

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

have the unanimous tradition of the most tenacious nation on the face of the earth, and of the uniform conviction of the Christian Church down to the present century. There is thus no reason at present for so much as presuming to touch those questions which lie within the very citadel of the Christian faith, respecting the authority of our Lord and that of His Apostles. When, if ever, the belief of centuries has been clearly overthrown, we might then be compelled, with deep and painful anxiety, to approach such inquiries. But for the present we are fully justified in maintaining that the old faith respecting the Jewish Scriptures is in possession of the ground, and that the plain natural interpretation of our Lord's language respecting them corresponds to the soundest conclusions of critical learning.

HENRY WACE.



## ART. II.—CLERICAL LIFE IN IRELAND.

IT is not more than some sixty years since a clergyman and an officer fought a duel on the island of Innisfallen, in Killarney Lakes. The clergyman had given unintentional offence to the man of war, one of the garrison of the Castle of Ross. A challenge followed. The parties met on the lonely island. The officer fired his pistol first, and without effect, whereon the clergyman fired his pistol in the air, advanced and shook hands, and the affair was happily over.

The same "Parson D.," a well-known Kerry rector, happened to be in Dublin when the famous duel was arranged between O'Connell, who was a native of the same county, and D'Esterre. The parson was a young man then, and failing to obtain a seat in the coach which plied between Dublin and the Curragh, where the duel was to be fought, he travelled the whole way standing on the step of the coach-door, and was in time to see the fatal shot fired which slew D'Esterre. His emotion was so great at the sight of the spectacle that he flung his hat in the air, shouting, "Hurrah for the Kerry man!"

Curious stories are told of the same "Parson D." He is said once to have borrowed a congregation of the Roman priest to meet the Bishop of the diocese, who had come to preach in his church. The two clergymen were on good terms, too good, indeed, for the Church clergyman had allowed many of his flock to stray to the Roman fold u rebuked. Both were great hunting men, and the priest did not wish to spoil sport, so when a message came from the Protestant rector that the Bishop was coming, and he wished to show him a good congre-

gation, the priest after early Mass bade all the "boys" go over to the parish church for the day, and there never was seen such a congregation as that which crowded aisles and seats alike to greet his lordship.

It was far away in the North in those good old days that another eccentric vicar caused one outer wall of his dining-room to be taken down, an old chaise on C-springs to be brought in, and the wall built up again. In the easy old coach the parson would recline, and smoke his pipe and have his glass, and prepare his sermons. Late in life the good man married, and his lady, who proved to be "the better man," brought in two men with a cross-cut saw, who before the astonished eyes of the vicar cleared the parlour of the cherished divan. This was the vicar who introduced an ingenious mechanism by which, to the saving of the parochial funds, he acted as both his own organist and organ-blower, working a barrel organ by a treadle placed in the reading-desk!

Speaking of barrel organs, I well remember certain churches where there was no other way of accompanying the service. In one church there was an organ with a couple of popular double chants, to which all the Canticles were sung. The Venite was a difficulty, however. What was to be done with the odd verse? The correct thing to do was to let the organ, then, play the first part of the chant alone, and the voices came in on the second half. This often led to amusing mistakes, and the good old rector had been heard to say, "Boys and girls, will you never learn to *humour the organ*?"

I myself remember a worthy West-country vicar who was both simple-hearted and absent-minded. I have known him put on one boot and forget the other, and go to church with a boot on one foot and a slipper on the other. I have been in his study, and you could look down through the holes in the floor into the kitchen below. And he did not seem to notice that there was anything much amiss, or to be in any degree inconvenienced.

But these days of prose and Mrs. Grundy are making a clean sweep of the old eccentricities. The rector is almost an impossibility now (he was no impossibility, but a reality, thirty years ago), who brought two spaniels to church, and encouraged them to sit perfectly well behaved in the two open windows of the chancel, interested spectators of the service.

The days we live in are pruning down originality, and improving things all round in the Church of Ireland. And I will bid good-bye to anecdotes of individuals, and say something about the circumstances which probably would most strike an English clergyman were he to come to minister in

an Irish country district, in the Disestablished Church, in the present day.

The question of finance is one of constant interest. But it must not be thought that in the disendowed Irish Church the clergy receive their support directly at the hands of their people. Matters are arranged too well for that. The voluntary system is a well-organized one. Every diocese has a "diocesan scheme," or "plan." And it is provided that so long as each parish pays in its allotted contribution to the diocesan funds, the clergy will receive the appointed stipend. And in most of the thirteen dioceses any failure to pay is not visited on the then incumbent, but on the defaulting parish, which must make up its arrears before a successor can be appointed. This secures the independence of the clergy, as a general rule.

During the past twenty years £4,069,529 have been contributed voluntarily to the Representative Body for the sustentation of the Church of Ireland; and although the landlords are less and less able to bear the burden, their deficiency in contributions is, as a rule, being made up for by increasing gifts from the middle and lower classes. In some dioceses the plan is working well of collecting the sustentation fund monthly by means of envelopes placed on the church plate, and the collections are acknowledged on a sheet in the porch. In the old times, everything required for the support of the church, and for its repairs and cleaning, down to a sweeping brush or duster, was applied for to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners; now all Church requisites, as well as the support of the ministry, come from the people themselves. The amount given for missionary and charitable purposes has increased very considerably since disestablishment, and these funds have not suffered by the diversion of so much money to sustentation.<sup>1</sup> A large number of new vicarages has been built, and countless churches have been restored in the same period. The laity have learned to give valuable help, and the clergy and laity have been drawn more closely together.

At the same time, it must be owned that it has put the Church to a serious strain in outlying districts to maintain with regularity her ministrations to the people. The consolidation of parishes which has been forced on us has placed many parishioners in a much less convenient position for attending public worship. Afternoon services have taken the place of matins in a great number of churches, and many of our clergy have to take walks or drives of an exhausting kind

---

<sup>1</sup> The average annual income of the Hibernian branch of the Church Missionary Society for the ten years previous to disestablishment was £6,100; the average for the decennium ending 1890 was £7,490.

between services. One of the Kerry rectors, who has two churches twenty miles apart, has for years served both, without the help of a curate, every Sunday, driving forty miles between the morning and evening services of the mother church.

Outside Ulster the Church is working in the midst of an overwhelming Roman Catholic population. The difficulties and dangers arising from this fact can be realized by a little thought. There is naturally a difficulty in making the ordinary mind grasp firmly the fact that truth does not depend on numbers, and that the Reformed Church is true and must be faithfully adhered to, even though there be a hundred Romanists to every one Churchman in the parish. The whole social and religious atmosphere is saturated with Roman habits of thought. The clergy, monks, and nuns of the Roman Church meet you at every corner, the rubicund appearance of the secular clergy, as a rule, not suggesting the practice of habitual fastings. The clergy and Bishops give themselves airs. They try to make it appear to the uninstructed that they are the only clergy who have any claim to recognition as lawful pastors. The contempt of our ministrations is scarcely veiled. And on the slightest opening, as, *e.g.*, at a death-bed, when the Protestant patient is weak or unconscious, and some Roman Catholic friends are near, they are ready to seize on the dying person, baptize him *in extremis* (even in such a case as a death by *delirium tremens*), bury him with all the rites of the Church, and fasten on his young children afterwards.

What consequences may naturally be expected to flow from this extreme disproportion in numbers, and from the audacious claims which, in striking contrast to the humble position held by the Roman Catholic clergy a hundred years ago, are now insisted on? You will readily believe that, according to the way in which each man views it, either extreme bigotry or a perilous indifference to the dangers of Romanism results on the Protestant side. Bigotry, puritanism, iconoclastic zeal—such are the features of character and action developed in one class by the presence of Romanism. It is this feeling which has led the General Synod to pass extreme canons, invading liberty of individual practice, and leading many of our critics to regard us as a very narrow-minded branch of the Church Catholic.

The other result, which is not uncommon and much to be regretted, is the fatal indifference which falls on some of our people. They see their neighbours nearly all going to Mass, but it no longer strikes them as sad that this is so. It is as "natural" as the damp climate, and as little to be

altered by personal influence. And a considerable number of Church of Ireland parents send their children on too slight grounds to monastery or convent schools, where, whatever may be said to the contrary, a quiet effort is made somehow, or by some person, to instil Romanism into the Protestant child's mind. I knew of a clergyman who, to test the effect of the Roman Catholic National School education (with a conscience clause) on the Protestant child of eight years old, offered the child sixpence to say the "Hail Mary!" and it was instantly repeated. A child in my own parish was given as a premium for writing, by the nuns, a story book altogether written to support the *cultus* of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And another young girl of my parish warmly maintained, as a result of her education by the nuns, that the Church of Ireland is no more ancient than the time of King Henry VIII. Some of our people absorb by every pore in these southern parishes the Roman influence. And some parents call the clergy bigoted if they denounce this attendance at Roman schools, and the mixed marriages, which are not uncommon.

The reader must not, however, gather from the above that a serious leakage is going on under these influences from the Church. The truth is that there is a small amount of conversion going on each way. Every clergyman almost has had his losses and his gains. I should be sorry to express a definite opinion as to the side on which the balance lies. But the statistics of the census of 1891, which are not to be questioned, show that the proportion of Romanists has decreased in the country during the previous decade more than that of Churchmen; or, in other words, that the Church of Ireland forms a somewhat larger percentage of the population now than in any previous decade of the century.

That this increase in the percentage is likely to go on there is little doubt.<sup>1</sup> And at any time it may become far more rapid by positive conversion. Facts point in the direction of a growth of the Church and of the number of Churchpeople. The reader may have heard of Father Connellan, of Athlone, who some five years ago, having been directed by his Bishop to preach on transubstantiation, was so convinced of the falseness of the doctrine while he studied for his sermon that he left the Church of Rome, pretending, by the ingenious stratagem of leaving his clerical garments on the side of a lake and donning a suit of lay clothing, which he had previously hidden near, that he was drowned. His character

<sup>1</sup> No one can, of course, predict what the effect on our poor scattered Protestants would be if a Home Rule Parliament under ecclesiastical patronage were established, but the prospect of the effect on poor Protestants under such circumstances is not a hopeful one.

as a good priest was proclaimed in the pulpit and the press; but when next year he reappeared as a decided Protestant and began to teach his neighbours, no words were too strong to describe the falsity of his motives and the incorrectness of his life. He has found many sympathizers among his family and poor neighbours. His brother and sister have followed him in quitting the Roman obedience, and he is doing useful work in propagating enlightened views of personal religion. During the present year another Roman Catholic clergyman, Father O'Shea, has similarly quitted Rome, and is now zealously working in Dublin in the cause of the Gospel. All over Ireland copies of the Scriptures are being bought from humble colporteurs in large numbers by Roman Catholics. One colportage society sold to them 12,978 Bibles, Testaments, and small religious books during 1891, and the number sold increases yearly. Every colporteur of different societies has the same tale to tell—a wonderful and increasing spirit of inquiry and independence of clerical dictation. There is a little band of evangelists who go to fairs and markets distributing tracts and preaching publicly in towns where the population is a mixed Protestant and Roman Catholic one. They have been very well received, and have sold many copies of the Scriptures.

I believe, from many years' personal contact with the people, that at no time were Irish Romanists more willing to listen to the simple comfort of the story of the Gospel of Christ. "That's grand!" heartily exclaimed a young woman to whom not long since I was reading from the Gospel of St. John. And I have never had such absorbed and attentive hearers among Protestants as I have from time to time met among Romanists as I related to them in simple words the story of a free salvation.

So far as can be learned, the old cry against heretics will no longer be tolerated by educated lay Roman Catholic people. It is only a very ardent young curate who will now venture to preach that all Protestants are on the road to perdition. Most of them have got hold of the convenient phrase that "invincible ignorance" on the part of a Protestant will be his excuse at the last. The social relations between the clergy of the two churches are usually those of cold civility. In few places is personal hostility shown by the Roman priest to the Church of Ireland rector. And the like may be said of the mutual relations of the laity. Up to the present a growth of good feeling has been slowly on the increase; it remains to be seen whether threatened political developments will interfere with this. My belief is that they will.

Leaving the subject of the Church of Ireland in relation to

Rome, other features of clerical life in Ireland suggest themselves for consideration. The revival of Church life has been most striking in the last forty years, and has received many fresh impulses since our disestablishment. The determined opposition of our people to Romanism will always prove a safeguard against ultra-Ritualistic developments. But the growth of order, reverence, and beauty has been general. In my youth no one stood at the reading of the Gospel; the people knelt with their backs to the Holy Table or stood facing westward at the prayers. Responding was scarcely heard. The Canticles in country churches were rarely chanted; there were few churches, except in the cities, which could boast of an organ. The clergy universally preached in gowns and bands; the "collection" was made generally before the sermon, and the alms were collected in long-handled copper pans, which were thrust by the churchwarden from the aisle to the end of the pews, and afterwards were laid to rest against the rails of the Communion Table. The churches were seldom opened on a week-day; and, indeed, in a place which I very well know, the introduction of one week-day service was within the last fifteen years regarded as a High Church innovation—so much so that the curate resigned rather than consent to such a change. Except in the city churches, the Holy Communion was scarcely ever celebrated till the afternoon, and was not largely attended. Now, week-day services are almost universal, and the increase in the number of communicants is striking. The introduction of weekly celebrations is common, and has led in places to a quadrupling of the total number of communicants.

If the Church of Ireland has lagged behind her English sister in the development of Church life, this has not been in all respects a misfortune. What we want now is a more tolerant spirit among strong Protestants when an attempt is made to make some moderate change in the order of the services or in the ornaments of a church. Intolerance is not unknown, and painful illustrations of its existence could be given. On the other hand moderate decoration of churches becomes more and more common and popular, while singing and chanting are surprisingly improved. Our Church Hymnal has gone through very many editions, and takes a high rank among English books of praise. Surpliced choirs exist in a small number of churches, and cannot be generally introduced without controversy. The chanting of the Psalms is becoming common, and nearly every diocese has its annual choral festival.

On the whole the revival of Church life in Ireland proceeds steadily, but is not a thing to be accomplished without difficulty.



But it is being accomplished, to the infinite help and comfort of many hearts longing to worship God with reverence and order. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper all acts and gestures which in any way look Romeward, are forbidden by canon. It is well. But it would be impossible by canon to ensure that a humble and loving reverence should characterize every celebration. There are churches still where it is not easy for the worshipper accustomed to the solemn reverence of a simple and earnest celebration to feel his soul uplifted on the wings of worship. And, unhappily, the writer has been told on two or three occasions by English visitors of certain country churches where they could not bring themselves to communicate for the second time.

If there be, then, improvement in many places, and room for improvement in many more, we must hope for the outpouring of a spirit of earnestness and of toleration, of zeal and of moderation, under the influence of which the Church revival in Ireland will be real without being marked by excess and formalism.

The country parson in the remoter parts of Ireland is painfully isolated. He lives perhaps at a distance of from twelve to twenty miles from his next clerical neighbour. A bleak stretch of uninhabited bog, a ridge of heathery mountain, cuts him off from the next parish. He lives and works alone. The infinite help of mental and spiritual contact with his brethren is seldom to be had. "To stir up the gift that is within him is left to himself alone." Under these circumstances, do I slander my brethren when I mention that sometimes there steals over one here and one there a spirit of—shall I call it lassitude—both as to private study and preparation, and as to visiting of the flock? The stimulus of example, of godly emulation, is often wanting. The districts where the flocks are scattered widely and the clergy are far apart are the very districts in which there is most danger of lapses to Romanism, and most need of assiduous attention to the spiritual wants of the people. Here is a little "outlying parish," for instance, seven to ten miles at its nearest point from the residence of the rector, possessing a scanty Church population of some five families distributed among five hundred Roman Catholic families. Here exist at once the condition of danger to the faith of the Church-people, and danger of neglect by the clergy. There are cases in which the clergyman rightly feels that this district claims his special attention, but others exist in which he is known to confine himself to the driving over to hold an afternoon service, neither visiting the houses nor instructing the young. In this occasional neglect (for I am certain such cases are not

frequent) lies one of the great dangers to the fidelity of our people.<sup>1</sup> Mixed marriages, and idle curiosity leading some to Roman Catholic "missions," are other causes of the defections here and there met with and of perversions to Rome.

There is, however, one wholesome corrective to the evil of isolation which is everywhere present in the Church of Ireland. *Diocesan synods* are held annually in every diocese, and the clergy with the rarest exceptions attend these. The country clerk may be seen there now and then in homely gray shooting coat and trousers, but, as a rule, very much more "correct" clerical habiliments are worn. In fact, these meetings tend to the better dressing of the clergy, and good clergy wives in the country will not suffer their easy-going husbands to appear shabbily dressed before their Bishop and their brethren.

At the Synod the Bishop sees all his clergy and representative laymen (two to each clergyman, elected by the vestries from every parish). Here diocesan finance is the first business, here all diocesan organizations—for education, for temperance work, for missions—are expected to report, and elections of various boards are made, notably of the Diocesan Council, to which the powers of the synod for the year ensuing are delegated. The diocesan nominators are elected, three in number, who, with parochial nominators to the same number for each parish and the Bishop as president, form a board for electing clergymen to vacant benefices. Representatives to the General Synod in Dublin are also triennially chosen by the Diocesan Synods. There also any "burning questions" are discussed; and the meeting face to face once a year of all, from the Bishop to the curate, and from the nobleman to the humblest lay representative of the farming class, does good to all.

The Bishop also meets his clergy at an annual visitation. From long distances they assemble, and, though the gathering is in a church or cathedral, the meeting of the clergy on such an occasion is not altogether an official one. While the long interval passes slowly by before each rural parson is called up to meet Bishop, Archdeacon, and Rural Dean at the chancel steps, a low hum of conversation proceeds. When a name is called

---

<sup>1</sup> I must not be taken as suggesting that this slackness in the duty of parochial visitation is a general evil in the Irish Church. Very far from it. On the contrary, the life of the parochial clergy is chiefly passed in visiting and teaching. It is study, not parochial work, which more commonly suffers. As a result of the pastoral care given, it will be found that in Ireland there is a larger proportion both of confirmees and of communicants to the Church population than is to be found in most of the English dioceses.

aloud, sometimes a hurried struggle to get into the gown lent by a clerical brother is barely ended as the wearer reaches the presence of his Bishop, answers to his name, and waits for the praise, inquiry, criticism, or mild rebuke which the state of his "returns" demands. The Archdeacons hold no visitation. The Rural Deans inspect the churches and "glebes," as the houses of the incumbents are nearly always called in Ireland. Ruridiaconal Chapters are little known in this country; but the work of the Rural Deans is of a very valuable kind, in discovering weak points both in the structures which they inspect and in the statistical records of work done in each parish.

What about the appointment of Bishops and incumbents in the Irish Church of to-day?

The vacant parish is "filled" by the election of an incumbent by the board of nomination already described. An advertisement is inserted in Church and daily papers. Sometimes this takes the form of inviting application from those who desire the appointment. Such advertisements are not always pleasant reading. Take an example: "The parish of A. will shortly be vacant. Gross value, £180, with a house and five acres of land at £35 a year. Two churches to serve, five miles apart. *Candidates for the benefice must forward with their applications copies of testimonials to such an address.*"

Now, this seems objectionable from beginning to end. It puts the stamp of approbation on "candidature" for a holy office; and although these advertisements do not offer any very thrilling temptations to candidates, yet it seems to proclaim to the world that you must be a candidate or you will not get a living.

Fault need not be found with the principle of joining with the Bishop a Diocesan and Parochial Board of Nomination; but it is strongly felt that candidature should be discouraged, and appointments should be made, as a rule, from among those who do not put themselves forward. There is no other Church, Roman or Reformed, in Ireland which adopts this plan of advertising vacancies. Therefore it is clear that such a plan need not exist, and its existence is a wrong done to the sensibilities of the clergy and to the spiritual character of appointments.

With a few words on the appointment to bishoprics I shall conclude this paper. The Irish Bishops before disestablishment were nominated, as in England, by the Crown. And to the See of Dublin, at least, Englishmen were very commonly appointed. Under our new condition appointment to a see is made on the result of an election by the Diocesan Synod of the diocese or united dioceses. If one clergyman after certain

preliminary votes have been taken has a clear majority of votes of both clergy and laity, his name only is submitted to the Synod, and if he then receives two-thirds of the votes of each order he is declared elected. If two have approximately equal votes, the selection as between them is left to the bench of Bishops (Constitution, cap. vi.). For the first few years of disestablishment the choice was usually made as from the whole body of Irish clergy. The present Bishops of Cashel, of Cork, of Ossory, and the late Bishop Reeves of Down, together with both the Archbishops, were called from other dioceses. The tide has, however, lately, and apparently definitely, turned in favour of choosing a diocesan clergyman to rule over his brethren. The last elections to Killaloe, Kilmore, Down and Connor, Clogher, and Tuam all resulted thus.

There seems to be something to be said on both sides of the question as between these two modes of election. For the appointment of a clergyman of the diocese it may be urged that he knows the diocese better than a stranger could, that he will be probably the man who on the whole has best made his mark there, and that when a piece of patronage is given to the Synod it is natural that they should use it to reward local merit. But, on the other hand, it must be felt that distinction for work, learning, devotion to the Church as a whole, should qualify a clergyman for election in any part of the land. Now the best man may have to wait for many years for election to the episcopate if he can look for appointment no where except in his own diocese. One motive in every election should be the strengthening of the Bench of Bishops by the introduction of the strongest and best men of the Church, which cannot be done by strictly diocesan elections. It will, as a general rule, be most for the interest of the diocese itself to be ruled by one who has gained experience in some wider sphere, who is free from all local party entanglements and prejudices, and who will have a ruling power and impartiality not easy to acquire when, from holding the position of a brother and an equal, he is constituted in one day a superior and a father in God.

A RURAL DEAN.



ART. III.—THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

No. VIII.—UNWORLDLINESS.

IT was a cold night. It was a pleasant, roaring fire. Peter had gone through much in the chill scene in the garden. He was an elderly man, and it was hard upon him to have to