

seek after that detachment and elevation of soul which will set us free to give our hearts and minds to the contemplation of these saving mysteries. This is the end of the discipline of Lent. And, secondly, to strive after that true penitence which will fit and prepare us to learn more clearly, and to our exceeding comfort, the power of the Precious Blood.

First, then, we see that the discipline of Lent is not in itself an end, but a means to an end. There is no merit in our prayers, or fasting, or alms. If ever they should be looked upon simply as good deeds, as something to our credit, they would cease to be either profitable to ourselves or acceptable to God. But if by our longer or more frequent prayers we seek to rise into higher spiritual life, and into greater nearness to God; if in our fasting and abstinence we seek to subdue the flesh to the Spirit, as the Church teaches us to pray; or to bring ourselves into subjection as St. Paul speaks; to have the mind more calm and clear for heavenly thought, through separation, as far as possible, from the temptations and distractions of the world; if by our alms we would both acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God, and learn to sit loose from our earthly possessions, while we cultivate a spirit of charity towards our fellow-men; then with such sacrifices God is well pleased, and by all these means we shall assuredly grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

So, too, with our words and acts of penitence, our confessions of sins and our tears of sorrow, our self-searching and self-subduing—let all be done, not with the thought that we can make amends for our misdeeds, but that we may deepen in our hearts a sense of our utter unworthiness and of our need of Him Who died for sins.

And now I would offer you some practical counsels with a view to the attainment of these blessed ends.

First of all, let this be the fundamental principle of your Lenten arrangement—to give more time to God. How little do we give Him at the best! Can we wonder that we know so little of God when we so seldom seek to be alone with Him? Can we wonder that the world has such a hold on us when we are so continually mixed up with its concerns?

How you are to gain more time for God must depend upon your individual circumstances. Some may be able to save the time from other unnecessary or less urgent occupations. Some may deny themselves a little sleep—best of all by rising up a little earlier each day. Some may gain the time by abstaining throughout this season from enjoyments, harmless in themselves, but worthless in comparison with the life of God. And therefore, even for this end, besides the discipline and self-control which would be involved in it, it would be well to give up for the time the pleasures of society, and to keep away from places of amusement, and to lay aside all trivial reading, however innocent these things may be in themselves; not thinking by such sacrifices to commend yourselves either to God or to man, but in order that you may give more time and thought to heavenly things, and be less distracted in your minds and hearts. What use you shall make of the time that you gain must again depend, in some measure, upon the circumstances of each. Part of it must of course be given to longer and more frequent prayer and meditation, and to the more careful study of the Word of God; while some may find it possible, and certainly it would be very helpful, to commit to memory some portion of the Holy Scriptures—a few of the Psalms, or some one of St. Paul's or the other Epistles. But besides this, I trust that in most parishes some additional services will be provided for you, and that you will thus give some of the time that you gain to worshipping God in His house of prayer. Where there are daily or frequent services already,

which some of you have not been accustomed to attend, you may be able to do so at least during the Lenten Season, and perhaps will find such comfort in them that you may resolve to make an effort, even when Lent is over, to continue your attendance to the utmost of your power. In some parishes, too, there will be additional celebrations of the Holy Communion, and you will indeed do well to avail yourselves of these opportunities for the strengthening and refreshing of your souls. One other suggestion I would make to you for the employment of your time is to select for your careful study some books on sacred subjects, or a portion of Church history, or some treatise on the devotional life. This will be not only a most fitting occupation during the Holy Season, but also a clear gain for your spiritual life. And in all these things let there be method and order. This in itself will be an important discipline, and will leave behind a lasting good.

But now as regards the more direct use of discipline and self-denial during the Lenten Season. I have already spoken of abstinence under various forms, but not of that which is commonly known as fasting, or the abstinence, more or less, from food. Self-denial of this kind has been practised from the earliest days of the Church, and is indeed enjoined upon us by the precepts, and sanctioned by the example of our blessed Lord Himself. Christians in all ages have found it to be helpful towards a devotional spirit, and for this end it may well be used during this Holy Season. But it must be with prudence and also with humility; carefully regulated so as not to be injurious, and never regarded as anything meritorious in itself. If under these limitations we add to our prayers fasting, we shall find in it a powerful help towards setting free the soul for the influence of the Holy Spirit. It will also be well for us to be more abundant in our alm-giving; denying ourselves for the sake of others, and realizing more clearly our entire dependence upon God, and our position in the world as merely stewards of His gifts.

I conclude with one or two very plain directions for the due improvement of the weeks of Lent. Make it a part of your daily work to fight manfully against some one be-etting sin, in confident expectation that it may by God's grace be entirely subdued. Night after night take account of your progress—your victories or your falls. Thus watching or praying, you will most surely be delivered from its power. Again, set aside, as much as lieth in you, all enmities and jealousies and misunderstandings, and be especially on your guard against all evil speaking and all unkind and inconsiderate words. Shun also idle conversation and empty frivolous talk. Abstain from needless visits which waste the time and dissipate the spirit. Seek, if you can, to be engaged in some special good work for God and His Church, or for your fellow-creatures. Be on the watch for opportunities of doing little acts of kindness, or showing sympathy to those who are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. Out of all these exercises of the soul may spring up abiding habits, which will endure long after the Lenten Season has run its course.

Lastly, strive to live mindful of God's presence, and to do all things as in His sight, calmly, thankfully, faithfully. It is He Who gives us these seasons of grace, that we may use them for His glory. Year after year they come and go, to render up their account concerning us at the great day. What record shall this Lenten Season leave behind? Shall it bear witness to our steadfast growth in grace, our deepened earnestness in spiritual things, our closer fellowship with God, our ripening for Eternity? Or shall it tell of grace neglected and of opportunities misused; and hence of sinking deeper into worldliness, and carelessness, and sin? 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.' 'The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he

that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Your faithful servant for His sake.

W. D. LICHFIELD.

—*Lichfield Diocesan Magazine*, 1891.

#### POLYCHURCHISM.—A SEQUEL.

BY THE REV. CANON HAMMOND.

(From the *Church Times*.)

[CONTINUED.]

4. Changes in the mere "accidents" of human life and environment are to involve changes in the main "essential" of God. It is said that Christ's Church may be totally different from the Apostolic Church because of "the totally different circumstances of the times of the Apostles and of the present day, (*Review* p. 29.) But pray what are these vast differences in the circumstances? Do they mean that we have railways and telegraphs and newspapers, and that the first Christians had none? They say, "certainly not." Then what else do they mean? If they do not mean this, they cannot mention anything else which has made so great a change. But perhaps they say "These things are mere 'accidents.'" I answer, "Precisely so; all the changes are changes of accidents, changes in the customs and details of life. The essentials of life and of religion remain precisely what they were. God is the same, and His Christ the same, and man is the same, and the enemy of God and man is the same. The battle we have to fight, the race we have to run, and the work we have to do, each is the same, in every essential feature, as that which lay before the first Christians. Then what are these different circumstances of to-day which justify secessions? Well, two gentlemen have volunteered an answer. One says: "It is the great difference between the environment of those small gatherings of Christians amid heathen populations, and the environment of Churches in Christian nations." Here is a Daniel come to judgment! He says that formerly Christians were few in number, therefore they must be united; now that they are so many, he says they are free to fall out! That is one reason. The other is that because we live in happier times, because we are surrounded by Christians instead of persecuting Pagans, we are free to quarrel; we owe less to God and to one another! I suggest to this luminous writer (in the *Christian World*) that this will never do; he must try again. But another difference has been mentioned—this time by Dr. Beet. He says, as we have already seen, that the Scottish Presbyterians of fifty years ago were compelled to have a Church disruption—on the momentous question of patronage!—because we no longer have the Apostles to refer to. But I reply to this, first, if we have not the Apostles, we have their Lord, who is "with us always, even to the end of the world." Secondly, if we have not the Apostles, we have their successors; only thus can we explain the words, "I am with you always," etc. (St. Matt. xxviii. 20.) Thirdly, we have their writings, and those writings clearly reveal their principles, and they say nothing about secession under any circumstances. It is true they do not mention patronage, but they mention other things which infinitely more justified and required a separation, if it is ever justifiable. And lastly, I do not find in the New Testament that the disputes of the early Church were settled by the Apostles alone, any more than they were settled by St. Peter alone. The Apostles did not always constitute "a decisive court of appeal." The burning question of circumcision was not "submitted to them" for their "judgment;" it was referred to a council. "The Apostles and elders were gathered together to