

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

Review.

The Church: Invisible, Visible, Catholic, National. The Second Charge of the Ven. Archdeacon SINCLAIR. London: Elliot Stock. 1892.

WHATEVER view may be taken of this charge, it must be admitted that the Archdeacon has the courage of his opinions, and does not hesitate to express them. He does so, however, quietly and calmly, without displaying any undue animus, and for our part we thank him most sincerely.

In opening up the subject matter of the charge "the absolute freedom of communion between the soul and God" is strongly affirmed. "The charter is perfectly clear: 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out'; 'Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely,'" etc. From the relation of the individual to the Head the transition is easy to the linking together of one and another, "under the Divine guidance," into a society which "would have officers and rules of faith and conduct," and which would necessarily lead to the formation of national churches.

As to the Church and its nature, the distinction between the visible and invisible Church is clearly insisted on. The teaching of Hooker is at once invoked as justifying this distinction. It is true that Hooker does not use the term "invisible"; still, it may be said to be implied in the expression "mystical" in the following passage: "For lack of diligent observing, the difference first between the Church of God mystical and visible, then between the visible, sound and corrupted, sometimes more, sometimes less; the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed." In pressing into his service Dr. Thomas Jackson, a learned divine of the seventeenth century, the Archdeacon has a writer after his own heart. His words are explicit: "Such as most use these terms"—viz., visible, invisible—"mean no more by them than we have said, to wit, what persons of the militant and visible Church be true denizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, or city of God, is to us invisible or unknown. . . . Ordinarily the live members of the Holy Catholic Church, or of that part of it which is to us invisible, are members of some visible Church, but not *e contra*; for neither all nor most part of any visible Church in latter ages are true and live members of the Holy and Catholic Church, part of which we believe to be here on earth, though it is to us invisible." The judgments of Field, Pearson, and Schaff as to the Church are also brought under review; but we must pass from them to consider the able words of the late Dr. Boulton. He is led to write on a point which is often utterly ignored—the difference between our own times and those of the Ante-Nicene Fathers—and thus addresses himself: "We have arrayed against us the vast bulk of the Western Church . . . which has overlaid, added to, and corrupted the ancient faith, and abandoned the rule of faith in Scripture. We are severed by almost as serious differences from the varied sections of the Eastern Church. And there have grown up amongst us (from the reformed Continental and Scottish Churches, where, through the cruelty of the Roman Catholic bishops, a strict episcopacy could not be obtained) communities of Christians differently organized and often opposing our action, and yet for the most part readily acknowledging the same creeds and doctrinal articles. There is no parallel to this state of things in antiquity." And shortly after the doctor well adds: "Ignatius might truly say, speaking of the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, 'Apart from

these there is no Church.' It was an unquestionable fact in that age. Apart from them there might be Jew, heretic, or gnostic, but not the Church. But to take these sayings of old (which have no warrant in Holy Scripture), and to force their application dogmatically to a condition of the Church (forced on us by the wickedness and apostasy of the Western Church in the Middle Ages), of which the venerable martyr had not the faintest glimpse, must surely be unjust to his memory and untrue to his faith." This quotation is somewhat lengthy, but it is so much to the point that we are sure our readers will excuse it.

On the rise and independence of national churches we have some well-considered remarks. Each bishop at first had liberty to frame his own liturgy; but in process of time, when the Church became coincident with the kingdom, a national liturgy would be the result. But for many centuries there was no attempt made to force a universal liturgy; indeed, Gregory the Great wisely gave counsel to Austin, the monk, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the following words: "Whatever you find, either in the Roman or Gallican or any other Church, which may be more pleasing to Almighty God, I think it best that you should carefully select it and settle it for the use of the English Church newly converted to the faith."

Later on in his charge the Archdeacon brings under review the existing state of Christendom, and most truly remarks: "When we repeat in our Creed our belief in the Holy Catholic Church, how heartrending it is to remember the deep dividing lines which cut the members of Christ asunder!" He then, giving the estimate of the members of Churches reformed and unreformed, adds: "Split up by these wretched mistakes and quarrels, we Christians stand this day before Almighty God, after nineteen centuries of storm and sunshine, of sin and forgiveness, side by side with eight millions of Jews, one hundred and seventy millions of Mohammedans, and the appalling aggregate of eight hundred and sixty-six millions of heathens. To Him who has left us in His Holy Word that message of gracious peace, 'Be ye all of one mind' . . . we cannot but cry with bowed head and broken voice, 'Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. . .'" The inquiry is next pursued as to our duty—(a) *As to Rome*: "There are in Great Britain some two millions of Roman Catholics. We do not grudge them their own organization. We can co-operate with them in all good works where we are not asked to compromise our principles. But we must not be blind to their mistakes both in morals and doctrines. And while we patiently hope and humbly pray that this, so immensely the largest section of the Christian Church, will in God's good time be brought to a better mind, we cannot properly forget that by them we have been absolutely and entirely excommunicated." (b) *As to Nonconformists*: This naturally is dwelt upon very fully. It is one of the primary questions of our day, and we need to be reminded, as is well done in the charge before us, that the Continental and Scotch reformers were very unwilling to abandon episcopacy. What drove them from it was "the cruelty and wickedness of the Catholic bishops abroad and in Scotland at the time of the Reformation; the attitude they were compelled to adopt then has become a time-honoured tradition, and, naturally enough, just like the Roman Catholic Church, has its representatives in this country." As to the position of our own Nonconformists, with the exception of alluding to the Methodists, very little is said with respect to their status. It would not, however, have been hard to point out that the difficulty of obtaining orders in the Church on the part of those who held what were termed Methodist or evangelical opinions was exceeding great. No friendly hand was ever

held out to them such as induced the present Bishop of Chichester to ordain Dr. Octavius Winslow ; indeed, it is related of one bishop that he had a series of questions entitled "Cobwebs to catch Calvinists." But as to the duty of endeavouring to cultivate a friendly spirit the charge is very strong, and the following words are weighty, and ought to have a telling influence : " My brothers, there are important differences of doctrine which divide us from the orthodox Nonconforming Christians of England ; but they are small compared with our bonds of union in one faith, one Lord, one baptism, in the face of the gathering clouds of infidelity, secularism, atheism, ignorance, sin, and vice. What are questions of Church government, however important in themselves at their own place, at their own time, compared with the evidences of a holy life and the indwelling of the Spirit of God ? "

On the question of episcopacy, and whether it is of the *esse* or *bene esse* of the Church, the Archdeacon has much to say ; and we owe him a debt of gratitude for bringing prominently to the front the opinion of some of the standard divines of the English Church, such as Laud, Cosin, Andrewes, Hall, Bancroft, and others. His remarks have special value in respect of the questions which have been raised of late with reference to the Grindelwald Conference. On this and other matters of the charge we must not linger, but will simply add the closing sentences of the last paragraph with relation to our Church : " Shall not we, her sons and servants, by patience, by forbearance, by mutual understanding, by sternly checking our own whims and fancies, and enforcing only the principles of Christ, by the discriminating study of history, by common participation in all good works, by unwearying perseverance in putting ourselves into the place of others, by a more zealous and entire following of our Lord's example in all things, once more unite, at any rate in one spirit, even if not in one outward organization, all those in our country who hold to the one invisible body, the one Spirit, the one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all ? ' I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' "

W. E. RICHARDSON.

Short Notices.

Revelation by Character, illustrated from Old Testament Lives. By ROBERT TUCK, B.A. London : Elliot Stock.

THE titles given to the several chapters will best explain the character of this work. Thus we have "Righteous Abel," "Patient Noah," "Meek Moses," "Pious David," "Wily Joab," "Fretful Jonah," and many others, in all twenty-four. The book abounds with sensible remarks, of which we give the following : " There is, indeed, in the present day a great danger of exaggeration. The wit, the caricaturist, and the comedian are over-praised and over-sought in current literature and social life. But this fact need not press any man to take another extreme and exaggerated view and altogether deny the Divine ministry of humour."

The Schism between the Oriental and Western Churches. By the Rev. G. B. Howard. London : Longmans, Green and Co.

A valuable contribution to a subject especially important at the present time.