

A REPLY

TO THE QUESTION,

“SHALL I SEEK ORDINATION IN THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND?”

BY

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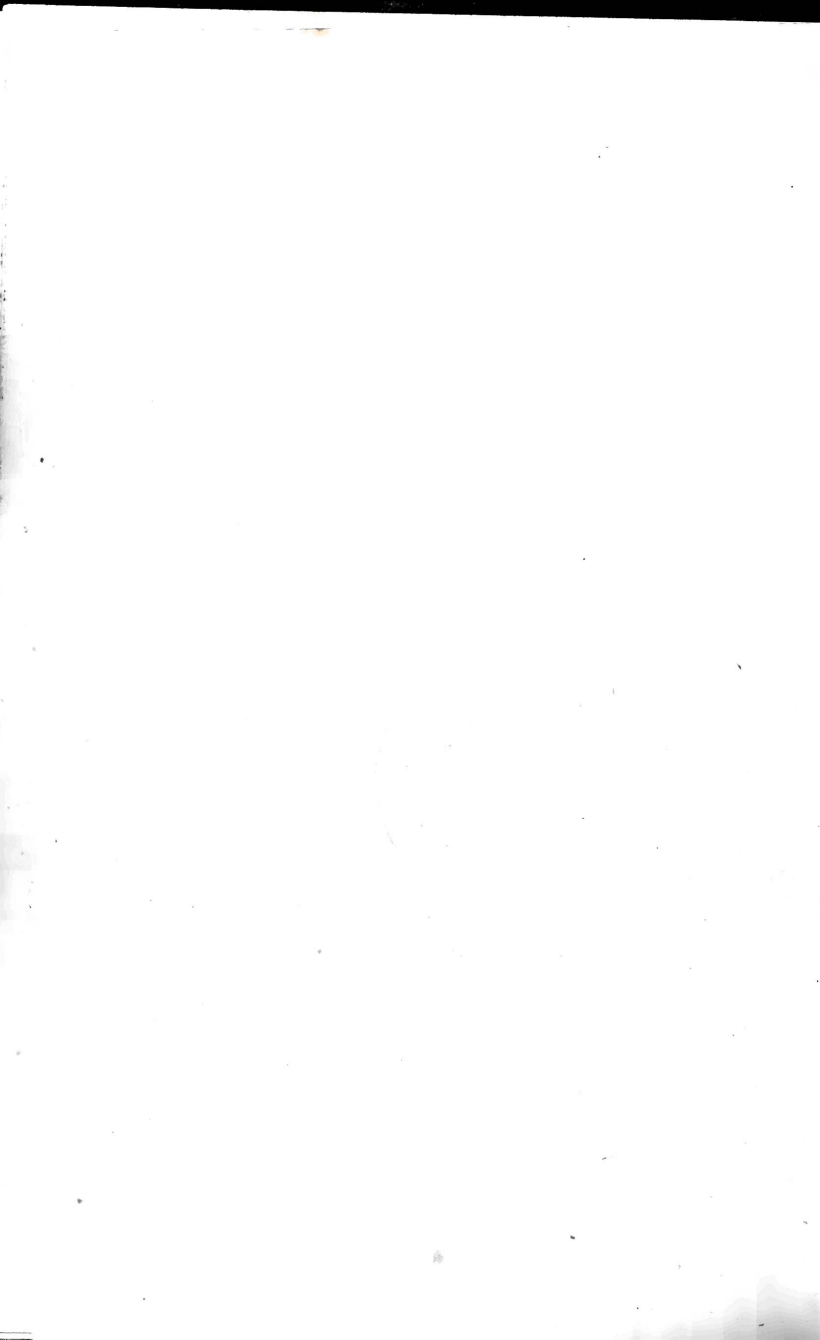
“Never take a first step without considering well what may
be the next you will have to take.”

Maxim attributed to the late Duke of Wellington.

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A R E P L Y

TO THE QUESTION,

“SHALL I SEEK ORDINATION IN THE
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I WILL do what I can to help you in deliberating on the question whether you shall seek ordination in the Church of England; but I must remind you that it is a question which you alone ought to decide. You cannot properly substitute the judgment of another for yours in determining on a momentous step for taking which you, not another, will be responsible.

On one and the most essential view of the question it is unnecessary for me to offer you any counsel. You are fully impressed with the high and holy interests which may be affected by your becoming a Christian minister, and are resolved to do your duty honestly and zealously. But although this is the most essential view of the subject, it is not the only one, nor the only important one. The clerical profession is a sacred, but it is also a worldly calling. Whatever other motive may induce you to select it, one motive, it may be presumed, is, that it will be a worldly provision for you.

Directing your attention, then, more especially to this phase of the subject, my advice to you is—do not decide on becoming a candidate for ordination until you have well weighed a contingency which I will state plainly and unreservedly. If, after becoming a

clergyman of the Church of England, any such change should take place in your religious convictions as to oblige you to abandon the office, your worldly prospects will be for ever blighted. It is most difficult for a clergyman to shift from the peculiar habits of clerical life to those of any other pursuit. In addition to his inaptitude for any other occupation, he is stigmatised, by friends and strangers, for a change of views which he could not help, as acrimoniously as if he had been guilty of some heinous sin, instead of being compassionated, as he ought to be, for the sad condition into which his honest conviction, whether erroneous or not, has brought him. He has to contend, moreover, against a feeling—call it superstitious or what—that he has broken a holy pledge, and is amenable to the reproach of having put his hand to the plough and looked back.* In common prudence, therefore, you ought thoroughly to acquaint yourself with the requirements of the clerical profession in the Church of England, and with the conditions under which you will have to fulfil them, that you may not discover something in them, when it will be too late, to which you cannot honestly conform.

If the contingency has never occurred to you, you will probably, on the first suggestion of it, be disposed to think it most unlikely, if not impossible, that any so serious a change should take place in you. Can I believe, you may say, that I shall ever forsake the faith in which I have been brought up, and the desire to contend for which is the cause of my proposing to myself the clerical profession? that I shall ever learn to regard as false, or doubtful, sacred truths now so clearly revealed to my faith, and attested by their effects on my heart and life? Without presuming on my own strength, I trust that, in the strength of the Lord whom I shall be serving, I shall be innocent of this great offence.

* Luke ix. 62.

All this is natural ; and I am not saying that any such change will come over you ; but I would, nevertheless, strongly urge on you the consideration *that it may*. There are some—it may not be too much to say many—in orders in the Church of England, at this moment, who are receding further and further from agreement with its dogmas, with its Articles and its Prayer-book, and whose conscience is harassed with the doubt, whether their dissent is, or is not, beyond the line which may be drawn as permitting those within it still to officiate as the Church's ministers, and who, when they undertook the clerical office, had no reason to suspect that they would ever fall into this slough of perplexity. It may be morally impossible with some ; with those, I should say, whose minds are so constituted as to renounce investigation of, and reasoning on, the topics which are embraced in the Church's formularies ; but not with those—and such I believe to be the case with you—who cannot but investigate and reason on them. These can never beforehand be sure of the conclusions to which their inquiry and reasoning may lead them.

Do I mean to suggest, then, that there is a possibility of your bringing Christianity itself to the test of investigation and reasoning, and of finding that, tried by that test, it must be rejected ? If this be the rejoinder you make to me, I must call your attention to an important fact. Christianity and a Christian Church are not identical. Christianity is the sacred deposit ; a Church, an institution for preserving, disseminating, and giving a social form and character to it. Your immediate concern, in your present deliberation, is not with Christianity, but with those provisions of the Church of England for enabling its members to understand and conform to it, which are embodied in its formularies. You must not allow yourself, in your just veneration for the Church of England, to claim for those to whom we are indebted

for its Articles and Common Prayer-book infallible wisdom, and to take for granted that whatever they have decided on must be a true and perfect exposition of Christianity. And yet, unless you do this, you cannot be exempt from the contingency which I am pointing out. Do not delude yourself with the notion that it will be in your power to go on, as clergymen did formerly, in untroubled security in this respect. The spirit of the age will not permit you. There is abroad everywhere a fearless searching into the foundation of the most time-honoured beliefs, and an unscrupulous scepticism concerning those of which no satisfactory account can be given. You cannot escape the impulse of the movement. However well satisfied you may now be with the Church of England's doctrines and rule, there is no saying that you will be of the same mind as years roll on, and you read and think more and more on the many subjects on which the Church has decided, and on the grounds on which some of those decisions are now canvassed. No precaution can altogether secure you against the risk, but thus much you may do towards diminishing it—you may make yourself acquainted with the scruples which have driven clergymen from the Church of England, either by their own act, or by the sentence of law-courts, and determine whether, with the light you now have, you would or would not entertain any of those scruples.

You will expect that I should particularise, and I will do so. But there is one preliminary about which it is indispensable that you should inform yourself, before directing your thoughts to this or that doctrine of the Church of England which has proved a fatal stumbling-block in the way of certain of its ministers. What is the test which the Church provides for enabling a clergyman to judge, on any occasion of doubt, how he ought to interpret the wording of the Articles and Common Prayer-book? At first sight,

this would seem to be clearly defined. A solemn promise is exacted of a minister, at his ordination as priest, that he will teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but *that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture*; and this coincides with that which is laid down, in the sixth of our Thirty-nine Articles, as the rule of faith. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that *whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby*, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Whenever, therefore, anything in the Church's formularies strikes the minister as false or questionable, it would seem that he has only to try it by the test of Scripture; and, if it does not abide that test, to conclude either that it is an instance of the fallibility of the authors and compilers, or else that their language was meant to be understood in a sense not the most obvious and natural; this provision of a Scriptural test being a pious and humble acknowledgment, on the part of those from whom we derive the authoritative documents, that they were but human interpreters of the Divine mind, and, as such, desired that their interpretation throughout should be subjected to appeal from their authority to an authority higher than theirs. If they were so minded, as we are bound to presume, their view of the matter has been long since ignored, and their test reduced to a nullity as a test. To all intents and purposes, ecclesiastical courts, and, as supreme, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, have superseded the Scriptural authority, in these cases, and their own authority is substituted for it. This is no exaggeration, but a matter of fact that must be patent to all whom it concerns. In the last trial for heterodoxy, that of Mr Voysey, how was his heterodoxy determined? He had satisfied himself that he was justified in holding

certain views of Christ's Divine nature, of his atonement, &c., although they were not in accordance with the ordinary interpretation of the Church's formularies; because, testing the formularies by Scripture, that alone was the meaning which he could assign to their language. Was any attempt made, in either of the courts before which he appeared, to show that this alleged discrepancy between Scripture and the ordinary interpretation of the formularies did not exist? any reference to the Church's rule of faith? None. All that was done, even by the court before which his final appeal was heard, was to examine carefully the wording of the formularies, and to determine, on its own authority, what that wording did, and what it did not mean; and, as this meaning differed essentially from Mr Voysey's doctrine, to condemn him. Whether he was right or wrong makes no difference as to the principle on which the decision was arrived at. As a minister of the Church of England, he had pledged himself to take the Scriptures as his guide and test for doctrine; as a subscriber to the Thirty-nine Articles, he had further pledged himself to recognise the Scriptures only as his rule of faith, and when he is prosecuted for having promulgated false doctrines, he finds, to his cost, that the Church of England's rule of faith is not the Scriptures, but the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. It is a grave stretch of authority for even the highest tribunal of the land to discard the sacred authority, and to act on its own independently of it. No doubt it is; but let us not think that in deciding what is and what is not Church of England doctrine, the members of that august tribunal act either sacrilegiously, or arbitrarily, and without any fixed principle to guide them. They are, and have been, I believe, without exception, laymen as well as clerics, men who have exercised the authority with which circumstances have invested them, not only

honestly and uprightly, but with more or less of a solemn consciousness that they were dealing with the things that are of God. The principle on which they appear to decide may not be defensible, but it is intelligible and plausible. Whether from their personal habits of religious thought, or from that acquiescence in the tyranny of popular and prevailing notions from which few of us are quite exempt, they come to the inquiry into an alleged heterodoxy, under the dominion of what is currently established as orthodoxy, and with a religious abhorrence of what is currently held to be heterodoxy. The law to which they bow is no statute or documentary authority, but a sort of common law in matters of faith—this is ruled to be the orthodox interpretation of the Church's standard, *that* the heterodox. What if, on all the subjects which have furnished occasion for these prosecutions, some in high and the highest ecclesiastical stations have differed from orthodoxy in their interpretation of the Church's formularies? That is no plea for the accused. The tribunal asserts the right of discriminating between the amount of heterodoxy that is permissible, and that which is not. It is allowable, for example, to question the authenticity of a certain portion of Scripture; but it must not be a very large portion. Would those of the judges who preside over secular courts of justice venture to maintain that theft is to be determined, not by the stealing, but by the quantity stolen; or that coiners of false money ought not to be prosecuted if they limit their coinage to a moderate amount, but only those who issue the base coin by the bushel? It would be easy to furnish a catena of eminent churchmen who have thought it no unwarranted interpretation of the Church's formularies to take what are called heterodox views of the Athanasian Creed, of the Trinity, of the person of Christ, of his atonement, of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and of

other essentials, and who, on the one hand, have never been prosecuted for those views, and, on the other hand, are not available when a clergyman who is prosecuted for doing the like, appeals to their writings as having been tacitly sanctioned. The Scriptures, having been deposed from their throne as the arbiter for the interpretation of the Church's formularies, are themselves classed with the Articles and the Book of Common Prayer, as all alike documents concerning which the clergyman must hold orthodox opinions. He may not appeal to the Scriptures, even to determine what he ought to believe concerning them; whether he may draw a distinction between the authority of this and that portion, or in what sense they may reasonably be called "The Word of God." Not Scripture itself, but orthodoxy, must instruct him.

I have stated the case plainly and unreservedly. My purpose in doing so is not that you should see in the Church of England's rule of faith, as I have represented it, an insurmountable obstacle to your becoming one of its ministers; but to impress on you the advisableness of recognising the fact, in all its bearings, before you do so. Numbers who cannot but be aware of the fact are not disturbed with the prospect of its ever causing trouble and difficulty to them. This may or may not be your case; but, whilst you are free to choose, you ought to be forewarned of the existence of a state of things which causes distress, if not ruin, to some of the most devoted of the Church's ministers, not the less devoted that they have laboured to ascertain what is true or otherwise in its teaching, undeterred by the consequences.

I may now proceed briefly to particularise the more prominent topics on which the decision, or presumed decision, of the Church has been questioned by them and by others. These are, the doctrine that the Deity is, in theological phraseology, a trinity in unity, the word *unity* meaning, not union, but oneness numeri-

cally, and the word *trinity* the being three; the connection of the second of the three, the Son, with "the man Christ Jesus;"* the personality of the one Christ with two distinct and perfect natures, that of God and that of man; original or birth sin; the atonement for sin, both actual and original; the future punishment of wicked men and of unbelievers; the meaning and purpose of those of the Thirty-nine Articles which relate to these subjects, more particularly of the first five; and of the adoption and sanction of the three Creeds, more particularly the Athanasian; the authority and the authorship of the Scriptures, specially as now most controverted, of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua in the Old Testament, and of the fourth Gospel in the New; the question whether certain statements in the Gospel histories which appear to be irreconcilable admit of being reconciled, and the veracity of the writers vindicated.

Now, if you really wish to understand the grounds on which certain clergymen have been prosecuted and condemned for their views on any of these subjects, you should seek your information, not from the representation of their opponents, but by candidly examining what they themselves, and those who have gone along with them, have said. It is very possible that, owing to your religious studies and thoughts having always proceeded in a totally different direction, you will find, in these writings, some things to startle and even shock you. Not that they are blasphemous or irreverent, far from it, but because they may run counter to, and jar with, your customary modes of thinking. Supposing this to be the case, it ought not to deter you from a candid examination of them. Should the result be that you are convinced by the arguments on the side of orthodoxy, you will be less likely to be disturbed by doubts when doubting cannot extricate you from a false position;

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

if, on the other hand, the heterodoxy shall approve itself to you, as the truth, you will have had a timely warning against taking a position which would oblige you to maintain the contrary.

Many, I know, would advise one in your circumstances to have nothing to do with the publications that call in question established views of religious doctrine, and to fortify yourself against them by reading what safe guides say on the orthodox side. Advice more unwise, disingenuous, and dangerous cannot be given. Thus to treat publications which discuss the truth or falsehood of religious views as you would indecent and immoral tracts, savours of a confusion of thought which can only be accounted for by the habit we so often observe, of dealing with religious beliefs as if the ordinary laws of thought were not applicable to them. We keep the immoral tracts out of the hands of the pure, because they appeal to the passions of the reader, and, therefore, tend to corrupt him morally in the very act of perusing them; whereas the heterodox tracts to which I refer, are addressed to the reasoning faculty of the reader, which they stimulate him to exercise lawfully and rightly, and in the exercise of which there is no corrupting process; the process being one of clearing away misty conceptions, and of forming a healthy judgment, whether for or against the views submitted to it. To aid the investigator by setting before him what we may think to be specious and false in the reasoning of an opponent, *that* is reasonable and right; but not to blindfold him and persuade him that he sees.

And what is the natural impression made by adopting this policy? Is it not that, make what assertions you may, of sacred truths not requiring investigation because they are already irrefragably established, there must be a lurking suspicion that they will not bear investigation?

The crisis is a trying one for the Church of England, and, indeed, for all churches and sects. There is a strong religious movement in a direction the opposite to church orthodoxy on some of its leading doctrines, and, indeed, to Christianity itself as commonly embraced. The aggressive views are making their way, with more or less acceptance, among all classes. The movement is not confined to England. It is agitating Scotland, and, in a less degree, Ireland. Indications of it may be found in every country of Europe, in the United States of America, and in the entire range of our colonial dependencies. For counteracting its influence in England, some efforts have recently been made. A Christian Evidence Society has been organised, and some of the most eminent of our churchmen have been charged with the refutation of this or that heterodox position. In Norwich a series of cathedral sermons have been preached and circulated, with the same object. Now, the misfortune is, that you will altogether fail of your purpose, if you suppose that, by studying these publications, you will be a scholar armed against the assaults of the heterodox. What appears to be taking place is, that one section of our Christian world read the Christian evidence publications, being beforehand convinced that they are on the right side; whilst another section read the heterodox publications, and derive all their light on the subjects from them. There is thus really no common ground for the controversy. Indeed it may be questioned, whether the authors of the Christian evidence publications have made themselves sufficiently acquainted with the views and arguments which they have undertaken to refute; for, whatever merit may be accorded to the tracts, as compositions, they do not as yet meet the views and arguments against which they are directed. Read what proceeds from the Christian Evidence Society, by all means; but read the heterodox tracts too, if you really wish to master the ques-

tions which are mooted, and to enable yourself to form a correct judgment on them. I will subjoin a list of some of the publications on both sides which may be of use to you. Do not be appalled at the amount of reading and of serious thought which it supposes. It is something very different, no doubt, from getting up the books commonly prescribed for an examination for orders; but the circumstances under which your ministry will have to be exercised differ essentially from those even of a few years ago, and call for a corresponding difference of preparation on your part. Those who shrink from it, may find themselves in the condition of an army which, with the weapons and tactics of other days, has to encounter an opposing force provided with all the inventions of modern warfare, and marshalled according to the strategical science of a more advanced age. What I am recommending is incumbent on you, not for your own satisfaction only, but because, in your ministerial course, you may have, again and again, to deal with the scruples of those to whom you will be ministering, whether derived from such publications, or from the independent working of their own minds.

I may be thought, perhaps, to have said enough in setting before you the requirements of the Church of England, and the conditions under which you will place yourself in becoming one of its ministers. I cannot, however, forbear from adding some remarks on a principle on which all existing ecclesiastical systems are based, and to which it is owing that, not in the Church of England only, but in all Christian communities, there is more or less of the risk which I have described, to one who undertakes the ministerial office in any of them. Christianity and a Christian Church are not identical. I have already called your attention to the fact; and I will now more fully explain my purpose in doing so, and urge on you the importance of bearing it in mind. That

there is this distinction would be apparent to all of us were we not so familiarised to the palpable phenomena which evidence it, as to overlook this application of them. Contemplate, for a moment, the condition of Christendom. Where is the Spiritual Temple which, according to the Scriptures, was to supersede its type, the material Temple of God's old people, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,"* its "living stones" cemented together by a holy union, "Christ himself being the chief corner stone?"† That beautiful conception is nowhere realised. What we have are the scattered materials of the mystic edifice, living stones in fragmentary combinations everywhere, but no world-wide structure; foundation and chief corner-stone, but not the Temple. Is this Christianity—the Christianity of Christ? The several communities which constitute the Christian world are in determined and irreconcilable opposition to one another, exchanging anathemas; or, if not so, keeping aloof from one another, as if religious intercommunion would be pollution. Is this Christianity — the religion of brotherly love and harmony? What of any single church? What of the Church of England, with its boasted safeguards for unity and uniformity? Is it not notorious that it contains within its pale sections as bitterly hostile, the one to the other, as any separate and antagonistic communities? Is this Christianity? With what difficulties and hindrances our Government and legislature, and not ours alone, have often to contend, in devising measures of State policy and civil administration, through the civil and political aspects of ecclesiasticism. Is that ecclesiasticism Christianity? Is it derived from him whose kingdom was not to be of this world?‡ We may know it by its fruits. Nor is all this a matter

* Ephesians ii. 20.

† 1 Peter ii. 5.

‡ John xviii. 36.

of to-day and yesterday. Ecclesiastical history tells us that, in the worst of these features, such has been the condition of the Christian world from almost its earliest date. Indeed the contrast is vastly in favor of modern and present times. It would almost seem as if the Christianity of the Church, instead of being the corrector of the errors and evils of secular life, has been itself indebted for correction and amelioration to the secular progress of mankind in thinking and acting. The annals of the past are darkened, not merely with the existing exhibition of discordant and hostile religious feeling, but with its development in bloodshed and atrocious cruelty, in torture, imprisonment, and the stake, in wars and wholesale massacres. Is this Christianity? However callous we may have become to the spectacle, we cannot seriously maintain that it is. We cannot but acknowledge that there must be something rotten in the institution to which the name of Christ is affixed, that unfits it to be the instrument of his all-embracing philanthropy, and "the habitation of God through the Spirit."*

Nor is it difficult to perceive in what this fatal perversion consists. Study the records that have come down to us of his life and character, of the kind of influence which they exercised, of the lessons he taught, of the principles which he inculcated as the foundation of Christian society. We can hardly avoid the impression from it all, that the main work in which he was engaged was, not that of a revealer of heavenly mysteries, but that of a moral reformer; that to implant in men purer motives of conduct, and to provide as a bond of social union for them a mutual pledge for practising a higher morality than had been hitherto possible for the world—that this was his first and dearest aim. Important, no doubt, were the doctrines which he taught; but, however

* Ephesians ii. 22.

important, they were incidental and subordinate to his moral teaching. The good life stands out first, the articles of belief second; the moral conduct was to be the characterising feature; to doctrinal tenets was assigned another position.

My reference, I should state, is principally to the three first Gospels, which alone are strictly biographical. The fourth is not so properly a biography as an exposition of certain views of our Lord's nature, by means of language which he is stated to have used, and things which he is stated to have done, on certain occasions; all of which, whether John was the author or another, appears to have been acknowledged as Scripture by the Christians of a very early period. It is difficult, however, to suppose that the sanction given to it was given to it as a history of Jesus, inasmuch as it is historically at variance with the three genuine biographies. These last do, no doubt, differ from one another in some of the details of the history, and this to an extent that has taxed the ingenuity of commentators to reconcile them; but the discrepancies of which I speak as between them and the fourth Gospel affect the main features of the history, in which they are in perfect agreement. To name one or two of these discrepancies. According to the fourth Gospel Jesus, during the whole of his ministerial career, was, again and again, in Judæa and Jerusalem, preaching and performing miracles; according to the other three his ministry was confined to Galilee, until quite the close of it, when the display of it in Judæa and Jerusalem provoked the interference of the Jewish authorities, and was the cause of his death. According to the fourth Gospel he openly avowed his Messiahship from the beginning of his ministry; according to the other three, until nearly the end of it he suppressed the claim, and strictly forbade its being made known. According to the fourth Gospel he partook of his last

supper with his disciples on the day before the Passover, and was crucified on the day of the Passover, and before its celebration; according to the other three this last supper was the Passover, which he kept with his disciples on the regular day for its celebration, and his crucifixion took place on the day following; and whilst all mention of the institution of the Sacrament, at this last supper, is omitted in the fourth Gospel, a record is substituted of his washing the feet of his disciples. All this, and more like this, of historical inaccuracy is explicable only if we regard the purpose of this Scripture to have been, as I have said, not that of recording the life of Jesus, but of establishing certain theological views of his nature, by recording certain things which he said or did, without caring to be scrupulously correct as to the time and place of the occurrences, or as to the connecting chain of events, *that* being the province of the historian or biographer.

Conformity to the view which we derive from the biographical Gospels of our Lord's character and mission does not appear to have been long preserved. Even in the earliest stage of the Church's growth, we perceive the tendency to that which became more and more prominent in its further progress—the establishment of a doctrinal, not a moral test, as the terms of communion for a Christian society. Instead of moral rules, such, for example, as Pliny represents the symbolism of the Christian Church in Bithynia to have been,* creeds became the symbola. The inevitable result has been, that everywhere there has been disagreement and disruption—inevitable, I say, because, as man is constituted, it is impossible that the members of any community should agree permanently and throughout successive generations in their views on religious subjects. They may acquiesce in the permanent establishment of any

* Plinii Epist., Lib. ix, Epist. 97.

amount of doctrine, as, to a certain extent, is the case with the members of the Romish Church; but that is agreement in the acquiescence, not in the doctrinal decisions, inasmuch as they are not theirs, but those of an authority to which they have delegated the right and duty of thinking and deciding for them. To say that it is, is as gross a misnomer as if partners in a property about the management of which they cannot agree, were, by agreement, to get rid of it, and still call themselves a partnership in reference to it. Permanent agreement amongst those whose religious views are their own, is, I repeat, impossible. Man's nature as God has formed it, makes it impossible. And thus it happens that that which has been devised throughout the Christian world, as the means of making the members of one church of one mind, has been the prime cause of dissent, and that which was to have been a bond of brotherly love has been the incentive to discord, malice, and hatred—hatred so characteristic of its origin that an especial term is used to describe it (*odium theologicum*). We cannot deny that such has been the effect of our symbola being doctrinal, not moral. That good moral life is recognised as indispensable to the Christian character, in all churches; that it so far enters into the symbola of all as to cause the expulsion, in some of a minister, in others of any member, whether minister or layman, who is scandalously immoral, does not alter the case. The mischief is done as soon as articles of belief make any part of the test of communion. There is agreement enough among men as to what is and what is not good conduct, and especially as to what is a flagrant departure from it, to secure permanent unanimity so long as the test is simply and solely the moral one; but as surely as men agree about this, so surely will they disagree about what they are to think and believe;

and as the disagreement progresses, one effect of the passions which it excites is to magnify unduly the importance of the bone of contention, and to give greater and greater prominence and weight to the doctrinal test, so as finally to overlay the moral element if it co-exists with it. All this would seem to be undeniable. And yet, so obstinate is the prejudice in favor of a doctrinal test, gathering strength, as it has, in its transmission to us through successive ages, and associated, as it is, with zeal for Christianity itself, that you will not find many who can conceive the existence of a church, the terms of union in which should consist in conformity to moral rules, doctrines and dogmas being open questions; in which social worship should not bind those who join in it to this or that article of belief; in which inquiry into theological truths should not be impeded by its involving a question of church membership, and religious discussion should be divested of the arrogance of Church authority, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the fierce antagonism engendered by that arrogance; in which religion should be no longer the one subject of controversy characterised, beyond all others, by uncharitable feelings and language. And yet such would seem to be the Church of Christ, as he projected it, and such the impress of his life and lessons which ought to be on it. It is remarkable, too, that notwithstanding the pre-eminence assigned to doctrine, doctrine itself is, from time to time, subjected to the moral test; so that, whatever may be the authority of any dogma, there is a revolt against it, if it offends our moral sense. We cannot altogether shake off its supremacy, or abandon its application.

It is not, you will observe, that I seek to detract from the intrinsic value of true Christian doctrine, or to assign it an inferior place in the Christian scheme; but to point out that it has been misapplied in being made the symbolum of Church union, for

which it is unsuited, and has therefore produced results the reverse of Christian fellowship.

Is there any prospect of the Christian world reforming the ecclesiastical system in this respect? The prospect, if any, is distant. Incapable of concord in aught besides, on this perversion of the bond of ecclesiastical union all Christian churches are at one, Eastern and Western, Greek, Romish, and Protestant, Episcopal and Congregational. All I would venture to assert is, that no church reformation will ever be of much avail until there is one in this direction; and although no church or sect is at present ripe for it, there are growing symptoms of revolt against the bondage of creeds and articles, as part and parcel of a tyrannical rule whose day is gone by, and an aspiration after a free admission of light and truth, which may bring about the needful change more rapidly than we think. The steps taken, in some quarters, to tighten the bondage are more likely to hasten emancipation from it, than to prevent or retard it. Whether you shall or shall not be called on to take an active part in the struggle, you will, I hope, bestow a serious attention on the signs of its approach, and be prepared for it.

I have counselled you, throughout my letter, to the best of my ability, but I cannot conclude without impressing on you that which I myself feel deeply, that mine are the words of a fallible counsellor, and directing you to seek surer guidance from Him who alone is infallible. Do I mean to imply that, if you do this, by some process, manifest or secret, you may rely on deciding aright? Not that,—I am fully alive to much that may be urged, not only against the reasonableness of such an expectation, but against all efficacy in prayer. The Divine Ruler of the universe exercises His rule, it is said, by general laws. Let us not imagine that He will, at our request, cause those laws to be violated. Experience is appealed to in

proof that He does not. Instances apparently to the contrary are ascribed to accidental coincidence, or to the delusions of enthusiasm. Still, I say, pray. He who has made us has implanted in us an instinctive desire to do so; why, if we are not to obey it? And as for the argument that the Creator cannot be supposed to change the established course of His creation at the bidding of one of His creatures, the reply that I would make is this:—How do we know that praying, for which man is formed, may not, according to one of the general laws of the universe, act on other general laws to modify them? The system of the universe is maintained by the action of one general law on another. Man, by the exercise of his intellect and bodily powers, gives this and that direction and application to the general laws of the material world. What is there irrational in supposing that *praying* may be, analogously, the agency of spirit on established spiritual laws, bending them to our purpose? That this is not the invariable result is true; but neither is it the invariable result in the application of intellectual and bodily agency to the laws of matter. Besides, how much of praying is really that energy of spirit which alone can be supposed to have efficiency? Pray, then, for guidance now, and pray whenever you feel the need of more than human power and human wisdom. Pray in a rational faith, but still in faith; and let that faith animate you to use all the other provisions of your nature, material, intellectual, and moral, which God has mercifully bestowed on you, for doing that which shall be most in accordance with His will for you.



*Publications advocating certain doctrines of the Church
of England as commonly held.*

It is not necessary that I should name any of the well-known standard works, as you must be already acquainted with them, if not otherwise, in your attendance on your University Divinity Lectures. In every Diocese, too, there is a selection from these printed for the use of Ordination Candidates. Among more recent publications, I may specify—

BYRNE'S DONNELLAN LECTURES. (Hodges, Smith and Co., Dublin.)

THE SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY (John Murray, London.)

REPLY TO BISHOP COLENZO. By the REV. W. KAY, D.D., Broomfield, Chelmsford.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE LECTURES (Hodder and Stoughton, Paternoster row).

BISHOP MAGEE'S SERMONS IN NORWICH CATHEDRAL (Hamilton and Co., Paternoster row).

LETTER TO THE REV. SAMUEL DAVIDSON, D.D., LL.D., in answer to his Essay on the Johannine Authorship of the Fourth Gospel. By KENTISH BACH (F. Bowyer Kitto, 5 Bishopsgate street Without).

*Publications questioning certain doctrines of the Church
of England as generally held.*

THEODORE PARKER'S THEOLOGICAL WORKS
(Trübner and Co.)

CREDIBILIA. By the REV. JAMES CRANBROOK (Trübner
and Co.)

THE FOUNDERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.
By the REV. JAMES CRANBROOK (Trübner and Co.)

THE SLING AND THE STONE. By the REV. C.
VOYSEY (Trübner and Co.)

DEFENCE BEFORE THE CHANCERY COURT OF
YORK. By the REV. C. VOYSEY (Trübner and Co.)

APPEAL TO THE JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PRIVY COUNCIL. By the REV. C. VOYSEY (Trübner
and Co.)

BISHOP COLENSO ON THE PENTATEUCH AND
BOOK OF JOSHUA (Longmans and Co.)

THE FOURTH GOSPEL. By J. JAMES TAYLER (Williams
and Norgate).

CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO FREE THOUGHT,
SCEPTICISM, AND FAITH (Austin and Co.)

MR SCOTT OF RAMSGATE'S LIST OF PUBLICA-
TIONS contains many more, from which you may make
a selection. I would particularise his CHALLENGE TO
THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.