

**CREEDS AND CRITICS:  
BEING OCCASIONAL  
PAPERS ON THE THEOLOGY  
OF THE CHRISTIAN CREED**

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**HENRY SCOTT HOLLAND & CHRISTOPHER CHESHIRE**

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# CREEDS AND CRITICS

*BEING OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON THE  
THEOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN CREED*

BY

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## FOREWORD

ON the Title-page to this volume I have termed the chapters which it contains "Occasional Papers on the Theology of the Christian Creed."

Such, I think, is the most accurate and covering description of its contents.

In such a collection of scattered papers it is not always possible to arrange them on a definite plan. But taking these chapters as they stand, they afford an admirable example of Canon Holland's typical treatment of such topics, and illustrate the range and depth of the mind of one who was beyond doubt a very great theologian.

To apologize or to make excuses for reprinting what will be found in these pages is superfluous. Indeed, the main aim of the book is to rescue from the oblivion of a magazine some theological utterances far too valuable and profound not to be gathered together in a more permanent form.

The energy which Dr. Holland displayed month by month in the pages of the *Commonwealth* was often viewed with something of dismay even by those who best knew and valued the quality of his mind. It was re-

garded as savouring of tragedy that he should spend himself in fragmentary and isolated utterances in a monthly paper—that he should continually give himself away in small change, as it were. This was a common feeling among some of his keenest admirers. It was also a sentiment based, perhaps, upon no very adequate regard for the much-abused calling of journalism. But Dr. Holland was a born journalist. What leaders might he not have written, say, in the *Times*! What swift, salted, penetrating notes might he not have sent to the *Spectator*! After preaching, nothing, I think, delighted him more than to fling off his quick thoughts on passing events. He revelled in newspapers. He rapidly obtained their vital information. In a flash he would pick out the heart of their columns, all the while exclaiming, commenting, interpreting their mind and meaning. The journalist within responded to the journalist without. He had that rare gift of catching the spirit of an article by merely glancing at it. Very seldom was it necessary for him to plod solidly through a printed page. This was true also of books. To be read aloud to was a thing he never tired of. It never bored him. And during the process he habitually seemed to be just a page ahead of the reader; he anticipated what was to come, what was to be said, so that often he had laughed his own laugh at some pleasing phrase long before the reader himself was aware of anything there to laugh at at all.



For a mind such as his, with its intense and constant interest in all that stirred in a world which to him was so fascinating, so surprising, so moving, the possession of a paper of his own was almost a necessity.

So the *Commonwealth* was exactly the medium for which in one of its aspects his genius clamoured. All that he wrote in its pages from month to month was perfectly spontaneous. He never had to force himself, or to search for subjects. That this was so is apparent from the actual tone and spirit of his varied notes. In their way they were unique in contemporary journalism. For light handling of deep topics, for searching criticism, for quick fun, for unexpected and telling turns of expression, for stern judgements conveyed courteously and without any touch of bitterness, for exuberance of soul, Dr. Holland's occasional "Words" and "Notes" stood quite alone. It would have been a disaster had he found no proper outlet for his vehemence. Ordinary life, and especially life in the Church, would have lost grievously had this side of him been suppressed. It might almost be claimed that some such periodical as *Commonwealth* was a psychological necessity for him. If there was anything of tragedy about his journalistic endeavours it was not owing to the fact that he should be continually uttering himself in this fleeting and fragmentary fashion, but rather in the fact that his contributions to *Commonwealth* were so ill-appreciated by the world at large. The articles, now to be found

in a small volume named *Fibres of Faith*,<sup>1</sup> are especially typical of this failure in public recognition. Even Canon Holland himself felt this particular instance. No doubt the comparative smallness of his monthly audience was due to the particular tone of his political thoughts and to the definitely catholic tendency of his theology. Between the two many people collapsed. It was a combination too puzzling and perverse for the average Churchman. You never quite knew where he would descend, or what advanced cause he might not champion. His monthly strokes could be strangely impartial. Of course stupid people could never abide him, still less people whose sense of humour was atrophied. To those for whom laughter was essentially profane Holland was an enigma, a dangerous force riotously out of its course, a Churchman turned Socialist. They could never grasp the strange mingling of gaiety and gravity within the one personality. Then too there was always the damning word "social" in *Commonwealth's* title-page, with its suggestion of unrespectability. Such a paper could hardly be quite nice. So it was that his literary outflowings were somewhat poorly appreciated. Only strong stomachs could stand for long the strong meat of his monthly remarks. Only the few could tolerate the unwavering independence. Nor was it every one who could freely enter into a mind so surprisingly brilliant, so bewilderingly varied. The range of the thought was a little

<sup>1</sup> Wells Gardner, Darton & Co.

disconcerting, the ground covered was immense. From some discussion of a deep and intricate matter of religious or philosophical importance he would pass at a bound to the fact that the bulbs were in, or up ; or that a thrush was bursting its soul in the garden. It was difficult to place the man who at one moment was handling with the ease of a master some new trend in contemporary science, and at the next was encouraging all and sundry to "Arise and go to Innisfree."

This was not typical of the ordinary cathedral canon ; Regius Professors did not commonly break out about pumpkins and bus-drivers. Was all this serious ? Was it dignified ? Was it spiritual ? Certainly it was baffling. And also it was the man himself. He was right in writing as he did. This journalist strain ran in him—it had to find expression. Nothing would have been more dismal for him than to settle down to write out commentaries or treatises or essays. A host of others could do that kind of work ; not one other could write *Commonwealth* chapters.

And there was a real place in our ecclesiastical life for this unceasing flow of brilliant papers. Whether or no we agreed with all the views so clearly expressed, whether or no we held to the opinions uttered in the familiar, characteristic sentences, we all somehow felt that as long as Holland kept writing away in that peculiar style of his the wind was moving in the tree-tops, we were being kept sweet and clean, life was the