

which they belonged. Certain of the Independents who denied the right of baptism to all who had not become of full age, therefore separated from that body, and formed a new sect, who administered the baptismal rite by immersion. Few sects have perhaps suffered so much by internal divisions as the Baptists; very soon they split into two parts under the name of General and Particular Baptists. The Particular Baptists are subdivided into Free Communions and Close Communions; whilst the General Baptists, again splitting up in 1770, formed a "New Connexion."

THE QUAKERS.

Lastly there were the Quakers, or Society of Friends, founded in 1646 by James Nayler, Richard Farnworth and George Fox, the latter the most important of the three. The leading idea of their system was that of personal illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Society has numbered in its ranks the names of many highly esteemed citizens. It is now but a small, gradually decreasing sect, in 1886 its members only numbering 15,000.

From these sects have sprung many other bodies of Dissenters, until in 1890 there appeared the names of no less than 254 different dissenting communities on the Registrar-General's Book. *

(To be Continued.)

POLYCHURCHISM—A SEQUEL.

BY THE REV. CANON HAMMOND.

The two papers on this subject, which I had the honour to read before the Lucerne Conference, and portions of which appeared in the *Church Times* of July 29 and August 6, have received some amount of attention at the hands of "Nonconformist" leaders, and replies—or what profess to be such—have been made to both of them at Lucerne and in certain Dissenting organs. I propose to examine these briefly. Not merely because (as I shall show) they will not hold water, but also that I may recall Dissenters, our brethren, our kinsmen according to the spirit, if my voice can reach them, from the false and dangerous position which they have taken up. For anything more instructive as to the present position and tendencies of Dissent, and anything more saddening, it has seldom been my lot to read.

Your readers will remember that in these papers I made my appeal exclusively to Holy Scripture. The one question I urged on the Conference was, "What does the Bible say about the Church?" I did this because I fondly imagined that there we stood on common ground; that Dissenters now, as formerly, recognized no other court of appeal than "the Bible, the Bible only." But I have been rudely undeceived. They appeal to the Bible, so far at least as the Church is concerned, no longer. They make us a present of that, or throw it overboard. They say the Bible was written so long ago that it can no longer be our guide. They say that our circumstances are so different that we cannot realise "the Apostolic ideal." They now appeal to what they call "the facts of modern Christendom" instead. The "old book of God" is too old; it is out of date and out of court.

Now these, I know, are grave accusations, but I shall prove them. I am only sorry that the proof is so easy. To avoid all suspicion of mistake, I give names and references.

The ball was set rolling by Dr. Duff, a Professor in an Independent Theological College, who "objected to my assuming that all appeal must be made to the New Testament." He tells me that I am "making a very great demand on nineteenth century Christians" when I "appeal to documents which were written so long ago." He bids me remember that "the representatives of the Baptists,

* In 1869 there were but 98 sects on the books of the Registrar-General.

† It is urged by some dissenters that the Church ought to be free from control by the State, but dissenters are themselves under State control. They are bound to the conditions of their several Trust Deeds, to which the law keeps them. Between 1840 and 1869, concerning these Dissenting Trust Deeds, no less than 23 law suits were heard. Commenting on one of these trials which was argued in February, 1881, before Vice-Chancellor Hall (the case of Jones v. Stannard, known as the Huddersfield Chapel case), a writer in the *Christian World* (Congregational) says, "We may shout as we like that we are Jews, and never were in bondage, but Pilate is in the Judgment Hall all the same. One good effect, it is to be hoped, will follow from this trial: that we shall see less popular clamour about our imaginary freedom, and less ravings against the trammels of the State Church. Dwellers in glass houses should not throw stones."

the Presbyterians, and the Wesleyans of the present day, have not been without the guidance of inspiration, and woe betide you," he added, "if you find fault with it" (*Review of the Churches*, p. 305). Similarly Mr. Price Hughes (*Review*, p. 376) says of my Bible argument, "It is an attempt to apply the teaching of letters written two thousand years ago to totally different circumstances to-day." "We have to deal," he goes on to say, "with a totally different situation, a situation which St. Paul never discussed, because he never foresaw it." And later on (p. 377), "The truth is that God recognises facts . . . and the sooner Canon Hammond and everybody else does so, the better." "These arguments overlook," writes Dr. Beet (*Methodist Recorder*, August 31), "the infinite difference between the circumstances which gave rise to English Nonconformity and any circumstances existing in the days of the Apostles. For example, the great disruption in Scotland fifty years ago arose from conscientious differences of opinion between Christian men. Had the Apostles been living and accessible, these differences would have been submitted to them, and their judgment would have been accepted as decisive. But no such decisive court of appeal now exists." Elsewhere the same writer has said, "An irresistible chain of events has led the outward forms of Christianity away from the Apostolic ideal," (Com. on Ephesians, p. 377). But he surpasses all former statements when (himself making for once an appeal to Scripture) he suggests that St. Paul "forsook our Lord's example and disobeyed His precept" (St. Matt. xxiii. 1, 2) "when he withdrew from the synagogue and separated the disciples" (Acts xix. 9). I will now show what all this new departure means. It means:—

1. That some of Christ's words have passed away. If these divines are right; if, instead of one Church, we are to recognise two hundred "separate and independent churches" of Christ, then our Lord's words about the Church have certainly passed away, for He said that it was one and was His. "My Church" He called it (St. Matthew xvi. 18), and He was speaking of the visible Church, as the next verse shows. If then there are many "churches," one as good as another, and one is Wesley's, and another Calvin's, and another O'Brien's; if these are "the facts" we are to recognise, then these facts go to show that our sacred Lord was a false prophet. He said that His words should never pass away, and they have done so.

It means (2) that the fundamental principles of the Apostles are overturned. For it was not merely "an ideal," it was a fundamental principle with them that there was "one body"; as fundamental as that there is "one Spirit," and "one Lord," and "one God and Father of all." The body being Christ's and He being Head of the body, there can no more be two bodies than two heads. But if I am to "recognise facts," "the facts of modern Christendom," I must allow that the one body has been replaced by many—a "Wesley body," a "Baptist body," and so forth. The principle of one great Catholic society to do Christ's work and unite His flock is gone. It is not a case of any advance on the primitive plan; not a new development; there has been a *bouleversement*. The Spirit remains one, and the Lord and Head one, and the faith one, and the God and Father one, but the one body has become two hundred. Mr. Hughes truly says that "Christianity . . . gives us general principles, which have to be variously applied from age to age," and the way he "applies" the principle of the "one body" is to trample it under foot and say he will have none of it. He says "we must recognise facts." And so say they all.

Again (3), the inspiration of the Bible is actually to give place to the inspiration granted to the founders of the sects. This is the pass we have now come to. And this means more than at first sight appears. For the inspiration of the Bible, whatever it was, has at least given us a practical and common-sense view of the Church. When it tells us that our blessed Lord founded a society to carry on His work; prayed that it might be such; that He gave it a visible form of admission and a visible badge of membership; that he set officers over it and gave them, and only them, power to appoint others; when it represents this society as everywhere more or less corrupted, and yet never suggests that its corruptions are to be, or can be remedied by secession, all this is just what our experience, our common-sense, would have taught us to expect; it is straightforward and consistent. But the "inspiration granted to the representatives of the Baptists, Wesleyans," etc., whatever that was, has at least resulted in endless contradiction and confusion. That such a claim of "inspiration" should ever have been made for them is sufficiently appalling—it shows how extremes, Papal and Protestant, sometimes meet—but that it should be made by any who insist on our "recognising the facts of modern Christendom" is too ludicrous. For what are the facts? That the "inspiration" granted to the Baptists flatly contradicts that granted to the

Brownists, and the inspiration granted to the Wesleyans, that granted to the Quakers, and so forth and so forth. It is surely obvious that if the one was inspired, the other was not. It is also obvious, in other ways, that all the leaders of our two hundred and odd denominations cannot have been inspired. For some of the sects owe their origin to a miserable squabble—the "Wesleyan Reformers" is a case in point. Of others the action of the "inspired" founders is now disallowed by some of their followers—the "Bible Christians" furnish an instance. And yet we are to trust to their inspiration rather than that of God's word! Is this what Dissent has come to? One cannot help being reminded of that German spiritualist who "would believe anything, so long as it was not in the Bible."

4. Changes in the mere "accidents" of human life and environment are to involve changes in the main "essentials" of God. It is said that Christ's Church may be totally different from the Apostolic Church because of "the totally different circumstances of the times of the Apostles and of the present day." (*Review*, p. 298.) But pray what are these vast differences in the circumstances? Do they mean that we have railways and telegraphs and newspapers, and that the first Christians had none? They say, "Certainly not." Then what else do they mean? If they do not mean this, they cannot mention anything else which has made so great a change. But perhaps they say, "These things are mere 'accidents.'" I answer, "Precisely so; all the changes are changes of accidents, changes in the customs and details of life. The essentials of life and of religion remain precisely what they were. God is the same, and His Christ the same, and man is the same, and the enemy of God and man is the same. The battle we have to fight, the race we have to run, and the work we have to do, each is the same, in every essential feature, as that which lay before the first Christians. Then what are the different circumstances of to-day which justify secessions? Well, two gentlemen have volunteered an answer. One says:—"It is the greatest difference between the environment of those small gatherings of Christians amid heathen populations, and the environments of churches in Christian nations." Here is a Daniel come to judgment! He says that Christians were few in number, therefore they must be united: now that they are so many, he says they are free to fall out. That is one reason. The other is that because we live in happier times, because we are surrounded by Christians instead of persecuting Pagans, we are free to quarrel; we owe less to God and to one another. I suggest to this luminous writer (in the *Christian World*) that this will never do: he must try again. But another difference has been mentioned—this time by Dr. Beet. He says, as we have already seen, that the Scottish Presbyterians of fifty years ago were compelled to have a Church disruption on the momentous question of patronage!—because we no longer have the Apostles to refer to. But I reply to this, first, if we have not the Apostles, we have their Lord, who is "with us always, even to the end of the world." Secondly, if we have not the Apostles, we have their successors; only thus can we explain the words, "I am with you always," etc. (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). Thirdly, we have their writings, and those writings clearly reveal their principles, and they say nothing about secession under any circumstances. It is true they do not mention patronage, but they mention other things which were infinitely more justified and required a separation, if it is ever justifiable. And lastly, I do not find it in the New Testament that the disputes of the early Church were settled by the Apostles alone, any more than they were settled by Peter alone. The Apostles did not always constitute "a decisive court of appeal." The burning question of circumcision was not "submitted to them" for their "judgment," it was referred to a council. "The Apostles and elders were gathered together to consider of this matter," and "the Apostles and elders" settled it (Acts xv. 2, 6, 22, 23; xvi. 4). Well, councils are possible still. We may be told that a general council is not possible, but if so, it is not better to wait for it (as the Church of England is patiently doing) than to break up Christ's Church. But the real point is that all the secessions have been made without any conference at all. Baptists, Brownists, Wesleyans, Bryanites, all took counsel with no one but themselves. Yes, a conference is still possible; but the last idea that occurred to the seceders was to "submit their differences" to it, or "to accept its judgment as decisive."

So that we are left where we were. We are industriously told that changed circumstances require changes—radical and subversive changes—in the Church, and when we ask what these circumstances are, we find that they are "trifles light as air," changes of dress, speech, wages, customs, and the like—things which no more excuse changes in God's Church than they warrant breaches of His moral law. You might as well defend polygamy on the ground that at Salt Lake City they "had to deal with a totally different situation, a situation which