

CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

I.

IT is reported that a leading layman of the Methodist Church, in a discussion upon the proposals for a "United Free Church of England," urged the view that such a Church would become a danger to the State. This is symptomatic of the confusion which surrounds the whole question of the relations of Church and State. Lord Acton somewhere speaks of "the undiscovered country where Church and State are parted"; and it is probable that neither this generation nor the next, nor the next after will reach a satisfactory solution of the problem. In any case it is quite certain that the solution will not come by way of a readjustment of frontiers or a process of mutual accommodation. It will be achieved only as the result of a profound change of thought and temper throughout Society, which will materially modify the accepted doctrines both of the Church and of the State.

That such a change is coming is clear. Within the last fifteen years, several circumstances have combined to stimulate thought upon the question. The disestablishment of the Roman Church in France (with the emphatic declarations of French statesmen in favour of State absolutism), the Scottish Churches' case, the passing of the Deceased Wife's Sister Act, the Welsh disestablishment controversy, and other incidents have led to a re-examination of the position of the Church within the community, and already some results are apparent. The Scottish National Church has, without