

ART. V.—THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN ITS
RELATION TO NONCONFORMISTS.

ARTICLE II.—INTRODUCTION.

FOR eleven years after Elizabeth's accession,¹ that section of the clergy and laity who sympathized with Rome conformed to the new Liturgy. Only 200 priests left their parishes on the death of Mary and the accession of Elizabeth. But the violence of the Popes encouraged a schism. Pope Paul IV. called her a bastard. Although Pope Pius IV. showed a more conciliatory disposition, offering to send a Nuncio to England, and inviting Elizabeth to send representatives to the Council of Trent, Pope Pius V. published against her a Bull of Excommunication and Deposition; and from that moment all English supporters of the Pope were forced to separate from the English Church. The English Papal leaders remained abroad, and established seminaries for young priests, who were to return as missionaries to England and convert the people back to the Roman faith. The principal leader of this crusade was William Allen, formerly Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, and afterwards a Cardinal. In 1568 he founded the first English seminary at Douai, in Flanders; he also founded colleges for the same purpose at Rome and in Spain. In 1580 he sent the first Jesuit missionaries into England—Father Persons and Father Campion. All these Roman emissaries at this period were necessarily treated as traitors, as they were charged with the deposition of the Queen and the subversion of the constitution. The laws against them accordingly grew continually more and more ferocious. In the reign of James I. the plots were continued, and the repression was still further pressed. In 1604 an Act of Parliament was passed for the due execution of the statutes against all Jesuits, seminary priests, and recusants. It is said that not less than 5,560 persons were convicted of recusancy, and now for the first time the Holy Communion began to be used as a test. Recusants were required to attend the parish church, and receive the Lord's Supper at the hands of those whom they considered nothing but Protestants and heretical ministers.

About 1618 a more kindly treatment began. James I. wished to stand well with the King of Spain; so he promised him "that no Roman priest or other Roman Catholic should henceforth be condemned on any capital law, and, although

¹ See Cutts's "Dictionary of the Church of England" and Perry's "Student's History."

he could not at present rescind the laws which inflicted only pecuniary fines, yet he would so mitigate them as to oblige his Roman Catholic subjects to him." Some years later a very large number of Romanists—it is said 4,000—were released from prison. In 1623 James allowed a Bishop *in partibus* to reside in England. There had been an interminable quarrel between the secular Romish priests and the Jesuits on this point, the former desiring a Bishop, the latter opposing it, as limiting their authority, and preferring the direction of an Archpriest. This first Romish prelate was Dr. William Bishop. The people were much excited about it, but quieted down when the Prince of Wales came home safe from Spain and the detested Spanish marriage was abandoned. On Dr. Bishop's death another prelate was appointed, but during the Commonwealth the depression of the party and the bitter hostility of the people seem to have prevented further nominations.

The accession of James II., himself a Roman Catholic, gave new hopes to the Roman See, and a large accession of importance to the Papal party in England. A Vicar-Apostolic was delegated; and shortly after the kingdom was divided into four districts, each under a Vicar-Apostolic; and this continued to be the organization of the Roman Church in England until the middle of the present century.

The extraordinary measures taken by James II. for restoring Romanism only secured his downfall and banishment. Father Petre, Vicar-Provincial of the Jesuits in England, was a member of the Privy Council; Sunderland, the Prime Minister, was a Romanist; two or three others besides Petre were members of the Cabinet Council, which contained only eight in all. Fourteen Benedictine monks were installed in St. James's Chapel Royal; there was a Jesuit establishment in the Savoy; a body of Franciscans had a house in Lincoln's Inn; a body of Carmelites were in the City. The heads of Christ Church and University College at Oxford set up the Mass in their College Chapels. Four Vicars-Apostolic, appointed by the Pope, were paid £1,000 a year each out of the Exchequer to rule the Roman clergy in England. The King's unconstitutional Declaration of Indulgence would have enabled him to use his power and patronage to put Romanists into the dignities of the Church, the offices of the Government, the judgeships, and the command of the army and navy.

The Revolution of 1688 accordingly swept away the King and the Stuart dynasty. Parliament took precautions in the Act of Settlement of William III. and Mary against the recurrence of the danger by requiring that the Sovereign should always be in the communion of the Church of England. The penal laws against the Romanists were revived, and the

Roman Church in England sank back into its former condition. A few families of the titled and landed aristocracy, with their adherents, formed its scanty but very respectable body. Their patriotism was undoubted, and their religion, of a Gallican, or national independent type, which had no virulence towards the Church of England, excited a feeling of interest rather than of dislike towards them as chivalrous adherents of a fallen cause.

In the end of the last century, and in the course of the present, large numbers of Irish Roman Catholics settled in the great towns of England, especially London, Liverpool, and Glasgow; but the number of English Romanists had not increased. The call for the full emancipation of Roman Catholics—that is, enabling them to take their full share in municipal and political government—came first from Ireland, but it also became part of the great Whig reforming programme which culminated in the famous Reform Act of 1832. Roman Catholic emancipation had been proposed by Pitt in the reign of George III.; but the King was resolute against it. After many struggles, it was carried in the last year of the reign of George IV., in 1829.

This act of justice, together with the revival of the High Church party in the second quarter of this century, and the secession of Newman, Manning, the two Wilberforces, Ward, and about 3,000 other distinguished and educated persons, roused in the advisers of Rome a keen and sanguine hope that the time had come when England might be won back again to the Roman obedience. The Roman claim was set forth in the most striking way by the creation of a Papal episcopate, with English titles, all over the country, with a Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster at its head. This was in 1850. The greatest endeavours were made to win converts. Money was found for the erection of beautiful churches in the most conspicuous positions, and for the maintenance of attractive services. Convents of men and women were dotted over the country. Charitable institutions presented the religion in its most persuasive character. Social influences were brought to bear on individuals. In short, all that statesman-like plans, skilful intrigues, Jesuitical astuteness, and money, all that Christian earnestness, zeal, and devotion, ably directed, could do, was done to restore the old Roman Catholic religion, in the hope of gaining a preponderance of influence and political power, and so ultimately of winning back England to the obedience of Rome. In spite of all this, however, the Roman Catholics have rather fallen off in numbers. Their influence is chiefly to be found in the press

and amongst the masses of the Irish Roman Catholics settled in the great towns.

We will now return to the other Nonconforming secessions.

I have said that the Calvinist principles of some of the Continental Reformers were sure to find an echo in England.

The followers of these principles in England are known in history as the Puritans. They were not only dissatisfied with abuses and corruptions, but also with some main points of the primitive and Scriptural constitution and doctrine of the Church. During the Reformation this school became an extreme section of the general body of the Reformers; and after the Reformation had been settled, in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, it became an organized body within the Church, aiming at further changes and causing great difficulties to the Queen and her bishops. Laud did his best to overthrow Puritanism; but it was too strong for him, and his repressive policy ended in the subversion of the Church, the Crown, and the Constitution. It was finally by its own extravagancies that Puritanism wearied the country, and caused the restoration of Charles II. and the astounding reaction of his reign.

The system of organization, doctrine, and discipline which Calvin had established at Geneva was accepted by the English Puritan party as the model to which they desired to bring the establishment of religion in England. Bucer, the German Reformer, Regius Professor of Divinity in the reign of Edward VI., wrote a book "On the Kingdom of our Saviour Jesus Christ," published in 1557, in which the Puritan platform was formally set forth.

The exile of Church of England clergymen during the reign of Mary, chiefly in the Low Countries, familiarized them with Calvinistic doctrine, and made them long to change their own Church in this direction. On their return, some of the bishops sympathized with their opinions, and allowed great liberty to the clergy.

The Puritan clergy, however, were not at liberty as individuals to disregard the law of the Church in their personal ministrations. They organized a system by means of which they endeavoured to introduce the Calvinistic model (the form of service with which we are familiar in Presbyterian and Dissenting places of worship) as a supplement to the lawful order, and to inoculate the whole country with its principles, under cover of their status as clergymen of the Church of England, and of the advantage it afforded them. They divided the whole kingdom into districts, and created an ecclesiastical organization of class, district, and general assemblies. The classes consisted of a few neighbouring

ministers, generally twelve. The district included several of these classes, and there were about three districts in a county. The General Assembly was a synod of the whole body. Influence was brought to bear on patrons to induce them to nominate to vacant benefices men of Puritan opinions. The Puritan incumbents were to dispense as far as possible with the legal ritual of the Prayer-Book; they were to teach the Scriptural character of the Calvinist form of Church government and discipline as well as doctrine. Where incumbents were orthodox Church of England men, means were taken to leaven their parishes. The Universities had an old privilege of nominating twelve preachers who might preach in any parish in England. The Puritans procured the appointment of eminent Puritan preachers, who itinerated through the important towns, gathering large congregations, and propagating their special opinions. Another plan was the founding of lectureships in important churches. The Puritan incumbents and lecturers often showed their dislike of the Book of Common Prayer by remaining in the vestry until the service was done; then mounting the pulpit, they gave out a metrical psalm, uttered a long extempore prayer, then the sermon; then another psalm and prayer, making a kind of supplementary service in Puritan fashion.

It was this state of things that Elizabeth and her Archbishops, Parker and Whitgift, struggled to suppress. But the minds of the people became leavened with Calvinistic teaching, especially in the great towns; and when were added the repressive measures of Laud, Stratford, and Charles I., we see how the way was prepared for the overthrow of the constitution in Church and State which was at length effected in the year 1648.

There were some, however, for whom this mixture of Puritanism with the Church of England was not sufficient. The first body of men who set up a separate communion were the Independents, about the year 1658. The cause of their secession was the assertion of the principle that the people were the legitimate source of authority in religious matters; instead of the previous view that the officers of one generation handed on the authority to the officers of the next; and so on, back to the time of the apostles themselves. Their opinions and history will be treated in a separate paper.

Next in point of time come the Baptists, or Anabaptists as they used to be called, because they baptize over again, or Antipedobaptists, because they deny the validity of infant baptism. This denomination is first heard of in Holland, where unfortunately it mixed up its religious belief with political designs, and ran into excesses subversive of all religion

and all society. Their seizure of the city of Munster, and their conspiracy for seizing other cities, made them special objects of repression by the Governments of the period; and this accounts for the severity of their treatment. Fourteen Anabaptist refugees from Holland were put to death in the reign of Henry VIII., others in the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth; and the very last person who suffered death in England on religious grounds was an Anabaptist named Whiteman, in the reign of James I.

The modern denomination of Baptists justly disclaim any connection or sympathy with these fanatics. It began in 1633, and arose out of a secession from the Independents. A few members of the Independents, who held a stricter form of Calvinistic doctrine, and desired to maintain a stricter discipline among Church members, formed themselves into a separate body. Their history, again, will be given in a distinct paper.

The greatest and most lamentable secession from the Church of England was of later date, and of very different character from the three which we have thus sketched. It was that of the Methodists or Wesleyans. But of that I will say nothing here, as another writer will recount the story.

A few words must be added about the Presbyterians, who for a short time were supreme in England. Presbyterianism was the form the Reformation took in Scotland under the influence of John Knox and Calvin, and because the Scottish Reformers could not get any bishop to join them. It consists of a system of government by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly. Lay elders are always present in these different courts as well as the clergy. The doctrines of Presbyterianism are expressed in the Westminster Confession and the Shorter Catechism; and though they insist strongly on predestination, they do not differ in really essential points from the doctrines of the Church of England. Under Scottish influences, Presbyterianism became predominant in the Long Parliament in 1641, in the time of Charles I. Parliament had no taste for Presbyterianism, but it was forced upon it by the Scotch, who insisted that there should be one confession of faith, one directory of worship, one public catechism, one form of Church government, and that prelacy should be plucked up root and branch as a plant which God hath not planted. In 1642 the Root and Branch Bill for the Abolition of the Episcopal Church was carried through both Houses of Parliament.

The Presbyterians were strongly opposed by the Independents, who looked upon them as little better than Episcopalians. From the rise into power of the Independents, the Presbyterian system, which was favoured by the Westminster

Assembly of Divines, was of necessity overturned. From about 1648 the Presbyterian discipline ceased, and, with the enthusiastic support of Oliver Cromwell, Congregationalism became the ostensible religion of the country.

The Presbyterian Church of England, which ministers chiefly to Scottish people residing in this country, has 11 presbyteries, 297 congregations, 10 preaching stations, and 68,992 communicants. It has a theological college in London, and supports 52 missionaries abroad.

The Unitarians, who are the only distinctly heretical body of Nonconformists, deny the distinction of persons in the Godhead. They date as an organization in this country from 1773, when a sceptical and Semi-Arian clergyman named Lindsey resigned his parish of Catterck, and set up a meeting in Essex Street, Strand, where he was assisted by some other seceding clergymen, and formed a congregation of sympathizers. From this Essex Street congregation modern Unitarians have sprung. Priestley is their greatest name; Belsham's "Calm Inquiry" is their ablest religious publication, and may be taken as an exponent of their doctrines. They are a small body, generally of well-to-do and educated people. Some of the old English Presbyterian congregations have become Unitarian. They are strongest in Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds. They have about 350 ministers, and 345 chapels and other places of worship.

Taking these different movements into review, I should say that the Independents or Congregationalists represent the idea of individual liberty, and the freedom of congregations to choose their own pastors. The principle of election ought certainly to have been always recognised in the Church; and as for individual liberty, so harsh and rigid was the tyranny of Strafford, that we cannot be surprised at the rapid growth of Independent opinions. At the Restoration most of them might again have been absorbed into the great national communion; but unhappily the statesmen and prelates who framed the Act of Uniformity in the reign of Charles II. contrived it on purpose to exclude the Congregationalists, and so the division became irreconcilable. The Presbyterians represent the principle of the original identity of presbyters and bishops. That brings them very near indeed to ourselves. Many High Church Bishops have been inclined to recognise Presbyterian succession and orders. They were right in protesting against an episcopal rule which had degenerated from the primitive standard of a bishop, ruling with the consent of his presbyters, into an autocracy, as it once seemed, resting on the power of the secular arm. The Baptists may be taken to remind us that, although infant baptism is the primitive rule, yet adult

baptism may be in cases acceptable to God. Whenever infant baptism degenerated into a mere mechanical performance, without a living faith on the part of minister, parents, sponsors, or congregation, there was the natural inducement to Baptist principles. The life of the Puritan party was the intense belief in God's government of the world, and its stern, ascetic piety, in contrast with the lukewarm faith and lax lives of the mass of the orthodox. The Wesleyan movement, which was originated and conducted by clergymen of the Church of England, was a revival of the ancient discipline of the Church. It was not merely the love of autocratic power in the leaders of the movement, but want of confidence in the lawful authorities into whose hands that discipline ought to have been committed, which led to the hardening of the society into a sect.

Under these circumstances, and with all these past mistakes in view, we ought to be very humble in our attitude, charitable in our judgment, and tender and respectful towards those who differ from us. While conscientiously holding to our own views, as the truest and most reasonable, we ought not to act as if no other view was possible to minds differently trained and in different circumstances from our own. We ought to be looking for points of agreement, instead of points of difference. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, one Holy Spirit, one invisible body, the ideal Church of Christ, one Atonement for sin, one right of prayer, one hope of immortal life, one repentance, one Christian love; surely these elements, besides an infinity of others that we hold in common, are already much!

That is, at any rate, the view of our Bishops. At the last Lambeth Conference they issued to us the following instruction on the subject in their encyclical letter:

"After anxious discussion, we have resolved to content ourselves with laying down certain articles as a basis on which approach may be, by God's blessing, made towards Home Reunion. These articles, four in number, will be found in the appended resolutions.

"The attitude of the Anglican Communion towards the religious bodies now separated from it by unhappy divisions would appear to be this: We hold ourselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference with any of those who may desire intercommunion with us in a more or less perfect form. We lay down conditions on which such intercommunion is, in our opinion, and according to our conviction, possible. For, however we may long to embrace those now alienated from us, so that the ideal of the one flock under the one Shepherd may be realized, we must not be unfaithful stewards of the

great deposit entrusted to us. We cannot desert our position, either as to faith or discipline. That concord would, in our judgment, be neither true nor desirable which should be produced by such surrender.

“But we gladly and thankfully recognise the real religious work which is carried on by Christian bodies not of our Communion. We cannot close our eyes to the visible blessing which has been vouchsafed to their labours for Christ’s sake. Let us not be misunderstood on this point. We are not insensible to the strong ties, the rooted convictions, which attach them to their present position. These we respect, as we wish that on our side our own principles and feelings may be respected. Competent observers, indeed, assert that not in England only, but in all parts of the Christian world, there is a real yearning for unity—that men’s hearts are moved more than heretofore towards Christian fellowship. The Conference has shown in its discussions, as well as its resolutions, that it is deeply penetrated with this feeling. May the Spirit of Love move on the troubled waters of religious differences.”

The special committee of Bishops also sent in the recommendation for mutual conference already quoted.

They added that they could not conclude their report without laying before the Conference the following suggestion, unanimously adopted by the Committee :

“That the Conference recommend as of great importance, in tending to bring about Reunion, the dissemination of information respecting the standards of doctrine, and the formularies in use in the Anglican Church ; and that information be disseminated, on the other hand, respecting the authoritative standards of doctrine, worship, and government adopted by the other bodies of Christians into which the English-speaking races are divided.”

They also desire—following in this respect the example of the Convocation of Canterbury—to pray the Conference to commend this matter of Reunion to the special prayers of all Christian people, both within and (so far as it may rightly do so) without our Communion, in preparation for the Conferences which have been suggested, and while such Conferences are going on ; and they trust that the present Lambeth Conference may also see fit to issue, or to pray His Grace the President to issue, some pastoral letter to all Christian people upon this all-important subject. For never certainly did the Church of Christ need more urgently the spirit of wisdom and of love which He alone can bestow who is “the Author and Giver of all good things.”

Are we doing what we can to carry out the suggestions of the Bishops and the instructions of the Lambeth Conference ?

If we are indeed sincere and genuine disciples of our Master, we shall each of us try to make personal friends of any Nonconformists that we meet, and endeavour to learn from them some Christian grace or virtue. We shall try, by the consistency of our lives, the earnestness of our faith, and the width of our charity, to recommend to others the principles that we hold to be true. We shall take every opportunity of joining together on religious and philanthropic platforms in all good works. Throughout every town, and in every country village, we shall do our utmost to make those who do not agree with us feel that there is no social ban upon them because they are unable to subscribe to the national organization of religion. Outward and formal unity we cannot at present expect: the lines of division sunk by the mistakes of the past are still too deep; but we can all strive for the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace—for that we can all daily and earnestly pray. And some day, in God's own good time, some great fervour of love will overspread the land like the universal dawn of a calm and cloudless summer day; and barriers will be broken down, and prejudices will be discarded, and misunderstandings cleared up, and we shall find that, by each coming as close as we can to the Lord Jesus Christ, we have come close to each other also!

The Removal of the Disabilities of Nonconformists has been in the following order, and has been promoted in all cases by liberal members of the Church of England:

- 1689. Toleration Act.
- 1812. Repeal of the Conventicle and Five-Mile Acts.
- 1813. Disabilities of Unitarians removed.
- 1828. Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Nonconformists in future only to make a declaration on the true faith of a Christian.
- 1829. Emancipation of Roman Catholics.
- 1832. Nonconformist Ministers may sit in House of Commons.
- 1833. Quakers, Moravians and Separatists admitted to Parliament on making affirmation.
- 1836. Marriage and Registration Acts, allowing Nonconformists to be married in their own churches, with presence of Registrar, or before Registrar alone.
- 1836. Royal Charter and Annual Grant to London University, founded for giving university education to Nonconformists.
- 1845. Founding of the Secular Colleges for Cork, Galway, Belfast.
- 1854. Religious tests for B.A. at Oxford abolished.
- 1856. Tests for all degrees except Divinity abolished at Cambridge.
- 1845. Jews admitted to Corporations.
- 1858. Jews admitted to Parliament.
- 1866. Abolition of Church Rates.
- 1871. Nonconformists eligible for Fellowships (except clerical) at universities.
- 1882. All Headships and Fellowships at the universities thrown open, except a few.
- 1882. Churchyards open to Nonconformist burials and ministers.

Except a few phrases in the obsolete Canons of 1604, there is no real bar to friendly intercourse between Churchmen and Nonconformists. The Church of England is so enormously the largest body, containing more than half of the population, that, if the other bodies will only be content to leave her alone to do her work, she can heartily bid them God-speed in their religious efforts for the people, and join with them cordially in many a philanthropic and religious movement for the benefit of the great Master, of the unfortunate, the godless, and the indifferent.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

Reviews.

Religions of Primitive Peoples. By D. G. BRINTON. G. P. Putnam's Sons, London and New York.

THIS is a book that we have read with a great deal of interest. The author's range of authorities is very wide, his style is clear and attractive, and there is a tone of scrupulous respect maintained which will cause the reader, even if he dissent from certain remarks, no irritation at statements so reverentially made. We do not say—far from it—that the book is one which commands our assent altogether, but there is nothing in it to rouse rancour or give unnecessary pain.

In 1891 a committee was formed in America to promote the historical study of religions. Lecturers were selected to give courses of lectures, which were afterwards to be printed, on some religion or phase of religion. They were intended to be popular, somewhat after the style of the Hibbert Lectures in England; we do not know the particular denomination, if any, under whose auspices they fall. The first series was published in 1896, and the lectures composing it were by Professor Rhys Davids, on "Buddhism." The volume before us is the second in the series. Dr. Brinton is a well-known American ethnologist, and a Professor in the University of Pennsylvania.

Beginning with the methods and definitions of a scientific study of primitive religions, he next investigates their origin and contents, and further, what is capable of more exact research, the expression of primitive religions in word, in object, and in rite. A final survey of the lines of development of these primitive systems closes the book.

We cannot, of course, follow Dr. Brinton through the whole of the line of his arguments, and we can only refer a reader to the infinite variety of allusions and quotations with which he supports them, but mention may be made of certain leading facts, to which he invites particular attention.

There is a striking similarity in primitive religious ideas. We have all recognised this. Wherever we turn to the earliest and simplest religions of the world, we find them dealing with nearly the same objective facts in nearly the same subjective fashion, the differences being due to local and temporal causes. How is this to be explained? By tradition, say some. By the relationship or historic connection of early peoples, is said again. But it would seem that the true answer lies in the fundamental