he notices the violent interference of the civil power in 1717 is well worthy of serious consideration :—

" It was on account of a very just opposition raised by members of the Canterbury Synod against the person last named that a political party, at that time in the ascendant, silenced the voice of the Church in 1717. For the moment the powers of the Crown were invoked for that unworthy purpose ; but as soon as the excitement which disturbed the temper of the then Whig Government had passed away, there were no farther impediments, at least so far as appears, in subsequent years placed by the secular power in the way of synodical action on the part of the Church. It is not fair to blame the civil power for the Church's silence and for the inactivity of her Synods during the last century ; she must take that blame chiefly on her own shoulders. The Civil State has performed its part punctually, unintermittingly. Whenever Parliament has been summoned by the Crown concurrent Synods in both provinces of England have also been summoned at the same time. If the Metropolitans, if the Bishops, if the lower clergy have failed to do their duty when summoned ; if they have neglected to meet, or if, meeting only in form, they have neglected to bring forward such evils in the religious state of the country as required reformation ; if thus they have failed to consult together for the removal of scandal, surely they should themselves be willing to bear the blame of their own negligence, and not endeavour to shift it elsewhere. That the clergy always have been justly treated by the civil power is by no means here asserted ; but that the Church in the matter of her synodical deliberations has as yet any just grounds of present complaint is absolutely denied.

This view may be startling to many persons, who have been accustomed to regard the long-continued silence of Convocation as an evidence of the chains in which the State has bound the Church. It is, however, fully justified by the considerations suggested in the following passage, with which we will conclude our notice of this useful book :—

" It must suffice here to give a brief account of the constitutional powers which are now invoked for summoning our provincial Synods, together with the forms used, and a summary of the constituent members. First, the royal writs for assembling the Convocations are issued by the Crown concurrently with the writs for assembling the Parliament. These instruments direct each of the Archbishops to call together the Synod of his province. For an account of their origin the reader is referred to a former part of this work. It is only necessary here to say that they issue as a matter of course, and that the unbroken usage in this respect now partakes of the obligation of common law. As connected with this subject a most extraordinary error prevails among many persons, extending, as it seems, even to some members of our provincial Synods, who appear to suppose that the Convocations require the *royal license* in order to empower those bodies to deliberate on matters affecting the Church. This, however, is altogether a misapprehension. The royal writs above mentioned, which are always directed, as a matter of course, to each Metropolitan, and which remain in force until the Convocations are either prorogued or dissolved by instruments issuing from the same quarter, are the licenses for deliberation, or rather, they contain the royal commands to meet for deliberation. The misapprehension above referred to has arisen from a strange confusion between documents altogether different, and from supposing that a royal license over and above the writ of summons is needed before entering upon debates or the discussion of synodical business. Now, a royal license is required only for ' enacting, promulging, and executing' canons, a contingency of very rare occurrence. Even were the government of the Church in this land at this time carried on upon true constitutional principles, a royal licence is an instrument which would be very rarely needed ; perhaps if such a document issued once in each Sovereign's reign, it would be quite sufficient for all necessary purposes, and for a wholesome management of ecclesiastical affairs."

News Department.

From Papers by R. M. S. Asia, July 21.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP BILL.

On Friday, July 8, the *Earl of Derby* moved the second reading of the bill agreed upon by the select committee on Lord Shaftesbury's bill. He regretted that it was to be opposed by the latter noble lord, who had declined attending the committee, where he would have had an opportunity of stating any real grievance, and would have been listened to attentively :

" The invariable policy of this country, ever since religious toleration has been in force in it, has been that the public worship of Almighty God should be duly and solemnly conducted in buildings set apart for that special purpose, either (as in the cases of the Churches of England and Rome) by consecration or dedication, or (as in some exceptional cases, even in the Established Church also, and in almost every instance among the Dissenters) by licensing and registration. This practice is, I believe, in accordance with the views and wishes of all right-thinking and serious-minded members of the community, whatever may be the particular religious persuasion to which they belong. That it is the feeling and desire of the Protestant Dissenters in general, I may venture to infer from the fact that there is now upon your Lordship's table a bill introduced and carried through the House of Commons on the part of those very denominations, not with the object of abolishing, but of amending and enforcing the law requiring places of worship to be licensed and registered." Lord Derby then recapitulated the history of Lord Shaftesbury's bill, deprecating the quiet mode in which it had been passed through the other house, an important amendment being made in it after the third reading at twelve o'clock at night without a word of comment. It was, however, referred to a select committee of the Lords, who proceeded, as well as they could in the unfortunate absence of its author, to deal as best they could with the grievances he alleged as proving its necessity. " It will be recollected that the first case to which my noble friend alluded was that of clergymen of the Established Church, and he even stated that the clergy of the diocese of a right rev. prelate opposite, were in the weekly and daily habit of violating the existing law, by carrying on their ministrations in private houses and in other places than churches. Now, I think it would be very difficult for my noble friend to prove that the practical operation of the law is such that no penal consequences could be made to affect clergymen of the Church of England ministering in their own parishes; but, to remove the possibility of any doubt on that subject, the bill which I hold in my hand distinctly provides that the existing statutes shall not be construed to impose penalties upon acts of religious worship, whether conducted by the incumbent or by the licensed curate of the parish, or by any clerk in holy orders acting on behalf of such incumbent or licensed curate. The next case of supposed grievance stated by my noble friend was of various religious and charitable societies, which, in holding their occasional meetings, commenced their proceedings with prayer or other solemn acts. I do not believe that such a case would come within the penal clause of the Act of Parliament; but, at any rate, this bill distinctly provides that persons engaged in such proceedings shall not be subject to any penalty whatever. The third case put by my noble friend is that of the celebration of divine worship in any place whatever, not being licensed or registered as a place of worship, and, of course, not consecrated, where there is an attendance of more than twenty persons, exclusive of the family or household belonging to such place. No doubt there is considerable difficulty in dealing with this case. It is by no means easy, I frankly confess, to draw a distinction between what is public and what is private worship. The law as it at present stands does not interfere with private worship, the private devotions of every family are left entirely untouched, but the question is where are we to draw the line between public and private worship ? I confess that I do not consider the definition drawn by the law, as it at present stands, to be one of the most unfortunate character. I think it is rather arbitrary to say that the presence of more than twenty persons, exclusive of the family and household, shall constitute an act of public worship, and shall draw down the penalties of the act ; and, speaking for myself, I should be glad to see some other definition introduced in the bill, having regard more to the fact of the act of worship being celebrated in a private house than to the number of persons engaged in it. My noble friend, as I understand, opposes this bill on the ground that it does not go far enough in this direction. He cannot deny that it does, to a certain extent, relax the present law ; but the principle which he desires to lay down is this —that public worship of all descriptions [with the exception of the sacrament of baptism and the rite of marriage,] so far as the law of England is concerned, may be solemnised by any person, in any place, at any time, and under any circumstances, without let or hindrance. Now, my lords, the Dissenting congregations may have within themselves a power of dealing with members of their own denominations who shall conduct their religious worship in a form not in accordance with the rules of their body, but the Church of England has no such power ; and what my noble friend proposes, therefore, is this, that while the Church of England is bound down by strict rules and regulations, and is prevented from enforcing her own discipline on her own members, yet the members of her communion shall be empowered, in defiance and in opposition to her clergy, to usurp her authority and ministration. This may be right with regard to the voluntary bodies, but it is absolutely destructive to the system of the Church of England. In many large towns, and in the extensive rural districts, the clergyman of the parish is not able to discharge all the important duties which devolve upon him, and in numberless cases he would—and, indeed, often does—gladly does avail himself of the assistance of a layman. What I desire by this bill is not to prevent this, but on the contrary, for the first time to give a legal status and a legislative sanction to such assistance. At present it is doubtful whether any layman is capable of assisting the clergyman of the parish, even though with his consent and by his authority, in visiting the sick and holding meetings for the purpose of religious worship, but this bill provides that for the future no penalty shall attach to any laymen performing those duties with the concurrence of the clergyman of the parish in which he labours. It may be said that this clause might be nullified by the idleness or apathy of the clergyman of the parish, who may refuse assistance of this description, but, with a view of meeting this difficulty, there is a provision in the bill that if any layman who is disposed so to employ himself can obtain the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese, he shall be at liberty to engage in those good works without subjecting himself to penalty. I do not say that it will not be an unfortunate circumstance that there should be such a difference of opinion between the clergyman of the parish and the Bishop, and that there should be in the same parish a conflicting authority, as it were, between the layman sanctioned by the Bishop and the clergyman who has refused his assistance ; but this is a less evil than that which exists at the present moment.

I have now stated the manner in which this bill meets the three cases brought forward by my noble friend, but there remains yet another case, with which there is great difficulty in dealing, but with which my noble friend would deal in a very summary manner, inasmuch as he would repeal all restrictions, and leave every man to do what seems best in his own eyes. We cannot conceal from ourselves the unfortunate dissensions which at present prevail upon certain topics in the Church of England, but, if there is any course which is more certain than another to aggravate those dissensions, and to introduce into this country all the evils which have resulted in Scotland from the institution there of a Free Church in opposition to the Establishment—it would be to give to any member of the Church of England the authority and sanction of Parliament in establishing a congregation and performing divine worship without applying for a license—in any place, according to his own views, and in direct opposition to and defiance of the clergyman of the parish. It may be said, however, that it would be hard to prevent any one from holding a meeting for religious worship for the convenience of his poorer brethren who might not be able to attend church, and, to provide for that case, I certainly should have no objection to consent to a clause by which such meetings should be allowed, provided that they were held in a dwelling house and did not take the form of public worship, and provided also that the person officiating was not a clergyman of the Church of England. If such a clause should be framed, then by the bill I propose all possible cases of grievance under the existing law would be removed. The committee thought that my noble friend, in sweeping away all these restrictions, went too far, and that he thereby introduced and sanctioned dangerous principles; but, at the same time, being anxious to meet the views of my noble friend, the committee directed a bill to be prepared, which, I believe, will do away with all substantial cases of grievance, and which, being sent down to the House of Commons, will meet with a fuller consideration than had been given to the other bill. I am not without hopes that my noble friend, on further reflection, will feel that by the adoption of the measure I now propose his object would be attained, and I, therefore, move the second reading of the bill.

(To be continued.)

According to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Dundonald's plan is so obvious as to require no personal explanation from its inventor. He declines to give the enemy information whether it is intended to use it.