

IV

Church Principles Stated— Duties of Churchmen— Prospects of Church Principles.

Let me be permitted in this place to attempt some brief outline of Church principles, and to mark some of the principal points of distinction between those principles and certain prevalent doctrines.

During the earlier part of the present century, the Evidence of Religion, and Biblical Criticism occupied much of that attention which might have been given with greater advantage to the study of Revelation itself. With a view to obviate Infidel objections, and to render Christianity more easy of acceptance, the mysteries of Revelation had been to a certain extent explained away; its doctrines had been lowered; it had been made to approximate as closely as possible to the standard of human reason and philosophy. On the other hand, the extravagance and irregularities of Sectarianism had led many to dwell on the necessity of external regularity in the Church, without, perhaps, duly appreciating the spiritual privileges connected with visible ordinances, or seeking after that spiritual life, which the Church herself, and all her rites, gifts, and instructions, are designed to cherish and to support. And the reaction against this unconscious formalism, did not correct, to any great extent, the downward tendency of things; for while it taught us to look within and above; while it led us beyond externals up towards the throne of God, and the cross of Jesus Christ; while it yearned for Communion with God, and was possessed of a spirit of love toward all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity; while it magnified Divine grace, and looked with truth on man and his works, as worthless and devoid of merit; it still aided the downward tendency of the age, by concentrating the whole of religion in the acceptance of one or two dogmas; by undervaluing the importance of the remainder of Revelation; and by overlooking the mysteries and graces of the Sacraments, in the effort after a more immediate communion with the Deity.

These remarks are not offered in any spirit of hostility or of unfriendly censure. We are sometimes inclined to judge too harshly those who have gone before us. A fair and candid consideration of the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, and the difficulties they had to encounter, which were very different from those of the present time, will enable us, I think, to find much that was laudable in their intention, and beneficial in their agency. The defence of Christianity on rational principles; the reaction against Sectarianism; the reaction against formalism, were each valuable in its way, and to a certain extent: it was only their abuse and excess which became really injurious. On the whole, however, it is now generally admitted, that religion was not generally in a healthy state when the present theological movement commenced. Important truths had been well-nigh forgotten, or explained away. There was a tendency gradually to lose sight of some of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity and of the English Church. A dangerous spirit of Latitudinarian Reform had arisen. A self-indulgent and worldly age was endeavouring to release itself from the restraints of Conscience and Religion.

Now if such was really the case, it was a necessary consequence, that difficulties and evils should arise in the course of any attempt on the part of individuals to arrest the prevalent tendencies of things. It was impossible, when certain truths or principles had to be retrieved, that they should not apparently, and in some cases really assume an undue degree of *prominence*. Principles relating to the Church, the Sacraments, &c., were to be dwelt on continually and earnestly, if the public attention was to be arrested: and yet it was impossible to prevent many of those who became convinced of the truth of those principles, from investing them with undue importance; from supposing that the essence of religion consisted in their reception and advocacy. It hence followed as a necessary consequence, that some more earnest minds should, after a time, discover that they had not, after all, attained to the great realities of religion; that they should feel an undefined longing for some higher and more satisfying truth; that their attachment to former theories being shaken, they should enter on newer and bolder paths of speculation, and should grasp at any theory or design, which seemed to possess something of a deeper and more spiritual character, or to hold out a promise of allaying the thirst which consumed them. It was to be expected, that such minds should, after a time, unite with the opponents on Church principles in attributing *Formalism* and a want of *reality* to those principles—that they should evince a tendency to Romanism. These evils are most truly deplorable, and yet they were unavoidable, and had they been fully foreseen, ought not to have prevented the effort to restore Church principles.

But oh, how ignorant are we of, I will not say merely the *principles* (this term is too cold), but the *spirit*, the *life* of Christ's holy Church, if we for a moment suppose that it is, in any degree, a spirit of formalism, of superstition, imagination, speculation, theory, or unreality. No; as Christians, as members of that spiritual body

of Christ which is His Church, as those who are united to Him by real ties more deep and tender than human imagination can conceive; yea, “bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh”—as Christians, I say, and members of His Church, we feel in the inmost recesses of our hearts, that it is God Himself, that Almighty Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, who is, and ought to be, the Author, the Object, the End of our existence; that in Him we both bodily and spiritually “live, and move, and have our being,” that He must be to us, “all in all,” that virtuous actions, religious worship, the sacraments and means of Grace, the Ministry, the Church, Revelation itself, are only valuable because they are creations of His power, instruments of His will, conducive to union with Him; that He is the only and Eternal Fountain, from whence all spiritual things derive their vitality; and that while we drink of that inexhaustible fountain we shall “*never thirst*”; we have within us “a well of water springing up into eternal life.” And where this is not the habit of the soul; where GOD is not the sum and substance of existence, the heart will be ever unsatisfied and restless, and devoid of true peace. The exercises of external devotion—ritual observances—the sacraments—the Church—the strictest external discipline—inward mortifications, and even monastic seclusion, may still leave the soul without its only solid consolation—its only adequate object. If we are restless and dissatisfied, it is because we attempt to repose our hopes on *inferior objects*, whether good or evil.

And it is from this principle alone—this absolute consciousness that God Himself is our “life,” and our “hope,” that all spiritual obedience, and the whole life of Christianity emanate. It is because we feel our natural state of danger, and our utter dependence on Him, that we avail ourselves of every possible means of grace, and feel true happiness only in conforming ourselves to the intimations of the Divine will, and thus preserving a continual union with the Deity.

It is then no mere dry and speculative principle on which the orthodox Christian acts, in receiving with the deepest veneration the holy Scripture. He receives it as THE WORD OF GOD—the only undoubted declaration of His will—a declaration mercifully vouchsafed for our salvation, and therefore full and ample, and in no respect deficient, as the Catholic Fathers have unanimously taught. And consequently he disapproves of any tendency to undervalue Scripture, to discourage its circulation or perusal, or to represent it as insufficient to establish the great doctrines of the faith; knowing that the most eminent defenders of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and other articles of the true faith, have always relied on Scripture as their strongest support. On the other hand, it is impossible to approve that *exclusive* veneration of Scripture, which would virtually supersede the office of the Christian ministry, and which, combined as it frequently is, with an assertion of the unlimited right of private interpretation, unguided by the instructions of the existing Church, and wholly independent of the recorded sentiments and tradition of the whole body of believers, from the beginning, has a tendency to permit each

individual to substitute his *own view* of revelation, for belief in revealed truth itself. It should never be forgotten that Scripture is the *inestimable*, but not the *only* gift of God.

In the same spirit we should confess the blessed privileges of the Sacraments; not like some, viewing them as mere signs of our duties or our privileges, instituted merely for the purpose of stimulating our faith; but recognizing in them communications of Divine Grace; means of communion with God; and therefore most deeply feeling the necessity of availing ourselves of such blessed gifts. Nor can any words be too high, when we speak of that regenerating Grace, which in holy baptism transforms the child of Adam's sin into the child of God; which clothes him with righteousness, engrafts him into the body of Christ, enables him to lay hold on the salvation set before him, and through "faith working by love" to attain eternal glory. And this divine life, thus implanted in the soul, is, we believe, sustained and nourished by innumerable graces and dispensations of the Holy Spirit, but more especially in the sacrament of the holy Communion, in which, by a mystery beyond human comprehension, the blessed Jesus Himself becomes the true nourishment and food of our souls, condescending to enter our earthly tabernacles, that He may make us partakers of Himself, and afford to our flesh a pledge of immortality. In all this God Himself should be our immediate object and end. The Sacraments (I speak now only of those great mysteries generally necessary to salvation) are only precious, as links which bind us to our Creator and to the Eternal Son which is the Word of God; but in this point of view they are awful and inestimable gifts; and we, therefore, can as little approve of those who venture to undervalue such gifts, to divest them of their graces, to explain away their high mysteries, as we can of others, who in their attempt to attain clearer views of the mystery of the Eucharist, involve themselves in contradiction to the plain words of Scripture by the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and needlessly, perhaps dangerously, compel men to distrust the evidence of their senses. Nor can we in any degree approve of any system or theory which tends to the reception of a doctrine so unfounded, and connected with such a mass of superstitions. In Romanism the sacrament becomes little else than a sacrifice; it is rather something which we offer to God, than something which God confers on us. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist, in a sense which is most dangerous and even heretical (as not merely a spiritual sacrifice of praise and commemoration, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, but as the sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself for the remission of sins), is habitually dwelt upon, apparently, with a view to salve the conscience of those who "*assist*" at this sacrifice, while they refuse to partake of the divine gifts of the body and blood of our Redeemer which are there offered. Thus, an unspeakable grace of God is rejected, while man identifies his lowly and unworthy offering with that stupendous sacrifice which was sufficient to redeem the whole universe.

With reference to the Church, we should maintain such principles as these. The association of the disciples of Jesus Christ in His holy Church, and their instruction and guidance by a ministry commissioned from on High through the apostles, for their sacred work, are divinely-appointed and ordinary conditions of our salvation. We would cherish them as such; not regarding them merely as privileges or advantages vouchsafed to us for *our merits*, or of which we have any right to *boast*, and still less declaiming in any uncharitable spirit against those who may be deprived of such blessings, even through their own fault; but feeling it as a deeply important practical truth, that there *are* such conditions, and that we are bound to avail ourselves of them. The Church, the ministry, and the legitimate succession of one and the other, are then of infinite importance to us; not in themselves, but as institutions of God, which we dare not neglect, and which we are bound to cherish as evidences of His paternal care.

We would, therefore, deprecate all views on this subject which tend to dissolve the obligation of Christian unity in the Church, to represent it as a merely human institution, or to deny to its ministers that divine commission which alone authorizes them to undertake so great an office. But on the other hand, we would with equal earnestness deprecate theories of a contrary tendency, which have emanated from some influence alien to the spirit of religion. We would disclaim that fanciful theory of an absolute external unity; of a perfect sanctity; of an unblemished purity in doctrine and discipline, with which Romanism has deceived itself, and which some amongst ourselves seem willing to adopt. It is evident from the Bible and the annals of Christianity, that the Church is symbolized by its vital members; that infirmities, sins, and corruptions, are found in it—that it is at one time more pure than at another; at once time more animated by faith and charity than at another—and yet that God is still directing and guiding it amidst many infirmities and backslidings, and sometimes, notwithstanding grievous sins; still urging it onwards, and accomplishing His promise, that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” We see this in the tare-sown field, the draught of fishes, the predictions of false teachers, and of heresies privily brought in.

And therefore we would not venture to maintain, in opposition to the plainest evidence of Holy Scripture and of Christian antiquity, that certain doctrines and practices which obtained extensively in the middle ages, and which are still received in the Church of Rome, must *necessarily* be sound and healthy, and in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. We cannot, on such a theory, set aside the plain and undeniable *evidence*, which is opposed to the Invocation and Worship of Saints and Angels, of images and relics. We cannot conceal the denunciations of God against idolatry in every shape; nor can we sanction any sort of religious worship to created beings. Even though such worship may not be always in *theory* or in *intention*

idolatrous (most assuredly it is often idolatrous even in *theory*), yet, still, if it has a direct tendency to idolatry; to withdraw man from his allegiance to his Creator; then woe be to us if we in any degree countenance or approve what is so deeply offensive to a "JEALOUS GOD." I mean not to say that all who have practised these things were idolaters: God forbid. We may find excuses for many of those who in ancient or modern times have done so. They acted thus from want of knowledge or of consideration; those doctrines and practices had not "developed" themselves; distinctions were made, and interpretations received, which in many cases saved men from the guilt of idolatry. But if those who have seen the evils attendant on such things; if they who have escaped the pollutions of the world, "are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." It is not our place to draw nice distinctions, and to measure how near we may approach to idolatry. Such is not the service with which God will be contented. If we be faithful to Him, we must not fear, in defence of His truth, and in a holy jealousy for the Lord God of Hosts, to uplift our voice like a trumpet, and to warn and exhort, against any concession on points so essential to the purity, nay, to the *existence* of religion.

And again; while we uphold the undoubted truth, that God has given to us a Ministry invested with authority to preach the Gospel, and to administer the Sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline; while we believe that the chief pastors of the Church have succeeded to the ministry of the Apostles; that great reverence is due to their admonitions and decisions; that we are bound to "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake"; to pray without ceasing for the success of their apostolical ministry; and to render their task more easy by our obedience and humbleness of mind:—while we thus uphold the sacred mission of the Ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we are, I hope, equally prepared to reprove any assumptions which owe their origin to an unholy desire for the "pre-eminence"—any power which is based on usurpation; which devoid, as it is, of any Divine or Apostolical institution, assumes to be possessed of both, and arrogates the government of the whole world both in temporals and spirituals. We can never, for any reason, or with any view whatever, give way to the claims of the Papacy; and we cannot but marvel most exceedingly, that any persons professing to be members of the English Church, can be so deceived and blinded by the shallow sophistries of the modern advocates of Rome, as to be ready, not merely to admit the Papal supremacy, but to admit it in all the wildest extravagances of its assumptions and claims.

Of the doctrines of Satisfaction, Indulgences, and Purgatory, we can never approve, based as they are on a principle which strikes at the root of our confidence in the promises of God; the assumption, that the sins of those who truly repent are not wholly forgiven; that penalties are still to be endured; that the wrath and justice of God is still to be appeased. We condemn the system of indulgences which

subverted the discipline of the Church, and which is applied to the support of innumerable superstitions. We condemn the doctrine of Purgatory, which supposes the justified to endure, after this life, tortures and sufferings inflicted by the justice of God. We cannot approve of lying wonders, legends, miraculous images, and the mass of superstitions which deform and degrade the popular religion of Rome; nor can we avoid looking with jealousy and dissatisfaction on any attempts to reconcile the public mind to such abuses.

No: this is not the mode in which the union of the Universal Church can be attained. It is not by concession on vital points; it is not by evincing a disposition to give way to claims, doctrines, and practices, which intelligent Romanists themselves disapprove; it is not by sacrificing the truth of the Gospel and Christian liberty in a vain and hopeless straining after a communion, which God, for His own wise purposes, has permitted to be interrupted; it is not *thus* that the breaches of the Church and be—*ought* to be, repaired. When we shall see in *other* Churches, as well as in our own, a spirit of improvement, a spirit of humility and moderation; when their members shall have gained the Christian courage to avow and to reform the abuses of which thousands and tens of thousands of them are secretly conscious; when superstition and idolatry are not, as now, gaining ground, but receding; when the Papal power, and ultramontane principles are not, as now, increasing, but diminishing; then, but not till then, may we hope and trust that the reunion of the Church is at hand. In the mean time it behooves us to take heed to *ourselves*, and with a thankful sense of the spiritual privileges which God hath vouchsafed to this branch of His holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, with a sense of our deficiencies, and an earnest desire to correct them; to stand firm in the old paths, rooted and grounded in the faith, not carried about with every wind of doctrine, but, in a humble reliance on Divine assistance, going on unto perfection. We shall thus have delivered our own souls, and shall have glorified God in this branch of His Church on earth.

Let me now be permitted to turn to some other subjects, which are of considerable practical importance at the present time. And in the first place, I would invite attention to the difficult question, how far, and under what limitations should members of the Church of England *admit defects in her existing system*.

It may be argued, that true filial piety, and zeal for the interests of Religion oblige us to desire and labour for the amendment of defects, and that it is only by pointing out those defects, that the public mind can be awakened to a sense of their existence. Be it so; but then much, nay, everything depends on the *mode* in which such a movement is conducted. In the first place, men ought to be very careful, that the defects pointed out should be *real* and *proved* defects. It is not because this or that individual is of opinion that the revival of certain rites, or the introduction of certain practices would be conducive to edification, that he has any right to infer

that the Church has not good reasons for her existing practice, or that she is in any degree deficient, because they are not recommended by authority. He should remember, that what might be conducive to his own edification, might be to another, "destruction." He should reflect, that the rulers of the Church, in times when there was *a more practical and experimental knowledge* of the working of another system than there can be now, must have had better opportunities of judging of the tendencies of that system by its actual operation on their own minds than we can have; and that we may now be totally unable, under any circumstances, even by forsaking the communion of the Church, to place ourselves really in their position, or to comprehend fully the working of the system which they reformed. So that in fact, what men regard as deficiencies, may be only the results of most pious care, most practical wisdom, most holy jealousy. If such men would as *candidly* endeavour to place themselves in the position of the Reformers, and to comprehend their leading principles and motives, as they do to enter into the views and feelings of Roman Catholics; they would, I am sure, feel more satisfaction at the great work which was accomplished in the sixteenth century.

It is not by implicitly receiving the views of modern apologists of the Mediæval system (such as Mr. Digby¹), and by dwelling only on its brighter and more engaging aspect, that such knowledge can be attained, as is calculated to enable men to judge rightly and fairly of the Reformation. Such a mode of investigation is preeminently liable to the imputation of *unreality*: the Mediæval system is thus viewed merely as a theory; its real nature is unknown.

We should then be very careful only to point out real and *proved* defects in the Church; but here again, more especially under existing circumstances, there must be some further caution. Nothing can be more injurious and dangerous than the prevalent habit of pointing out defects, apparently *without any definite object*; but in a mere spirit of *complaining*. This habit cannot fail to render men *discontented* with the Church, disposed to schism, and to dangerous innovations. It causes infinite scandal to the weaker brethren, and throws many men back on existing systems as affording the only refuge against a spirit of spiritual turbulence and disloyalty. To so great a length has this evil proceeded, that beardless youths and young women discuss without scruple the most solemn and difficult subjects of controversy; and presume to censure the Church; to condemn her existing system; to canvass and to blame the conduct and principles of those who sit in the chairs of the Apostles. This is an abuse which demands the interference of parents, instructors, and the clergy generally.

There are those, however, to whom years, and attainments, and station, give some right to investigate defects, and to attempt their removal. But they will, I am sure, act most wisely, when they endeavour *never to point out a defect without suggesting, at the same time, a feasible remedy*. If this be done, the Church will be

encouraged and stimulated by the hope of improvement, instead of being left to mourn in spiritless despondency over her faults.

I must now bring these observations to a close. It has been freely admitted that there have been faults on the part of the writers of the *Tracts for the Times*: there has been, on the other hand, much to lament in the conduct of those who have risen in opposition to the *Tracts for the Times*. I am persuaded—I know indeed, that amongst those whose disapprobation of the Tracts has been publicly avowed, many, very many, deeply regret the *tone* in which the controversy has been too frequently carried on.² The *Record* (a journal which was subject to *presbyterian* influence) was the first to adopt this tone; it was followed by the *Christian Observer*, and subsequently by various other periodicals, and by innumerable pamphlets and other works written in a spirit which it is most painful to remember. May we never be brought into judgment for these ebullitions of an ill-regulated zeal, in which charity and decency were too frequently altogether lost sight of. Party feeling has led to every species of unfairness. Exaggeration of facts has almost universally prevailed; motives have been unjustly imputed; character has been traduced; extremes of doctrine, or mistakes in practice have sometimes led to contrary extremes. I will not further pursue this grievous subject, and shall only add a most earnest and respectful prayer, that all sincere friends of the Church, who may disapprove of the doctrines or theories advanced in the theological system of the Tracts, may feel the necessity of repressing intemperate language, personal reflections, everything calculated to irritate without convincing. It would be wholly impossible under existing circumstances to expect that *controversy* on such points should be discontinued. The sacred interests of Christian truth would not permit the slightest relaxation in that conscientious vigilance which has been exercised, or in the duty of “contending *earnestly* for the faith once delivered to the saints.” It may even be necessary to introduce controversial subjects *occasionally* in the pulpit, when congregations seem to be in special danger from the approach of error. But where there is no such danger; where there is enough and more than enough of hostility to certain unpopular doctrines, and to their advocates, it is surely unwise to excite and disturb congregations by *continual* appeals on controversial subjects. The frequent application of such stimulants must tend to create a tone of mind very injurious to practical and spiritual religion, to promote divisions already but too serious, and to foster a spirit of criticism, which may at any moment re-act on those who have been instrumental in drawing it forth, and may create for them embarrassments of the most serious nature.

I would also venture to suggest (and the suggestion is offered alike to all parties) the necessity of abstaining from the perusal of controversial writings, and especially from the study of journals and periodicals, *the circulation of which depends on the amount of excitement which they supply*. I am persuaded, that no

one who permits himself the habitual study of such publications, can fail of imbibing their tone, and of thus being gradually filled with irritated and angry feelings. I am sure that many excellent men would have recoiled with horror from the perusal of such writings, had they been aware of the frame of mind to which they were about to be unconsciously led. It almost seems to argue distrust in the soundness of a cause, when we are for ever seeking for arguments to sustain it. If "Tractarianism," as it is sometimes called, be dangerous and pernicious—if it has been marked by censures, why is it necessary to dwell longer on the subject? Is it wise or right to continue the controversy, to the exclusion of almost every other thought or interest; to mark all its turns and windings, to listen to every alleged error, and dwell on every alleged instance of folly or of guilt? Do not such studies tend to disturb the heart, and disqualify it from the higher pursuits of religion? Do they not engender a spirit of criticism? Are they wholly exempt from *danger*, in familiarizing the mind with the notions of error and evil? I am convinced that there is no more clear duty of Christians in these days, than that of abstaining from the *habitual* study of controversial journals and periodicals, in which the power of writing *anonymously* what no man would venture openly to avow; and the pecuniary interests of publishers or proprietors, which are promoted by violence of tone and party spirit, combine to keep up an unwholesome and unnatural excitement. And I would most earnestly and humbly appeal to the conscience of writers in periodicals, whether it is right to put forward sentiments under the veil of anonymous communications, which they would feel in any degree reluctant to publish with their names. Individuals have it in their power largely to diminish these evils, and in that power is involved responsibility—a responsibility to GOD for the welfare of His Church. With reference to publishers, I cannot but observe, that they are, and ought to be held *responsible*, to a certain extent, for the works which they are instrumental in bringing before the public. They have not apparently been sufficiently alive to this responsibility. Much has been published of late which should never have made its appearance. The Church has, in a great degree, the remedy in her own hands. If publishers are in future so forgetful of their responsibility as to print indiscriminately all that is offered to them; if they thus prove themselves careless of the interests of the Church, let them know the opinions of her members: let authors and purchasers withdraw their patronage and support.

More especially would I venture to offer a word of caution, in regard to parties which have been brought into this controversy. Churchmen ought surely to be able to settle their own differences without calling in the aid of Dissenters or of Romanists. It may be that these strangers to the Church speak truly on some of the disputed points; but, however this may be, I cannot but think it highly derogatory to the dignity of truth to receive the aid of such auxiliaries; and when it is remembered, as it ought to be, that the parties in question are actuated by the most unremitting

hostility to the Church; that their craft is equal to their hostility; that their obvious policy is to excite jealousies and divisions in the Church to the very utmost, in the hopes of detaching at some favourable crisis the more excited of its members, and of uniting them to their own parties respectively; seeing all this, I cannot but think it almost suicidal, to avail ourselves of the assistance so eagerly proffered by Romanists and Dissenters, and to give them the satisfaction of witnessing the progress of their designs.

In conclusion, let us consider the present state and prospect of Church principles. There are some adherents of these principles, I am aware, who are inclined to look rather despondingly on the prospects of the truth. The violent opposition which has been raised against the Tracts and other connected publications, and against their authors; the unpopularity of some important principles; the discouragement given by politicians of all parties;³ the censures passed by so many prelates; the particular acts of censure under which the leaders of the Tract theology have been silenced or condemned; the outcry for further victims daily stimulated by party journals, all combine to dispirit, to alarm, to alienate some minds from the English Church, as though it would be impossible to continue much longer in the profession of truth within her bosom. To some, perhaps, it seems doubtful, whether that Church can be indeed a Christian and a Catholic Church, when she permits truth to be so violently assailed and oppressed.

Such thoughts are passing in the hearts of some brethren; but I think that there is another view of the circumstances in which we are placed, which is at once more reasonable and more encouraging. Admitting, then, most unreservedly, the fact, that opposition *does* exist on questions of great moment; that essential truths have been, in fact, contradicted; still it remains to be inquired, how far that opposition arises from misconception or not, and how great is its real amount. If we do not consider the real *causes* and *direction* of existing prejudices, it will be impossible to comprehend their bearing on the question of Church principles.

It appears to me, then, that the prejudice, the opposition, the persecution of which we have to complain were caused in some degree by indiscretion. Doubtless we should have had a great amount of obloquy to encounter under any circumstances; doubtless there would have been suspicions, artifices, and very much of what we have had to deplore. But had not opponents been given *every conceivable advantage* by offensive expressions, inconsiderate language, unwise acts, the opposition could never have become formidable. It was in order to prevent such evils that I vainly endeavoured to obtain *revision* of the Tracts, that I even laboured for their suppression. I was anxious to see this *practical* application of the doctrine of reserve and *economy*. I was earnest that advantages should not be given to opponents; that the public mind should not be offended by the mode in which truth was presented to its notice. Had this sincere advice, which was probably, at the time,

regarded as a sort of compromising expediency, been acted on, I cannot but think that much evil and danger would have been avoided.

I am far from presuming to blame those friends who adopted a contrary course: but it certainly does seem that the opposition which has been gradually swelling into louder and more vehement wrath, was excited to some extent by *mere indiscretion—mere excesses*; that it is directed, and will be directed, not so much against Church principles, as against certain mistakes, and against principles which we cannot approve; being chiefly directed against those Romanizing tendencies which me most strongly repudiate; and I cannot but cherish the opinion and the hope, that there is no indisposition in the public mind to afford a fair consideration to Church principles, if they are not urged in such a form and mode as is extremely, and, to a certain extent, justly obnoxious; and I confidently trust that the doctrines of Bancroft and Andrewes, Bramhall and Taylor, Hammond and Beveridge, Bull and Wilson; the doctrines of antiquity, of our formularies, and of the Scripture itself, will finally obtain that universal approbation and acceptance to which they are most justly entitled. I would not for a moment deny the fact, that there are parties who are very unsound in their belief, and who are on principle opposed to sound and Catholic views. I have not the least hope of conciliating such men, nor would I make any concession to them; but they have obtained an influence which would have been unattainable, had not many indiscretions been committed, and had not certain writers, within the last two years, manifested Romanizing tendencies.

What, in fact, are the principles and the conduct against which so much vehement opposition has been raised, and which the prelates have found it necessary to censure or oppose? I am persuaded that the great body of those who adhere to Church principles⁴ will, on consideration, agree with me, that they are not bound to vindicate the points which have been thus objected to. The very laudatory terms in which Romanism has been spoken of, is one great cause of offence. We are surely not bound to employ such terms, or to approve their use. The depreciating manner in which the English Church has been mentioned, the abuse of her Reformers, the spirit of discontent with her offices, the desire to alter and assimilate her system to that of Rome,—all this has been another principal ground of offence. Churchmen are certainly not obliged to adopt any such course; they are not to consider their principles as censured or condemned when such things are objected to. The hostility against notions of tradition, which would either supersede Scripture or receive articles of faith not contained therein, does not seem directed against the sober and rational view, which receives the testimony of the primitive Fathers, of the Creeds, of the Universal Church in all ages, as confirmatory of that view of Scripture which the Church of England entertains, in opposition to the errors of Unitarians, Latitudinarians, Dissenters, Romanists. I need not proceed further on this topic: other instances will readily suggest themselves.

However distressing may be our present differences, yet we should remember that the Church is at all times liable to the recurrence of such difficulties, which are frequently of long continuance. The history of *Jansenism* will show that the Roman Church has not been able to prevent protracted discussions within her own bosom.

In our own Church differences on certain points of doctrine, which are now in dispute, were, *thirty years ago*, as hotly and vehemently carried on as they are at the present day. Do not let us suppose that theological differences on justification, grace, the influence of the sacraments, and other connected points, are ever likely to come to an end in the Church. Candour and charity may lead us to acknowledge the excellence of many who hold contrary views on these subjects, and to walk in Christian communion with them; but perfect agreement is perhaps unattainable in this world of imperfection.

In conclusion, it is impossible not to advert in a spirit of deep thankfulness to the prospects of the Church, and the progress of Christian principles and practice. Who shall say that much has not been done within the last ten years? And what may we not humbly expect from the blessing of God on patient, and humble, and persevering endeavours for personal and general improvement? A theology deepened and invigorated; a Church daily awakening more and more to a sense of her privileges and responsibilities; a Clergy more zealous, more self-denying, more holy; a laity more interested in the great concerns of time and eternity; Churches more fully attended; sacraments and divine offices more frequently and fervently partaken; unexampled efforts to evangelize the multitudinous population of our land, and to carry the word of God into the dark recesses of heathenism. In all this there is very much to awaken our hopes, and to stimulate to continued exertions. Lethargy and indifference, at least, are at an end. We are conscious of our deficiencies, and not ashamed to own them; and God forbid that we should ever cease to be so; or that the effort and straining forward towards greater purity, and sanctity, and discipline, should ever lose one particle of its energy. No sincere friend of the Church; no zealous and faithful servant of Jesus Christ could wish to impose any restraint or check on the desire for improvement. He cannot but rejoice at the existence of such a spirit, and unite himself cordially to its praiseworthy efforts. He will be very careful not to damp the kindling fervour of devotion and self-denial; or to restrain the efforts to restore ecclesiastical discipline. He will be careful, as far as in him lies, that weak and wavering minds shall not be alienated by any apparent want of zeal on his part; any apparent indifference to spiritual things; any forgetfulness or compromise of great Catholic principles. We have much to hope, should Divine Providence mercifully guide us in this course. It is thus that we shall best promote the cause of Catholic unity throughout the whole world. But we are undoubtedly surrounded with difficulties and dangers; and *absolute ruin* may be brought on us by the exaggerations and mistakes of a few men. The bright prospects before us may be

blotted out for ever, if there be any *reasonable* suspicion of Romish tendencies; if there be not most frank, and honest, and open dealing on this subject. Let the public mind once be so deeply deceived, as to suppose that the advocates of Church principles have any concealed designs in favour of Romanism; any partiality for that evil system; any wish to promote the revival of that system; any desire whatever, beyond that of reinvigorating the Church in strict harmony with her own genuine principles, and according to the model of the pure and *primitive* ages: let mistakes on this subject be assiduously instilled by hostile malignity, and permitted to prevail through any weakness, timidity, or reserve on our part, and the result can be nothing but *ruin*; ruin to sound principles; destruction to all hopes of improvement; annihilation to all possibility of ever restoring Catholic unity; division, and remorse within the Church; and perhaps the final triumph of the principles of anarchy in religion and politics.

Such evils can, and (under the Divine blessing) *will*, I hope, be averted from us. But there are great and mighty interests depending on the conduct even of *individuals* amongst us. Unguarded words, thoughtless actions, notions put forth almost in playfulness, may have deep consequences. They may be recorded as amongst our most weighty sins at the last day. A child may, in his sport, apply a match to a barrel of gunpowder. An indiscreet word may open the floodgates of schism or heresy. May we earnestly supplicate Divine grace to guide our words with discretion and moderation; and to enable us to pursue our difficult and anxious path, without swerving to the right hand or to the left, and without leading any astray from the fold of Him, “who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.”

I have now to express an earnest hope, that an indulgent and favourable construction will be extended by the Christian reader to this little work. Its object is not to add to our divisions, or to create unkindly feelings in any quarter; but to offer some warning which seems greatly needed at the present time; and to obviate mistakes which might have a most injurious effect on the cause of truth. It will not, I trust, tend to *division*, if it should have proved, that those who advocate Church principles are not unwilling to acknowledge faults where they really exist, and to act in entire freedom from party feeling. And, on the other hand, I would hope, that if a line has been drawn between our principles and the theories which a few brethren have recently advanced, a difference which exists *in reality*, and which I have not brought into existence, will not be *increased*. And with reference to the eminent men who have patiently endured much obloquy and discouragement, and whom I hope always to consider as friends, it will perhaps be not without use to have shown the simplicity and rectitude of their intentions in originating this movement; and for this cause, I am content to take share in a responsibility which has hitherto not been attributed to me. I humbly trust that our hands and hearts were pure in this matter—that we have nothing to conceal—nothing of which we need be ashamed—nothing

for which we are not prepared, in reliance on the merits of Jesus Christ, to render an account at the LAST GREAT DAY. There was no dishonesty on our part—no wish to promote Romanism—no disloyalty to the Church of England—no want of charity towards any of her members—no designs, except that of seeing all the principles of the English Church in full and active operation—no wish, but that of promoting the glory of God, “and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” But we were “compassed with infirmity,” were “men of like passions with you”; and therefore were liable to error and indiscretion. I think that any indiscretions and mistakes which have been committed, have been far too harshly judged; and while I would not impute any *intentional* injustice to those who have combined circumstances which had in reality no connexion, and have deduced from them a proof of some design on our part to promote the cause of Romanism, I must say, that such a charge is really and substantially unjust.

Notes

1. Kenelm Henry Digby (1800-1880), author who, in addition to several volumes of poetry, published *The Broad Stone of Honour; or, Rules for the Gentlemen of England* (1822), afterwards expanded to four volumes and subtitled *or, The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry* (1840), *Mores Catholici; or, Ages of Faith*, 3 vols. (1845-1847), *Compitum; or, The Meeting of the Ways at the Catholic Church* (1848), and *The Chapel of St. John; or, A Life of Faith in the Nineteenth Century* (1861).

2. I cannot but lament the tone adopted by some highly respected prelates on this subject. The language employed by the Bishop of Chester, and by the Metropolitan of Calcutta, in their charges, seems to me calculated to give countenance to a spirit which has been most injurious to the Church. The respect which is due to the abilities and Christian zeal of those prelates, evinced by their great exertions in the cause of Christianity within their respective spheres, only adds to the regret which their controversial tone has excited. Two or three other Prelates might be mentioned, whose words seem not to have been always guided by that spirit of wisdom and charity which their eminent station demands, and which has been happily manifested by the great body of our prelacy.

3. I may be permitted to observe, that after the publication of such articles as that “on the Tamworth Reading-room,” in the *British Critic*, we can feel very little surprise at the evident hostility of an influential party [Peel and his friends].

4. Let me not be supposed for a moment to imply that *Church principles* are limited to those who approve the *Tracts for the Times*. I know, and thankfully acknowledge, that many of their opponents have always maintained sound and

Catholic principles. The Church is far, very far, more united in great points than it might be imagined.