

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

which the work of the translator is seriously criticized; it is shown that in the crucial passage of Professor Kittel's estimate of Wellhausen and his theories (pp. 74, 75) the commendation which the author gives is weakened in the translation alike by the inadequate rendering of the German, and by the complete omission in more than one case of not unimportant words and phrases. *Non tali auxilio!*

(*To be continued.*)



## Oxford and Evangelicalism in Relation to the Crisis in the Church.

BY THE REV. E. A. BURROUGHS, M.A.,  
*Fellow and Lecturer, Hertford College, Oxford.*

### I.—THE CRISIS IN THE CHURCH.

OF the crisis in the Church of England, readers of THE CHURCHMAN need not to be made aware. Its existence has long been felt; and now its nature is fairly evident. One hopeful feature of the age is the wide public interest taken in religious questions, even by "those that are without," with the result that secular papers deal with our difficulties, and the man in the street has his own opinions on them.

The most striking element in the situation is the growing impatience, in all Christian communities, of sectarian difference, and the kindling passion for Christian Unity. The feeling is, perhaps, largely sentimental and uninstructed as yet; but of its intensity there can be no question, for we see practical steps being taken towards Reunion which would hardly have been dreamed of twenty years ago.

But here at once the central problem rises before us. It is, of course, the old problem of the necessity or otherwise of Episcopacy, called up from more academic surroundings to become a burning question of the hour. The prominence of

the subject at the Cambridge Church Congress of 1910 is but one of a long series of indications showing where we are; and some of the views expressed, however good-temperedly, on that occasion suggest how fierce may be the struggle ahead. Because in the Church the preliminaries of revolution are conducted courteously, we must not blink the fact that here also a revolution is at hand.

Why a revolution? Because two great sections of Church opinion, professing equal devotion to the English Church, stand absolutely committed to two apparently irreconcilable theories, as to the nature of the Church in general and the teaching of the Church of England in particular. The whole structure of the Oxford Movement, with all that has followed from it, is built on the foundation-principle of "Apostolical Succession," so stated as to exclude non-Episcopalian Christians from the Body of Christ. The whole record, doctrinal and practical, of the Evangelical School within the Church of England is one long exposition of that central claim of Evangelical Theology, that "in Christ"—however it may be in ecclesiastical history—"in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek," Catholic nor Protestant, Episcopalian, non-Episcopalian, Established nor Free. And meanwhile people ask, Which is the doctrine of the Anglican Church? and both answers are given, with apparently equal authority and conviction.

Both, it is obvious, cannot be right. If, therefore, a definite solution is to be reached, it must be either by capitulation on one side, or by a painful and humiliating schism. Discussion has been too widely aroused, and tentative *rapprochements* too freely indulged in, to allow of any ultimate compromise. Even if the Churches had a mind for such, the scorn of the world would scarcely tolerate it.

Meanwhile, the leaders of at least one great section are genuinely perplexed, and show their perplexity by self-contradiction. Bishop Gore's contribution to the controversy in "Orders and Unity" is a case in point; and one may also

fruitfully contrast his warm support of the World Missionary Conference with his startling utterance at the last Church Congress, that "the Church of England would be rent in twain" the first time a non-Episcopally ordained minister were formally allowed to celebrate the Eucharist within it. If we of the other wing are less disturbed, let us not congratulate ourselves too quickly; it may be that we are less alive to the situation. In any case, we shall do well to act on the advice which Dr. Gore and others are urging upon Churchmen—viz., that a solid unity may best be reached in the future if each party to it will, meanwhile, emphasize rather than efface its characteristic tenets. Sacrifices, of course, some day there must be; but such a course would insure that the points then surrendered were those that ought to go.

The main question underlying the present paper is just this: Do we Evangelicals consider that we have, in our "characteristic tenets," a real contribution to make to the controversy, and that it is worth making? Are we, then, in a position to make that contribution tellingly and effectually? and, if not, what steps are we taking to prepare for the crisis, in which we stand either to gain or to lose so much, both for ourselves and for English Christianity? In particular, what is our position at the Universities? The present writer is only qualified to speak of Oxford, and ventures, with regret, but without hesitation, to urge that there at least we are largely unprepared.

## II.—THE CONTRIBUTION OF EVANGELICALISM.

First, then, let us try and determine what our contribution in the coming crisis is likely to be; and then consider the conditions at Oxford which should affect our chance of making it effectually.

Those leaders of exclusive Anglicanism, who have allowed themselves of late years greater licence in the matter of co-operation with Dissenters, have justified their action on the ground of a so-called "new principle"—the polysyllabic Inter-denominationalism—which they are careful to explain as "taking

all their Churchmanship with them when they go among those who differ from them." But this at once suggests two questions.

First, *do* they really take "all" their Churchmanship—in their sense of the term—to such gatherings as one has in mind? Or do they not rather, as their own more rigid and consistent brethren remind them, leave behind them at the door that very principle of exclusion from which their system starts, while morally supporting a theory of the Church which they exist to condemn?

And, secondly, *is* Interdenominationalism really a new principle at all? Is it not precisely the one upon which true Evangelical Churchmen have uniformly conducted their relations with Nonconformity, ever since the first Evangelicals branched off from Wesleyanism, when it endangered their Churchmanship, without ceasing to regard its leaders as brethren in Christ? Is it not the principle which, for instance, led to the foundation of the C. M. S. by men who could not accept the undenominational basis of the London Missionary Society? For 150 years Evangelical Churchmen have managed, in their dealings with Nonconformity, to combine full spiritual sympathy with clear ecclesiastical distinctness; while at the same time they have set no impassable barrier in their own way towards a more corporate unity, by formulating any other doctrine of the Church than that of the Prayer Book and Articles.

Does not this indicate the importance of Evangelical Churchmanship in the crisis, and the nature of the contribution which it should be able to make? It would seem as if our own traditional standing-ground were intended for the meeting-ground of High Anglicanism and Nonconformity, our central principle for the link to unite the two.

And yet, when this was suggested to an influential, thoughtful, and spiritual Nonconformist leader in the University of Oxford, the notion was met almost with scorn; and, as a matter of fact, both he and his colleagues fraternize more readily with High Churchmen than with others, and seem to hope more from them than from us—a phenomenon with parallels else-

where. Why? Perhaps the most real reason, at least in Oxford at the present time, is the strange ignorance prevailing as to what Evangelicalism really is. "For my own part," cried a high official of the Oxford Intercollegiate Christian Union, himself a Presbyterian, when the altered outlook of the Union was being discussed some time ago, "for my own part, I don't know what Evangelicals *do* stand for." The situation is the more perplexing by reason of the claim now generally advanced by spiritual High Churchmen to be "Evangelicals" also; by which they mean that they lay stress on the Gospel message and the Evangelistic method, without in the least abandoning, say, their distinctive sacramental teaching. So it comes to pass that "Evangelicalism" is viewed by many as merely an outworn antagonism, or at best as an ill-proportioned statement of one aspect of truth, which finds its true adjustment in a higher and richer synthesis known to them as "the Catholic Faith."

Here, however, we may pause for a moment's self-defence. This claim to our distinctive title is significant of a new value attached to part at least of our distinctive teaching; and to that extent it testifies to the success of Evangelical work in the past. That a high value is now placed on spiritual, personal religion, as Evangelicals have always understood it, in quarters where once it seemed to be otherwise, is certainly due to Evangelical influences. If Evangelicals are adopting some practices hitherto known as "High," it is far more obvious that our High Anglican brethren have adopted from us many things they formerly scorned as "Methodistical." But the very advance of our influence has created new difficulties; our part in the present is not to rest on our oars and furl our sails, but to study the chart of the course ahead.

For, in fact, the mission of Evangelicalism is twofold. It has to do with life, but also with doctrine. The religion we stand for is spiritual religion; but it is that because also Scriptural religion. "They that worship Him must worship

in spirit *and* in truth." If "spirituality" be, to some extent, at a premium in the Church of England to-day, it is safe to say that "Scripturalness," alike in thought and worship, is sadly at a discount. True, in theory the test of Scripture is still supreme: the Church of England has never repudiated her Sixth Article, nor re-explained it in Anglo-Catholic terms. But what chance, humanly speaking, has Holy Scripture of really being the deciding voice in the great controversy on the doctrine of the Church, to which we stand committed? If any school of thought in our Church is going to secure the full and loyal recognition of the principle of the Sixth Article in the coming controversy, it will be the Evangelical School.

The contribution, then, which Evangelical Churchmanship might make towards solving the problem ahead of us is two-fold. First, it provides an actual meeting-ground and half-way house between the two extremes of High Anglicanism and Nonconformity, with a principle of *rapprochement* not complicated by any preconceptions about the necessity of Episcopacy. Secondly, it is the natural champion of the Scriptural basis of our Church, as expressed in Article VI.

The real question is, How are Evangelical Churchmen going to make their voice heard? For this we must have leaders and spokesmen who can speak with an authority at least equal to that which is ranged on the other side; and we must also have leaders of the second rank, to interpret the lead given, and make it effectual among the masses of thinking but undecided Churchmen. Quality and quantity are both essential. Never was greater reverence for the specialist than to-day, but also never more wholesale respect for numbers and success. The majority of minds, after all, are not yet made up; but men will often follow the greater volume of sound instead of the sounder argument. However clear the merits of our message, the louder voices do not come from our camp.

Leaders indeed we have of the older generations; though far too few. And for their immediate successors we need not

be anxious. But what of future supplies? What of the natural seed-plots for leaders—the older Universities? The outlook, though hopeful at first sight, is really such as to suggest anxiety. There is a real danger of our losing all effectual hold on the two great strategic points—the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

### III.—EVANGELICALISM AT OXFORD.

This alarm-signal will probably come as a surprise to many who have been accustomed, in recent years, to hear more of the religious life of the older Universities than ever before, and to thank God for what they have heard. There is, however, no real contradiction involved. From the point of view of religion generally, things have never, perhaps, been more progressive. New ideals of personal religion and social service, and in particular new interest in missionary work, prevail in much wider circles, and circles socially and ecclesiastically more various. But this is all quite consistent with an outlook for Evangelical principles which is anything but reassuring.

As has been already suggested, the rise of spiritual vitality is, at bottom, the result of Evangelical forces, working beneath the surface. And it may be urged that with this we should be content, and forthwith sink our identity as a "party" in the wider whole of the coming days. In the image used, at the Islington Meeting of 1910, by one to whom the writer owes a special deference, "if the house is already filled with the odour of the ointment, why should we longer care about the alabaster box?" A prompt surrender of what are called our "shibboleths" would undoubtedly be a most popular move at Oxford. Why not confine ourselves to the devotional sphere, and leave the doctrinal alone? In the former our help and leading is really desired; in the latter it is almost resented.

Well, what are we to do? Three arguments seem to be decisive. First is the inevitable connection between doctrine and true devotion, which past experience abundantly proves. The only final guarantee for "worshipping God in spirit" is

that we should also worship Him "in truth." If we believe we stand for a great aspect of His Truth not equally represented elsewhere, we must stand up for it still. Secondly, the house is *not* yet "filled with the odour of the ointment." The Christian atmosphere of modern Oxford is still far from having penetrated into the parochial life of the land; on neither wing, as yet, are devotional enthusiasm and comprehensive charity marked features of the rank and file. Even in Oxford itself, there is ample room for more of both. And thirdly, the distinctive propaganda of the other side, so far from being modified or relaxed in view of the new conditions, is being strengthened and, if anything, stiffened. The practice of the Pusey House may have changed in several respects, but the doctrine it stands for remains the same. "I am Evangelical in spirit, but Tractarian in doctrine": the words were used by another O.I.C.C.U. official of recent date, and they express what a large section of "young Oxford," including some of the very best, would say of themselves. The real inconsistency of it they will learn, and rectify, at Cuddesdon or Wells.

Surely the moral of all this is that we Evangelicals should be up and doing in Oxford on the same lines as the majority of our High Anglican friends; that is, throwing ourselves heartily and thankfully into the interdenominational religious life of the place, but, at the same time, reorganizing and strengthening our doctrinal propaganda, with eyes ever open to the crisis ahead?

The situation is more difficult than might be supposed, in view of the complete change of orientation in the religious life of Oxford in recent years—a change which, as has been said already, is largely the fruit of our fathers' work. The new position can best be explained by a rapid review of the recent history of the O.I.C.C.U., the undoubted focus of our religious life to-day.

Ten years ago this was a small, fairly compact, socially perhaps not very influential, but wholly Evangelical society. There was no restriction of membership, save that implied

in the basis—the profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ ; but in effect hardly any but Evangelical Churchmen and Nonconformists belonged.

By its side, in severe aloofness, stood the small and not very active “Church Union,” founded in 1896 to house such Churchmen as, for one reason or another, were unwilling to join the O.I.C.C.U.

Now, however, a virtual union of the two Societies has taken place, through most of the members of each, who were eligible, joining the other *en masse* a few years ago. A joint “Intercession Service” replaces the old “Sunday Prayer Meeting” of the O.I.C.C.U. ; at this the speakers represent every school of thought, in the Church of England and outside it. The numbers attending regularly are double what they were, and include a good proportion of “influential” men. The College Secretaries are generally men of some position, and College Meetings can be advertised in the Porters’ Lodges without risk.

Whence this change? Without any doubt, through the influence of the Student Christian Movement, which the O.I.C.C.U. has for many years represented in Oxford, but which, so to speak, took the reins into its own hands some few years back. Since then the O.I.C.C.U. has gradually merged its separate identity in the larger organism, and calls itself “The Student Movement in Oxford” ; and, by thus identifying itself with the more catholic schemes and outlook of the S.C.M., it has certainly gained in popularity and opportunity. For this, and for the blessing it has brought to very many lives in Oxford, one cannot be too thankful. At the same time, there is another side to the question which, as Evangelical Churchmen, we are bound to recognize, even if we may not regret it.

It is this : In the transformation of the old O.I.C.C.U., Evangelicalism has lost its one seemingly assured base within the University itself. The new O.I.C.C.U., while scrupulously anxious to give our representatives a fair place on its programmes, stands for no particular school of thought ; its leading spirits are, perhaps, more often High Churchmen than

otherwise, and to distinctive Evangelicalism it is certainly not sympathetic. This is said in no spirit of complaint; there are good reasons for the change. Only, it compels us to recognize that, in the general religious transformation of the last few years, Evangelicalism as such has lost ground in the University, however much the Evangelical spirit may have gained.

And if so, we come back to meet our obligation, which is, to face the facts, review our resources, if need be modify our methods, but at all costs strengthen our organization along the lines which the changed conditions demand.

Our remaining regular resources may be said to be three—viz. :

1. The Evangelical Parish Churches,
2. Wycliffe Hall,
3. The Oxford Pastorate.

To discuss the relative value of these three is outside the scope of this paper; and it would be an impertinence in the writer to suggest in any detail the possible lines of development. But in any estimate of our resources and needs, the following factors should be ignored:

First, there is the growth and better organization of what may be called "College Religion." The Chaplain is generally chosen with a view to real pastoral work, and sermons, extra services, etc., are much more freely provided in chapel. One effect of this is an almost entire cessation of "church-going" on Sundays, except to one or two extreme churches and, of course, to the evening sermons at St. Mary's.

Then, again, there is the growing complication of Oxford life. College and University societies for every conceivable purpose, secular and religious, jostle one another on nearly every night of the week. The man who would be best worth attracting is likely to be the fullest of such counter-attractions to the very best doctrinal lectures you may provide: he will not go out of his way to the latter save under stress of some personal tie.

And, further, there is the subtle effect of atmosphere. Oxford is a past master in the art of disparaging Evangelical institutions by means of a few epithets judiciously used. It is not long before the new arrival learns that "narrowness," "controversy," "proselytism," and the like are prime offences against the spirit of the place; and that it is an unfortunate tendency toward these vices which has prevented Evangelicals from quite ranking with other people in Oxford. The result is that he sees Evangelical institutions under something of a cloud, which does not allure him to investigate them further. And after all, if he *has* himself been Evangelically brought up, is there not a great deal in *audi alteram partem*? There would be certainly if it were adopted all round; but one result of a training to "strict Churchmanship" is that you have no *altera pars* to hear. *Roma locuta est*—it is for the others to revise their position.

Putting these three considerations together, we must recognize that the three regular assets already enumerated represent, under modern conditions, less than they might seem to stand for on paper. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that the influence of Wycliffe and of the Parish Churches must, for the next few years at least, be largely indirect and incidental. The bulk of the work must be done by agencies which can penetrate more easily and directly into the inner life of the University, and adapt themselves to the new conditions obtaining there. In other words, the key to the position is an extended, strengthened, and reorganized Pastorate, with, perhaps, as has been more than once suggested lately, a Pastorate House as its base of operations.

Whatever the steps needed, they will be costly; but the cost is nothing in face of the opportunities and the responsibilities. We must not be afraid of what will, of course, be called "party activity." We are not, and shall not be, fighting for our own hand, but for the widest interest of English Christianity, and for the cause of Catholicism in the one true sense of the word.