

**THE FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH
ASSAILED IN OXFORD; A LETTER
TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY, VISITOR OF
THE UNIVERSITY**

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The Foundation of the Faith Assailed in Oxford; a letter to his grace the Archbishop of
canterbury, visitor of the university by Various

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45 *B.M. Bond.*

THE

FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH

ASSAILED IN OXFORD:

A

LETTER



TO HIS GRACE THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

&c. &c. &c.

VISITOR OF THE UNIVERSITY,

WITH

PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE CHANGES IN ITS CONSTITUTION,

NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION.

J. W. Wetherill

BY A

CLERICAL MEMBER OF CONVOCATION.

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L E T T E R,

&c.

MY LORD ARCHBISHOP :

It may seem, I fear, somewhat presumptuous in one who, though he dearly prizes his connection with the University of Oxford, has no part in its government, and whose lot is cast at a distance from it, to call your Grace's attention to the existing condition of its affairs. Yet the novel circumstances in which we are placed seem to require extraordinary measures. In common times, the non-resident members of the University gladly leave the active management of affairs to those who bear offices within her walls — and they judge wisely. In Oxford are many men who, to capacious and well-stored minds, add that practical acquaintance with the details of University administration, which alone can enable them to conduct them with quiet and unobtrusive uniformity ; and, under their management, it has long experienced that tranquillity which, proverbially, leaves nothing to record, each succeeding year being marked rather by the gradual succession of individuals than by any change of principles.

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Under these circumstances, the non-resident members have very properly abstained from exercising the powers vested in them by the statutes. Yet from the fact that those powers are entrusted to them, we may conclude, that, under certain circumstances, they were intended to be exercised. This conjuncture seems to me to have arrived.

When a number of trustees are associated in any office, it is commonly arranged, almost indeed of necessity, that the active management of affairs should be left in the hands of a few, whose fitness, whether by character or circumstances, commands the confidence of their colleagues. But, as each is ultimately responsible for the acts of the body, it becomes imperative upon each to resume the authority which he has delegated, if those to whom the administration has been left, should at any time be found to propose as the object of their trust, results wholly different from those which he feels himself bound to pursue; or even, if professing to keep in view the same end, they adopt means which he considers in no way to tend towards its accomplishment. And should any such fundamental difference exist, the very integrity and trust-worthy rectitude of his colleagues, renders his interference doubly necessary; by ensuring to him that their professed principles will really be the rule of their conduct.

Now such is the relation borne to the University by every non-resident member. We are one and all *Trustees*; — trustees charged with the well-being of the University, bound, as far as in us lies, to hand it

to our children as illustrious as we received it from our fathers. It is not our duty, indeed, to interfere in the detail of daily matters—to show an ungenerous want of confidence in those to whom the helm is, at each successive period, committed; but yet we are bound to see that their desired haven be the same to which our eyes are directed, and that they hold the same fundamental principles with ourselves as to the course by which it is to be attained.

What great objects, then, was the University designed to effect? What is its part and office among the institutions of our church and nation? Is it not, to be the nursery of the Church of England, whence a succession of men may constantly issue, who with minds well stored with the wisdom of former times, and with characters moulded after the pattern of those worthies, whose histories and whose works have been their study and delight, may go forth into the world each to fill some important sphere of action, and to diffuse into the surrounding mass, less favoured than himself with the blessings of education, a sincere admiration for the achievements of former times, an earnest attachment to the principles whence they sprung, and a resolute purpose of adhering to them at whatever hazards? Such men, whether among the Clergy or the Laity, are indeed the salt of the earth—whether like the Evelyns and Nelsons of former days, they carry into the secular world the atmosphere of the sanctuary, or whether they devote themselves to her immediate service, and each in his own neighbourhood present to the eyes of men (always most

readily affected by what they see) an example of the Apostolical ministry, and a type of the Church herself—or whether, remaining within the limits of the University, they devote themselves, without distinction, to the pursuit of truth, and prepare themselves, by prayer and meditation, by patient study and teachable humility, to wield the arms of Hooker against every assailant—or whether, lastly, they consecrate their powers to the service of the succeeding generation, by raising up others to tread in the same steps. For, be it ever remembered, that the benefactors of the human race form (for the most part) one connected series; in which each succeeding generation is joined to the last, not by ordinary laws of descent, but by that transforming process of education, which like a moral engrafting, derives to the disciple the sap and fruitfulness of his Master.

And how is this to be effected? How is the University thus to secure these blessings to the Church and nation? Is it not by training up her members, from the first, in pure and uncalculating loyalty to the Church—by accustoming them, even before they can formally defend their conclusions, to regard her as the sacred ark wherein the truth has been preserved to us, and by leading them on, step by step, not as sceptical disputants, who would investigate for themselves a new road to the shrine of truth; but as humble and teachable disciples, labouring to ascertain what has been the Church's faith and practice, assured that the path by which fathers, and confessors, and martyrs, attained the high prize, will more certainly conduct

them to it, than any which their own acuteness and the modern development of intellect can enable them to discover ?

Such are the objects to which we would see the University devoted ; and however we must admit, that the practical workings of her system have occasionally been impaired, by negligence or incompetency on the part of some of those to whom its execution has been committed ; yet it is undeniable that on these principles it has been conducted. This has been witnessed even by the malignity of her enemies, which has been excited by her steadiness. For by this alone she has provoked the attacks (so many and so ferocious) of those who glory in representing the spirit of the age—the characteristic temper whereby this æra is distinguished from those which preceded it. These principles explain her preference of those studies by which the moral character is disciplined, over those which merely devolve the intellectual powers—her steady refusal to give any prominent place in her course of education to those elegant and scientific pursuits, which in our day (for the first time perhaps since the æge of Socrates), have usurped almost exclusive possession of the title of philosophy, and which have an adventitious value in the eyes of the learner apart from their intrinsic attraction, by affording, beyond all other studies, the means of immediate display. Lastly, they are stamped upon the tone and character of her theology, which has been directed rather to the defence of ancient truths than to any new discoveries.