

For these, and no doubt other cogent reasons, the bishops feel that the time has come to move towards consolidating all the churches sprung from the Mother Church of England and the Mother into one vast Communion in order to maintain and develop the unity and coherence of the Anglican communion without interfering with that freedom of synodical action in separate national churches, which exercised as it has been, is largely, under God, the secret of church advancement in different countries. Of course, such an idea, in every way statesman-like, is not without serious difficulties in its path, for the hardest of all problems to solve is that of concentrating influence without interfering with distributed liberty. The bishops, however, clearly think that the problem is capable of ultimate solution, and as "a step towards it" propose the creation of a "central consultative body" for supplying information and advice, for securing steady and rapid intercourse between all the branches of the Anglican communion, and conserving that mutual knowledge which is freely admitted to be needed, and which is the only sure basis of all real unity of life. Such a body would not be possessed of coercive power, it could only advise when asked to do so, and its force would alone make itself felt through the reputation it might gather about it arising out of the wisdom of the advice or aid it might give. That such a body guided for good would prove a vast benefit in uniting into one the scattered branches of the Anglican communion, I have no doubt; that wisely guided, it would tell with force on the missionary and educational work of the Church at large, I have no doubt either; that it would aid materially in creating and maintaining a strong conservative church feeling, and foster an unquestioned spirit of unity, is to me apparent, but I am also convinced that to bring about such results its formation should be endorsed by each national Church through the willing action of its respective synods. For, such a body, practically self-constituted, would fail of its object unless the whole Church were convinced of the value of its existence, but this assurance once created, the success of the body itself would be undoubted, and its recommendatory influence on the Church at large would be very great.

ANGLICAN ORDERS.

The bishops, wisely guided, I think, have not taken the slightest notice of the Bull lately issued by the Pope of Rome, declaring Anglican orders invalid and inviting England to give in its allegiance to the Roman See, and thus obtain a remedy for its ministerial defects. But intentionally, or otherwise, the bishops have answered Rome with a voice of solemn and decided power in two distinct ways. First, by

calling on all Churches in communion with the Anglican Church all over the world to consolidate and unite their separate influences, as I have just described; each colonial or American bishop pledging canonical obedience to his own archbishop and metropolitan—such offices to be created where they do not now exist, and every bishop consecrated in England for service abroad declaring due honor and deference to the Archbishop of Canterbury as the recognized spiritual head of the Church of England, and promising to maintain the spiritual rights and privileges of that Church, and all churches in communion with her. Not even at the Reformation itself was a more decided ecclesiastical blow given to the claims of the Papacy than this, for it disposes at one stroke of the faintest possibility of obedience or reverence or deference being given to Rome, all these tokens of ecclesiastical submission being centred in the officers of the Church of England, as bishops of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Secondly, the bishops reassert the Reformation platform with clear decisiveness, by tendering their sympathy to all religious movements which aim at escaping from "the usurped authority of the See of Rome, as we ourselves regained our liberty three centuries ago." Not alone do the bishops tender sympathy but they express their desire for friendly relations with all such protesting churches and communities—the Old Catholics in Germany and Austria, the reformed churches of Mexico and Brazil, and "the religious movements of brave and earnest men in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, who have been driven to free themselves from the burden of unlawful terms of communion imposed by the Church of Rome."

In these ways the bishops have restructured the great protesting note of the sixteenth century, and have asserted both by action and language, that never was the Anglican Church more widely and determinately separated from the see of Rome, than in these, the closing hours of the nineteenth century; and that never was its influence as a great historic Church more widespread, and its power more influential, than in the very year that the Pope declared its orders invalid.

With regard to the Prayer Book, it is plain that the bishops think it wiser to leave it as it is, as "an authoritative standard."

But they have passed clear over the old rigid rule which bound the Church to the sole use of the book as it stands, by acknowledging "that no book can express every possible need of worshippers, in every variation of local circumstance," and consequently, they affirm the right of every bishop, in his own jurisdiction, to set forth additional services and prayers for the furtherance of God's work and the spiritual needs of the worshippers; and to adapt the