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REASONS FOR RETURNING TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ENGLAND;

IN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR. SECKER, A CHURCHMAN, AND MR. BROWN, A METHODIST.

DIALOGUE VII.

(By a Correspondent of "The Church.")

Mr. Brown.—Since I last had the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Secker, I have been looking over some notes I have made of our conversations, and I find that there is scarcely an objection to an entire and humble return to the bosom of our holy Church which you have not most satisfactorily answered; but yet do not think me captious if I advance a few other arguments which Dissenters in general, and especially Methodists, are in the habit of adducing in defence of their conduct. For instance, the Methodists say that they do not break the unity of the Church, inasmuch as they are still willing, when opportunity serves, to worship in the Church, and even to receive the sacraments at the hands of its ministers; and that therefore it is the Church itself that breaks the unity, by refusing in return to associate with them in terms of Christian fellowship.

Mr. Secker.—You are quite right, Mr. Brown, in seeking to be fully persuaded in your own mind. I know how to sympathize with you; I have myself felt all these doubts and anxieties in no little degree, and have not got clear of them without, I trust, sincere and careful examination; and if I have gone far from Methodism, it is not, as I fear some of my friends think, from any feeling of unkindness, but from a sorrowful conviction of its dangerous departure from Church unity and scriptural order. Indeed, I believe, I shall carry down to my grave sentiments of high esteem and deep affection for many persons and many things connected with British Methodism; nevertheless, personal excellence or collateral good can never justify our remaining in a communion, the distinctive fundamental principles of which are radically wrong.

I think that our second conversation, in which it was proved that Methodism is schismatical, gave a satisfactory answer to the Methodist objection that Methodism does not break the unity of the Church; for what is schism but a "rending of the Church, the body of Christ?" That their schism is accompanied by remains of reverential regard for the Church, does not heal the breach which they have made; but, on the contrary, while it may excite in us lively hopes concerning their personal rectitude, it does but show more clearly, when viewed in its true light, the execrable nature of their conduct. Whatever may be the fair professions, or even actual good feelings of Methodists, it is absurd for them to deny that they destroy the unity of Christ's Church, so long as they send forth a ministry commissioned by themselves in a manner unacknowledged by the Church in every age of its history, and in direct opposition to that true and living branch of it founded in their own land, and to which they formerly belonged; and so long as they erect altar against altar, and temple against temple. Equally, or even more, absurd is it to charge the Church with being the cause of this breach of unity by its exclusiveness. Nay, but let every one in this case bear their own burden. Who was it that withdrew from the Catholic Church? Who sent forth a new ministry, and set up rival altars? Now, because the Church cannot, in her conscience, acknowledge this Methodist ministry, nor reverence its altars, nor lightly esteem that sin of schism, which she believes those who have separated from her to have been guilty, shall she therefore be blamed as though she destroyed Christian unity? But really, Mr. Brown, I am sure that you will agree with me that such a pretence is all too shallow to admit of being rebutted by fair argument. That this "exclusiveness," as the Dissenters are pleased to term it, should subject the Church to many false and unkind charges of haughtiness and pride is to be expected; but surely if she were to act otherwise, she would be unfaithful to the trust committed to her. Even Dissenters must acknowledge that it is the duty of the Church to maintain both the doctrine and discipline of Christ in their utmost purity; hence its ministers cannot do otherwise, as men of principle and piety, than refuse to hold religious intercourse with those whom they believe to be either corrupting the true faith, or violating the scriptural order of Christ's Church. You know, with Dissenters, it is not so; because, as they profess to believe almost any form of Church government lawful, and to hold many points even of faith itself as indifferent, they can, of course, readily associate with those of other religious denominations; and as such conduct is quite in accordance with the very reprehensible liberalism of the day, it will meet with the applause of the multitude.

Mr. Brown.—Your views are most certainly correct; and being so, they satisfactorily disprove the slander so frequently brought against the Church that its clergy and members are bigots.

Mr. Secker.—Yes, indeed, never was there a more groundless slander than the charge of bigotry against the Church of England. For, while she steadily refuses her sanction or countenance to error, she does not attempt to interfere with the personal rights and privileges of any one; and, indeed, in the sound and high-principled Churchman, how little do you see of that bitter and intolerant spirit for which Dissent is so remarkable!

Mr. Brown.—In truth, Mr. Secker, I think that the various parties within the Church itself are more severe towards each other than they are towards Dissenters themselves. This, indeed, is one of the matters respecting which I wished to converse with you. The evil course of Dissent, in separating from the Church, you know, I now fully admit, as being in direct opposition both to the Word of God and to the authoritative teachings of Christ's Primitive and Catholic Church; but still even the Church itself seems to be no remedy against schism and strife; for you know it is full of parties,—High Church and Low Church, Orthodox and Calvinistic, Puseyite and Ultra-Protestant,—surely all this is not consistent with that unity which ought to exist in the Church as the Body of Christ. These internal divisions, as they form one of the strongest arguments of the Dissenters against the Church, so they greatly contributed to prevent my seeing the evil of Dissent, inasmuch as it appeared that even the Church itself was not one.

Mr. Secker.—The divisions to which you have alluded are, with sorrow I confess it, a most serious evil in our Church; and it is not to be denied that many of them at least in the extent to which they are carried, are cherished by the very same errors which give birth to dissent, namely, a want of due submission, in matters either of discipline or doctrine to the teachings and injunctions of the Church. If members of the Church, either Clergy or laity, will set up their own private opinions in opposition to her teachings, or by forced and uncanonical constructions endeavour to explain them away, they fall into the grand error of dissent, and we cannot, therefore, wonder that they should share in its evils. And, if I might presume to venture a remark respecting the doings of our Clergy, I should say that into this evil I think both the Divines of the Oxford or Newman school and those of the ultra-Protestant school have fallen; and they, I fear, both of them disposed to bend the Church to their opinions, instead of humbly and scripturally submitting their judgments to her teachings.

Mr. Brown.—Your remark strikes me as being exceedingly just; but yet the question presents itself, Where shall we look for the pure and distinctive voice of the Catholic Church?

Mr. Secker.—Unquestionably in our own Prayer-book, Articles, and Homilies. To us they are the voice of the Church; and she refers us for her authority to the Bible and to the Catholic Church in its first and pure ages; and unless we can prove that she contradicts these, we are bound to submit to her in all things, as to the injunctions of Christ and his Catholic Church; and that she is scriptural and her doctrines and primitive in her discipline her bitter enemies have never yet been able to disprove. It follows therefore from what has been said, that even if Dissenters could show that unhappily there existed a measure of division within the bounds of the Church itself, yet this would not afford any justification whatsoever of their separation from it, any more than that being a whip, would justify your becoming a positive rebel. But yet, Mr. Brown, while I candidly admit that very unjustifiable divisions do exist amongst ourselves, I think it would be very unjust to suppose that they are equally sinful with positive dissent or with schismatical separation; I speak now in the general, because it is very possible that there are individual Clergymen who do so decidedly set themselves against the intentions of our Church, fairly interpreted, that in them it would be more honest altogether to withdraw from her communion; but these are only the exceptions. Some one, I forget who, has made a homely but striking remark respecting our internal divisions as striding with dissent, namely, "that they are splits which do not go down to the bottom;" it is exactly so, we are yet essentially one; these fissures are to be exceedingly deplored, because they are both unsightly and dangerous, and tend, in no small degree, to keep Dissenters, and especially the Romish dissenters, from returning to the bosom of the Catholic Church, inasmuch as their teachers carefully point out to them these imperfections, while at the same time they as cautiously hide from their view the far more violent internal animosities and divisions existing amongst themselves; but yet, Mr. Brown, I again repeat we are essentially one. Our worship in its distinctive features, is one, the authoritative doctrines of our Church are every where the same, and the supreme ecclesiastical authority is vested in the same hands.

Mr. Brown.—And yet you cannot deny that not only do the private opinions of the different Clergy vary, but even their public teachings are by no means all of one character. For instance, to give you a case in point; a few weeks ago, having reached Windon on Saturday evening, and not of course wishing to travel on the Sunday, I heard their very highly respected Rector, Mr. Wilberforce, preach on the subject of baptism, and I must say I was startled to hear how very distinctively he set forth the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, openly declaring that "our Lord Jesus Christ doth not deny his grace and mercy unto baptized infants;" but this is a doctrine which, you know, the Clergyman of our own township does not at all preach; indeed I do not think he believes it. Now it appears to me that it is of great importance whether such a doctrine as this be true or false; and yet even here you see our Clergy do not agree.

Mr. Secker.—Mark, I do not defend this dissimilarity of teaching, for assuredly it ought to be most cautiously avoided; yet the circumstance itself to which you have alluded, shows how much less is the evil which results from such divisions in the Church, than that which is consequent upon absolute dissent from it; as even those Clergymen who might have no objection to explain away some of the doctrines of the Bible as taught in the Church, are yet obliged to use those very forms in which they are set forth; and thus there is much less danger of the Church ultimately straying far from the truth. Indeed, I have personally proved this in the very case you have mentioned. It appeared to me that the teaching of our worthy Pastor on the subject of Baptism, scarcely agreed with the Baptismal Service. And here you may see the different effect of partial division within the Church, and total separation from it. While a Methodist, my views of this Sacrament were never distinct, though I always esteemed it more important than many of those around me did, but having nothing more distinctive to fall back upon, than what our preachers taught, I remained satisfied in unsound views of the matter; but I had not been long in attendance upon the Church Services before I became aware, as I have just stated, of a discrepancy between the views of our Clergyman and the Prayer Book on Baptism; and, notwithstanding that he taught exactly the doctrine to which I had been accustomed, still I could not rest without knowing what was the doctrine of the Bible and the Church on this important matter. Thus as a separatist I had nothing to prevent my resting in unsound doctrine, while in the Church even imperfect teaching did not prevent my arriving at a knowledge of the truth. So important to the maintenance of sound doctrine is even outward unity of worship, especially when accompanied with the authoritative use, as in our own Church, of a sound liturgical service!

So also the visible union of the Church in its formularies, sacraments, and authoritative doctrines, greatly tends to peace and concord amongst the people, even when their teachers are not in all things agreed.

And then, as I before observed, the unity in the government of the Church places its divisions on altogether another footing to those of dissent. So long as this is maintained the Church must remain vitally one. The importance of this principle has been strikingly evidenced in the suppression of the Oxford "Tracts for the Times" by Ecclesiastical authority, when their views were considered to have become dangerous. This fact appears to me one of the noblest evidences of the Scriptural unity of the Church which its history exhibits; here was no positive heresy, no personal misconduct, no professed teaching of anti-Church principles, and yet, in submission to the proper authorities, these writings are at once stopped.

In fact, view the matter in any way you like, and there is the most marked difference between some division of opinion in the Church, and open separation from it; the former, to a certain extent, may be only an infirmity incident to human nature; the latter, I fear, is sin, and partakes of the nature of spiritual rebellion.

Mr. Brown.—I could feel half ashamed, Mr. Secker, of saying so frequently that I entirely agree with what you advance, and with professing myself so fully satisfied with the answers you make to my objections; it almost appears as if I had no settled opinions of my own.

Mr. Secker.—Really, my dear Sir, I do not think that you need to have any such feeling; remember they are not answers of mine, but of the Church of Christ. And need we wonder that when two persons are honestly inquiring after the truth, and are content humbly to submit to the Word of God as interpreted by His Church, that they should arrive at the same conclusions? Surely not. The reason why it is not more frequently so, is because men seldom seek for truth with a single eye; there is almost always more or less of party mingled with their feelings, whereas in all such inquiries, as it is Christ we profess to seek, so if we would find Him, we must receive what He and the Church, which He has given authority to teach, declare to be His truth, however it may strike our prejudices, or overturn our preconceived notions.

Mr. Brown.—(Mr. B. gives his hand to Mr. Secker, and with deep and serious feeling says)—Here then I

bury all my opposition, and henceforth hope, by God's grace, to be enabled to manifest my faith in, and love to, our blessed Saviour, by walking zealously, yet quietly and obediently, as a humble member of the Church of England, in which I was, as you know, baptized; and which I now believe to be the purest branch of the Catholic Church of Christ. And to you, Mr. Secker, I cannot say how grateful I feel for the successful effort you have made to place these matters in the clearest manner before me.

Mr. Secker.—Indeed, Mr. Brown, I am fully repaid for any little trouble I have taken, by its resulting, through Divine goodness, in your return to the bosom of the Church.

But as I see that we have half an hour to spare, there are one or two further remarks which, with your permission, I will make, as I think they afford much evidence of the Scriptural character and primitive simplicity of our Church.

One of the important peculiarities of our English Church is, that at its reformation it introduced no novelties, but cast off many which the Romish superstition had caused it to adopt. This freedom from novelties appears to me no mean proof of its holy and apostolic nature; and I think it is a characteristic which is not quite peculiar to our English Church. Amidst the Romishists, pure Christianity is almost buried under a heap of superstitious novelties,—adoration of images, worship of the Holy Eucharist, prayers to the Saints, auricular confession, penances, &c. &c.; while the Protestant Dissenters who have separated from the Church are also overlaid with novelties of various descriptions,—errors concerning infant baptism, the nature of both the Sacraments, the distinctive character of Christ's one Holy and Catholic Church, and all hold novel and unscriptural ideas respecting the nature, authority, and valid ordination of the Christian Ministry. But, through the very gracious and indeed most remarkable over-ruling of Divine Providence, the English Church on the contrary has been saved from the novelties both of Romanism and Dissent, and conformed, with a surprising degree of accuracy, to the Apostolic and primitive model; so that it is perhaps not too much to say, that there is no branch of the Church equally Scriptural and primitive in its doctrine and discipline. It is not then alike both the duty and privilege of all true and simple-minded Christians to seek her communion.

But, Mr. Brown, permit me to ask, have you fully satisfied yourself respecting the nature and necessity of Episcopal Ordination, in order to a Minister's being duly qualified for his sacred office?

Mr. Brown.—To a considerable extent I have done so; the books you recommended are, I think, unanswerable; but to this subject I intend to give a yet more thorough investigation, upon my return from the West, in order that I may be able the more readily to meet the objections of those about me. As respects myself, the following considerations have satisfied my mind on the subject:

1. I cannot suppose that Christ, who is infinite in wisdom, would leave His Church without some Divinely appointed government, by which its doctrines might be authoritatively taught, its ordinances administered, and its unity preserved to the end of time; especially as in all His own conduct and that of his apostles, I see such an earnest wish that His people might be "one;" let those who can, therefore, believe that He would make no provision for their being so!

2. I cannot find any form of Church Government, excepting Episcopacy, which can show a single clear Scriptural argument, or establish one example of primitive usage in its favour. Indeed, I have observed that nearly all the arguments of Presbyterians and other Dissenters are negative, namely, based on supposed objections against Episcopacy; while their attempts at positive evidences in support of their own views are exceedingly few and feeble. Now, Mr. Secker, we are agreed to me that, as a general rule, that must be a weak and unsound cause, the strength of which depends upon negative arguments.

3. I find in the Old Testament that our own Christ did, as the Jehovah of the Jewish Church, establish a Ministerial Polity exceedingly like that which, in all ages, has prevailed in the Christian Church. Therefore judge that it was from the express command of Christ to his Apostles that such a polity was established in the latter Church, because it seems exceedingly probable (nothing being in Scripture to the contrary), that as the same ends were to be accomplished in the Christian as were proposed in the Jewish Church, the same Infinite Wisdom would use the same means; the manner of the Ministerial Succession, only being changed, so as to suit the change which had taken place in the Church itself, as being no longer peculiar and national, but universal in its character.

4. The facts related and the instructions given in the New Testament only admit of a fair and reasonable interpretation, on the ground that Episcopacy was that form of Church government which then existed, and which was designed to perpetuate.

5. Lastly, the universal prevalence of the Episcopal office, and of the doctrine of the Apostolic Succession for nearly fifteen hundred years,—and these facts, I believe, many of the most learned Presbyterians themselves admit,—does appear to me conclusively to prove that Episcopacy must be Apostolic in its origin, and therefore absolutely binding upon the Church, in all ages. Those who say otherwise are bound, in all Christian honesty, to tell us when and how so strange an innovation was introduced, and how it came to be so universally adopted, and to point us to the most unquestionable ancient authorities for what they may state respecting these things; all this, I believe, no one has yet dared even to say that they have done. And, till this is done, I confess it appears to me to manifest a spirit little consonant with either the humility or piety of the Gospel to neglect, nay, as many do, to pour contempt upon an institution which, if it be of Christ, must be so vastly important as Episcopacy, and the evidence of the divine origin of which is drawn, as I have just stated, from the dictates of sound reason,—the absence of all positive competition—the analogy of the Jewish Church—the statements of the New Testament, and the universal consent and faith of Christ's Church for fifteen hundred years.

Mr. Secker.—It is very evident, my dear Sir, that the vastly important questions, What is the Church of Christ? and who are His duly appointed ministers? have employed your very careful and, I doubt not, devout attention; and, believe me, it is with the most heartfelt gratification that I congratulate you upon the exceedingly happy termination of all your investigations. Your analysis of the arguments which establish Episcopacy, is very pleasingly clear and sound.

Mr. Brown.—I most sincerely thank you, my dear Mr. Secker, for all your friendly feelings and conduct, and I do trust that they have not been lost upon me, for my return to the bosom of the Catholic Church of England has arisen, I assure you, from no lightness of feeling, but from deep convictions of the divine origin and apostolic authority of her ministry,—of the scriptural purity of her doctrines,—of the holiness and safety of her sacraments,—of the primitive character of her worship and discipline,—of the vast importance of the divine commands enjoining Church unity, and of the great evils,—ecclesiastical, social and spiritual—connected with the sin of schism.

And now, as I see it is late, "farewell." Tomorrow I intend to set off on my Western journey.

THE END.

METHODISM:

ITS BEARING ON THE INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH IN A PARISH WHERE THERE IS A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST.

(From the Dublin Christian Journal.)

Church unity, in any locality, should resemble that of the Primitive Church, when "they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" i.e., when they maintained unity of faith, Christian communion, and external and visible unity of worship.

Whatever militates against the existence of a Church in this state must undoubtedly be an evil. Now we are quite sure that in any place where a minister of the Church of England exerts himself to have the Church what it ought to be, Methodism, if found amongst his flock, must create dissent, and hinder his usefulness. Its genius is different—its interests are different—and its whole demeanour (so to speak) is alien from that of our Church. So that it is quite impossible they can "walk together, seeing that they are not agreed." Sobriety ever marks the movements of the one, enthusiasm those of the other. The one calms and collects; the other restless and agitated with violent emotion. The one quiet and unostentatious in its exertions to do good; the other fond of parade, always consequential, proud, and boastful of what is very often only pretended success. The best side is ever kept in view, and every expedient is often without scruple resorted to, in order to stimulate the flagging energies of its votaries; and to any one acquainted with the working of its machinery, the fact is well known that pious frauds are frequently practised.

Time has long since proved that systems so discordant could not long work together; experience has proved, that wherever the Church shows any disposition to resist the encroachments of her noisy and obtrusive rival, there bigotry sets its destructive energies at work; and envy, strife, dissension, contention, slander, and a host of kindred evils pour in, till final separation ensues. Then, as might be expected, proselytism, in its various forms, commences its operations, to the unavoidable deterioration of moral principle, and the consequent inefficiency of the Church of God.

No man can have two such different teachers, for he assuredly will "hold to the one and despise the other," and though this preference may not show itself for a time, yet when the occasion offers, its consequences will be apparent in the slight put upon the opinion of their pastor, and in opposing his judgment when it clashes with their own: alienation of mind succeeds. The scriptural ties between pastor and people are broken; they soon forget that it is written "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves."

The way scripture truth is put before their auditory by Methodist preachers is in many respects unsound and faulty.

It is no uncommon thing, in cases in which it might be apprehended that the religious views of their followers were at all warped by what they heard in the Church in the morning, to hear Methodist preachers counter-acting the minister in the evening, and, as far as possible, undoing what he endeavoured to do; and this conduct, we fear, is gloried in by both preachers and people as an instance of zeal in "contending for the faith." How can a minister hope to benefit people in his Church who are in the habit of listening to such sermons?

An overbearing self-complacency and self-conceit, most unfavourable to improvement, is commonly the characteristic of all who are in any way identified with their system. Their teachers are deemed by them next to infallible, just because they imagine themselves to be so. They idolize them, just because they themselves become of importance in proportion to their idolatry. Such persons must be impatient of the control of their proper pastor, and will naturally feel indignant whenever interference on his part may appear to him to be called for, and, as happens among the ignorant, the prescriptions of the quack are greedily swallowed, while the medicines of the accredited and true physician are despised; so the absolute opinions of these men hold dominion among their followers, and the efforts of the pastor to correct abuses, must, so far as they are concerned, prove unsuccessful.

Again, Methodist teachers, in all their assemblies, aim at producing excitement, and in proportion as they can succeed in troubling the waters do they expect a rich draught in the hauling up of their net. The people are thus led to substitute strong emotions for the operation of the Holy Ghost—loud vociferation, for his present energy—and in the same degree as men have been moved during the service, has the place been, in their estimation, "the house of God and the gate of Heaven" to their souls. We say this of their ordinary meetings for preaching and praying; but no powers of description are adequate to their extraordinary ones, especially those which they term revival meetings—they sometimes surpass all description. Oh, what rubbish, on such occasions, is drawn in by their falsely-so-called Gospel net! Yet these miraculous conversions are trumpeted throughout the land (now much less frequently than formerly, except when the scene is laid in foreign lands), although, perhaps, long before the fame thereof has run its circuit, not one of the converts remains attached to the society. What an immediate falling away, to the increased hardening of the excited dupes themselves, the subjecting of our holy religion to reproach, and the bringing into unmerited contempt true and sound conversions to God, which have taken place under more sober and scriptural circumstances!

What can the effects of such fanaticism be, but disrelish for the sober and truly spiritual and rational services of our Church? Hence the apathy and indifference that Methodists exhibit, whenever they present themselves in our congregations. Their preachers, who sometimes visit our Church, almost without exception, lean over the back of the seat (while the congregation kneels around), with a listlessness as great as that of the most careless; plainly proving how utterly devoid of interest they are in our public worship. Indeed their attendance at all is difficult to be accounted for; if it be not merely a means to accomplish their own ends, or what we would rather attribute it to, the force of habit, and an instinctive veneration for the Church, to which it may be their best interest to belong.

Methodist class-meetings and love-feasts are little else than schools for teaching the language of Christianity, and leading young minds especially, to substitute this for religion itself—they are hot-beds of a false and spurious religion, calculated to lead men to rest in feelings, to the exclusion of practical godliness. In speaking lately to a man who is in the habit of attending these meetings, he said that he often felt he got good in them. Being asked if he were a child of God, he said that he had no reason to think himself one! yet that man imagined that he was blessed in those meetings! What injury must result from such meetings to the partially awakened, as well as to those who are still dead in trespasses and sins!

If a minister of our Church shows himself friendly to these teachers, he will most certainly be made a tool of by them. If he does not recognise them at all, he becomes a subject of their censure, and is considered an opponent. In the former case the minister's countenance is urged as a reason why his people should follow them; in the latter, his opposition will be alleged as a reason why they should leave him. In

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fact a minister of our church cannot have any religious intercourse of co-operation whatever with them, without certain injury to his own flock.

As to the Methodist preachers, it is taken for granted by many persons, that they are men of unblameable lives, and disinterested promulgators of what they consider truth. As to their certain disinterestedness, the Christian public are not aware of facts. A married preacher's salary is £32 per annum—he is allowed for lodging £12—public support for himself and horse is worth something, say £30—£8 per annum is allowed for each child; so that a very moderate average of four children brings £32 more. Besides this, the education of these children is paid for—extra travelling expenses—and finally a pension for themselves and their widows. We think it will be acknowledged that the disinterestedness of men raised from the loom of plough to such comparative wealth is by no means self-evident—they may be disinterested, but the fact is not necessarily so.

As to their blameless lives, supposing them really such, it proves nothing as to their utility to the church of God; for the history of the church furnishes numerous instances of persons holding opinions most pernicious in their tendency, who were yet most exemplary in their lives. But as a proof that these men are not more immaculate than their neighbours, and without designing to lay the faults of individuals to the charge of a whole body of people, the writer may mention that three Methodist preachers, who succeeded each other in his locality in the space of about seven years, were removed for immoral conduct, of which the whole notice taken in the minutes of their conference was, such an one "ceased travelling." And these three individuals, the writer has reason to know, are at present preaching in America!

The point of view in which Methodist preachers wish to appear, with reference to their connexion with the Established Church, is that of being virtually the ministers of it. The point of view in which they wish the ministers of the establishment to be considered, is as priests of a national worship to which all may have access as pleasure—useful in a national point of view, as giving expression to a nation's worship, and its attachment to the faith of the gospel—as state machines, the ministers of all indiscriminately, whenever their mechanical services may be required; but without any right of control over the religious principles or conduct of any—thus reserving all the essentials belonging to the ministerial office to themselves. By the public inculcation of these principles, they compress the people with the idea that they can get on very well without their ministers, and that they are the messengers specially sent by God to teach them the way of salvation; and as far as their influence reaches among the poor and illiterate, such is really the impression upon their minds.

The force of these observations upon a subject vitally affecting the interests of the church in very many places will be strengthened, by quoting the sentiments of the late Archbishop of Dublin, Doctor Magee, who, in his work on the Atonement, says—

"Accuracy of reasoning, however, is not among the distinctive marks of this latter description of religionists (Methodists). A warm fancy, with a weak intellect, strong passions, and vehement conceits, almost always go to the composition of the character. That such qualities should find many minds of congenial aptitude, is a thing not to be wondered at. And therefore, that this mixture of fanaticism, hypocrisy, vanity, and ignorance should be widely spreading in both countries, is perfectly natural. It is, however, to be lamented, that such a mischievous corruption of true religion should receive countenance from any of its real friends; and that it is a matter equally of surprise and concern, that a system which no longer coheres, but openly and avowedly works in continued hostility to the established religion, has not met with more effectual resistance from those who may be supposed to take an interest in the well-being of the establishment."

The contemptuous language which the overbearing Methodist is too apt to employ, with respect to all who are not within his sanctified pale, but more especially with respect to the clergy of the establishment, affords but too strong a justification of this charge as it applies to him. The clergy are uniformly, with religionists of this description, "dumb dogs," "watchmen who sleep upon their posts," "priests of Baal," "wolves in sheep's clothing," &c. &c. Indeed Mr. Whitfield informs us in his Works, (vol. iv. p. 67,) that "Mr. Wesley thought meanly of Abraham, and, he believes, of David also;" whilst of Mr. Wesley himself we are told, that "whenever he went, he was received as an apostle;" and that "in the honour due to Moses he also had a share, being placed at the head of a great people by him who called them;" &c. (Hampson's Life of Wesley, vol. iii. p. 35; Coke's Life of Wesley, p. 520.) Mr. Wesley has taken care to let mankind know that Methodism "is the only religion worthy of God," (Hampson, vol. iii. p. 30;) and the miracles which repeatedly attested his divine mission for the propagation of this religion, he has most copiously recorded throughout his journals. Whoever wishes to form a just idea of the pernicious extravagances of this arch enthusiast, and of his followers, will find ample satisfaction in Bishop Lavington's *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, (a book which Dr. Warburton, in one of his private letters to his friend Hurd, very unfavourably describes as "a bad copy of Stillingfleet's famous book of the *Fanaticism of the Church of Rome*"); and in the later publication of *Not's Religious Enthusiasm Considered*.

The treatment which the Liturgy and the Articles have experienced from Mr. Wesley, is, I apprehend, very little understood by the generality of those who are disposed to look with complacency upon the sect of which he has been the founder.

"Professing to adopt the Liturgy of the Church of England, he has framed one for his followers, differing from it in many and essential particulars. He confesses, indeed, that he has made some slight alterations, which he enumerates in such a way as would naturally induce the supposition, that the difference is altogether unimportant; whilst, in truth, he has not only newly modified the common prayer, and nearly abolished the whole baptismal office; but, besides mutilating about sixty of the psalms, has discarded thirty-four others, and newly rendered many of the remainder."

"Of the psalms which he has discarded, six, at least, are admitted to be eminently prophetic of our Saviour, of his incarnation, his sufferings, and his ascension; whilst the reason assigned for the expurgation is, their being 'improper for the mouth of a Christian congregation!' But this is not all; the rubric and the appointed lessons are in many places altered; and the catechism and the two creeds (the Nicene and the Athanasian) totally discarded. Of these last mentioned alterations, it is also particularly to be observed, that Mr. Wesley gave to his followers no notice whatever; whilst the former were represented by him as of a nature altogether unimportant: so that the ignorant among his adherents were led to imagine that they were not materially departing from the forms of the establishment, when, in truth, they were altogether drawn away from the offices of the church. To complete the whole, Mr. Wesley provided his communion also with a new set of articles; reducing the number from 39 to 25, and making such changes in those which he retained, as he found most convenient."

To add to dwell too long upon this subject, suffice it to notice two instances of omitted articles, from which the spirit that governed the whole may be easily divined. The eighteenth article, which pronounces that "eternal

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salvation is to be obtained only by the name of Christ; and the fifteenth, which asserts "that Christ alone was without sin," are two of those which the founder of Methodism has declared to be unfit objects of a Christian's belief. Thus it appears that the Socinian is not the only sectary that would degrade the dignity of Christ.

Such are the people from whom certain weak members of the establishment apprehend no mischief. On the points which have been here noticed, see particularly *Not's Religious Enthusiasm*, pp. 150-167."

In our next number we shall endeavour to point out what we conceive to be a minister's duty with reference to this amphibious description of dissenters.

PEWS.

(From Archdeacon Manning's late Charge.)

It is well known, that three hundred years ago, the whole area of our churches, with few and slight exceptions, was open and free to all; the only exceptions were seats of which the private and permanent use was assigned by the bishop, or, in other words, by a faculty. The whole area of the church was common to all parishioners, and very significantly shadowed forth the unity and the equality of all members in the mystical body of Christ. It was a pathetic witness against self-elevation and self-preference of one above another, a rebuke of the exalting vigilance of private rights, and a manifestation that in Christ all things are united; that in him there is "neither bond nor free;" that the mysteries of the creation and regeneration are laws alike to all. There was a deep moral and spiritual meaning lying hid in this internal order of the Church of Christ; and not only so, it was a most wholesome and subduing discipline to the minds of those who, by their wealth or rank without the walls of the church, might be tempted, to their own great spiritual hurt, to carry the same bearing and temper into it. From time to time—be it for ever so short a season,—all men were reminded of their natural equality, and of their equal need of one and the same atoning sacrifice. Separate seats were permitted only in cases of such peculiar exemptions as could not be drawn into precedent, e.g., to the lord of the soil, to the patron, or to some great benefactor of the particular church; and the exemption could be made by no one but the bishop alone. The whole of the remaining space was free for the common use of the parishioners, subject to the disposal of the churchwardens. And so long as this disposing power was real and not nominal, there was no confusion, no strife, no litigation, but order and certainty, and a fitting arrangement of the parishioners, according as they and their families had need.

Now, it is well known that the present state of our churches is the direct reverse of all this; so absolutely is the whole area of the church pre-occupied by separate seats, that there remain but few, and they almost always the worst seats in the church, at the disposal of the churchwardens.

It would lead me far beyond both my present design and the limits I desire to observe, if I were to enter upon the unhappy consequences which have followed from this invasion of the church's order. Suffice it to remind you, that the best sites in our churches are occupied by exclusive pews, and the poor are thrust into inconvenient and remote sittings; that in many places the pews have so enclosed and appropriated the whole interior of the church, that the poor are thrust out altogether from the House of our Common Father; that, when this is not so, yet in the very presence of God, all temporal distinctions should be blended in one aspect of brotherhood, the inequalities of our earthly lot are forced upon us with a nakedness and an obtrusiveness which galls one's very heart.

The truth must be told. Pews are a strong abuse, a triumphant usurpation, fenced about by the difficulties and costs of obtaining a legal remedy. Parity rights have no place in the freehold of God. It is against Him that we commit the trespass.

With great joy, therefore, I see, in the Report of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, appointed in the year 1830, a recommendation made to the crown that henceforward no permanent faculties shall be granted; and that an effective jurisdiction to determine all other questions in the disposal of church-seats, be constituted. How soon this may be carried into effect I have, at this moment, no knowledge. In the meanwhile, I would desire to approach the subject in another and altogether unofficial way. My reason for introducing it to you, brethren, at this time, is this: I am so deeply convinced, by personal inspection of about seventy churches, and by much familiar conversation with both clergy and laity, that the creation of pews has been one chief cause of the mutilation of the most beautiful buildings; of the disorder and obstruction even of the offices of the church; and of the consequent violation of the rubrics of the Prayer-book; that I am confident no real restoration can be effected so long as the present system of pews exists. Order, regularity, the becoming equality of brethren in Christ, we can never recover until we have swept away what the declension and lawlessness of generations has accumulated. It is altogether a mistake to fancy that pews are a means of order in the Church; it is "certainly that is the mother of quietness;" and by the universal extinction of rights which can be pleaded against the other; and by the restoration of the only lawful authority which is able to dispose of the customary use of our common heritage among the members of the church.

Again, the money you lay out upon your churches, so long as the present system of pew-making exists, will be in no little degree spent in vain. Not only the idea and sympathy of the communion of saints, but mere worldly calculations urge us to throw down these middle walls of partition, which, in a divided time of this church—chiefly in the time of her overthrow by the schismatical league of the seventeenth century—have risen up between the members of Christ. It has been ascertained with much care and exactness that, in fair average cases of pews now existing, by the restoration of the open seats there would be a gain in space of twenty-eight, thirty-eight, or even sometimes of fifty per cent.; or to make best case we can for pews, it may be said, that by the most favourable measurement, the waste of room is never less than twenty per cent.

Again, as to the cost, reckoning according to the space which is covered, oak seats are very little more expensive than deal pews; reckoning according to the number of seats obtained, the oak seats will be actually cheaper.

I believe there are few men who do not agree in thinking the existence of pews to be a great and lamentable evil. Nevertheless, it is an evil which has at its back the support of long-established use. It would be a mere extravagance to attempt to reduce it by assault; too much of our fallen nature is wound about it to allow of such an attempt. We know what it is to touch one such case, even with the clearest law before us; and that will protect us from the hardship of opening an universal warfare. Let me not, therefore, for a moment be understood to address myself to anything but the hearts and consciences of those who have it in their power to reduce some portion of this evil, and thereby to set an example which others may be led to follow. Now, it does happen that most of us are possessed of the absolute control over one or more pews. We may be sure that the poorer will never give up their exclusive privileges till they see the

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fact a minister of our church cannot have any religious intercourse of co-operation whatever with them, without certain injury to his own flock.

As to the Methodist preachers, it is taken for granted by many persons, that they are men of unblameable lives, and disinterested promulgators of what they consider truth. As to their certain disinterestedness, the Christian public are not aware of facts. A married preacher's salary is £32 per annum—he is allowed for lodging £12—public support for himself and horse is worth something, say £30—£8 per annum is allowed for each child; so that a very moderate average of four children brings £32 more. Besides this, the education of these children is paid for—extra travelling expenses—and finally a pension for themselves and their widows. We think it will