



**THE HISTORY OF
THE ENGLISH CHURCH AND PEOPLE
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**"Quod Ecclesia Anglicana libera sit et habeat jura sua integra,
et libertates suas illesas."—*Magna Charta.***

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IN · PIAM · MEMORIAM ·
ROBERTI · GRAY · S.T.P.
AFRICÆ · AVSTRALIS
METROPOLITANI · PRIMI
QVI · FIDEI · CATHOLICÆ ·
CVSTOS · FIDELISSIMVS ·
ET · EXIMIIS · OPERIBUS · STRENVVS
LIBERTATES · ECCLESIE
VT · ATHANASIVS ·
CONTRA · MVNDVM ·
ILLESAS · CONSERVAVIT
HOC · OPVSCVLVM
DEDICAT · AVCTOR ·

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INTRODUCTION

A VERY grave responsibility is necessarily laid upon the annalist of the English Church in South Africa.

Other Colonial Churches of our Communion have had their varying struggles, trials, and difficulties, but no other Colonial Church has had to contend for the root principles of Catholic belief and Apostolic order under the same difficulties as we have had to encounter. No other Colonial Church has had to bear the brunt of the struggle between Erastian conceptions of the relations between the Church and the Civil power and the ordered freedom of true spiritual liberty as the South African Church has done. The Colonial Churches won their liberty and gained their freedom from the oppressive fictions and traditions of a State supremacy, which was supposed to import into new and free countries the disabilities and hindrances of the Established Church of England, without any of its corresponding advantages of endowment. But the strain and stress of the conflict whereby this liberty of organization and freedom of action was won fell upon the South African Church alone.

Robert Gray, our first Metropolitan, has been rightly called "the Athanasius of the South." Had

it not been for his resolute fortitude and iron determination not to compromise one iota of the first principles of Catholic liberty, the battle against Erastianism would not have been won. Colonial Bishops would have continued to rely on the feeble arm of flesh provided in their "Royal Letters Patent" instead of on their inherent spiritual powers as the lawful inheritors of Apostolic Thrones.

Our first Metropolitan was one of the greatest Prelates that have ever adorned the Anglican Communion. He came to South Africa to find our Church a shadow of weakness and a by-word of feebleness in the face of the sturdy Puritanism of our Dutch Reformed brethren, who even now number 250,000 European adherents in the Cape Colony against our 70,000, and who form the decided majority in all the other South African States, except in Natal. He left the Church deeply rooted and well grounded in the Faith, and the impress of his master mind and firm grasp of true Church principles is felt throughout the ten Dioceses into which our Church has grown since S. Peter's Day in 1847, when he was consecrated the first Bishop of the solitary South African See of Cape Town.

I shall endeavour to show first of all, by a brief historical sketch of the South African people, how South Africa came to be what it is to-day. Unless people understand South Africa and its people, it is impossible for them to understand the story of the South African Church, or the diverse problems that lie before us in the present day. South Africa is a country with a very strong national feeling of local

patriotism. The fact that the great majority of its European inhabitants are of Dutch and French Huguenot descent, makes the position of our Church quite different to that which it occupies in Australia and New Zealand.

The Dutch Reformed Faith is virtually the "Established religion" of the powerful and vigorous Africander republics of the Transvaal and the Free State. In some ways our position in South Africa may be paralleled with that of the Scottish Church, which has to work face to face with the vast mass of Scottish Presbyterianism, Established and un-established. Friendly harmony with the Dutch Reformed authorities, with a view to as much co-operation as is possible without perilling the true basis of Catholic re-union, is our obvious duty. South African Churchmen never ought to forget that our Dutch Reformed brethren were at work in South Africa for two centuries before we really touched the religious life of the country, and that we have to approach them from a different standpoint from that which we naturally adopt in dealing with the schisms and separations of English growth and nurture which took root in the country after the English flag had finally supplanted the Dutch tricolour on the Castle at Cape Town in 1806. We must also remember that we are the "Church of the Reconciliation." We have not only to work for corporate re-union, but we have to bind together the South African people, and strive to knit once more the ties which were sundered by the cruel civil war of 1881, and cause English and Dutch alike

to forget the bitter memories of Majuba Hill, and to work for a United South Africa. Thus and thus only shall we be enabled to do our great missionary work to the myriads of heathen around us. Much has been done, and much may be done, by the heroism of isolated effort. But when there is a United South Africa, with a common policy of righteous dealing towards the native races, when the native drink traffic is prohibited, when polygamy involves legal disabilities, when other evil native customs are forbidden by law throughout South Africa as they now are in the Cape Colony;—when the natives learn that all the privileges of citizenship will be withdrawn, except on condition that they forsake barbarism for civilization, then the missionary can teach them the lesson that the gifts of civilization are the true outcome of the Gospel of Christ.

A man who for twenty years has identified himself with the ecclesiastical, social, and political life of South Africa as I have done cannot be expected to write a history from the standpoint of a stranger to South Africa. I write in full consciousness that the cause of the Church in South Africa has been harmed by injudicious writing. It was little short of a calamity that Bishop Gray's *Life* was undertaken by one who knew little or nothing of South Africa, and who was therefore out of touch with the very essence of the great Bishop's life and work.

I shall try to be scrupulously impartial and fair in dealing with the history of our legal and ecclesiastical controversies. I have had special opportunities of

arriving at the truth from personal knowledge and from access to documents.

In availing myself of the labours of previous writers, I desire specially to acknowledge my obligations to Theal's *History of S. Africa*, *The Dutch Reformed Church in S. Africa* (M' Carter), *Sketches of English Church History in S. Africa* (Rev. Dr. Hewitt), and for documents and appendices, *The Life of Bp. Gray* (2 vols.). I shall rely upon the sympathy of my readers in the discharge of a confessedly difficult task. I shall aim at the accurate narration of facts in their due sequence and order. More than this I have not space to accomplish, but if I can give the facts, my readers can draw their own conclusions.

A. THEODORE WIRGMAN.

*S. Mary's Rectory, Port Elizabeth,
South Africa,
Feast of S. Michael and all Angels,
1894.*