

**A LETTER TO THE RIGHT REV. FATHER IN
GOD, RICHARD LORD BISHOP OF
OXFORD, ON THE
TENDENCY TO ROMANISM IMPUTED TO
DOCTRINES HELD OF OLD, AS NOW, IN
THE ENGLISH CHURCH**

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A Letter to the Right Rev. Father in God, Richard Lord Bishop of Oxford, on the Tendency to Romanism Imputed to Doctrines Held of Old, as Now, in the English Church by E. B. Pusey

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E. B. PUSEY

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A

LETTER

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TO THE RIGHT REV. FATHER IN GOD,

RICHARD

LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD,

ON THE

TENDENCY TO ROMANISM

IMPUTED TO

DOCTRINES HELD OF OLD, AS NOW, IN THE
ENGLISH CHURCH.

BY THE

Edward Bouverie

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LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE;

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW, AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH.

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of Boston.

(G.G. 211.)

" To say that in nothing they may be followed which are of the Church of
" Rome were violent and extreme. Some things they do in that they are men, in
" that they are wise men and Christian men some things, some things in that
" they are men misled and blinded with error. As far as they follow reason and
" truth, we fear not to tread the selfsame steps wherein they have gone, and
" be their followers. Where Rome keepeth that which is ancients and better,
" others whom we much more affect; leaving it for newer and changing it for
" worse; we had rather follow the perfections of them whom we like not, than
" in defects resemble those whom we love."

HOOKE, Book V. ch. xviii. sect. 1.

" They which measure religion by dislike of the church of Rome, think every
" man so much the more sound, by how much he can make the corruptions
" thereof to seem more large Wisdom therefore and skill is requisite to
" know, what parts are sound in that Church and what corrupted.
" Neither is it to all men apparent which complain of unsound parts, with
" what kind of unsoundness every such part is possessed. They can say, that
" in doctrine, in discipline, in prayers, in sacraments, the Church of Rome hath
" (as it hath indeed) very foul and gross corruptions; the nature whereof, not
" withstanding, because they have not for the most part exact skill and know-
" ledge to discern, they think that amiss many times which is not; and the salve
" of reformation they mightily call for, but where and what the sores are which
" need it, as they wot full little, so they think it not greatly material to search."

HOOKE, Book IV. ch. viii. sect. 2.



A

LETTER,

&c.

MY DEAR LORD,

IN ordinary times it is best and simplest to be silent amidst misrepresentations, and to commit our innocence to God, leaving it to Him to bring it out when to Him seems good; "As for me, I was like a deaf man and heard not, and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth; I became even as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no re-proofs: for in Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God¹." Extensive good to the many must always be purchased by the suffering of the few; it is a portion of the Cross which our LORD has bequeathed as a precious gift to His disciples, and they must take it humbly and thankfully; glad if they may indeed think that they have a portion of it, yet scarce venturing to decide for themselves whether it be in truth His Cross, or the chastisement of their own

¹ Ps. xxxviii. 13—15.

infirmities, yet taking it at all events quietly and joyously, that so, sanctified by that meritorious Cross, it may turn to their joy and consolation; and to those, to whom it is indeed His Cross, to their crown.

These, however, are not ordinary times; the waters, which stagnated during the last century, are being stirred vehemently; we trust, for the health of those who shall be cast into them; but amid the first troubling, people seem to be tossed this way and that, not knowing whither themselves shall be borne, and more curious about the fate of others, than anxious to secure their own. It is not among the least strange circumstances of the times, that tracts, written for a temporary purpose, by persons unknown, or those who were known, but little known beyond their own University, should within a few years have been made, against the will of their writers, into a sort of touch-stone of opinion almost throughout the land; it is stranger yet, that the greater part of those who make these tracts a test of soundness or unsoundness of faith, should be ready to confess not even to have seen them, but have gleaned what little they know of them from the report of one or two periodicals; stranger yet, that publications devoted to politics, should at a time of great political expectation, break off their speculations, or books of gossip¹ "cut off their tale, to

¹ "Travels in Town."

talk of " deep and sacred subjects of theology, and descant on the gifts of God in Baptism, or on the succession of Bishops ; or a defence of the Establishment ' be changed into an " accuser of its brethren." Amid this chaos, it is certainly *not* strange, that the wildest misconceptions should be commonly circulated and greedily received ; that tales about the writers in the " Tracts for the Times" should take the place of other novelties, and that those who live to " tell or to hear some new thing," should be more interested in their novelty than their truth ; or that truths which were handed down to us by our forefathers, and which in the last century, and in the beginning of the present, were held by the majority of the Clergy, should be stigmatized as novelties, because new to such as have taken their opinions from a modern school.

This ferment has already had its use ; the names of individuals have been branded, but the doctrines or practices which they recommended have been at least partially received. Many who opposed them, were obliged to advance a certain way, in order to take a position from which they might with advantage attack them : still more frequently, men were thus constrained to consider subjects which they had hitherto left out of sight, but which, once brought before them, demanded an audience, and thereon found admittance, through their manifest coincidence

¹ " Essays on the Church," originally, and still for the most part, an useful exposure of the pseudo-voluntary system.

with the teaching or the services of our Church. Thus, many observe the Ember weeks, acknowledge in some degree the duty of fasting, keep some of the festivals of the Church, acknowledge the privileges of their Ministry, are thankful for the gifts of GOD in their Baptism, have truer views of repentance, recognize the benefits of more frequent Communions, not to speak now of a deeper knowledge of its blessedness, who perhaps little suspect from what quarter they derived their present views. Doubtless too some of those who now have "heresy" upon their lips, have been awakened from their apathy as to its dangers, ultimately, by those whom they now accuse of it; and some have derived unconsciously their value for the distinctive character of their Apostolic Church from those, whom they now too readily suppose to be alienated from, or but lukewarm towards, her. Then also these discussions, though often somewhat rudely and painfully carried on, have spread wide the seed; and so it has reached and lodged in many a heart, which GOD has prepared to receive it, and to which He has thus brought it, and is taking root and bringing forth fruit of self-denial, self-discipline, increased devotion, and enlarged charity. We can, in another respect, already, hardly realize the state in which we were some few years ago. The plans of reforming our Liturgy, then so rife (each reformer having a scheme of his own, and agreeing with his fellows only in curtailing¹ the

¹ This, as so much besides, is inherited from the Puritans. See

whole), have shrunk away, or sunk to rest; most have discovered that one hour and an half in a week is but very little to offer to Almighty God: the murmurs against the Athanasian Creed and the imprecatory Psalms, are no longer heard: and those who retain their wishes for some alteration, are content to abandon it for the time as hopeless, and to comfort themselves, that if the Liturgy were more perfect, "the sort of idolatry now often offered to it"¹ would be increased, and it might be "placed not only on a level with the Bible, which indeed men often do already, but even above it." Thus the Church has gained a respite; and persons, who love her, might the more cheerfully go on with the task of studying her character, and developing it in their own practice, and inculcating it on their flocks.

And with this we should have been contented, had we ourselves, or our own character, alone been concerned. Each year is changing or modifying the opinions of numbers among those, who once regarded as novelties the truths which we have put forth in the name of our Church: many now support them, who once opposed them; and of those who have been too long trained in a different system to receive any new impressions, many yet see thus much, that there is nothing in these views inconsistent with piety; and so they are content to wait with Gamaliel, to see

Hooker's Defence of the length of the Church Service, Eccl. Pol. V. xxxii. and notes, ed. Keble.

¹ Essays on the Church, p. 270.