

**ARE WE BETTER THAN OUR FATHERS? OR A
COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE SOCIAL
POSITION OF ENGLAND AT THE
REVOLUTION OF 1688 AND AT THE PRESENT
TIME. FOUR LECTURES DELIVERED IN ST.
PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, NOVEMBER, 1871**

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ROBERT GREGORY

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FOUR LECTURES

DELIVERED IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, NOVEMBER, 1871.

BY

ROBERT GREGORY, M.A.

CANON OF ST. PAUL'S.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Lectures were not prepared with any thought of their being published. In conjunction with one of my colleagues, I proposed to give a short series of Lectures in the small north-west chapel of the Cathedral; but that chapel being under repair at the time my Lectures commenced, and no other part of the Cathedral being available for the purpose, I was compelled to deliver them under the dome. The very large attendance on each occasion would have made any other arrangement inconvenient; but this I had not foreseen.

The object of the Lectures was to point to the existence of deep disorder in our social system. I had called attention to the subject in the University pulpit at Oxford in 1860, and in a series of Sermons on the poorer classes in 1867-9. In them I had spoken of the evil positively; I thought it might secure more attention and interest if I reviewed our position relatively by comparing it with some past period in our history. The Revolution of 1688 was convenient for my purpose; I therefore adopted it.

In instituting such a comparison, it was neces-

sary to prove my points, and that could only be done by an appeal to facts and figures. For employing them, if not for speaking upon topics not exclusively theological, I have been taxed with "delivering a series of Lectures under the dome upon topics utterly foreign and inconsistent with those objects for which alone the Metropolitan Cathedral was first consecrated, and to which it has ever since been exclusively devoted." This charge has been echoed by a portion of the Press. I do not feel that it can with justice be urged against me: I am therefore constrained to print the Lectures; it is the only answer which I can give.

One of the many difficulties of the clergy at the present day is that their views on social questions, practically affecting the religious life of the people entrusted to their care, are misrepresented, and that their reply is never heard. It is held to be beneath the dignity of the pulpit to discuss such questions there; the periodicals in which the clergy might express their views on such topics are seldom seen by those to whom they specially wish to explain them; and consequently the interests committed to their charge are being injured without their being heard in their defence. It seemed possible, and if possible desirable, to make available our Cathedrals for supplying such information to the people. It was thought that they might be opened on week-day evenings for

the consideration of questions directly bearing on the prominent social difficulties of the day, and so, necessarily, on the moral well-being of our people. It was hoped that in this way good service would be done to the Church and nation. And as a way seemed thus to be opened for making St. Paul's more useful to the young men of the city, and as this was a matter about which the Dean and Chapter were specially anxious, leave was readily given for the experiment to be made within its walls.

The experiment of this series of Lectures has convinced me that an untold amount of practical power and influence has been allowed to lie dormant in our Cathedrals. They can yet do much for the Church and nation. Words spoken within their walls will be heard more widely than if spoken elsewhere. Questions deeply affecting the life and true prosperity of the Church and State, which are now never referred to in sermons, may be handled there with advantage. Some of the false views of our social and religious position, and of what is needed for its improvement, which are allowed to circulate, because those who could speak, feel that the only place from which they could speak effectively is improper for the purpose, it is hoped may here be refuted. I have ventured to use the Cathedral of St. Paul for examining one of such questions; and though I have employed statements drawn from political and

historical sources, and have discussed some points that seem to belong more immediately to the secular than to the ecclesiastical history of the country, I hope that the manner of the discussion has been strictly religious as a sermon would have been. I feel that it would be productive of great evil to speak of such subjects as I have dealt with in a party or political sense, and that the one end which the lecturer in a Cathedral should have ever before his eyes is that for which the Gospel was given to man, and the Cathedral consecrated. No one would deprecate more strongly than I should the use of our Cathedrals for purposes which had no relation to the glory of God, and the best interests of man. I have striven to place a high ideal before me: I am conscious that it has been most imperfectly realised. From the rule which I felt ought to guide me, I have not erred consciously, though I fear I may have done so through infirmity.

R. G.

*2, Residentiary Houses, St. Paul's,
Advent, 1871.*

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