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

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

A Caroline Divine and Catholicity.

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PROBABLY none of the great Churchmen of the seventeenth century was more renowned both for learning, eloquence, and piety than the famous Jeremy Taylor. A reputed descendant of the well-known Rowland Taylor, the Rector of Hadleigh, who suffered for his faith in the Marian persecutions, Jeremy, or Jeremiah, was the son of Nathaniel Taylor, a Cambridge barber, in which town he was born in 1613. Little is known of his early years or of his academic career, beyond the fact that he was entered as a sizar at Caius College in 1626, and took his B.A. degree in 1631. He was elected Fellow of his college in 1633, by which time he had been ordained, and his conspicuous powers as a preacher had already attracted the notice of Archbishop Laud, who was so pleased with him that he nominated him a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, in 1636, in spite of the fact that such appointment was contrary to the statutes of the college. Laud also made him one of his private chaplains, and in 1638 he was presented by Bishop Juxon to the rectory of Uppingham in Rutlandshire. While here he married his first wife, by whom he had three sons, but by 1642 he was a widower, and about the same time his living was sequestered by the Parliament on account of his attaching himself to the King's army, in the capacity of a Royal chaplain, at the outbreak of the Civil War. His fortunes suffered considerably owing to the issue of this unhappy struggle between the King and Parliament, and for some time he was reduced to keeping a school in Wales. In 1644 he married a lady who was supposed to be the natural daughter of Charles I., but this alliance does not seem to have greatly improved his material prospects, and for some years he seems to have been largely dependent on the bounty and liberality of a number of wealthy and influential friends. He was specially intimate with

Lord and Lady Carberry, Lord Hatton, and John Evelyn, the well-known diarist. In 1657 Lord Conway appointed him to a joint lectureship, with a Presbyterian minister, at Lisburn in the North of Ireland, and at the Restoration he was rewarded for his fidelity to the Royalist cause by promotion to the See of Down and Connor, and was also shortly afterwards appointed Vice-Chancellor of Dublin University. He died in 1667 at the comparatively early age of fifty-four.

A prolific writer, of a highly florid and poetical style, Jeremy Taylor is chiefly remembered to-day for his practical and devotional treatises, and there are few Churchmen who have not either read or heard of his "Holy Living" and "Holy Dying." He was, however, the author of several valuable polemical or controversial writings, and his "Liberty of Prophesying," published in 1647, in which he enunciates the essential principles of Catholicity and Christian fellowship is, in spite of our altered conditions, peculiarly pertinent in view of the controversy which has suddenly been revived with such vigour on these important subjects.

In 1640 he had published a tract in defence of episcopacy, in which he adopted the Puritan contention of claiming that Scripture laid down a necessary form of Church government as well as of doctrine, but the stern discipline of the bitter religious and civil strife of the next few years taught him to moderate this view, and led him to make an earnest attempt to promote unity and harmony amongst the warring sects and parties. It is gratifying to learn that the change in the wheels of fortune at the Restoration did not lead Taylor to forswear the tolerant opinions he had advocated while in adversity. His sermon, preached before the University of Dublin in 1662, proved, as one of his biographers has declared, "that as a Bishop he did not resile from the principles which as a sufferer for conscience' sake he had so strenuously pleaded."[1]

Taylor's main thesis is worked out in the first two chapters

[1] "Practical Works," I., xv., 1850 (Bohn).

of his "Liberty of Prophesying," in which he discusses the "Nature of Faith" and the "Nature of Heresy."

He prefaces his remarks by pointing out that with men possessing different temperaments, education, and interests, variety of opinion must be inevitable; but that "the present ruptures" were not caused by these "differing opinions," but by a "want of charity," and because men were "so in love with their own fancies and opinions as to think faith and all Christendom is concerned in their support and maintenance."[1] He then examines the foundation article of the Christian faith, which he declares to be the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, upon the confession of which Christ built His Church; and he proves that the object of writing the Gospels was the acceptance of this article. All that Christ and His Apostles taught was, he declares, that "we should acknowledge Christ as our Lawgiver and Saviour," and salvation is annexed to the belief of such articles as qualify our Lord for these offices—viz., "Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, resurrection of the dead, and life eternal." "Salvation is promised to the explicit belief of these articles, and therefore these only are necessary, and these only are sufficient."[2] The summary of these necessary truths, Taylor asserts, was formulated in the Apostles' Creed, "as a rule of faith to all Christians," and this was alone required as a test of discipleship in primitive and Apostolic times, and should therefore be sufficient now. "If," he pertinently asks, "this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the Apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this creed, why shall we exclude any that preserve the same entire?"[3] All other tests of communion Taylor regards as unlawful, as he denies altogether the right of the Church to add *credenda* to the Christian creed, "to declare any article to be necessary which before was not necessary." "The Church hath power to intend our faith, but not to extend it; to make our belief more evident, but not more large and comprehensive. . . . No age

[1] Introd., p. 12. [2] P. 14. [3] P. 15.

can, by declaring any point, make that an article of faith which was not so in all ages of Christianity before such declaration . . . for by so doing she makes the narrow way to heaven narrower, and chalks out one path more to the devil than he had before." The Church cannot "by any sentence or declaration lay the foundation of faith," because she relies upon and is built on it herself.[1]

There is therefore little doubt that Taylor would even have objected to the terms of communion required by the "Lambeth Quadrilateral," while the novel theory of Catholicity enunciated recently by the Bishop of Zanzibar would have found as little favour with him as the Tridentine decrees. With Taylor the "Apostolic Deposit of Faith," "Catholic Dogmas," or, in other words, the notes of a true branch of Christ's Holy Catholic Church were not contained in an appeal to the teaching of "the living Bishops of East and West," but in a loyal acceptance of the Apostles' Creed. This symbol alone was the one essential condition of membership in the Catholic Church. It was the faith "to which God had promised heaven," and therefore "that faith makes us members of the Catholic Church."[2]

Instead, like Bishop Weston, of charging with heresy those who admitted members of other "particular Churches" to communion, Taylor deliberately asserts that the possession of this common Apostolic faith entitles them to communion with all other Christian Churches, "for as for particular Churches, they are bound to allow communion to all those who profess the same faith upon which the Apostles did give communion. For whatsoever preserves us as members of the Church, gives us a title to the communion of saints." And then in a fine passage he adds: "To make the way to heaven straiter than God made it, or to deny to communicate with those with whom God will vouchsafe to be united, and to refuse our charity to those who have the same faith, because they have not all our opinions, and do not believe everything necessary which we overvalue, is impious and schismatical . . . it dissolves societies, and is an enemy to peace."[3]

[1] Pp. 17, 18. [2] P. 142. [3] P. 142.

In his chapter on "Heresy" Taylor further supplements his view of the nature of faith. He shows that in Scripture and in Apostolic times the term "heresy" was never applied to "pious persons," or to doubtful speculative propositions, but to those who held "a wicked opinion and an ungodly doctrine," and "taught practical impieties or denied an article of the Creed."[1] "Heresy," he declares, "is not an error of the understanding, but an error of the will," and thus "an erring person may be a Catholic." "If we remember," he points out, "that St. Paul reckons heresy amongst the works of the flesh, and ranks it with all manner of practical impieties, we shall easily perceive that if a man mingles not a vice with his opinion, if he be innocent in his life, though deceived in his doctrine, his error is his misery, not his crime; it makes him an object of pity, but not a person to be sealed up to ruin and reprobation."[2] Similarly, in another place, he urges men "not to be hasty in calling every disliked opinion by the name of heresy; and when they have resolved that they will call it so, let them use the erring person like a brother, not beat him like a dog, or convince him with a gibbet."[3] There is a striking contrast between this wise and Christian attitude and that implied in a recent episcopal pronouncement, where it is stated that "God's will is to purify the Church by driving away heresy, which no doubt implies also *the driving away* of obstinate heretics, sad and unpopular as such action would be."[4]

Although Taylor believed episcopacy to be a divinely sanctioned order, and sealed with the Spirit's approval and blessing by its almost universal use from Apostolic times, yet he would not make the possession of it a necessary "note" of the true Church, or, like the Bishop of Zanzibar, declare that the "very existence" of Christian communities, lacking that form of government, "is hostile to Christ's Holy Church." Neither would he follow the same prelate and condemn as "heresy" those who regarded episcopacy as only of the *bene esse* of the Church. Its adoption was to him largely a matter of

[1] P. 24. [2] P. 21. [3] P. 7.
[4] Open Letter of Bishop of Zanzibar, p. 12.

political necessity as the necessary support and handmaid of monarchy; he considered Kings and Bishops to be "the foundations and the great principles of unity, peace, and government," and he believed that historically, and conspicuously so in his own experience, "they who go from their Bishop have said very often to their King, too, '*Nolumus hunc regnare.*'" He endorsed James I.'s maxim, "No Bishop, no King." He said, also, some very strong things about those extreme men—and there were many in his day—who dared to deny the *lawfulness* of an episcopal form of government; but Taylor refused to excommunicate any Christian who lived a good life and accepted the Apostles' Creed, the one and only Apostolic symbol of unity. "If obedience and a good life be secured . . . upon the Apostles' Creed, then faith is also secured . . . all other articles by not being necessary are no otherwise to be required but as they are to be obtained . . . morally, fallibly, and humanly."[1] Taylor, although he accepted the truths contained in the Nicene Creed, thought it was a mistake to have enlarged the Apostles' symbol of faith, and considered that "articles and bodies of confession" had done "much hurt by becoming instruments of separating and dividing communions, and making unnecessary or uncertain propositions, a certain means of schism and disunion," and he asks the pertinent question as to which of the two is the schismatic, "he that makes unnecessary and inconvenient impositions, or he that disobeys them because he cannot, without violating his conscience, believe them?"[2]

By enunciating these principles, Taylor was unconsciously advocating the full justification of the later separation of the Puritans, and it may seem a little difficult to understand his consistency in acquiescing in the narrow and exclusive terms of union imposed in the Restoration settlement of religion. The explanation of his attitude, however, is probably to be found in his unfaltering belief in the principle of Erastianism, and his strenuous advocacy of the favourite Caroline tenets of passive

[1] P. 143. [2] P. 143.

obedience and the divine right of Kings. Taylor, if he could have had his own way, would almost certainly have favoured a compromise which would have included the Presbyterians, and probably also the Independents, within the national Church, but, like most of his contemporaries, he was a firm believer in the supremacy of the State over all causes, and thus he held that no one should be allowed to dispute even the strictly religious laws which the State had enacted. The "laws were the last determination," and "in wise and religious governments no disputation is to go beyond them." He regarded also, in his exalted notion of sovereignty, the King as endued with a "peculiar spirit" as God's vicegerent; "the spirit of the King is a divine eminency, and is as the spirit of the most high God," and he possessed a perfect right to "amend and rule and compose every new question arising." Therefore to Taylor "the sentence of the King's laws" concerning the ecclesiastical settlement must be accepted as final, as "our last resort, and no questions be permitted after his judgment and legal determination." It is impossible to-day to understand the extravagant loyalty which could actually thank God for giving the kingdom "so good, so just, so religious, and so wise a Prince" as Charles II.!

Moreover, Taylor was a firm believer in the *cujus regio ejus religio* principle, and although he would have preferred a more tolerant and comprehensive national Church, yet its "laws and decrees," having once been established, ought "to be esteemed as a final sentence in all things disputed." It was the duty of the individual Christian to prove his "humility and obedience" to the supremacy of the laws by subjecting his "doubtful" private opinions and loyally accepting the "public spirit" or "the laws of the Church," which had been "subjected to the prophets," and "tried, searched, and approved." To set up "private opinions" against authority is to endanger the stability of the State, "for no man's opinion must be suffered to do mischief, to disturb the peace, to dishonour the government."[1]

[1] Part III., pp. 49, 51.

Thus, although Taylor's spirit was identical with the aim and desire of those to-day who are striving for a more real fellowship and unity amongst Christians, his outlook or methods for attaining this end were, in accordance with the current ideas of his day, entirely different. He could not conceive of the "several names of Churches not distinguished by the divisions of kingdoms." Instead, therefore, of the modern aspiration towards a federation of the different Christian societies, which individually may retain and emphasize their own peculiar doctrines, and yet may collectively unite in mutual fellowship and communion on the basis of the fundamental Catholic truths of the Church, Taylor was aiming at an ecclesiastical union or organization, a single comprehensive national Church, excluding none who would accept the Catholic teaching of all ages, which was summarized in the Apostles' Creed. He fully recognized, however, as we do to-day, the grievous harm caused by exalting non-essential principles into necessary articles of faith. The one essential condition of Church membership, the "one medium of the communion of saints," was "the creed of the Apostles," and he protested strongly against those with whom "every opinion is made an article of faith, and every article is a ground of quarrel," and who "by supposing" that they "preserve the body" in reality "destroy the soul of religion," and who, being zealous for what they "mistake for faith, are cold in charity, and so lose the reward of both."[1] Over two and a half centuries of Christian thought and progress separate us from the days of Jeremy Taylor, but we have constant and abundant proof that the same wise and earnest warnings are just as much needed to-day, and there is a remarkable harmony between Taylor's exhortation and that of a modern Bishop who declared recently that we shall never be ready for further Christian unity, or able, rather, to make that unity "more manifest, so long as we exalt the scaffolding above the building, the shell above the kernel, the priest above the prophet, the Church rules and discipline above the inward and spiritual verities of the Gospel."[2]

[1] Pp. 12, 13.

[2] Bishop of Saskatchewan's Charge, 1913.