

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Reviews.

Canon Harford Battersby and the Keswick Convention. By TWO OF HIS SONS. Seeley and Co.

THE publication of this memoir is opportune at a time when many are inquiring, "What is the Keswick Convention, and what is its teaching?" The life of Canon Battersby, the virtual founder of the Convention, to a great extent supplies an answer to this question and similar ones.

The greater part of the volume is devoted to an outline of the early years and subsequent ministerial work of Mr. Battersby prior to the foundation of the Keswick Convention. Yet this period must be understood before we can follow the subsequent connection with the Convention, which is the central point of interest in the book. The life of Canon Battersby is the life of a man of deep spiritual convictions; no ordinary life, but one which combined practical common-sense and distinct ability with an intense spirituality. Perhaps at times there may have been too great a preponderance of what we may call "spiritual introspection," but it was throughout an introspection of deep humility, and while creating dissatisfaction with "self," led him on to find that "resting faith" which resulted in a profound peace.

Entering Balliol in 1841, he found himself in the midst of "the Oxford Movement," a movement which at the time, and for some short period after his leaving college, attracted him considerably. The earnestness and devoutness of its leaders made a great impression upon him; so much so, that when in 1847 he was ordained, his first curacy was under High Church auspices.

The two years spent at Gosport, his first sphere of labour, were marked by a contest in Mr. Battersby's mind between the Evangelical and Tractarian systems; and at the close of the period he found himself differing fundamentally from his colleagues in doctrine and practical teaching.

In 1849 he accepted a curacy at St. John's, Keswick, under the late Rev. Frederick Myers, a clergyman of wide sympathies and eminent intellectual power. In 1851 he succeeded Mr. Myers as vicar, and Vicar of St. John's, Keswick, he continued until his death in 1883.

The full change in his views on Church principles dates from his connection with St. John's, and he writes in his journal just prior to his leaving Gosport: "I am persuaded, on the whole, of the truth of Protestant principles; Anglo-Catholicism I believe to be inconsistent and untenable by an honest mind." Referring to the reproach often brought against clergy of Protestant principles that they are unlearned, he adds: "Let me also endeavour to wipe off the reproach of ignorance, which, I fear, must attach to me now, by diligence and perseverance in my studies."

The chapter entitled "Pastor in Parochia" gives us a most interesting account of Canon Battersby's work at Keswick. Deeply instructive is

the view he held regarding the position and responsibilities of a clergyman in charge of a parish. It must be no sinecure, no mere routine of ministerial work; the work of a pastor must embrace all the varied interests of his parishioners. Secular and spiritual wants alike are to engage his attention, and yet nothing is to be so secular that it cannot also be spiritual. He writes in his journal (a book which must teem with valuable and suggestive thoughts and hints):

"I have . . . to watch over all the institutions in the parish, to have "an eye to everything which can affect the spiritual or temporal well-being of the people of the parish; for I am, or shall be, an officer of "the State, as well as of the Church. Yet let me beware of making too "much separation between secular things and spiritual . . . the Christian "minister ought to be first and foremost in all things which concern the "intellectual and social welfare of the people . . . in short, he ought to "use his influence every way, wherever he can, to set everything on a "right footing as regards its spirit and aims, and to promote its preservation in the same."

Nor did he fail in this high ideal. Library, Lecture Hall, Mechanics' Institute, all witnessed to his interest and activity. Yet all was subordinate to one aim; "My business with the people is to make them Christians." And he spared no effort in his endeavour, nor was he wedded to mere conventional forms. "If the people will not come to Church, the Church must go to the people."

But the portion of the memoir which is, perhaps, the most interesting, though the whole book is deeply so, is that which gives us an insight into the spiritual life of Canon Battersby, and the course of events which led up to the founding of the Keswick Convention.

A sense of the need of union among Christians seems to have been forced gradually upon him. He writes, September 30th, 1851:

"The tone of piety is very low amongst us. The friends of truth, "such as they are, are disunited. They give a feeble light singly; they "do not strengthen one another's hands, nor attempt to rally round the "standard of Jesus."

Attendance later on at the May meetings in London caused him "to feel how good it was for men, who were working in the same cause, and on the same lines, to meet together for mutual encouragement and strengthening one another's faith." The growth of this conviction led to the founding of "the Evangelical Union for the Diocese of Carlisle," mainly designed to foster spiritual life by means of gatherings for the clergy and laity at one centre for two days for prayer and fellowship.

It was in such a frame of mind that Canon Battersby came into contact with another movement. In 1873 came the controversy on "holiness through faith." That phrase was the title of a series of articles published in a weekly religious paper. There was much to condemn in the position taken up in those articles; their tendency was towards a doctrine of sinless perfection, not towards a life of victory, which results from the grace given to realize that sin lies under condemnation, and is to be treated accordingly, while at the same time the Christian never forgets that

it is present, though its doom is settled and its dominion broken. While there was much in the teaching of this movement which Mr. Battersby could not but regard as dangerous, he was yet greatly impressed by it. He had a longing for a higher experience of victory and rest. His words are, "I feel again how very far I am from enjoying that peace and love and joy habitually, which Christ promises." It was the sense of need of rest which led him to attend the Oxford Convention in 1874. The definiteness of purpose and directness of aim in the speakers struck him. It was here that he entered into a newer and higher state of spiritual experience, which he himself described as a passing "from a seeking to a resting faith." Under date September 3rd, Oxford, he writes :

"Have been too much occupied to write in this since Monday, but it has been an eventful time for me. *I believe I entered into a rest of faith on Tuesday evening, which I have not known before.* . . . I said to myself, Has not my faith been a seeking faith when it ought to have been a resting faith? and if so, why not exchange it for the latter? And I thought of the sufficiency of Jesus: and said, 'I will rest in Him!' and I did rest in Him. I said nothing to anyone of this, and was afraid lest it should be a passing emotion; but I found that a presence of Jesus was graciously manifested to me in a way that I knew not before, and that I did *abide in Him*. In the morning I awoke with a sweet sense of His blessed presence and indwelling, which has continued in measure since."

The Rev. Handley C. G. Moule, in his preface to this memoir, alluding to this event says :

"Canon Battersby, in 1874, made what to many another man also has been a discovery of supreme importance, the discovery of new trust. . . . I venture to think his experience strikingly illustrates what has been strikingly said, that the great need of the soul and of the Church in these latter days is 'not new truth, but new trust.'"

The result of this change was some time later the issue of a printed circular signed by Canon Battersby and Mr. Robert Wilson, of Broughton Grange, inviting "Christians of every section of the Church of God" to meet at Keswick for "three days' union meetings for the promotion of practical holiness." So the first Keswick Convention was held; and every year since has witnessed a similar, though far more numerous, gathering.

Canon Battersby passed away to his rest on July 23rd, 1883, the day fixed for the Keswick Convention of that year.

The memoir of the life thus briefly sketched will be read by a wide circle of readers, and it will well repay them. The writers have gathered together the most striking incidents and letters, and the two hundred pages of the volume are filled with the most interesting and markedly instructive matter. Amid much in the present time that is either defective or extravagant in doctrine and in method, it is refreshing to find the record of a life marked by common-sense and practical religion, and yet of a spirituality so deep, so consecrated, so inspiring.

GEORGE NICKSON.

Our Title Deeds. A Defence of the Church against Disendowment; being a reply to Mr. Miall's book, "Title Deeds of the Church of England to her Endowments." By Rev. MORRIS FULLER, M.A., Rector of Ryburgh, author of "Our Established Church," "Pan-Anglicanism: what is it?" "Church of England: its History and Claims on the Nation;" "Court of Final Appeal;" "Lord's Day, or Christian Sunday;" "Life, Times, and Writings of Dr. Thos. Fuller," etc. Pp. 375. Griffith, Farran, Okeden, and Welsh.

This is a timely work, and should do good service. The learned author has seen what is the present need, and has carried out his purpose on judicious lines with great ability. A defence of the Church against *Disendowment*, the volume is dedicated to the Earl of Selborne, author of the "Defence of the Church against *Disestablishment*." Its object is to show that the Church's "title deeds" to her endowments and fabrics are unimpeachable; in other words, to refute the "national property" argument. Accordingly, beginning at the beginning, Mr. Fuller deals with the rise of the tithe system in the Christian Church, and then proceeds to the origin of tithes in Anglo-Saxon days. His remarks on the Anglo-Saxon Charters—in particular that of A.D. 854—are admirable, and the whole of this chapter is clear and telling. The fifth chapter is on the Norman period. In the sixth and two following chapters the alleged tripartite division of tithes and the Poor Law System in relation to the Church are dealt with. Each branch of the subject is handled, and so far as we have observed, with precision and point. We regret that lack of space prevents us from giving so good a book a worthy notice. One of the useful appendices, we may add, contains a letter from Lord Bramwell, about landlords; "the tithe-owner's title is as good as the landlord's."

One portion of the work will be turned to with special interest just now, namely, that which relates to the Bill now before the House of Commons; it admits the difficulties of the case, and answers the question, What is to be done; now, and later on? First of all the Government Bill must pass.

In his preface Mr. Fuller points to the fall in the annual value of tithes. According to the prophets, in three years they will be down to 72, and are never likely to rise above 80 again. This means that £100 of tithe is to-day worth only £78 1s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., a deduction of nearly 22 per cent. This represents untold misery to those clergy who have no private resources, and carries discouragement and dismay into thousands of parsonages. It must be confessed that the clergy are bearing their losses with a dignified and uncomplaining resignation. Something, however, will have to be done sooner or later as to their maintenance, and the present generation of Church people must be taught that they can no longer fall back, as they have been accustomed to, upon the piety and munificence of their forefathers, but they must themselves contribute of their substance to the stipends of their clergy. Meantime can nothing be done to alleviate the "present distress" and take off some of the fiscal burdens from the clergy? Mr. Fuller calls attention to the mode of assessing and rating the incomes of the clergy. It must be borne in mind that of all the parishioners in any parish none are so heavily taxed for the relief of the poor as its incumbent. The *official stipends* of the clergy are subject to burdens from which the members of other professions are exempt, to wit, the army and navy, the civil and

other services whose stipends are paid out of the Imperial Exchequer. The taxes on the endowments of the clergy, *other than* income tax and those usually paid by occupiers, amount to £714,043 per annum. And not only is the whole of the *tithe* rated for the relief of the poor, but all *other local* charges, such as Highway and School Board rates, are *levied on the same basis, i.e.*, the old assessment for the poor, with the result that the clergyman, with or without even a pony-chaise, often pays more highway rate than the squire who can afford to keep many horses, or the farmer and miller who send their lumbering teams and heavy waggons over the same roads to their detriment, an injustice which the late Mr. Fawcett recognised and would have endeavoured to amend. Surely some readjustment of this basis of taxation would bring some relief to those who are bearing this distress so bravely, and it would be an act as graceful as equitable. The clergy are *overtaxed*—more highly taxed than any other class in the community. Nothing should be left undone, adds Mr. Fuller, which could possibly bring about a better state of things.

Short Notices.

High Days of the Christian Year. By the Very Rev. ANDREW TAIT, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E., Provost of Tuam. London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh.

THIS work may be best described as a series of homilies on Church seasons, and it is impossible to speak of them too highly. They are up to the mark, thoughtful and earnest. We quote a fine passage on materialistic theories :

Dr. Tyndall in 1870 was pleased to say that "not alone the exquisite and wonderful mechanism of the human body, but the human mind itself—emotion, intellect, and will, and all their phenomena, were once latent in a fiery cloud;" and Professor Huxley speaks of "nature's great progression from the formless to the formed, from the inorganic to organic, from blind force to conscious intellect and will." This is what is understood by the development theory—a theory which sets aside all notion of a personal Creator, and which is alike subversive of the first principles of physical truth, as it is contrary to the precepts of religion. If man's constitution be only the result of a process of development from inorganic to organic life; if we, in common with the plant or the lower creation, be only the result of the action on matter of forces governed by inexorable law, where is the room left in such a theory for duty, responsibility, or a future state? We may, therefore, expect the faith of the philosopher not to rise higher than his tenets; and accordingly we hear him propound his creed, when, alluding to the prospects of the religion of humanity, he says: "Here I touch upon a theme too great for me, but which will assuredly be handled by the loftiest minds when you and I, like specks of the morning cloud, shall have melted into the infinite azure of the past." If the theory of the evolution of living forms from non-living matter, in the early stages of the earth's history, be the philosophic faith of the nineteenth century, and if the only hope it can inspire is that we shall all pass away "into the infinite azure of the past like streaks of the morning cloud," then what remains for us but to adopt the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"?

It would be easy to add to the above many other passages of equal merit; but we must content ourselves with the following :

Can the example of patient endurance, such as Stoicism taught, open up a vista through the clouds which overhang the mystery of life, and point us to a bright