

hope for any very great representation in the Clerical Houses. And in any case, the numbers of the House of Laity will always be the greater. Do not let anything operate to drive a wedge between Evangelical clergy and Evangelical laity. Neither can do without the other. Let us hear no more cant about lay apathy, and let us trust and confide in one another. And, in this connexion, let it be remembered that the Assembly is the successor to the Council; and let us take full advantage of the experience of such members of the old Council who may secure re-election to the Assembly. Do not begin all over again.

6. And over all, and before all, and after all, let us take the whole matter of the Assembly—its elections, its meetings, its members, and its measures, before the Throne of the Heavenly Grace. Let it all be in our constant prayers whenever Evangelicals meet together, as in such Conferences as this, and in all details of preparation. I do hope that Evangelical members of the Assembly, as Evangelicals, will meet for prayer before and during every session, as well as before every election. There will be, in all probability, corporate services from which Evangelicals, by the nature of their principles, may possibly find themselves excluded by the ritual adopted—a most cruel wrong. Well, then, let them meet together themselves. It will be quite feasible. But, beyond that, let there be constant prayer about every detail of policy. Let us seek the Holy Spirit's lead in everything, great or small.

### III.

BY THE REV. E. W. MOWLL, M.A., Vicar of Christ Church, Southport.

THE machinery of the Church of England needed improvement. On that question there can be no doubt. Some of that improvement is available, and more is possible by the passing into law of the National Assembly Act. On that score we welcome it heartily. The Act has a democratic basis in consonance with the times in which we live. It opens up a new avenue of approach to the laity in matters of Church life and government, which they never possessed before. It compels Churchmen to take a wider view of Church life than that limited by the parochial horizon. It gives the Church a far greater opportunity of making her voice heard and her influence felt than she has ever known heretofore. The very fact that the members of Parochial Church Councils are *elected* gives much enhanced value to resolutions passed by them, whether they deal with Church affairs, civic affairs, or matters touching the country's well-being.

At the same time, let us face the fact that the number of those, who up to the present have signed the Declaration and are on the various Electoral Rolls, is insignificant when compared to the membership of the Anglican Communion. We are told that those who have not signed are not so much indifferent as ignorant. Now

is the time to enlighten such. Let us not wait till somewhere about Easter next year, for a whip-up, but seek at once and all through these coming months to increase the electorate.

The Parochial Church Councils, for the most part, have not sprung into existence alert and alive—bursting with enthusiasm and thirsting for hard work. On this point we should not be too disappointed. Rome was not built in a day. Is it not true to history to say that the parliamentary franchise has invariably been given before the new recipients were ready to exercise their privilege and responsibility to the full. It will fall largely to the Parochial Clergy and to the comparatively few ardent spirits among the laity to foster the membership of the Electoral Roll and the Parochial Church Council, and therein to train men and women to think and work, and pray for the Church as a whole, and to produce, by the grace of God, leaders who shall be statesmen of His Kingdom.

#### PRESSING NEEDS.

What are the pressing needs of the hour? Needs which cannot but occupy our minds at the present moment?

1. *What are the statutory powers we desire for the Parochial Church Councils?*

(a) In the first place may I make a humble plea for simplification and not multiplication. Let the Parochial Church Council supersede the ancient Vestry—Dual control is rarely satisfactory.

(b) Let the Council have control over the finances of the parish, and the Wardens act as Lords of the Treasury. It is a privilege longed-for by the laity, and rightly so. It is surely their sphere. At the same time it is a task which has been and is loathed by the clergy.

(c) By all means let the Council have power to make suggestions as to the conduct of services (within proper and well-defined limits), and the right to make some representation to the Patron of the benefice as to who should be appointed to minister to them.

(d) Should there not be a recognition of the fact that the provision and up-keep of a Vicarage or Rectory, especially with regard to dilapidations, is a parish matter, and not only the often overburdening responsibility of the Incumbent? The method in use among the Wesleyans has much to commend it.

2. *Should not the Act itself be amended in at least two particulars?*

(a) At present the Lay Representatives form the electorate of the House of Laity. Would not much greater interest be aroused if a more direct election from the parishes was in vogue? The expense entailed is, I know, against it.

(b) With a view again to simplification—should not the Lower House of Convocation, drastically reformed, become the House of Clergy in the National Assembly.

3. *Organisation.*—Another pressing need is closer—and yet wider—organisation of Evangelical Churchmen. In and around London this organisation appears to be excellent. With regard to the North there is still much room for improvement. When will

the "seccotine society" or federation for binding us together and not further splitting us up come into existence? Let us not be so foolish as to go on dissipating our forces. A central headquarters in London for co-ordinating, for advice, and for information is essential to success. The National Church League supplies this need.

These points have been and will be dealt with by other speakers much better qualified than I to place them before you. Let me pass on to another matter of great importance.

4. *The type of men and women who should be elected*, whether to the House of Laity—as Lay Representatives, or as members of the Parochial Church Council. We want to see elected to whatever office, the best brains and the wisest heads, men and women of affairs, possessed with "a superabundance of sanctified common sense, and animated with a spirit of self-sacrifice, willing at whatever cost to home-life, time and commercial interest, to attend to the duties devolving upon them. They should be folks who know where they stand, what they stand for, and at what they are aiming, and yet have a breadth of outlook and vision which enable them to gauge the force, course, and ultimate end of the various movements in the Church. Probably we all agree upon these requirements. But let us remember that although we organise up to the hilt and evolve (on paper) a perfect machine, although we win elections, secure majorities, and gain the reforms, amendments and powers we seek, yet "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

(a) *Those who look back*. We desire to see elected those who are students of history. Men and women who will not discard but rather build upon the gains, so hardly won, of the past—those who will be true to Reformation principles and proud of their descent from the great Evangelical Revivalists, who did so much to transform our land at the close of the eighteenth century. Such folks will bring no mean contribution to enrich the life-blood of the Church in our own day.

(b) *Those who look right on*. We need, too, to elect those whose eyes look right on, whose faces are set Sionwards, who know that their citizenship is in heaven, whose one aim is the Glory of God in the coming of His Kingdom. To this end let us remember that in days gone by God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise: and God chose the weak things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong (1 Cor. i. 27 R.V.). When He wanted a statesman, a king, a leader for His people, He selected a humble shepherd lad, one who was faithful in life's little things—and not a clever courtier. He chose, I know, an Isaiah—well versed in the ways of the palace and *au fait* in matters pertaining to state-craft. Another time He chose a Daniel, an administrator par excellence, but He also picked out a herdman to be His prophet. The so-prayerfully selected apostles of our Lord—the men whom He so implicitly trusted to "carry on" after His Ascension were for the most part "unlearned and ignorant men," though I know the early Christian Church owes more than

she can ever gauge to the intense spirituality and great intellectuality of St. Paul. In those first days in order to increase efficiency, to perfect their organisation and administration, and to keep everything in true perspective, the apostles appointed seven men, whose qualifications were that they were of "good report, full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts vi. 3). Well will it be for the National Church Assembly if these qualifications are possessed by each of its members.

We desire to see elected men and women who are not merely Protestants (as that term is usually used) but who are witnesses for Truth—the Truth as it is in Jesus. We need not merely clever speakers, skilled in all the arts of dialectic, but folks who are filled with the spirit of that wisdom which is from above, and infilled and overflowing with the Holy Ghost. We want as our elected representatives not simply the student or the master of Church History, but men and women who humbly and constantly sit at the feet of Jesus and seek at all times to do His will. In a word, the necessary attributes of each should be—God-given wisdom and deep spirituality.

Above all the greatest need of to-day is Prayer. The Church at large should be roused to this work; nothing—neither conferences—nor scheming—not even the best-laid plans can prevail without it. The Parochial Church Councils, the House of Laity—indeed, the three Houses of the National Assembly, if they are to accomplish anything of permanent value to the life of the Church and her main duty—viz., the hastening of the coming of our Redeemer's Kingdom—must be backed up by earnest, continuous, persistent prayer.

If we would make full use of this Act of Parliament let us remember that our work is but just begun—the road is a long one—sustained interest and effort, and self-forgetting service are vital, but that prayer, humble and full of faith—prayer which continually seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the discovery and the doing of God's will, is absolutely essential to success.

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#### IV.

BY THE REV. CANON ALFRED ALLEN, M.A.,  
Vicar of Rotheram.

WHILE the Enabling Bill was before the country, and being debated in the Houses of Parliament, it met with opposition from men of all schools of thought, some of our most devout and earnest Evangelicals being amongst them. Now that it has been placed on the Statute Book by large majorities in both Houses, and, above all, was approved, all but unanimously, by our Convocations and the Representative Church Council, it behoves us all to set aside our opposition. We must take our places—all we can get—in the Church Assembly, the Diocesan Conferences, and the Parochial Church Council, and do our utmost to make them effective in the development of our Church and the increase of the cause of Christ in our land. The part Evangelicals played in some of the