

that we know of no such Church ourselves. The man who said that he would "join the Church as soon as he found a pure one" was appropriately reminded that that Church would become impure as soon as he joined it. Churches must be impure, however strict they may be, however stern their discipline, because they are made of men, men of like passions with ourselves, and more, are made up of "disciples," that is to say, of learners, of scholars, not of professors. The Church of the Bible is a school, not a showroom; an institution for making men better, not for pronouncing them good. "None is good save One, even God." "Brave it out as we will, we men are a little breed," and we know by painful experience that the *phronema sarkos* remains, even in the regenerate. No, we ourselves know of no incorrupt Church—"we have seen an end of all perfection"—and certainly, the Bible does not. I am not concerned, however, to prove that all the Churches of the Bible were impure: it is really enough for my argument if one was. I ask, therefore, Was the Church of God at Corinth perfect, when it not merely had its incestuous person, but when the Church members, so far from being broken-hearted over it, were "puffed up," and apparently "gloried" in their shame? Was it pure in doctrine when some of its teachers were ministers of Satan? when some of its members affirmed that there was "no resurrection of the dead"? I will ask you to hear Dr. Marcus Dods on this subject. "This [first] Epistle [to the Corinthians] is well fitted to disabuse our minds of the idea that the primitive Church was in all respects superior to the Church of our own day. We turn page after page, and find little but contention, jealousies, errors, immorality, fantastic ideas, immodesty, irreverence, profanity." And this is the premier Church of Greece, and within a few years of its foundation, and in the age of prophesings and miraculous gifts! Was the Church of Sardis, again, Christlike, which "had a name to live, but was dead," and in which were a "few names which did not defile their garments"? And if the other congregations were not as corrupt as these, was there one without its stains and blemishes? Here it was the Judaizing teachers, who "preached a different gospel;" there it was the members who "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness" and "denied the Lord that bought them." I question if even the members of this Conference, earnest Bible readers as I am sure they are, have ever realized the indirect testimony of the Epistle to the manifold corruptions of the early Church. It could not have been otherwise without a perpetual miracle, taken as the members, many of them, were, straight out of Paganism and the unspeakable abominations of Paganism, and baptized on the spot without any long preparation or probation. No wonder that we read of "fornication and uncleanness and lasciviousness"; no wonder that we read of "destructive heresies" and "doctrines of demons." No wonder that Timothy has to be cautioned against appointing "brawlers" and "strikers" and drunkards to the ministry: no wonder that St. Paul thinks it necessary to exhort Timothy himself to "flee youthful lusts." What does Calvin say of the Church of God at Corinth? Why, that "Satan seemed to rule there rather than God." I submit to you, therefore, that, bad as the Churches of later days may have been, or, let me say, corrupted as the Church of England undoubtedly has been, it has not been worse, if it has been as corrupt, as the Churches—or some of the Churches—of which the Epistles tell.

I now come to the last link in the chain, and with it to the end of my seemingly ungracious, but really charitable and necessary task. I affirm in the last place that—

VI. Holy Scripture teaches us, and in the most emphatic and decisive way, that, whatever may be the corruptions of the Church, we must on no account separate from it. I submit to you that the Book of God instructs us to put notorious and impenitent sinners out of communion; to teach us to separate from the errors and abuses of the Church (by protesting against them, by resisting them, by striving to reform them); but it nowhere teaches that we ourselves are to leave it; on the contrary, it requires us to remain in it. It does this, first, by the example of our sacred Lord, who voluntarily—when there was no inherent necessity that He should do so—became a member of the Jewish Church, gangrened as it was with hypocrisy and formalism and greed; who remained a member—just as the prophets had done before—and a conspicuously conforming member, for He religiously attended both temple and synagogue, and who lived and died in its communion. Secondly, by the precepts of our Lord, who, among other things, charged His disciples to observe and do "all things whatsoever" the Scribes and Pharisees bade them to do—those same Scribes and Pharisees whose deeds, in the next breath, He denounced in such scathing words. Thirdly, by our Lord's language and attitude towards the "seven Churches of Asia," one of which "was dead," and in another of which His servants, the Church members, were taught to commit fornication and to join in idolatries, and yet He addresses

these Churches as His, and never says one word about secession. He does threaten to remove the candlestick out of its place (as indeed He has done): He even threatens to "spew them out of His mouth," but He never counsels separation—not even as a last resort, if every other means should fail. It is now allowed by some dissenters that secession can only become a duty as a last resort—"after all means have been tried and after it is clear that a majority of the Church have ceased to keep Christ's word and have denied His name." But our Lord says nothing about secession "after all means have been tried," as He must have done, if secession is ever a duty or a remedy. Fourthly, by the attitude of the Apostles, who, as their Epistles plainly show, had to do with frightfully corrupt Churches, yet never spoke of secession. "Neither St. Paul," says Wesley, "nor any other of the inspired writers ever advised holy men to separate from the Church because the ministers were unholy," nor, we may add, for any other reason whatsoever. And not only so, but they denounce all divisions within the Church; how much more, therefore, separations from it? For, if factions and strifes which do not lead to an open rupture are condemned, how much more would the Apostles have reprobated the open rupture itself, had it occurred to them that men could or would separate from Christ's Church, God's Church? But separation is also condemned, fifthly, by the principles of the Apostles, for St. Paul clearly held the principle of the "one body" to be as fundamental as that of the "one Lord," or "one Spirit," or "one God and Father of all"; he also held this body to be the household or family of God. But if this is so—and it cannot be denied—then it follows that, whatever the diseases of the body, men must not leave it so long as the Head remains; but whatever the errors or misdeeds of some members of God's family, the others must not desert them—their misguided brothers—and set up a new family. "It is only," says Wesley, "when our love grows cold that we can think of separating from our brethren." He might with equal truth have added that it is only when we forget the example of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the prayer of Christ, and at the same time forget the example, the principles, and the precepts of the Apostles, that we can think of separation at all. I therefore submit to you that you are not entitled to say that, though there was no Dissent in the Apostolic age, and no Church other than the Church of the city or country, yet the creation of separatist "Churches" has been necessitated and is justified by the errors and abuses which have since arisen in Christendom. I say that you cannot take this ground, because those errors and abuses, in England at least—and it is with England that we are concerned—have not been greater than those of the Jewish Church, which our Saviour nevertheless did not leave; not greater than those of the Church of Sardis, which He neither required nor permitted men to leave; or than those of the Church of Corinth, which the Apostles neither left nor counselled others to leave.

And there are, of course, other arguments which I might use, had I not limited myself in this paper to an appeal to Holy Scripture. I might ask, for example, whether secession can ever be a remedy for the corruptions of the Church? Whether that remedy, as Irenaeus pointed out long ago, is not worse than the disease? I might ask whether "union is strength," or division? I might show that "our unhappy divisions" have silenced the voice of the Church, have weakened her witness, have impaired her forces, have exasperated her members, have brought her into profound contempt. But this would be to travel out of my proper province, which is the teaching of Scripture on the subject of *polychurchism*. I therefore proceed to sum up my argument, which I shall put before you in the shape of questions, to which I earnestly and respectfully solicit an answer. And I suggest to you that, lying as they do at the very root of the matter, they should be answered one way or other before I am required to deal with objections. It is in the interests of truth and of reunion that I press for an answer.

1. Is the word "Churches" ever used in Holy Writ as it is used in the prospectus and proceedings of this conference, and as it is constantly used in newspapers, in pulpits, and on platforms to designate bodies which have separated from the parent stock? Is it ever given to congregations of Christians other than the congregation of the city or country? If so, where?

2. Is there any Scripture precedent for calling voluntary associations of Christians professing a particular form of Christianity—such, for example, as Baptist principles, or Wesleyan principles, or teetotal views (we have had a "teetotal Church")—is there any precedent for calling such sectional bodies "Churches"? If so, in what Gospel or in what Epistle is it found?

3. Is there any mention of any dissenting Church, or indeed of any separatists at all, in the pages of the New Testament; or any mention except to condemn them? If there is, where is that page to be found?

4. Is it or is it not the fact that the Apostles forbid divisions within the Church? And if divisions within are sinful, can divisions which lead to separation, to an open rupture, be sinless? If so, on what grounds?

5. Is it or is it not the case that the Church is described as "one body"? But if so, how can it be composed of two hundred separate and independent "bodies"?

6. If the name of "Churches" is never given to separatist bodies, and if indeed no such bodies existed—notwithstanding the errors and abuses of the Apostolic age—then on what grounds can it be contended that such Churches can be created or must be maintained now?

7. Is the historic Church of England, from which the denominations have at one time or other separated, worse, either in point of doctrine or of morals, than some of the Churches of which the New Testament tells, or than the Jewish Church? If so, in what particulars?

8. Are its ministers, or have they been within the last 300 years—i.e., since Dissent arose in England—worse than the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Lord charged His disciples to obey? If they are not worse, than why are they, or why were they, to be discarded? Why should their office count for nothing, when that of the Scribes counted for so much?

9. Is the Church of England, or is it not, a Church of God? Yes or no? If it is not a Church of God, then on what grounds is a name to be denied to it, which was given to the corrupt congregation at Corinth, and implicitly to the dead congregation at Sardis?

10. If it is a Church of God, if, that is to say, God has not left it, then, on what grounds is it contended that men may leave it, or, having left it, are justified in remaining aloof from it?

I submit to you, brethren in Christ, that we shall never touch bottom, in any Conference or Reunion, until these questions are faced. It is useless to assume that there are many Churches without some Scripture proof; as useless as it is to assume that errors and abuses in the Church justify secession without Scripture proof. I commend them to your candid and dispassionate attention. "Domine, nos dirige." I thank you for the patience and courtesy with which you have listened to me, and I pray God, through Him who "loved the Church and gave Himself for it," to guide us to a right conclusion.

#### THE GROWTH OF OUR COLONIAL CHURCH.

Few indications of the vitality of the Church of England are more striking than the recent growth of the Episcopate.

At the first Lambeth Conference, consisting of the Bishops of the various branches of the Anglican communion, which was convened by Archbishop Longley to meet at Lambeth in September, 1867, 144 invitations were sent out.

Eleven years later, when the second Conference was held, under the presidency of Archbishop Tait, 100 bishops were present out of the 173 invited.

At the last Conference, presided over by the present Archbishop in 1888, the total number of bishops summoned was 209. Thus the episcopate of the Anglican communion had increased, in the twenty-one years between 1867 and 1888, by the addition of 65 prelates.

The Home Episcopate, during the eleven years from 1877 to 1888, was extended by the creation of six new Sees—Truro, St. Albans, Liverpool, Newcastle, Southwell, and Wakefield. These represent an average of £76,500 each, raised by voluntary offerings, as a condition precedent to the establishment of the bishopric.

Turning to the appointment of Suffragan Bishops, we find that, from two in the year 1870, their number has grown to sixteen.

The Church in America, which is in full communion with the Church of England, became an independent branch of the Catholic Church a little more than a century ago, by the consecration of Bishop Seabury at Aberdeen in 1784, and of Bishops White and Provoost at Lambeth in 1787. The American episcopate now numbers eighty-one.

But it is, perhaps, in our own colonies that the growth in this respect is most striking.

The year which saw two bishops consecrated for the independent but sister Church in America, witnessed the laying of the foundation-stone of our daughter Churches in the Colonies, by the appointment of Charles Ingles as Bishop of Nova Scotia. His jurisdiction included all the British possessions in America, from Newfoundland to Lake Superior (an area about three times as large as Great Britain), and the total number of his clergy was twenty-four. Six years later he was relieved of the charge of Upper and Lower Canada, by the foundation of the See of Quebec, to which Bishop Mountain was appointed, with the supervision of six clergymen. His district comprised the whole territory included in the present dioceses of Fredericton, Quebec, Montreal, Tor-