

WHY I AM AN EPISCOPALIAN.

[FROM THE CHURCH ECLECTIC.]

The *Cleveland Leader* has been asking different ministers in that city the reasons for maintaining their different organizations. Their answers are all clever in their way, showing however, not the least *desire for unity*. Each writes as if the highest blessing was the liberty to differ, and the only way to prove that liberty is to differ. Under the Protestant system the *individual* is exalted, and that is the way Milton came to make such a hero of Satan.

The letter of Dr. Bates is really well put for the popular mind. We extract the main portion:

I know of no other system of Christian nurture and education which seems to me so rational, so simple, so complete, so closely bound to spiritual realities, and so fully permeated with a sense of spiritual law and order, as is the nurturing system of the Episcopal Church. The system makes the infant child a member of the Christian Church by baptism, and then,—far from placing any irrational reliance upon baptism alone—it insists that the child, “shall learn the creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments and all all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health.” It insists that the child be brought up as a Christian child, to “lead a Godly and Christian life; remembering always that baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him.”

In a catechism of wonderful clearness and completeness, it presents an object for belief, the simple spiritual realities set forth in the Apostles’ Creed, and as rules for conduct, the practical duties towards God, and towards our neighbor, covered by the Ten Commandments, and the precepts of Christian morality. The Episcopal Church gives to its people an order of services and seasons which with each year brings freshly to mind the principal events and offices of the life of our Lord; and it gives as an aid to worship and to spiritual culture, a liturgy rich with the prayers and praises of the saintliest souls of all the ages.

Another reason why I am an Episcopalian is because of the clearness to me of the historic connection with which the Episcopal Church is linked to the Church founded by our Lord and his Apostles. I believe in the fact and the value of an Apostolic succession. That is, I believe that the eleven disciples, with certain fellow Apostles, were the first chief officers in the Christian Church, and that these apostles ordained certain men, as Timothy, Titus, Simeon, Polycarp, Evodius, and others to succeed them as chief officers through lines of Bishops duly elected and consecrated. I believe that the bishops of to-day in different countries represent Apostolic succession prolonged through different national or provincial lines, so that the Bishop of Rome and the other Bishops in Italy represent such succession prolonged through a line of Italian Bishops, while the Bishops of France represent a succession prolonged through a line of Gallican Bishops, while the Bishops of England and the United States represent a succession prolonged through Anglican and American bishops.

My belief in the fact of Apostolic succession depends upon the teaching of ecclesiastical history. Of course I cannot here make any extended citations; but I will quote a sentence or two from Eusebius (born A. D. 264) as illustrating the way in which early ecclesiastical history alluded to Episcopacy as a well-known and unquestioned part of church life. “About this time (i.e. about A.D. 100) flourished Polycarp in Asia, an intimate disciple of the Apostles, who received the Episcopate of the church at Smyrna at the hands

of the eye-witnesses and servants of the Lord... Ignatius, also, who is celebrated by many even to this day as the successor of Peter at Antioch, was the second that obtained the episcopal office there.”

Whenever the condition of an early church is revealed to me by ecclesiastical history, I find the Presbyters and deacons subordinate to the bishops. I can find protests against the *mode* in which episcopal authority is sometimes exercised, but I can find no protests against *episcopal authority itself*, and no claim that such authority was then considered by any one either a usurpation or a novelty. Had the exercise of such authority then been a new thing in the church it seems to me that we should be sure to find traces of stout and widespread opposition to it. As my reading of ecclesiastical history makes me a believer in the fact of apostolic succession, so my regard for the primitive form of Church government, and for order and regularity in such government, make me a believer in the value of the succession. I rejoice at the multitude of noble Christian lives that I see in all the denominations around us. I thank God for the broadening tolerance and faith which they are showing, and for all the increased efficiency which they are securing, and for all the power to bless the souls of men which they are manifesting. But to me, the Episcopal Church seems to have a broader spirit, a wiser system of religious culture, and a clearer line of ecclesiastical authority than any other Church possesses. Thus believing, I am and must be an Episcopalian.

PRINCIPLES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

It is surprising how few *rules*, binding upon Christians, the Sacred Volume contains. Almost all the preceptive part of the Volume is devoted to the laying down of *principles*. And by way of impressing upon us more clearly this character, certain rules, which we should expect to find there, are purposely omitted. Thus, we might have expected a rule, prescribing prayer a certain number of times every day. We find no such rule. We find only the broad principle, “Pray without ceasing.” We might have expected rules forbidding slavery, and forbidding suicide. We find none. But in their place we have the broad principle given to us, on which such sins must be perfectly odious in the sight of God. We have the strongest assurance of God’s hatred of oppression, of the duty of submission to His will, and of the importance of the span of time allotted to us here below: and from these principles of duty, those rules are easily evolved. It requires however, reflection to evolve them,—and application of the mind to the principles, with the view of developing the rules.

2. Again, the Bible is a book rather of examples; than of precepts. There is comparatively little teaching of moral lessons in the abstract. We are designed to gather such lessons for ourselves from the narratives.

Take the preceptive parts of both Testaments, and weigh them against the narrative parts; and how greatly will you find the latter to preponderate. What is this arrangement, but an indication on the part of God that He wills us to *meditate* upon His Word, and to derive from it for ourselves the lessons implicitly wrapped up in it, without their being always explicitly stated? The narrative itself seldom or ever develops those lessons; no comments are made, as a general rule upon the conduct of characters which are brought before us; we are left to gather the moral for ourselves either from the results of the conduct, or from principles laid down in another, and possibly a remote part of the Sacred Volume. Nay, where we should most expect to find some note of approbation or disapprobation affixed to the narrative; where the not having such a note even

proves a stumbling-block to shallow and unreflecting minds; even there it is absent, by way of exhibiting to us more vividly the character of the Scripture, and the necessity for thought, imposed upon him who would read to edification. Thus God’s abhorrence of Jacob’s deceit and falsehood is not stated expressly in the narrative, but left to be gathered from the after fortunes of the Patriarch, whose latter years only were gilded with some gleam of comfort,—who may be said to have paid a life-long penalty of his sin. And in recording the end of Judas, where profane writers would scarcely have omitted some comment on the guilt of suicide, and the steps which led to it, the mind of the reader is left to elicit for itself the lesson of that fearful fall, the awful risk of sinning against high privilege, the hardening of hearts involved in frequent violations of conscience, and the mastery which Satan gains over the will at great junctures, by surrenders of it into his hands on ordinary occasions. All these lessons it asks some mental effort to elicit. It is, however, an effort, which repays itself. It is far more interesting—it gives far more of life and freshness to a maxim of duty—to derive it for ourselves, from an example, than to have it presented to us in a dry and abstract form. Teaching by example is far more lively in the nature of things, than if the precept were delivered without illustration, and ready for immediate use.—*Dean Goulburn.*

THE TERM CATHOLIC.

The term *Catholic* has been applied to the Church from the earliest ages, and is its common designation in the writings of the ancient fathers. It may be traced, indeed, to the times of the Apostles, since it appears in the writings of St. Ignatius (Epistle to the Smyrnean, iii. 4), a man who, it is related, “was intimately conversant with the Apostles, educated and nursed by them, everywhere at hand, and made partaker both of their familiar discourse and more secret and uncommon mysteries.”—*St. Chrysostom quoted by Cave.* The Church is called ‘Catholic in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. Though “the word was not used by the Apostles,” says Bishop Pearson, “we must acknowledge that it was most anciently used by the primitive fathers, and that, as to several intents. For, first, they called the Epistles of St. James, St. Peter, St. John, St. Jude, *Catholic* Epistles, because whilst the Epistles written by St. Paul were directed to a particular Church congregated in particular cities, these were either sent to the Churches dispersed through a great part of the world, or directed to the *whole Church of God upon the face of the whole world.*”—*On the Creed*, p. 5.7. In our translation of the New Testament, the term “*Catholic*,” in the titles of the above mentioned Epistles, is rendered “*General*.”

One of the questions at Baptism is, “Wilt thou be baptized in *this Faith*?” viz: the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostles’ Creed. To this an affirmative answer is required; consequently, the article of the Catholic Church is to be believed, and it is into that Church that we are baptized. To dislike the term, is therefore a disparagement of the Church of which it is the distinctive appellation, and of which we have been made members incorporate.

If the present Church is not by actual descent the continuation of that organised under the Apostles, it cannot be the *Apostolic* Church, and consequently it would be irrelevant to apply to ourselves such passages of Scripture as the following:—“Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone.”—Eph. ii. 19, 20.

—*Selected.*