

## OUR ANGLICAN HERITAGE.

[The third and fourth of a course of four sermons preached in Peterborough Cathedral during the month of August, 1933.]

By THE REV. A. J. TAIT, D.D., Canon of Peterborough:

## III.

*Now ye are the body of Christ and severally members thereof.*—  
1 Corinthians xii. 27.

THE nineteenth century stands out as a conspicuous epoch in the religious history of our nation, and for the Anglican Communion as a period of revival that powerfully enriched the spiritual heritage into which we have entered; and this through two movements of outstanding religious influence, the Evangelical and the Tractarian Movements, and a third of intellectual influence, the Broad Church Movement. I have paid tribute to the Evangelical Movement; my purpose now is to pay tribute to the Tractarian or Oxford Movement. The ideals and achievements of the Tractarian Movement have been so ably and amply set before us both in the pulpit and in the Press during the past year that it would be almost impertinent and certainly unnecessary for me to try to cover the ground again now. What I shall attempt to do is to relate the Movement to our heritage, and to bear my testimony to its characteristic contribution.

Up to the time when the Movement originated the Evangelicals in the Church of England, who had been at work for a hundred years, had paid no attention to Church politics and the ecclesiastical side of religion. They laid no particular stress on the conception of the Church as the visible body of Christ. They were not indifferent to the Sacraments, but they hardly got beyond the idea of their being ordinances for the individual's use and help; they did not seem to attach importance to their being the ordinances of the Christian society, social ordinances through which the Church maintains her corporate life, realises her fellowship, and exercises her discipline. Further, in worship the Evangelicals practised extreme and almost severe simplicity; they were imbued with the Puritan dislike of externalism, and the fear of its becoming a hindrance to the harder spiritual exercise of walking by faith and not by sight.

That which is physical and visible can be a help or a hindrance to the spiritual, and there is a point up to which it can help and beyond which it can hinder; and that point varies with our various personalities. There is therefore something to be said for the attitude of reserve, for it does aim at keeping the spiritual demand of worship in the forefront. For illustration of the point we only have to remember that when we wish in prayer to realise the unseen we instinctively close our eyes.

But over against this attitude we have to set the fact that individual religion is not the whole of the matter: for there is the Church, the Christian society to which we have been admitted, and through which we have received everything that belongs to our religion, the society which has its corporate life to be expressed, its corporate obligations to be fulfilled, its corporate discipline to be exercised, its corporate worship to be offered.

Moreover, for her expression of worship the Church should be able and ought to claim all the powers that man possesses for the setting forth of God's glory. I recognise the subtle danger of allowing the motive of setting forth God's glory to become nominal and to be lost in the motive of selfish gratification. It is pleasing to listen to good music, to see well-ordered ceremonies, to handle vessels of gold and silver; and there is a lurking possibility of our allowing our own enjoyment to take the place of the true motive. Nevertheless, I count it individualism or timidity to refuse to claim for the service of the Church in glorifying the Name of God the best that architectural, musical and æsthetic culture can produce.

In the early years of the nineteenth century there were minds at work which were growing increasingly dissatisfied with things as they were in these respects of the Church's life and worship: and I think that this must have been in the mind of the Bishop of Durham when he used the following words in a recent sermon on the Oxford Movement: *By assisting* (so he was reported, but I think that he may have used the word "asserting") *the character and claim of the Catholic Church, the Oxford Movement succeeded in recovering from long disregard a truth of cardinal importance, the neglect of which had lowered the standard of faith and conduct in the Church of England, alienated many genuinely Christian souls, and gone far to paralyse the Church's spiritual witness to the nation.*

Yes, I agree, if (as I think) that closing stricture refers to the Church as represented, not by the earnest men who had been quickened to new life and stirred to spiritual and philanthropic activity through the Evangelical revival, but by the official and general attitude. It only required a match to produce the blaze, and the match was Keble's sermon preached in the University Pulpit at Oxford in 1833. The effect was instantaneous, and there arose the great Movement that stressed the institutional, sacramental, corporate aspects of religion, and led by degrees to the æsthetic revival in our Churches and Services.

The Movement produced devoted and enthusiastic men, and fanned by the storms of opposition it spread rapidly, and has permeated the Church with its influence. Like the Evangelical Movement it has been attended by losses to the Church of England. It was perhaps inevitable that some of the leaders should look back to the time of the Church's dominance, dogmatic authority, and (as far as the West was concerned) visible unity under the Papacy: and it easily followed that they desired to recover doctrines and practices associated with the mediæval

authority, power and unity; and it easily followed again that they cultivated a hatred of the Reformation, and eventually overcame their scruples about submission to the Papal claims: and the Roman Church began, and has continued to reap a harvest of converts ever since. Within our own Communion, moreover, there has emerged a section of people who seem to reserve their admiration for the Church of Rome and their toleration for the Church of England, and approximate as closely as they can to Roman doctrine and ceremonial. Further, I would not be in an honest position if I do not say that the recent celebrations of the Anglo-Catholic organisation in London (even with the restraining influence of the Bishop of London) exhibited features which cause me serious misgiving.

But I would feign believe that these divergences from our Reformation and Caroline traditions do not represent the main body of the Churchpeople who claim to be in the tradition of the Tractarians; and in any case my present purpose is not criticism; I wish rather to speak of what I conceive to be the permanent contributions which the Movement has made to our heritage.

In view of the recent commemorations I shall not attempt an inclusive statement of achievements: I shall speak of some ways in which (as I think) our standards and ideals of worship have been raised by the Movement. I claim then that it has given to the Church a quickened and deepened sense and expression of awe and reverence. I have in mind particularly the behaviour and attitude of people in the house of God. To put the matter in a practical form, if a man comes into a church in much the same way as that in which he might enter a place of entertainment, or if a man stands with his hand in his pocket during the singing of Psalm or hymn or during the recital of the Creed, I think that you may take it for granted that he has not come under the influence of the Oxford Movement.

I claim, further, that the sense of what is worthy of the glory of God in our church arrangements and furnishing and Services has been educated, developed, enriched. And most of all I claim that our conception of the place which the Holy Communion should occupy in our lives and worship has been enlightened and enlarged. Let me not be misunderstood: if I may speak for myself, I would say that it does not mean that I have participated in the doctrinal changes through which Newman, e.g., or Pusey reached interpretations which I reject; nor is it that it was from the Oxford Movement that I learned to appreciate the Holy Communion as a means of grace; I was taught that both by example and by precept in my Evangelical home; but it is that I have learned from the Oxford Movement a larger view of its use, and I now see the Holy Communion, not only as a means of grace for the individual, but as the centre of the Church's corporate worship, and the principal expression of the Church's fellowship. I have also learned to associate my love of a simple Celebration (and how I detest the designation of it as "low"! ) with a complementary love of

the Choral Eucharist. I have, moreover, cast off a prejudice against being present for prayers and worship without communicating, when I have communicated at an earlier Celebration. We owe it to the Reformation that we have recovered communion as the norm in place of attendance at the Mass, and our Liturgy lays unmistakable insistence on the act of communion as the ordinance of the Lord (or, if you like, the Lord's Service), the memorial which He bade us make, the central expression of the sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving and self which we have to offer. And I love to think in that connection of the Psalmist's words, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He has done unto me?* and I can almost imagine the Psalmist being projected in thought into the Christian Church as he replies, *I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, yea, in the presence of all His people. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call upon the name of the Lord; in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.* But now that this is established among us, and so long as communion of the people is the genuine purpose of the Celebration I can welcome (and I owe it to my Tractarian friends that I can) the presence of worshippers who for one reason or another do not communicate.

I shall not say anything about distinctive doctrines, because my purpose is to indicate some lines of enrichment in which I feel that all Churchmen can rejoice, for which the Church as a whole stands deeply indebted: but I do wish to maintain that the Church of England to-day rightly refuses to be reduced to the level of a sect with its fellowship and unity determined by strictly defined interpretations; and I suggest that comprehensiveness, within the bounds of loyalty to the Church, and not exclusiveness, should be our ideal. It means, of course, that we have to face problems such as belief determined at all points by authoritative dogmatic expression and definition can evade; but I count it better to have comprehensiveness with its problems than to have external uniformity purchased at the cost of liberty of thought and expression, and the almost certain quenching of the Spirit as the result.

#### IV.

*Prove all things: hold fast that which is true.*—I Thessalonians v. 21.

If we are to take account of the influences which were at work in the nineteenth century, that issued in the vitality and activity to which we are accustomed in the Church of England to-day, it is not sufficient to recall the two outstanding religious revivals known to us as the Evangelical and the Tractarian or Oxford Movements: we must also remember the contribution of the Broad Churchmen, who numbered among their leaders such distinguished men as Thomas Arnold, Bishop Thirlwall, F. D. Maurice,

Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes, Dean Stanley, F. W. Robertson, Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The influence and achievements of the Broad Churchmen do not lend themselves to the kind of review that we can give to the Evangelicals and the Tractarians, because they were not an organised party united by distinctive doctrines and ecclesiastical activities. We have rather to think of them as men of a school of thought, who adopted the intellectual attitude of free inquiry, unrestricted research, unprejudiced thinking; men who insisted on the right of criticism, and tested everything that was traditional in the light of any new knowledge that they could acquire. They stood for the fearless facing of all new discovery and new thought, and gave a modern application to a famous *dictum* of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (A.D. 248-258), who maintained his independence of Stephen, Bishop of Rome, and successfully rebutted Stephen's claim to judicial authority over other Bishops, and snapped his fingers in the face of Stephen's sentence of excommunication. He refused to submit to a ruling of the Bishop of Rome, and when Stephen appealed to tradition Cyprian replied: *Custom without truth is the antiquity of error*. It was the attitude which directed the Reformation; and in the nineteenth century it received a new application from the Broad Churchmen.

Further, we can think of them as holding in the Church a position that was in some respects analogous to that of the old Liberal Party in politics; for they were not only progressive in matters of thought, they were also, under the inspiration of such men as Maurice, Kingsley, Hughes, Ludlow, pioneers in the field of social reform, preparing the way for the Christian Social Union. They drew attention to the unfair operation of trade laws and conditions, and set up a social movement which had for its purpose, not merely the alleviation of distress, but also, and still more, the prevention of it through the removal of the causes of suffering. Since their day the social feeling of the Church and nation has been revolutionised; and the attitude *which for these men meant almost a martyrdom is now almost a fashion* (I quote these words from Bishop Boyd Carpenter's *Popular History of the Church of England*).

For some time they were opposed and denounced both by Tractarians and by Evangelicals: indeed, we have to think of the Tractarian Movement as having originated to a large extent as a protest against the liberalism for which they have stood to this day. But to their honour, be it said, some of the successors of the Tractarians were the first to modify this attitude; and I imagine that Bishop Gore, e.g., would have admitted his indebtedness to the stand which the Broad Churchmen made for truth at all costs, and for the progressive thinking and acting which that principle involves in practice. The Evangelicals were slower in the intellectual uptake, though they had led the way in active philanthropy, and it was not until the early years of this century that the progressive men amongst them asserted their independence

of the old leadership, and insisted on the necessity and right of relating traditional thinking and expression to modern conditions.

This does not mean that progressive Evangelicals and progressive Tractarians would find themselves in agreement with ideas that may be propounded to-day at a Conference of the Modern Churchmen's Union, but it does mean that the attitude of scientific inquiry and fearless examination of criticism from any quarter has been adopted: and in that sense the intellectual influence (as well as the social) of the Broad Church school has permeated the Church, and they have laid us all under permanent obligation for having won their way, in the face of determined opposition, to freedom from the bondage of antiquated and out-of-date attitudes.

There is no field of thought and study in which the influence has been so conspicuously effective as that of the interpretation of the Bible. In this connection I must mention the great Cambridge trio, Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort, for the inestimable service which they rendered both in the revision of the text of the New Testament and in the interpretation of its meaning. They were Churchmen who cannot be labelled, but their work was done in the scientific spirit for which the Broad Churchmen stood. In the Church of England we can now enjoy freedom from the Fundamentalist attitude, and we can study the Bible in precisely the same way in which we reverently and seriously study any ancient literature. We can base our conceptions of its inspiration and meaning and value, not upon untested traditional explanations or prejudices, but upon the critical study of the Bible itself.

It is this scientific attitude that I regard as the outstanding feature of the Broad Churchmen's contribution to our heritage in the Church of England. They would have nothing to do with the old argument that satisfied mediæval theologians—God could, therefore He did: God can, therefore He does—the *a posse ad esse* argument. The only beliefs that could command their respect and assent were those which rested upon satisfactory and adequate evidence: and belief on any other ground is not reasonable belief but credulity. It is always possible that such an attitude may lead to rationalism, because insistence on the duty of intellectual satisfaction about the grounds of belief may pass almost imperceptibly into a demand that our reason shall be able to understand and explain the whole content of our belief: and if that transition is made, we pass at once into the attitude of rationalism or scepticism. And the Broad Church influence was attended by losses to the Church in that direction, as the Evangelical and the Tractarian Movements were attended by losses in other directions. When Archbishop Benson was Headmaster of Wellington College he wrote these pathetic words to Professor Lightfoot: *If it were not for such men as Westcott and Temple, and one or two who can both think and believe, I should fear that thought and faith were at last parting; save two or three, the only truth-loving men I know now are humble-minded enough, I am bound to confess, but scarcely*

to be called believers. That was in 1865. His wider experience in the Episcopal Office restored his confidence, for a friend of his recording his reminiscences of the Archbishop wrote of him as being a thoroughgoing optimist.

I think that it will not be out of place here if I suggest to you that our power of understanding and explanation may not determine the objects and contents of our beliefs. Provided that evidence requires it, we must be ready to believe what we cannot understand and explain. If we find ourselves tempted at any time to allow our power of understanding to limit in this way our exercise of belief, I recommend as a good test of our position our going out on a fine night and gazing upwards. If that does not cure us, I doubt if anything will: for if our understanding sometimes fails us in matters of sight, how much more must we expect it to fail us sometimes in matters of belief.

But to return to the Broad Churchmen; their attitude of course involved insistence on individual responsibility, and that in turn brings up the question of authority, too big a question for treatment as a side issue in a sermon. But I must say this about it: it would be a misconception for anyone to imagine that the faith of the Church of England is at the mercy of the individual. The Church's right and duty in the matter of determining her faith is clearly asserted in her Articles of Religion. It is the Church and not the individual that has authority in controversies which may arise about the Church's faith. But along with this claim, the Church of England fearlessly bids us read the Bible for ourselves and accept nothing as belonging to the essentials of faith that is not clearly provable by and taken out of the Holy Scriptures. In other words, she does encourage individual responsibility: and, when you come to think of it, you find that you cannot rid yourself of it. The man who adopts the attitude of submission to external authority (and provided that we are satisfied with the authority, it is the reasonable course to adopt in most matters) is as responsible for what he subsequently believes as anyone else: for why does he accept that authority, whether it be the Bible, or the Church or the Pope? Who told him to accept it? There is no authority outside of himself that can relieve him of the responsibility of the decision, and having accepted the position he becomes responsible, though less directly, for all that he subsequently believes and does. It is a profound mistake for anyone to imagine that he can secure freedom from ultimate responsibility by accepting any external authority.

When the Lord warned His disciples against false prophets, He did not tell them that He was giving them a line of infallible successors to Peter to save them from responsibility, but He threw them back upon themselves, and said *By their fruits ye shall know them*. Judged by that test I am convinced that the Roman Catholic challenge to the Church of England's right to existence, and the Roman claims that the Pope is the infallible Vicar of Christ and that apart from communion with the Papacy the Church has no

existence, stand condemned at the bar of history and experience.

In the present divided state of Christendom, for which the initial responsibility rests with the Church of Rome on account of its extravagant claims for the Papacy and its corruption of the Apostolic Gospel, the Church of England represents to her members the Church of Christ ; and we have a spiritual heritage in which we can confidently rejoice, and for which we can thank God. For combined with the historic foundation and structure of Orders, Sacraments and Creeds, the Church of England possesses the inestimable qualities of *the openness* that places the Bible in our hands to be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested, *the comprehensiveness* that allows for the varieties of apprehension and expression that characterise human experience, *the fearlessness* that faces with open mind new discoveries and new knowledge, *the wealth of experience* that has been mediated to us through the Movements of last century, and not least *the freedom from the claim to infallibility*, a claim that renders it in some matters impossible and in all matters inexpedient for the Church of Rome to admit error and mistake. In recent years there has been at work among us a synthetic process. The give and take between adherents of the three Movements of which I have been speaking have been so subtle and widespread that it is often quite impossible to disentangle the processes of cause and effect in the make-up of members of the Church. I believe that in most people who take religion in the Church of England seriously there are elements contributed by all the three Movements : and I am persuaded that the more we practise unity through sympathetic fellowship the more will the Church of England go on growing, as a body that is nourished by that which every joint supplies, into the fullness of the stature which God has purposed for His Church.

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ROSE FROM BRIER. By Amy Carmichael. S.P.C.K. 3s. 6d.

This is another of the Dohnavur books, which have made the name of Miss Amy Carmichael so well known, and is full of the sweetness and charm and deep spirituality which characterise all her books, though each one has its own original line. These letters were written for the Dohnavur Invalids' Fellowship League, and are the expression of the thoughts of one who suffered much and longed to hand on to other invalids the comfort and assurance which she herself experienced. The illustrations are four beautiful photogravures of simple flowers, and there are many beautiful quotations.

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