

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CHURCHMAN

May, 1914.

The Month.

IT would be idle to deny that the Bishop of Oxford's "open letter" to the clergy of his diocese on "The Basis of Anglican Fellowship in Faith and Organization" (Mowbray, 6d. net) is a document of first-rate importance, which may have far-reaching effects upon the Church of England, and that, too, in the immediate future. It deals with three distinct subjects—"The Claim of Liberalism," "Protestant Federation," and "Romanizing in the Church of England"—but, for the moment, attention is centred chiefly around the Modernist section. It is necessary in the first place to look at the basis upon which the Bishop rests his case. He states what in his view the Church of England has stood for since the Reformation :

"It has stood for what can, I think, be best described as a liberal or Scriptural Catholicism—that is to say, it has stood to maintain the ancient fundamental faith of the Catholic Church, as expressed in creeds and conciliar decisions of the undivided Church, and the ancient structure of the Church, as depending upon the successions of Bishops, and the requirement of episcopal ordination for the ministry, and the ministration of the ancient sacraments and rites of the Church by the methods and on the principles which it believed to be primitive. On such a basis it has claimed to stand as part of the Catholic Church ; and, at the same time, it has associated itself with the Protestants in what it believed to be their legitimate protest and appeal—their protest against the exaggerated claim of the medieval Papacy and the medieval accumulation of dogma, and their appeal to the primitive Church, and especially to Scripture."

These words have a distinct value of their own, and the Bishop takes occasion to reiterate that "it is this appeal to Scripture, constantly insisted upon, which qualifies the Catholicism of the Anglican Church as Scriptural or liberal." We wish that the Bishop had made it clearer, in the section on "Protestant Federation," that he laid the greatest stress upon the appeal to Scripture. There is an extraordinary confusion in his references to Apostolic and sub-Apostolic times, but this will appear later on. The Bishop thinks that the common principles he has laid down are now imperilled amongst us in three directions—

"First, by the recent tendency of the critical movement which has resulted in what I think is an inordinate claim for licence of opinion among our clergy, threatening most fundamentally our basis of faith; secondly, by the Evangelical movement, especially strong in the mission-field, towards fellowship among Protestants, which has had its outcome in proposals which seem to threaten our Catholic basis in organization; and, lastly, by the tendency of the extremer members of the 'Catholic' movement, which in its turn seems to ignore the appeal to antiquity and Scripture, as restricting the dogmatic authority of the Church, and to leave us without any reasonable basis for resistance to the claims of the Roman Church."

In these circumstances he thinks that Anglican Churchmen, "and in particular we clergymen," should undertake "the painful duty of thinking," and Bishop Gore's letter should help materially to that end.

With this preface the Bishop of Oxford plunges at once into the heart of the subject. He refers to the advanced critics who reject "Nature miracles," including the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, and asks: "Is it consistent with the sincerity which ought to attach to public office, and especially to public office in the Christian Church, that a man should pledge himself to the constant recitation of these Creeds, as an officer of the society which so strenuously holds them, if he personally does not believe that these miraculous events occurred, if he believes that our Lord was born as other men, or that His dead body did, in fact, see corruption?"

"The Claim of
Liberalism."

The Church has been challenged "to allow the recitation of the Creeds by those who do not believe the miraculous events," and "we are as near as possible to official complicity." The Bishop has no doubt about what the answer to his own question should be. He is ready to give the fullest liberty for tentative proposals and free discussion, but a man after a time must make up his mind; "and when he has come to the conclusion that he does not believe that we have adequate grounds for asserting that our Lord was in fact born of a Virgin or rose again the third day from the dead, he cannot legitimately, or with due regard to public sincerity, retain his position as an officer in a Church which requires of its officers the constant recitation of the Creeds." We agree so fully with the Bishop of Oxford on this point, that we trust something may be done—although we admit the great difficulty—to emphasize that, comprehensive as the Church of England is, it is not sufficiently wide to take in those who deny fundamental articles of the Christian faith. It is not a question of philosophical reasoning, it is a question of fact. Either our Lord was or was not born of a Virgin Mother; either His body, which was laid in the grave after the Crucifixion, rose again the third day, or it remained in the grave. There is no alternative. The teaching of the Creeds of the Church of England is perfectly clear, and the Church has to demand that its officers who say the "I believe" should make their affirmation without any mental reservation or qualification whatever. The Bishop of Oxford wisely concludes:

"I cannot entertain a doubt that if this claim on the part of officers of the Church to affirm officially their belief in the occurrence of certain specific events which, in their plain and unmistakable meaning, are at heart not believed to have occurred—if this claim be allowed, so far from 'commending itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God,' the Church which tolerates this claim will be publicly convicted of insincerity, and will lose all moral weight with the mass of Englishmen. I have no doubt that, with few exceptions, the clergy do certainly and unhesitatingly believe the Creeds which they profess. But we shall more and more lose both the reputation and the reality of sincerity unless we repudiate, solemnly and directly, the claim which, as I think, is inconsistent with the veracity required in all public professions."

No detailed reply to the Bishop of Oxford's **A Mischievous Article.** argument on this part of his case has yet appeared—even the Dean of Durham has kept silence—but one is promised very shortly from Dr. Sanday, who has given his benediction to what we can only describe as a most mischievous leading article which appeared in the *Times* of Saturday, April 18. Put briefly, its argument is this: that as “the advance of Biblical study has necessitated modifications in our interpretation, not only of the Articles, but also of some clauses of the Athanasian Creed,” it is impossible “to place a ring fence around the other Creeds.” Then follows this extraordinary statement: “Though authority may speak loudly, ‘Thus far shalt thou go and no farther,’ the statements of the other two great Creeds are made subject to the same appeal to Holy Scripture, and must stand or fall by it.” Of course, it is the merest truism to observe that the teaching of the Creed must be subject to the authority of Scripture, but the context of the *Times* article shows that the writer means something very different. It is not Scripture, but Scripture as interpreted by methods of modern criticism. In the light of such a frank confession is it surprising that even men who are most anxious to avail themselves of the best results of Biblical scholarship should be thoroughly alarmed at the destructive tendency of the advanced school of critics? The attack on the Christian faith is by far the most grave question before the Church at the present time.

But to return to the Bishop of Oxford. The **“Protestant Federation.”** second and third sections of his letter give us almost as much pain as the first affords us pleasure. The Bishop does not face the Kikuyu Conference—it would have been much better if he had done so in the light of the full facts which are now known—but confines himself to the question of principles and the results of principles as affecting all similar proposals. He makes the question centre round the Episcopate, and expresses his “total disagreement” with those “who say

that modern historical criticism has tended to weaken the distinctive Catholic position above the Apostolic succession of the ministry or the place of the Episcopate." "Really," he adds, "I think its effect has been the opposite." We are surprised that Bishop Gore should have the hardihood to make that statement. He must surely stand almost, if not wholly, alone amongst scholars in doing so. He claims that the threefold ministry was recognized as of the *essè* of the Church "from sub-Apostolic days," but when he passes on to examine the Preface to the English Ordinal he exposes the weakness of the position, and he has to admit that "it is quite true that the Church of England imposes upon the clergy no obligation to hold the dogma that only episcopal ordinations are valid, and only priestly consecrations of the Eucharist, and that Bishops are of the *essè* of the Church." This is an admission which goes to the very root of the Bishop's contention, and we question whether he has quite weighed its significance. We do not for a moment suppose that he has any desire to confuse the issue, but in the light of Bishop Willis's account of what happened at the Kikuyu Conference, it strikes us as irrelevant to the present position that the Bishop should reaffirm his famous statement at the Cambridge Church Congress "that the Anglican communion would certainly be rent in twain on the day on which any non-episcopally ordained minister was formally allowed within our communion to celebrate the Eucharist."

We deplore the repeated reference in this letter to disruption. "If the Anglican communion is to hold together, whether in the mission-field or at home," so says Bishop Gore, "the contentious positions" which "have to be maintained" are: (1) The requirement of episcopal ordination for the regular ministry; (2) the requirement of an episcopally ordained priest to celebrate the Eucharist; (3) the requirement of episcopal confirmation by laying-on of hands, or at least of the readiness to receive it where it can be had, before admission to communion. This is a deplorable position to have

**A Deplorable
Position.**

reached after nearly two thousand years of Christianity. It must in fairness be pointed out that the Bishop of Oxford himself is conscious of what will be the general opinion of such exclusiveness :

“And do you say this is intolerable—at least, in the mission-field? I say, painful indeed, but not intolerable; not if you believe in the permanence of the great Catholic principles—not if you believe that it is only on the basis of these principles that we can even hope that the Church can come together again. If we do believe this, and if we believe that the Anglican communion is specially responsible among the Churches of Christendom for keeping alive the type of liberal and Scriptural Catholicism, then we shall feel that, even at the price of much isolation and much limitation in the area of our work, it is our duty to deliver our special message, and maintain our type of Christian life, as much in Asia and Africa as in America and Europe.”

We have devoted much space—we hope not too “Romanizing,” much—to the Bishop’s letter, yet there still remains the third section, “Romanizing in the Church of England,” upon which a word must be said. But it must only be a word. The Bishop’s sympathies with an advanced type of teaching and ritual are so well known that it comes with all the greater pleasure to know that he at last recognizes that “Romanizing” is going on in the Church of England. But his protest is very feeble. He is not prepared to condemn all invocation of saints, and he repeats a protest he made at the time of the Royal Commission, that “if we take the least Protestant types of Anglican teaching and the most moderate Roman types, the line [of cleavage] is hardly apparent.” He is, however, clear that the requirement to use the Prayer-Book and none other “is strict, and should be taken seriously, like all strict requirements solemnly undertaken, and acted upon in willing obedience.” This general statement is all we can expect from the Bishop of Oxford. We could wish, indeed, that he had in this matter more of the force of the Bishop of Manchester, who has protested most strongly against the Romeward drift in the Church of England. In a letter to one of his clergy this Easter Dr. Knox goes as far as to say that “the apparent apathy of Evangelicals

under the Romanizing of our Prayer-Book by Convocation is heartbreaking." The Bishop underestimates, we believe, the force of Evangelical opinion behind him, but we confess we should like to see a little more backbone in some, at least, of the Evangelical leaders. It is no use crying "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, and the "Romanizing" of the Church of England is a very grave menace.

In connection with this question we quote the "A Roman Mission." following passage from the *Catholic*, which we believe to be the official organ of the Catholic League: "We owe a debt of gratitude to the Bishop of Manchester for the expression a 'Romeward drift,' as descriptive of the present state of what was formerly called the 'Oxford Movement.' Both titles express a condition of advance, the one naming its starting-point, the other its final resting-place. We have, then, episcopal authority for saying that at last there is a Romeward drift, a movement towards a return home to the Mother who bore us. We must reverently and quietly reply, 'Deo Gratias.' The *Ecclesia Anglicana*, as the Church of the English people has been called since Magna Charta, is essentially a *Roman Mission*." There is nothing to say to this impudent assertion beyond the fact that it fully justifies every warning the Bishop of Manchester has given us.

A correspondent, whose opinion we value very highly, sends us a gentle protest against the line taken in last month's CHURCHMAN on Prayer-Book revision. His view is that we should receive with thankfulness all that we can safely accept, and be content with protesting against that with which we do not agree. The argument is a specious one, but it does not make sufficient allowance for the nature of the "revision" against which protest is made. The proposals of Convocation divide themselves into two distinct classes. In one class are changes which have no doctrinal significance; and even if objection were taken to some of these on literary or other grounds, we should repudiate any suggestion

that on that account the whole scheme should be withdrawn. In matters of this kind there must always be a certain "give and take." But there is a second class of changes proposed by Convocation, and when these are examined the whole position is most seriously altered. It can hardly be denied that they upset the doctrinal balance of the Book of Common Prayer, and in this respect there has been no "give and take." Everything has been done to ease the position of the Neo-Anglican, whilst the position of the loyal Evangelical has been rendered still more difficult. This is the price we are asked to pay for Prayer-Book Revision. It is too dear ; and rather than submit to it, we say again that we believe the truest policy now to be that represented by the phrase, "Hands off the Prayer-Book!" We regret that it should be so, because it may mean the loss of some really beautiful changes in the text and structure of our services. Convocation—not by any means for the first time—has misused its opportunity.

Our complaint against the National Church
 Memorial to the League's Memorial to the Archbishops of Canter-
 Archbishops. bury and York is that it is too grandiloquent in style and too verbose in substance. It would have been well if it had been confined to the simple issue of what the Bishop of Manchester calls the "Romanizing" character of certain Prayer-Book Revision proposals ; but since it was determined to be wise to give it a wider scope, the references might at least have been such that the man in the street could understand. Nothing could have been easier than to state in short, terse, expressive sentences the unfeigned assent of the memorialists to such articles of the Christian faith as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, and their alarm at the seeming departure from the Christian standard which is characteristic of a section of critical writers of to-day. Equally easy would it have been to state that the memorialists do not hold Episcopacy to be of the *esse* of the Church, and that they repudiate the suggestion that baptized members of non-Episcopal Churches should be repelled

from the Lord's Table in the Episcopal Church. We believe these things are in the memorial, but we confess we had to read it through two or three times before we could make sure about them. But having had our grumble, we may now express our great satisfaction that the National Church League decided to take action, and that the memorial is receiving a large measure of support. If it should fail to attract the general body of the laity, the failure will be due, we believe, to the terms in which the memorial was drawn up. The National Church League has a great part to play in the future history of the Church of England, but if it is to rise to the fulness of its opportunities it is necessary that its policy should be clear, definite, and, above all things, strong.

The nation's drink bill, details of which Mr. **Increase in Drink Bill.** G. B. Wilson, of the United Kingdom Alliance, sends annually to the *Times*, is again up. The actual expenditure in 1913 is estimated at £166,681,000. This is an increase of £5,128,000 over the figures for 1912. Spirits show an increase of £1,997,000 on an increased consumption of 1,267,000 gallons; beer, £3,007,000 on an increase of 1,002,000 standard barrels; and wine £118,000 on an increased consumption of 131,000 gallons. In 1913, the average expenditure per head was £3 12s. 5d., and per family of five £18 2s. 1d., as compared with £3 10s. 9d. per head and £17 13s. 10d. per family in 1912. The drink bill for England and Wales is £137,041,000, being £3 14s. 2d. per head; for Scotland, £15,815,000, being £3 6s. 9d. per head; for Ireland, £13,823,000, being £3 3s. 1d. per head. During 1913 the retail sale of beer and spirits took place in approximately 141,000 shops, of which 112,000 were on-licences and 29,000 off-licences.

Sunday Closing and Clubs. This increase in the drink traffic is sadly discouraging to temperance workers, but social reformers will never make real headway until they come nearer to some measure of agreement amongst themselves. It is possible to find a very recent instance of what we

mean. The Bishop of London has introduced in the House of Lords a most salutary Sunday Closing Bill, but because it does not deal with the difficult question of clubs, a certain section of temperance reformers think it might be described as a Bill to encourage Sunday clubs. We have no doubt at all but that the club evil wants taking in hand firmly and decisively, but it needs a Bill to itself, and it would be the greatest possible mistake to include it in the present measure. It would probably mean that the Bill would sink, as many another temperance measure has gone down before, as the result of overloading. We wish success to the Bishop's Bill, and a more intelligent appreciation of what is demanded of them on the part of some over-zealous temperance reformers.

Note. With the March issue Dr. Walker and Dr. Warman, the late Editors of this magazine, handed on their task to others. That task had been one of unalloyed pleasure between themselves, cementing by a piece of common work a long-standing friendship. They venture to hope that it brought some measure of pleasure and helpfulness to their readers. They trust that they are passing on pure and unsullied a magazine which has a long and distinguished history. They regret the necessity of the change, but the complexity and pressure of work make changes of this kind from time to time unavoidable. They desire to express their word of warm thanks to all who have helped to make their task easy—to publisher, to printer, to writers, to reviewers, and certainly not least of all to the kindly and sympathetic band of loyal readers. May the magazine flourish in other hands for the good of the cause for which it stands, and to the furtherance of the Kingdom! *Valete, χαίrete!*

