

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A
LAYMAN.

A BAPTIST ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

A FEW days ago a Churchman and a Baptist were travelling together in the same car. The former was the layman whose attacks upon the Ross Bible have done much to drive that abominable publication out of our schools. The other was a gifted personage whose genius has won him fame, and we trust, for time. The Editor of *Grip*, one of the pair, said to his friend: "I hear that you are going to be *Churched* for what you have said about the Ross Bible." Reply was made: "That would be a strange event indeed, for in the Church of England the only persons who are 'Churched' are women." This puzzled the Baptist not a little. Explanations were given as to why the fair sex monopolised the privilege of "Churching." These elicited a further explanation that amongst the sects a man is said to be "Churched" who is brought under discipline. The Churchman thereupon declared his freedom from any alarm, inasmuch as the Church of England has no disciplining code for laymen. If it had, the reverence of the Church for Holy Writ was so high that it would be far more certain to punish any one who set up the Ross Bible as a substitute for the Word of God, than likely to do anything but honor one who attacked such a scandalous book. This incident is instructive and suggestive. It shows us how very little is known of the internal, we may say, the domestic life of the Church, of the "family" of God, by those outside its pale. The editor who supposed that a Churchman would be punished for defending the Bible against an insidious conspiracy against its sacred unity, is a member of the Baptist body. This body boasts, *honorably boasts*, that it holds no doctrine contrary to the Scriptures. Our Baptist friends got their Bible reverence from the teaching of, and by inheritance, from the Church of England. Indeed in some vital features, the Baptists are much more in accord with the Catholic Church than they seem at present to be conscious of, or willing when conscious to recognize. But the scales of prejudice are in process of dissolution.

It is surely a reproach to the Church to be so defenceless against false brethren as it now is. It sounds well, no doubt, for laymen to boast of their liberty being so wide. Freedom "has a charming sound, 'tis music to the ears," of men to whom the restraints imposed by the obligations of honour, of duty, of Church family life, are an offence against their passion for individual independence. Church law should however only be the enemy of law breakers. To those who do well, wise discipline is a praise, a protection and a power. Were men sinless, there would be no fences nor police needed to guard our homes. Were the Church home only the abode of angelic beings, a code of discipline would be unmeaning. The Church of England, our good Mother, has a pardonable pride in her children's love and loyalty, keeping them from disorder.

But all are familiar with the sad fact that ruin has fallen upon many a child owing to a mother's love having moved her to withhold the restraints of corrective and instructive discipline. We all know homes that were wrecked by this unwise form of parental fondness. We know also, only too well, children of the Church, whose erratic ways have brought dire mischief upon themselves, owing to the liberty of the Church leading them into license. It is, alas! only too familiar a fact that the Church in Canada, has been terribly injured, scandalised, weakened, and rent by home quarrels, owing to the absence of discipline to curb and punish rebellious offenders against her place and order, against the family life of the Church. The Church being so open, is like an unfenced common in the midst of carefully guarded fields. In those fields disputes arise, law is put into motion, and in known cases the offenders have quietly passed from the enclosed pastures of Nonconformity to the fenceless ground we occupy. Whether it is the function of the Church to shelter without question all who run to her merely to escape from the discipline of other bodies, we have only to ask to answer. While the Church is thankful to receive any whose convictions lead them to the true fold, she has reason to fear those who come only to escape ecclesiastical censure. It is known that there are in our lines those who have come to us without changing anything more than their outward observances. It is from such that our principal disturbances have arisen; they have made the Church a convenient refuge, and our ritual and our Catholic claims are to such, burdensome and irritating. Our neighbours have fair ground of complaint against the Church in this respect. But they are wise in their generation; whatever broils disturb abroad they desire peace at home. Hence we find encouragement given by outsiders, and no little flattery and honour to Churchmen who are noisy and rebellious. The sects are shrewd enough to see that whatever disturbs the peace of the Church of England, whatever tends to destroy its family life, whatever mars its unity, tends to drive away the gentler members from the scene of such disorder and to attract them to societies wherein reigns a happier spirit. We see the sects petting Churchmen, whose contempt for Church order would be summarily squelched *were it attempted to be shown inside those bodies*. Hence the continued, outward adhesion to the Church of some who know full well that were they to leave our open common for any fenced field of nonconformity, they would be bound over to keep the peace or expelled.

But the remark about Churching, quoted above, suggests also this reflection—that *discipline may be tyrannous, as it may be used for political purposes inside a religious body*. It is quite clear the Baptist thought that a Churchman who stood in defence of the Bible against a powerful political conspiracy against the sacred integrity of the Bible, was open to the action of Church discipline. This idea could only have arisen in a mind familiar with cases

wherein opposition to a political party had brought the offender under discipline of his brethren. We thus get behind the scenes. This to us is a revelation of the fact, otherwise so mysterious, that certain religious bodies are wholly and actively, political partisans. The political machine grinds even in the courts of the Lord, grinds to powder all independence of political thought, grinds to death every manly aspiration for liberty of citizenship. Over the portal of many so-called churches might be written: "All hope of political freedom, abandon ye who enter here." But true discipline is not tyranny, while license breeds the worst forms of oppressions. Discipline is the guardian of the just rights of all; it keeps faction at bay; it bridles tolerance, and secures within the borders of the Church that liberty which being the common inheritance should be the common, unmolested enjoyment of every one of her loving and loyal children.

When shall we of the Church of England have this safeguard against disorder, against the tyranny of faction, against the cruel scandal of party divisions?

THE EVIL AND FAILURE OF
DENOMINATIONALISM.

IS the present broken-up denominational condition of Christianity which obtains among us necessary or desirable? It is neither. How can that be either necessary or desirable which is contrary to the known will of God? For the Christian there should be, in this matter, only one decisive question, and that is, What is the will of God as made known to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

It is not a matter of uncertainty. In the night in which He was betrayed, praying for His disciples, He said: 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.'

This was a prayer for unity, the unity of His people: 'That they all may be one.' But what sort of unity was it which our Lord had in mind? Certainly not the unity of an 'Invisible Church.' It was not only that they might be one in Him but in *work* for Him, for it was a prayer for unity that had reference to the work of the world's conversion. 'That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' This prayer of the Lord remains unfulfilled. His people are not one, and the world does not believe in Him. It is a significant fact that the work of the world's conversion has been proportionate to the degree of unity that has characterised Christianity. The grand conquering Church of the first days was indeed afflicted with heretical teachings and party spirit, but these seldom resulted in open schism. In the early Church there were no quarrels about Church policy, methods of organisation or administration. And so long as it remained

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