

## ART. II.—THE CHURCH AND PARLIAMENT.

“IN the belief that the attention of the Legislature will now be likely to be directed to matters of domestic concern, to a greater extent than has been the case during the last two Sessions,” the executive committee of the Liberation Society declare to their supporters that they are preparing to act “with increased vigour.” Individuals wishing to obtain special information on any branch of the Disestablishment Question are requested to communicate with the Society. The Lecture List published by the executive committee for 1882-3, available for “Liberal associations, working men’s clubs,” etc., etc., is a long one. Mr. Carvel Williams contributes “The Struggle for Religious Equality; or, Reminiscences of a Liberationist;” Mr. Fisher, “The Present Position of the Burials Question: what has been Done, what has to be Done;” Mr. Briggs, “The National Church a Hindrance to National Religion and Progress;” Mr. Higgins, “The Advantages,” and Mr. Rowlands, “The Reasons,” “for Disestablishment and Disendowment.” These are mere samples taken at random from the headings of the Lecture List.

We have no complaint to make against the methods of the Liberationists; on the contrary, though we believe their aims mistaken, their methods are constitutional. They wish to educate the minds of the electors. There is nothing religious in their programme: it is purely political. They are trying to effect a change in the law by convincing the electorate that a change will be beneficial.

Now let us recall the words of an eminent Bishop of the Church of England, whose tracts are read by the million, spoken at the Church Congress at Derby. “We cannot do without the masses,” said Bishop Ryle. “The Church whose adherents are in a minority in the land will not be long allowed to retain her endowments and her connection with the State in this age.” No advice can be sounder. But how many Churchmen act on it?

We are sometimes told that the House of Commons is an assembly of which four-sixths are Churchmen; and that we ought not to doubt its good intentions. We believe the late Dean Stanley used to think so, until one day the House of Commons, at the instance of a Mr. Briggs, passed a vote of censure upon him for exercising his undoubted privilege in respect to the erection of a monument in the venerable Abbey. But let us test this point a little further. Is it a ground for confidence that four-sixths of the members of the House of Commons and nine-tenths of the members of the House of Lords are Churchmen?

And is their Churchmanship any guarantee of the loyalty of Parliament to the Church of England? Why everyone knows that most Dissenting constituencies are represented by Churchmen. A Churchman who adopts the shibboleths of political Nonconformity is a far more eligible candidate for such a constituency than a Nonconformist; and for the very intelligible reason that a Nonconformist must belong to a sect, and all the other sects are a little jealous of being represented by a Dissenter who dissents from themselves. They prefer an outsider. So we find Flintshire represented by Lord Richard Grosvenor, Denbighshire by the Right. Hon. Osborne Morgan, Denbigh Boroughs by Sir Robert Cunliffe, Montgomeryshire by Mr. Rendel, Montgomery Boroughs by the Hon. F. Hanbury-Tracy, all of them members of the Church of England.

The House of Commons is the creature of the constituencies; the members merge their own personality in the personality of their constituents. Even the Prime Minister's personal attachment to the Church has not prevented him from dealing her many political blows when political occasions made it necessary to rally the Liberal party.<sup>1</sup> We should like to know which Parliament of late years has deserved the absolute confidence of Churchmen. Do we owe to this present Parliament, upon which the Liberationists are bringing their utmost influence to bear, so firm an allegiance that we ought not even to express our united opinion on Church legislation, lest our action should imply suspicion of its omniscience and good intentions?

Every alteration in the temporal or quasi-temporal affairs of the Church requires an Act of Parliament. There are many ecclesiastical matters which lie on the border line between the Doctrinal and the Civil—questions such as those touching Ecclesiastical Courts, rubrics, ceremonial. Parliament has shown some inclination to deal with these. Again, all the questions relating to such matters as burials, marriages, fees, tithes, cathedrals, Church property, patronage, fall under the cognizance of Parliament. How are these questions to be settled to the satisfaction of Churchmen, if Churchmen provide no means by which their wishes can be authoritatively stated, and efficiently supported in the division

---

<sup>1</sup> In a letter written immediately after his defeat for the University of Oxford in 1865, and significantly published now by his leave in the "Life of Bishop Wilberforce," he speaks of his "revenge in the future," and declares himself "a person wholly extraneous on one great class of questions" (*i.e.* Church questions), though still a "unit in Legislative and Cabinet matters." His third and last great "political transmigration" is now being accomplished. Only the other day the Attorney-General, Sir Henry James, foreshadowed a means of eliminating Churchmanship from the representation of the Universities by disfranchising the non-resident Masters of Arts.

lobby? Shall Churchmen in the House of Commons leave such questions alone altogether? Some of them urgently require alteration. Changed conditions require change. Are we to wait until an anachronism or an inconvenience has become a scandal before we apply a remedy? or shall we leave all remedial legislation in the hands of the anti-Church party? Under present conditions no change, as we have said, can be effected without an appeal to the House of Commons. Yet there is no man in the House of Commons or in the country who can assert, without fear of contradiction, what is the mind of the Church on any given question. A general agreement does in fact exist quite sufficient for practical purposes; and the Church is guilty of blamable negligence in failing to give adequate expression to this unanimity; we blame Churchmen for not calling forth the substantial numerical support which they have in the constituencies. Why are the Nonconformist Members of Parliament and their allies always in their places when a Church question is, before the House? Simply because their seats depend upon their votes. Why are the friends of the Church absent? Because they know that their constituents have not yet been roused to take any deep interest in the subject. So it comes about that the Church allows itself to be practically represented in the House of Commons by some half-dozen individuals, who are regarded by the general opinion of the House as "clericals" or "fanatics" not worth listening to, because they have no outside backing, and deserving only of a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder from the occupants of both front benches. It is an old saying that eloquence is in the audience, not in the speaker: of Parliamentary eloquence this is entirely true. Popular support is more regarded than logic or reason or principle, and numbers in a division are the practical test of Parliamentary wisdom. Commercial men know this, and maintain their Chambers of Commerce; farmers know it, and maintain their Chambers of Agriculture; Sir Wilfrid Lawson knows it, so does Mr. Parnell. But the Church of England feels such confidence in the House of Lords and the House of Commons that she will not use the means which others use. She has, forsooth, the Conservative party, and the Bench of Bishops and Convocation on her side, so she may fold her arms and close her eyes in the assurance that no harm can come! There can be no greater political danger for the Church of England than that she should be, or that she should even be supposed to be, the monopoly of one party or of one class of the community. If such were the fact she would be untrue to herself: the suspicion of such a fact is a hindrance to her influence. "How fortunate," said the Bishop of Meath the other day, "that the recent crusade

against the landed interests in Ireland did not find the Church as closely associated with them as she was before the Disestablishment!" Each political party is always carrying on war against the other; and neither is very scrupulous about the means it uses. It is ruinous in the long-run for the Church to be identified with either. But if one party is more likely to bring her into misfortune than the other, it is the Conservative party, as hitherto constituted. The Church is democratic—"Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" are moral principles preached from her pulpits. We believe the interests of the Church as an establishment are safer in the tempests of the Lower House than in the great calm of the Upper. Of late years we know by experience that her successes have been more conspicuous amidst the manifold antagonistic influences of the great towns, than in the apparently unruffled quietness of country parishes. Happily the Church has not yet allied herself irrevocably to either political party: she must for the future disengage herself absolutely from both. Her immediate political advantage might seem to be to strengthen herself upon the Liberal benches. But such a policy, if conducted with a selfish object, would be ruinous. Her true wisdom is to ignore both parties, and to refuse to allow herself to be made the tool of either. To accomplish this she must not shrink from asserting herself in the constituencies. She must not be nervously afraid of pressing her demands upon candidates on the day of election.

How is this to be done? By the drudgery called organization. The clergy must lead—as the Nonconformist ministers lead their people, as the Roman Catholic priests lead their people, as Mr. Bradlaugh leads his followers; or rather, we should say, better than they. For an influence may be not less real, and a leadership not less effectual, because the leader is directing the plan of battle instead of himself storming the outpost. It is probable that a compact body of two hundred Churchmen, voting together irrespective of party, in their several constituencies, could decide at least one hundred elections, and could influence a great many more. Many Liberal members give a "Church" vote now at the risk of their seats. To such men such a contingent in their constituencies would be a security which they have not at present. In many decidedly Liberal constituencies a Liberal Churchman might be brought forward against a Liberal hostile to the Church without in any way appealing to the constituency to change the political colour of its representation.

In this latter way Churchmen might successfully assert their legitimate influence. The very fear of an avoidable contest would have a sensible effect upon the Churchmanship of politicians. It is reported that several elections were

decided in 1880 by Churchmen. The Liverpool election is supposed to have been materially affected by the annoyance created in the minds of Churchmen by certain utterances of the Conservative candidate. We have no fault to find; on the contrary we would wish to encourage a spirit which will assert itself at the polling-booths. But let it be exercised according to reason. If as electors we withdraw our support from one candidate, let us take security from the other on the matter we have at heart. Otherwise we perform the silly but time-honoured operation of cutting off our noses in order to spite our faces. In the cases which have come under our own notice this precaution was not taken.

As long as there is solidarity in the political organization of the Church, its form is of secondary importance. For ourselves, we believe that the old ecclesiastical areas of the diocese, the archdeaconry, the rural deanery, are well suited to our purpose. But the weakness of ecclesiastical organisations is that they have not yet begun to influence the conduct of members of Parliament. The Diocesan Conference includes all Churchmen. The appointment of a diocesan committee, whose special duty it shall be to watch Church legislation, seems a natural part of the regular business of every Conference. Yet very few Conferences have such committees. The duty of such committees would be to acquaint themselves with the attitude of every member of Parliament in the diocese towards the Church; to approach him when occasion requires, as every member is liable to be approached by any one of his constituents. To represent to him the wishes of Churchmen, and to explain to him the reasons for opposition or support to such and such measures of Church legislation; to publish his answer to inquiries; to support him, or, if necessary, to oppose him. If it be impossible to influence him, then to endeavour to influence a portion of his constituency. United action in a number of constituencies would give a national impulse and strength to Churchmanship, which could not be despised by any candidate, party, or Ministry. Every English member of the House of Commons would be thus brought face to face with Church questions from a very practical point of view, namely that of his constituency, and through the mouths of those whom he is bound to listen to, because he represents them.

The exaggeration of our differences forms an easy excuse at present to our lukewarm friends to desert us, and for our opponents to attack us. Each diocese, nay, almost every incumbent, acts, or rather seems to act, independently. We value the independence of the incumbent in the system of the Church of England, but it may be carried to a point which

destroys corporate work. Beaten by an overwhelming majority in his Diocesan Conference, or clerical meeting, or in Convocation, a clergyman, like the British soldier, ignores the fact, and writes a brilliant letter which appears in large type in some well-known newspaper, reasserting the arguments which have been overruled. His signature itself will often carry authority to the half-instructed; the unanswered letter may appear to some conclusive; if answered, the spectacle is presented of divided opinions, without the possibility of a decision, and the lay mind, especially the Parliamentary lay mind, is perplexed.

We have endeavoured to show that the first and most pressing need of Churchmen is to prevent Church legislation from being governed by party politics. A great step would be gained towards this end if we could obtain a working Church majority, as undoubtedly we have a theoretical Church majority, composed of members of both sides in the House of Commons. We ought not, however, to rest contented should we succeed thus far. Our ultimate object ought to be to relieve Parliament from whatever Church business may be better done elsewhere. It is unfitting that Roman Catholics, Jews, Presbyterians, Nonconformists, and supporters of Mr. Bradlaugh, should decide questions touching the rubrics, ceremonials, or courts of a Church to which they are opposed. Therefore we ought ever to look forward to some method by which we can utilize Convocation as a constitutional body for preparing schemes of legislation, as was suggested in the Bishop of London's "Draft Bill;" or else we ought to devise some other means of remodelling the relations of the Church and Parliament. Such should be the line of our policy in the future. But at the present moment our first and most urgent duty is to assert our position in the House of Commons. If we fail there, we must expect hard measure.<sup>1</sup>

We do not wish to exaggerate the political side of Church questions. We know very well that Establishment and Endowment are the accidents and not the essentials of a living Church. We esteem all the questions raised in this article as of secondary importance from a religious point of view, as matters of expediency touching the temporal circumstances of the members of the Church of England, both clergy and laity. But such are precisely the subjects with which politicians deal. There is more than one course open. We may fold our arms and accept with resignation whatever a

---

<sup>1</sup> Two new Burial Bills, a Tithe Bill, a Church Boards Bill, an Affirmation Bill, a Marriage Bill are only some of the measures introduced this Session into the House of Commons in antagonism to the principles of the Church of England.

Parliament, three-fourths of which are professing Churchmen, may provide; or we may engage in a long and arduous struggle, not over-confident in the issue, but determined to fight, as men fight who are in earnest. The third course we will not willingly adopt, and yet at the moment it seems the one most generally acceptable to our leaders. For our part, we shrink from the shame of drifting into Disestablishment and Disendowment, speaking much and doing little.

STANLEY LEIGHTON.

---

ART. III.—OUR LORD'S PRESENT WORK AS THE  
HIGH PRIEST OF HIS CHURCH.

A VIEW of the Holy Communion is not unfrequently maintained in the present day, which the following quotation fairly represents:

Thus what the Christian priest does at the altar is, as it were, the earthly form and visible expression of our Lord's continual action as our High Priest in heaven. As the most holy Body and Blood of Christ, the alone acceptable Victim to make our peace with God, are offered, that is, continually presented and pleaded, by Jesus Himself in heaven, naturally, as we may say, and openly, so the same most holy Body and Blood are continually presented and pleaded before God by Christ's representatives, acting "in His name," and "by His commission and authority" (Article xxvi.) on earth.<sup>1</sup>

The view thus stated rests on two assumptions, both of which must be substantiated before it can be accepted. It must be proved, first, that Christ is really doing as our High Priest in heaven what is here alleged, that He is offering, continually presenting and pleading, His most holy Body and Blood; and secondly, that He has delegated to His ministers on earth the power here claimed for them, to present and plead continually before God the same most holy Body and Blood, as His representatives.

Both these pillars must stand firm, or the arch which is constructed upon them will fall. Even if the first were clearly established, it would by no means follow that the second could be made good.

It is, however, with the first of these statements that we now intend to deal. We propose to inquire whether it accurately describes the present work of our Lord, as High Priest of His Church, so far as it is revealed to us in the Word of

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Church and the World*: "On the Eucharistic Sacrifice," p. 339. Edited by the Rev. Orby Shipley.