

give. I have intimated these things after a private, friendly, brother-like manner, both to deliver my own soul and to put you in remembrance of these duties. After this you will not take it ill nor wonder, if I ask you questions upon these heads, and enquire how they are observed. I am sure they are matters of consequence, or I should not have given you or myself the trouble of writing this letter. I am, with daily prayers for you,

Your affectionate brother, and servant in Christ Jesus,

THOMAS SODOR AND MAX.

Bishop Wilson's biographer (the Rev. H. Stowell) adds:—

"Bishop Wilson was particularly solicited to execute his Clergy to the important duty of visiting their parishioners from house to house, and instructing them individually, as well as collectively. There was no part of the pastoral office which he appears to have regarded as more essentially necessary than this. There are several memoranda in his private papers, with regard to letters written to his Clergy, urging and intreating them to visit their parishioners *car oixon*, and enforcing his admonitions by the example of St. Paul, in his address to the elders of Ephesus. 'Ye know after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewn you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'—Acts xx. 18—21.

"This noble example of ministerial fidelity well deserves the imitation of every Christian Pastor, throughout the world. The Apostle was not satisfied with his public labours, frequent and abundant as they were, but he taught the people from house to house, instructing each individual in his particular duties, and thus giving every man a portion of meat in due season. There are no parts of his ministry which the Pastor will recollect with greater comfort on his death-bed, than the hours which he has spent in pastoral visits, and no omissions of duty of which the remembrance will be more grievous to him at that awful period, than the omission of this momentous duty. It was with great reason, therefore, that Bishop Wilson pressed the observance of pastoral visits with such earnestness. He required the Clergy to take an exact account of the spiritual state of their respective flocks, their prevailing sins, wants, infirmities, &c., and to insert these in a book to be kept for the purpose, and entitled *Parochialia*. By this arrangement, they would acquire a distinct knowledge of all within their several parishes and be enabled as the spiritual physicians of their people, to prescribe a suitable remedy for the disease of every individual. No human understanding can duly estimate the probable utility of such a plan in time and in eternity.

"Bishop Wilson's repeated admonitions and instructions to his Clergy were not without effect. Several of the persons to whom they were addressed, implicitly followed the plans recommended, and were exemplary in their whole life and conversation. The ascendancy which the Bishop possessed over his Clergy, arose, not so much from his rank and station in the Church, as from his superior piety, and the hold which he had on their affections. Their attachment to him was strong and permanent. It was a mixture of love and veneration. They regarded him as their father and their friend. Some of them, whose conduct constrained him to exercise a degree of necessary severity towards them, were so fully persuaded of the purity of his motives and the kindness of his intentions, that they felt no sensation of resentment, but through life retained unbounded respect for his memory, and ever spoke of him with the highest gratitude and esteem. At the expiration of nearly half a century after his decease, aged Ministers have been heard to recount the virtues of Bishop Wilson with tears of affection trembling in their eyes. The memories of the descendants of the last race of Clergymen in the Isle of Man are deeply impressed with the good report which they have heard from their fathers of this revered Prelate; and to the latest posterity, his deeds of charity 'shall be told for a memorial' of him."

THINKERS ON CONVOCATION.

We confessed ourselves last week indebted to the *Times* for a good representation of that public opinion, which, without any special information or logical training, grows out of the feelings or prejudices, the good sense or ill temper, of the English character. The prominent ecclesiastical topic has this week received illustration from a different quarter. We may take our philosophical contemporary, the *Spectator*, for an exponent of the ideas which thoughtful persons of the Liberal school, reasoning in their hours of leisure, form on the Church questions of the day. The premises from which these thinkers start are different from our own; but they are often made the foundation of a fair and candid argument, from which our friends may take a useful hint. To ourselves, at least, it is pleasant to turn from the heated atmosphere of popular intolerance and unbecoming prejudice to the purer air of philosophical discussion. There may be, indeed, a sensation of chilliness in that lofty region, which we are in no danger of experiencing in the crowd below; but we can tolerate for a time even a freezing stoicism for the sake of the clearness with which its voice comes home to our ears and our apprehensions.

The writer in the *Spectator*, then, noticing, as others have done, the remarkable change in the aspect of the movement for reviving Convocation, proceeds to lay down the conditions on which alone that body will be allowed to resume

its active functions. It must be made clear, he says, to the country at large what is the want to be satisfied, and in what respect Convocation is qualified to give the satisfaction required. It must be shown also that no such theological controversy will be introduced in the revived synod as would endanger the present social status of the Church of England with its comprehensive terms of subscription and its valuable machinery of civilization. If the purpose of the revival could be made out, the probability of effecting it manifested, and the likelihood of danger dispelled—the clergy might have their ancient council, in fact as well as in name, with the consent of all wise men and all moderate politicians.

To these dicta a twofold reply may be made. Let us admit for a moment—what, however, we are quite prepared to deny—that the position of the Church of England as an element of social order and civilization will probably be endangered by the acrimonious discussion and bigoted decision of certain theological questions. Yet even in view of this lamentable consequence we must remind our wise theorists that there is an already existing danger, quite as serious and more closely imminent. There is the risk lest, in an age of revived enthusiasm and awakened religious sympathies, the National Church, for want of a free organization, should fail to correspond with those feelings, and should so dry up the resources of its own natural vigour as to fall a prey from inherent weakness to the attack of its enemies. A lifeless body, unable to act in accordance with the aspirations of its own most zealous reformers and most self-denying members, would soon cease to possess that weight in the country by which alone it could perform the social or political functions whose cessation is so much dreaded. To be friends of the poor, promoters of education, and advocates of intelligent social improvements, are indeed noble attributes of the clerical office; but they would no more supply the want of its religious characteristics than the credit of patronising the arts would compensate for the absence of statesmanship in a great political functionary. It, therefore, a want can be shown, which is crippling the energies of the Church, driving out of her many of her brightest ornaments and weakening the allegiance of all whose fidelity is best worth having, we are entitled to claim the power of redressing that defect, even though danger or confusion and discord should be discerned in the remedial process.

But we have already denied the implied assertion that such confusion and discord must necessarily arise from the revival of Convocation. Some stupid commentators on its former history, whose lucubrations have appeared in the columns of the daily journals, assume the exact identity of its future transactions with the past. What happened in the beginning of the eighteenth century, according to the *Daily News* and similar wiseacres, must of course occur in the nineteenth. To apply the argument in a different case—because King Charles and his advisers found it essential to their policy that Parliaments should not be assembled, and did actually disperse for many years with their attendance, therefore Queen Victoria could not without great danger and loss meet her faithful Commons at Westminster. Because the latitudinarian Ministers of a German Prince, a hundred and thirty years ago, provoked Convocation to resist a somewhat intemperately the worldliness and infidelity of its Episcopal nominees, therefore Lord Derby is sure to give the same provocation, and the Clergy certain to reply with exactly the same asperity. Really, we may be pardoned if we decline to argue with persons who judge of the wisdom and temper of our leading Clergy without admitting any other consideration than the precedent to be found in the days of George I.

But the question remains to be answered.—What is the want which Convocation is to supply? We do not believe that a settlement of doctrinal differences is uppermost in the minds of those who are striving to make the elections of proctors a reality. They have regard far more to that large class of practical matters coming under the general term of discipline, which call urgently for some authoritative arrangement. Doctrine cannot change; what was true once is true for ever. But discipline may, and must, change with the varying requirements of times and countries. Nothing can be more different than the state of our population now and its condition when the canons were passed. Active Clergymen find every day difficulties in their dealing with Dissenters, in the accommodation of their pastoral labours to the necessities of overgrown populations, in the arrangement of their ritual, in their efforts to promote missionary work at home or abroad, and in a thousand other practical matters, which there is no present authority to decide. Bishops cannot, or will not, always interfere, sometimes their timidity or their lukewarmness, sometimes their physical incapacity to manage such extensive dioceses, makes them useless in the emergency of the Church. Shall not the body corporate be permitted to reform its own representative body, and try the virtue of its own resources to remedy its defects?

But Parliament—the objectors reply—Parliament can do all you want. When we hear that answer we consider our cause triumphant. If any one who makes the suggestion will take the trouble to examine the proceedings of our parliamentary laborers in any one branch of ecclesiastical legislation, and to test their work by its practical effect, he will understand what we mean. The chaotic uncertainty into which many of our most important institutions have been thrown, the repeated failures on such a subject, for instance, as the Clergy Discipline

Bill, the most disastrous result of parliamentary successes rush to our recollection. We could desire no more convincing argument for the revival of a competent consultative body to act for the Church in her own name, and with her own powers, than the mass of conflicting and irrational statutes by which Parliament has hampered the action of the Church, even when most favourably disposed towards it, since the time when the Convocation, because it had begun to wrangle, ceased to deliberate at all.

ILLNESS OF THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY.—Our late much respected Archbishop, the Right Rev. William Rowe Lyall, D.D., Dean of Canterbury, and Rector of Great Chart, has been seized with paralysis.—*Essex Gazette*.

The Lord Bishop of Lichfield completed his confirmation tour in the Coventry archdeaconry on Saturday last, having in twelve days administered the right to 3446 females, and 2333 males; total, 5779.

POPULAR BAPTIST ARGUMENTS REVIEWED.

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"When those who were pricked to the heart enquired, What shall we do? Peter answered, Repent and be baptized.—Acts 2, 37—41. Here Peter made disciples by preaching the Gospel, and such disciples were baptized. On this occasion, about three thousand were baptized. But there is not the least intimation that one of these was an infant." Nor need we feel surprised at this. At the very first effort to make converts, both St. Peter and his historian, St. Luke, were naturally more concerned about adults. The great point to be gained was to reason the Jews into a belief of the Messiahship.—We ought not, therefore, to expect that express mention should be made of the infants of those three thousand; but, after all, there does seem to be some intimation that infants were included. There is some intimation of this in the words "every one of you." In the next verse, too, there is some intimation to the same effect—"For the promise is unto you, and to your children." Truly, the intimation that infants were included seems quite as great (if not greater) than that they were excluded. True, it is said, "They who gladly received his word were baptized;" but it is not said that none others were. However, as the Baptists are so hasty in arriving at conclusions from omissions, it may be allowed us to arrive at—(not indeed conclusions) but—intimations gathered likewise from omissions. Now is it not extraordinary that there is no mention made in Scripture of the Apostles deferring the baptism of any believer's child, on account of youth, till it came to years of discretion? and yet many such cases, no doubt, must have occurred. We do not read, Scripture is silent, concerning any instances where the convert was too young for baptism. Again, is it not strange, supposing the Apostles to have limited their baptism to adults, that we do not read of the Jews finding fault with them on that score. Yet had the Apostles rejected infants from the Church, the Jews, who were so strict in admitting their men children into covenant with God by circumcision, would certainly have upbraided the Christians with this unnatural conduct. But, in all the disputes between Jews and Christians, detailed in the Acts, or referred to in the Epistles, this taunt is never thrown out against Christianity. Here, then, are two omissions, pregnant with intimations, which we may set against the Baptist objection quoted above.

"Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them; and when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.—Acts 8. The narrative says nothing about infants. Had Philip baptized infants, no doubt they would have been mentioned here."

On the contrary, we should have esteemed it much more surprising had infants been enumerated here. The Apostles, no doubt, were engaged most particularly in persuading adults, to them alone they could preach, they alone could believe, therefore they alone are mentioned as having received baptism. How strange it would appear had the text run thus: "When they believed, they were baptized, men, women and infants." Yet, because it does not run thus, Baptists contend that infants were excluded. The truth is, "The narrative says nothing about infants," consequently nothing can be inferred, because the allusion to them would have been unnecessary, as St. Luke was writing

of believers. We may add that this remark of the Baptists—"that when men and women are mentioned, it was a good time for the writer to have included infants,"—may be retorted. We may as well say that when the Apostles are represented as baptizing whole households or families, it was a good time for the writer to have excepted infants, had the Apostles not baptized them.

"The Eunuch enquired, What doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip answered, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. Then he was baptized."

We are quite at a loss to know to what purpose this instance is adduced. It obviously has nothing to do with infant baptism. What would be thought of an attempt to prove that Herod did not put infants to death, because another Herod put James, an adult, to death; or to convince us that infants were not circumcised, because Abraham was ninety-and-nine years old when he was circumcised. Nevertheless, we are told, in the pamphlet under review, "that these instances are referred to, to show that in the Scriptures there is not the slightest intimation that infants were baptised. Surely, it were strange to expect it in this instance."

"At Cesarea the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word; then answered Peter, can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.—Acts 10. These heard the word, and received the Holy Ghost, before they were baptised, and, therefore, they were not infants, but believers."

Such a circuitous method of proving that these persons were not infants is quite unnecessary, as we know from Acts 10, 24 and Acts 11, 12, exactly who were present, viz: Cornelius, his kinsmen, and near friends, together with St. Peter and his six friends. Surely no argument can be drawn from the fact that these persons who were baptized were not infants, unless we had reason to suppose that there were infants present; but it is almost certain that all present were adults, and that they were baptized, proves nothing against the propriety of infant baptism. In other words, unless it were probable that infants were present, while, at the same time, we are informed that they only who heard the word were baptized, no argument can be raised against infant baptism. But it is not only probable but absolutely certain that infants were not present; therefore, nothing can be inferred regarding them.

"The Lord opened the heart of Lydia that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and she was baptized and her household.—Acts 16. There is no evidence that Lydia had any children, or was or had been married; therefore, this example can afford no argument to infant baptism. There are probably more households without infants than with them; consequently, the baptism of a household can be no proof of infant baptism."

To arrive at the true force of the argument, let us take a parallel case:—Suppose an historian of the Church Missionary Society, in giving an account of the first instance of the success of some of its missionaries in India, were to say, "several families or households were baptized;" how would the assertion be understood by the English public? Certainly, that infants, if such there were in these families, participated in the sacrament. The same rule of interpretation holds here. St. Luke, the historian of the Church's earliest success, speaks of families being baptized, and unless he had specially excepted them, the mass of the Jewish people would have supposed that infants were included. Now, there is quite as much probability of there being infants in Lydia's household as the reverse; but still we build no argument on a single instance. Our argument is simply this—from the frequent mention of whole families being baptized, and from the casual way in which the mention is made, we conclude that it was quite a usual thing with the Apostles to baptize households, and, therefore to baptize infants; because, though the probability that one household contained infants is slight, yet the probability that among many households there were some infants is very great; indeed, amounts to certainty.

(To be continued.)