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## II.

MR. ALBERT MITCHELL.

I AM grateful to Archdeacon Storr for his remarks about the one-sidedness of the Commission, as that relieves me of the necessity of speaking of it. . . .

It is very necessary when we are presented with this Report and evidence that we should make some attempt to study it as a whole; and to study it as a whole means studying it with the evidence, because the "history" of the Report is extremely inadequate. It is so inadequate that it cannot claim to be accurate. But the evidence in the second volume will, to a very great extent, correct the inadequacy and possible inaccuracies of the Report, if the evidence is intelligently read. I do venture to make claim that in my evidence quite a number of points are tackled that nobody else ventured to tackle, and as I sat in the witness chair for two and a half hours and not one of my historical facts was seriously challenged, either by the chairman or by any member of the Commission, I think I may say my evidence remains unanswered.

## THE SPIRIT BEHIND THE REPORT.

We have to consider the spirit that is behind the Report. I have tried to get at the spirit behind the Report. I do honestly attempt to do what the Commission asks; take the Report as a whole, and not be unduly prejudiced by one point here or there.

Although the Report bases itself on the claim that it is an aspiring after *new life* in the Church, actually the spirit behind the Report is very evidently *discontent* with the present doctrinal standards of the Church. If we look at the Report, the first of the proposals obviously is this proposal for a round table conference. I am more afraid of that than of anything else; because in regard to all the other things there are so many obstacles to be surmounted before anything can come to pass, that I don't think the immediate danger or the immediate difficulty arises so much with regard to the later proposals. But I am very much afraid of this round table conference at this particular time. Strip from it everything else, and it is impossible to escape the conclusion that it is putting us once more into the exact position in which we were in the summer of 1928. The eight years which have passed since then are practically scrapped for the purpose of this matter. We are thrown once again into controversy on a very vital point. I don't for a single moment minimise either the importance or the difficulties of the question of Reservation, but that is not the worst point. Reservation is the fruit, but the alterations in the Consecration Prayer are the root. We are presented, if we contemplate such variations in the Consecration Prayer as impart into the most sacred part of the service a doctrine that is different from the doctrine of the present Consecration Prayer, with an apple of discord at once.

Reservation, important as it is, almost falls into insignificance beside that. But you cannot separate the two. The proposal is one and the same because the doctrinal implication behind the two things is the same. Is it not a fact that the doctrinal implication behind them is really an undoing of a vital principle of the Reformation?

#### VITAL MATTERS.

The Reformation in England centred, as regards the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, around two principles; first, the substitution of a Sacrament for a sacrifice—and I think we owe that trenchant phrase to that old stalwart, Bishop Edmund Knox—and secondly, the substitution of open Communion for the Mass. Our friends of the Anglo-Catholic school are quite frank in saying it is the Mass that matters. The Mass is not the Lord's Supper. The Mass is not the service of Holy Communion as it is in the Prayer Book. The Mass does imply such a conception of change having taken place in the sacred elements as makes them cease to be mere symbols or mere expressions, or even signs; but actually something changed into the actual Body and Blood of Christ. No Anglo-Catholic will dispute that that is the essence of the Mass. I don't think we can contemplate drawing into a round table conference with the suggestion implied that we are to be persuaded into accepting the sacrifice of the Mass in place of the open administration of the Sacrament. There may be a great deal in which we might welcome variety in regard to the administration of the Lord's Supper, such as a varied form for use when there is no Morning or Evening Prayer, incorporating the essentials of Morning or Evening Prayer. The principle of uniformity is not respected quite as much to-day as it was in the sixteenth century. But the essential thing is we cannot contemplate a round table conference called for the express purpose of inducing us to withdraw our objections upon which the Books of 1927-8 were legitimately defeated in the legislature. And yet the whole wording of the report suggests that that is the purpose. In looking at the round table conference, we are bound to look at it from the fact that it is only to be called practically for two purposes; and that we are up against. The phrase is a round table conference "or otherwise"; and it is quite obvious there was more than one mind behind the report. If the round table conference is simply a method of inducing us to shift from the position we took up as a matter of conscience in 1927-8, the position is impossible. There is also the incidental question of the representative character of the conference.

#### RELAXATION OF SAFEGUARDS.

It is also proposed that, in "spiritual" matters, the present safeguards should be relaxed as regards legislation. The Commission admits that the present system works well in all matters that are not controversial. The present system provides a safeguard for

minorities, and prevents a majority sweeping the Church. The change would be to sweep away this safeguard, and place the minority at the mercy of the majority. The State is the paternal authority, and the State—the King in Parliament exercising the royal supremacy—looks after the children and prevents the stronger and more insistent children having their own way at the expense of the weaker children. The present system does provide a protection for minorities, and ought there not to be a very great protection for minorities? All those who are loyally and reasonably attempting to serve God in the Church have vested interests in the Church.

I agree we have got to face the position that something other than that of which we approve must be recognised as having its place in the Church, but that is a different thing to altering the doctrinal standards of the Church.

I cannot conceive that this double reference to the diocesan conferences is either workable, reasonable, or possibly effective. It might be only a bare majority, or even a minority, that carried three-quarters of the diocesan conferences. How many of us are happy, either as to the intelligent working of the diocesan conferences, the attendance of the members, or the real work that is done? Most of the work is really done by a very small section of those who are entitled to come. Diocesan conferences are liable to be swept off their feet by gusts of emotion, and played upon sometimes as an instrument by the bishop. I don't think this legislation proposal is possible. But, even more, there is the constitutional matter. How can a measure that has never been submitted to Parliament have the force of an Act of Parliament; how is the measure to be submitted to the Crown for approval; are we to have a second legislature, and a second executive, so that either the Archbishops should directly submit to the King these measures which have not received the authority of Parliament? Or is the government of the day to be allowed to do this? If so, you are merely substituting control by Cabinet Council for control by Parliament. I cannot believe that the Commission can possibly have thought out the methods and incidence of its proposal.

#### DISCIPLINE.

With regard to the Courts, while I agree that in all probability the present appellate tribunal, the King in Council, is the best that can be devised for the ultimate appeal to the Crown for lack of justice in the Ecclesiastical Courts, yet I do think that the time is ready for great reforms in the procedure of the Ecclesiastical Courts. We are still working on outworn medieval procedure. We want to get rid of all the criminal character of the Church courts and substitute a simpler procedure like that in use in the Courts of Equity for obtaining the opinion of the Court on doubtful points of law.

With regard to the pastoral authority of the bishops, new

tribunals are proposed. If they are necessary they ought to be supported, but why cannot the bishops do all that they propose under their present powers? They probably could have done so if they had started twenty or thirty years ago. Still, if it is necessary we ought to concur.

I don't like the interim proposals; I don't like the method in which they are proposed to be effected by synodical declaration. We were reminded this morning that there ought not to be any difference between the authority of the bishops and clergy, and the authority of the laity, in dealing with questions of doctrine; and the synodical declaration to be made by Convocation and submitted to the Church Assembly for a sort of approval would bear the aspect of a clerically imposed law. If anything of the sort is to be done, why should it not be done in the way which the Bishop of Norwich proposed in his evidence?

There seems to have been a complete change of face on the subject of the appointment of bishops in the last ten or twelve years. I sat on the Committee on the appointment of bishops; I gave a minority report, as did others; and none of us were quite satisfied with anything proposed.

#### CANON LAW.

One very serious question is the reference to the codification and re-establishment, practically, of Canon Law. That seems to attract the "reformers" very much. Lord Hardwicke in a famous case decided that Canon Law did not bind the laity unless allowed by Parliament. It is also held by many that not having been allowed by the secular authority the Canons of 1604 do not bind the clergy beyond the generation that enacted them. In any case the Canons of 1604 were a quite honest attempt to codify such of the medieval Canon Law as had survived the Reformation. Not a very successful, but an honest attempt. I have seen a memorandum by a bishop, one of the most extreme Anglo-Catholics, who says there is probably no Canon Law that has authority in England at the present time. But there is a school in the Convocations, the most learned advocate of which is the present vice-chairman of the House of Clergy, which maintains that the whole of the medieval Canon Law may still be binding on the Church. I hold the contrary view. I served on the committee on the relations between Convocation and the Assembly, and the point was raised there, and that learned Canonist held very strongly that the Canon Law is still in vigour. If the Canon Law is codified and brought back, there may be no limits to the extent to which not only the laity but the clergy may be in danger of being burdened by medieval garments that we thought we had cast off. We have believed that the effect of Reformation legislation was to free us entirely from the whole of medieval Canon Law. If that is not so we don't know where we stand. There is no reason why, if we are to have the Law brought up to date, we should not start *de novo*.

## PRINCIPLES IN ISSUE.

My purpose, of course, is rather to indicate the principles that lie behind the report and the dangers I can see lying therein. There are many points of detail, but if we talk too much in detail we fail to see the wood for the trees.

In summing up I would say we cannot accept the proposals for a round table conference without throwing our whole doctrinal position into the melting-pot. If we have a new court of appeal in place of the King in Council, we are losing probably the strongest protection of minorities that we now have; for Evangelicals, Liberals, Broad Churchmen and Anglo-Catholics have all, in turn, been saved from extinction by the greater tolerance of the King's courts. The pastoral authority of the bishops ought to be able to be exercised without further legislation. If interim proposals are to be made for relaxing the terms of subscription, it would be better done by a non-controversial agreed measure, rather than by a synodical declaration. And the proposed revival of Canon Law holds within itself far more dangers than at first sight appear.

I don't think the Anglo-Catholic section has an *equal right* in the Church with the Protestant section, because the Church has deliberately adopted the Reformation standpoint; but I agree that the happenings of the last century have given the Anglo-Catholics such a lodgment in the Church that it is idle for us to talk about expelling them. But there may be very real danger of the Evangelicals being expelled from the Church if the Anglo-Catholic dominance becomes more marked than it actually is.

As for liberalising Anglo-Catholicism, as suggested by the Archdeacon, I should quite agree that the ideal of Home reunion is of more vital importance and should precede any disturbance of the relations between Church and State. It is not the relations between Church and State that hinder reunion at all. It is not the method of the appointment of bishops, it is the character of the bishops who are appointed. The Non-conformists are up against the principle of episcopacy as it is insisted upon by the Anglo-Catholics. I do agree that if anything could be done, as the Archdeacon hopes, to bring the spirit that lies behind what he calls Catholicism more in touch with practical facts to-day, that might be of very great effect.

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*The Real Progress* is the title of the Story of the Year 1935-6 of the work of the C.E.Z.M.S. in India, Ceylon, China and Singapore. It is a well-produced and well-illustrated volume of 110 pages, and contains interesting accounts of many encouraging incidents in the field.

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