

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>

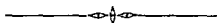
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

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

this is a good country—that is, it would be a very good country if the people were Christians. Then they would not be so idle as they now are; and they would agree together, and clear the jungles, and build churches to worship God in. It will be pleasant to see the people when they are Christians all going on a Sunday morning to some fair church built among those hills, and to see them of an evening sitting at the door of their houses reading the *Shaster*. I do not mean your *Shaster*, but our *Shaster*—God's Book.' ”

Those words, written eighty years ago, describe, in almost prophetic language, the present result. The scene of the pious wish was about ten miles from Taljhari. There is now a magnificent church standing on the summit of one of the Rajmahal Hills, whilst here and there, scattered all over the very country described as the one on which Henry was looking, are more than fifty village churches. Of these we hope to speak more particularly in our next paper.

F. T. COLE.



ART. VI.—THE SHARE OF PARLIAMENT AND CONVOCATION IN THE ENGLISH REFORMATION.

IT is not proposed in this sketch to estimate all the different forces which produced the Reformation. To perform such a task in any detail would be a long and very tedious business. In the days of personal government, when the House of Tudor reigned, the individual character and initiative of the Sovereign counted for much, and would have to be taken into reckoning. The Reformation was in different ways profoundly influenced by Henry, Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth. And besides the general tendencies which moved the age, we should have to reckon the work of different privy councils and committees, the personal impress of great leaders and thinkers, and here and there the action of a Pope or a Legate. But it is enough for one essay to call up to remembrance the tone, temper, and work of the two great Constitutional bodies, Parliament and Convocation, in their effect on that momentous and unparalleled national struggle which continued between the year 1529, when the Reformation Parliament first met, and 1571, when subscription to the Articles was enforced by the Parliament of Elizabeth. No half-century in our history is fraught with more inestimable consequences; for it was during that short period that the national Church of England, which for some hundreds of years had submitted to Romish doctrine and discipline, deliberately, and through the trial of fire and sword, discarded both, and

returned to the example of Holy Scripture and the Primitive Church.

The first sign of the coming storm was the attempt of the Commons in 1513, the fourth year of Henry VIII's reign, to prevent persons committing sacrilege, murder, and robbery, from claiming exemption from civil courts by reason of their ecclesiastical office. The Romish bishops and abbots were at this time a majority of the House of Lords, and they were able to make the Act ineffectual.

In 1515 the imprudence of Convocation in attacking Dr. Standish, the King's Advocate, who defended this highly just and expedient Act of Parliament, first gave King Henry VIII. the notion that he was over all causes ecclesiastical and civil supreme; no new doctrine, but in accordance with the great Acts of William the Conqueror, Edward I., Edward III., and Richard II.

The legal foundations of the Reformation were laid by the Parliament of 1529. It abridged the exorbitant fees for probate exacted in the Bishops' Courts, and it prohibited licenses from Rome for the plurality of benefices and for the farming of ecclesiastical appointments. No consultation of the clergy had preceded this Act; it would obviously have been useless; but Convocation warmly protested. It was not without vigorous opposition on the part of the Lords, and skilful management on the part of the King, that the terrible scandal of clerical pluralities was brought to an end and the Act passed.

The Parliament met again next year, in 1530; many of its members addressed a remonstrance to the Pope for not forwarding the King's divorce; and in answer to a snub from that quarter, Parliament passed an Act ordaining that all Proctors and Pardoners going about in any country without sufficient warrant were to be regarded as vagrants, to be drawn on two successive days through the next market town, and whipped at the cart's tail.

Then came the tremendous conviction of the whole clergy of England under the Act of Præmunire for having attended the synod summoned by Cardinal Wolsey as Legate at Westminster in 1523 without the authority of the King. The judges held that the whole clergy of the land, their liberties and goods, lay at the royal mercy. The Convocation of Canterbury compounded for £100,000, which would be equal to a million sterling in the present day; the Convocation of York for £18,000, which would now be about £180,000. The clergy were informed that the money could not be accepted unless they formally acknowledged the King's supremacy, a constitutional doctrine which had been forgotten in the re-

actionary times which followed the reign of Richard II., but which, as we have seen, King Henry VIII. had reasserted in 1513.

After long negotiations, Archbishop Warham informed the Convocation of Canterbury that the King would accept the wording, "The singular protector, the only and supreme lord, and, as far as is permitted by the law of Christ, even the supreme head." "He that is silent," said the Archbishop, "seems to consent." The conclusion was better than they had expected, and no voice was raised in opposition. Thus in silence the agreement of the clergy was given. The Convocation of York, over which Tunstal of Durham presided in the absence of an archbishop, offered a longer resistance, and their pardon was not granted till the following session. "The royal supremacy," says Professor Burrows, "which did not become the law of the land till 1534, the true era of the Reformation, simply reproduced the laws of William the Conqueror, Edward I., Edward III., and Richard II. The King was not turned into a Pope; but no laws were to be made touching religious matters without his consent. The supremacy was claimed, and has been treated ever since in authoritative documents, not as anything novel, but as an inheritance of which the Crown had been recently defrauded by popes and clergy. It was anti-papal rather than pro-regal; it was a synonym for 'Anglican liberties.' The King and Parliament were to be replaced in their true position as Guardians of the Establishment. Lord Clarendon has well expressed it thus: 'Henry applied his own laws to govern his own people, and this by consent of his Catholic clergy and Catholic people.' It is true that the clergy would not have submitted if they could have helped it; but, the Constitution once reasserted, it was not long before an unwilling assent changed its character with the more intelligent of the body; and at any rate it was a valid assent, subsequently ratified unexceptionally."

The complaint of the Commons to the King on March 18, 1532, illustrates the abuses and feelings of the time. The clergy had made laws without consent of King or laymen, and as these were in Latin, nobody knew what to obey. The lawful proctors in the courts were so limited in number that unbiassed defence could not be obtained. Fines and the like were vexatious and tyrannical. Fees were excessive. The Sacraments were sold. The Bishops promoted "certain young folks, calling them their nephews and kinsfolk," while "the poor silly souls which should be taught in the parishes were left, for lack of good curates, to perish for want of instruction." Holidays were too numerous, and on them "many great,

abominable, and execrable vices and wanton sports were used and exercised." Imprisonment by Bishops *ex officio*, without witnesses, prevailed, and even if afterwards release was granted, there was no redress. Laymen were entrapped into profession of heresies by skilful questions on insufficient evidence, and heavily fined and punished.

The Bishops entrusted their reply to Gardiner; but it was so flimsy that he was obliged to apologize to the King. The Lower House of Convocation then took up the question, and drew up a paper, which, however, conceded nothing, as the clergy were still to be judges as to which of their laws were to be excepted from the King's control.

The King sent down a reply to Convocation by his almoner, Bishop Fox. Three articles were to be subscribed: (1) No constitution or ordinance should thereafter be enacted by the clergy without the King's consent; (2) a committee of thirty-two persons should be appointed to review the ancient canons, and to abrogate such as should be found prejudicial to the King's prerogative and onerous to his subjects; (3) all such canons should stand good when ratified by the King's consent. On May 16, 1532, was accordingly voted the celebrated Submission of the Clergy. The King in those days represented the whole of the laity; and there can be no doubt at all that some such measure was necessary, to curb the intolerable spiritual tyranny by which the old system was disgraced.

The clergy themselves were groaning under the exactions of the Pope, which, in the case of Bishops, amounted to the whole of the first year's income, besides enormous fees. The same Convocation accordingly petitioned the King to abolish this grievance, adding: "Forasmuch as all good Christian men be more bound to obey God than any man, and forasmuch as St. Paul willeth us to withdraw ourselves from all such as walk inordinately, it may please the King's most noble majesty to ordain in this present Parliament that then the obedience of him and his people be withdrawn from the see of Rome, as in like case the French King withdrew the obedience of himself and his subjects from Pope Benedict XIII., and arrested by authority of his Parliament all such annates." This was entirely in accordance with Henry's wishes, and a Bill was introduced into the House of Lords abolishing the annates, but proposing to retain five per cent. on Papal bulls of investiture if the Pope will consent to the change. If not, then the Bishops may be consecrated without him, and the clergy may disregard his excommunications, interdictions, and inhibitions. The Pope refused, and the whole change became the law of the land.

In 1533 was enacted the famous statute for the Restraint of

Appeals. The Act declared that the Crown of England was imperial, and the nation a complete body within itself, with a full power to give justice in all cases, spiritual as well as temporal, to all manner of folk, without restraint or appeal to any foreign prince or potentate; the body spiritual thereof having power, when any cause of the law divine happened to come in question, or of spiritual learning, to declare and interpret by that part of the body politic, called the spirituality, and now commonly called the English Church; and that there had always been in the spirituality men of sufficiency and integrity to declare and determine all doubts within the kingdom, without the intermeddling of any exterior power; and that several Kings, as Edward I., Edward III., Richard II., and Henry IV., had by several laws preserved the liberties of the realm from the interference of Rome. Appeals were only to lie from the Archdeacon to the Bishop, and from the Bishop to the Archbishop, or the Dean of the Arches, except in the case of the King and his heirs, who had an appeal from the Archbishop to the Upper House of Convocation, or Synod of Bishops.

In 1534 Parliament ratified the Submission of the Clergy, two years after it had been made, and provided for the appointment of the thirty-two Commissioners who were to draw up a code of canons.

The same Act ordained an appeal from the Archbishop, in case of the failure of justice, to the King's Court of Chancery.

Another Act of the same date regulated the appointment to bishoprics, by election by the Chapter after nomination from the King. In the next reign another Act ordered Bishops to be appointed directly by letters patent without election. That again was repealed by Mary, and the statute of Henry being revived by Elizabeth, is now the law of the land.

Another Act of the same Parliament made Papal dispensations illegal. The two Archbishops were to have the power instead. The King was to have the power to visit monasteries and colleges. The Act also stated: "That the King and Parliament did not intend by it to decline or vary from the congregation of Christ's Church in anything concerning the very Articles of the Catholic faith of Christendom, and in any other things declared by Scripture and the Word of God necessary for salvation."

A tyrannical provision of this Parliament did not last long. It was a reinforcement of the supremacy, and claimed far more than had been granted. It ordered that the King shall have full power to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner of spiritual jurisdiction ought to, and may be, lawfully reformed,

most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for conservation of the peace, unity, and tranquillity of this realm, any usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

This memorable session of 1534 also invested the King with the right to first-fruits and tenths, which the clergy hoped were abolished when they were taken from the Pope. These afterwards became the fund known as "Queen Anne's Bounty." A provision was also made for the appointment of suffragan Bishops, instead of Wolsey's grand scheme of twenty new sees.

In the last session of 1534 Convocation honourably distinguished itself by unanimously petitioning the King to fulfil his promise of causing the Scriptures to be translated into the vulgar tongue by honest and learned men, with a view to their being delivered to the people. It also voted that the Roman Bishop has no greater jurisdiction given to him by God in this kingdom than any other foreign Bishop. That was the form of the Canterbury vote; York varied it by a reference to Holy Scripture.

In 1535 an instrument was passed under the Great Seal which had the consent neither of Parliament nor Convocation. It gave visitatorial power over the whole Church of England to Thomas Cromwell, the King's vicegerent, and to his deputies. The whole liberties, powers, and privileges of the Church of England appeared to be swept away. The Bishops' power of visitation were in the meantime suspended. But this exorbitant power was only exercised over the monasteries, and even that exercise was legally authorized by Parliament. The tremendous claim was only put forth in order to overawe, and not for actual use.

Between 1536 and 1539 various Acts of Parliament were passed for the suppression of the monasteries. These had an important bearing on the historical development of the Reformation, but they do not affect the constitutional growth of the Church of England.

In 1536 Convocation passed the Ten Articles, which mark a distinct advance in Reformation doctrine. They recognised the Christian faith as contained in Holy Scripture and the three creeds, interpreted according to approved doctors of the Church and the four holy Councils. They retained auricular confession and absolution, the real corporal presence, images, the honour of saints second to the honour of God; but grace, remission of sins, and salvation cannot be obtained but of God only, by the mediation of our Saviour Christ. As to purgatory, it was good to pray for the lessening of the pains of the departed, but they could be helped neither by the Pope's pardon nor by masses. No mention is made of the four

assumed sacraments of Orders, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction. The same Convocation diminished the number of holidays, and disapproved of the Pope's summons to a General Council at Mantua, which afterwards became the Council of Trent, on the ground that the sovereigns of each Christian nation ought first to be consulted.

The "Institution of a Christian Man; or, The Bishops' Book," which treated of the visible and invisible Church, showed that the episcopal office is a grade of the presbyteral, dropped the cultus of saints, and declared that the Ave Maria is not a prayer, was drawn up in 1537 by a committee of Bishops and divines, under the authority of a synod of Bishops of both provinces.

A reaction was now at hand, which lasted till the end of the reign.

By the year 1539 the King had become enraged by the censures passed on the English Church by the Lutheran divines resident in England, and he prevailed on Parliament and Convocation to pass his terrible Six Articles, which asserted transubstantiation, communion in both kinds not to be necessary, celibacy of the clergy, perpetual obligation of all vows of chastity, private masses to be commendable, and the necessity of auricular confession. Death by burning was the penalty for impugners of transubstantiation. The marriage of priests was dissolved; if they married again they were to be hanged. Proportional punishments were designed for various offences. A reactionary period had now set in which lasted till the end of Henry's reign.

The same Parliament enacted that the King's proclamations were to have the force of Acts of Parliament. It also empowered the King to erect sees and appoint Bishops by letters patent.

At this point the fall of Cromwell, who had recommended the detested marriage with Anne of Cleves, struck terror into the reformers. The joint Convocation of York and Canterbury was compelled to declare the marriage null and void in 1540.

In the Parliament of 1543 a reactionary law was passed condemning Tyndall's translation of the Bible, forbidding all books contrary to the Six Articles, prohibiting plays, interludes, and ballads on Scriptural subjects, forbidding the reading of the Bible to all under the degree of gentility, allowing the expositions of doctrine set forth by the King, but exempting the laity from capital punishment for heresy. The milder provisions of the Act were due to Archbishop Cranmer.

In 1545 Parliament conferred on the King the property of collegiate churches, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities

and guilds. The number of these was no doubt excessive, but the act was one of spoliation. Henry's death occurred too soon to allow of the result of great mischief, but the seed produced an evil harvest in the time of the Council of Edward VI.

At the same time Convocation was preparing for the reform of the service-books. In 1543 Cranmer brought a message to Convocation that "all mass-books, antiphoners, portiuses, in the Church of England, should be newly examined, corrected, reformed and castigated from all manner of mention of the Bishop of Rome's name, from all apocryphas, feigned legends, superstitious orations, collects, versicles and responses; that the names and memories of all saints which be not mentioned in the Scripture or authentical doctors should be abolished and put out of the same books and calendars; and that the services should be made out of Scripture and other authentical doctors." A committee of both Houses was appointed to carry out this correction. In 1544 the Litany was remodelled and authorized in English. It was sung for the first time by the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral on October 18. In the last year of his reign the King, acting, it is said, in agreement with the King of France, authorized the Archbishop to turn the Mass into a Communion.

The first measures of the reign of Edward VI., such as the renewed confiscations of ecclesiastical property, the general royal visitation of the kingdom, and the campaign against images, were enacted by the Lords of the Council, proceeding on the authority of Acts of Parliament passed under Henry. Edward's first Parliament met in 1547, and in conjunction with Convocation at once ordered reception in both kinds. The second Act abolished *congé d'élire*, and ordered the appointment of Bishops by letters patent. In the ecclesiastical courts writs were to run in the King's name, and not the Bishop's. By a more wholesome Act everything declared treason and felony during the late reign which had not been treason and felony before was restored to its original character.

The repeal of the Six Articles Act set free the Convocations to proceed with the improvement of the services. They now asked that the Committee of Thirty-two be revived; that the clergy may be present in Parliament by their representatives, or else that no provisions relating to the Church be passed without their concurrence; that the work done by the joint committee for remodelling the services may be laid before them; and that some allowance be made during the first year of an incumbency in respect of first-fruits. Not much attention appears to have been paid to these requests. The joint committee were working at Windsor, and on March 8, 1548, came forth a proclamation establishing a new Communion

Office. A considerable state of confusion followed. In November of the same year the committee of divines completed the first service-book, and with the approval of Convocation it was laid before the two Houses of Parliament. To facilitate its acceptance, a grand debate was previously held in Parliament on December 14, in which Archbishop Cranmer greatly distinguished himself. After some opposition from eight Bishops of the old learning, it passed the Lords on January 15, 1549, and the Commons on January 21. The book was used in London churches on Easter Day, April 21, and throughout the country on Whit Sunday, June 9.

The first Convocation of this reign restored the right of the clergy to marry without a dissentient voice, and Parliament enacted a corresponding law in the same year as the First Prayer-Book.

In 1549, after the fall of Somerset and the rise of Northumberland, an Act was passed ordering the destruction of all the old service-books: antiphons, missals, grails, processionals, manuals, legends, pies, "portuasses," primers in Latin and English, couchers, journals, ordinals; and of all remaining images in churches, except those who had never been considered saints. Henry's primer was excepted, but the invocations of saints carefully blotted out.

Another Act of 1549 empowered the King to appoint thirty-two commissioners for the revision of the Canon Law; but this never finally bore fruit.

Another Act provided for a new ordinal, which had been omitted from the Prayer-Book as not of pressing necessity. Six prelates and six other men learned in God's law were appointed to draw it up. Later on it received synodical authority.

In a meeting of Convocation towards the close of 1550, certain objections were made to the Prayer-Book of 1549. In the absence of complete records, it appears probable that Convocation authorized a review of the book, and that the same committee of divines who had drawn it up now made the alterations. The result was the Prayer-Book of 1552, which Calvin disliked as much as that of 1549. The alterations are too familiar to be here enumerated. In the absence of record, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Convocation approved of its own work. Parliament met on January 23, and Convocation next day. Copies were carefully prepared for formal presentation. The Act of Uniformity authorizing the new book passed both Houses of Parliament on April 6.

The destruction of the records of Convocation of this period is singularly unfortunate, as we have to trace its work by

inference and reference. The question has arisen whether the Articles of Belief prepared by Cranmer as a sequel to the Prayer-Book received the formal sanction of Convocation. Different views are taken by different historians. It is true that the Parliaments of Somerset and Northumberland showed a still more usurping disposition than those of Henry VIII. ; "but there is good reason to believe," says Archdeacon Perry, "that the Articles were submitted to Convocation. For not only does the copy of them bear in its title the express assertion that they were agreed upon by the Bishops and other learned men in the Synod of London in the year of our Lord 1552, but it is evident from the delay in their publication, and in exacting subscriptions to them, that something was being awaited. This must have been the assent of Convocation, as the King and Council had approved them before November 24." The Articles having been ratified by the King, were published by his command, May 20, 1553. The majority of the London clergy subscribed, and they were sent to the Universities for subscription. The example of London would be followed by that of other dioceses. The synodical approval of the Articles, which appears quite clear, carries with it the sanction of the second Prayer-Book and the ordinal, as the thirty-fifth Article gives complete and emphatic approval to both.

On the death of Edward, Mary proceeded at first according to the precedents of the late reign, by proclamations and Acts of the Council. Her first Parliament met on October 5, 1553, when it was proposed to repeal all the Acts of the late two reigns affecting the Queen's mother and religion. This was acceptable to the Lords, but not to the Commons. Parliament was prorogued. In the second session it was proposed to confine the repeal to the Acts of Edward VI. regarding religion. The annulment of the divorce passed at once, the repeal only after a "marvellously violent debate of eight days." Nine Acts of Parliament were abrogated by it, including the two Acts of Uniformity of 1549 and 1552. The Act directed that all such divine service and administration of the Sacraments which were most commonly used in England in the last year of King Henry VIII. shall be revived and practised after the 20th of December next following, after which time the officiating in any other service is forbidden.

Convocation showed itself singularly willing to return upon its own acts. Many of the dignified clergy had fled beyond the sea, and the reforming Bishops were confined to their houses; but we are surprised to find the whole body, except five, signing an acceptance of transubstantiation. No evidence could be stronger of the predominant influence of leading

spirits, and the torpidity and indifference of the mass of ordinary men on most subjects.

Mary again proceeded by proclaiming injunctions of a very drastic character. In April, 1554, her second Parliament and Convocation met. Convocation prepared test-questions which were to be put to the reforming Bishops, with a view to their conviction of heresy: "(1) In the Sacrament of the altar, by virtue of the Divine word spoken by the priest, there is present really, under the forms of bread and wine, the natural body of Christ which was conceived by the Virgin Mary, also His natural blood. (2) After consecration there remains not the substance of bread and wine, nor any other substance except the substance of Christ, God and man. (3) In the Mass is the life-giving propitiatory sacrifice for the sins both of the living and the dead." It was on these questions that the reformers were burnt.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

(To be continued.)

Short Notices.

Fragments in Baskets. By Mrs. BOYD CARPENTER. Pp. 223. Price 3s. 6d. Isbister and Co.

Two charming volumes have come from the Palace at Ripon. Mrs. Boyd Carpenter's consists of twelve very interesting allegories, setting forth important truths of our spiritual nature. They show originality of thought, close observation of nature, and real spiritual insight. The style is pleasant and poetical. No reader will be content to leave the book unfinished. It would be a capital work for reading aloud, and is sure to bring wholesome suggestion and comfort to many.

The Son of Man among the Sons of Men. By the BISHOP OF RIPON. Pp. 308. Price 5s. Isbister and Co.

This volume has all the fascination of the Bishop of Ripon's wonderful gifts of fancy, imagination, and reflection. It consists of twelve studies of characters with which our Lord had to do: Herod, Pilate, Judas, Peter, Thomas, Matthew, Nathaniel, Nicodemus, the Sick of the Palsy, John the Baptist, Bartimæus, and the Restored Demoniac. The Bishop's expansion of his materials are not in any sense padding, but full of fruitful reflection on the circumstances, illustrations of the principles implied, suggestions of what might probably have been really the case, and deep knowledge of human nature. To speak of the beauty of the style is needless. The lessons of the book in the direction of a reasonable and well-grounded Christian faith are of permanent value.

The English Church in the Nineteenth Century. By Canon OVERTON. Pp. 342. Longmans.

Canon Overton has added another to his great series of historical works on the modern Church of England. The present volume embraces a period the details of which are little known, and which is often mis-