

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CHURCHMAN.

APRIL, 1907.

The Month.

THE publication of the *Official Year-Book of the Church of England* (for which we are greatly indebted to the S.P.C.K.) has naturally afforded occasion for some ecclesiastical stocktaking. Both the *Guardian* and the *Record* have been calling attention to some of the facts and figures and pointing their morals. As the *Guardian* truly says, the statistics are sadly disquieting :

“In some most vital particulars they show neither increase nor standing still, but an actual falling back. This is the more disturbing in view of that growth in the population which ought, almost mathematically, to ensure an improvement in the annual figures. In the spiritual side of Church life we are not only not increasing relatively to the growth of the population, but at the best we are stationary, and at the worst we are slipping behind.”

In Ordinations, Confirmations, Communion, and Building the figures show a decrease, and when we inquire as to the causes the *Guardian* says that we shall “probably not be far wrong if we fix upon party spirit and lack of earnestness as at once the most obvious and the most important reasons why the Church is in many respects standing still or falling back.” Party spirit is then more definitely defined as “the intolerant temper which, although enjoying liberty for itself, seeks to restrain the liberty of others.” The meaning of this is perfectly obvious, though while clearly directed against Evangelical Churchmen, it entirely ignores the responsibility attached to those who have introduced

into our Church doctrines and practices which, as a recent article in the *Guardian* itself admitted, were unknown before the Tractarian Movement. The *Record* seems to us on surer ground in attributing the decrease in large measure to the ritual controversies which are distracting the Church and preventing her from doing her proper spiritual work.

“More and more of the clergy are drifting into the practice of Ritualism; the Mass grows in popularity; multiplied celebrations go on multiplying still further; more and more of the clergy take to vestments; more and more of our churches exchange their old simplicity for a careful imitation of the decorations and accessories of a Roman chapel. Is it here that the explanation may be found? The question will force itself upon the attention of any candid observer, and we believe that there is but one answer. Advanced ritual has its votaries, its devoted and devout followers; but for one whom it helps to keep within the Church, it drives ten away. At the door of Lord Halifax and his friends we lay the blame for a condition of things now becoming too palpable for the most optimistic prelate to ignore them—for the estrangement of the people, for the slow bleeding to death of the Church. And this is the period selected by the Church’s leaders for planning a revision of the rubrics which shall yield the citadel of Prayer-Book Churchmanship to the forces of disorder.”

The greatest need is that of a spiritual revival, such a work of the Holy Spirit as will pour a stream of truth and life into our midst. This would remove our differences and enable us to go forward in the path of evangelization and edification. In view of the approach of Whitsuntide, ought we not to pray the prayer of the Psalmist: “Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?”

A Parallel In a recent speech Mr. Balfour used the following suggestive illustration:

“Students of history will know that at the time of the great Mohammedan invasions of Europe of the West the Christians were divided into sects, so bitterly hostile to one another that they almost preferred the Mohammedan conqueror to those who were, though Christians, divided by some particular dogmatic differences. Well, they were successful. Heresy was entirely stamped out, and with it Christianity, and those countries are Mohammedan to this day.”

This has not a few applications to-day. It has a very clear meaning for Churchmen. The country will not tolerate inde-

finitely the present state of affairs in the Church of England. It is perfectly clear that the ritual crisis is something far more than mere differences of theological and ceremonial aspects and attitudes, such as were found in our Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It represents a line of deep cleavage between what is Roman and what is Anglican, and both sides cannot possibly be right. If the differences are not resolved, we may be perfectly certain that steps will be taken before long to settle this question. Mr. Balfour's illustration has also an important application to things educational. It carries an earnest and urgent plea for Christian co-operation if we are to avoid secularism in our elementary schools. There are other pertinent applications, which our readers can make for themselves.

It is with great satisfaction that Church-people

Clergy
Pensions. have learned that steps are about to be taken in connection with a Pension Scheme. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have just resolved, on the motion of the Archbishop of Canterbury,

“That steps be taken to promote the creation of a Pension Fund out of the existing and prospective resources of the Commissioners for facilitating the retirement of aged or infirm clergy holding poor benefices; and that a Committee be appointed, consisting of the members of the Estates Committee and of the undermentioned Bishops and clergy—namely, the Bishops of St. Albans and Liverpool, the Dean of Windsor, and Canon Gore—to prepare a scheme for the administration of such a Fund, and to report thereon to the Board.”

The Fund is at first to be limited to “aged or infirm clergy holding poor benefices,” though it is obvious that a Pension Scheme cannot long be limited to incumbents, but must be extended so as to include all aged and infirm clergy. The sum named as likely to be available during the first three years is £250,000. On the principle of thankfulness for small mercies we welcome this proposal with all heartiness, though something much ampler and more far-reaching will be needed before

Churchmen can feel that their duty is being done to aged and needy clergy. The present state of affairs is simply deplorable, but the movement of the Ecclesiastical Commission will serve to direct renewed attention to the imperative necessity of preventing those who have borne the burden and heat of the day from finding themselves either in the depth of poverty or compelled to seek the shelter of the workhouse at the end of their ministry. We are also glad that this scheme is being mooted because it will serve to direct fresh attention to the whole question of Church revenues. The proper distribution and use of the revenues of the Church forms one of the most pressing subjects of ecclesiastical statesmanship.

Disestablishment, It is clear from the recent debate in the House of Commons that we need have no fear of the Disestablishment of the Church of England during the present Parliament. The matter cannot be brought within the realm of practical politics in the time. The Government have already far too many pressing works on hand to attempt the most gigantic task of the century and one from which the greatest statesman might well shrink. It was not surprising that the Archbishop of Canterbury should, at the recent meeting of the Additional Curate Society, lay stress on this fact. At the same time, it is well to be forearmed, and for this reason we were glad to read the Bishop of Birmingham's courageous words at the same meeting, when he spoke with real insight and foresight of the possibility of our having to face the fact of Disestablishment in the non-distant future. In pleading for the attitude of renunciation as the true attitude of the Church at such a crisis, Bishop Gore instanced the United Free Church of Scotland and certain recent events in France :

“There was one aspect of the situation which seemed to have alarmed many, and yet it had filled him with an enthusiasm which nothing he had witnessed or read since the days that gave rise to the Free Church of Scotland had filled him. Here they had a great Church which, under right or wrong advice, had, at any rate, believed that at the call of principle it should give up its property—vast sums of money, absolutely necessary (as

would appear) for the carrying on of their work—give up an enormous income without a murmur, without hesitation, with a magnificent *insouciance*. Well, he said that, whatever despondencies might beset one's mind from time to time, that magnificent spectacle stirred within one a great hope. The French Church might be right or wrong, but from the bottom of his heart he prayed that when the time came—as he himself believed it would come, and at no very distant date—when some similar sacrifice would be required of the Church of England, they might show themselves as simply ready, and be able to do it so much as a matter of course that people would hardly notice what they had done. He said this (for in France the thing had been done so simply that it had almost escaped attention) partly because he was always haunted by the feeling that there was a wrong moral impression being produced on people's minds by the constancy with which Bishops and clergy stood on platforms in the position of those asking for money, with the result that asking, begging, demanding, was associated with the Church, instead of the idea of renunciation, detachment, giving up, abandonment.”

This is the true way to meet Disestablishment, or any other question affecting the Church, and if only Churchmen are actuated by such a spirit, not only no harm, but untold good, will come. One question meanwhile is whether Churchmen will be warned by this resolution of the House of Commons in favour of Disestablishment, and do something to set their house in order. If they do not, the end is not far or difficult to seek.

A
Distinctive
Vestment.

An important debate in the Upper House of the Convocation at York will be welcomed by the large body of Churchmen who feel that to introduce a new rubric permitting a distinctive vestment at Holy Communion would be to open the flood-gates of untold trouble. The Bishop of Sodor and Man moved a resolution, in connection with the Committee appointed to consider the questions arising out of the Letter of Business, asking that it might be an instruction that no alterations be recommended which can be regarded by any section of the Church as altering in any way the doctrinal basis on which our present Prayer-Book rested. The Bishop was easily able to show the real meaning of the claim for such a vestment and its connection with doctrine distinctive of Roman Catholicism. The Bishop of Liverpool, in seconding the resolution, referred to the very widespread

spirit of disquietude among the laity, and the feeling of uneasiness lest the Committee may make recommendations which might go behind our present Prayer-Book, and take the line of the Prayer-Book of 1549. It ought to be made clear, and that as soon as possible, by those who are responsible for the matter, that any attempt to introduce the chasuble into the Holy Communion Service will lead to Disestablishment and Disruption sooner than anything else. We learn without surprise that High Churchmen, though from very different motives, are as strongly against altering the rubrics of the Prayer-Book as are Evangelical Churchmen. The Dean of Canterbury has rightly pointed out that for the first time for the last three hundred years our Prayer-Book, the Magna Charta of the Church, is to be thrown open to reconsideration in every detail. The gravity of the situation can hardly be exaggerated in the present state of acute differences of opinion in the Church. Many Churchmen would welcome reconsideration of the Prayer-Book with a view to greater elasticity if there were any likelihood of agreement on the points raised. As it is, to reconsider the Prayer-Book will only be to accentuate existing differences. If, however, men wish to bring danger to the Church as at present established, and play immediately into the hands of political Nonconformity, let them introduce and make legal the permissive use of the vestments. The end would soon be here.

The Bishop of Winchester, in the debate in
 Dress and Convocation, gave expression to the following words
 Doctrine. on the subject of vestments :

“The vestments, if they are legally permitted by the Prayer-Book, would not connote any Roman teaching, but would merely represent the continuity of dress in some particulars from a previous age. The timidity of a certain section in our Church with regard to vestments, I confess myself, amazes me. Dress, after all, does not denote doctrine. The symbolism of dress belongs to a comparatively late age in the history of the Christian Church. Symbolism as applied to dress, such as you may find in the works assigned to medieval writers, such as Honorius and Alcuin, seems to me to correspond to the allegorizing tendency of the great teachers of the Middle Ages. Symbolism as denoted by dress is a very elastic thing, and I am surprised that so much

importance is attached to the supposed symbolism of dress, which in its origin was singularly innocent of such purpose. Certainly its origin preceded the promotion of the doctrine of transubstantiation."

We would venture to point out with all respect that the vital question is not what the Bishop of Winchester thinks, but what they think who wear distinctive vestments, and there can be no possible doubt that with such people dress does denote doctrine. Just as, according to the late Canon Carter, the eastward position is distinctive of the position of a sacrificing priest, so, according to the best authorities, the chasuble denotes the doctrine of the presence of Christ in the elements at Holy Communion. Yet this is not only not found in the teaching of our Church, but we make bold to say it has not been part of our Church position from the time of 1552. Not only is it the case with the chasuble, but even the stole is not without meaning to those of the particular ecclesiastical school that believes in a close connection between doctrine and dress. We therefore submit with all deference that it is this practical aspect, and not the purely historical aspect set forth by the Bishop of Winchester, that rules the situation ; and Dr. Ryle, of all Bishops, ought to know that it is not "timidity," but a pronounced objection to anything in the form of the doctrine of a real objective presence in the elements that prevents, and will prevent, Evangelical Churchmen from agreeing to the use of the chasuble as a distinctive vestment at the Holy Communion. It is in our judgment entirely wide of the mark to concentrate attention on the origin and earliest date of symbolism in ecclesiastical dress. The one and only question is the use and meaning of that dress to-day.