

mentions ; but I cannot find, secondly, that, in this connection, he mentions the occurrences of a period of seven days both in Genesis (vii. 10, viii. 10, 12) and on the Flood Tablets (ll. 130, 146). What he does say is that there is no indication or hint of the Sabbath being observed as a sacred day in pre-Mosaic times (p. 18). Now, the argument from omission is a dangerous one. Institutions of a religious kind are in sacred writings often taken for granted. Take the analogous case of the observance by Christians of the first day of the week which we find mentioned in the Acts. Now St. Paul, who is constantly writing about Christian practice as well as Christian doctrine, never in all his extant epistles writes a word about Sunday or its observance, though we know that he preached on Sunday at a Holy Communion service (Acts xx. 7). If we had had only his epistles, which are most, if not all, of them earlier than the Acts, it might have been argued with just as much validity as there is in the argument about the Sabbath that there is no indication of its being observed in Pauline times ; and the same might be said of all the other epistles. Such observances are taken for granted by writers of all times ; it is very seldom, for instance, that any particular notice is taken of Sunday or Holy Day in English history unless there be something special connected with it—as, for instance, the Battle of Agincourt being on St. Crispin's day, so markedly recorded by Shakespeare :

“And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered.”

*Henry V.*

*(To be continued.)*

---

#### ART. IV.—BISHOP STUBBS AND THE HIGHER CRITICISM.<sup>1</sup>

**V**ISITATION charges, as a rule, perish with the using. The only one that can be said to have become a classic is the primary charge of Bishop Butler to the clergy of Durham. Yet there are not a few which acquired considerable celebrity in their day, and may still be read with profit by those who meet with them. Three very different men in the earlier part

---

<sup>1</sup> “Visitation Charges delivered to the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Dioceses of Chester and Oxford.” By William Stubbs, D.D. Edited by E. E. Holmes, Honorary Canon of Christ Church and Vicar of Sonning, formerly Domestic Chaplain to the Bishop of Oxford. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Pp. vi + 360. Price 7s. 6d.

of the last century excelled in this species of composition: Archbishop Sumner, when Bishop of Chester, Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter, and Bishop Thirlwall. Since their time new questions have come to the front. Developments beyond the expectation of any of the three or their contemporaries have been witnessed, and the Church of England has in several respects practically undergone a revolution. The general position of things at the close of the century is reviewed in the charges of the late Bishop of Oxford, recently edited by Canon Holmes. This volume will prove, it is to be hoped, the means of preserving in a permanent form the "beliefs and impressions" of one who had many claims on the attention of the public. His eminence as a historian, and particularly his intimate knowledge of the constitutional and ecclesiastical history of England, gave importance to his utterances on matters connected with the relations between Church and State. Long experience in the weighing of evidence and in the handling of texts and documents rendered him a capable judge of new methods which have become fashionable in certain departments of modern criticism. Nor was it the least of his qualifications that he spent nearly twenty years of his life as a studious and devout country clergyman, accustomed to look at questions of the day from another standpoint than a purely academic one. A touching passage in his last charge contains some personal reminiscences, in which he acknowledges his debt to both of the great schools of thought in the Church. Like many other High Churchmen of the older type, he owed much to the somewhat different influences of his earlier surroundings: "I began life in a centre of Evangelical energy—a real school of life, narrow, it may be, even slightly Calvinistic in its attitude of dogma, but most devoted, generous, studious; too much self-contained to be uncharitable, and placidly recognising its position as a true and faithful guardian of souls, although not the only one; on the whole, in a minority of influence, but not ambitious, thoroughly pastoral, given to missionary and school work quite in advance of common opinion, and, above all things, devoted to the study of the Bible. I have often thought that, if I had had time to write a history of that time and neighbourhood, I could have drawn a picture that would put more modern pretensions to shame, both as to work and as to spirit."<sup>1</sup>

During his episcopate Bishop Stubbs delivered five charges: one in the diocese of Chester and four in the Oxford diocese. The date of the first is 1886, while the others were delivered in 1890 and at three succeeding triennial visitations. During

<sup>1</sup> "Charges," p. 347.

the winter of 1885, subsequently to the General Election which took place in that year, several schemes of Church reform were mooted, with a view to getting rid of some of the reasons alleged in favour of Disestablishment, and no small portion of the Bishop's first charge was devoted to an examination of these proposals. He returned to the subject on more than one occasion afterwards, his opinions upon it remaining unaltered up to the last. The watchword "Church Defence is Church Reform" he considered to be a formula with a double edge, since it might quite easily be made to mean the pulling to pieces of the whole fabric of the English Church, in order to reconstruct it on altogether new principles. To the introduction of laymen into Convocation he was strongly opposed. That the Church should have a council in which the learned and faithful laity could find a place might well, he thought, be an object of desire; but it must be allowed time for growth, and not be adopted as an experiment, and the definition of laymanship presented difficulties of the most serious nature in the formation of an elective body. He remarks on this point: "I hope that the use of the Holy Communion as a test of any kind will never be restored amongst us. It cannot be restored without a return to, and an aggravation of, the miserable abuses which were the cause and justification of the legislation that abolished it."<sup>1</sup> Many pages of this volume are occupied with detailed statements, deserving careful study, of the views held by the Bishop as to the peculiar advantages of the constitution of the Church of England, by means of which the Church is enabled to bear witness to certain definite principles, as well as to occupy a position of authority. In one place he protests against sneers at Anglicanism and the Establishment, and defends the two words as words of honourable history, of great and comprehensive ideas of blessing, of privilege and duty. Elsewhere he maintains that "there ought to be no hesitation in admitting that the Church of England since the Reformation has a right to call herself, and cannot reasonably object to be called, Protestant."<sup>2</sup> Much as he disliked the policy of a certain section of Protestant Churchmen, he was scarcely less severe upon extremes in an opposite direction, and the introduction of numerous novel practices was confessedly "a matter of great grief" to him.

The object of this paper, however, is to draw attention to some notable pronouncements on what is popularly known as the Higher Criticism in the charges of 1890 and 1893. Their republication at the present time is most opportune, and it is well to recollect that they were occasioned by circumstances

<sup>1</sup> "Charges," p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 841.

which had given rise to much discussion and not a little distress. A few months before the delivery of the former charge great unsettlement was caused by the appearance of "*Lux Mundi*," a collection of essays that ran rapidly through several editions. The writers claimed—or the editor claimed for them—that their object was "to succour a distressed faith." One essay in the book monopolized public notice, almost to the exclusion of the rest, so much so as to draw from the editor a complaint that the purpose of the volume had been defeated. It is entitled "*The Holy Spirit and Inspiration*," and in the opinion of many people was more calculated to upset faith than to succour it, being practically a formal surrender of the Old Testament Scriptures. Its author took up the position of, to use Bolingbroke's words, "a Christian on the footing of the New Testament." At his visitation, in the following June, Bishop Stubbs dwelt at some length on the questions raised. Referring to the process of analytical criticism through which the Old Testament Scriptures were passing, he remarked that the results "interfere seriously with the literary and religious beliefs of two thousand years, modify all definite theories of prophecy and revelation, and demand a readjustment, to say the least, of all existing theories of inspiration."<sup>1</sup> He went on to say that the unsettling of matters which had for all these years been regarded as settled has its further result on the acceptance of the New Testament Scripture, and even on the explanation of our Lord's language recorded there. For if the literary and historical truth of the Old Testament code is irreconcilable with the statements of the New Testament writers, by whom it is cited, it is difficult to acquit them of ignorance, and (where they found arguments on the misunderstood theories of authorship) of an ignorance so dangerous as to bring their general credibility into question. "And further than this: when our Lord quotes a passage from the Old Testament, and argues from it on an acceptance of authorship which is now assumed to be disproved, His own credibility, and with it the Divine and perfect knowledge which in His one personality He must, as we have been taught, have possessed, becomes a matter of doubt, and therewith the doctrine of the Incarnation, the complete union of perfect Godhead and perfect manhood in the one person of the Son. Such a result is a very terrible one—very terrible indeed if we at all realize what it means: not only that Christianity is not proved, or that its doctrine of the Incarnation is false, but that a God who would let mankind be cheated of the truth by their own

---

<sup>1</sup> "*Charges*," p.93.

best instincts, and by permission of a falsehood, let them be deluded into a progress of development towards a virtue that has no real sanction as virtue, and a hope of immortality that has no certain warrant, can scarcely be a God of love or truth at all."<sup>1</sup> An attitude of patience and avoidance of rash conclusions was desirable, the Bishop maintained, in view of the ebb and flow in other regions of criticism. There was no reason for attributing to the critic a "super-papal function of appeal," and "they who seek another rock because their hold on the faith which they have received has been faint, loose, slippery—whether that rock be in the hardness of self-conceit or in the self-assumed infallibility of a system that dispenses with the foundation of the Scripture—shall have great trouble."<sup>2</sup>

The publication of the charge was followed by a new edition of "Lux Mundi," containing a lengthy preface, the writer of which endeavoured to parry the force of the Bishop's objections. His main point was that Christianity was not affected. The New Testament might be considered safe, and "we are not liable to be asked" why so much uncertainty is admitted in the Old Testament, but need not be admitted in the case of the New. The canons of criticism were different.<sup>3</sup> Viewed in the light of later events, this answer to Bishop Stubbs was anything but a successful performance. The complacent assurance that the canons of criticism are different has been rudely destroyed, Dr. Hort helping to give the theory its death-blow. We are now told that "the rôle of the theological Canute" must be pronounced not merely indefensible, but injurious to the best interests of faith and truth. At the present moment there is probably not a single person on either side who would try to defend the distinction set up in the preface mentioned. In 1891 its author was Bampton Lecturer. He took for his subject "The Incarnation of the Son of God," and applied himself to the task of elaborating a doctrine of the *kenosis*, claiming to have solved the difficulty of reconciling an acknowledgment of our Lord's Divinity with a denial of His superiority in point of knowledge to a German or English professor. It is not to be wondered at if such an amazing paradox shocked great numbers of devout believers, while it was regarded by unbelievers as another futile compromise which would sooner or later break down.

Bishop Stubbs, when his turn to speak came, spoke out

<sup>1</sup> "Charges," pp. 93, 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> "Lux Mundi," Preface to Tenth Edition (1890), pp. xix, xxii, xxxix.

faithfully and manfully. At his visitation in 1893 he said that he felt this to be the most important of important questions. Three years previously he had been inclined to hope that the increase of doubt and negation might be stayed. But, as it so happened, "time has been given for the explanation of difficulties, and they have not been explained; opportunity for the reconciliation of inconsistencies, and they have not been reconciled; occasion—ample occasion—for the reconstruction of affirmative arguments which seemed to have been impaired by the negative character of the criticism, and they are (to say the least) very slow indeed in the process of reconstruction. Meanwhile, the leaven of misgiving has spread; the sermons preached in churches, where better things might have been expected, have in the mouths of some of the younger clergy, I fear, taken an apologetic and attenuating tone with regard to the great features of the faith; and the popular foible that nothing should be believed against which any objection could or can be raised—a weakness of public sense, which gives to the argument of negation a preponderant importance before discussion is fairly begun—has spread accordingly. Manuals of theology are drawn up and circulated, in which these difficulties have a place, and find far too irresolute and indeterminate handling; matters are treated as conclusively proved that are only negatively mooted, and the true suspensive attitude of real criticism is superseded by the assumption that everything required to be re-stated and re-proved."<sup>1</sup>

In the case of men with whom he was personally acquainted, and whose work had conduced to "these painful stages of theological thought," the Bishop was ready to admit their conviction that the verities of the faith would come out from the ordeal unimpaired. "I admire," he observed, "the strength of their convictions, but I grieve over the short-sightedness and I had almost said the self-will, or absolute selfishness, of their procedure."<sup>2</sup> He thought they understated the merits of the cause which it was their duty to defend, and contented themselves with incompletely realizing the issues of their methods of controversy. Neither did he believe that it was possible to treat the Bible like any other book, since "no other book comes to us with a claim authorized by the Church of our baptism as containing the Word of God, or containing so constant assertion of its claim to be heard as the Word of God, or as cited, *one part of it by another part, by a sort of textual testimony*, as of Divine

---

<sup>1</sup> "Charges," p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

authority, or as consistently upheld by the long consent of the Christian ages as the law and the testimony.”<sup>1</sup> All this meant that to us the Bible is a paramount witness of truth. We have been taught to base upon it all our faith in the unseen world and the way of salvation. The very fact, indeed, that it is like no other book “has led critics to apply to it methods of arbitrary, wanton, and conjectural criticism which, applied to Greek or Roman, or even Anglo-Saxon literature, would be laughed out of court.”<sup>2</sup> There was a wanton criticism against which we had to guard, manifesting itself in “irresponsible levity of hypothesis,” and so trifling with the Word of God. Also, if the result of the present speculations should be “the displacement or rejection of any considerable part of the Jewish law and record, it would involve the re-writing of the whole of Catholic, of Christian theology; and, what is more critical still, such an explanation of the way in which the Old Testament Scriptures are used in the New as would call in question the knowledge and honesty of the writers whom we believe to be inspired, and in some matters endanger the authority of the words reported to be spoken by our Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

After noticing some other phases of the question, Bishop Stubbs passed to the subject of the *kenosis*, and explained his reasons for not accepting the new interpretation of St. Paul's expression in Phil. ii. 7. He pointed out that the limitation of knowledge is a very different thing from the limitation of the exercise of power. Power itself has its essence *in posse*, its manifestation in exercise of will, while knowledge has its essence *in esse*, and our Lord's omniscience was of the essence of the personality in which manhood and Godhead united in Him. “With this belief,” the Bishop continued, “I feel that I am bound to accept the language of our Lord in reference to the Old Testament Scriptures as beyond appeal. Where He says that Moses and the prophets wrote or spoke of Him, and the report of His saying this depends on the authority of His Evangelist, I accept His warrant for understanding that Moses and the prophets did write and speak about Him in the sense in which I believe that He means it. Where He speaks of David in spirit calling Him Lord, I believe that David in spirit did call Him Lord, and I am not affected by doubts thrown on the authorship of Psalm cx., except so far as to use His authority to set those doubts aside.”<sup>4</sup>

The conclusion of this portion of the charge must be given

<sup>1</sup> “Charges,” pp. 140, 141.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 148.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

in full. Its solemnity of tone presents a striking contrast to the flippancy which characterizes so much of the new theology, and its warm language of high indignation has far more reason in it than the lullabies of those who would hush men to sleep while the foundations of Christianity are undermined. Bishop Stubbs ended by saying: "The doctrine, then, of the perfect possession but habitual restraint of His Divine powers by the Son of man during the thirty years of His life on earth does not allow of any imputation of ignorance or incapacity. If such imputation be once admitted, notwithstanding all argumentative safeguards and compensating considerations, the great Gospel of grace and salvation is touched on its keystone, and on whomsoever it falls it shall grind him to powder. Grant it; then, could Jesus of Nazareth forget, could He mistake, could He become confused in argument, could He be inconsistent in His teaching, could He be Himself mistaken? Grant it, and what safeguard have we that He did not forget, was not mistaken or confused, or inconsistent, or Himself deceived? We may ask no end of such questions. If the Saviour were ignorant once, how, when, or where does the limitation of His knowledge cease, and within what terms, beyond that of the self-conditioning of constant self-restraint, does it affect the region of His mediatorial work? Could our loving God—for if all else is a mistake, there must be a true and a living God—could He treat us so? I will make no apology for saying this to you. I cannot rationalize the doctrine of the Atonement, or weigh or analyze the blood of the covenant. I cannot draw the articles of the everlasting covenant of the Incarnation. It is only in a very distant way that I can fashion to myself my idea of what my Lord has done, is doing, and will do, as I trust, for me. I cannot read the doctrine of the Incarnation as I could a book of Euclid, or the Bible as a poem of Ovid or Milton. But I think that I know whom I have believed. I would that all men could think of Him as I do; but I cannot bear to anticipate a day when the Church shall cry out to Jesus of Nazareth, 'Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived'; or to the Unknown and Unknowable, 'Why didst Thou let Him deceive Himself and us?' Does it strike you that my words are too strong? I have indeed run on a long way from my starting-point, but He who will help our unbelief and increase our faith will surely give us grace also to observe a loving, trustful, courageous patience, until all such things are made plain, and He has guided His own into all truth."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Charges," pp. 152, 153.



Many people will bless the Bishop's memory for this noble testimony, and will feel that the example he set might well be followed more generally by the rulers of the Church. It was with justice that he described the conclusions of the new criticism as overthrowing our Lord's authority, and involving (if they were admitted) the re-writing of Christian theology. The wish expressed recently by a distinguished representative of the modern school that all argumentative treatises on prophecy, miracles, and inspiration could be thrown into the fire exemplifies the temper of mind engendered by the system Bishop Stubbs opposed—a temper of mind that would consign to the flames as useless lumber the evidential literature of the Christian Church, and break with the past to begin *de novo*. Young students under training for the work of the Christian ministry are taught to disbelieve. They are taught that the Bible has been discredited, that our Lord was ignorant of the truth, and that theology more than twenty-five years old is now out of date. It needs, however, to be remembered that there is one question which modern criticism has not tried to face. Is it true that Christ will come again? The truth of His second coming—an event still in the future and Divinely revealed—rests entirely upon unfulfilled prophecies. If the predictions of His return are to be believed, the whole critical theory relating to predictive prophecy falls to the ground. Are those who deny our Lord's knowledge of the historical fact of the Flood prepared to deny His knowledge that His own reappearing would correspond with the Biblical description of that event in its suddenness, and in (contradiction to the evolutionary philosophy now in fashion) in its interruption of, and unexpected breaking in upon, the course and order of the world? On what ground is our Lord to be believed when He foretold the world's future, but disbelieved when He spoke of its past? The persistency with which the question is ignored by certain Bishops and professors who have written on Old Testament criticism is truly wonderful, yet the whole controversy narrows itself down to this one issue: "As the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

H. W. REYNOLDS.

