

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

Henry G. Bell

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND PAPAL
CLAIMS.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE
MEMBERS OF THE CANTERBURY DIOCESAN
CHURCH READING SOCIETY,
IN

Folkestone Parish Church,

On Thursday, October 1st,

BY THE

REV. H. HENSLEY HENSON, M.A.,

FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD,
INCUMBENT OF S. MARY'S HOSPITAL, ILFORD,
SELECT PREACHER TO THE UNIVERSITY
OF OXFORD, AND RURAL DEAN
OF BARKING (SOUTH).

Published by request.

Canterbury :

GIBBS AND SONS, PRINTERS, PALACE STREET.
MRS. BOWLER, PRECINCTS.

1896.

Price : 2d.

From the Preacher

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND PAPAL
CLAIMS.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

MEMBERS OF THE CANTERBURY DIOCESAN
CHURCH READING SOCIETY,

IN

Folkestone Parish Church,

On Thursday, October 1st,

BY THE

REV. H. HENSLEY HENSON, M.A.,

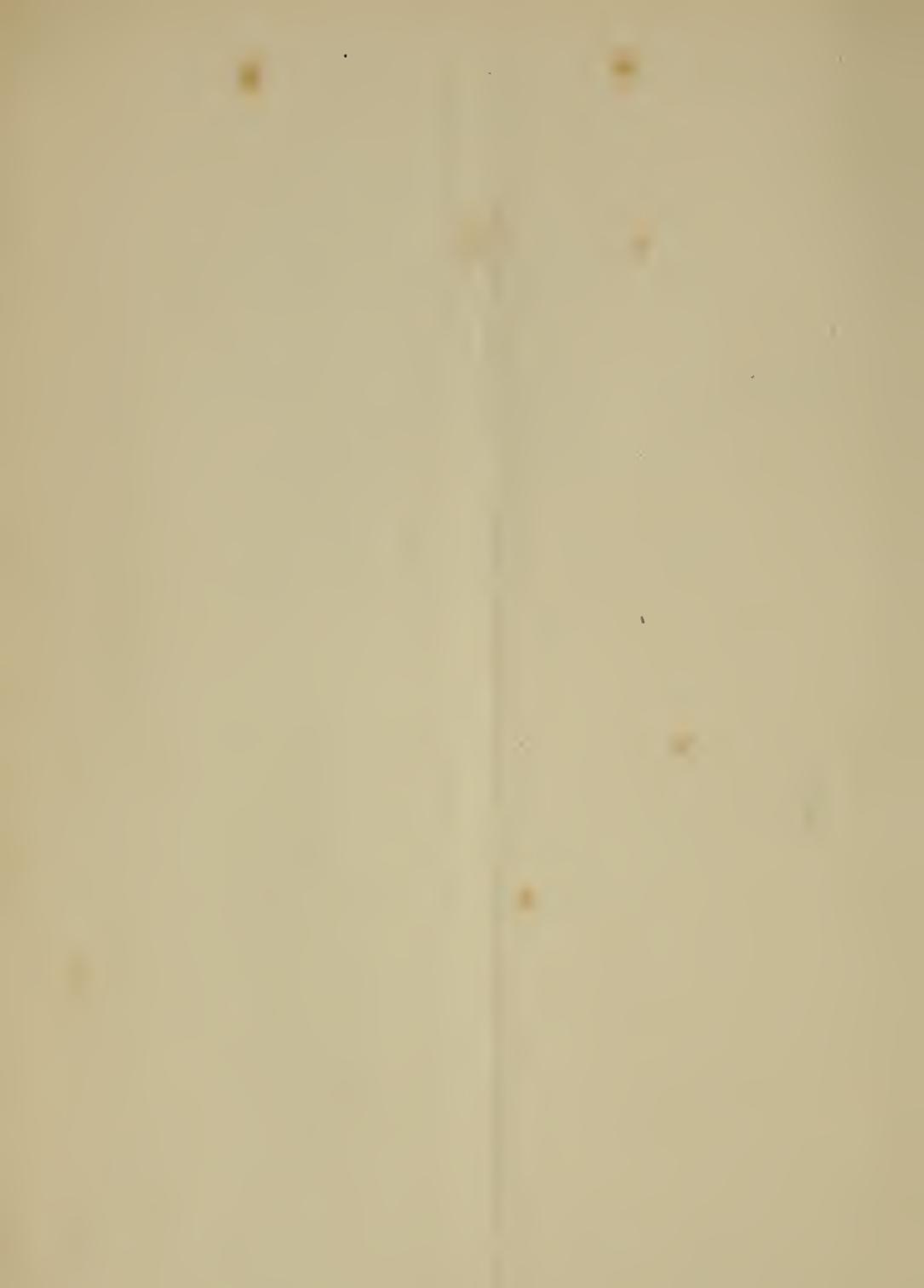
FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD,
INCUMBENT OF S. MARY'S HOSPITAL, ILFORD,
SELECT PREACHER TO THE UNIVERSITY
OF OXFORD, AND RURAL DEAN
OF BARKING (SOUTH).

Published by request.

Canterbury :

GIBBS AND SONS, PRINTERS, PALACE STREET.
MRS. BOWLER, PRECINCTS.

1896.



“With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage. GALATIANS V. 1.

By the common consent of thoughtful men liberty is reckoned among the most precious of human possessions: and yet no observant student of human nature will deny that, if action is to be accepted as the true index of desire, liberty is among the least valued of terrestrial boons. Whether the sphere of inquiry be the political history of the race, or its social development, or its intellectual record, or its religious phenomena, the same conclusion will be reached. With the highest theoretical appreciation of liberty men have consistently sought for servitude, and nothing has been more normal in the experience of humanity than the forfeiture of freedom. In this sermon I propose to speak very briefly of this paradox in the religious sphere, and I shall make no apology for giving to my speech a direct reference to actual facts and conditions.

Our text, we may remember, suggests a remarkable instance of the inherent love of bondage, which is not the least impressive trait of human nature. S. Paul stands aghast at the spectacle presented by the Galatian Church. He had been the instrument of spiritual liberty. If we accept the most interesting theory of Professor Ramsay, and locate the Galatians in the cities of Lycaonia, then we can learn from the fourteenth chapter of the Acts the type of religious bondage from which they had been set free. It was a bondage of gross materialism, of an exigent ritual system,

of a cruel and narrow bigotry. They were on the watch for marvels, greedy of miracles. "*The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*"—the proposition was readily advanced, and eagerly accepted. The organized Religion was extremely accommodating; in its capacious creed there was always room for a new dogma, the popular fancy need never lack appropriate liturgical expression. "*The priest of Jupiter, whose temple was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes.*" This facile devotion, however, indicated but faint authority over character. The credulous rustics were the helpless victims of any adventurer who would play on their fears, or arouse their passions. The Apostles were in rapid succession the objects of worship and the victims of outrage. Christianity represented to the Galatians, who accepted it, their release from the bondage of false views about God, it set their minds in the true attitude towards the problems of religion, it brought to them a just sense of moral proportions. Materialism, ritual, bigotry, the triple yoke of paganism was broken from off their necks, and for awhile the Galatians rejoiced in their liberty. But the incorrigible paradox soon emerged to view. The abrogated servitude had furnished life comfortably, even splendidly, and the new freedom was painfully cold and bare. So the way was prepared for the agents of reaction. The Judaizers found willing audience for their advocacy of a revived paganism under Jewish forms. The apostasy was as prompt and as enthusiastic as the original conversion. The Galatian Epistle is S. Paul's protest. He reminds his inconstant converts of their former bondage, he warns them against their present contempt for evangelic liberty. "*Howbeit at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods; but now that ye have come to know God,*

or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain."

"As a whole, the letter is an eloquent and powerful claim for freedom of life, freedom of thought, freedom of the individual from external restrictions and regulations, freedom for all to work out their own salvation and develop their own nature: "*Ye were called for freedom.*"* S. Paul does not scruple to represent freedom as the very essence of discipleship. "*With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.*"

In thus stating the source of evangelic freedom the Apostle indicates its character, and suggests the limiting conditions of its exercise. It is a freedom which reflects Christ's mind, and assists Christ's Mission. It is therefore no mere anarchic individualism, but a righteous discipline. It is, to borrow the striking phrase of S. James, "*a law of liberty.*" It has its roots in righteousness: it ministers to righteousness: it works out in righteousness. It is the precise antithesis of that sin, which S. John describes as "*lawlessness.*" So in this Epistle of protest against religious servitude, S. Paul jealously guards the character of Christian Liberty against the distortions of antinomian heresy.

"For ye, brethren, were called for freedom: only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another."

* Ramsay, S. Paul, p. 189.

To be free in the evangelic sense is to live by the inspiration of a surrendered heart, not by the letter of an external law. *“If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”*

But such freedom will be distasteful to men precisely in measure as they are receding from Christ's Standard of duty, and losing touch with Christ's Eternal Purpose. The former servitudes will ever present a more alluring aspect as they draw the closer to our real desires. The freedom with which Christ set us free will ever be a prize to be vigilantly guarded rather than a luxury to be securely enjoyed. For human nature lusts after bondage, and the set of life, and the movements of the world, and the pervading atmosphere of existence all trend towards the soul's enslavement. Therefore the protest of S. Paul will never wholly lose its relevancy to the needs of the Church, and at intervals, when the servile drift in disciples has, from some cause or other become exceptionally powerful, that protest will be found to possess direct and manifest cogency. It will be of all messages, the message which the faithful ambassador of Christ will feel himself compelled to deliver, though it be unpleasing and unregarded. *“With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.”*

If I have rightly gauged the auguries of the hour, we, members of the Church of England, are, at this moment, passing through what may be called an acute phase of ecclesiastical servility: and, consequently, we may with advantage consider the Pauline protest. Let me make clear to you the direction of my thought. Any intelligent and disinterested observer of English religious history during the past year, or perhaps eighteen months, would have been

impressed by the curious papalist reaction, which has manifested itself among a small body of English laymen, and a relatively numerous section of the English clergy. That a generous resentment against the miserable divisions of Christendom should glow in sincere Christian hearts is both natural and advantageous: but the sentiment which has laid hold of the Reunionists, whom I have in mind can hardly be described as such: it is specially—so far as I have been able to understand its character—a desire for Papal authority, a yearning for the government of an admired Pontiff. The enthusiasts have certified their sincerity by the amazing extent of their concessions. It is commonly assumed, as a reasonable basis for discussion, that the Roman standpoint is sound. The gigantic and unproved hypotheses which form the basis of Vaticanism are silently conceded: and we are seriously exhorted to believe that the differences between the two Churches are merely matters of misunderstanding to be removed by a policy of “explanation.” I yield to none in my abhorrence of religious division: I yield to none in my earnest longing for religious unity: but I have never been able to reconcile myself to these projects—which are chronic among us—of reunion with the unreformed and irreformable Papal Church. The recent and somewhat humiliating collapse of the latest of the series may induce a little reflection on the real character of the longing for Roman recognition which is obviously the common source of all these futile enterprises. Our respect for the Authors of the latest attempt, and our sympathy with the rough disillusionment to which they have been subjected cannot blind us to the censurable nature of their action, and the large, though probably unconscious, disloyalty involved in it. You will say to me, why revive a painful memory? why taunt a fallen combatant? Assuredly

I should merit your censure, if for the mere service of personal satisfaction I were to do so : but, brethren, I have another purpose, the gravity of which bears me out in my action. I desire to press on you not alone the futility, but also the disloyalty and the religious danger of these perennial Roman movements. I shall submit to you that they come within the range of the Pauline protest, they are a manifestation of the indigenous servility of the human heart, they contradict the liberty of our discipleship. Apart from these considerations there are other and considerable mischiefs. While attention is directed towards the Church of Rome it is diverted from the Church of England : in coveting the heritage of another we ignore the substantial worth of our own. "Anglicanism" is continually spoken of in terms of contemptuous pity : it would really seem that the *raison d'être* of the English Church is, in the judgment of many of her members, her ability to escort the errant nation back into the Roman fold. Comparisons are instituted between our Church and the Church of Rome always to the advantage of the latter. The events of the 16th century are habitually in many circles described as a compound of guilt and folly : the "Fathers" of the English Reformation are continually depreciated. Any reference to the virulent and pervading abuses of the mediæval Church, or to the incredible superstitions which have lowered the Christianity of the Latin Races almost to the level of sheer paganism is indignantly denounced as "Protestant bigotry." In fine, Rome is taken at her own estimate, and the English Church finds her most relentless critics among her own members. This process appears to me equally unintelligent and discreditable. It is bad tactics and worse morals. It encourages the Romans to hope for extensive desertions : and it weakens the Church of England by the suspicion of a large

measure of disloyalty in her ranks. I stand here to maintain that Anglicanism is no unwarrantable excrescence on Catholic unity, no abortive experiment in ecclesiastical politics, no temporary concession to obstinate insularity. The Church of England stands for principles not one whit less true, noble and precious than the principles which are associated with the Church of Rome. Anglicanism is, in the religious sphere, the synonym for ordered liberty. If the Church of England were to cease, whether by submersion into the Dead Sea of Papalism, or by shipwreck among the breakers of Protestantism, the world would lose the presentment of Christian Freedom, that is, of freedom conditioned by Christ's Mind and Christ's Mission. The Roman Church has destroyed in its members the notion of the sovereign greatness and inherent sanctity of truth. I am fully conscious of the gravity of this accusation: but I cannot mitigate it, for it represents a conviction based on an honest, and—as far as the exigencies of a very busy life have permitted—thorough inquiry into the relations between England and Rome since the separation of the Churches. This lamentable fiasco of a Papal Inquiry into the validity of English Orders will not be wholly fruitless of good if it opens the eyes of English Churchmen to the fictitious character of Roman controversy. It is not that we accuse individuals of untruthfulness: we are not precluded from recognizing their excellence: but we point to this prevailing note of Roman Controversy, its contempt for truth as such. If time were at my disposal, I would ask you to consider from this standpoint the recent Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. on the Unity of the Church, and the still more recent Bull of the same Pontiff, condemning Anglican Orders. I must, however, content myself with recommending to you a short but thorough criticism of the Encyclical, issued by the

“Church Historical Society.” It is simply true to say that in the ordinary intercourse of human life a man who exhibited so lax a sense of truth as that exhibited in his official pronouncements by the Infallible Pontiff would be considered either astonishingly unscrupulous, or still more astonishingly misinformed. Now I do not for one moment question the sincerity, the lofty motive, and the single-minded piety of Pope Leo XIII. : I regard him as the typical product of the Roman System, reflecting as such its cynical indifference to truth. I read the frequent utterances of Cardinal Vaughan : I do not resent their roughness, nor censure their ignorance : but I call attention to the same circumstance. His Eminence never seems conscious of the duty of setting the facts before the public he addresses. His statements are always clear, positive, aggressive, but never complete. His hearers could never discover from him that there are degrees of evidence, and differing measures of agreement, and large diversities of opinion. In short truth is identified with the interest of an institution : it is never revered for its own sake ; I do not deny that there are unscrupulous controversialists in other camps, but outside the ranks of Rome there are among men of character and adequate learning certain broad understandings as to the nature of evidence and the authority of facts, which make discussion reasonable and even serviceable : in this eternal Roman controversy alone no advance is made. The words of the Bishop of Peterborough are plainly true. “Proof or disproof seems almost impossible. Controversy goes the same weary round ; and no falsehoods ever seem to be exploded.” The Nag’s Head Fable does duty as a conclusive proof of the invalidity of Anglican Orders so long as its impudent falsehood is undiscovered, and I am constrained to add, so long after that as the discovery

is unknown, and wherever it is unknown. When that happens, and the old argument has to be abandoned, then new objections are coined: and when every other objection is overcome then the whole question is carried into the pathless wilderness of "Intention." Only one thing is certain, and that is the determination of the Roman controversialist never to admit that he has made a mistake. For, indeed, he enters on his pretended historical inquiries with his conclusions settled in advance. Inquiry is, from his own standpoint, superfluous when it is not heretical. It is a condescension to inveterate error. But it may not affect conclusions. They have no reference to inquiry. An infallible Church cannot afford to acknowledge her errors, she may only defend them. With us, happily, the case is far different. The Church of England represents, and as far as I can see, alone in the West represents the principle of historical Christianity. Her appeal to the past is not conditioned by any dogmatic or hierarchic *arrière pensée*. She maintains as essential nothing which she does not justify at the bar of Catholic History. To her loyalty to this principle she owes the isolation which her enemies cast at her as a reproach. Protestants and Papalists unite in repudiating the authority of historic Christianity, both prefer the larger liberty of adaptation to the varying conditions of humanity which infallibility (however defined and wherever deposited) secures. Their government, their creed, their forms of devotion, are perpetually changing, waxing here, shrinking there, and always the dominant factor in the process is the pressure of opinion, expediency. Anglicanism stands for loyalty to the Catholic past, as Papalism and Protestantism stand for the contrary principle of limitless variation. Liberty and loyalty are the essentials of Anglicanism, and they are worth fighting for. Intellectual

liberty is the condition of truth, as moral liberty is the condition of righteousness. So Anglicanism stands for the sovereign dignity of Truth, and the practical supremacy of Righteousness. The justification of the Church of England is in the bondage of the past, and the necessities of the present. The Reformation was doubtless faulty in its motives, in its agents, in its methods, in its achievements; but it emancipated England from an intolerable tyranny, and secured to her the possession of spiritual liberty. And is this, brethren, the time to make light of our heritage of liberty? In view of the confusion of men's beliefs, the distress of many loyal hearts, the cruel perplexity of many honest minds which has been brought about through, to give but a single instance of an almost infinite unsettlement, the new science—for new it practically is—of Biblical criticism, who would despise his Anglican birthright of freedom? Read Leo XIII.'s Encyclical on the "Study of Holy Scripture" in which the fatuous Decrees of Trent and the Vatican are solemnly reaffirmed in face of the labours and achievements of historical science, and wonder at the folly which could discuss reunion with Rome apart from the great issues of freedom and truth. What does the average Roman know of the Scriptures, what influence have they on his thought, what authority do they carry in his religious discussions? In prohibiting the rational study of the Scriptures, the Roman Church has exposed her members to immense dangers. It is said, and I believe with truth, that the popularity of M. Rénan's "Vie de Jésus" arises from the ignorance of the Gospels which prevails among his countrymen. Remember, the rational treatment of the Scriptures, their habitual study, their supreme authority are Anglican principles, that is, true Catholic principles which it has come to be the special task of the Anglican Church to maintain. These

principles it is your special function to assert and maintain. As members of the Church Reading Society you are formally pledged to a "regular, careful, and intelligent study of the Bible, Prayer Book, and Church History." Your association for that purpose reflects the very genius of Anglicanism. In the Roman Church we have the authority of Cardinal Vaughan's great predecessor in the schismatic see of Westminster for the fact that the appeal to history is itself a heresy; and, to do them justice, most Roman ecclesiastics tried by that test are undoubtedly orthodox.

So, brethren, I would appeal to you as studious, thoughtful members of the Church of England not to undervalue your religious heritage. We can adopt the words of S. Paul with a fullness of appreciation beyond all other Christians. "*With freedom did Christ set us free*"; it is for us, then, to be heedful of the Apostle's warning: "*Stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.*" Let us be loyal to the truth God has given to us, and let us trust His over-ruling Providence to bring about the restoration of unity when and how He will. The surrender of principle can never be the basis of a religious harmony which accords with the Will of God. The Truth Incarnate cannot approve that manipulation of facts, those distortions and suppressions of evidence, those brutal appeals to irrelevant fears, must I add, those coarse suggestions of material advantage which form the most conspicuous features of the Papalist pronouncements. Let us, as disciples, as students, maintain the supremacy of truth as truth, and banish from spiritual discussions the name and the notion of expediency. The events of the last year have discovered among the members of our own communion so perilous an indifference to truth, a temper of accommodation

so eager, a regard for expediency so manifest and unashamed that I, for one, confess to deep alarm; and that must be my apology for seizing the rare opportunity of addressing religious students in order to press upon them the high duty of loyalty, at all costs and at all risks, to sovereign Truth.

N.B.—We have been assured that the actual motion for the Inquiry referred to came from within the Roman Church. This perhaps was inevitable. It certainly cannot excuse the almost ecstatic delight with which some Anglicans received the project, or the extraordinary lack of self-respect involved in their formal participation (so far as that was possible) in it. For the rest, the statements in the sermon represent a deliberate judgment on the episode.



