

PRINCIPLES FOR
CHURCHMEN

A MANUAL OF POSITIVE STATEMENTS
ON SOME SUBJECTS OF CONTROVERSY

WITH AN

*EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION ON THE PRESSING DANGERS
WHICH BESET THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

BY THE RIGHT REV.

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"LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES" ETC.

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II.

THE CHURCH'S COMPREHENSIVENESS.

THE title of this paper contains a word which requires a little explanation. That word is "comprehensiveness." In order to explain my meaning, I will mention a few questions about which men's minds seem curiously bewildered in these days. The questions are such as these: Was the Reformed Church of England intended to be a narrow communion in which no difference of opinion was to be allowed?—Were its members meant to be confined to a rigid uniformity of thought on every conceivable point of doctrine and practice?—Was any liberty of thinking to be allowed?—What were to be the limits of such liberty? On each of these questions I shall try to throw a little light in this paper.

(1) To be *as comprehensive as possible*, consistently with reverence for the rule of Scripture, should be the aim of every well-constituted National Church. Reason and common sense alike point this out. It should allow large liberty of thought within certain limits. Its *necessaria* should be few and well-defined. Its *non-necessaria* should be very many. It should make generous allowance for the infinite variety of men's minds, the curious sensitiveness of scrupulous consciences, and the enormous difficulty of clothing thoughts in language which will not admit of more than one meaning. A sect can afford to be narrow and exclusive; a National Church ought to be liberal, generous, and as "large-hearted" as Solomon (1 Kings iv. 29). Above all, the heads of a National Church should never forget that it is a body of which the members, from the highest minister down to the humblest layman, are all fallen and corrupt creatures, and that their mental errors, as well as their moral delinquencies, demand very tender dealing. The great Master of all Churches was one who would not "break a bruised reed or quench smoking flax" (Matt. xii. 20), and tolerated much ignorance and many mistakes in His disciples. A National Church must never be ashamed to walk in His steps. To secure the greatest happiness and wealth of the greatest number in the State is the aim of every wise politician. To comprehend and take in, by a well-devised system of Scriptural Christianity, the greatest number of Christians in the nation, ought to be the aim of every National Church.

Now comprehensiveness, such as I have described, I believe to be *a peculiar characteristic* of the National Church of England. I do not admit the truth of Chatham's famous dictum, that we have Calvinistic Articles, a Popish Liturgy, and Arminian clergy. It sounds smart, but it is not correct. No doubt we have within our pale three widely different "schools of thought,"—the old historical schools commonly called High, and Low, and Broad. They are schools which have existed for nearly three centuries, and, unless human nature greatly alters, I believe they will exist as long as the Church of England stands. But for all this I believe that there is no Church on earth which contains so large a number of educated, intelligent, independent, thoughtful, free-speaking ministers and laymen; who, while they—differ widely on some points, and each thinks himself right and others wrong, are all firmly attached to their own Communion, and would be ready, if need be, to fight for it to the very last. We all probably think we could reform and amend the Church a little, and each school has its own special nostrums and medicines, which it believes would

improve the Church's health, if taken. And, like genuine Englishmen, we are all ready to grumble because we cannot have everything our *own way*. Yet there is a curious amount of agreement among us about certain great principles. We all love our old English Bible, if we do not always interpret it alike. We like Episcopacy, if we do not equally like all our Bishops. We like the Prayer-book, if we do not put the same sense on all its phrases. We like our parochial system and our parish churches. We like our Articles, and Creeds, and mode of worship. And if any man asks how much we like these things, I advise him to try to take them away. He would soon find that he might as well try to interfere between husband and wife in a family quarrel, and that all parties would agree in telling him to mind his own business, and in shutting the door in his face.

The plain truth is that our National Church is very like our National Army, which contains several various forces, each firmly convinced of its own peculiar importance. In time of peace the Guards chaff the Line, and the Line the Guards, the Cavalry makes light of the Artillery, and the Artillery of the Cavalry, the kilted Highlanders think little of the Rifle Brigade or the Welsh Fusiliers, and the Irish regiments think themselves best of all. But let the stern realities of war once begin, and a British army be sent to a foreign shore,—let the campaign really commence, and the enemy be met on the field of battle,—let the word be given to advance across the Alma, or charge up the valley of death at Balaclava, or storm the Redan, or force the Khyber Pass,—and where will you find more real union, and brotherly feeling, and readiness to stand shoulder to shoulder, than in the army of our Queen? And so I believe it is in our National Church. There may be many traitors among us, sceptics and Romanists, who are useless and untrustworthy, and ought to go to their own place. But for all this, there is a vast amount of substantial agreement within our pale. In spite of all her apparent differences, and conflicting schools of thought, the National Church has strong elements of cohesiveness, and contrives to satisfy and keep together a very large proportion of the people of this land. This is what I call successful comprehensiveness.

In questions like these there is nothing like coming to names and facts. From the long roll of great divines to which the National Church can thankfully point, let me select a few examples of men of different schools of thought, and then let me ask any sensible Churchman whether there is one of them whom he would wish to blackball and exclude from our ranks. Let us think of Ridley and Latimer and Jewel, of Hooker and Andrews and Pearson and Hammond, of Davenant and Hall and Usher and Reynolds, of Stillingfleet and Patrick and Waterland and Bull, of Robert Nelson and George Herbert, of Romaine and Toplady and Newton and Scott and Cecil and Simeon, of Bishops Ryder and Blomfield and Baring and Waldegrave and Jeune and Thirlwall, of Archbishops Sumner and Longley and Tait and Whately, of the martyred Bishop Patteson, and the late Canon Mozley. What reading man does not know that these divines differed widely about many subjects,—about the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments—about the meaning of some words and phrases in the Prayer-book—about the relative place and proportion they assigned to some doctrines and verities of the faith? But they all agreed in loving the Church of England, in thanking God for her Reformation, in maintaining her protest against the Church of Rome (see Note A), in using her forms of worship, and in labouring for her prosperity. They could pray and praise together. In days of

darkness and persecution they drew together, like Hooper and Ridley in Queen Mary's time, and found common ground. We may all have our pets and favourites in this list. We may greatly prefer some of these men to others. We may think some of them were in error, and did not "declare all the counsel of God." But after all, is there one of them whom we should like to have turned out of our communion? I reply, Not one! With all their shades in opinion they were "honest Churchmen," and there was room in our pale for all. And this is what I call the practical comprehensiveness of the National Church.

(2) But are there no *limits to the comprehensiveness* of the Church of England? This is a very delicate question; but I am prepared to look it fully in the face. It is one of such vast importance, in a day of abounding liberalism, that it seems very desirable to lay down one or two leading principles on the subject.

There ought to be some limits to the comprehensiveness of every Church, for the sake of order. Once more I assert that reason and common sense point to this conclusion.

Order is Heaven's first law. There was order in Eden before the fall. There will be perfect order on earth at the restitution of all things. A Christian Church utterly destitute of order does not deserve to be called a Church at all. A Church, like every other corporation on earth, must have definite terms of membership. It must have a creed, and certain fixed principles of doctrine and worship. Its members have a right to know what its ministers are set to teach. A Church which is a mere boneless body, like a jelly-fish, a colourless, bloodless, creedless Pantheon, in which every one is right and nobody is wrong who is *in earnest*, and in which it does not matter a jot what is preached and taught, so long as the preachers are *sincere*,—such a Church is an unpractical absurdity, and the baseless fabric of a dream. The Church which abandons all "limits," and will not proclaim to mankind what it believes, or would have its members believe, may do very well for Cloudland or Utopia; but it will never do for a world where there are tears and crosses, troubles and sorrows, sickness and death.

The member of the National Church of England has a right to expect one general type of teaching and worship, whether he goes into a parish church in Truro or Lincoln, in Canterbury or Carlisle. Different shades of statement in the pulpit, he may find himself obliged to tolerate. But he may justly complain if the doctrine of one diocese is as utterly unlike that of another as light and darkness, black and white, acids and alkalies, oil and water. "Liberty of prophesying" and free thought, in the abstract, are excellent things. But they must have some bounds. Just as in States the extreme of liberty becomes licentiousness and tyranny, so in Churches it becomes disorder and confusion. The Church which regards Deism, Socinianism, Romanism, and Protestantism with equal favour or equal indifference, is a mere Babel, a "city of confusion," and not a city of God.

Now, I contend that the National Church of England has set up wisely-devised "limits" to its comprehensiveness. Those limits, I believe, are to be found in the Articles, the Creeds, and the Book of Common Prayer. These well-known documents, I maintain, provide limits wide enough for all reasonable men who do not object *in toto* to liturgies and Episcopacy. They are documents, no doubt, which all do not interpret alike. As long as the world stands, and as long as language is what it is, you will never get men to place precisely the same meaning on theological phrases and words. But, however

variously we may interpret the Articles, Creeds, and Prayer-book, they are unmistakable limits, fences, and bounds within which the National Church requires its ministers to walk, and he that flatly rejects them, denies them, contradicts them, and transgresses them, is in his wrong place inside the Church of England.

(a) If, for example, on the one hand, a man calling himself a Churchman deliberately denies the doctrine of the Trinity, or the proper deity of Christ, or the personality and work of the Holy Ghost, or the atonement and mediation of Christ, or the inspiration and divine authority of Scripture, or justification by faith, or the inseparable connection of saving faith and holiness, or the obligation of the two sacraments, I cannot understand what he is doing in our ranks. Of course, as an Englishman, he may come into our places of worship. But common sense seems to me to point out that he cannot conscientiously use our Prayer-book, and that he has certainly no right to occupy our pulpits and reading desks.

(b) If, on the other hand, a minister of the National Church maintains and teaches those distinctive doctrines of the Church of Rome which are plainly named, defined, and repudiated in the Thirty-nine Articles, and ignoring the public declaration which he made on taking a living, deliberately teaches transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, purgatory, the necessity of auricular confession, and the invocation of saints, I contend that he is transgressing the liberty allowed by the Church of England. He may be zealous, sincere, earnest, and devout, but he is in the wrong place in a Protestant communion. He has stepped over the just limits of the Church's comprehensiveness, and is occupying an untenable and unwarrantable position.

Whether these documentary limits of our Church's comprehensiveness are the wisest and best that could have been devised, I will not undertake now to consider. At any rate, they are at present the law of the land. But one assertion I will venture boldly to make. Search all the Confessions of Faith in Christendom, and I defy any man to find one which combines decision and firmness in necessary things, and moderation in non-necessary things, so admirably as the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Nor yet will you find a Church which allows such liberty and freedom of thought to its ministers, and imposes so light a yoke on their consciences. If a clergyman will only subscribe the Articles *si ammo*, and "consent to the use" of the Prayer-book in conducting public worship, he is at once a chartered freeman of our Anglican corporation. Let our rivals in other communions say what they please about our need of "liberation." The freest pulpit on earth is the pulpit of our Established Church.

Of course the things I have just said appear very narrow and illiberal to some minds. There are many nowadays who are so enamoured of liberty that they would throw down all theological "limits," fences, and restrictions, and leave the platform of our Church as bare as a common. They tell us the only way to save the Church from shipwreck is to pitch overboard Articles and Creeds as useless lumber, and to assign no bounds to her "comprehensiveness," so long as her ministers are earnest and sincere. I am utterly unable to see with the eyes of these people. I believe that it is miserable policy to try purchase unity and peace and charity at the expense of faith and hope and truth. I contend that a rejection of Deism and Socinianism on one side, and a rejection of Romanism and superstition on the other, form "just, and reasonable, and fair limits to comprehensiveness," and that our Church does well and wisely in requiring

her ministers to walk within them. [See Note B.)

But I go farther than this. I contend that the maintenance of certain well-defined "limits to comprehensiveness" is absolutely essential to the welfare of a Church, and that without such limits it is vain to expect any blessing from God. I think I could name Churches which have fallen into decay, and become lightless lighthouses, in consequence of giving up Creeds and Confessions of Faith. In the vain pursuit of liberty they have sacrificed vitality, and, casting overboard distinctive doctrine, have committed suicide. They continue to this day, and have a name and place on the earth, but, like extinct volcanoes, they have neither heat, light, nor fire. Nor yet is this all. I fail to see in ecclesiastical history a single instance of good being done to souls except by the agency of men who adhered strictly to positive doctrinal "limits," and preached and taught positive distinctive truths. Weigh and analyze the teaching of any English divine who has shaken the earth from the time of the Reformation down to the present day. Tell me, if you can, of one who ever roused consciences, awoke the sleeping, and revived the dead, who did not hold and proclaim a well-defined and limited theology. Show me, if you can, a single "master of assemblies," from Latimer down to the most popular mission-preacher of this day, who ever wrought deliverance on earth, and turned the world upside down by a mere colourless gospel,—a gospel without the Trinity, without the Atonement, without the blood of Christ, without the Holy Spirit, without justification, without regeneration. No! you will never find one—never, never! Grapes will not grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles. The Church which allows its ministers to teach a vague gospel of *earnestness and sincerity*, instead of distinctive Christian doctrine, may get the reputation of being very liberal and tolerant in these latter days, but it will never convert and satisfy souls. A Church must have some "limits" and bounds to its "comprehensiveness," if it desires to do good.

And now let me conclude with an earnest appeal to my brother Churchmen, by way of application. For the sake of peace, for the sake of truth, for the sake of the Church of England, for the sake of Christ,—let us strive and pray that we may hold fast both the principles referred to in the subject of this paper—the principle of "comprehensiveness" and the principle of "limitation."

(a) Let us be of a *comprehensive spirit*. Let us not exclude from the Church those whom the Church has not excluded, nor ostracize and excommunicate every one who cannot pronounce our shibboleths, or work exactly on our lines. I am a thoroughgoing Evangelical Churchman, and I am not a bit ashamed of it. I will never give place by subjection, and admit that any one is a better Churchman than myself. But I have no sympathy with those who advocate a rigid, unbending, cast-iron uniformity within our pale, and want all Churchmen to be, like the rails round Hyde Park in London, of one unvarying metal colour, height, shape, and thickness. If any man asks me to cast out of the Church of this day men of the type of Andrews and Sanderson and George Herbert, or of Burnet and Tillotson and Whichcote, or of Bishops Blomfield or Thirlwall, or of Bishops Wilberforce or Selwyn, I tell him plainly that I will not lift a finger to do it. No doubt I could not preach very comfortably in the pulpits of such men, nor they in mine. I could not take them as curates if I was an incumbent, nor could they take me. I prefer to support my own favourite religious Societies, and they prefer theirs. But if any Evangelical Churchman

wants to thrust these men out of the Church of England, because, like Apollos, they do not seem to him to know the “way of God perfectly,” I will not help him. I will tolerate them, on my principle of “Church comprehensiveness,” and in return I expect them to tolerate me.

(b) On the other hand, let us neither be ashamed nor afraid of having *limits to our comprehensiveness*, even the limits of our mother, the Church of England. Let us not overstrain the quality of liberalism so far as to sanction theological licentiousness. Let us be as broad as the Articles and Creeds, but not one inch broader. If any one tries to persuade me that I ought to smile and look on complacently, with folded arms, while beneficed or licensed clergymen teach Deism, Socinianism, or Romanism, I must tell him plainly that I cannot and will not do it. He may tell me that I am a “troubler of Israel,” and a bitter controversialist; but I repeat that, when truth is in danger, I cannot and will not sit still. At this rate the apostles ought to have left the world alone eighteen centuries ago! They ought to have been satisfied with the teaching of Socrates and Plato, and were fools to attack heathenism, and live and die preaching Christ crucified! At this rate the English Reformation was a huge schism and mistake, and Ridley and Latimer ought never to have resisted Rome and gone to the stake! No, indeed! I love my own Church too well to tolerate either scepticism on the one hand or Romanism on the other, and I think I am only doing my duty to my ordination vows in trying to “drive both away.”

But after all, it matters little what bishops and clergy may think or do. The question before us is rapidly getting out of clerical hands. There are handwritings on the walls, which it needs no Daniel to interpret. I think I know something of the laity, and especially in the middle classes, in this country, and I am certain they will never tolerate and support a National Church which desires to return to Rome, or has no theological “limits,” and holds no distinctive doctrines. (See Note C.) They do not want the Established Church of England to be narrow, illiberal, party-spirited, and exclusive. But in a weary, working, sorrowful world, the laity will not put up with a religion either of negations or superstitions. They want bread, and they will not be content with stones. Once let the English laity see that a reign of complete latitudinarianism has begun, that the old landmarks are thrown down, and that the National Church does not care a jot whether her ministers preach Deism or Bible Christianity, Protestantism or Popery, but gives equal favour to all,—once, I say, let the laity see this, and they will desert the National Church and leave it to perish. Give the laity the old paths of the Bible, and the well-defined limits of the Articles, Creeds, and Prayer-book, and they will stand by the Church to the last. Destroy those limits, or refuse to enforce and maintain them, and they will soon cry, “Let us depart hence;” our candlestick will be removed, and the Church will die for want of Churchmen. In short, there is no alternative. The question is one of life or death. The English National Church must either be Protestant, and have doctrinal “limits,” or cease to exist.

NOTES

NOTE A.—It is a curious and noteworthy fact, that even Archbishop Laud, with all his High-Churchism, used the following language about the Church of

Rome:—

A Church may hold the fundamental points, literally, and as long as it stays there be without control, and yet err grossly, dangerously, nay, damnably, in the exposition of them; and this is the Church of Rome's case."

"There is great peril of damnable schism, heresy, and other sin, by living and dying in the Roman faith, tainted with so many superstitions as at this day it is, and this tyranny to boot."

All Protestants unanimously agree in this, that there is great peril of damnation for any man to live and die in the Roman persuasion."

(I find these quotations in a pamphlet of Dean Goode's, entitled, "Is the Reformation a Blessing?" Hatchard, 1850.)

Archbishop Sancroft, the famous nonjuror, before he ceased to be Archbishop of Canterbury, recommended the clergy "to take all opportunities of assuring and convincing the Nonconformists, that the Bishops are really and sincerely irreconcilable enemies to the errors, superstitions, idolatries, and tyrannies of the Church of Rome."

NOTE B.—"Those who, in their dread of strife and party violence, would seek to preserve union by abstaining from all mention of every doctrine that is likely to afford matter of controversy, by laying aside all formularies and confessions of faith, and by regarding with indifference all varieties of opinion among professors of Christianity, would in fact put an end to the very existence of the society itself, whose integrity and concord they would preserve. In preventing hurtful contentions, by giving up everything that is worth contending about, they would be rooting out the wheat along with the tares; and for the sake of extirpating noxious weeds, would be condemning the field to perpetual sterility. And, after all, it would be but an apparent union that would result; since the members of the same nominal Church could have but little sympathy with each other's sentiments and designs, when they know them to be essentially at variance with their own."—"We are not then to hold a society together by renouncing the objects of it; nor to part with our faith and our hope, as a means of attaining charity."—*Archbishop Whately's Bampton Lectures*, I. 44.

To this note I shall venture to add another extract from the same volume, which in an age of extreme theological violence and party spirit deserves the serious attention of all thoughtful Churchmen:—

"Party spirit is justly charged upon those who go to all lengths of bigoted partiality and narrow-minded prejudice, in matters relating to their party; who are wanting in candour and charity towards those of another party, and unfair in any contest with them; who are strangers, in short, to that 'wisdom from above, which is not only peaceable and gentle,' but also 'without *partiality*.' The great historian of Greece (*Thucydides*, B. iii.), who described, with such frightful vividness of colouring, the political party spirit of his own times, and who pronounced, with the prophetic power which results from wide experience, acute observation, and sound judgment, that the like would be ever liable to recur, though in various forms and degrees, has proved but too true a prophet. Much of his description may be applied, with very slight or without any alteration, to many subsequent periods, not excepting the present; and especially in what relates to that kind of party-spirit which has been last mentioned. No assurances, he says, or pledges, of either party, could gain credit with the other; the most reasonable proposals, coming from an opponent, were received, not with candour, but with suspicion; no artifice was reckoned dishonourable by which a point could be carried. All recommendation of moderate measures was reckoned a mark either of cowardice or of insincerity; he only was accounted a thoroughly safe man whose violence was blind and boundless; and those who endeavoured to steer a middle course were spared by neither side."—*Archbishop Whately's Bampton Lectures*, pp. 57, 53.

NOTE C.—The following passage from the *Quarterly Review* for October 1878 deserves the attention of all who fancy that the English laity will ever allow the advocates of extreme ritualism to do what they please with the

Church of England:—

“A startling disillusion would await these priests” (the ultra-Ritualistic clergy) “if ever the experiment of disestablishment were to be tried. They would find that the laity, once driven to protect themselves against clerical usurpations, would take good care that the Protestantism which they cherish in the Prayer-book, as in the other formularies of the Church, was enforced upon her ministers with a stringency never yet approached. The High Churchmen of the day are endeavouring to read into the Prayer-book the corruptions which it was its very object to shake off, and they attempt to explain away the Articles in accordance with this perversion of historical truth. Should the laity have the opportunity of making their voice heard, they would finally prevent, at whatever cost, any such juggle with facts. It is impossible, however, within our space, to enter into the collateral controversies thus suggested. We trust that we have sufficiently shown that the Church of England bears upon its face the most unmistakable marks of being a Protestant, no less than a Catholic, Church; and that until the rise of the un-English school of theology now so prominent, it was united, alike by its history and by the principles of its greatest divines, with Protestant interests and Protestant principles. It is conceivable that the Ritualists and their High Church allies may seduce a considerable body of the English clergy from loyalty to those principles and interests. But in proportion as they succeed, they will produce an impassable gulf between the Church of England of the Reformation and that of the present day, and a similar and a more disastrous division between the English clergy and the English people. When the clergy abjure Protestantism, they will abjure all sympathy with one of the primary movements of English life: their Church will cease to be the Church of England, and they will sink into the condition of an Ultramontane priesthood amidst a contemptuous laity.”—*Quarterly Review Article, October 1878: “Is the Church of England Protestant?”* p. 549.