

Christianity from Unitarianism and Congregationalism up to moderately 'High' Ritualism. We notice, with melancholy interest, that no serious attempt was made to impeach the statements of Rev. W. Beatty as to the loss of hold of the Anglican Church upon its followers in New Zealand. This is an old standing complaint in England. There is sad reading there-upon in Conybeare's *Essays, Ecclesiastical and Social* (p. 99), in the speeches or sermons of Canon Money of Deptford, Prebendary Harry Jones, the Bishop of Rochester, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, Rev. J. S. Street (in his *Increase of Immorality*, pp. 28, 30), and sundry writers in reviews such as the *Quarterly*, the *Contemporary*, the *Fortnightly*, etc. Side by side with this we gladly acknowledge an awakening of spiritual life and charitable work, mainly through the efforts of the High Church party. They have been to the English Church of the past fifty years what the Wesleys were to that of the last century, with this important difference, that they have familiarised millions of Anglicans with Catholic doctrines and modes of thought, and thus, under Providence, led many a faltering footstep to the door of the Church, and finally past it portals.

A DESTROYING PRINCIPLE.

Judging from the Auckland controversy, there seems to be as many different explanations of the decline of Anglican Church influence as there are writers. Some have hit the right nail full square upon the head. The foes of the Church of England are those of her own household. She is a divided house, and we have high Authority for the statement that a house divided against itself cannot stand. The causes of division and consequent decay lie deep—they are bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of Protestantism. They are bound up in its very essence. They lie in the bed-rock principle of its constitution, namely—the substitution of a fallible individual private judgment for the infallible authority of the living Church of Christ. Such a principle makes every man and woman—and every mood of every man and woman—the final judge of what is true and false, right and wrong, in religion. By the very logic of the situation it leads necessarily to division and disintegration. The facts of history have abundantly proved that the principle of private judgment is destructive of any positive religion, or, if it comes to that, of any stable code of morals. In effect it leaves every point of doctrine and of morals unfixed, uncertain, undefined. To one, one point may be unacceptable; to another, another; to a third, both; to a fourth, neither. So long as the principle of private judgment is preserved there can be no limit to this disintegration. As a matter of history, there has been no limit. Witness Germany, for instance, where the warring sects that are bound by an iron law into what is termed the Evangelical Church, scarcely preserve even the essentials of Christian belief. Witness the breaking up of the English Establishment, of the Calvinistic Churches, and of such later outcrops as the creeds that look to Wesley as their founder. And the process still goes merrily on. Private judgment has broken up the Reformed creeds into a babel of warring sects. It has turned God's ordered revelation into a chaos. It has applied itself to the Fathers with almost equal effect; likewise to history—as witnessed in the 'Continuity theory'; it has whittled away at the 39 Articles till it has stripped them of their natural meaning; and has left us 'a hundred sects battling within one Church.' All this is its natural and necessary result. The doctrine of private judgment is the apotheosis of doubt, the canonisation of fallibility, the glorification of divisions and sects. Other causes may, and do, combine with it to produce religious dry-rot. This must ever be the chief one.

The one curious—and contradictory—feature of the anti-Ritualistic crusade both in England and in Auckland is the effort to compel uniformity of mere *ritual* within certain limits. On the face of it, this is an interference with the great Reformation principle of private judgment. It reminds one strongly of what Fontenelle wrote of pagan Rome—and his words were approved by Lecky: 'There is reason to believe that among the pagans religion was merely a matter of practice, regarding which speculative questions were matters of indifference: "do as others do, and believe whatever you like."'

HOW IT WORKED.

The right of private judgment is regarded as the great palladium of Reformed liberty, but, as a matter of fact, the principle was never acted upon by any of the Reformers, nor is it logically followed at the present day by any one of the Protestant denominations. The Reformers saw, and the Protestant denominations of our day see, that it could not be strictly adhered to without a complete destruction of every semblance of a Church. On the other hand, they cannot abandon it without accepting the Catholic principle of authority. Here is a dilemma. The Reformers cut the Gordian knot by making private judgment begin and end with themselves. The 'glorious liberty' of the Gospel was just theirs, and nobody else's. Hence Articles of Religion, Confessions of Faith, etc. Each, as far as it went, was a death blow aimed at private judgment. They were intended to be bonds of union, an extinguisher of controversy. They missed their mark. Each differed from the other. Each was confessedly fallible. Each was, nevertheless, enforced from the Alps to the Arctic Circle by excommunication, exile, fines, imprisonment, torture, and death. (To the present hour we have heresy trials in the Presbyterian Church.) The Elizabethan 'settlement of religion' and the Book of Common Prayer are an instance in point. By what right should Zwingli or Calvin or Luther or Cranmer inflict their private judgment on posterity? Is the Book of Common Prayer—with its admittedly fallible 39 Articles—to be regarded as a fetish? The framers of the first Prayer-book rejected the older ritual; the framers of the second Prayer-book rejected the first, and so on. On the Reformation principle of private judgment why should not the Anglican Church of our time, or any individual Anglican, for that matter, reject the Prayer-book now in use? Any attempt, whether by State, clergy, or Convocation, to interfere with their right of practical private judgment should be regarded as an act of tyranny.

SIGNING THE ARTICLES.

Much has been made, both in England and in Auckland, of the well-known fact that the Ritualistic clergy subscribe their 'unfeigned assent and consent' to 'everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer.' The complaint is an old one. Private judgment fretted against the Articles at an early date in the Reformation. In 1772, clergymen of the Establishment wrote against them and petitioned Parliament to be relieved of the grievance of subscribing to them. To this hour Parliament has steadily refused. And to this hour we have the melancholy spectacle of clergy stretching their private judgment to the farthest verge of its breaking strain and adopting the extremest forms of casuistry to find in the 39 Articles Catholic doctrines and practices which are there condemned in set and express terms. Rev. Vernon Staley's *Catholic Religion* is a notable instance in point. Bishop Bramhall (1591-1663) regarded the Articles not as 'essentials of saving faith, but as pious opinions'; 'neither,' said he, 'do we oblige every man to believe them, but only not to contradict them.' Archdeacon Balcuy (1686-1748) wrote of the Articles that 'some of them are expressed in doubtful terms, others are inaccurate, perhaps unphilosophical; others, again, may chance to mislead an ignorant reader into some erroneous opinion.' Dr. Hey, Norrisian Professor at Cambridge (1797), in his *Lectures in Divinity*, has an elaborate excuse for the Anglican and Calvinistic clergy who subscribe to Articles of Faith which they do not believe. Archdeacon Paley (1743-1805) assumed that a great part of the clergy of his day signed the Articles without believing them. He does not blame them. The Bishop of Carlisle went further still; for, in his *Considerations* he defended the subscribing to what was not believed. The same was done by Archdeacon Powell, Bishop Hoadley, and many others. To come to our own day, Froude, who was an Anglican clergyman, wrote of the official creed, in his life of Queen Elizabeth: 'The Thirty-nine Articles, strained and cracked by three centuries of evasive ingenuity, scarcely now embarrass the feeblest of consciences. The clergyman of the nineteenth century subscribes them with such a smile as might have been worn by Samson when his Philistine mistress bound his arms with cords and withes.' Others, on the contrary, as strongly insist upon strict adherence to what their private judgment tells them is the plain, literal meaning of the Articles. And thus we have three officially-recognised divisions in the Anglican Church—the Broad, the Low, and the High—with their myriads of doctrinal differences, comprising every variety of creed from mild agnosticism up to the very verge of 'Romanism.' One party like, say, the Bishops of Hereford and Sodor and Man, condemns the doctrines of the others as 'errors' and 'superstitions,' and their ritual as 'retrograde and superstitious sensationalism,' 'idolatrous and absolutely inconsistent with the maintenance of a national Church as such.' And so on. Christ prayed that His followers might be one. He decreed that there should be one Body, one Fold, one Shepherd, one Lord, one Faith. There was one—St. Peter—for whom He prayed that his faith might not fail, and that he, being once converted, might confirm his brethren. The true Church of Christ must then be one. It must have the note of Unity. Every divided creed is therefore a witness against itself. It cannot be the one Body of Christ. For Christ is not divided.

A HOPELESS HOPE.

The history of the reformed creeds has abundantly proved that such hopeless dis-sension must ever be the rule so long as the principle of private judgment takes the place of authority. In England, as in Auckland, there are many who place their hopes—not of unity of doctrine, but of some approach to uniformity of discipline—in a recognition of the Bishop's authority to prohibit any service not contained in the Prayer-Book. But the Prayer-Book itself was introduced as a novelty long ago. It was repeatedly and very substantially altered from time to time. A bishop in condemning novel rites and practices in his churches would, in effect, be condemning a principle on which his whole religious system rests. The *Church Times* is already lecturing the bishops, and there is every indication that the Catholic practices which Ritualists have been struggling for during almost half a century will not be readily given up. We are glad to see both by the English papers and the *Auckland Herald* that there are many who recognise the urgent necessity of a final and authoritative court of appeal on matters of doctrine and ritual. The lack of this, coupled with the wholesale and deep-seated differences that distract the Anglican fold, is recognised by, among many others, the Bishop of Sodor and Man as one of the causes which have driven people from the Anglican Church into the Catholic Church, or the Nonconformist body, or into the vortex of indifferentism and infidelity. The lesson is a useful one, but it is too dearly bought. Rev. W. Beatty wrote: 'A parish may be rent asunder by strifes about the order of worship, and there is no one in authority who has "the time or inclination" to step in as judge, arbitrator, or conciliator, to heal wounded consciences and restore peace and unity.' Rev. W. Beatty may take heart of grace. He has put his finger on the principle which has broken Protestantism into fragments—the rejection of that divinely appointed authority which holds the Catholic Church together through all the shifting scenes of time, the wonder of the ages. Her children, of every race and colour and clime are one Body, one Fold, not by virtue of any merely human or external bond. They are—to use the words of the Saviour's prayer for unity—'made perfect in one' by the in-dwelling of that Divine Spirit that is to teach the Church all truth and abide with her till the end of time.

Despite the nagging of one or two small-fry agnostic writers, their question-begging, and their airs of infallible omniscience, the Auckland controversy may effect much good if it only succeeds in bringing home to the minds of people the living principle which gives the Catholic Church her marvellous unity, and shows them that the negation of it is the cause of the miserable distractions and divisions of Protestantism, which are the laughing-stock of agnostic, atheist, and pagan, a clog upon the spread of Christianity, and a grief to earnest men of every creed.