

# The Church Guardian,

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## THE LIBERTY OF THE CHURCH.

No doubt the relations between Church and State, directly influencing one another in the Mother Land, and indirectly transferred to Canada, have been strained to their utmost limit. The collision at one time seemingly fraught with fatal consequences to one or both has been in great degree avoided. The shocking results of attempted coercion on the part of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the case of the Rev. S. F. Green have caused men of all schools in the Church, and of all religions outside her, to awake to a sense of the position into which the spirituality had been for many years drifting.

The holy death-bed effort of the late great Archbishop has come like a voice from the spirit land to breathe peace over the troubled waters of ritual strife. Men are beginning to ask themselves, what is this 19th century boast of religious liberty? Questions of lawful doctrine and allowed variety in the ritual of Divine Worship within the Church have been looked fairly in the face, and on every side, except, perhaps, among a few immovable formalists, the cry is coming up for religious toleration and liberty. As we survey the wide horizon of the religious world, we see in the *via media* between Rome on the one extreme, with its call for absolute submission to modern claims for infallibility, and Protestantism, with its ever shifting bases of religious teaching, the Church of England, in very truth, the most liberal branch of the Church of Christ in the world. In no religious body is the member thrown more entirely upon his own responsibility to Almighty God than with us. If we take dogma we have clearly defined the great vital truths of the Faith as it has been read in Holy Scripture, and handed down unaltered in the central expression of her Belief, the Creed of Nicæa. Therein the Faith of the Churchman is claimed simply for the great truths of the Eternity of God, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the Presence of the Holy Ghost, three persons, co-equal and co-eternal, in one Supreme Godhead. The questions of modern religionism, such as the eternity of death, are there untouched.

So long as the Churchman gives the adhesion of his faith, to the vital truths, the facts, of the Catholic Faith, he is allowed immense latitude of opinion as to those accidents of the truth, which have been wrested from their places, and enthron-

ed as vital principles of belief, by the various forms of sectarianism in each age. In the acknowledgement of the Faith, as publicly expressed in the Nicene Creed, there is no real stumbling block in the way of the re-union of Christendom, under the banner of the Church of England. Then again as to Ritual. Here also, the Church being left to express in practice, her own formularies, as laid down in her Book of Common Prayer, immense latitude both of opinion and practice, in matters which the Fathers and Reformers, thought of so non-essential a nature, as not to need specification, is given to her Bishops, priests and laity. When we consider that all prayer and reading, and psalmody, especially as arranged in her Order of the liturgy, has for its one supreme object, not so much the edification of the people as the glory of God, we shall readily acknowledge how wide may be the limits, within which the forms of such Divine offices of worship may be cast. As to the doctrine of the Faith, as delivered from the several pulpits of the Church, it would not be lost sight of, that while Evangelicals dwell less upon certain truths than do the Ritualists, and that the High Church clergy lay more stress in their ministry, upon certain aspects of the Faith than do their Low Church brethren yet *that all teach the same Gospel*. For example, a Ritualist presents the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist forcibly before his people, from the aspect that this Sacrament is the ordained *mode* of joining the Church on earth with the Church in Heaven, to the great ever-continuing work of Christ—the pleading of the Infinite merits of the Sacrifice of His Passion and Death before the eternal throne. Whilst the Evangelical dwells chiefly, such is the bent of his mind, upon the Holy Communion as the blessed Christ-given ordinance whereby He feeds His people with spiritual food, for the sustenance of the faithful soul in this its day of battle.

But we may wisely bear in mind, that neither party, (except as we said in the case of a few extreme partizans,) wishes or attempts to hide from view, that aspect of the one great truth, which makes greater impression upon another soul than upon his own.

Then again, there are subjects which have caused much heart-burning, simply because having been laid for a time in oblivion, when brought out again to light, they are found dressed in the ghostly habiliments with which a disordered public fancy has arrayed them. The rightness of these things rightly used, has never been called in question by the Church as such, whatever may have been the prejudices, which a wrong use or abuse of them has created.

Let us gather up carefully all the shibboleths which have been for the last 40 years calling men to battle, for the honour (!) of which men have been found to put the Church beneath the foot of a secular committee of a secular Parliament, and we shall find that each one of them has been a matter of doctrine, discipline or ritual, which the Church has all down the ages, and especially at the time of her Reformation, and in our present Prayer Book of 1662, *deliberately* and carefully left a question of religious liberty of conscience.

There is now a breathing time. In the simple and Christian adjustment of the case of Rev. Mr. Mackonochie—in the elevation of Bishop Benson, once inhibited from preaching in the Diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, and the persons of satisfaction that have burst from the lips of all parties

in the Church with this appointment; again, in the presentation of Canon G. H. Wilkinson, of St. Peter's, Eaton Square, to the Episcopate of Truro; and yet again in the universal disfavor with which Bishop Fraser's attempt to curtail the liberty of the Priesthood in the matter of subscription in the case of Mr. Cowgill has been received. In all these signs of the times we see, with gratitude, certain indications of the restoration of that liberty in non-essentials, unity in essentials, and in all things charity, which must be well established in the Church of England before the beginning of the end of that great consummation for which we earnestly long, and devoutly pray may take place—the re-union of divided Christendom, at least in English speaking lands, under the one central, primitive and liberal body—the Church of England.

## THE CHURCH NOT PARTIES.

It is difficult for some people to understand how a Priest or Layman of the Church can hold aloof from one or other of the parties to which so many belong, and into which the Church seems to the outsider to be divided. But in truth, as is well known to those who are at all conversant with the present condition of the Church in England, and also in the Colonies, the great mass of both Clergy and Laity are not partizans, are members of neither the "High," "Low" nor "Broad" School, but are simply CHURCHMEN, holding to and firmly believing in the Doctrines and Ecclesiastical Polity as laid down in the Church's Formularies. It is true that if we were to judge of the strength of a cause by the amount of noise made by its followers, we should have to admit that these loyal non-party men are few in number and inferior in abilities, and that to the parties belong the learning and zeal which happily characterize the Church of the present day.

We have, however, but to look at the *personel* of the Bench of Bishops of England, which, we should suppose, will be accepted as a very good index of both the learning and zeal of the Church, and we find that there are not half a dozen professed or confessed party men among them. So it may be said of the Professors in the great Universities, and the dignitaries of the Cathedrals of England, the great majority of whom would disclaim any connection with the parties we have named. Take the Parochial Clergy, and the same may be said of them; certainly four out of every five would be quite ready to attest the truth of our statement. What is true with regard to the Clergy is equally true of the Laity, although, perhaps, the proportion of party men would be found to be greater among them than among the Clergy. What has been said of the Church in England may with equal confidence be said of the Church in the United States and of the Church in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world. The great majority of the Bishops, Clergy and Laity are neither "High," "Low" nor "Broad," are not party men in any sense whatever.

Yet it does not follow that, because the majority of Churchmen, Clerical and Lay, do not belong to one or other of the parties, the influence of these parties has been nil; on the contrary, the whole Church has felt in every part of it that they have done a noble work. First, the Evangelical movement made Christianity a real thing to the individual, and Christ a real Redeemer and