

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

ART. VIII.—CHURCH DEFENCE; PRESENT AND FUTURE.

BY the time that these pages come before our readers the Parliament of 1880 will have been dissolved, and the country will be mustering to the polls. That the occasion is a momentous one we may well admit, without taking any exaggerated view of the importance of the last extension of the franchise. What makes the present elections important is not so much the character of the new constituencies, as the questions which have been put before them, and the peculiar inducements by which it is sought to secure a verdict. All the opponents of the existing order of things appear to have fixed their hopes upon this election; and two months ago they were so certain of success that their premature boastings awakened a hitherto apathetic and uninterested public. Among the institutions confidently marked down for destruction was the Church of England. The Church was not only to be Disestablished—whatever that may mean—but to be fairly stripped of all her belongings, and her organization as far as possible broken up. The extent of the ruin in store for her was set forth without disguise in a book which received the *imprimatur* of a leading statesman. Nearly five hundred Parliamentary candidates were discovered to be pledged to vote for the Resolution which was to open the campaign, and when Mr. Gladstone's Political Programme came to be read, it was found to include so spiritless a deprecation of immediate action, that it seemed almost to promise for the morrow the measure denied for the day. Then, at length, for the first time within living memory, from end to end of the country Churchmen were stung into action; and then, too, it was almost instantly seen that the disclosed plot against the Church was a tactical mistake of the first magnitude.

Few things in recent history have been more remarkable than the speedy change which was manifested in the tone of the attacking party so soon as it became evident that the Church question could not be carried by sudden assault, and that the unsparing nature of the hostile proposals had provoked resistance and remonstrance from Liberals as well as Conservatives, from Dissenters as well as Churchmen. At once it was sought to soothe us with promises that the matter should be postponed; and to calm our fears, and lull us again into inaction, by assurances that the subject was one upon which any alarm was premature. One was reminded of the Russians at Khiva or Merv protesting to English diplomatists that a trackless desert divided them from the nearest boundary of Afghanistan. When this failed of its object Mr. Gladstone

promulgated the amazing statement that the question would not have been raised at all but for the conduct of the Conservatives in thrusting it to the front for party purposes. On all sides the friends of the Church were warned that by accepting the Conservative alliance they were identifying the Church with a party, and that when once the cause of the Church is bound up with that of the Conservative party, its condition will be hopeless. Finally the attack was, for this election at least, formally abandoned—an admission that the sudden disclosure of hostile designs was an error, and a tribute to the strength of Church Defence more eloquent than many speeches. After the address of Mr. Gladstone on the 11th of the month we may take it for granted that, so long at least as he continues to lead the Liberal Party, the assault will not be formally renewed. But this does not cause us to forget that the men who are pledged to favour Disestablishment are still candidates for Parliamentary honours, and that their independent action is still possible.

But the recent alarm has not been without momentous consequences. At the time when we were being most unnecessarily lectured on the deplorable results that must follow if once the National Church became the Church of a party, our opponents did not see that the result of their ill-timed menaces was not to drive the Church into the arms of the Conservatives, but to keep the Liberal Party out of the net of the Liberationists. This unexpected result, for which Churchmen ought to be most heartily thankful, is the real meaning of that most significant Manifesto of the Dukes of Westminster, Bedford, Somerset, Grafton, and many of their Liberal colleagues. This, too, it was that underlay the sudden change of attitude on the part of our opponents generally.

To understand the full importance of this it is necessary to make for a moment an excursion into politics. Of late years the Liberal Party has been led by its Radical section. Forty years after the first Reform Bill about sufficed to exhaust the energies of the older Party and to complete the greater social and political reforms which its principles involved. Since then the initiative has come more and more from the Radical wing, whose principles are wholly foreign to those of Liberalism, but whose measures, in the rivalry for office, have been from time to time adopted by the entire Party. Mr. Gladstone's approaching retirement from party leadership has at length given the signal to the Socialist Party to strike a blow for visible dominion, leaving to the old Liberals the alternative of submission or secession. Had the Church question been postponed—as, but for the arrogance of Mr. Chamberlain and the impatience of the Liberationists, it would have been—there is

every reason to believe that the great majority of them would either have followed their leader into servitude from which they would not have emerged, or maintained a half-disgusted apathy, in the vain hope that their indolence would preserve their independence. But the ill-advised and ill-timed menace to the Church effectually roused them to a sense of their position. The Church is not, and never must be, either the property or the political ally of any party. Her claim to the loyalty of all parties depends, like that of the Crown, upon her sustaining a position above party strife. It will be an evil day for her should she ever elect to descend from this high position and become a partisan in the political arena. Those who take the political sword shall perish by it. But for the same reason she has a right to expect that neither of the great political parties shall make hostility to the Church a "plank" in its platform. Now there is no necessary hostility to the Church in the desire to sever her special connection with the Civil Government. Loyalty to the Church may fairly consist with very strong opinions either way. But that is not, nor do we think it ever will be, the practical question. Loyalty to the Church is not consistent with a wish to deny her that guaranteed possession of her own property which she has in common with all other religious societies. It is not loyal to desire to deprive her of the means of usefulness over a large proportion of the country. It is not loyal to hand over her churches to secular uses, and her cathedrals to the impartial possession of grotesque Christianity and open Atheism. It is not loyal to count up the treasures which the piety of forty generations has dedicated to the service of God, and to invite a hungry mob to consider how far this wealth would go to satisfy its greed for the good things not its own. Lastly, it is not loyalty to plot further for the complete disorganization of the crippled Church, and to bewail the tendency of the tree cut down to sprout again. All this, whether or not it masquerades in the thin disguise of friendship, is downright, unqualified enmity; and it is this that has all but succeeded in getting itself foisted on to the Liberal Party as an inseparable and essential part of Liberalism. No wonder the men who claim that name are roused into action. Among the sons of the Church in this country none are more distinguished for love and zeal in her behalf than members of the Liberal Party. Churchmen form, too, the great bulk of those quiescent people who are not active politicians, but who like to register a quiet vote for "the party of progress" when the progress is neither too rapid nor too much in the dark. Well may they ask since when it was that Liberationism became an essential part of their creed, and what compulsion there is for a true Liberal to

advocate the plunder and maiming of the Church! Why, it was but the other day that these very Liberationists, who now assume the dictatorship, were a disaffected clique, plotting to desert the Liberal Party *en masse* because they failed to get their own way in the matter of education!

However, for the moment, the struggle is over, and, whatever may be the result of the elections now in progress, the Church question is not likely to make a great advance in the coming Parliament, which seems likely to have both a short life and a stormy one. Should there be a majority of members individually pledged to Disestablishment and Disendowment, it is more than probable that an abstract resolution will be carried, pledging the House of Commons to undertake the work. But after the distinct repudiations of the past few weeks, it will be impossible to pretend that the House has any "mandate" to deal with the question; and even if it were possible—though the thing is most unlikely—to frame a Bill and pass it through the Lower House, the Peers would be more than justified in referring the subject to the country. Moreover, the Church of Scotland blocks the way, and, when the convenient time comes for assaulting it, will probably prove a harder nut to crack than is generally expected. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." We have heard all that the Caucuses have to tell us of the "unanimous verdict" of the Scottish people; but even if, as idle politicians affirm, the matter were one for Scotland alone, it would by no means follow that the bare local majority of the moment must in a matter of so much importance have everything conceded to them at once. Another reference to the polls will certainly now be needed upon even that question.

At the same time, let us not deceive ourselves. The carrying of even an abstract resolution against the Church in the House of Commons would bring the danger appreciably nearer, and would increase the number of those faint-hearted supporters who are always proclaiming that final defeat is "inevitable." Sooner or later the assault in force will certainly be made, and when made it will be supported by all the force of an empty exchequer, and backed by the eloquence of a needy Minister. For the financial prospect is not likely to be greatly improved for some time to come, even if our needs are not multiplied; but the growth of State Socialism will certainly augment the number of things to be supplied out of public money, and the most popular Chancellor of the Exchequer will be the financier who can find the most money, and yet keep the burden of taxation from becoming too heavy. That will be a time of

trial for all endowments, and eventually, perhaps, for all capital. The task for Churchmen is to make clear the title of the Church to her property, and to let it be known by all whom it may concern that plunder will not be permitted. Most of the leading men of both political parties have joined with the Archbishops and Bishops in advocating the organization of the Church vote in the constituencies, with the single purpose of insisting that the rights of the Church shall be respected, and her name kept out of party contests. Candidates and political organizations have a fairly keen insight as to what it will or will not answer their purpose to support, and surely if the advocates of every paltry cause, from the Anti-Vaccination League upwards, can make their pressure felt, the Church should have no difficulty in making her "*Noli me tangere*" at least as audible and influential as the words of command of her opponents. But simple as this may seem, there is no time to be lost in carrying it out.

After all, the great strength of the Church must in the end be sought for even more in the goodness of her cause than in the number and temper of her adherents. Her right is two-fold—a good title, and a justification—"justice and utility," as the Bishop of Peterborough calls them. Much has been done to dispel the amazing amount of ignorance prevalent upon both these topics; but I venture to think that the most correct, as well as the most telling method of bringing home to people a knowledge of the truth, has hardly yet had a fair trial. We are too much accustomed to speak of the Church and her endowments as if, for purposes of property, the Church were a single Corporation, possessing a lump sum, very irregularly and even unjustly distributed. It cannot be too often impressed upon people that there is no such centralized body. Every parish possesses its own endowment, frequently traceable to its origin; and this is a fact which, if rightly made use of, is of the greatest value. People more readily comprehend the right of individual cases, and can be more easily moved to enthusiasm about them, than when asked to deal with generalizations and abstractions. As Mrs. Barrett-Browning put it—

A red-haired child
Sick in a fever, if you touch him once
With but so little as your finger-tip,
Will set you weeping; but a million sick!
You could as soon weep for the Rule of Three
Or Compound Fractions!

So with Church endowment. Get a parishioner to listen while you tell the story of his parish church—who first founded it,

who enlarged and rebuilt it, at what cost and from whose pocket it has been beautified and enriched, and he soon sees what a cruel wrong would be the threatened confiscation of the sacred building for any but its present sacred use. Tell him, too, the story of the particular endowment, whence it comes, and for what purpose it is given; and show him, too, how little of it, under any system of confiscation, would ever fall to his share, and you will interest him in a matter of which he will readily see the rights and wrongs. The work here indicated is one which ought, on other grounds, to be done for every parish where possible throughout England. Our individual title to such should be worked out, and be ready to be put in as evidence whenever a Royal Commission shall issue to inquire into the nature, origin, and extent of Church Property. The next step should be to show what use the Church makes of her so-called wealth—how it is infinitely more than paid for by the constant labour of an army of over twenty thousand men and a large proportion of their wives—by the education of the poor, the alleviation of misery, assistance to emigration, counsel and help for the distressed, and the prevention of pauperism. These are services which would not be more than compensated by the Church revenues were they far more extensive than at present; and, what is more to the purpose, no other agency would perform them at twice the cost, should the nation in a moment of folly elect to deprive herself of the Church's help. Upon all these matters the nation is yet in darkness, or, perhaps, we may say, is only now beginning to see the light. Be it ours to hasten the dawn, in the full assurance that with light must come safety.

GILBERT VENABLES.

Review.

The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat. By their son, JOHN S. MOFFAT. With Portraits, Maps, and illustrations. Pp. 460. T. Fisher Unwin.

Robert Moffat was born in the year 1795, at Ormiston, in East Lothian. In 1806 his parents were established at Carron-shore, on the southern side of the Firth of Forth, and a short distance from Falkirk. The cottage in which they lived still stands; it was recognised by Robert when, in his old age, he revisited some of the scenes of his youth. In 1809 he was apprenticed to the trade of a gardener. The discipline was somewhat severe; but Robert found time to attend an evening class occasionally, making an attempt at learning Latin and mensuration. He also took his first lessons at the anvil, and learned to play a little on the violin. He had a craving, which clung to him throughout life, to learn something of what-