

**FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH: OR, THE
DOCTRINE OF CHRIST AS THE LORD HATH
COMMANDED AND AS THIS CHURCH
HATH RECEIVED THE SAME ACCORDING
TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD**

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Freedom in the church: or, the Doctrine of Christ as the Lord hath commanded and as this church hath received the same according to the commandments of God by Alexander V. G. Allen

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FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH

OR

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

AS THE LORD HATH COMMANDED, AND AS
THIS CHURCH HATH RECEIVED THE
SAME ACCORDING TO THE
COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

BY

ALEXANDER V. G. ALLEN

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PHILLIPS BROOKS"; ETC.

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PREFACE

THE situation in the American Episcopal Church calls for serious consideration in the interests of theology and of true religion. There are many issues at stake. Honesty in the recitation of the Creed is by no means the only question. Deeper motives lie beneath the present disturbance than can be measured by the uncritical observer. No amount of practice in ethical theorizing qualifies for judgment on the complicated issues of religion. For religion constitutes a department of life by itself, independent of science, or ethics, or philosophy. There is danger that the cause of religious freedom and of freedom of inquiry in theology may be retarded indefinitely unless the emphasis be again placed upon freedom, the one predominant motive of the Reformation in the sixteenth century which gave us the Book of Common Prayer. The desire for freedom, the determination to guard the liberty of both

clergy and laity then manifested was only another form of the demand of Magna Charta, "Libera sit ecclesia Anglicana." Other words which expressed the purpose of the Reformers and were often quoted were those of St. Paul, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" and the words which follow, "And be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage." Other kindred words come from our Lord Himself, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, and if the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." This freedom is called in question when an interpretation is placed upon the vows of the Ordinal, foreign to their original intent, as if they were a business contract with a corporation in accordance with whose terms the clergy resign their freedom in Christ for certain material considerations, instead of a guarantee of Christian freedom, as in the intention of the Reformers they were meant to be.

The difficulty about the Virgin-birth is but a symptom of a profounder disturbance which threatens to shift the base on which the Church was restored to its pristine purity at the Reformation. It is a difficulty not wholly created by the "higher criticism" or

engendered solely by scientific distrust of the miraculous. An effort has been made in the following paper to trace the difficulty to its remoter source in the history of theology in the ancient Church. It was through misinterpretation of the Virgin-birth and the undue prominence assigned to it that the transition was made to the sterile form of Byzantine Christianity or to the impotency of the Latin Church in the ages preceding the Reformation.

There is no denial in this treatise of the Virgin-birth. It is accepted as the miraculous or supernatural mode by which God became incarnate in Christ, as the resurrection and the empty tomb mark the exodus of Christ from the world. But criticism is directed against the misinterpretation of the Gospel of the Infancy or against arguments used for its support which not only go beyond God's Word written, but give to it a prominence which changes the perspective of the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture. The Apostles' Creed needs to be supplemented by the postulate of the larger faith in the primary and essential importance of the life of Christ, and not only of His birth and passion, — His life and character, His deeds and teaching; in other words, the historical Christ portrayed