

Correspondence.

FOR THE CHURCH TIMES.

COLONIAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

No. 8.

In my last, after adverting to some difficulties in regard to the sufficiency of an Act of the British Parliament for constituting synodical action in the Colonies, it was suggested that an express exercise of the Royal Prerogative, conceding this privilege, might have the twofold effect of obviating a constitutional obstruction, and at the same time of allaying the just scruples of a tender conscience. But I rather surmise that the Crown Lawyers would even suggest doubts as to the extent to which the assumption of an obsolete though rightful authority might be made available for the purposes intended within the Colonial empire of Great Britain. Such authority would doubtless suffice on ecclesiastical grounds for imparting a constitutional character to our Diocesan assemblies, in so far as the internal arrangements and requirements of our Church may be concerned. But I suspect that constitutionally speaking the Royal mandate calling us together, would not be sufficient, at least in the North American Colonies, to form us into a privileged court. We could have no freedom of debate,—no power to enforce compliance with our regulations,—no authority to interfere in any way whatever with the temporalities of the Church,—and no liberty to touch the social status, such as it is, which the law in each Province may respectively accord to her. We should only have the power of assembling ourselves together and talking things over in a friendly manner; but be utterly unable to carry either our desires or decisions into practical effect.

And this same peculiarity be it particularly remarked, is attached to any Act which the British Parliament may pass for our benefit. No power or compulsion whatever could be permitted from that quarter at this time of day. Meeting under the authority of such an Act, every speaker, animadverting on any subject or matter that implicated the conduct or feelings of any member present, would be liable to prosecution at the option of that member. Free discussion could not be safely entertained; compliance with certain decisions could not be enforced; the management of the Church could not be approached; its condition could not therefore be improved. We should be exactly in *status quo ante*, or perhaps worse—the sport of theories, doubts and divisions. Then the question will immediately recur—*cui bono*? What benefit are we to expect from all this law-making, and consequent meetings?

The truth is that ever since the concession of what is called Responsible Government to the Colonies in 1835, and probably under the regime that prevailed previously to that period, an Act of the Colonial Legislature is constitutionally and absolutely necessary to give full effect in any Colony to either the exercise of the Royal Prerogative or to any Act of the Imperial Parliament. This however is my own humble opinion, and I confess that I risk it with much diffidence. If I am correct it will follow as a necessary consequence, that although the Parliament of the Mother Country has passed the Bills of Mr. Gladstone, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Solicitor General, in a cumulative form, they would have been found on this side the water to be totally inoperative—without force or vitality. An Act of the Legislature of each Province respectively would be necessary to confirm and enforce them, or it may be to modify and remodel them in such a manner as to impart to them a useful and constitutional bearing.

Hence it becomes a question of the very highest importance, one which deserves the serious consideration of all concerned or interested in legislating for Colonial Synods, whether the efforts hitherto directed towards this object have been based on a sure foundation?—whether the due and constitutional mode of procedure has not been reversed?—and whether the initiation of the whole matter should not have been commenced on this side of the Atlantic. The very delays and difficulties, which are year after year thrown in the way of an Act from the imperial legislature, and that too by those who are known to be most friendly to the interests of the Church, indicate in a manner which ought not to be misunderstood, that some serious objection operates against the measure in the minds of many Churchmen, although they may not very distinctly give utterance to their doubts or misgivings. Under these circumstances ought we not to try the reverse order? Should we not as a body apply to our Provincial Legislature for an Act, empowering us to meet in a Diocesan assembly or Synod, constituting our Meetings Courts of privilege, and conferring upon us the freedom to act for ourselves in a loyal and constitutional manner? This certainly appears to be a rational if not an ecclesiastical mode of proceeding. And the assent of the Queen to a measure of this description would at once render it perfectly constitutional both in its civil and religious aspects: she acting ecclesiastically as Head of the Church, the legislature temporally, as guardians of our property and privileges.

Permission to meet and act under such combined sanction as is here intimated, would, it is believed, satisfy the most fastidious conscience in regard to the nature of the oath of Supremacy and the legality of the mode of management. For the Queen's Supremacy remains untouched, and the Synod acts under her authority within certain prescribed limits. Unity too is thus preserved; unity of action and design, of discipline and order, of worship and of power, of heart and mind. In short we should thus be enabled to

meet in a constitutional and legal manner all the requirements of our position; to provide for new exigencies and emergencies; to supply what is wanting; to impart energy to what seems inactive; to help the weak, to confirm the strong, and to instil generally into the whole body of our Diocesan Church vigorous sentiments and healthful action.

Now I am very sure that any person belonging to our Church, unprejudiced in his views and unbiassed in his feelings, and who is tolerably well read in her history and constitution, will at once agree with me in view of the above considerations, that synodical action at the present moment, whether in Diocesan Assemblies or otherwise, is not only premature but altogether out of place. On the first view of the question, a mind animated with zeal for the Church and entrusted in the extension of her borders would, from very eagerness, be apt to overlook all those impediments, and to desire at once the immediate establishment of a system from whose operation so much real advantage is anticipated. Our wishes and our feelings based upon our hopes of some future amelioration in our position, impel us onward and bear us in a straight direction to a practical conclusion, shutting out from our view at the same time all those obstacles and entanglements which intervene between us and the accomplishment of our object. But against this natural tendency to hasten towards a desired conclusion, regardless of obvious difficulties, Churchmen above all others ought to be particularly watchful. For we profess to follow a principle of Scriptural order, which not only pervades every part of our system and discipline, but is also visible in every instance of their practical tendency and application. Whilst we believe episcopacy to be of divine institution we desire to connect its concomitant advantages with that pious and devout sentiment which teaches us to fear God and honor the Queen,—to do unto others as we should wish they should do unto us,—and in scriptural phrase to “esteem each other better than ourselves.” A necessary consequence of this sentiment consists in a watchful and guarded caution lest in our eagerness to adapt our discipline to the requirements of the day we should overlook or violate those very principles which we publicly profess to inculcate. We ought to give its due weight to every consideration and suggestion that may in any way affect the consistency of our system, and to be excessively careful that in every attempt at either improvement or alteration we do not lose sight of the truth and venerable order which eminently characterize our Church, and mark her in favourable contrast to the rest of protestant Christendom.

While therefore it is clear that consistent action compels us to observe all order and regularity in our movements, we are at the same time fortified by the conviction that no human institution, be it the government of a kingdom or the laws of a republic, is necessarily as such opposed to the spirit of our discipline. Episcopacy as we learn from the past and the present will readily and easily adapt itself to any order or arrangement that may be thought most advantageous for the exercise of constitutional authority. In attempting to effect this adaptation in the best and most efficient manner, let us be exceedingly careful to preserve in its integrity the spirit of that system of discipline and order which we have received from our fathers, as embodying the faith once delivered to the saints.

CRITO.

FOR THE CHURCH TIMES.

MELFORD—ITS CONDITION.

No. IV.

MR. EDITOR.—It is sometimes matter of complaint, and perhaps justly, considering that a Church Paper is published in the Diocese, that so little intelligence is communicated respecting the Church affairs of the different parishes. With the exception of the annual Diocesan reports, which all come in a bunch, and the excellent communications occasionally from Chester and Dartmouth, we have little to inform us of what is doing beyond our own immediate locality. The remedying of the defect complained of, would probably supply an important ingredient, towards, at once, perfecting the efficiency of this Paper, extending its circulation and usefulness, and stimulating a wholesome spirit of emulation and zeal amongst Churchmen. Short histories of the older Missions by those sufficiently acquainted with them, or occasional sketches of the progress of the Church, from time to time, in the different parishes, as well as the noting of deeds of charity, works of piety, and solemn or important events, would not fail to be read with great interest; and not only so—but what is indeed desirable—would very naturally beget a personal and spreading interest in this our Church Paper, as the Record of treasured memorials, full worthy of preservation. While all this is readily admitted, I trust a brief account of the state of the Church at Melford may not prove unacceptable to your readers.

Melford was, originally, part of the extensive Parish of Gaysborough, of which it was a distant preaching station, occasionally visited by the Rector. What was then the sphere of a single clergyman, is now the ample field for the labours of no less than seven Missionaries. A few years ago, a section of this Parish, including Melford, was separated and erected into an independent Mission, under the designation of “the Parish of Manchester,” of which the Rev. W. T. Morris was put in charge, to be resident at that place. From this separation and the arrangements which followed, the district of Melford derived very considerable benefit; for the Rector of Gaysborough, notwith-

standing his most active, and unwearied exertions, had found himself unable, in the increasing duties of so large a parish, to afford that amount of attention to Melford, which its wants were beginning to require, and which the Rector of Manchester has since been able more easily, and more fully to bestow. And it is now no small proof of the past usefulness of both these worthy clergymen and of the people's appreciation of it too, that the latter have united their efforts, some very liberally, for the support of a resident Minister amongst them, that the Gospel might be more frequently preached, and the ordinances of our holy Religion more frequently administered than hitherto was possible, to their souls' health.

Through the generous assistance of our own Society, and of that for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Rev. J. S. Smith has been appointed, and is now established, as the Resident Clergyman at Melford. By him, in his new situation, all the usual difficulties of a new mission, and perhaps many more than are usual, are to be encountered,—many hardships, especially in the Winter season to be undergone,—and not a little patience and self-denial to be exercised. But, may he have the zeal of St. Paul to animate, the love of Christ to constrain, and the spirit of the Heavenly Wisdom to comfort him, in all the trials and undertakings of an arduous ministry.

At Melford there are three principal preaching stations, at two of which Divine Service is held every Sunday, which, together with other important duties, and the necessary travelling, occupies the entire day. At two of these stations there are also Churches. One is at McNair's Cove, which is small, but very neat, and whose simple plan has been much admired. It was raised mainly through the exertions of B. Hadley, Esq. of that place. The building is situated on a lofty eminence, and may be seen a great distance at sea. To the approaching mariner, it stands forth a witness of the Truth—the remembrancer of a God—the beacon in the storm—and the indicator of a happier haven, and an eternal rest. The interior has not yet been painted, but there are funds in hand nearly sufficient for that purpose. An effort has also lately been made, which has resulted in the purchase of material for hangings for the pulpit and desk, and for a cloth for the Communion Table. It is proper to mention, also, that a handsome linen surplice has been recently presented by J. Hartley, Esq., Church Warden, with the assistance of some ladies, to be used in this Church. Owing to the smallness of the number of Protestants at McNair's Cove, this congregation is generally small. It is however sometimes much enlarged, by the attendance of mariners, who happen to be in port—an attendance we feel much disposed to encourage, and for which free seats are provided. But, as Divine Service can not be celebrated in this place on every Lord's Day, and as the Church is much elevated, and at considerable distance from the shore, notice of the appointed Service is not easily, and oftentimes not at all, had by mariners and strangers in harbour. A small bell would entirely remedy this evil, and is indeed an object much to be desired; but so small is our number, so poor our people, and so numerous our wants, that we dare not yet promise ourselves its accomplishment.

The remaining Church is situated on the shore, about equidistant between the other two stations, being eight miles from each. It is about the same size as that at McNair's Cove, but has no spire or tower. The interior has never been painted, and as it is rather small, and not furnished with a Vestry, it is proposed to make an addition to the building, provided sufficient funds can be raised. There is a larger number of Protestants in the vicinity, than at McNair's Cove, but they are very poor—it is indeed sufficient to say that they are fishermen—so that I fear, that, unassisted, they will not be able to accomplish the proposed improvements.

The third principal station is on the shore, at the south end of the Strait. Here, Divine Service is celebrated once a fortnight, in a private house, where the accommodation is found to be quite too small. On this, and other accounts, it is very desirable that we should have a Church raised in this neighbourhood; for this end, a piece of land was given by the late Joseph Hadley, who, as a sincere Churchman, and for his many virtues, is held in respectful remembrance by the inhabitants. Owing to a want of unanimity here, and some having been unsettled, and led away by other teachers, it is thought it will not be in our power to effect more than a commodious school house, which might answer a twofold purpose. Nothing is as yet determined on, but it is to be hoped, that this foreboding will not prove true. It is however expected, that the timber will be hauled this Winter, and, at least, that a building will be raised early in the spring. At this station there is generally a large and pleasing congregation.

In conclusion, I would add, that at Melford a wide and deserving field lies open, for the exercise of true Christian charity. How many Christians have enough and to spare, while many poorer brethren are languishing for want of, not merely, bread natural, but bread spiritual, or the higher privileges and comforts, to be found only in the Sanctuary. Nor should the feeble effort, when struggling in the right direction, be allowed to waver, and perhaps die out, for want of encouragement and assistance. For the destitute, unfortunate, and unprivileged fishermen at Melford, sympathy is now sought—appeal is now made. Donations or contributions, however small, in favour of any of the objects mentioned in the foregoing statement, by any who may feel disposed to respond to this