

to get our religion, or to learn our faith; probably none ever did so; all have gone to the Bible with some preconception, whether right or wrong, of what they would find therein. Not to learn our faith first of all, but that our faith may be strengthened, illuminated, corrected if need be, and quickened; this is the object of the New Testament Scriptures as stated by St. Luke in the Preface to his Gospel: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been previously catechetically instructed," St. Luke i, 4.—*Diocese of Pond du Lac.*

FASTING IN LENT—PAST AND PRESENT.

(By Rev. Littenhal, M. A.—T. Whittaker, N. Y.)

The early Church did not make the fast consist in simple abstinence from a particular kind of food, it would reach a deeper principle and result than such superficial prescription. "The pretence of keeping Lent only by change of diet from flesh to fish, or a more delicious food, which allows men the use of wine and other delicacies, is but a mock fast, and a more innovation utterly unknown to the ancients."

If I understand the principle of fasting which the early Church laid down, it would be that fasting consisted not simply in abstinence from food for a stated length of time, and from a certain kind of food, but it was the practice of moderation in all kinds of food at all times with a total abstinence from food for a certain portion of all the fasting days of Lent; and that together with this moderation should be exercised charity, almsgiving, forgiveness, and other Christian deeds of mercy. We also are led to believe that the liberty of the individual was left untouched in great measure; that each was to be his own judge of his ability to fast. In proof of this we may quote from the greatest of the early preachers, and also most reasonable of Fathers, St. Chrysostom. He says to his hearers during Lent, "If thou canst not pass all the day fasting by reason of bodily weakness no wise man can condemn thee for this. For we have a kind and merciful Lord, who requires nothing of us above our strength. He neither requires abstinence from meat, nor fasting simply of us; nor that for this end, we should continue without eating only; but that sequestering ourselves from worldly affairs, we should spend all our leisure time in spiritual things. For if we would order our lives soberly, and lay out our spare hours upon spiritual things, and eat only so much as we had need of and nature required, and spend our whole lives in good works, we should not need the help of fasting." Then he proceeds to advise as follows: attempting thereby to correct abuses in the matter which had become prevalent. "If, therefore, there be any here present who are hindered by bodily infirmity and cannot continue all the day fasting, I exhort them to have regard to the weakness of their bodies. For there are many ways besides abstinence from meat which will open to us the door of confidence towards God. He, therefore, that eats and cannot fast, let him give the more plentiful alms; let him be more fervent in his prayers; let him show the greater alacrity and readiness in hearing the divine oracle; let him be reconciled to his enemies, and forget injuries, and cast all thoughts of revenge out of his mind. He that does these things will show forth the true fasting which the Lord chiefly requires."

Thus we see it was something more than abstinence in eating and drinking that was involved in the Lenten fast, as St. Chrysostom understood it. "Tell them what the Apostle says, 'Both he that eateth to the Lord, and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks, therefore he that fasteth giveth God thanks, who has enabled him to

bear the labor of fasting; and he that eateth giveth God thanks likewise, that this is no prejudice to the salvation of his soul if he be otherwise willing and obedient." In a word every particular church in the beginning in a great measure, on this question of fasting, "left all her members to judge of their own abilities by Christian prudence and discretion; exhorting men to fast, but imposing rigidly upon none more than they were able and willing to bear, nor enforcing it under pain of ecclesiastical censure."

Our study so far will lead us to learn that fasting was not an end in itself. It had two objects—one which looked to some gain for the individual practicing it; another which looked to procuring some benefit for others. For the individual profit it was desired that the one fasting should practice moderation, that he devote more time to spiritual exercises, that he abstain from unseemly and unseasonable amusements, and from pleasures at this time inexpedient. For the profit of others it was desired that the faster should exercise forgiveness, cast out revenge, and through savings made from abstinence in food luxuries and other expenses, be enabled to assist more liberally with alms the poor. Thus, one of the early Fathers says, "That which is gained by the fast at dinner ought not to be turned into a feast at supper, but expended for the feeding of the poor." So too Leo the Great: "That which is not expended upon our tables should be laid out in alms, and then it will bring us in great gain." So says Chrysologus, "Fasting without mercy is but an image of famine; fasting without works of piety is only an occasion of covetousness, because by such sparing what is taken from the body only swells the purse."

Herein lies the danger of all bodily and outward observances that they become formal, that they produce no spiritual profit, unless we guard our motives, and constantly examine ourselves.

ECCLESIA ANGLICANA.

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The proposal above mentioned necessarily demands on both sides a true conception of the position and status of the English Church. This however is not clear to all English Churchmen themselves. The assertion sometimes made that the Anglican Church is schismatic must be to everyone who knows anything at all of ecclesiastical history a statement that is not in accordance with fact. There are certain sayings on the lips of some people which are repeated from one to another without the slightest idea as to the truth or error on which they rest. One of these is the phrase that the Church of England "broke off" from the Church of Rome at the Reformation,—which is about as true as the vulgar notion that horse racing improves the breed of horses. History nowhere tells us of some one act done at a definite time and called the Reformation. That was the aggregate of changes which extended over many years. The State did not take from one religious body and give to another. Throughout the whole period of the change bishops continued to sit in Parliament with their old titles, and Convocation assembled as before with every Parliament. The Church of England was purified from what were regarded as "Romish errors," but the existing ecclesiastical organisation was not disturbed; and the "partisans of the Papacy" continued for many years to conform to the worship of the Anglican Church. An appeal to history will show that the independence of the English Church as distinguished from the Roman was a fact centuries before the time of HENRY VIII., and that the ecclesiastical, not

spiritual, supremacy of the English Throne dates from the earliest times. From Anglo-Saxon days the Sovereign could exercise 'external jurisdiction,' enforce the performance of their duties by the bishops and clergy, and defend and preserve the purity of the Faith. Fifteen hundred years ago the Church of England was a branch national and local, of the Church Universal, and neither owned nor paid allegiance to the Bishop of Rome. In later times the Anglican Church threw off by degrees the usurpations of the Pope, but this did not mean the founding of a new sect, nor did it invalidate her claim to catholicity. Throughout English history the English Church has retained her orders and sacraments, and she is no more a creation of HENRY VIII., in respect of the essentials of a Church, than Westminster abbey is the creation of SIR GILBERT SCOTT, supposing he may have rendered important service in repairing and restoring the fabric wherever signs of decay or defect showed themselves by the wear of time. The displacement of certain faulty accretions through the arrogant assumptions of an earlier and misguided architect would not render the ancient pile a new structure, but would simply reinstate it in its former symmetrical splendour and utility of design. Public institutions must suffer the test of criticism, which is destructive only of the false, while it preserves the true. It is a law of nature that nothing shall stand still; all is ever involved in a process of purification and growth, bringing life out of decay and death: like the sea, eternally perturbed the waves of its unrest perpetually beating to and fro, its internal currents to all appearance pursuing aimlessly their devious courses yet casting up mire and dirt upon the shore and saving its own life from the decay of stagnation. Apparently, the same unvarying ocean; actually, an order of never-ceasing change by the accretion of renewing elements: yet still the great ocean as man first knew it. So also is it with the Church in its internal economy and outward similitude. Though ever receiving new powers of Spirit and of Truth, and purifying itself by a law divine operating among its constituent elements, and thus reviving itself perpetually, it is still the living Church of old in which we dwell to-day.

THE CONSTRAINING MOTIVE.

The one thing needful for all men is to know Christ; to know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His Resurrection; to know Him as our Saviour and as the daily food and nourishment of our lives; to know the love of God brought nigh to us in His Son Jesus Christ. It is the real need of the black man, the red man and the white man; it is the need on the mountains and on the plains, in the minor's camp and the herdsman's ranch, in the cabin and the cottage of the poor, and in the palace of the rich, in the city and in the country. It is your need and mine, in our work and in our rest, when we lie down and when we rise up, in business and pleasure, at home and abroad, in society and in all the intercourse of life. What we need every hour and day of our existence, is to know Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God: renewing our hearts, lifting our lives into the sunshine of Divine favor, transforming us and filling us with a sense of the presence and fellowship of the Father through the Holy Spirit whom He has shed abroad. Then we shall wish every one to be partaker of our joy, we shall feel that the same heritage of blessing is for everyman, and the love of Christ will constrain us to do what we can to make His grace known to others. We shall realize with St. Paul the unsearchable riches of Christ, and say, I am a debtor. I am a