

or kill a man if only I give him leave to maim and kill me if he can and will.

"I have spoken my mind once and for all on a matter on which I have held the same views for more than twenty years."

POLYCHURCHISM.

By THE REV. JOSEPH HAMMOND.

From the Church Times.

At the Lucerne conference on Reunion which has been in session at intervals during the present month, a paper was read on the above subject by Canon Hammond of St. Anstoll—author of "Church or Chapel," and "English Nonconformity and Christ's Christianity," both valuable works in the controversy between Church and Dissent—which gave rise to considerable discussion. The greater part of the paper we now proceed to give, omitting the first few words of apology and regret for speaking in a way which Canon Hammond said might hurt the feelings of many who were present. "If I wound you, it is that I may help to heal one of the sores of the Church." He then proceeded:—

This present Conference is summoned, as that of last year was, to discuss "the Reunion of the Churches," and there can be no doubt what is meant by the term "Churches." You understand the word to mean, as the Grindelwald fathers understood it to mean, the various communities of Christians in England, and possibly elsewhere—Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and so forth. You call all these "Churches"—perhaps you also assume that "one Church is as good as another." I have now, therefore, to submit to you, most earnestly and most respectfully, that *there is and can be no Church but one*. I shall maintain that the visible Church of Christ was meant to be, and essentially is, "one body," and no more; that no man or number of men can possibly found a second or secession Church; that, however much the one Church has been and is distracted and divided, it has not been, it cannot be divided into two, much less two hundred "Churches," and that, consequently, what we have to aim at is not the "reunion or federation of the Churches," for there are no "churches" to reunite, but the healing of divisions in the Church, the reconciliation of separated Christians to the "one body" of Christ.

In other words, this Conference is based, as the Grindelwald Conference was on the purely modern theory of *polychurchism*—a theory which, I fear, will vitiate all your proceedings and frustrate your amiable efforts. I have therefore sought and obtained permission to lay before you some reasons for clinging to the ancient view that there is "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church;" that God's Church, Christ's Church, can be *but one*.

And by "God's Church," or "Christ's Church," I mean the *visible Church*. I do not allow that there is any "invisible Church,"—nothing of the kind is ever mentioned in Holy Writ; if it is, let the passage be produced presently—no, but there is a *soul* of the Church, as well as "the body of Christ's Church." The *body* of the Church is the visible community of Christians, the Church as we see and know it. The *soul* of the Church consists of those true believers, those "disciples indeed," who are known to God alone. Of the latter I shall say nothing. The Conference does not propose to reunite *them*. My words refer, as the Conference relates, to the visible Church only.

And in attempting to prove to you that this Church was meant to be one, and that, despite the "schisms in the body," it has not been, and cannot be, divided into two, I shall make my

appeal exclusively to Holy Scriptures. I do not forget that the Church is older than the New Testament; I do not forget that it is to the Church that we are indebted, under God for the Scriptures; but all the same I shall now, for obvious reasons, appeal to "the Bible" and the Bible only." It has been said that the Grindelwald Conference was marked by an absence of all references to Holy Writ. "We looked in vain through the proceedings," said the *Christian Commonwealth* at the time, for any definite appeal to the Word of God, by which the differences must eventually be destroyed if they are destroyed at all." Whether this was so I will not say, but I must remark that in the discussions of last night there was no reference to God's Word. The same reproach shall not be brought against these present proceedings. I shall take you "to the law and to the testimony," and to that alone. If I cite the opinions of others, it is only to show that I do not stand alone in my interpretations of its teachings. And I venture to hope that those of you who are good enough to notice my argument will meet me on this ground. I rest my case, such as it is, on God's Word; it is by God's Word that I must be convinced, if I am to be convinced, of my error. It is of no use pointing me to what men call "the facts of modern Christendom." If these facts, or *supposed* facts contradict God's Word, then so much the worse for them. If, as Dr. Beet allows, "events have led the outward forms of Christianity away from the apostolic ideal," then I reply that the sooner events lead them back again, the better. We cannot mend the Church of the New Testament, in any of its essential features. And therefore I make my appeal to the New Testament. "If ever," as the Bishop of Ripon said recently, "there is to be a communion amongst the various denominations of Christians throughout the world, it can only come by the honest, patient, careful, reverent, determined, and unself-willed study of the old Book of God." I now, therefore, bespeak your honest, and careful, and patient, and unself-willed attention to the following propositions which it seems to me that Book clearly and unmistakably lays down. If it is not so; if I, and thousands of others, are labouring under a delusion; then we shall be sincerely grateful to you if you will point out where our mistake lies. If I am wrong, you will do me an essential service by putting me right.

I begin by affirming that—*I. Holy Scripture knows of no Church, of no local Church even, which is not God's Church.* Every Bible "Church" is a "Church of the Living God. Even the corrupt Church of Corinth was "the Church of God which is at Corinth." The Church of the Thessalonians was "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Church at Ephesus, which St. Paul charged the elders to feed, was "the Church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." The Church as to which Timothy was taught "how men ought to behave themselves" therein, was "the house of God, which is the Church of the Living God." In fact, all the congregations of the Apostolic age are described as "the churches of God" or "the churches of Christ." On this point there can be no dispute. If the Church is, as Dr. Fairbairn says, "an institution of man, not an inspiration of God," still it is God's institution. Nor do I think we shall differ much on the next point—as to *why* they are "Churches of God." They are such because God founded them, because He inspires them, inhabits them, orders them, governs them; because they form His family and His flock—in one word, because He chose them, not because they chose Him. If therefore, all our denominations are "Churches," they are all "Churches of God." There is no middle course. *If a Church, then God's: if not God's, then not a Church.* Whatever their origin—and some of them, it is notorious, had their beginnings in

bitter strife and wrangling—still God founded them. However discordant or mutually destructive their tenets, still God upholds and informs them; however antagonistic to each other they may be, still God regards each one as His "household," His "habitation." And not only so, but—what is much more important for my argument—the Church of England, if it is a Church at all, is God's Church whatever its corruption may be.

II. *Holy Scripture knows of no Church in any city or country other than The Church of the city or country.* The "Churches" of which we read in the "old Book of God," are "the Churches of Asia," "of Galatia," "of Macedonia," "the Church of the Laodiceans," "the Church of Cenchrea," of Corinth, of Sardis, of Thyatira, "the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria." Even the Churches in private houses were the Churches of the locality. We search the Bible in vain to find any "Church"—other than the *universal* (which is composed of all these local Churches)—which has not its "local habitation and name;" which is not *the Church of the place*. We search it in vain to find any precedent for a Baptist, or Methodist, or Unitarian, or United Presbyterian Church. "Churches" other than *the Church*, separatist bodies, splits from the parent stock, were unknown to the Apostles. If any such existed, if there is *one* instance of a Dissenting communion in the pages of the New Testament, it will be easy to cite the chapter and verse. But they cannot be cited. "We may challenge the proof from Scripture"—these are Mr. Gladstone's words—"of any plurality of Churches except such as is local only." Divisions there were *within* the Church—and *these* were sternly denounced—but separations *from* it (except on the part of the apostates), there were none. The idea of competing Churches, denominational Churches would have filled the Apostles with dismay. To St. Paul, a divided Church seemed to imply a divided Christ. "If there be *one Christ* indivisible"—so Dr. Marcus Dods interprets His words—"then there is but *one Church* indivisible." But whether there is so or not, the fact remains that Holy Scripture knows of no "Churches" but the local Churches.

(To be continued.)

EPISCOPACY A DIVINE INSTITUTION.

The great *Wesleyan Commentator* Dr. Adam Clarke, says: "As the deacon had many private members under his care: so the presbyter or elder had several deacons under his care: the bishop several presbyters: and the Archbishop several bishops. But I speak now more of the modern than of the ancient Church. The distinction in some of these offices is not so apparent in ancient times: and some of the offices themselves are modern or comparatively so. But *deacon, presbyter* and *bishop* existed in the *Apostolic Church*; and may therefore be considered of *Divine origin*." Dr. Adam Clarke, commentary 1 Tim. iii., 13 "The directions given in this chapter concerning bishops and deacons should be carefully weighed by every branch of the Christian Church. Not only the offices which are of Divine appointment such as *bishop, presbyter* and *deacon* should be most religiously preserved in the Church, but that they may have their full effect, the persons exercising them should be such as the Apostles prescribe." The same on the same chapter.

N.B.—The above italics are Dr. Clarke's.

MEN have learned Greek without a teacher, but no man ever yet learned the Bible outside of the school of the Holy Ghost.