

## MEMORIES OF CANON CHRISTOPHER.

BY THE REV. W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS, D.D.

(Continued from THE CHURCHMAN of October, p. 570.)

[It may perhaps be permitted me to say that as Canon Christopher wrote to me many of his memories, the material now presented is usually very largely and sometimes identically in his language.—W. H. G. T.]

### VIII. OXFORD: CENTRAL YEARS. (ii), 1871-1885.

#### LETTERS FROM DR. PUSEY.

ONE letter from Dr. Pusey deals with an important point in Mr. Gill's Lecture referred to in the correspondence with Canon Liddon, and it will be readily noted how markedly different Dr. Pusey's tone is from that of his advocate.

CHRIST CHURCH, *Christmas Eve*, 1878.

I am distressed to see that in a letter to the *Oxford Times* you have endorsed Mr. Gill's accusation against me of subverting some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and first of the Atonement. I venture to enclose to you some prayers suggested to the dying, out of the prayer from which Mr. Gill took some of his accusations. There are very many more. In his earnestness to find matters of accusation against me, Mr. Gill must have overlooked them, although they are close to what he selected as ground of accusation. I send a copy of them to you that you may think whether he who suggested them would tamper with the doctrine of the Atonement. The writer from whom they are taken is one whom the English love as almost one with themselves, S. Francois de Sales. One "who tampered with the doctrine of the Atonement" would not be such a favourite with the English people as the author of *The Love of God*, *The Devout Life*, whom the English read, as if he had been one of us.

I venture also to send you a sermon which I wrote lately as a University sermon. With it, too, doubtless you would find much to disagree; but you would not say the one who wrote pp. 40-42 "subverted the doctrine of the Atonement." In my University Sermons (Vol. II), there are two written to maintain the doctrine of the Atonement against attacks then recent. I have just been reminded that after my Lenten Sermon, "Christ in you the hope of glory," one leaving the Church said, "No one can say he does not preach Christianity." Among my adapted books, one was *The Sufferings of Jesus*, the one great Portuguese book, written by one who suffered much for Christianity in guarding the Portuguese prisoners in Africa from apostasy.

With regard to the aspersion on which Mr. Gill founded his grave charge, I had no idea that any would identify it with *Our Lord's Expiation on the Cross*. Those for whom I edited the book would not. It did not occur to me that people would look at the book simply (as Mr. Gill has done), to pick holes in it, or to cull out stones to fling at me. Expiation (as you would see in Richardson's English Dictionary) is a word in popular use. Could I have foreseen that it would give offence to any one, I would have substituted

some other for it, and even now would cancel the pages and substitute another expression if it would do any good. In my own writing I have taken pains, since I began writing some forty-four years ago, to use terms which would not be misunderstood, avoiding terms which, though right and true, were taken in a wrong sense. Thus, I used the words "made children of God," rather than "regenerate," because people in those days attached the idea of actual conversion to regeneration.

ii. In former days I used to refer to the Homilies for the use of the word "Sacrament" of any but the two great sacraments. My doing so gave even more offence than the use of the term itself. Yet the Homily on Swearing speaks of the "sacrament of matrimony," and the Homily on Common Prayer and Sacraments says, "Although absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sin, yet by the express word of the New Testament it hath not this promise annexed and tied to the visible sign, which is imposition of hands. For this visible sign (I mean, laying on of hands) is not expressly commanded in the New Testament to be used in absolution, as the visible sign in Baptism and the Lord's Supper are, and therefore absolution is no such sacrament as Baptism and the Communion are. It does not deny, but rather implies, that it is in some sense a sacrament.

iii. It certainly was an oversight that I overlooked the words "extraordinary supererogation," not thinking that people would think that I admitted the phrase in a sense which would contradict the Article. I have now cancelled the page, though I fear that Mr. Gill would dislike the change, since he will have a stone less to cast at me.

And now in the time when the angels first sung at that Blessed Nativity of our dear Lord, "Peace on earth, goodwill towards men," do let us try to understand each other as well as we can. It has always been a joy to me to recognize the truths which your friends hold, and to feel how much we have in common. It is a hard battle which we who love our Lord have to fight with those who deny Him. At least let us pray Him for one another.

Yours faithfully in Christ Jesus,

E. B. PUSEY.

Since writing the above, I have determined to cancel all the pages in which the word "expiate" occurs, although Bishop Taylor uses the word "expiation" of repentance.

There is no record of a reply from Mr. Christopher, but he would assuredly reciprocate the spirit of the letter, which is an interesting illustration of some oft-quoted words of Dr. Pusey—"I have always had a great love for the Evangelicals." In fairness, however, both to Mr. Christopher and Mr. Gill, it can be shown from the statements of Mr. Gill's Lecture that the terms used by Dr. Pusey were clearly open to the Lecturer's condemnation, and it is therefore a great satisfaction that Dr. Pusey determined to cancel these pages. The wonder is that they were ever allowed to appear in a publication intended for Anglican clergymen. The references to Penance, Supererogation, and the doctrine of the Sacraments, are equally opposed to the obvious statements of the Articles. Like Canon Liddon, Dr. Pusey never attempted to vindicate his adaptation of a Roman Catho-

lic book to the English Church, while retaining some of the distinctive Roman errors. Mr. Christopher would have been the first to appreciate and respond to the tender and beautiful words of Dr. Pusey's closing appeal. While always fully recognizing the agreement between Evangelical and High Churchmen on such fundamental truths as the Trinity and the Deity of our Lord, yet Mr. Christopher never allowed this to interfere with his solemn protests against what he believed to be the errors of extreme Churchmen in regard to the position taken by our Church at the Reformation. Dr. Pusey, Canon Liddon and others of the same school were frequently urging the need of unity against Rationalism, and Evangelicals were never backward in expressing their own abhorrence of anything that tended to subvert the truths of the Deity and Atonement of Christ, but writers of the extreme Anglican school were often forgetful of the fact that by an inevitable rebound Ritualism is constantly productive of rationalistic errors against our Lord's Deity.

But it is interesting to notice that notwithstanding these severe encounters, the personal relations between Mr. Christopher and Dr. Pusey were not affected, as may be seen by the following beautiful letter from the latter, written, it will be observed, soon after the events and correspondence just recorded.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD. *Jan. 1, 1879.*

MY DEAR MR. CHRISTOPHER,—

I thank you much for your kind wishes and kind present, which I shall value as a testimony of your Christian charity. But pray do not write to me as "eminent," or yourself as "inferior." It pains me so who knows myself to be nothing.

As for reading your kind present, I have just now my hands very full. I was finishing some notes on a sermon on prophecy, by which I hoped to waken some out of their unbelief, and some on an old sermon on Everlasting punishment, when, on the one hand, I find myself appealed to by Dr. Farrar<sup>1</sup> in his sad, fierce book, on the other, attacked by Mr. Gill as subverting the Christian Faith. So you see I have enough on my hands for 78.

You write to me as if I were a Ritualist. I never was. But I think them the objects of an unjust persecution, founded on an unjust judgement. For if they had been altogether wrong about the ornament rubric, the Church of England would have misled them, by omitting "not" in the so-called ornament rubric.

However, this is only by the way.

I have been thinking what I would ask you to accept as a New Year gift from me; but I mistrust anything of my own. So will you accept a

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Eternal Hope* controversy.

volume of one, whose belief I shared in all things, but whose humble loving soul escaped rubbing people up, as I did somehow Mr. Gill.

With every good wish for this and all your coming years.

Yours very faithfully,

E. B. PUSEY.

### THE BAPTISMAL CONTROVERSY.

Soon after the correspondence with Canon Liddon, Mr. Christopher sent him, as he had decided to do, a copy of Mozley's *Review of the Baptismal Controversy*, and received the following reply:—

DEAR MR. CHRISTOPHER,—

I am much obliged to you for sending me a copy of Dr. Mozley's *Review of the Baptismal Controversy*. I shall value your gift, although I have been more or less familiar with the book for many years, and have talked parts of it over with its author.

Of course, it is marked by the great ability which distinguishes everything that he wrote. But the method of explaining the language of the Baptismal Service by the theory of a "charitable hypothesis," appears to me to belong to that family of theological solvents, which is apt to do more destructive work than is at all intended by the writers who employ them for a particular purpose. You would be acquainted with theories of "accommodation," by the aid of which the great texts in the New Testament which, as we both believe, teach the doctrine of the atonement, are emptied of their natural meaning, by Socinianizing writers.

If Baptismal Regeneration is not the doctrine of the Church of England, the language of the Baptismal Service is very misleading for plain people. When administering Baptism, we are instructed to pray that "this infant, coming to Thy Holy Baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual Regeneration," and that God would "sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin," and then, when the rite is complete, to announce that "this child is regenerate." And we teach our little children to say that in baptism each one was made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." It seems to me that the natural sense of this language will outlive the subtleties upon which the Gorham decision was based: and that, if the Church of England had desired to leave the matter an open question, or to deny the Revealed doctrine of baptismal grace, she would have done better to omit from her formularies passages which, to ordinary apprehensions, seem to affirm the doctrine more explicitly than does the corresponding language of the Church of Rome.

If, unhappily, I did not believe in Baptismal Regeneration, I should lose my faith in more than one Revealed Truth besides. The Rationalism which denies Sacramental Grace is the same Rationalism (only happily less consequent) as that which rejects the Atonement and the Holy Trinity; and the arguments which enable it to achieve the one result are serviceable enough for the other. It is a great blessing that people do not see this, in very many cases; it is better far to be illogical than unbelieving. But—truth has exigencies which are beyond control.

If, too, I rejected Baptismal Regeneration, and yet consented to use the Baptismal Service of the Church of England, I should not feel at liberty to denounce Ritualists, or any other persons, on the score of unfaithfulness to the *natural* sense of our formularies.

In saying this, I hope not to be thought insensible to the kind spirit which dictates, I am very sure, your New Year's gift.

Mr. Christopher always felt that Mozley's treatment was a more than sufficient answer to Canon Liddon's position, and he showed this by the circulation of extracts from Mozley's writings, in pamphlet form, under the title of "Baptismal Regeneration." The extracts had a remarkably large circulation, and were regarded as so important and convincing that they were subsequently reprinted and reissued by Canon Hay Aitken. The fact that the Gorham Judgment led the able Tractarian, J. B. Mozley, afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, to examine the whole question, and to change his views, was something that Tractarians never really met, and the position, in spite of Canon Liddon's letter, is truly summed up by Balleine in his *History of the Evangelical Party*.

Gorham was instituted to his benefice, and lived and worked quietly there until his death. The triumph of the Evangelicals on this point was complete. Not only had they convinced the judges, but they had convinced many of their opponents also. Archdeacon Manning, Archdeacon Wilberforce, and many other Tractarians, seceded to Rome rather than remain in a Church which was proved not to enforce the Roman doctrine of Baptism. On the other hand, one of the ablest Tractarians, J. B. Mozley, later the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, who was now editor of the *Christian Remembrancer*, which had succeeded the *British Critic* as the monthly organ of the party, was so impressed by the evidence brought forward that he entirely changed his opinions on this subject, and his *Review of the Baptismal Controversy* is still the ablest defence of most of the points for which the Evangelicals were contending (p. 227).

Canon Christopher all through his life laid the greatest stress on this question of Baptismal Regeneration, which he felt was the basis of all the errors connected with Ritualism. As an instance of this strong conviction, it may be mentioned that as late as 1910, when in his ninety-first year, he read Dr. Eugène Stock's volume of *Reminiscences* and wrote to the author pointing out the omission of all reference to Mozley's change of view. This elicited from Dr. Stock the following reply:—

"I entirely agree with you I *ought* to have mentioned Mozley's recantation a most important event. My difficulty is, every page of the little book has to get in things that ought to be there, somehow, but my space was strictly limited! However, when I have to prepare for a new edition, I will sacrifice something in order to make room for the Mozley incident. I am grateful to you for pointing out my omission."

In sending me a copy of Dr. Stock's letter, of which the above is an extract, Canon Christopher made a further reference to the subject, which showed how important he felt it to be.

## CHURCH ASSOCIATION.

All through his long life in Oxford Mr. Christopher was connected with the Church Association, latterly as a Vice-President. This does not mean that he approved of everything the Church Association did, for it is known to some that he did not, but he never would allow such differences of opinion to lead to the severance of his connection with the Association. On the contrary, he continually upheld it as an organization which was founded for the express purpose of discovering the law of the Church of England, and of getting the Bishops to act in defence of the Church. He often pointed out that the Church Association was formed subsequent to the English Church Union, and for the express purpose of enabling the Bishops to know the exact legal position with regard to controverted points of ritual. Mr. Christopher was particularly fond of quoting certain words of the President of the E.C.U. before the Church Association took up legal proceedings :—

The English Church Union only defended what the law of the Church of England ordered or permitted. Of course, there were some points in which the law was not very clear, but whatever the Courts of law should decide the English Church Union would of course be bound by.<sup>1</sup>

It is sometimes forgotten, when the Church Association is charged with "persecution," that the English Church Union put forth threats and made preparations before the Church Association took up legal proceedings.

## A CLOUD.

Mr. Christopher almost incurred the "woe" pronounced on those of whom all men speak well. But he did not quite escape, for in 1882 he suffered from a gross libel, which, however, only served to show the esteem in which he was held by all parties in Oxford. The result of the trial he had to institute in self-defence was a foregone conclusion. The person pleaded guilty at the Reading Assizes, and Mr. Christopher recommended him to mercy. As he had already been three months in prison, he received only three additional months' punishment. Unfortunately, the trouble did not cease with the trial, for scurrilous post cards came from time to time for years afterwards; indeed, up to the time of the person's death. One incident may be recorded as eminently characteristic

<sup>1</sup> The President of the English Church Union, at a meeting held in December, 1866.

of Mr. Christopher. When the trial was over and the Counsel were together in the Barristers' Room, he suggested thanksgiving to God for the result, and at once went down on his knees, followed by the members of the legal profession. One who was present humorously remarked to me that this was probably a novel experience for them! In Oxford there was a very remarkable sequel to the trial in the form of an address of confidence signed by almost all the leading personages of the University and city. In the long list of names are included the Vice-Chancellor, who at that time was Dr. Jowett, master of Balliol, all the Canons of Christ Church, Heads of Colleges, a large number of University Professors and Tutors, Graduates and Undergraduates, and people in the city, from Roman Catholics to Plymouth Brethren. The wording of the address was as follows:—

TO THE REV. A. M. W. CHRISTOPHER, M.A., RECTOR OF ST.  
ALDATE'S, OXFORD.

*March 10, 1884.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—We, the undersigned Graduates and Undergraduates of the University of Oxford, are desirous to express our deep sympathy with you at this time of sharp sorrow. We think it scarcely necessary to assure you of our undiminished confidence and attachment—each year you have lived or ministered amongst us has increased our esteem for you. We are, dear Sir, Sincerely and affectionately yours,

If the printed list of nearly 200 names (besides a very large number of B.A.'s and Undergraduates) could be given, it would be seen to include the best known men in the Church and University from that day to this. No greater testimony could be given to the real worth of the man. In reference to this episode, the Dean of St. David's (Dr. Allan Smith) wrote to me the following reminiscence:—

Probably few men have surpassed Canon Christopher in the power of gaining the deep personal respect of his opponents. As a striking proof of this, on the occasion of a most scurrilous attack on his character, a testimonial letter was signed by almost every prominent member of the University (many of whom Canon Christopher had strongly opposed in his teaching and work), testifying most cordially to the unquestioned blamelessness and purity of his life. That printed letter I have carefully kept for nearly thirty years as, in my opinion, one of the most remarkable letters ever published in Oxford.

#### TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY.

This part of Mr. Christopher's life may fitly close by a reference to the twenty-fifth Anniversary of his coming to St. Aldate's, when his parishioners and friends made him a presentation of a fine oil

painting of himself, together with a purse of 110 guineas. Those who have seen the painting in the Rectory dining-room will recall the coal-black hair, so different from the white hair of later days. Mr. Christopher was then, perhaps, at the height of his influence in Oxford. The inscription on the painting bore these words :—

PRESENTED, together with a purse of 110 guineas, to the Rev. A. M. W. Christopher, M.A., Rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford, by a large number of parishioners, members of the congregation, and personal friends, in recognition of his earnest and loving labours amongst them for upwards of five and twenty years. *January 1st, 1885.*

W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS.

(*To be concluded.*)

#### CANON WILSON'S SERMONS.

CHRIST'S THOUGHT OF GOD. Ten sermons preached in Worcester Cathedral in 1919. By James M. Wilson, M.A., Canon of Worcester. London: *Macmillan & Co., Ltd.* 5s. net.

Canon Wilson stands for Broad Churchmanship of the older school, and, if we do not always agree with him,—if we cannot endorse such views as those he holds on the Atonement, for example,—we can at least admire the lucidity and courage with which he states his opinions. He is up against the “childish anthropomorphic conception of God which produced and haunts some of our formulas and devotional language,” and he holds that “it is destroying the credibility of the teaching of the Church.” The view which Canon Wilson has given expression to in his Hulsean Lectures and in his little book, *How Christ Saves Us*, reappear in these pages. “Christ came not to save men from God's punishment, but from their own sins” (p. 42), but it remains true that in saving them from their sins He also saved them from the penalty due to those sins. No doubt Canon Wilson's views are a revolt against a crude method of stating the doctrine of the Atonement,—“the old thought of the method by which Christ's life and death saved us, and what He saved us from, was determined entirely by man's conception of God as a superhuman individual despot, angry at man's disobedience and threatening dire punishment” (p. 41). Perhaps the most useful sermon is the one on the Athanasian Creed, or the *Quicumque vult* as he very properly prefers that we should call it, since, as he shows, it is not strictly speaking a creed at all, but a canticle or hymn divided into verses pointed for chanting. In these sermons Canon Wilson is certainly at his best, and he has thrown a good deal of useful light upon the teaching of our Lord with regard to God, and he approaches the crooked and the straight, the difficult and the easy considerations, in a spirit of profound reverence. We are one with him in the conviction that “in a deeper and truer thought of God lies the one hope of the world; and where shall it be looked for except in Christ's thought of God? ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’”

