

### Reasons for Returning to the Catholic Church of England;

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

#### DIALOGUE V.

Mr. Secker.—I am exceedingly happy to see you, Mr. Brown, and permit me also to express my serious gratification at hearing from Mr. Nelson, our respected Churchwarden, that you have been applying to him for accommodation for yourself and family in our Parish Church. I do sincerely rejoice that we shall now again walk to the house of God in company. I suppose, from this step, that you have fully satisfied your mind as to the duty of returning to the Church of England, because she is the only branch of Christ's Primitive and Catholic Church in the Province, and is consequently the only one possessed of a pure and Apostolic Ministry, that it is unnecessary to continue our conversations respecting the reasons which induced me to return to her sacred pale.

Mr. Brown.—Nay, I do not say that, for though I have resolved regularly to attend the Church, by divine permission, once at least every Sunday, I have not yet made up my mind altogether to leave the Methodists as you have done. I have resolved to attend at Church because, after reflecting upon the various subjects of our conversation, I have become deeply convinced of the sin and evil of schism; and seeing that the English Church is the oldest Protestant Church in the Province, and that from which we separated, I have felt that I ought to return to her communion. But yet I am not fully decided as to the whether Methodism may not be lawful, if it is in connection with the Church. I am not satisfied that the Methodist preachers are not true ministers; but I am clearly convinced that they ought not to have separated from the Church of England, because, next to that of the Papists, it is the oldest Church in the Empire; and the Papists are so corrupt that of course we could not unite with them. But there are a few points connected with the Methodists and the Unity of the Church in general, respecting which I wish to ask your opinion. And first, how do you reconcile your censuring of Methodism with our blessed Lord's answer to St. John, when he had told him, "We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us?" (Mark ix. 38-40, and Luke ix. 49, 50. Now it appears to me that this man was one who, like the Dissenters of the present day, had for some reason, separated himself from the rest of the Church, and yet you see Christ did not censure him, but blamed his disciples for so doing. How then dare you church people thus boldly

censure the Methodists, simply because they do not walk with you?

Mr. Secker.—There are several things, my dear sir, in what I have just said that I think are very incorrect, particularly your idea, that the Popish Church is the oldest in England; this is altogether and totally an error, though, owing to the falsehoods and misrepresentations of the Papists and Dissenters, a very common one. But I will now confine myself to answering your question:—The case of this man who walked not with the disciples, does not, at first sight, I grant, appear very easy to reconcile with the serious and frequent admonitions which we find in the Bible against division in the Church; but, like most of the objections raised against the Unity and Episcopacy of Christ's visible Church, it has no real force. Consider for a moment, and I am sure your candour will admit that there could be no imaginable similitude betwixt this man, of whom St. John complained, and the modern Dissenters. This man could not possibly object to either the doctrines or discipline of the Apostles, for they were those of Christ, the Apostles being under his immediate control, and this man was a believer in Jesus, working miracles in his name, and therefore it is evident could not dissent from him; indeed he believing Him to be the Messiah, must have been filled with the most reverent respect for all that was done by Christ and those Apostles whom he had made his chosen companions. Here, then, it was evident there was no schism—no rent of the Body of Christ like that occasioned by Methodism and other Dissent. Whatever were the circumstances, it is clear that they had no connection with the principles, and consequently have no bearing upon the question of Dissent. And here I think I might dismiss this objection as fully answered, but perhaps another observation or two may make the matter still plainer. It is, then, Mr. Brown, further plain that the case of this man has nothing to do with the matter of Church Unity, because the Christian, as distinct from the Jewish Church, was not yet formed; hence, had this person objected to the doings of the Apostles (which, however, I have shown that as a true believer he could not do), yet it would not have been schism, but a work of personal irreverence to Jesus, which, though it would have been great impiety, could in no way have affected the Unity of the Visible Church, because both He and His Apostles, and doubtless this isolated believer also, were all members of the Jewish Church, and the outward unity of that church did not then at all depend upon the opinion which its members might have of Christ and His apostles. Here then is a second proof that in the conduct of this man there was no breach of the unity of God's Church; and that, therefore, our blessed Lord's approval of him does not in any, the slightest, degree sanction