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THE CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine and Review

CONDUCTED BY
CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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Richard Hooker and his Views on the Doctrine of the Holy Communion.

IT is to be hoped that my readers are acquainted with that very delightful old book, Walton's "Lives," the short but vivid biographies of Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, of Sir Henry Wotton, of Richard Hooker, of the saintly George Herbert, and of Bishop Sanderson. Very graphic they are, yet containing no superfluous words, full of seriousness, yet lighted up with genial humour.

Children sometimes say to us, Tell us a story, but let it be a true one. And in this old book there are true and fascinating stories for us grown-up people. So easy and natural is Isaak Walton's style that we can almost imagine that we are sitting round him, listening to his kindly voice while he unfolds the history of his holy men. Of Richard Hooker he tells us that he was a native of Devonshire, as so many have been who have attained to eminence. His parents were of the middle class, and an uncle of his becoming a friend of Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, the good bishop undertook to send young Richard to Oxford, where he was entered at the College of Corpus Christi. This college was founded by Bishop Fox in the year 1516, and that enlightened churchman provided that special attention should be given therein to the new studies which had come in with the Renaissance, so that his scholars might be well abreast of all the knowledge of the day. It is a significant fact that while Latin was, as usual, the ordinary mode of conversation in the college, Greek was made permissible. By a lively metaphor the founder designated his home of learning as a hive of bees, upon whom industry is constantly enjoined. And certainly among the many good bees who have gathered the honey of learning in that small but very intellectual hive, Hooker will ever take an honoured place. It is not too much to assume that to the wide range of study prescribed by Bishop Fox for his students Hooker owed a great deal of the remarkable breadth of mind and sympathy that enabled him in mature life to deal so effectively with the Puritan narrowness. The two chief Puritan leaders were Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers. They were both good and learned men, and attractive and able preachers. Travers had been for some time Reader of the Temple when Hooker, who disliked pro-

minence, was appointed Master, to which position Travers might reasonably expect to have been promoted. As is still the case in the Temple Church, the Master preached in the morning and the Reader in the afternoon. So the result between Hooker and Travers was that the latter endeavoured to confute in the afternoon what the former preached in the morning. It was said that the pulpit preached Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon. We will look for a moment at the racy old historian Fuller for an account of this.

“ Mr. Hooker’s voice was loud, stature little, gesture none at all, standing stone-still in the pulpit, as if the posture of his body were the emblem of his mind, immovable in his opinions. Where his eye was fixed at the beginning it was found fixed at the end of his sermon. His style was long and pithy, driving on a whole flock of various clauses before he came to the close of a sentence. So that when the copiousness of his style met not with proportionate capacity in his auditors, it was unjustly censured for perplexed, tedious, and obscure. Mr. Travers’s utterance was graceful, gesture plausible, matter profitable, method plain.”

He attracted the larger congregation, but at both services, not only young students, but the gravest benchers were taking notes, eager to follow up the controversy for themselves. Eventually Archbishop Whitgift silenced Travers, on the plea that he was not episcopally ordained. These eminent antagonists, oddly enough, were related to each other, and it is pleasant to hear that in the heat of the controversy no angry words passed between them. Indeed, when Travers was asked what he thought of Hooker, he replied, “ I take Mr. Hooker to be a holy man.” From the publicity of life at the Temple Hooker was glad to escape. His collisions with Travers and the Puritan opinions had led him to plan the great work of his life—his book on the “ Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.” This he began in the Temple, but was glad to continue it in a rural retreat, the parish of Boscum, near Salisbury. Here he wrote four of his eight books of the “ Ecclesiastical Polity.” In 1595 Hooker was presented by the Queen to the living of Bishop’s Bourne in Kent, where he remained until his too early death, and employed himself in writing the fifth book of his great work, which is mainly devoted to a detailed reply to Puritan objections, and has long been regarded as the standard treatise on the customs of the Church of England and her method of administering the Sacraments.

The last two books, the seventh and eighth, were not completed

by Hooker himself, but published a good many years later from his notes, and cannot be regarded as of equal authority with the first five. The sixth is not authentic. At Bourne he enjoyed the friendship of Dr. Hadrian Saravia, a German who had been made a Prebend of Canterbury, and who held firmly to Episcopacy. This Saravia wrote various Latin tracts, and among them one on "Degrees of Ministry, and the superiority of Bishops above Presbyters." Walton tells us that in the year 1595 and in this place of Bourne, these two persons began a holy friendship, increasing daily to so high and mutual affections that their two wills seemed to be one and the same, and their designs both for the glory of God and the peace of the Church.

From this outline of Hooker's early days as a clergyman we must pass on to his position in Church literature and controversy. I will take his position in Church literature first. Much has been written about it, and not only as to his position in Church literature, but his position in English literature. His "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity," in a literary point of view, suffice to place him in the front rank of our prose writers. The work being suggested by the controversy with the Puritans, a great deal of it must inevitably be dry and unattractive to the modern reader, but where he gives the rein to his knowledge of philosophy, or makes way for spiritual reflections on divine mysteries and blessings, there can be no doubt that his book contains some of the finest passages in our language. In the argumentative parts his sentences are too long for modern readers; a style formed on the Latin classics of St. Augustine and St. Jerome is stately but difficult to grasp—and it is well for us that our present fashion of writing short sentences makes the meaning easier to take in. But he had an ear for rhythm that is too often wanting in our rough and ready modern authors. A recent critic remarks, "As soon as we are accustomed to the massiveness, ampleness and dignity of Hooker's manner, we shall quickly become aware of other qualities which cannot be missed by a sensitive reader; he has the great writer's instinct for the just and beautiful use of words, and he has a scholar's ear for all their meanings and associations. He has a delicate sense of rhythm. His phrases and sentences are fashioned by this musical instinct into a more true and natural order than is possible to wit and logic alone. Rhythm in words was more thought of in those days than now.

We may have noticed the beautiful, impressive, musical flow of our collects, and of the exhortations in our Common Prayer. Modern writers of English seldom aim at rhythm except in poetry. But there is a rhythm possible in prose which the writer who has an ear for melody seeks to bring out." The critic I have previously quoted remarks, "The second volume of Ruskin's 'Modern Painters' was written when the influence of Hooker's style upon Ruskin was strong and fresh. The reader who is not interested in theological controversy, and inclined to think Hooker hard, will be helped to understand the beauty of his style by Ruskin's imitation. Ruskin has been nobly sensitive to the music of his master and to his felicities in the use of language."

From the remark just quoted from a recent critic, I pass to similar observations by the historian Hallam.

"Hooker's eminent work," says Hallam, "may justly be reckoned to mark an era in our literature. So stately and graceful is the march of his periods, so various the fall of his musical cadences upon the ear, so rich in images, so condensed in sentences, so grave and noble his diction, so little is there of vulgarity in his racy idiom, of pedantry in his learned phrase, that I know not whether any later writer has more admirably displayed the capacities of our language, or produced passages more worthy of comparison with the splendid monuments of antiquity."

What are we to say of Hooker's great work in its aspect of Church literature? It has become an heirloom of the Church of England, defending her standing as a rightful and reasonable one, showing that she is Catholic as regards primitive antiquity, Protestant as respects the claims of the Papacy. Hooker shows that we do not need to become Puritans or disciples of Calvin to occupy a sound position as a Reformed Church; that it is not necessary to reject every ancient custom simply because it happens to descend from primitive times through the Roman Church. In this he showed a far-seeing wisdom. Many minds were much perplexed in those days of strife and doubt. Was the Romanist right after all? or was the complete revolution advocated by the Puritan the true path of salvation? Hooker showed that the middle course chosen by Elizabeth, and laid down by Parker and Whitgift, was not a mere makeshift compromise, but was framed upon the model of the ancient and primitive Church, agreeable to the doctrines of the early Fathers and consonant with all that had been taught in England in the earliest days. Here perplexed minds found that they had a real foundation, and a stronger one than Romanism or Puritanism

could afford. To give an instance, which I shall notice more fully later on, Hooker declares himself in favour of the belief that the partaking of Christ in the Eucharist is a spiritual, not a material feeding on Him. In the old Anglo-Saxon Church, when material views of the Eucharist had begun to creep in on the continent, Abbot Ælfric published a set of Homilies dedicated to Archbishop Siric ; one of these was on the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and he clearly and forcibly declares that the Body and Blood of Christ are received after a spiritual manner. In the time of Elizabeth, when the doctrine of transubstantiation so much insisted upon in the reign of Mary was repudiated by her Bishops, they naturally wished to show that their view of the Holy Communion was really the ancient one ; and Archbishop Parker republished the homily of Ælfric about the Eucharist, with his signature and the signatures of thirteen of his suffragans. In harmony with this kind of reference to the earlier Church it was that Hooker's whole position was taken up, namely that of consistency with antiquity and repudiation of the errors of both Mediævalism and the Puritans. No wonder his book has been regarded as an armoury of defensive weapons against the Papist on the one hand and the Calvinist on the other, by many generations of English Churchmen. The Puritans, however, were not without their merits, and a quotation must be inserted here from the admirably fair Introduction to the fifth book of Hooker by Bishop Paget.

“ On no defect in the state of the Church did the Puritans insist with more justice than on the lack of preaching, and the wrong done to the people by clergy who were non-resident or unlearned. The fault was due in part to the confusion into which the Church had been thrown in Mary's reign, in part to the plunder of Church property, with the consequence of an untrained and ignorant ministry. But in justice to those who were impatient and indignant at the scandalous deficiency of preachers, it must be remembered that when Hooker began his treatise this lack had gone on for nearly thirty years, amended indeed, but very incompletely ; so that a whole generation had grown up seeing parishes neglected and the poor untaught. It is easy to laugh at the Puritan exaltation of sermons, at their vehement denunciation of an unpreaching ministry ; but it is unjust to forget the greatness and the persistence of the neglect which they denounced. There is no need to cite the strong language of controversy ; figures and formal documents show plainly enough from time to time the strength of their case. In 1561 Archbishop Parker made an inquiry into the state of the parishes in his province ; and Strype, taking as an instance (likely to be a favourable instance) the Archdeaconry of London, records that some of the ministers held three, some four, and one five livings together : that one was Vicar of St. Dunstan's West, and had Whiston and Doncaster in Yorkshire, Rugby

in Warwickshire, and Barnet in Middlesex ; that few or none of the Curates were graduates ; that many of the Vicars were non-graduates ; that not above a third of them were Preachers ; that as for their learning, thus it was commonly set down : ' Latine aliquot verba intelligit.' ' Latine utcunque intelligit. Latine pauca intelligit,'¹ etc. Again in 1576 it is the ignorance of the clergy and the great need of ' more frequent Preaching for the Instruction of the People in the grounds and truth of Religion,' that moves Archbishop Grindal to be zealous for the Prophesyings² : and in the Preface to the English translation of Bullinger's 'Decades,' published in 1577, the work is described as intended to meet the needs of those ministers who, lacking knowledge, or having knowledge but lacking ' order, discretion, memory, or audacity,' cannot ' by reason of their wants, either expound, or exhort, or otherwise preach, but only read the order of service.'³ Nine years later, in 1586, the Puritans made a survey of the parishes with regard to the residence, character, learning and preaching of the clergy ; and according to their reckoning there were in the 160 parishes of Cornwall only twenty-nine preachers ; in the 210 of Buckinghamshire only thirty ; in the 335 of Essex only twelve ; and altogether in 10,000 parish churches only 2,000.⁴ But perhaps the most significant evidence in the matter comes from the Orders introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Convocation of 1586, requiring that those ministers who are not licensed to preach shall get a Bible and Bullinger's Sermons, and read over one chapter of the Bible every day and one sermon of Bullinger's every week, and ' note the principal contents thereof briefly in his " paper booke " and submit them to an examiner ; that every licensed preacher shall preach at least twelve sermons in the course of the year, and that an arrangement shall be made by which each parish shall hear *at least one sermon a quarter*.'⁵ It must have been a low level on which this was the highest standard that could be raised—and that in the *twenty-eighth year of Elizabeth's reign*.

" The Puritans had, then, a strong case at this point, and they were not likely to be backward in urging it. There is earnestness as well as vehemence in two documents which appeared about the date of Hooker's work, *The lamentable Complaint of the Commonaltie, by way of supplication, to the high Court of Parliament for a learned Ministerie, and The humble petition of the Commonaltie to their most renowned and gracious Sovereigne, the Ladie Elizabeth*. ' So many congregations of us as be in this land, destitute of a godly minister, to preach unto us the Word of Salvation (as there be exceeding many), do intreat for our life, and the life of our neighbours. For we are sure to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish eternally, if by your gracious help, speedy remedy be not had.' . . . ' We desire that our Pastor teach us the Words of God truly and sincerely, the which sincere affection moveth him that is endued therewith, in his whole ministry to seek the glory of God, and the saving of the souls of the people committed to his charge.' ' We desire to be taught this doctrine of salvation in all simplicity and plainness : which plainness no doubt springeth from sincerity, as from the fountain. For he that seeketh God's glory, and the conversion of sinners, will make choice of the means that may best bring his desire, and purpose to effect, which is a plain and familiar handling of the Word of God, as we have our Saviour

¹ " Life of Parker," Bk. II, chap. v.

² Strype's " Life of Grindal," ii. 8. Cf. App. No. IX.

³ Bullinger's " Decades," Vol. i. p. 8 (Parker Society).

⁴ Neal's " History of the Puritans," i. 415-417.

⁵ Cardwell's " Synodalia," ii. 562, 564.

Christ and His Apostles for Example.' 'To this sincerity and plainness in teaching, there ought to be joined a continuance in the holy exercise of the Word.' . . . 'But if further, reply be made of those that tender our salvation, but a little, saying, "You are sufficiently provided of preaching by your quarterly sermons," we answer, that "four sermons in the year are as insufficient ordinarily, to make us perfect men in Christ Jesus (to which end Pastors and Doctors are given us) as four strokes with an axe are unable to fell down a mighty oak, or four showers of rain of one hour's continuance, to moisten the hard dry earth, and to make it fruitful all the year long." . . . 'So it is, most dread Sovereign, that the greatest part of the people of the land are altogether blind and ignorant of true religion: yea, more ignorant than is credible to any, that hath made no trial of us, as though we had never dwelt within the lists of Christendon.' 'But we pray your highness most humbly upon our knees that for the redress of this our woeful case, you would not send us to the Bishops of this land, or commit this charge of establishing of an holy ministry unto their fidelity. For if they should solemnly promise your Majesty, and that with an oath, that they would have special care of this matter, yet we could not be induced to believe that they would perform it, neither could we conceive any comfort by such words. Because that by the space of this nine and twenty years, their unfaithfulness hath manifestly appeared, in that they having power, have not provided for us themselves, no not so much as law requireth, neither at any time sought means either in Court or Council that ever we could learn, to satisfy our hungry souls with bread.' "

"It was a real and serious complaint," says Bishop Paget. "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed"—and for the space of a whole generation the destitution had gone on; men had passed from youth beyond middle age and seen the Church neglecting in thousands of parishes one great part of the divine commission; seen moreover the Prophesyings, which might have done something to mend matters, suppressed rigorously, in spite of the Archbishop's protest; and seen also some of those who were eager and seemed able to do the neglected work refused the liberty to do it, or as Travers was, inhibited in the course of it.

We go on now to consider the matters at issue between the Authorities and the Puritans. The main question in dispute may be divided into two parts. The Puritans wished to introduce (1) the Genevan discipline; (2) the Presbyterian ministry, and however meritorious the efforts of the Puritans were to promote preaching, we must bear in mind what their becoming masters of the whole situation would have meant the adoption of these two principles. The question at issue was nothing less than this—whether the Church should be completely re-cast after the model of Geneva, or whether it should continue to be the old historic Church of England, with only the dark errors of mediæval Popery removed. The system

established by Calvin, in spite of his many personal merits, was certainly not an inviting one. His discipline framed an inquisitorial rule, which left no one at liberty. It had the advantage at Geneva that it enabled the Protestants to present a compact front to their numerous enemies ; but this was not so necessary in the wider sphere of English life ; had that system been adopted here we should have felt its defects more than its advantages. And such a course would have contravened a principle dear to the English mind, and illustrated by our history, that moderate change and reform is better than the complete and sudden destruction of the old and the substitution of something quite different.

It is remarked by Guizot in his essay on Calvin, written for "Macmillan's Sunday Library," p. 267, that Calvin's religious system for the Evangelical Church almost entirely overlooked individual liberty. He desired to regulate private life in accordance with the laws of morality and by means of the powers of the state ; to penetrate all social and family life, and the soul of every man, and to restrict individual responsibility within an ever-narrowing circle. The discipline that he set up was of a more inquisitorial character than that of the Roman Church itself. Such a discipline the Puritans wished to establish in England. Moreover, as is well known, they desired to substitute a Presbyterian ministry in place of the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons which had from the first existed among us. They imagined that they had a foundation to build upon. They blotted out all the centuries of the Church's life as of no account in the argument, and took their stand upon their own version of what the Apostolic Church was in the short account given of it in Scripture. They maintained that it was necessary, not only to take our views of Gospel doctrine from Scripture, which is reasonable ; but argued also that the early arrangements of the Christian ministry, in its first beginnings, were obligatory for all time, and no addition or change might be made in them. They denied that any office in the Church or any ceremony was lawful unless it was mentioned in Scripture. The effect of this position was to deny that the early Church, subsequent to Scripture times, was in any degree guided by the Holy Spirit in the settlement of its ministry and its ceremonies. It appears a more reasonable view to regard Holy Scripture as the ultimate appeal in matters of doctrine, but not to consider its historical

statements as meant to settle the external arrangements of the Church's polity for all time. Our Lord gave no indication that such was His command. It was rather the importance of the spiritual essence of things than the outward form to be given them on which our Lord laid stress ; and while there are indications of the settlement of the ministry by St. Paul and the other Apostles, it is nowhere laid down that an exact conformity to their practice is required for all time. This fact was pointed out by Hooker, especially as regards the great question of Episcopacy. The Puritans, as we shall see later on, regarded the Presbyterian form of Church government as the one and the only one sanctioned in Scripture. To this Hooker boldly replies that Scripture nowhere lays down that any one form of Church government is obligatory for ever on the Church. He argues indeed that in his opinion the Puritans are wrong in the deduction that Presbyterianism can be based on Scripture ; he considers that Episcopacy sprang up in the time of the Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ; but he goes further and denies that the question between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism is settled in an obligatory manner either way by the command of God in His written word.

Hence, as it appeared to Hooker and other Churchmen, the Puritans were pressing the meaning of Holy Scripture beyond what had been the Divine intention. Hooker had been a profound student and had read widely. The result of his studies was shown in his being able to raise the controversy out of the narrow bounds in which his opponents had sought to confine it. How Hooker raised the whole controversy to a higher level is admirably shown by Bishop Paget. And so in Hooker's chief work he opens his defence of the Church of England by pointing out in the fifth book that it is not in Scripture alone that God had revealed Himself to man. In God's great kingdoms of nature and grace Holy Scripture holds an honoured place, but not the only place. God has revealed Himself in rule and law in the natural world, in the wide sphere of morals also, and in the faculties given to man. From this it follows that reason is a Divine gift, and that these various modes of the Divine manifestation are to be taken account of by reason, and are to be regarded in their connexion with Holy Scripture. He follows out a line of reasoning showing such to be God's order, in his first book of the " Ecclesiastical Polity," so placing the matters at

issue on a wide basis. The largeness of Hooker's mind is shown in thus placing the question on a broad platform. But it was clear that there could be no hope of agreement with his opponents. They appealed to Scripture only. Hooker's basis of argument included Scripture, but not Scripture only.

What would have been the practical result if the Puritans had gained their wishes? It would have been the acceptance of the Presbyterian instead of the Episcopal system, and the overthrow of all that the Church of England had been since Anglo-Saxon days. We should have been assimilated to the Church of Geneva.

Considering then that the very basis of argument was different, and that in practice the characteristic systems of the Church of England and of the Puritan Reformers were antagonistic, all minor points sank into lesser importance. A number of minor points, subordinate to the larger issue, were sought to be altered by the Puritans. We may think that it would have been wise to make some concessions in these lesser things, and to allow some ceremonial details to be optional, but even if this course had been adopted, there can be no doubt that the leaders of the Puritans would still have used their influence for the overthrow of the existing Church system. Later on, as we know, it *was* for a time overthrown.

To glance at some of the objections made in matters of detail.

1. They objected to any ecclesiastical officers not mentioned in Scripture, such as an archbishop or an archdeacon.

2. To certain parts of the usual clerical dress, as for instance the surplice, grounding their arguments on the idea that the Apostles and the elders of their time wore no distinctive dress.

3. To kneeling in the Communion as superstitious.

4. To the sign of the cross in baptism.

5. To godfathers and godmothers; to baptism by women, which appears then at any rate to have been permissible in the Church of England.

6. To the ring in marriage, which they regarded as a sacramental sign.

But these minor outward differences soon ceased to be the battleground. They were only the preliminary skirmishing before the great issue that lay behind should be decided.

S. HARVEY GEM.

(To be continued.)