

**THE HISTORICAL POSITION
OF THE EPISCOPAL
CHURCH. A PAPER**

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The Historical Position of the Episcopal Church. A paper by Francis J. Hall

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FRANCIS J. HALL

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CHURCH. A PAPER**

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OF
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

A Paper

READ BY THE
REV. FRANCIS J. HALL, M.A.,
INSTRUCTOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, CHICAGO,
BEFORE THE
CHURCH HISTORY CLUB OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL (BAPTIST),
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, DECEMBER 11,
1894; AND BEFORE THE CHICAGO CLERICUS
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DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,
TO THE
REV. ERI B. HULBERT, D.D.,
DEAN OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF CHICAGO, WHOSE
COURTESY, HEREBY SHOWN, IS THE MORE
NOTEWORTHY BY REASON
OF THE
DIFFERENCES OF CONVICTION
BETWEEN US.

WHAT DOES THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
CLAIM TO STAND FOR IN HISTORY?

It is with heartfelt pleasure that I accept the courteous invitation which you have given me to read a paper before this Club, and I appreciate your kindness the more because I understand that you expect me to address you from the point of view of an Episcopalian. It is not to be expected that a Club like this will agree with all the beliefs which are likely to be propounded by one who speaks from such a point of view.

Yet, if I rightly understand your invitation, I am expected to speak with entire candour. Gentlemen, I appreciate your kindness and accept your invitation in good faith. I shall, therefore, not shrink from plain speech, even when touching upon the things wherein we differ, although, in speaking plainly, I trust that I shall not abuse your kindness by any manner of utterance inconsistent with the Christian duty of speaking the truth in love. The truth, my friends, is sacred—not less so

when ascertained than when still being sought after—and should enslave our hearts, and minds, and tongues. Truth is mighty and, in the end, will prevail; so that, if we would think to some purpose, and contribute to the permanent advance of spiritual intelligence and life, we must conform our thoughts and language to the truth, as such. Moreover, the principle of love to which I have referred requires not only that we should conform to the truth *when* we speak, but that we *should* speak—openly and persistently—in the presence of those who are still lacking such truth as we have learned, until it has become the common possession of mankind. I am sure that you agree with me here, and that you expect me to conform my utterances to what I, an Episcopalian, am convinced to be the truth, without reserve or fear of causing offence.

I purpose this evening to answer, as well as I can, this question: *What does the Episcopal Church claim to stand for in history?*

My aim is chiefly expository, and I shall endeavour to avoid a polemical tone; although I cannot promise to assume the indifferent tone of one who has no interest in the questions at

issue. I am sure you do not expect this. I shall deal with arguments, but in their historical aspects, and for the purpose of exhibiting more clearly the nature of the Episcopal position, and of obviating certain misapprehensions concerning it.

To enter at once *in medias res*, The Episcopal Church claims to stand in history for three things: (a) for the original of the Christian religion; (b) for that which it has, as a matter of history, received in trust, and therefore may not lawfully compromise or surrender; (c) for the only possible basis of Church Unity.

I.

In the first place, then, *the Episcopal Church claims to stand for the original of the Christian Religion.*

The true idea of religion, as it appears in history—and Sacred History is none the less history, because it is given chiefly in the Bible—is that of a bond or covenant between God and man; along with whatever pertains to such a covenant, of truth, institutions and life. It is thus, I am sure, that Sacred as well as Eccle-

siastical history exhibits religion to us. The Greek word *διαθήκη*, which is usually translated testament, is more accurately translated covenant; and the entire Bible is concerned with the Old Covenant or Hebrew Religion, and the New Covenant or Christian Religion. This does not mean that these two are different religions, but that they are two dispensations of one and the same religion, which are necessarily in harmony with each other and governed in common by certain principles which are permanent and unalterable, since they proceed from one God, with Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning¹. The law is a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ²; and, as S. Augustine said long ago, the New Testament is latent in the Old, and the Old is unveiled in the New³. It is, therefore, a mistake to oppose one dispensation to the other, for they are but successive Divine arrangements in one covenant of promise made of old with the patriarchs. The Christian dispensation is indeed more spiritual, but this does not mean that the old religion has been revolutionized, so as to become indeterminate, unrecognizable

1. S. Jas. I. 17. 2. Gal. III. 24. 3. Quest. In Ex. Q. 73.

and without visible ministries or means of open maintenance before the world and of corporate life. It means rather that the inner and spiritual significance of God's covenant has been unveiled in its fulfilment by Christ; and that, in consequence of Christ's work and ordinance, the ancient forms, which were without power¹, have been reconstituted and given spiritual efficacy and world-wide application. The religion of Christ is the religion of Abraham and of Moses; and, like its Author, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever².

If this original and everlasting religion of God is to be identified, it must be by means of such characteristics as were of Divine origin in the beginning, and which have been permanent, being provided for by God in every successive dispensation. I think that three such characteristics can be distinguished historically without difficulty. I will try to exhibit them in due order.

(a) The first of them, appearing in both the Hebrew and Christian dispensations, and, therefore, characterizing the original Christian relig-

1. Heb. VIII. 7-13: X. 1, 11.

2. Heb. XIII. 8.