

his preaching demonstrates the correctness of his belief. The infidel takes issue with him, and expresses a strong disbelief in the theories advanced. In doing so he is only exercising a not to be disputed right. If he can secure an audience he possesses the privilege of putting the belief of the Christian upon the rack and torturing it to his heart's content, providing he possesses the skill to do it. No one will gainsay him this right. The minister does not look upon such opposition as affecting either himself or the religion he teaches. He does not feel called upon to pick up the gauntlet thrown down, because he cannot so demean his Master's cause as to play the buffoon upon the infidel stage.

The Liberal Leaguers have their places of worship, and the Christians have theirs. In the Liberal League rooms the infidel can project his arguments at all who are content to gather and to listen. Those who take offense can avoid having offense given them by remaining away. In the Church the same rule holds good. Those who cannot accept the doctrines taught, are not compelled to remain under the teaching of them. They are not privileged to interfere with the pleasure of those who take delight in listening to an expounding of the Scriptures. Let all such go their own ways. There is room in the world for both classes. The Church does not find in the Liberal League an opposition worthy of its notice. The Liberal League finds in the Church a great impediment. The poodle snaps at the mastiff; the mastiff does not deign to notice the insignificant assault, and the poodle cries out, Coward!

To their common-sense remarks we would add that the proper way to meet such attacks is for each priest to strengthen his own congregation against what are after all, only scattering, unsequential, illogical, and unphilosophical assaults, by adverting to them either incidentally as occasion offers, or by formal discourses levelled against some of their most dangerous, most pronounced, most seducing theories; to analyse with careful scrutiny every statement made, every argument advanced, every inference drawn; to grant nothing, and to take nothing for granted. Christianity being in possession, it is for the infidel to dispossess her. As yet she has shown herself able to withstand every shock, nor is she bound at the call of any Free Thought Association or Liberal League to pose publicly as her own champion, or to repeat those proofs of her divine foundation that are to be found in the writings of the Christian philosopher and theologian. These proofs are on record, and the forefathers of the present race of atheism and unbelief, from ANAXIMANDER, EPICURUS, and LUCRETIVUS, down to d'HOLBACH, LALAND, CABANIS, HOBBS and TOM PAINE, have never answered them. The old defences of the "Maiden Fortress" are still standing. When these are taken, it will be time to think of erecting new safeguards. If the opponents of the truth are ignorant of the older arguments, that is no sufficient reason why they should be repeated. Christianity is not on trial: atheism and unbelief stand at the bar. Let them prove their innocence if they can.

THE "DENOMINATIONAL DEVIL."

IN a series of articles in *The Century* entitled "The Christian League of Connecticut," the writer with real originality and interest treats of a matter not to say a movement, which the Church will do well to keep an eye to. His Christian League is an ideal affair, but he would very much like to have it real. He is not writing for the fun of it, or to make a vain display of his abilities. He is concerned to know what to do with that "Denominational Devil," as he calls it, which, to quote his language again, has "unchristianized the Churches." He regards the number of rival and feeble societies or denominations as he sees them in hundreds of towns in New England and the West, as the positive foe of Christianity. They have largely rended and broken up the Christian brotherhood, driven out the Spirit of Christ, and substituted that of strife and alienation;

made zeal for a name greater than zeal for the Divine Founder of the faith; sadly weakened their own resources, and hindered the increase of true religion; and made multitudes not only disbelievers in any particular church, but skeptical of Christianity itself. What the League is aiming at, then, is to exterminate these superfluous societies by voluntarily merging two or more together, and having but one church in a given community. Of course, the writer being a Congregationalist, includes the Episcopal Church among these denominations, and represents one of its clergy as acting with other members of the League on equal terms.

We have said that this is a matter, not to say a movement, which the Church should keep an eye to. It is a matter which has well nigh unchurched thousands and thousands of people who have no thought of throwing away Christianity, but who so far as any organized form of it is concerned, are all at sea as to what to believe in. As to the matter of names together with a vast amount of claims, they have come to regard them with indifference, not to say aversion. They know that Christianity, like every other working force, must be organized in some way, but what they also know is that nothing should be so organized as to defeat and destroy itself. They ask not scornfully but with painful earnestness: "What is to take hold of this divided, disorganized Christendom and shape it as it ought to be?" As Pilate asked: "What is truth?" so they ask: "What is the Church?" Now the Church, if she would satisfy the obstinate questionings of these troubled spirits, must answer with care. Possibly "the Church" must not be made too prominent. Possibly things that are in some sort secondary should be kept in abeyance. Because it is not a case, nor possibly can be, of such persons flinging themselves at once and bodily into the arms of anything, but of approaching by little and little, as they are won by the attraction and "sweet reasonableness" of things.

Again the Church is to keep an eye to this movement, because it is a movement, and whether for good or ill, is constantly gathering momentum. It is a movement away from so much dividing and subdividing, and putting names above things from so much of this and that machinery, as if there could possibly be no other from so much defining and over-defining in matters of faith, from these and those attempts to confine Christianity within such and such limits, and, above all, from substituting anything for Christ and Christian character. The question is, How can the Church guide and take advantage of a movement which calls itself Catholic, and goes, perhaps, it knows not whither? What can she insist on less strenuously? What can she include and not compromise her character? Above all, what can she show in the way of doing all that any movement, the most Catholic, can hope to do?

The Church has before her a task which requires the utmost skill and wisdom to help free a multitude of earnest souls from the power of the "Denominational Devil."—N. Y. Churchman.

A VOICE FROM THE AMERICAN CHURCH.

BY EARL NELSON.

IN continuing the extracts from Dr. Hopkins' sermon, showing the best way to meet the problem which the present position of the Church puts before her, I must draw attention to the source from which he attributes her past success and present position. "Whence has come the strengthening of our distinctive principles from within? It has come from the wonderful Catholic revival which, like life from the dead, has penetrated every part of Anglican Christianity. The whole history of the Christian Church shows no revival to be compared with it, but other parts of the Church, though in less degree, have already felt the glow."

I give the following extracts in answer to the problem proposed in Part I:—

THEIR PECULIAR POSITION.

"This, our peculiar task, is different from any that has been seen before in any other part of Christendom. In all other places the pure stream of Apostolic faith, order, and tradition has, actually or theoretically, come down from the beginning, and the only effort has been to preserve it pure and undefiled. With us, however, though we have this, yet in a country which is the 'home of all nations,' we are brought face to face with all the existing varieties of Christianity, and many of these are closely identified with forms of nationality and language which do not disappear for several generations. Our problem, therefore, is to find out the simplest terms on which any vital union is possible; and we must make these simplest terms our organic law, in order that we may at length actually enfold those whom, as yet, we have only attracted, and who are often, to a great degree, unconscious of the attraction."

LITURGICAL ENRICHMENT AND FLEXIBILITY.

"The securing of liturgical enrichment and flexibility will enable us, if we are wise, to prepare for this future in no small measure. Already a German Prayer-book has been issued, which is not in all respects a literal translation of our 'Dearly beloved brethren' and so forth, but which pays a reasonable regard to those liturgical forms and that liturgical language to which our German fellow-Christians have been accustomed in their own land, and adds a fair selection of their own grand old hymns set to their own noble Chorals. In other words, the Germans are brought into full communion with the Church with as little change in their customary worship as possible, instead of making the change so great that no German could feel at home with it at all."

"The same should be done with Swedes and Norwegians and others. And why should not the same principle be applied to the Oriental and to the Latin communions? And why not to all the Protestant sects? The door should be open wide to all to return to the visible unity of the Catholic Church, requiring of them as little change as possible from what they have been used to, instead of insisting on a total change of everything."

NARROWNESS THE PUNISHMENT OF PAST DIVISIONS.

"The main obstacle in the way of this is the fearful narrowness of our own people. The spirit of the old Acts of Uniformity of the British Parliament still survives among us to an astonishing degree. People take it for granted that we ought to have a uniformity in everything. They generally go further, and insist that the compulsory uniformity shall be precisely that which each individual happens to have been accustomed to himself. Of course this is totally absurd; but it takes a long while for such absurd people to find out how very absurd they are. In the meantime we must try to be patient, yet never cease our efforts to spread the broader and truer idea touching the comparative importance of things. Whatsoever is clearly necessary to the unity of the Catholic Church should be recognised as necessary by Church law; and things that are not necessary to Church unity should not be made obligatory by Church law."

ROME THE PARENT OF UNIFORMITY.

"As to liturgical uniformity, Rome is really the parent of the idea. For many centuries Rome has employed every effort of finesse, fraud, and force, to secure the adoption of the Roman liturgy to the displacement of all national or local uses; yet the true principle of diversity in unity is recognised even by Rome herself. She has a special chapel at Toledo, in Spain, for the perpetuation of the use of the old national Mozarabic liturgy, against which she used both fraud and force six hundred years ago. In Italy she permits the use of the Ambrosian liturgy in Milan, although that, too, cost hundreds of years of effort in order that the Roman should be made dominant even in Milan. Still more remarkable instances are those of the Uniat and Oriental Churches, which in accepting communion with Rome, have been wisely permitted to retain their own liturgies and usages unaltered."

GREATER FREEDOM IN RITUAL.

"Now if Rome—the inventor and original patentee of the rigid uniformity system—yet allows sufficient variety to establish the opposite principle, why should we persist in being more Roman, in this matter, than the Pope himself? We must recognise the equal validity, and permit the equal use, of a variety of liturgies. If our General Convention shall go so far in the way of liturgical enrichment and flexibility as to make the attempt really worth the trouble, it will be found necessary to permit the continued use of our present Prayer-book indefinitely in all the congregations which may prefer it, or we may have a schism on our hands before we know it. And there is no reason why the English book, and the Scotch book, and the Irish book—the political parts only being altered—should not be used, or the First Book of Edward VI., which is the best of them all. And a French book, and a German book, a Swedish book, a Norwegian book, a Spanish book, an Italian book, would be just as natural and just as wise. A special book for services among the coloured people, and another for use among the Indians, may also be needed."

"And as our notions expand, suppose we go a little higher. The liturgy of St. James is probably, in its essential parts, the same that was used by the Apostles themselves. Now if one of those very Apostles should reappear here in America, and should undertake to celebrate, using the liturgy he had always used, is it not rather startling to think that he would be liable to presentment and trial under our Canons for using a service not identical with the Standard Prayer-book of 1871? And yet we call ourselves an 'Apostolic' Church, although among us it would be unlawful for an Apostle to celebrate the Divine liturgy in the very words which He used while on earth!"