

# **THE FAITH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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The faith of the Old Testament by Alexander Nairne

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**ALEXANDER NAIRNE**

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*Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the  
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and the Rev. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A.,  
*Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's  
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BY THE REV.

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TESTAMENT AT KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

WITH A PREFACE BY

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## PREFACE

THE *Layman's Library* is a series of which the present work is the First Volume, and it has been thought appropriate that one of the two Editors should commend it to the world with a Preface. My friend Mr. Nairne himself needs no commendation from me: it is rather the series that needs to be introduced.

*Clerus Anglicanus stupor mundi.* This familiar phrase was first used of the dispossessed clergy of the Church of England during the Protectorate. It was the day of Walton and Edmund Castell, of John Spencer, of Cosin, of Thorndike. The Church of England had seemed to be a mere historical accident, a creature of the State, and now historical accident and the State had swept it away. But the event proved that some of the Anglican clergy were more than State-paid officials. Whatever the origin of the Reformed English Church might have been, it had struck such deep roots in the soil of English life that silencing and proscription left these men still Anglican. The Caroline Divines were ready to give a reason for the faith that was in them, whether on the controversial points that

separated Anglican faith and practice from that of other Christians, or on matters that pertained to religious thought generally. Men realised that a religion which could breed such champions was a distinct and living faith: a teaching Church is never a dying Church.

During the last two and a half centuries great changes have come to the Church of England in particular, as well as to the world in general. Moreover we are not at an acute crisis such as befell the English Church during the fifteen years from 1645 to 1660: we should not be at such an acute crisis as that, even if a Disestablishment Bill for the whole of England were before Parliament. Nevertheless there is a sense in which it may be said that Anglicanism is really on its trial, that it has to prove its right to exist.

A teaching Church is never a dying Church. But how far is the modern Anglican *Ecclesia* a teaching Church? Does it teach anything distinctive except its own legitimacy? Is there an 'Anglican touch' that can be felt and recognised, even when the matter in hand has nothing directly to do with the validity of Anglican Orders or the essential requisites for interdenominational communion? Or is an Anglican merely a person who thinks with Roman Catholics on some questions and with Protestants on others? And—most important of all—what has he to say on the vast and complex

array of questions that have arisen since the age of the Caroline Divines ?

The question is worth asking, for if the Anglican, *qua* Anglican, has nothing to say, it means that after all he is only an antiquarian survival. During the last fifty years the Church of England, as still by law established, has abandoned many points of vantage from which it was wont in former days to teach. For good and for evil the Anglican clergy have become a class of parish priests. They have abandoned the career of the schoolmaster and the University don to laymen, who have to make no profession of communion with the Church of England. A change of similar import and equal significance is that the investigation of large tracts of inquiry, even on subjects that directly concern the intelligent Christian, have been given over to the specialist. Natural Science, Archæology and ancient History generally, Biblical Criticism, Philosophy, Psychology (or the study of man's mind), all these touch the Christian at vital points. The men who *know* in these subjects all claim autonomy in their own province, and if their province be found to overlap the Church's preserves, so much the worse for the preserves.

It is not that these specialists are hostile to Christianity in general or Anglicanism in particular. Some of them are, in fact, pious and loyal sons of the Church. But the 'authorities' which as specialists