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BISHOP HALL.

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IT would be difficult to find a more representative Churchman of the earlier Caroline period than the man who was eulogised by his contemporaries as "our English Seneca," and who, with his consuming love of truth, his zeal, sympathy and genuine humility, was admittedly the most popular bishop of his day. It would be a great loss if mere lapse of time should lead the present or future generations of Churchmen to forget to honour and venerate the memory of one who was justly renowned, not only for his ability and moderation, but also for his pre-eminent piety, and whose devotional writings were in constant use and were highly esteemed both by Churchmen and Dissenters for quite two centuries.

Joseph Hall was born on July 1, 1574, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, his father holding an important and responsible position under the third Earl of Huntingdon. Both his parents were devout, godly people. His mother was a great sufferer, and her fortitude, patience and resignation made a lasting impression on her young son. Years after, Hall confesses the great debt he owed to her influence and training. "How often," he declares, "have I blessed the memory of those Divine passages of experimental divinity, which I have heard from her mouth. . . . I can hardly take off my pen from so exemplary a subject, her life and death were saint like."

Although his parents had early devoted him to the sacred ministry of the Church, young Joseph, not being the eldest son, had great difficulty in obtaining a College career. It was only through the special and unselfish solicitation of an elder brother that his father determined to risk the expense of sending him to Cambridge. He went up in 1589 to the recently founded College of Emmanuel, of which the learned and celebrated Puritan divine, Dr. Laurence Chaderton, was Master, and to which, a little later, came John Harvard the founder of Harvard University. Hall always held the memory of Chaderton, his College Master, in the highest esteem and affection. In 1592 he took his B.A. degree and three years later his M.A. and was chosen Fellow of his College the same year. He was soon after appointed Rhetoric Lecturer in the Public Schools, a post he retained till his ordination in 1597. It was about this time that Hall commenced his active literary career by publishing

several books of Satires, which were soon widely known and greatly esteemed. Pope afterwards declared them to be " the best poetry and the truest satire in the English language." In 1601 Hall, through the influence of Lady Drury, was preferred to the country living of Hawstead, near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. Two years later he married, and during his incumbency here he built a new parsonage house. In 1605 Hall paid a visit to the Continent, going to Spa on the invitation of Sir Edmund Bacon, the grandson of the famous Lord Chancellor. Hall rejoiced in this opportunity of obtaining first-hand knowledge of the religious condition of countries under the domination of the Papal Church, and most of his strictures and criticisms of the Roman system were based on the observations and experiences gained from this visit.

As the income from his small country cure did not provide him with a " living wage," in 1608 Hall accepted the living of Waltham. His ability as a preacher soon attracted public notice and he was appointed Chaplain to Henry, Prince of Wales, to whom, before his early death, he became greatly attached. In 1612 Hall was appointed Prebendary of Willenhall in the Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton, and four years later he, accepted the deanery of Worcester; but in 1625 he refused the see of Gloucester, although two years after he accepted that of Exeter. To appreciate fully the careful and independent attitude which Hall adopted on Church questions we have to bear in mind the peculiarly serious and stirring times in which his long life was passed. It was an age of the keenest religious and ecclesiastical strife and controversy. At his birth the Elizabethan religious settlement was only fifteen years old, and most of the great champions of the Reformed Faith who had escaped the fury of the Marian persecution were still living. The influence of Calvin was still predominant in all the Reformed Churches, his doctrinal system was universally accepted as orthodox by English Churchmen, while the Puritans were making a determined attempt to substitute the Genevan discipline and polity for the Episcopal. It was not till 1594, the year before Hall took his M.A., that the first book of Hooker's masterly and famous *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* was published in defence of the Anglican Reformation settlement. Just at the time Hall matriculated at Cambridge the infamous " Martin Marprelate " libels were being circulated. It was not till he had finished his academical career that the new Arminian

" heresies " began to disturb the peace of the Church and that Barret and Peter Baro were censured by the University for daring to disagree with some of the extreme Calvinistic tenets expressed in the *Lambeth Articles* of 1595, which Archbishop Whitgift actually declared to be " sound doctrine and universally professed in the Church of England and agreeable to the Articles of Religion established by authority." As a lad Hall must have heard of the plots and conspiracies to dethrone Elizabeth, while the formidable Armada was destroyed only the year before he went up to Cambridge and the Gunpowder Plot frustrated the year he made his trip to the Continent.

In 1618 Hall was chosen by King James as one of the four celebrated divines to represent the English Church at the Synod of Dort called to crush the new Arminian " heresies " in Holland. They were instructed to use moderation, but to " favour no innovations in doctrine, and to conform to the Confessions of the neighbouring Reformed Churches." Hall preached before the Synod, but serious sickness compelled him to leave before its deliberations were concluded. He however fully approved of its decisions and highly valued the medal which was presented to him as a memento of the Conference. Writing years after to Bishop Davenant, a brother delegate to the Synod, he appeals to him to bear testimony that, although " sickness bereaved him of the honours of a conclusive subscription," he had been " equally vehement " with the rest in " crying down the unreasonableness " of the Arminian doctrines. But although Hall never seriously departed from the Calvinism of his early training, he was most moderate in his views and used all his great ability and influence to allay the fierce and unseemly disputes which were raging at this period between the protagonists of the Calvinist and Arminian parties. In 1622 he published his *Via Media*, pleading with the contending Churchmen to cease their unprofitable and dangerous strife and confine their definite teaching " to those moderate bounds which the Church of England guided by the Scriptures hath expressly set " or to those points on which both sides were fully agreed. A few years later he sent a letter to Crocius, the Divinity Professor at Bremen, enunciating his nine deliberate conclusions on the five disputed points of Arminianism, containing weighty and reasonable scriptural expositions of his very moderate Calvinistic opinions.

The Gunpowder Plot, the assassination of Henry IV of France, and the proposed Spanish marriage for Prince Charles brought into prominence the Roman controversy, in which Hall took no insignificant a part. Bishop Andrewes had already entered the lists against Cardinal Bellarmine, and Hall came forward with his *Serious Dissuasive from Popery* and in 1609 with his *The Peace of Rome* and in 1611 his *No Peace with Rome*. Although admitting Rome to be a truly visible Church yet Hall contended that by her errors and novelties she was heretical and unsound, while her doctrine of transubstantiation destroyed the verity of Our Lord's human nature. Some of his strictures sound to our modern ears harsh and uncharitable, yet Hall was conspicuous at the time for the mildness and moderateness of his views. Speaking of his continental experiences, he declares, "I call God to witness that I could not find any true life of religion amongst them that would be Catholics. . . . I speak of the lively practice of piety. What have they amongst them but a very outside of Christianity, a mere formality of devotion? What papist in all Christendom hath ever been heard to pray daily with his family or to sing a psalm at home? Who ever saw God's day kept in any city, village, household, under the jurisdiction of Rome? Who sees not how foul sins pass for venial, and how easily venial sins pass their satisfaction; for which a cross or a drop of holy water is sufficient amends?" Hall follows his learned contemporary, Dean Field, in laying down the marks or "notes" of a true Church as "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism." "That Church," he affirms, "which holds those Christian articles, both in terms and necessary consequences, however it doth vary in theological conclusions is *Columba una*," although he admits that its unity may be sadly troubled by the theological or ecclesiastical distinctions between Lutheranism, Arminianism, Calvinism or Separatism. In his doctrine of the Eucharist, Hall adhered closely to the teaching of Cranmer, Ridley and Hooker, denying a corporal, carnal or oral Presence in the elements. "The feeding upon Christ," he declares, is "but a comfortable application of Christ and His benefits to our souls." "Christ is only present and received in a spiritual manner so as nothing is objected to our senses but the elements, nothing but Christ to our faith."

Hall, like the Reformers and their successors, recognised and fully realised the value of the essential unity and common interest which

bound all the Reformed Churches together in spite of the want of Episcopacy in some, the importance of which, as will be noticed shortly, he was the last to minimise. Writing to his friend, the celebrated Huguenot divine, Peter du Moulin (who was afterwards made a Prebendary of Canterbury), concerning the assassination of Henry IV, he emphasises the real and necessary union between the Reformed Churches of England and France. "Your dangers and fears and griefs have been ours; all the salt water that runs betwixt us cannot wash off our interest in all your common causes."

In October, 1610, the consecration as bishops of three Scotch presbyters had restored episcopal government to the Church of Scotland, but the unwise attempt of Charles I and Archbishop Laud to force an unwelcome Liturgy on the Scots in 1637 led to the defiant action of the National Assembly in 1639 by which Episcopacy was entirely abolished. This rebellious act aroused Hall's indignation against the Scots, and he proposed to Laud the holding of a Synod of the three kingdoms to arrive at a peaceful religious settlement and thus confute the headstrong Scotch Presbyterians. The Archbishop, however, considered this suggestion impracticable and instead urged Hall himself to write a confutation of the ecclesiastical position of the Scotch clergy. Hall acceded to this request and published his famous *Episcopacy by Divine right asserted.* As early as 1610, in a controversy with the Brownists, Hall, in common with the Elizabethan bishops, had treated Episcopacy as an allowable form of Church government based on expediency, and as having been regarded historically "as a perpetual ordinance of superiority"; but in this new tract he makes somewhat "higher" and more definite claims. Disregarding the ground of expediency he asserts that the universal practice of the sub-Apostolic Church is the surest commentary that the Apostles must have recommended Episcopacy and therefore it was of Divine inspiration and intended to be perpetual. The weak point in this contention is that the initial inference is too large. The most we can assert from the early prevalence of Episcopacy is, as Professor Gwatkin so well expressed it, that the Apostles could never have left a command *against* episcopal government, while the most recent scholarship and research has failed to overthrow Bishop Lightfoot's conclusion that Episcopacy was a natural development based on expediency and circumstances connected with better ecclesiastical organisation. The Scotch Presbyterians

had rejected Episcopacy as actually unlawful according to "Christ's ordinance." Hall in this treatise had, with Hooker, only asserted the general Caroline position that Presbyterian government was valid only when Episcopacy could not be had, and had moreover not defined it as a distinct order. These and other minor points, such as calling the Pope Antichrist, encountered Laud's censure, and Hall was compelled to tune his statements to suit the Archbishop's views before his tract was published in 1640. On the assembling of the Long Parliament, Hall, with an unfettered hand, continued his defence of Episcopacy in the "Smectymnuan" controversy, and urged his views with such moderation that Neal is probably right in declaring that "the controversy might have been compromised if the rest of the clergy had been of the same spirit and temper as Bishop Hall" (*Hist. of Puritans*, vol. ii., p. 354). Preaching before the King in 1641 Hall pleads for a reasonable middle position between the hostile parties, although he anticipates that as a "neuter" he is likely to please no one. His appeal sounds singularly modern. "This man is right," ye say, "that man is not right"; "this sound, that rotten." "And how so, dear Christians? What! for ceremonies and circumstances, for rochets or rounds or squares? Let me tell you he is right that hath a heart to his God, what forms soever he is for: The kingdom of God doth not stand in meats and drinks, in stuffs, or colours, or fashions, in noises or gestures, it stands in holiness and righteousness, in godliness and charity, in peace and obedience; and if we have happily attained unto these, God doth not stand upon trifles and niceties of indifferences; and why should we?" (Lewis, *Life of Hall*, p. 344). Again in 1644 after the Scotch had forced the Solemn League and Covenant on the English Parliament, Hall addressed the Westminster Assembly of Divines, urging the adoption of a primitive and reduced Episcopacy where no episcopal censures could be exercised without the concurrence of the presbytery. "The most perfect reformation," he declared, "might consist with Episcopacy." Perhaps his charity and moderation are best set forth in his little tract *The Peacemaker*, which he addressed to his clergy after his enforced retirement to Higham in 1645, to allay if possible the fierceness of the religious disputations of the opposing parties. "Blessed be God," he declared, "there is no difference in any essential matter between the Church of England and her sisters of

the Reformation. . . . The only difference is in the form of outward administration, wherein also we are so far agreed as that we all profess this form not to be essential to the being of a Church though much importing the well or better being of it according to our several apprehensions thereof ; and that we do all retain a reverence and loving opinion of each other in our own several ways, not seeing any reason why so poor a diversity should work any alienation of affection in us one toward another" (*Works*, v., p. 56, 1811). At first sight this view may seem inconsistent with *Episcopacy by Divine Right*, but in his *Humble Remonstrance* Hall had explained his use of that term, "When we speak of a Divine Right, we mean not an express law of God requiring it upon the absolute necessity of a being of a Church, what hindrance soever may interpose ; but a Divine institution warranting it where it is and requiring it where it may be had." It was on this ground that Hall condemned the Scotch and English Presbyterians for their desire to neglect or even condemn Episcopacy where "it could be had." The necessity of separation from the corrupt Roman Church had compelled the foreign Reformed Churches to forsake Episcopacy. "The neighbour Churches," he declares, "would most gladly embrace this our form of government, which differs little from their own save in the perpetuity of their προστασια or Moderatorship," and so he concludes "We can at once tenderly respect them and justly censure you."

Soon after the meeting of the Long Parliament, Hall with eleven other bishops was impeached for treason for signing the episcopal "Protest" against Acts passed in Parliament during the Bishops' absence for fear of the violence of the mob. Although the Bishops were eventually let off with a heavy fine, Hall spent several weeks as a prisoner in the Tower. On his release he went to take up his duties in his new see of Norwich, to which he had just been translated. He laboured peacefully with his usual zeal for about two years, when the Parliament commenced a period of harsh persecution for the Church clergy. Hall has graphically related the insults, hardships and sufferings which he had to endure, in his *Hard Measure*. By the ordinance of Sequestration in March, 1643, all his real and personal property was seized, "not leaving so much as a dozen of trenchers or my children's pictures." Fortunately an unknown pious gentlewoman bought in the Bishop's goods

and presented them to him. An allowance of £400 a year, as at first arranged, was afterwards refused him, and it was with difficulty that even a fifth of his income was granted for his wife and family. The Bishop's only source of income at this time was limited to fees for ordinations and institutions. But after the imposition of the "Covenant" Hall was charged with violating it by his ordinations, and soon after both he and his family were peremptorily ordered to quit the episcopal palace, while his Cathedral was defaced and despoiled by a furious mob of fanatics. He retired to a private house in a suburb of the city where he resided until his death in 1656. In 1652 he lost his wife, who had been the faithful and greatly beloved companion of his labours for forty-eight years, while four of his children predeceased him. His eldest son, Robert, managed to retain his country living throughout the troubles of the Commonwealth period, while George, another son, became Bishop of Chester after the Restoration. Towards the end of his life Hall was a constant sufferer, but he managed to preach occasionally, and although stripped of his wealth and left with only a very meagre subsistence, he continued his charitable habits by distributing weekly gifts to the poor widows in his parish.

While Hall felt impelled by the troubles and distractions of the times to take his part in polemical and controversial writings, he always rejoiced far more in the theological and devotional treatises on which he was constantly engaged from almost the very commencement of his long ministry, and which were highly valued, both at the time and for long after. One of his last productions, *In the Night*, breathes a most beautiful and helpful spirit in recounting his own personal losses and afflictions for the encouragement of others similarly tried. A good evidence of the depth of Hall's affection for his Mother Church is the fact that his very last Meditation, at the very close of his life, was called forth by the sad and apparently hopeless condition and prospect of the Church. In the *Holy Order of Mourners in Sion*, the aged Bishop suggested the formation of a spiritual Society to pray and fast regularly for the relief of the necessities and calamities of the distressed National Church. Fuller, in his *Worthies*, aptly sums up Hall's gifts as a writer, as being "not ill at Controversies, more happy at Comments, very good in his Characters, better in his Sermons, best of all in his Meditations."

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