

## John Hales.

**I**N a day when there are ever increasing signs of a growing desire towards Christian unity and of a strong revulsion from mere sectarian dogmatism and bitterness, it is well perhaps to recall one of the earliest and most conspicuous pioneers of this movement. John Hales was the earnest advocate and apostle of tolerant and "Broad" Church principles a generation before they acquired a somewhat dubious fame under the sobriquet of Latitudinarian. In an atmosphere and environment of the most bitter and intolerant religious controversy it required a mind not only of singular originality but of undaunted courage which could attempt to swim against the current. Such was the aim and life work of John Hales, pursued unwaveringly amidst the opposition and suspicion, alike of Puritan, Calvinist and Arminian. He belonged to a very small company of men born before their time, whose enlightened and charitable aspirations, as we shall see from a glance at his theological views, are by no means universally adopted by the Christian sentiment of three centuries later.

Hales was born at Bath in 1584, his father being steward to a gentleman of property in Somersetshire. He was entered at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, at the early age of thirteen and graduated B.A. in 1603. In 1605 he was elected a fellow of Merton, as his great ability had soon won him distinction. Wood tells us that "through the whole course of his scholarship there was never any one in the then memory of man that ever went beyond him for subtle disputation in philosophy, for his eloquent declamations and orations, as also for his exact knowledge of the Greek tongue." In spite of this profound scholarship Hales never attained any very important position in the Church, his somewhat uneventful career being rather that of the theological recluse. He was appointed Greek Professor at Oxford in 1612, and admitted a fellow of Eton in 1613. In 1618 he went to the Hague in the capacity of chaplain to the English ambassador, Sir D. Carleton. While here he attended, merely as an interested spectator, the famous Synod of Dort and his early doctrinal opinions were greatly influenced by the discussions he listened to. At first definitely opposed to the Arminian party he was favourably impressed by the wisdom and moderation of Episcopius's speech at the Synod,

while the narrow and dogmatic conduct of the Calvinists had the effect of so changing his views that in the end he sided with neither party and recognized that spiritual truth was not the monopoly of either Calvinism or Arminianism. Returning to England in 1619 he settled down at Eton, where for many years he enjoyed the friendship of Sir H. Wotton, a man of a liberal and tolerant spirit who was Provost from 1624-39. Hales was also soon an intimate member of that celebrated poetic and literary circle which foregathered at Great Tew, that "university in a purer air," as Clarendon styled it, and where he met Suckling, Ben Johnson and such kindred spirits as William Chillingworth and Lord Falkland. In fact Bishop Pearson's description of Hales reminds us closely of Clarendon's eulogy of Falkland the noble and fascinating owner of Great Tew, when he says "he was of a nature so kind, so sweet, so courting all mankind, of an affability so prompt, so ready to receive all conditions of men, that I cannot conceive it near as easy a task for any one to become so knowing, as so obliging."

Hales was appointed a Canon of Windsor in 1641, but the Civil War and the ecclesiastical confusion which followed soon robbed him not only of this emolument, but of his position at Eton, and before long he was forced to sell his very fine collection of books to supply his actual needs. At length he found shelter in the house of an old servant, where he died in poverty in 1656.

In 1636 Hales published a tract on *Schism and Schismatics*, which incurred the animadversions of Archbishop Laud, since he enunciated broad and charitable principles quite out of harmony with the narrow spirit of the times. The problems of Christian fellowship and reunion would have been solved ere this if his enlightened ideals had been generally accepted and his practical proposals adopted. Ecclesiastical history would have far happier records if Christians had always understood that "it is the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and not identity of conceit, which the Holy Ghost requires at the hands of Christians" (Hales' *Works*, II, 94). "Heresy," Hales declares, "is an act of the will, not of reason, and is indeed a lie, not a mistake, else how could that known speech of Austin go for true, 'errare possum, hereticus esse nolo' . . . I do not yet see that *opinionum varietas, et opinantium unitas*, are *αυστατα*, or that men of different opinions in Christian religion may not hold communion *in sacris* and both go to one Church." While he defines

schism as "an unnecessary separation of Christians from that part of the visible Church of which they were once members." It is "ecclesiastical sedition" or open violence against "that communion which is the strength and good of all society, sacred and civil." Hales, however, affirms that "if liturgies and public forms of service were so framed that they contained only such things as in which all Christians do agree, schisms on opinions were utterly vanished." "Prayer, confession, thanksgiving, reading and exposition of Scripture, administration of sacraments in the plainest and simplest manner, were matter enough," he considers, "to furnish out a sufficient liturgy, though nothing either of private opinion or of church pomp, of garments, of prescribed gestures, of imagery, of music, of matter concerning the dead, of many superfluities which creep into churches under the name of order and decency did interpose itself." One cannot but think that our present task of Prayer Book revision would have been far sooner accomplished if it had been conducted more in accordance with this wise and liberal spirit!

Hales admits, however, that there are occasions where schism is perfectly justified, in fact where "consent would be conspiracy." If "false or uncertain conclusions are obtruded for truth and acts either unlawful or ministering just scruple are required to be performed," then "he that separates is not the schismatic, for it is alike unlawful to make profession of known or suspected falsehoods, as to put in practice unlawful or suspected actions."

Hales fully accepted the Anglican position of the final authority of the Holy Scriptures in matters of Faith, for in combating the idea that the words of consecration added anything to the substance of Christ's action, he declares "for that the words were used by our Saviour to work anything upon the bread and wine can never out of Scripture or reason be deduced, and beyond these two I have no ground for my religion neither in substance nor in ceremony." He strongly opposed the modern Tractarian doctrine of a real objective Presence of Christ in the Eucharist by *virtue of consecration*. Nothing, Hales declares, is given in the Supper but "bread and wine." "Jesus Christ is eaten at the communion table in no sense—neither spiritually by virtue of anything done there, nor really, neither metaphorically, nor literally. Indeed that which is eaten (I mean the bread) is called Christ by a metaphor, but it is eaten truly and properly." The spiritual eating of Christ, he declares, is "common

to all places as well as the Lord's Table." The uses and ends of the Lord's Supper can be no more than such as are mentioned in the Scriptures, and they are but two. (1) The commemoration of the death and passion of the Son of God, specified by Himself at the institution of the ceremony. (2) To testify our union with Christ and communion with one another. In these few conclusions the whole doctrine and use of the Lord's Supper is fully set down, and whoso leadeth you beyond this doth but abuse you; "quicquid ultra quaeritur, non intelligitur" (*Works*, I 62-3).

Besides his treatise on the Lord's Supper Hales published in 1637 a dissertation *Concerning the Power of the Keys*, a clear practical common-sense exposition in which he disposes of all sacerdotal prerogatives and pretensions. He interprets the authority to "bind and loose" as the privilege of declaring the message of divine love to mankind. "Every one," Hales asserts, "of what state or condition soever, that hath any occasion offered him to serve another in the ways of life, clergy or lay, male or female, whatever he be, hath these keys, not only for himself but for the benefit of others . . . to save a soul every man is a priest. The sufficient and able of the clergy will reap no discountenance, but honour by this, for he that knows how to do well himself will most willingly approve what is well done by another. Be not angry then to see others join with you in part of your charge. I would that all the Lord's people did preach and that every man did think himself bound to discharge a part of the common good, and make account that the care of other men's souls concerned him as well as of his own."

Hales, as we should expect, is a strenuous champion of the right of private judgment against the claims and authority of an infallible Church or of Catholic tradition. "Antiquity" is nothing more than "man's authority born some ages before us," and time, he argues, cannot alter the original truth or falsity of such opinions. Like his friend Chillingworth, Hales clearly points out, that each man is bound to approve and accept the Truth by the light of his own reason, otherwise he will never know if he is deceived by some one else's opinions which he has blindly accepted. "I comprise it all," he says, "in two words, *what* and *wherefore*. They that come and tell you what you are to believe, what you are to do, and tell you not *why*, they are not physicians but leeches, and if you so take things at their hands you are not like men but like beasts . . . for without

the knowledge of *why*, of the true grounds or reasons of things, there is no possibility of not being deceived." . . . "Wherefore," asked John Gerson, some time Chancellor of Paris, hath God given me the light of reason and conscience, if I must suffer myself to be led and governed by the reason and conscience of another man? "How can it stand with reason, that a man should be possessed of so goodly a piece of the Lord's pasture as is this light of reason and understanding, which He hath endowed us with in the day of our creation, if he suffer it to lie untilled or sow not in it the Lord's seed?" (*Works*, III, 152-3). Hales contended, therefore, that the spiritual enlightened conscience was a surer guide to truth than the blind acceptance of the dogmas of an infallible church. A spiritual man he defined as one "whose reason is illuminated by revelation out of the written word. For when the mind and spirit humbly conform and submit to the written will of God, then you are properly said to have the Spirit of God, and to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. This alone is that spirit which preserves us from straying from the truth; for he indeed that hath the spirit errs not at all; or if he do, it is with as little hazard and danger as may be, which is the highest point of infallibility, which either private persons or churches can arrive to" (*Works*, I 69, 70). The reason, he concludes, why "men rely on others so much is because the dregs of the Church of Rome are not sufficiently washed from the hearts of many men." If this be so, it is certain that another 300 years has not been sufficient to complete the purification!

Hales was, however, no bitter bigoted anti-Papist. He was born a generation too late to share the feelings of those who fed the flame of their strong animosity to Rome on the afterglow of the Marian fires of persecution. It was his ardent hatred of the censorious spirit, the uncharitable condemnation of differing opinions which created his main antipathy to Popery. For Clarendon tells us that "nothing troubled him more than the brawls which were grown from religion, and he therefore exceedingly detested the tyranny of the Church of Rome; more for their imposing uncharitably upon the consciences of other men, than for the errors in their own opinions; and he would often say that he would renounce the religion of the Church of England to-morrow if it obliged him to believe that any other Christian should be damned, and that nobody would conclude another man to be, who did not wish him so."

Both the churchman and the "sectary" would have escaped a half a century of cruel suffering and harsh persecution, had they been able to appreciate the wisdom and beauty of Hales' liberal and catholic principles, but the time was not yet. There can, however, be no question of the accuracy of Principal Tulloch's verdict when he describes Hales as "a churchman without narrowness, who must have hated in his heart and deeply felt the folly of Laud's tyranny," and as "the representative—the next after Hooker—of that catholicity yet nationality of Christian sentiment which has been the peculiar glory of the Church of England" (*Rational Theology*, I 259-60).

C. SYDNEY CARTER.



### The Unity of the True Church.

**O**NE Lord, One Faith, One Baptism (though rites  
May differ, the blest meaning is the same).

There is one Cross, one fount of cleansing Blood,  
One great Redemption, and but one New Birth;  
While, linked together in a "common faith,"  
Saints of all names share the same "peace of God"  
Each, with his special views of Scripture Truth,  
Enjoys the Great Salvation with the rest.  
Heber and Rippon hymn the same sweet Name;  
Faber and Wesley praise the same dear Lord;  
Carey and Xavier take the same "Good News;"  
Hooker and Bunyan love the same blest Word;  
Bernard and Luther teach from one dear Book;  
Newman and Spurgeon preach the self-same Cross;  
McCheyne and Liddon spread the same great Truth;  
Aitken and Moody share the Fire from Heaven;  
Guyon and Havergal drink from one Fount;  
Ignatius and Chalmers share their zeal:  
"All one in Him" to whom their all they owe!  
Behold the Unity of the true Church,  
A unity begotten from on High!  
"One flock," and surely to "one fold" they come,  
Led by one Shepherd to their Heavenly Home.

WILLIAM OLNEY.