

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>

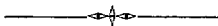
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

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

irrefutable. The strange thing is, that the arguments in his book on St. Mark certainly, and apparently in this case also, are not only not refuted, but not even read. We have heard men far inferior, both in learning and scholarship, pour contempt on what they had evidently never studied at all. Why this is so, is a question which admits of more than one answer. There are fashions even in criticism: and "men love darkness rather than light," if darkness is fashionable. Dean Burgon is too much of a student to be popular. He is too painstaking, too exhaustive, too accurate, too minute, for the age in which we live. Books which are written with so much labour cannot be appreciated at their true value by those who have not laboured at the same task themselves.

Yet the style throughout is as easy as English can well be. Who else is there that can write about "codex" letter this, or "Praxapostolus" number that (we wonder how many of our readers have the faintest notion *what a Praxapostolus* is!) as familiarly as a commercial traveller can describe a railway junction, and be as interesting as a novelist all the while? And that this learning and this facility should be all thrown into the scale, together with life, health, recreation, and even necessary rest, and all to vindicate a single sentence of God's written Word—this, we say, is a sight not for a season, but for a century; not a lesson for the period ("for the fashion of this world passeth away"), but an example for all time.

C. H. WALLER.



ART. VI.—THE BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S ON THE CHURCH IN WALES.

A Charge delivered at his Third Triennial Visitation to the Clergy of the Diocese of St. David's. By WILLIAM BASIL JONES, D.D., Lord Bishop of St. David's. Rivingtons.

AN effort is to be made this Session, it seems, to carry a resolution in favour of the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales. The people of Wales are supposed to be keen and vigorous politicians; and they return to Parliament, as everybody knows, strongly Liberal representatives. In England, happily, politicians of even pronounced Liberalism, not seldom, are loyal supporters of the National Church; but in the political circles of Wales, perhaps, "Liberal" stands for much the same as "Liberationist." For this reason, no doubt, the first blow at the Establishment is to be directed against

the Church in the Principality. The Church of England is to be assailed on what is supposed to be its weakest side.

Under these circumstances, as is natural, Churchmen in Wales are setting themselves to work. Through the instrumentality of the Church Defence Institution, and in other ways, making known the real facts of the case, they are appealing to the people. This work, we hear, is being done in earnest, and not without success. People in England, as a rule, it is said, "are singularly ignorant of the real condition of the Church in Wales;" but of the Welsh people themselves, probably, no small number are scarcely any better informed, while of the historical claims of their ancient Church they really know nothing. Yet excellent work, as was remarked, is being done in Wales; and observers, whose opportunities of judging are great, have given expression to their belief that the Welsh people "are awaking to the hollowness and the insincerity of the Liberationist attack; and there are not wanting most encouraging indications that its main effect will be to strengthen the position of the Church in the Principality, to stimulate it to greater efforts, and to confirm it in the enduring affections of the people." The Bishop of St. David's, whose welcome and interesting Charge is now before us, does not fear to express his opinion that "the policy of the Liberation Society will not be ultimately successful."

The chief matter, at the present moment, is one of statistics. We thoroughly agree with the remark of the Bishop of St. David's as to parochial statistics. Careful returns from the Clergy of the Welsh dioceses are of high importance.¹ For the making of full and accurate statistical calculations, which may be published and regarded as trustworthy, there is a very real and pressing reason. "I am convinced," says the Bishop, "that a full, plain, and unvarnished statement of facts would

¹ A correspondent of the *National Church* (Feb., 1884) calls attention to some very startling statistics of the Nonconformist bodies in Wales that have been recently issued. The *Nonconformist and Liberator* claims a million and a half Nonconformist members, adding that this million and a half represents four and a half million persons; multiplying the members by three to arrive at the adherents of the denominations. In the county of Cardigan, the Calvinistic Methodists return 12,030, the Independents 11,734 members. Adding these figures and multiplying by three, we have a total of 71,292, or actually 966 in excess of the census of 1881. But this is not all. The Baptists claim 6,000, and the Wesleyans 3,600 in the same county—making a total Nonconformist population of 80,892. The census return is 70,266. That is to say, the Dissenters by their own calculations exceed the total inhabitants by more than 10,000, and leave no room for a single Churchman, clerical or lay. Applying the same test to the counties of Merioneth, Carnarvon, Anglesey, and Carmarthen, they each exhibit the same marvellous results.

do more for Church defence than any amount of political agitation. I think that the following points would be established by statistical inquiry, at least as regards the large Diocese of St. David's: first, that, as regards the proportion of real Church members to the population at large, it is scarcely, if at all, behind some of the English dioceses; secondly, that, as regards the progress of the Church during the last ten or twenty years, it has at least kept pace with most of the dioceses of England, though it doubtless started from a lower point; and thirdly, while there are among us, unhappily, parishes in which the Church is at the lowest possible ebb, these are exceptional, while in many the condition of the Church is as flourishing as in any part of the kingdom. There is in fact, so far as I can see, no reason for treating the case of the Welsh dioceses as in any way exceptional. But we certainly need accurate statistics in order to enable us to make this position good."

The Bishop gives, and examines in detail, statistics as to Baptism, Confirmations,¹ Sunday-schools, Holy Communion, Church-building, and so forth. There are many encouraging symptoms of reviving activity in the Church; and those which have to do, directly, only with the externals of religion, are at once symptomatic of increasing earnestness and self-denial on the part of the people, and productive of the happiest consequences as regards the life of the Church. Thus, in answer to the question whether the work of the Church has increased in proportion to the growth of its advantages, the Bishop of St. David's has no hesitation in stating that it has done so. "There is a distinct advance in this respect," he says: the number of services is steadily increasing. In the important and even vital matter of pastoral visitation, he mentions an increased activity of the clergy. In this one respect, indeed, you cannot gauge by statistics the comparative amount of clerical labour; but an increase in the Christian activities of any parish, probably, will be the proof, as it is the result, of the kindly and prayerful visits of the pastor from house to house.

¹ Referring to some admitted to Communion, who had been communicants in other denominations, and not unreasonably objected to be deprived of Communion until they could be presented for Confirmation, and to others, "who, having been brought up as Dissenters, did not understand or appreciate the ordinance of Confirmation," his Lordship gives gentle and gracious guidance. "In the two last cases," he says, "however much we might advise persons of full age, having been brought up as Nonconformists, to submit to the rite (like Him who, though sinless, underwent a ceremony of human institution symbolizing the washing away of sin, that He might fulfil all righteousness), I suppose few of us would wish in such cases to make Confirmation an indispensable prerequisite to Communion." The case of persons of mature age who have come over from Dissent was not contemplated when the Rubric ["there shall be none admitted . . ."] was drawn up.

In the pulpit, no doubt, the Nonconformist minister may equal, or even excel, the clergyman; but week-day work in the parish, if truly spiritual, is sure to tell, and its results will abide. On a political platform the spiritually-minded clergyman may never appear; but in the weekly prayer-meeting or the communicants' meeting, in the parish school-room, his place is not likely to be often empty. Christ's Gospel the keynote of his message, the representative of the ancient Church of the land, in the best sense of the word *unsectarian*, the servant of the people for the Saviour's sake will minister in trust and hope. "*Our land shall yield her increase.*"

On the subject of lay agency, a most important subject, the Bishop of St. David's comments at some length. He alludes, of course, to the expected Report of the Committee of Convocation; and he remarks that some impatience was expressed in the Diocesan Conference at the delay in the publication of that Report. He says:

It was justly felt that, especially in Wales, lay agency might be made the means of solving many of the Church's difficulties, and that any delay in arriving at a decision in this important matter was so much time lost to the Church. This is, doubtless, true to some extent; but the statement is subject to one qualification. For the lay agency which is so much desired exists already in this, and probably in every other Diocese, even though it may not have received—among ourselves at least—episcopal recognition. In fact, I do not doubt that this agency is at present somewhat more freely resorted to than would be altogether possible if a scheme were adopted making episcopal sanction necessary in every case for the employment of laymen in quasi-ecclesiastical functions. The establishment of any such scheme, while it will encourage the employment of laymen in fit and necessary cases, must, on the other hand, tend to limit it.

In regard to lay help, no doubt, the special point with many Churchmen in Wales, is this: What is to be done in the large, poorly endowed parishes? You have two congregations in one place, or the distance between the parish church and the mission-room is considerable. For five services, then, what can you do? At the Swansea Congress (*CHURCHMAN*, vol. ii, p. 160) the self-supporting Diaconate, it was urged, gives the best practical answer.¹

As regards rubrical revision, Bishop Jones points, as he has pointed before (*CHURCHMAN*, vol. iii, p. 467) to the reform of Convocation. The present Parliament has shown no readiness to pay respect to Convocation; and "he must be a very sanguine person who considers that the next Parliament will be more likely to agree to the acts of Convocation. In fact," says his lordship, "I see no solution of this difficulty except

¹ The Bishop of St. David's recommends the "institution of a separate and distinct Order of the ministry," and for such ministers the title of Sub-deacon is, his lordship thinks, the best.

in the reform of Convocation, or rather in the substitution for it of a mixed representative body of Clergy and Laity, which shall have authority to speak and to act for the whole body of the Church. If such a body were once instituted, I am inclined to think that Parliament would gladly leave to it a large part of the power, labour, and responsibility of legislating for the Church."¹ There is little doubt about it, we think. It has long been our own opinion that the reconstitution of the Convocations is the most pressing of all "Church reforms." In the meantime, however, the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences, directly and indirectly, is doing good service. We have supported the movement from the first, and it will have, we believe, important consequences.

The Central Council movement, as regards the object which it has in view, has the "warm sympathy" of Bishop Jones; and his criticisms (with those of the Bishop of Worcester and the Bishop of Liverpool), and also his suggestions, will be very carefully considered on all sides among sober and thoughtful Churchmen. "The system of Diocesan Conferences," says his lordship, "has now spread its network nearly over the country, since there are only two Dioceses at present untouched by it. At last the great Diocese of London has come in; and I cannot imagine that the time is far distant when the system will have been established throughout England and Wales. It was felt by some of the most ardent promoters of the system that it was desirable to gather up the results of these scattered assemblies into a single head. And it was at the same time felt to be an evil that there existed no central deliberative assembly of the Church of England in which the laity have a place. Hence it was proposed to form a Central Council of Diocesan Conferences, consisting of lay and clerical members delegated from every Conference. It was decided at the last meeting of the St. David's Conference to send representatives for this year, as a tentative measure; and it is very possible that the experiment may be repeated. I honestly confess that I consider this step somewhat hasty and premature, although it is certainly one in the right direction. I cannot recognise, as in any sense representative of the Church of England, a self-constituted body, summoned by no superior or external authority, from which the Bishops are excluded, which stands in no acknowledged relation to them, and which is presided over by a layman, however able and eminent. It is not that I desire to exclude the laity from a share in the councils of the

¹ The opinions of the Earl of Chichester, the Bishop of Peterborough, the Right Hon. H. C. Childers, M.P., and of other eminent Churchmen, in consonance with these remarks, have been quoted in this Magazine. See *e.g.*, THE CHURCHMAN, vol. iii., p. 138.

Church : quite the reverse ; as I am convinced their admission to a share in such councils is the best solution, or, rather, perhaps the only possible solution, of our present difficulties. But I feel that the recently established Central Council can never, for reasons which I have stated above, be looked upon as the true Church of England by representation, and my anxiety to give the laity their proper place in Church government is the principal ground of my dissatisfaction with the present, as I consider, not very felicitous experiment."

The Bishop proceeds as follows :

At the same time, I consider that, pending the establishment of a more really representative body to which the duty of deliberating on affairs of the Church may properly be entrusted, there is a function which may very properly be undertaken by the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences, and which it may discharge without any suspicion of arrogating to itself a position which cannot rightly be accorded it. You are, doubtless, aware that it has long been the practice of the Bishops of both Provinces to hold private meetings at Lambeth Palace, or elsewhere, more than once during the Session of Parliament, but invariably about the time of the commencement of the Session, when the most important meeting is generally held. These meetings come down from the time when Convocation was silent ; they deal with a large variety of subjects on which it is desirable that the Bishops should seek the benefit of each other's experience and wise counsel ; and they frequently handle matters which can be most profitably and safely discussed *in camera*. Of course, such meetings are not in any way official or authoritative ; their resolutions can only bind an individual Bishop by his own consent ; and, speaking generally, they are more useful as a means of comparing notes and eliciting advice under difficult circumstances than in any other way. There is, however, one class of subjects in relation to which these private and informal meetings are especially important. I mean the measures directly or indirectly affecting the Church which are, or are likely to be, brought before Parliament. For it must be remembered that the Bishops of England and Wales are, with the exception of the five junior prelates, members of the Legislature, and it is desirable that their legislative action should be, if possible, harmonious, but in any case well considered. Now, it is here, as it seems to me, that the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences may make itself very useful. It can sift and discuss questions which are likely to take shape in the form of Bills in Parliament, and can bring the opinions of the clergy and of the faithful laity before the Bishops in a definite and tangible form. Or the Bishops, after considering such matters, might send their own resolutions for consideration by the Central Council, with a view to their own guidance in their legislative capacity. This, I think, is the way in which the Central Council is most likely to be useful at present. . . . The opinion of the majority of a body constituted like the Central Council both deserves and would command respect, and the expression of such an opinion would be one very important element in the calculation which has to be gone into in the process of making up one's mind on public questions.

In regard to the Disestablishment resolution in the House of Commons, to which we have referred, the observations of such a prelate as the Bishop of St. David's have a peculiar

weight, and we have pleasure in quoting them. The Bishop said :

I deny the existence of any reason for treating the position of the Church in Wales as in any way peculiar. Wales is neither geographically nor politically distinct from England, and so far as there is an ethnical distinction between the two countries, it is not greater than that which divides the Highlands from the Lowlands of Scotland. Doubtless there exists in Wales a strong national sentiment, and it is deserving of all honour. But this does not form such a barrier between our fellow-subjects and ourselves as to justify the separate treatment of our country which would be involved in the disestablishment of the Church in Wales alone. . . . The late Archbishop of Canterbury paid me a visit four years ago, and was surprised to see the crowds of communicants coming up to the Lord's Table in a simple country church in a part of the kingdom in which he had been led to suppose that the Church was dead or moribund. What I am now contending for is, not the maintenance of the Church Establishment in Wales (although I desire this, and believe that its destruction would be injurious to the cause of true religion), but its being dealt with on equal terms with the Church in England. Of course, we know that every effort will now be made by the Church's enemies to show that the condition and the position of the Church in England and in Wales respectively are wholly unlike, and that they should be dealt with separately. Should those who desire to disestablish the Church succeed in Wales, there is no doubt that the opposite line will very quickly be taken, and that we shall be told that after all there was not very much difference between the state of these two portions of the same Church.

Leaving this point, the Bishop proceeds to what, after all, is a leading thought. As regards the Nonconformist bodies and the Church, what is the essential difference between them? "I am not blind," says Dr. Jones, "to the great advantages which the Church of England and (as I believed) true religion derive from her position as an Established Church. But this position is surely an accident, and is no part of her essence. If she were to be disestablished to-morrow, though doubtless some other great changes would speedily follow, she would still be the same Church. We have seen this in the case of the Church of Ireland. She was disestablished, and, as a result of her disestablishment, first her constitution and then her formularies were modified. She has rather drifted away from the position which she previously occupied—a position in which she was perfectly at one with the Church of England in respect of her standard of ritual as well as of doctrine. But she is the same Church still, and is still joined to us, if by no legal or official connexion, at all events in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Now it appears to me that those who rest upon their positions as members or ministers of an Established Church, as if this were the main feature of our Church's position, lay themselves open to the attacks of those who are unfriendly to the Church in an unnecessary manner." Many of the denominations, no doubt, may make

remarks which a mere establishmentarian would find it difficult, if not impossible, to answer.

In what then, according to the Bishop, does the real difference between the Church and the Denominations consist?

Primarily [he says] in our being *the* ancient Church of this nation, and a branch of the ancient and once undivided Catholic Church throughout the world. I rest our claim upon this far more than upon our Episcopal constitution or upon Episcopal succession. These are important elements in the catholicity of our Church, or, as I would rather say, they are strong evidences of it. But the great thing is, that we are a Church, and are not a sect. Those who assail our position speak and think as if we were one sect among many, unfairly singled out for favour by the State. Nobody who knows anything of history can accept this position. There was but one Church in the country, and this was an integral portion of the State, or, more truly, was the State itself in its religious aspect. First one and then another body fell away from it, on more or less defensible grounds; but the old Church stood where it was. It is upon this that we must take our stand. We are the Church of the country, and we cannot give up that title, whether we are recognised by the State or not. This is our grand principle, and this is the true charter of our position; on no other ground can we claim it. Dissenters, generally speaking, cannot understand this. They start from a totally different conception of a Church. One of the largest of the Nonconforming bodies, and certainly one of the most important, is that of the Congregationalists, and at least one other great body is congregationalist in constitution and principle; while Congregationalism has largely influenced the ideas of others who do not formally acknowledge it.

The Right Reverend Prelate concludes with counsels of charity and concord. Churchmen and they who have separated from the Church have been baptized in one Name and have been made to drink into one Spirit. It is our duty, says his lordship, as a Christian Bishop, to bear this in mind; and by all the means in our power to seek the things which make for peace in relation to them. "It seems to me impossible that any true Christian, except under the distorting influence of theological traditions, should fail to desire external unity among all who bear the worthy name by which we are called, and have been admitted into covenant with God through Holy Baptism. But since external unity is, in the present condition of the Church, a thing to be desired and prayed for rather than to be expected, we should surely all follow after that charity which is in itself at once more precious than external unity, and the only means of securing and preserving it."

