the law.

The Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.

It is announced that the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen for this year will be held at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, April 16th, 17th and 18th. The Committee in their invitation state that it was inevitable that

they should take as the subject of the Conference the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Relations of Church and State. The Report will come up for consideration at the Church Assembly in June, and it was thought well that Evangelical Churchmen should have an opportunity of considering its proposals before then. The relationship of Church and State will be considered in a number of its principal aspects, and the Committee have secured the help of a strong platform of speakers. The Rev. C. M. Chavasse, M.A., Master of St. Peter's Hall, will be the Chairman and will give the Introductory Address. "Church and State in Scripture" is the subject of the first paper, by the Rev. D. E. W. Harrison, M.A., Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall. "The History of the National Church" will be dealt with by the Rev. V. J. K. Brook, M.A., Censor, St. Catherine's Society, and the Bishop of Norwich will consider "The Value of the National Church." "The Life and Government of the National Church" is the subject allotted to Dr. Gilbert, the Principal of St. John's Hall, Highbury. Special interest attaches to the paper on "The Church and State Report and Evidence" by Archdeacon Storr, who was a member of the Commission. Mr. Albert Mitchell will speak on the same subject, and the Discussion will be opened by the Hon. Lancelot Joynson-Hicks. The closing paper is by the Rev. T. G. Mohan, M.A., Assistant Secretary, C.P.A., whose subject is "The Church and the People." Early application should be made, as the accommodation at St. Peter's Hall is limited to 85. We hope to publish the papers in the next number of THE CHURCHMAN.

Our Contributors.

Our contributors this quarter are all well known to our readers. Dr. Sydney Carter continues his series of historical studies on the Reformation. Mr. Blakeney, in his usual interesting way, points out some of the lessons to be learnt from the study of history. Dr. Montgomery Hitchcock has many important facts to state in regard to the relationships of the Popes to affairs in Ireland. Dr. Harold Smith gathers together a number of points in the history of our English Bible which deserve special notice. "Beta," who is a well-known Evangelical Churchman in close touch with ecclesiastical affairs, discusses the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Relations between Church and State and indicates some of the features that will be of special interest to Evangelical Churchpeople. We are grateful to him for giving our readers so useful a survey of the Report and of the Evidence, and we commend this article to their special attention in view of future discussion. In our Reviews of Books some of our leading Evangelicals give our readers the benefit of their opinions on some recent literature.