

where there is Jesus Christ, there is the Church with Him." Yes, "coming from every religious movement, our hymns betoken," says a distinguished living writer, "an unsectarian catholicity such as marks all true religion. On the neutral ground of hymns we rejoice alike in the classic sweetness of Addison, in the simple faith of Ken, in the fervent devotion of Toplady, the poetic tenderness of Heber, the chastened sadness of Cowper, the saintly strength of Newman, the soothing peacefulness of Keble, the passionate yearnings of Faber and Neale. What matters that some of these were Bishops and some Dissenters, some Puritans and some Roman Catholics, some Armenians and some Calvinists? A true hymn, simple and passionate, natural, manly, fervent, thrilling with spontaneity and vigour, knows nothing of the petty distinctions of Ritualist or Evangelist; it knows only of Christ and God." In the calm light thrown by our hymn-books on the consoling truth of the inward unity of Christendom, we can make with confidence the great confession, "I believe in the communion of saints."

JOHN VAUGHAN.

ART. V.—PARTY SPIRIT.

THE third and last subject for National Repentance mentioned by the Bishops in the appeal which they made last January for united prayer during the dying year of the century is one that will be very popular with all of us. It alludes to a fault which we all see in our neighbours, though we are very unwilling to detect it in ourselves. It is *Religious Party Spirit*.

"We cannot disguise from ourselves," say the Bishops, "that the greatest hindrances to the advance of the kingdom of Christ among men are to be found in the bosom of Christendom itself. Next to the irreligious lives and inconsistent spirit of many professing Christians, perhaps the chief hindrance is to be found in the unhappy divisions in the Church of Christ. The divisions of Christendom, the present troubles in our communion, and, more grievous still, the acrimonious temper which too often characterizes religious controversy, are deplorable impediments to the progress of the Gospel. All these hindrances are again a call to prayer." What excellent advice! we say, and how admirably suited for those who do not agree with us!

The party or schismatic spirit comes from an exaggerated

and one-sided reverence for religious teachers. Sometimes it issues in the formation of movements within the Church, sometimes without; but all alike arise from excessive partiality and unreasoning devotion to the leader. A great teacher arises, and forms a movement. He is opposed. Allegiance to him becomes a tradition. So it goes on. It has always been so, and always will be. It began, for our warning, in the very earliest days of Christianity.

The Corinthian Church, so lately founded by St. Paul himself, failed to abide in the unity of Christ. Following the fashion of the Greek philosophical schools, its members soon clustered round different human organs of the Spirit of Christ, who had themselves no desire for such rivalry. The different parties maintained and magnified what they thought to be the peculiar excellencies of their favourite teachers with contentious zeal, until at last they broke into factions, each separate tendency pushing itself to an extreme, while they still met in the same place, and belonged to the same Church.

St. Paul enumerates the parties in the order of their rise: that of Paul, of Apollos, of Cephas (or Peter), and of Christ. Their origin was the appearance of the brilliant Apollos at Corinth. His treatment of the Gospel was essentially the same as St. Paul's; but while St. Paul made it a rule to preserve the utmost simplicity in his preaching, Apollos, on the contrary, seems to have given full scope to his Alexandrine learning, and to his well-trained power of eloquence and argument. These shining qualities so attracted some members of the Church that, in their over-estimate of them, they exalted Apollos above St. Paul, as a teacher of superior education and culture. Over against the adherents of Apollos, accordingly, there arose a loyal and indignant party for St. Paul, who applauded the founder of the Church as their master, and wished to make him their head. Against both of these there gathered gradually a third faction, under the influence of Judaizing teachers, who wished for a legalistic system founded on Jewish rites, and who, without sufficient reason, invoked the name of St. Peter.

Finally, there was a party of purists, who were shocked at the devotion of these various cliques to their favourite divines, and were resolved in a lofty spirit to exalt Christ alone as the Head to Whom they themselves belonged, but who did this in so exclusive, disdainful, and partial a manner, that, instead of proving a uniting element in the distracted Church, they only made the rent worse.

St. Paul's remedy for all this is to abase as much as possible his own importance and that of Apollos, as mere instruments of God, and to refer the divided Corinthians back to Christ

Himself. Human teachers, he urged, however great, were nothing but *ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*. Those mysteries had been revealed once for all in Christ; that was the important thing. Human instrumentality was only of value in so far as it represented that Divine influence, and was in accordance with it. *Other foundation could no man lay than that which was laid, which was Jesus Christ*. Christ's work, Christ's teaching, Christ's life, Christ's character—these were all important. Human ideas were nothing. If anyone among them had a reputation for superior wisdom, for human gifts of intelligence, and doctrinal refinements and improvements, let him become a fool that he might become wise. Paul, Apollos, Peter, everybody and everything else, were only of use in so far as they represented the truth of Christ; for Christ Himself was the revelation of God.

To St. Paul there can be no question that schism means the indulgence of these partialities to the verge of forming divisions within the Church. It is comforting to us to know that when, not many years later, St. Clement of Rome wrote his Epistle to the Church of Corinth, the wise and self-forgotten counsels of St. Paul had so far prevailed that these discussions had not been of long continuance. St. Clement speaks of them as something long past and gone, with which he compares later quarrels as a phenomenon even worse.

From this object-lesson of the Church at Corinth we see that all sectarianism and party organization, arising out of this inordinate preference and loyalty for favourite teachers, is in itself sinful, and fraught with dangerous consequences to the truth and peace of the Church. It ruptures the Church's unity by limiting Christ's right over us, and our absolute and exclusive subjection to Him, in favour of special interpretations of special men. It allows to a mere man, or set of men, and to their peculiar opinions and ways and doctrines, something of that power and importance which belong to Christ alone. It binds its followers, and would wish to bind all Christians alike, to these special views and objects, as if on these our whole salvation depended. It causes those whom it influences, on one side or another, at one time or another of the Church's history, to move in these favourite views as the very element of their existence. To these special views, customs, or ideas it draws their whole devotion; and so it causes a human mind or minds, with all their individualities and singularities, to take the position of essential mediators in that spiritual life which can come alone by truth and grace.

The tendency to sectarianism or party spirit lies sometimes in human ignorance, partiality, and stubbornness of opinion, sometimes in conceit and egotism, sometimes in an honest and

sincere incapacity to estimate the truth of doctrine. We believe our own party to be truest and best, and that it ought to establish itself over other parties, whereas the things that divide us from other parties are not, according to St. Paul's criterion, fundamental. Party spirit does not consist in holding fast to our profession or opinion for conscience' sake—that is a right that is inherent in everybody—but in organizing ourselves for the purpose of making our specific opinions triumphant, and in using our own specific varieties of doctrine or religion as a means for exalting our own party and for ruling over others, depressing them, or opposing them.

And do not think that this is confined to leaders alone. As at Corinth, so in the history of the Church, so in our own day, the party spirit of followers is generally more intense than in those they follow. This is the case especially among party women, who are less versed than men in the logic of life and in the simplicity as well as the many-sidedness of truth. That votary of party spirit who does not feel sufficiently strong or courageous to take the lead will at least join himself with ambitious devotion to some other person better able to do it, in whose victories and successes he may share.

But Christianity refuses to be sectarian or partisan at all. Lord Bacon, in writing on Unity in Religion, refers us to St. Paul's criterion of Christian truth, the foundation teaching of Jesus Christ Himself: "The league of Christians," he says, "has been penned by our Lord in two clauses, which only need sound and plain exposition: '*He that is not with us is against us:*' and '*He that is not against us is on our side.*' That is," he says, "that the points fundamental and of substance in religion should be truly discerned and distinguished from points not absolutely of faith, but only of opinion, order, or good intention." Oh, what heart-burnings, mutual recriminations, factions, divisions and cruelties, might have been saved had any attention been paid to the Divine rule!

Excellent and wholesome advice, we say, and how justly applicable to those obstinate people who will not accept our views!

But when such a condition of things has grown up in the English Church as that described by the Bishops, it is impossible that the fault can be all on one side; and it becomes very important for us, as part of our spiritual discipline, to examine ourselves in order to discover whether we ourselves belong to a party, whether we ourselves have been enlisting under human leaders, whether we ourselves have been brandishing swords on the party arena, whether some of the clamour and discord does not lie at our own door.

Now, here again the same wise man is of great service in

suggesting to us tests by which we may examine our consciences. He reminds us that there are two kinds of controversies about which men become partisans, and by which they ought to take heed of rending God's Church :

"The one is, when the matter of the point controverted is too small and light, not worth the heat and strife about it, kindled only by contradiction. For, as it is noted by one of the Fathers, Christ's coat indeed had no seam, but the Church's vesture was of divers colours: whereupon he saith, Let there be variety in the robe, but no rent. They be two things, unity and uniformity.

"And the other kind of controversy is this: when the matter of the point controverted is great, but it is driven to an over-great subtilty and obscurity, so that it becometh a thing rather ingenious than substantial. A man that is of judgment and understanding shall sometimes hear ignorant men differ, and know well within himself that those which so differ mean one and the same thing, and yet they themselves would never agree: and if it come so to pass in that distance of judgment which is between man and man, shall we not think that God above, that knows the heart, doth not discern that frail men, in some of their contradictions, intend the same thing, and so He approveth of both? Men create oppositions which are not, and put them into new terms so fixed: so that, whereas the meaning ought to govern the term, the term in effect governeth the meaning."

"Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?"

In looking into our consciences, it should be a warning to us to remember that the worst dissensions have been about very small matters: the time of keeping Easter, the way in which clergymen should cut their hair, the addition of a word to the creed the meaning of which the other side fully admitted; the question whether the surplice was allowable; the question whether Bishops ought to have a distinctive dress; the exact meaning of such an abstract idea as Predestination; the sign of the cross in baptism; the question whether the bread used in Holy Communion should be leavened or unleavened; the question whether prayers should be printed or extemporaneous; the question whether organs are permissible; the question whether hymns should be read out line by line before singing. All these and a multitude of other trivialities have seemed of vital importance to different generations of Christians. It is difficult for us to believe it: but so it was. It is these things that have divided Churches, or filled them with confusion and hatred. It is more than probable that at a time when the Church is full of internal discord,

and, as the Archbishop of Canterbury lately said, is more in danger from disruption than disestablishment, the like trivialities may have assumed the like absurd and unreasonable importance amongst ourselves. If you take the harsh correspondence in half a dozen ecclesiastical newspapers of one week, and compare them, and consider what it is that has separated these good and earnest men, and made them think so bitterly and unkindly of each other, the slightness of the cause, the needlessness of the difference, the malignity of the dislike, the defilement of the calm atmosphere of the Church by the evil tempers of distrust, suspicion, misrepresentation, disparagement, and hostility, then one cannot but think of the exquisite lines of the Irish poet on quarrels :

“ Alas ! how slight a cause may move
 Dissension between hearts that love !
 Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
 And sorrow but more closely tied ;
 That stood the storm when waves were rough,
 Yet in the sunny hour fall off,
 Like ships that have gone down at sea
 When heaven was all tranquillity !
 A something light as air, a look,
 A word unkind or wrongly taken—
 Oh, love that tempests never shook !
 A breath, a touch like this hath shaken.
 And ruder words will soon rush in
 To spread the breach that words begin ;
 And eyes forget the gentle ray
 They wore in friendship's smiling day ;
 And voices lose the tone that shed
 A tenderness round all they said ;
 Till, fast declining, one by one
 The sweetnesses of love are gone,
 And hearts, so lately mingled, seem
 Like broken clouds—or like the stream
 That smiling left the mountain's brow
 As though its waters ne'er could sever,
 Yet e'er it reached the plain below
 Breaks into floods that part for ever !”

“ *Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal ?*”

One of the evils of going into the party room is that such combinations, either for the exaltation of one doctrine or for the denial of another, tend to create words, terms, and phrases of their own which are not present in the foundation of Jesus Christ, but which gradually become shibboleths, which the followers of the party always expect to hear, and the absence of which fills them with disgust and the suspicion of heresy. Thus these favourite terms inevitably crystallize the party more and more, and separate it in a wholly unnecessary and

most lamentable manner from the great mass of the other members of the Church. So the division becomes permanent, so the rent or schism grows wider and deeper. And this exclusiveness is generally on the part of those who have adopted the favourite terms and phraseology. They cannot help feeling a sense of superior wisdom, and looking down on those who have not taken up their shibboleths. They have a sense of delightful isolation and elevation, like those little cliques in society who have invented for themselves what they call a new language. "All the more fools the others," they say, "for not accepting our views and our words." But it is not so. These things are not of the foundation of Jesus Christ; and to expect allegiance and submission in such matters is merely a proof of the domination of party spirit.

Another evil of going into the party room is that it supplies those who are there with a spurious and baneful form of that sympathy for which man has a right and genuine craving. "To anyone unconnected with party," wrote a deep student of human nature of its effect on the rank and file of partisans, "the temptations of personal interest or gratification are in some degree checked by the disapprobation of those around him. But, alas! a partisan finds himself surrounded by persons, most of whom, though perhaps not unscrupulous in their private capacity, are prepared to *keep him in countenance* in much that is unjustifiable—to overlook or excuse almost anything in a zealous and efficient partisan—and even to applaud what in another they would condemn, so it does but promote some party object. For party corrupts the conscience by making almost all virtues flow, as it were, *in its own party channel*. Zeal for truth becomes gradually zeal for the watchword, the shibboleth, of the party; justice, mercy, benevolence, are all limited to the members of that party, and are censured if extended to those of the opposite party, or (which is usually even more detested) to those of no party. Candour is made to consist in putting the best construction on all that comes from one side, and the worst on all that does not. Whatever is wrong in any member of the party is either boldly denied, in the face of all evidence, or vindicated, or passed over in silence; and whatever is, or can be brought to appear, wrong on the opposite side is readily credited, and brought forward and exaggerated. The principles of conduct originally the noblest—disinterested self-devotion, courage, and active zeal—party perverts to its own purposes; veracity, submissive humility, charity—in short, every Christian virtue—it enlists in its cause and confines within its own limits; and the conscience becomes gradually so corrupted that it becomes a guide to evil instead of good. 'The light that is in us becomes darkness.'"

These last sentences are the words of a famous Archbishop, a very acute observer of his own times. Again we say: What admirable advice, and how perfectly true of those who do not agree with us!

The third evil of going into the party room is that it leads to personal dislike of those who pass into the opposite room, or who do not go into any room at all. This is the commonest and most obvious result of party spirit, and I need not dwell upon it. In some it amounts to no more than a shirking from the companionship of those who do not agree with us; in others it takes the form of perpetual depreciation whenever their name is mentioned; in others it breeds slanders, misrepresentations, monstrous lies, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Of this, God knows, the Church is full. From this we pray three times a week, "Good Lord, deliver us!" This alone, even if we are free from it ourselves, when we know it to be the direct result of party spirit, should be enough to prevent us, for the sake of example and influence for others, from entering the pestilential atmosphere of party at all.

"I beseech you, brethren," says the loving and tender heart of St. Paul in like circumstances—"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." I said that this would be a popular subject, because, in order to see the evils of that party spirit which the Bishops deplore and of which they entreat us to repent, it is not necessary to go very far; we can measure the melancholy result in the words and conduct of people about in our world. I do not ask my readers to apply these statements to themselves, but to think of the tendencies which produce these evils as they exist in the Church. And then I will ask them with all my heart, for the sake of that great historic Church which we all love, and which has such unrivalled opportunities for good of every kind opening out before her, to avoid to the very utmost, at whatever cost, the increase of this dire spirit of partisanship by any complicity of their own, however slight, with party combinations. Of course, we shall say, "My own party is the cause of truth; it is right; it is the true Church." But then we shall remember that the members of every party would say the very same. Such a complacent opinion will only lead to perpetuation of faction. The only remedy is the remedy that St. Paul urged so affectionately and strenuously on the Corinthians, to turn with all our heart and soul and mind and strength to the foundation-truths of Jesus Christ. If we maintain these with any power that we have, and cultivate

the philanthropies, graces, and charities that spring from these, then our life will be far more fruitful, fertile, and happy. The smaller things of which Bacon spoke which are not fundamentals, or even the great things when pushed to an extreme of refinement, we must make a real effort to put in their proper place for fear of the carnal evils of factious pursuit. We may have opinions about them; we may have controversies about them, if need be; but we shall refuse to commit ourselves to all the dangers of combination on their account. It is well to remember the advice of Gamaliel about greater matters than these: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it: lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." By the love we bear our Saviour, by the loyalty which we owe to the English Church, let us consecrate the opening of the new century by ceasing to exaggerate things that are not fundamental by looking in all things to the foundation of Jesus Christ for the estimation of the relative importance of controversies. For this one year, the first of a momentous series, should we not refuse to go near the party room, and see how well we can get on without it? A sacrifice is demanded of each of us for the cause of the peace of the Church: it is only to go back in all things to our only Lord and Saviour, Master and Teacher, Jesus Christ. The nearer we are to Him, the nearer we shall be to each other. Personal traditions, human influences, may be recognised in their proper place; but when they divide us in parties, and distort great truths, and destroy proportions, and fill us with the fierce glee of sectarian fury, then certainly they are not of God. For this one year of renewed life and responsibility let all refrain from these combinations, which might in different times be tolerable, but which are now necessarily and essentially imbued with the evil spirit of division. "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no schisms among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment!"

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