

William George Ward.

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No one who has read the contemporary account in the *Edinburgh Review*, or the later reminiscences of the same episode from the pen of A. P. Stanley, can forget the scene in the Oxford Convocation of February 1845. Meetings of Convocation are, as a rule, tame and formal enough, possessing little beyond a local interest; but this one was historical, and its proceedings anything but tame. The occasion of it was known and discussed throughout the length and breadth of England. The summons to it perturbed the peace of remotest vicarages. The roads converging on the University town from all points of the compass were blocked with coaches and gigs, four-in-hands, and bishops' chariots, floundering through the snow. Gibbon's famous description of the dignitaries of the Church flocking to Nicæa was reproduced in miniature during these days, when lawyers and statesmen, peers and parsons flocked to the summons of their Alma Mater to cast out a new heretic. "A great proportion of those who arrived," writes an eye-witness in the *Times* of the following day, "were men distinguished in public life," including Lord Shaftesbury, Archdeacon Manning, Dr. Tait, afterwards Archbishop, and Mr. Gladstone. The Arius, to whose attack or defence these hosts were summoned, was William George Ward, who, being a Fellow of Balliol, and in deacon's orders of the Church of England, had published a book containing such sentences as the following:—"I know no single movement in the Church, except Arianism in the fourth century, which seems to me so destitute of all claims to our sympathy and regard as the English Reformation." "For my own part I think it would not be right to conceal, indeed I am anxious openly to express, my own most firm and undoubting conviction, that were we as a Church to pursue such a line of conduct as has been here sketched, in proportion as we did so we should be taught from above to discern and appreciate the plain marks of divine wisdom and authority in the Roman Church, to repent in sorrow and bitterness of heart our great sin in deserting her communion, and to sue humbly at her feet for pardon and restoration." The work from which these and other extracts were taken, on which to found the "libel," *The Ideal of a Christian Church*, was a closely printed volume of 600 pages. It was described by Dean Stanley in 1881 as "one of the obsolete curiosities of literature," but none the less it was epoch-making in the history of the English Church. It fell as a dissolving acid on that heterogeneous combination of opposing systems, doctrines, and ideals. It threw a light far in advance of the spot which the main body of

the Tractarians had reached, and showed the goal to which their steps were moving. Whether they knew it or not, that goal was reconciliation with Rome, but this premature disclosure of the end both hastened and checked the movement. It checked the movement as a purpose to educate the Church in general towards reconciliation. But by the operation of this check, as well as by its logical exposure of the untenableness of their position, it helped to precipitate many individuals into submission to Rome. In this respect it was of doubtful service to the cause in whose name it was issued. Newman shook his head over it, saying, "It won't do." Yet all that Ward had done was to push Newman's premises relentlessly to their conclusion. He was a disciple whose loyalty of spirit carried him so far beyond his master that it approached disloyalty of action. What would have been the result if the "movement" had been allowed to ripen slowly to maturity it is impossible now to say. But it is not too much to say that Ward's *Ideal* changed its whole development. He "brought in a general action with a merciless disregard of strategy." The book was looked on by moderate Tractarians with dismay, hailed by the *Edinburgh Review* as an open and welcome acknowledgment of the natural terminus of Puseyism, by John Stuart Mill as a decided supporter of his views and those of Auguste Comte, to whom he wrote on the subject. It was elaborately attacked by Mr. Gladstone in the *Quarterly*, and the conventional Churchman, whether High, Low, or Broad, looked on it simply with horror.

After the usual war of pamphlets and rejoinders, the Heads of Houses at Oxford felt called upon to take action. Having learnt wisdom from their previous mistake in the Hampden case, they selected a number of paragraphs, instead of taking the whole book on which to invite condemnation. They proposed, after condemning the book, to strip the writer of his degrees. And in order to give competence to their work, they would set the University right in the eye of the world by taking the same opportunity to condemn Tract No. 90. A further proposal was made to define subscriptions to the articles as subscriptions to the sense in which they were originally drawn up. But so great a storm of indignation arose from all sides, with a danger of bringing over allies to the defence of Ward from most unexpected quarters, that the proposal was abandoned. This concession, however, shook off only a few. Newman kept himself entirely aloof from the struggle. Pusey made no

sign; but Keble published a pamphlet in Ward's defence. Tait, then Master of Rugby, Moberly, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, and F. D. Maurice alike threw their weight and influence on the side of the writer, though none of them accepted the positions of the book.

As a special concession to the seriousness of the occasion, Ward was permitted to make his defence before Convocation in his own tongue. Once again the English language was heard in that assembly, where Latin else was paramount. "His speech," says an ear-witness, "was exceedingly well delivered; boldly, clearly, with great self-possession, but the matter seemed intended *auditores malevolos facere*. Every statement, every influence that could offend their prejudices, irritate their vanity, or wound their self-respect, was urged with the zeal of a candidate for martyrdom." "After all," wrote Canon Mozley two days after the scene, "I really am astonished at the number of men, and sort of men, who supported Ward after such avowals as he made. If he said once, he said twenty times in the course of his speech, 'I believe all the doctrines of the Roman Church.'"

There could be no doubt, however, about the issue. The first resolution, condemning the passages from the *Ideal*, was carried by 777 to 391; the second, depriving Ward of his degree, by 569 to 511. There remained the resolution condemning Tract No. 90. But it was never put to the vote. When the Vice-Chancellor had read the resolution, the two Proctors rose, and, exercising their consular right of veto, "uttered the words which, except on one memorable occasion [the Hampden case], no one then living had heard pronounced in Convocation,"—*Nobis Procuratoribus non placet*. The Proctors of the year were Mr. Guillemand and Mr. Church, the late Dean of St. Paul's. There are those who say to-day that these men saved the Church of England.

What sort a man was he who was the cause and centre of this commotion? His life was published a year ago by his son, and now the second edition of it lies before us. This volume, which has alone appeared as yet, ends with the close of his life at Oxford, but for general readers it contains probably more interest than any which may follow. It portrays a character which is fascinating from the very contradictoriness of its qualities, a mind of extraordinary dialectic ability, and a development of opinion which began with John Stuart Mill, and after running through phases of devotion to Arnoldism and Tractarianism, ended in submission to the Church of Rome. He came up to Oxford from Winchester, having "never been a boy," awkward and eccentric; but in the University he found an atmosphere congenial and stimulating; he distinguished himself as a debater at the Union, as a conversationalist, and as a most consistent

scorner of examiners and examinations. For ten years he was Fellow of Balliol, and lectured on Mathematics. But it was outside the lecture-room that he sought and found his scope and influence. He captivated his contemporaries by the boldness of his speculations, while he startled them by the relentlessness of his logic. He shared with two other tutors in the College the supervision of the moral and religious training of the undergraduates. He made direct endeavours to bring religious influence to bear on all the undergraduates with whom he at all came in contact. But the influence was not all on one side. It was the time when Arnold was sending up year by year from the Sixth Form at Rugby a batch of disciples imbued with his *ethos*; impressed, perhaps beyond what was natural at their years, with the seriousness of life; from these Tom Browns and Harry Ewatts, the open-minded seniors caught not a little of the enthusiasm of their great master. Thus through his pupils as well as through his sermons, Arnold of Rugby became a potent influence in Ward's development. Having begun his thinking life in intellectual allegiance to Mill and Bentham, Ward, when he came to examine matters theological and ecclesiastical, had found in Whately the only tolerable guide and interpreter. Whately brought to bear on theology Mill's method of free discussion, and his readiness to question unsupported tradition and sentiment. It was from this atmosphere of "ruthless criticism" and doctrinal barrenness that Arnold set Ward free. "His influence was personal and spiritual. It was the influence of a high character testifying by life and action, rather than by argument, to the substantial truth of his teaching. It was Mr. Ward's first introduction to ascetic religion—to enthusiasm for self-discipline and self-improvement. The Rugby boys—W. C. Lake, now Dean of Durham, Arthur Stanley, Arthur Hugh Clough—were a sort of flesh and blood argument for the powerful living force of Arnold's religion." From this time forward there were two antagonistic tendencies in Ward's mind,—one to free discussion and abstract speculation intellectually, the other to the practical restoration and application of his high moral ideal ethically. He recognised in course of time that the two were antagonistic, and under the teaching of Newman, to whom in turn he passed from Arnold, he found the necessary harmony between intellect and conscience. But in the interval he was intellectually a sceptic, though morally a believer. The frank debates he entered on as to what grounds we have for considering Scripture to be inspired, as to the arguments for God's existence, nay, as to the imperative nature of the moral law itself, seemed to many rationalistic and irreligious. Thus "while his influence seems to have been entirely for good over those whose doings lay either in flippancy or

want of seriousness and personal ambition," there were other cases in which it was far from beneficial. It is beyond doubt that we have to lay to the charge of Ward's influence the melancholy shipwreck of Clough's faith. There was for some years a deep attachment between the master and the pupil; but Ward's criticism of old-fashioned natural theology unsettled the younger man, while his constructive principles failed to satisfy him. "There goes Ward mystifying poor Clough, and persuading him that he must either believe *nothing* or accept the whole of Church doctrine," was a common remark in Oxford. Unhappily he chose the former alternative, and in the distraction and pain that followed, English poetry lost hardly less than English piety.

Ward himself, having tried almost every standing ground within Protestantism, found nowhere the certainty and the saintliness he together craved. The condemnation of his book cut his bonds to the University and the English Church. He surrendered his fellowship, and a few weeks afterwards married. *Solvuntur tabule risu*. He had been known far and wide as an obstinate upholder of celibacy for the clergy. To his opponents and the anti-Tractarians generally this marriage seemed to put a fool's cap on the whole cause. It was unfair,—for Ward, honestly disbelieving, as he now did, in the validity of his Anglican orders, had no scruples of conscience to overcome. But it was natural, and the burst of ridicule and malicious contempt which followed on this supposed collapse of its leader, hastened the collapse of the movement. Ward and his wife were shortly afterwards received into the Catholic communion, and being followed one by one by the rest of the extreme Tractarians, put an end to the attempt to bring the English Church as a whole into approximation, and ultimately union, to Rome.

It is obvious that a man who could win the affection and support of such contemporaries as we have mentioned, and of many more of the best and noblest minds in Oxford, could not be either a mere enthusiastic idealist or a cold dialectician. Ward's character, as traced in his biography, presents a fascinating combination of opposite qualities. His almost exasperating mastery of logical method, his most illogical humour; his high spirits and his intense moral convictions; his genuine piety and his boisterous fun; his devotion to philosophy, and his unconcealed contempt for history; his almost childish delight in the theatre, and his almost Quakerish conscientiousness,—are all abundantly illustrated. His ten years' life at Oxford are an epitome of the progress of theology along a certain line, and when the history of the movement comes to be written, his biography will supply material only less valuable than the *Apologia* itself.

Christ the "Little Lamb."

It is surely noticeable that throughout the Apocalypse, not the (Greek) word for a lamb (*ἀμνος*), but that which designates a "little lamb" (*ἀρνιον*), is used. Thus, in chap. v. 6, we find, "I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, *a Lamb*, standing as though it had been slain." Here it is *ἀρνιον ἐστῆκός ὡς ἐσφαγμένον . . . i.e.* a "little lamb" or young lamb, such as was claimed by the Law for the atoning sacrifice, and so bearing the mortal throat-wound (*ἐσφαγμένον*) inevitable thereto. So in ver. 8, . . . *ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου . . .* So, too, and with the article, in ver. 12, *τὸ ἀρνιον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον . . .* Co-equally striking is it that in chap. xiii. 11, wherein anti-Christ is word-painted, he takes the guise of "a little lamb" . . . *εἶχε κέρατα δύο ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ . . .* With reference to this use of the diminutive, it is to be recalled that our Lord Himself so named His followers, *τὰ ἀρνία μου* (St. John xxi. 15), in some MSS., *πρόβατα*.

All this becomes still more suggestive and interesting when we turn to our Lord's and the apostles' Bible—the Septuagint, and discover the use of the same diminutive whereby to set forth the Lamb of God and Saviour of man, *e.g.* Jer. xi. 19, *ἐγὼ δὲ ὡς ἀρνιον . . .* Again, though not Messianic, our Authorised Version in chap. l. 45, which reads, "surely *the least of the flock* shall draw them out," is represented by *τα ἀρνία . . .* It must also be noted that in Ps. cxiv. 4, 6, the description is vivified, when it is observed that in both places the words are *ὡς ἀρνία*, "little lambs." The phrasing throughout also reminds us how St. John, the writer alike of the Fourth Gospel and of the Apocalypse, addresses adult Christians as his "little children" (*τεκνία μου*). It is surely of supreme dogmatic value that the relation of the Lord Jesus to the "little lambs," of the ancient foreshadowing sacrifices, is thus with nicety preserved and accentuated. What of pseudo-dignity is lost thereby is aggrandised by the affirmation, that He who bore the name of "the Lamb of God" was the antitype of the lamb-sacrifices and of the "little lamb" foreseen and fore-painted by Jeremiah. St. John had learned much between John the Baptist's cry, "Behold the Lamb of God" . . . "Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ" (St. John i. 29), and these visions of the Lamb, *τὸ ἀρνιον*, of Glory.

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