

THE ROYAL SUPREMACY OVER THE CHURCH

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649282845

The royal supremacy over the church by G. E. Biber

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Cover @ 2017

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G. E. BIBER

**THE ROYAL
SUPREMACY
OVER THE CHURCH**

THE ROYAL SUPREMACY

OVER

THE CHURCH,

CONSIDERED AS TO ITS

ORIGIN, AND ITS CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS;

BEING

AN EXPANSION OF THE AUTHOR'S FORMER TREATISE
ON THE SUPREMACY QUESTION,
OCCASIONED BY THE CLAIMS RECENTLY PREFERRED IN THE NAME OF
THE CROWN IN REFERENCE TO

EPISCOPAL PROMOTIONS.

PRECEDED BY A DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P. P.C.

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, &c. &c.

BY THE

REV. G. E. BIBER, LL.D.

Τοῦτο τοὺς μὲν ἐκκλησιαστικοὺς κανόνας παραλύνει, τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζει βλασφημεῖν καὶ ὑπονοεῖν, ὅτι μὴ κατὰ θεῖον θεσμὸν, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἱμφορίας καὶ προστασίας αἱ καταστάσεις γίνονται.—ATHANAS. *Epist. Enycl. ad Episc.* c. ii.

LONDON:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE,

1848.

TO THE RIGHT HON.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P. P.C.

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, ETC.

MY LORD,

WHEN, little more than a twelvemonth ago, I did myself the honour of inscribing to your Lordship my treatise on the Supremacy Question, I pleaded, in apology for the liberty so taken by me, two points,—first, the share which your Lordship has had in placing the Church in a position at once anomalous and injurious; secondly, the notoriously bold character of your Lordship as a statesman.

That the circumstances which have occurred since, are of a nature to add tenfold strength to both those pleas,—that the injustice of the position in which the Church is placed has been immeasurably aggravated,—and that the course pursued by your Lordship has been one of unprecedented boldness,—few men will, I think, venture to deny.

Men, my Lord, who love and reverence the Church as God's ordinance, are compelled, by the necessity of the case, to regard your Lordship in the light of a bold oppressor of the Church; charity constrains some of them, at least, to believe that you are so unintentionally and unconsciously; that you have been overtaken by the human infirmity of attributing to your own peculiar theory of the Church—from the preoccupation of your

mind by political subjects, necessarily an imperfect one,—the same infallibility which has hitherto been monopolized by the Pope in support of his extravagant claim to absolute lordship over God's heritage.

Among those who take this charitable view of the course pursued by your Lordship, the humble individual who now addresses you desires to be reckoned. And since charity is a great prompter of candour, and men who themselves are bold, are ready to excuse boldness in others, I trust I shall have your Lordship's forgiveness, if I venture, with as much brevity and plainness of speech as I can command, to place before your Lordship the aspect in which the late transactions appear to those who do not share your Lordship's somewhat modern theory of the Church, but view her in the light in which she has been viewed by churchmen ever since Christ conferred upon His Apostles the commission expressed in the words: "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

If that view be correct, your Lordship has set at nought the Divine Head of the Church, the Lord Christ, invisibly represented in the Church by God the Holy Ghost,—inasmuch as your Lordship has insisted that the gifts of the Holy Ghost for the work of her different ministries,—the conveyance of which, ministerially, by the Church, is, according to the solemn injunctions of Holy Writ, not to take place without careful inquiry,—shall be dispensed by her ministers (so far as they have power to do so) without inquiry, at the dictation of your Lordship, as First Lord of the Treasury.

If that view be correct, your Lordship has robbed the temporal Chief Ruler of the Church, the Sovereign of these realms, of the highest and most sacred attribute of Her Royal Office and Dignity,—inasmuch as your Lordship has insisted that the prerogative “given to godly Princes by God Himself,”—for the exercise of which, more than for any other act of the royal power, the Sovereign is directly and personally responsible to God,—belongs to the Sovereign only in name, but in reality to your Lordship as First Lord of the Treasury.

The bare suspicion, my Lord, of your having claimed the right to dictate to the Sovereign in the exercise of her prerogative, and the power to control God the Holy Ghost in the distribution of His gifts,—for the high-handed maintenance of the political system of which your Lordship is the personal exponent, must, one should think, be keenly painful to one who professes, and I doubt not sincerely, to be a friend and patron of true religion, and who has proved himself a strenuous assertor of the royal prerogative. And if any thing can add to the sting which this suspicion cannot but leave in your Lordship’s mind, it must be the reflection that you, the great political representative of the house of Russell,—you, the zealous advocate, the fearless champion of civil and religious liberty,—should find yourself in the strange position of having revived, or threatened to revive, the antiquated enactments of the greatest monster of bigotry and tyranny that ever sat on the English throne; in the strange position of having threatened to enforce upon unoffending churchmen, who were prevented by

conscientious scruples from complying with your peremptory commands, the barbarous penalties of mediæval legislation;—penalties, permit me to add, my Lord, which, by a more than curious coincidence, you yourself and your colleagues have distinctly incurred by your unconstitutional tamperings with the Papacy.

Great wrongs, my Lord, if persisted in, entail great retributions; if acknowledged, they demand great reparations. In the heat of party conflict, they are often heedlessly and unconsciously committed; their acknowledgment is not unfrequently the fruit of cool reflection superinduced by their successful accomplishment.

It is the hope that a dispassionate reconsideration of the course recently pursued towards the Church by your Lordship, may dispose you to an examination of the false position in which the State and the Church are placed towards each other, and to that act of reparation to which the Church is eminently entitled at your Lordship's hands, that has emboldened me once more to address you, notwithstanding the distance which intervenes between your Lordship's exalted rank and my humble station.

In that hope, I have the honour to subscribe myself, with profound respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble and obedient Servant,

G. E. BIBER.

ROEHAMPTON,

May 1, 1848.

PREFACE.

A TWELVEMONTH had not elapsed since the appeal made by the Author of the following pages to the British sense of justice on behalf of the grievously oppressed Church of which it is his happiness to be an humble minister, when circumstances occurred than which none could have more strikingly illustrated both the despotic character which the Supremacy has assumed since its transfer from the hands of royalty to those of the representative of the democracy,—and the imperative necessity of adopting some such measures as those suggested by him, for a constitutional exercise of that supremacy, if the Church of England is to be saved from a state of degradation similar to that to which the Greek Church has sunk down by her servile submission to the Cæsaro-episcopate of the Low Empire.

In the controversy and agitation excited by the nomination of Dr. Hampden to the see of Hereford, the Author religiously abstained from taking any part; feeling as he did, that as far as the question was a personal one, a satisfactory solution of it was possible only in the regular course of adjudication by competent authority. But when afterwards the judicial power of

the highest ecclesiastic authority, to inquire into, and adjudicate upon, the canonical fitness of the nominees of the Crown for the Episcopal office, before conferring on them the spiritual power and commission of that office, was peremptorily denied, the question ceased to be a personal one; it became a great constitutional question, on which it is open to the humblest lay or clerical member of the Church, who has made the Constitution of the Church his study, to offer his opinion. Nevertheless, the Author of the following pages, deeply engaged at the time in other literary labours, would hardly have resumed his pen on this subject, had he not been urged, in terms which scarcely admitted of a refusal, to publish a second edition of the treatise published by him last year, on the Supremacy Question. This was all that he contemplated, when he took up his pen; but he soon found that in order to do justice to the questions connected with Episcopal promotions, on which he had but slightly touched in his previous publication, it became necessary, not only to recast the old materials, but to make most extensive additions. In this manner the present volume has arisen, in which all the historical information on Church Synods contained in the pamphlet on the Supremacy Question is incorporated; while the few matters which were extraneous to the main argument on the Synodal power of the Church and the Episcopal office are omitted; and to the last-named subject all the prominence is given which is called for by recent occurrences.

The author has thought it right to offer this expla-