

EDITORIAL NOTES

Oxford and St. Peter.

Oxford in Catholic days was wont to make much of St. Peter. He, the Keybearer, shared with St. Michael, the warrior Archangel, the privilege of guarding the City Gates. Oxford dedicated a church at the North Gate, and another at the South Gate to St. Michael; and the East and West Gates each had its Church of St. Peter. The Gates are no longer there, but the Churches still stand; and the memory of the Gates and of the Catholic instinct that chose these two guardians of the heavenly kingdom as appropriate protectors of Oxford is preserved in the ancient distich:

‘Invigilat portae australi boreaeque Michaël
Exortum solem Petrus regit atque cadentem’:

which Anthony Wood translates thus:

‘The North and South Gates St. Michael doth
guard;

The East and West St. Peter’s care doth ward.’

But St. Peter suffered a long period of eclipse in the Oxford that chose him as guardian. He was forgotten—or at least only remembered as an awkward and bulky stumbling block to any satisfactory refutation of Roman claims. It is therefore with feelings of surprised joy that we note what seems to be Peter’s spirit stirring once more in Oxford. An Oxford Professor, the Reverend C. H. Turner, has written two articles in the August and October numbers of *Theology* entitled ‘St. Peter: I In the New Testament’ and ‘St. Peter and Paul in the Early Church,’ in which he proves and defends the primacy of St. Peter. Prof. Turner says: ‘The question of “Petrine primacy” is a

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question of controversy and a burning one. But it is possible to approach it in a spirit, not of controversy, but just with the single object of trying to see exactly what the evidence tells us I think that we of the Church of England and Protestant scholars in general since the Reformation have failed to give its due weight to the testimony supplied by the New Testament, and in particular by the Gospels, to the unique position there ascribed to St. Peter. Protestants have been under an overpowering temptation to minimize anything in the New Testament which might seem to give sanction even to the beginnings of the Roman theory of the Papacy: Anglicans have been so anxious to bring into strong relief the unique position of the Apostles that they have tended to overlook any parallel indications of a unique position among the Apostles of St. Peter.' The weighing of the evidence with the impartiality of a scholar, who is seeking truth and not pleading for truth he already believes, leads to conclusions which are old and familiar to Catholics, but new as coming from such a source. If only Professor Turner's conclusions could be recommended to all Anglicans they would doubtless lead to other still more practical and consoling conclusions. Anyhow, it is a great step forward when Anglicans are going back to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles.

Voting upon Truth.

The questionnaire set by *The Nation* has produced interesting results. There is now no personal God, and no personal immortality for men. The formulated tenets of 'the churches' may be disregarded even by the small minority who can still describe themselves as active Church folk. The evidence against the historicity of Genesis I is overwhelming. These are dogmas established by the highest modern criterion—a majority vote. Truth being nowadays what we all

think, there is one truth for each and another truth for all. The truth for each is each man's own opinion; the truth for all is the opinion of the majority. The majority of readers of *The Nation* favouring the abolition of God is solid: 1024 to 743. There is a much narrower majority in favour of our own complete extinction at death: 882 to 807—which means, apparently, that our chances are about even, or that we shall be about fifty per cent. immortal. Formulated tenets are overthrown by 1265 votes to 453; and 213 active Churchmen are actively engaged in demolishing them within 'the Churches.' Against the 1685 who have discovered the First Chapter of Genesis to be fabulous there are still surviving 115 old-fashioned recusants who persist in believing it historical. *The Daily News* readers are much more old-fashioned. Two-thirds of them are active Churchmen, and of these there are only 1,500 who disbelieve the teaching they actively support. The odds against Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden are only 5 to 7. God's supporters outnumber His annihilators by 3 to 1; and of the annihilators one in every three hopes to go on annihilating God for ever. It is all tremendously interesting—and tremendously unimportant. The important question in these matters is surely not what people think, but what, being the truth, everybody must, not merely think, but believe. But it is, of course, preposterous to expect a modern daily, still less a modern weekly, to concern itself with anything so important, or so dull, as the truth. Its business is to be interesting—and so, remunerative.