

among the clergy, who, as a body or class of men, have shown aversion to radical change. While the Apologetics of Christianity has been mainly the work of its ministers, we cannot deny that errors and abuses which had come to be regarded as part of the Church, which had obtained prescriptive authority, have, as a rule, been defended by the clergy. Any attempted changes in the doctrine, polity, or discipline of the Church, whether for corruption or renovation, have had to reckon upon the opposition of the ecclesiastical body. Various causes of this clerical conservatism, some of them entirely honourable, others, not so, may be specified.

1. The piety, the faith of the clergy has been an element in determining their resistance to radical change. Even those who judge Christian ministers most severely will hardly deny that many of them have really loved the doctrine and the Church of which they were the zealous defenders; while those who, under the influence of Christian sympathies, think more favourably of ministers, though they mourn the decay which, in many times and places, has affected the piety of both pastors and people, gratefully acknowledge that a large proportion of the clergy have, according to their lights, been true servants of Christ. That some of them have led scandalous lives, and that many have been self-seeking and unholily is confessed with sorrow; but we should not be blind to the clear evidences of piety which shine forth in the character and work of so many Christian ministers.

Now we cannot be wrong in regarding the piety of the clergy as part of the explanation of their conservatism. Any one can see how it will act. Piety and faith are ever associated with reverence. They make men afraid of doing or sanctioning what may hurt religion even under the guise of promoting it. Reverence clings to all that is good in the past—all that has been transmitted to us as good from the wise and the holy. Even where in the state of the Church evil or serious imperfection is fully admitted, there is, on the part of many, an unwillingness to adopt vigorous remedies, lest more harm than benefit should ensue; lest the wheat should be rooted up with the tares. That religious feeling should sometimes incline toward an unreasonably timid conservatism may be matter of regret but not of surprise. Enlightened Christian men should, indeed, be able to distinguish between excrescences from which the Church of Christ should be freed and the essential doctrine and