

**RICHARD  
HOOKER**

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Richard Hooker by Vernon Staley

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**VERNON STALEY**

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By VERNON STALEY

PROVOST OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH  
OF ST. ANDREW, INVERNESS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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RICHARD HOOKER.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

IT has been recently said by one accustomed to weigh his words, "I do not think it can be doubted that in the early years of Queen Elizabeth a large part, numerically the larger part, of the clergy and laity who made up the Church of England was really Catholic at heart, though the Reformers made up for deficiency of numbers by energy and force of conviction." And again, "When Elizabeth came to the throne, the nation was divided between a majority of more or less lukewarm Catholics no longer to be called Roman, and a minority of ardent Protestants, who were rapidly gaining—though they had not quite gained—the upper hand. The Protestantism generally was of a type current in South West Germany and Switzerland, but the influence of Calvin was increasing every day."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sanday here uses the term "Catholics," in the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sanday, *Minutes of Evidence taken before The Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline*, 1906. Vol. III. p. 20, §§ 16350, 16356.

sense of those who were attached to the old faith and worship minus certain exaggerations, but who disliked the Roman interference in England.

Speaking of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Bishop Forbes of Brechin similarly said—"When the Queen succeeded, in the case of the rank and file of the Church, the old spirit remained. Suppressed and crushed, it formed the vivifying influence when the Catholic opinions began to re-assert themselves. The Lower House of Convocation, we know at the beginning of her reign, spoke out in the ancient voice; and though much was done to destroy that spirit, yet there is no doubt that it continued to exist, gradually, during Elizabeth's reign, overcome by the growing Puritanism, but destined to rise from its ashes in the time of her successor, when, after giving birth to the belief of such men as Andrewes, Montague, and Donne, it developed into the great school of the Caroline divines . . . . The great mass of England was implicitly Catholic, even in the case of those who had submitted to the new-made changes . . . I believe that Shakespeare—making some allowance, of course, for the costume of the characters he portrayed—exhibited what was the current religion among the mass of the people in Elizabeth's time, a faith in which the



great features of the old religion remained, modified and stripped of excesses and superstitions, but still in tone and temper Catholic in the main."<sup>1</sup>

Early in Elizabeth's reign the appeal of the English Church to Holy Scripture and to antiquity, as concurrent and mutually corrective sources of Catholic truth, was authoritatively made. In the first year of the reign, and again in the following year, Bishop Jewel, in a sermon at St. Paul's Cross, took for the standard of doctrine and practice "either some Scripture, or some old doctor, or some ancient general council, or else some allowed example of the primitive Church."<sup>2</sup> In April 1571, the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury put forth a code of canons, in which it was directed that "chiefly preachers shall take heed, that they teach nothing in their preaching, which they would have the people religiously to observe and believe, but that which is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old Testament, and the New, and that which the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops have gathered out of that doctrine."<sup>3</sup> Early in the next reign, in

<sup>1</sup> A. P. Forbes, *Explanation of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 3rd ed., 1878, Epistle Dedicatory to Dr. Pusey, pp. xi, xv, xvii.

<sup>2</sup> *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury*, Parker Soc., 1845. Vol. I. p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> *The Canons of 1571*, sub "Preachers." Church Hist. Soc., S.P.C.K. 1899.

the year 1609, Archbishop Bancroft published an edition of Jewel's *Works*, to be placed in the churches, in the preface to which he stated—"This is and hath been the open profession of the Church of England, to defend and maintain no other Church, Faith, and Religion, than that which is truly Catholic and Apostolic, and for such warranted, not only by the written word of God, but also by the testimony and consent of the ancient and godly fathers."<sup>1</sup> In the year 1622, Bishop Sparrow, in his *Rationale upon the Book of Common Prayer*, after quoting the canon of 1571, added—"These Golden Canons, had they been duly observed, would have been a great preservative of Truth and the Churches peace."<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Laud, in his Conference with Fisher,<sup>3</sup> described that man as "mistaken, who will presume upon his own strength, and go single without the Church," in his interpretation of Scripture: and went on to urge men "to believe the Scripture and the Creeds in the sense of the ancient primitive Church, to receive the four great General Councils so magnified by antiquity."<sup>4</sup>

Whilst this great appeal to Holy Scripture and Catholic Tradition, which represents a

<sup>1</sup> Cited in *The Canons of 1571*, p. 77, note.

<sup>2</sup> Edition of 1668, p. 253. <sup>3</sup> xvi. 33. <sup>4</sup> xxxviii. 1.

fundamental principle of the English Church and which alone justifies the Reformation in England—whilst this appeal was persistently made in the English Church, it was either not made at all, or if made gradually dropped by the foreign reformers. In fact, it came to be strenuously repudiated by the Puritan party, and in place thereof a rigid reference to the letter of the Bible only, as variously interpreted by the individual conscience, was substituted, to the utter confusion of the religious world. Thus individualism came into conflict with authority, becoming the fruitful parent of endless heresies and schisms lasting on to our own times, the disgrace of modern Christianity, the fatal obstacle to the conversion of the world to the dominion of Jesus Christ.

The destruction of the Spanish Armada in the year 1588, which followed ten years after the publication of Pius the Fifth's bull, excommunicating and deposing Elizabeth, finally settled that the Christianity of the English nation was to be no longer Roman: but the question as to what form it should take, remained to be solved—Was its characteristic to be Catholic, or was it to be Protestant? or, on the other hand, was English Christianity to be henceforth a compromise, combining, if it might so be, the Catholic and the Protestant