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THE CHURCH AND STATE REPORT AND EVIDENCE—I.

THE VEN. V. F. STORR, M.A., Archdeacon of Westminster.

LET me begin, before coming to the actual proposals in the Report of the Commission on Church and State, with a few general considerations.

(a) The composition of the Commission was obviously unfair. Only two Evangelicals were on it; and no representative of the opponents of Prayer Book revision. You will agree, I think, that as emanating from a body of that kind the Report is very temperate.

(b) We could get very little evidence in favour of Disestablishment, and, as you see, the Report wishes the Establishment to remain.

(c) We found no one—is there anyone?—to dispute the dictum laid down in the resolution which contained our terms of reference—“it is a fundamental principle that the Church . . . must in the last resort, *when its mind has been fully ascertained*, retain its inalienable right in loyalty to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to formulate its faith in Him, and to arrange the expression of that Holy Faith in its form of worship.”

Is there anyone who can dispute that, especially in view of the increasing tendency everywhere towards the secularisation of the modern state? Happily that process of secularisation has not gone so far in England as in other places; and I trust it will never go as far. But it will go far if Disestablishment should be the order of the day.

(d) Now in the dictum to which I have referred the crucial words are “*In the last resort, when its mind has been ascertained.*” And you will notice how again and again the Report implies that the Church’s mind has not yet been ascertained. Hence the Report deprecates any hasty action; insisting that time must be allowed for reaching, if possible, a common mind—in a word presents (as regards a large part of the proposals) an *ideal*, towards which we have to grow.

I would call your attention to page 65 in the Report. “To try to get an Act of this kind passed by Parliament, overriding the protests of a sincere and substantial minority of the Church is not a course that we can advise.”

I hope you will feel that the Commissioners were not animated by anything but the spirit of liberality, and a sincere desire to restore unity, if that is possible. It was the grave disunion of the Church which we had constantly before us.

(e) *Is unity possible?* Now here we come, of course, to the crux of the whole matter. I must state what I want to say briefly and succinctly.

There are two theologies fighting for the mastery in the Church of England. They cannot, when you get right down to rock bottom, be reconciled. Evangelicalism and Anglo-Catholicism can never come to agreement—except to differ. That is my profound belief.

Now what is to be done? How is the Evangelical to check the growth of Anglo-Catholicism? You don't stop it by girding at it. In the long run, truth wins by its own merit, and it may be that these movements have to work themselves out through a long process of time. I think there are signs that extreme Anglo-Catholicism has shot its bolt, and that a new synthesis in religion is arising which will take the best from both schools of thought.

Now I personally am prepared to see both theologies within the Church of England provided certain limits as regards order and ritual are reached and kept to. I cannot exclude from the Church of England men like Bishops King, Talbot and Gore. They have as much right to be there as we have.

If you want the Church of England brought back to Evangelicalism as a whole I can see no way of doing that, except by a slow process of education. If you can get this, then you will gradually see the colour and the representation in the Church Assembly and Convocation changed; and you will see the House of Laity more really representative of the mass of English laymen. It is not so representative. Archbishop Davidson said truly that it does not represent the average lay mind: but it does very fairly represent the mind of the *Churchgoing* layman who cares. (Perhaps Mr. Mitchell will deal with this question, on which the Commission spent much time.) I hope he will tell us how he proposes to make the House of Laity more representative.

I have been taken to task for an expression I used in an article in the *Church of England Newspaper* that the right method for Evangelicals to pursue at the present juncture was to try to "liberalise Catholicism."

That may mean one of two things; (1) It may mean coming to terms with it—let me say, for example, agreeing to Reservation within the strictly defined limits of the 1928 Book.

(2) Or it may mean, *pressing for recognition of the ideals for which we, in common with many Broad Churchmen, stand*—insisting that the Bishops shall sanction, let us say, Intercommunion with the Free Churches—a point on which many of us feel very strongly.

You liberalise Catholicism if within the Anglican Church you admit such a scheme as the South India Reunion scheme; or recognise that you have no right to fence off the Lord's Table from Free Churchmen. I know the South India scheme was put outside Anglicanism, but if it passes its repercussions will be great.

Now, *it has frankly to be admitted that the proposal in the Report for a Round Table Conference leans heavily in the direction of Anglo-Catholicism.* For the two subjects of the Conference are to be Reservation and alternative Communion Offices. The Evangelical, and I venture to think most lay people, don't want any change. Lord Davidson admitted that Parliament in rejecting the Revised

Prayer Book had rightly interpreted the mind of the mass of lay people.

If that Conference is held we ought to press that its terms of reference be widened so as to include the question of our relation to the Free Churches; and generally the issues of reunion and intercommunion.

And it is essential (and it was in the minds of the Commissioners) that the Conference should be *really representative*. The only way to get that is that each society should nominate its own representatives and that they should include laymen. If action is to be taken by those opposed to the Report I suggest that this should be one of the points stressed.

With regard to Reservation—I should personally (though it does not help me and I would rather not see it there) be prepared to concede it, if it could be kept within limits—for the sick; and if no kind of devotion attended it. Some people doubtless find help in feeling that the Reserved Sacrament is there. It is a kind of focus point for their devotions, just as men are helped by reading out of their mother's Bible, which becomes a sacred centre of association. If it could be treated as a kind of psychological focus point, it might perhaps be conceded. We have frankly to recognise differences of temperament; and differences of theological outlook.

But can you control Reservation? I doubt it; and the demand for it does not seem to me always quite honest.

The Bishops made a solemn public declaration that they would endeavour to restore order on the basis of the 1928 Book. And we had evidence from most of the dioceses that a considerable amount of order had been restored. But there are certain dioceses where no attempt has been made to keep Reservation within limits.

One has every sympathy with a Bishop who tries and fails; but none with one who, in defiance of his public promise, does not try.

(f) The last general remark I want to make is this—that *the Commission had to work within certain limits*, i.e. the Assembly Act in existence; and the Report of 1896 of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline.

Some of us may regret the definition of Church membership in the Assembly Act, by which the person has to say that he is not a member of any other religious body than Church of England. But can you at this time of day get that altered?

Most of us here probably are quite content with the Judicial Committee as the supreme court of appeal—but you have to remember that the Ecclesiastical Discipline Committee emphatically stated that a new court of appeal was needed, as the Judicial Committee had lost the confidence of a large number of Church people.

Many of us here are probably quite content with the old Prayer Book; but the Ecclesiastical Discipline Committee reported that the law of worship was too narrow for this generation. *And you don't touch the real problem if you press for a Revised Prayer Book on which all are agreed.* The real difficulty is over Holy Communion and Reservation.

I only mention all this to show that our Commission could not start with a clean sheet.

I come now to some points in the Report itself.

I think you will admit that we have pretty accurately and fairly analysed the causes of the present disorder.

(a) We have censured the Bishops (page 77). We have proposed a Court for trying them. We have pointed out how action or failure to act by an individual Bishop may seriously affect the whole question of order.

(b) We have dealt with "lawful authority"—a very important point.

(c) We have suggested a new Pastoral Tribunal. I believe that is very important and useful. I do think you want to get the ritual question out of the ordinary atmosphere of law courts.

And we have said that in case of a man refusing to obey deprivation should follow.

(d) Again, very important, page 89—we suggest increased power to Bishops to refuse institution.

(e) We do not interfere with prevailing method of appointing Bishops.

When you fairly weigh up all these recommendations you cannot, I think, deny that we have made some valuable suggestions which are in the direction of curbing Anglo-Catholicism.

The main proposal.

(a) *Spiritual Measures.* Professor Barker doubted if there were such. Surely there are—e.g. a new Lectionary; or special epistles or gospels; or Holy Communion. But I may be wrong in not being able to see how these are not purely spiritual.

(b) The laymen who certify—a mere detail. Others might be named.

(c) The *double* reference to Diocesan Conference ensures delay and illustrates the wish of the Commission to avoid haste.

(d) This proposal cannot become law without consent of Parliament. Unlikely Parliament would at present touch the Prayer Book again.

Also you may be perfectly sure that Parliament will ask—*Is the whole Church behind this proposal?* It would reject a sectional proposal.

I cannot myself see that there is anything to be frightened about in the proposals. I could not have signed the Report if it had not presented an ideal towards which we have to strive, if it had advocated immediate measures of a drastic kind.

I do not know whether it is the intention of the Archbishops to take any immediate steps to summon a Round Table Conference. In any case I hope they will wait till the Doctrinal Commission has reported next year.

Meanwhile I feel it to be urgently necessary that those who feel that the character of the Church of England is being imperilled by the growth of Anglo-Catholicism in the official circles of the Church (I don't think it is capturing the laymen), should without delay

take some action so as to show the authorities, before the Conference is called, that there are other claims to be considered beside those of Anglo-Catholicism. In particular I think it should be insisted that the Conference must be truly representative and that it should discuss other subjects than Reservation and alternative Communion services.

This is a practical issue. On the larger issue of the clash of spiritual movements I think we have to be patient, and to recognise that you can't quicken the pace of history. Tendencies have got to work themselves out. What the Reformation began in the sixteenth century moved on to a new phase in the seventeenth century when that elusive thing called Anglicanism was born. Much has happened since the seventeenth century and we simply can't stand exactly in the old paths. There is a widespread movement towards unity. What you may roughly call Catholicism is in the air everywhere. It shows itself, as Heiler points out, in a rise in the standard of worship in all countries, which cuts clean across all confessional divisions. All this we have to take into account. I am glad that God is in charge of the Church and not we. I am glad that Truth must in the long run win. I am also glad that I shall not be asked at the Judgment Day whether I wore a biretta.

Canon Peter Green's *This Our Pilgrimage* (Longmans, Green & Co., 2s. 6d. net) is one of his devotional books, drawn from a wide experience of life and a devoted ministry of many years, to which we have learnt to look for encouragement and inspiration. In this volume, the Canon takes a number of texts centring round some general theme, such as "No continuing city," "The Example of Christ," "Companions of the Way," and "Sunshine and Shadow," and applies them to his purpose. Canon Peter Green's devotional books are so well known and so much appreciated that it is not necessary to dwell upon their good qualities.

The Rev. Ernest G. Loosley, B.D., is a young Methodist Minister with somewhat original ideas. Influenced by Mr. A. A. Milne's well-known book he adopts as the title of a work dealing with the earliest days of the Church *When the Church Was Very Young* (Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 3s. 6d. net). It is full of interesting suggestive matter for those who know how to use it. The headings of the chapters indicate that when the Church was young, it had no Buildings, no Denominations, no Fixed Organisations, no New Testament, no Vocabulary of Its Own, no Dogmatic System, and no Sabbath Rest in the Gentile World.