

consider of this matter," and "the Apostles and elders" settled it (Acts xv. 2, 6, 22, 23, xvi. 4.) Well, councils are possible still. We may be told that a General Council is not possible, but if so, is it not better to wait for it (as the Church of England is patiently doing) than to break up Christ's Church? But the real point is that all the secessions have been made without any conference at all. Baptists, Brownists, Wesleyans, Bryanites, all took counsel with no one but themselves. Yes, a conference is still possible; but the last idea that occurred to the seceders was to "submit their differences" to it, or "to accept its judgment as decisive."

So that we are left where we were. We are industriously told that changed circumstances require changes—radical and subversive changes—in the Church, and when we ask what these circumstances are, we find that they are "trifles light as air," changes of dress, speech, wages, customs, and the like—things which no more excuse changes in God's Church than they warrant breaches of His moral law. You might as well defend polygamy on the ground that at Salt Lake City they "had to deal with a totally different situation which St. Paul never discussed because he never foresaw it." Yes, Mr. Hughes' argument, if it is good for Methodism, is good for Mormonism. But it is good for neither. I repeat, there is no change in God or in man, in the laws and obligations of a Christian, or in the work and calling and fellowship of the Christian Church.

But it is said "we must recognise facts." I think we know what that really means; if not, it is not because we have not been told. Mr. T. P. Bunting told us at Lucerne, when he suggested that the Bishops at their next meeting "should make a declaration that the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, and the Baptists, and there might be others to add—they might perhaps include the Mormons and the Shakers whilst they are about it—were all true branches of the Church of Christ, and that their ministers were true ministers of Christ" (*Review*, p. 35). These are the facts! I take the liberty once more to show, not in anger but in deep sorrow, what all this means. It means:

1. That we are to give up the Bible, as they are doing. In no other way can we possibly do what they demand. We cannot recognise a "Baptist Church" and a "Methodist Church," except in the teeth of that Scripture which knows *The Church, Christ's Church*, and nothing else. Nor can we recognize them as "branches of the Church"—unless we consent to expurgate or re-write our Bibles. To please Mr. Bunting we are to quarrel with St. Paul (1 Cor. I, 12, 13.) We recognize all the baptized as members of the body, but that is not enough; we are to say that two hundred bodies are the same as "one body."

2. That we are to recognize as of God a situation which they themselves have created. For it is not God, as they would have us believe, who has made these facts; men have made them; sometimes, no doubt, with pure motives; sometimes, I fear, with very mixed motives. There is no doubt, to take one instance, that God raised up the Wesleys. But when and how did the Almighty tell the Wesleyans to leave His Church and to start a new one? Why, Wesley himself protested to the last against the very course which they have taken. They constantly ask us to do what their founders did not and would not do; they warmly resent it if we simply hold fast to the beliefs of the very men whose names they bear. One thing is certain: if these facts are of God, then the Wesleys were fighting against God. No, I think with Baxter that one of the saddest features of schism is that men are so ready "to charge it upon God and make Him the author of it."

3. That we are to do what they themselves decline to do. We are to recognise Dissenting "Churches" and ministers as accomplished facts, of God's providential ordering, when they themselves do nothing of the kind. Do they recognise as a fact of modern Christendom that the Pope is universal Pastor? Do they recognise Unitarian congregations as "Churches," or Unitarian ministers as ministers of Christ? Certainly not. But why not, if "facts" are to be our guide? They do not, because they say these "facts" are against the Bible. Well, that is just what we say about their facts.

I might easily pursue this subject farther, but I think enough has been said to show that the first question at issue between Churchman and Dissenter, whatever it once was, now is as to the authority of the Bible. I do not forget for a moment that there are thousands of Dissenters who have the warmest love and reverence for the sacred Scriptures—far in excess of that of some Churchmen. But I think the time has come to point out that their leaders—or some of them—make no scruple of throwing Holy Writ aside as antiquated—it was "written so long ago"—when it condemns their position. Much was said at Lucerne, for which we may be thankful. But I confess that it has been a shock and a distress to me to find that good and earnest men like those whom I have cited do not hesitate to kick the Bible down stairs when it contradicts their conclusions. I was quite prepared for their making no serious attempt to meet my Scriptural argument, and to answer my Bible questions—they remain unanswered to this day—but I was not prepared to hear the inspiration of the Scriptures set aside for the inspiration of the sects.

RITUALISM AND ROMANISM.

A word may be said as to the alleged connection between Ritualism and Romanism. If they be cause and effect, as some would have us believe, how is it that while "Ritualism" in the Church of England has been advancing by leaps and bounds Romanism has been steadily going back.

Father Lelley, O. S. A., Sub-Prior of the Augustinian Convent at Cork, wrote three years ago to the *Catholic Times* a letter in which he said:

"By the blessing of God I have received very many converts into the Church during my sacerdotal career, but, strange to say, especially in these days of ritualism, they have been nearly all from the ranks of the Low Church part of the Establishment. Though I can count amongst them several neophytes from the Jewish religion, I have no High Churchmen, Puseyite, or Ritualist, and scarcely a Dissenter to show.

So Monsignor Capel in the *Weekly Register* for July, 1865, wrote:—

"There is no diminution of converts, but they have recently come, not so much from the ranks of Tractarians as from the Low Church, or even Presbyterian School."

Moreover, the same article in the *Quarterly Review* quoted above draws attention (page 53) to the fact that Presbyterian Scotland is a better soil for Romanism than Ritualistic England.

The Rev. G. S. Mitchell, preaching in the Church of the Sacred Heart, West Houghton, as reported in the *Catholic News* of Aug. 23rd, 1890, said:—

"Although the Church gains some learned men, we must not be under the impression that we gain ground. We are fast decreasing, and if we go on as we are, England will never be Catholic. We don't get our children, who are our future generations. There is some work done in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and

Newcastle, but not enough, and too late for thousands. Drink and indifferent parents, and so on, are only some of the causes. There are a hundred thousand children lost now in England and Wales. During the last forty years we have lost a million souls. Let the clergy and laity work together and rescue poor children, and there will be some chance of England returning to the old fold.

The Rev. F. Powell, of Birehley, said in the course of a paper he read at a Roman Conference at Wigan, and reported in the *Tablet* for Aug. 8, 1891, p. 213:—

From time to time they received most glowing accounts of the opening a new church, of the building of a school, of the providing of a church with a new organ, or stained glass window, or decorated statue; and good Christians immediately concluded that the faith was making progress, that truth was enlightening the land, and that a return of England to God's Church might be looked forward to before this generation passed away. But never since the accession to the throne of that abandoned profligate Elizabeth, had the prospects of the Church been darker than at present. The population of the country was increasing most rapidly, and the new census showed an increase of some three millions, but Catholics asked themselves the question were they advancing or receding? They might set down the number of Catholics in England as 1,400,000 or a little under five per cent. of the total population. If, then, their increase during the last ten years had been on a par with the general increase, they would have added to their numbers 175,000. But the melancholy truth was that in many parts of England their numbers were on the decrease. The rev. gentleman then gave figures showing the comparative decreases in Liverpool, Salford, Newcastle, Leeds and Westminster. What were the causes, and how were they to account for the loss? There were many causes, such as emigration and the decline of immigration from Ireland, but the two main causes were the aversion of the young men to marriage, and apostasy.

The *Month* for July, 1885, said:—

The Church of England has sucked into itself, or, at all events, sucked out of their faith, a vast number of the (R) Catholics born and educated in this country. Its schools, its money, its gentry, its prestige have so completely overshadowed all else, that, somehow or other, thousands of Catholics have disappeared into it, or into the indifference it tends to produce. This makes exertions, which would be quite sufficient in a Catholic country to prevent leakage, quite insufficient in England.

Again, the *Month*, in the same article, showed how, since 1841, the Romanist, in England had lost a million adherents.

To the same effect is the testimony of Mr. E. Peacock, F. S. A., writing in the "Faith of our Fathers" for November 1892, the organ of the notorious Guild of Ransomers. He says:—

The Ritualist party in the Establishment has gone on rapidly growing from three days to the present; it now, we imagine, embraces in some or other of its numerous forms, more than half the clergy of the Church of England. We believe that the Ritualists are one of the main hindrances to conversion at the present time.—*Illustrated Church News*.

If there is one truth relating to men's criticisms of one another likely to be more prominent than others during Lent, it is this: That the inconsistencies of Church people regarding Lenten observances, while perhaps applauded by the outside world as signs of a liberal spirit, do in reality lessen the world's respect for those who so lightly regard the principles of their own Church, and cause many a sinner, at their expense, behind their backs.—*North East*.