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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)

## CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN.*

SIR,—

As Dr. Maynard Smith has taken the trouble to write an Article in the April Number of the *Church Quarterly Review* in order to hold up to scorn my historical interpretation of the "Case of Robert Wright" with regard to the date of his foreign Ordination, perhaps you will kindly allow me a few words in defence of the statements which I made in my Article in the January CHURCHMAN.

Dr. Smith accuses me, without any evidence, of writing with a "controversial bias," but my purpose is really to discover the correct period in which to place Wright's foreign Ordination, from the precise historical data which we possess.

Now while we may admit that the documents are not absolutely conclusive on the point, I still confidently maintain that the available evidence is sufficiently strong and full enough to support my contention that this Ordination took place within the year May, 1581 to May, 1582, and thus necessarily within the first half of this period, since during the latter half of it Wright was in prison in England. Canon Maynard Smith now asserts that "the year 1578 is a suitable date and is consistent with the other data we possess." Now I submit that the evidence before us practically precludes the possibility of this early date. For in the account furnished by Strype (*Annals*, III, 124, 1728) we are given the official "Answers" which Wright *himself* gave to the "Notes of Matters laid to his Charge" at his trial in the Consistory Court in October, 1581. These official "Answers" were sent to Wright (on account of his appeal against his imprisonment) to examine, by Lord Burleigh, when Wright was in jail in May, 1582. In one of these official "Answers," which Wright gave at his trial, he distinctly "confesses that *Being a Layman* he hath preached and catechized in the House of the Lord Rich . . . Lord Gray (and others) within two or three or four years past." Now if Wright himself in September or October, 1581 describes *himself*, even *less* than three years ago, as a "layman," obviously he cannot have been ordained abroad in 1578? Also since he definitely states that he has been called "since the death of the old Lord unto the Ministry" ("Appendix," p. 40) (thereby indicating his foreign Ordination) we have additional confirmation that he was not ordained till *after February*, 1581, the date on which this "old lord" Rich died. I do not overlook the fact that Dr. Smith challenges my construction of this paragraph from the Lansdowne MSS.—that the "old lord" mentioned there must refer to the one whom Wright also styles the "late lord" Rich who died in February, 1581—because to imagine, as Dr. Smith does, that this expression ("old lord") *could* refer to a previous "old lord" who died when Wright was only 17 in the year

1567, makes as much sense as if Wright had said that "he was called to the Ministry since the *death of Henry VIII.*"

Moreover, when we combine this statement—"that he was called to the Ministry since the death of the old lord"—with the other definite statement concerning the actual date of his foreign Ordination (a statement which I notice Dr. Smith carefully omits to mention?) we get confirmatory conclusive proof that Wright's Ordination *could not have been* as early as 1578. For in his letter to Burleigh, Wright denied that "any Magistrate ever examined him" "by what authority I preached," but he adds that if "I ever spake the words," i.e. that "I was called by the Reformed Church," "*within the last year*" "*I might truly say it*, though I took not upon me *thereby* to do any *public* duty." This letter or answer to Burleigh was written in May, 1582, and thus it clearly puts the date of his Ordination as not before May, 1581. It consequently confirms Wright's statement that "he was called unto the Ministry since the death of the 'old' or second Lord Rich," in February, 1581. It is quite evident that Wright styles him the "old lord" as equivalent to the "late lord," because in the very next sentence he draws the distinction by adding "And this (present) Lord being desirous to use his Ministry, etc.," where he obviously refers to the third Lord Rich then living in 1582.

Canon Smith wonders how Wright could crowd into a two months', or as he is pleased to reduce it, into a fortnight's short visit to the Low Countries, "the study of Divinitie in sundry Universities at home and in foreign Countries." But there is no reason whatever why this "study" should not have been spread over several years, as Canon Smith himself suggests in another place. Wright may well have been abroad in 1578 "studying," although not ordained abroad that year. And again after his release from prison in 1582 he had ample opportunity for a further visit to the Continent for this purpose, since we know nothing of his movements or employments until he was instituted to a living in 1589.

Dr. Smith's reconstruction of Wright's life and career is all built up on mere and, in many respects, most improbable conjectures which are devoid of any contemporary evidence.

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