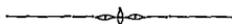


would be attended with the greatest difficulty. Our Church would have to give up the Preface to the Ordination Forms, and to obtain the repeal of the Act of Uniformity. I concur with the Bishop of Edinburgh, that "the proposal if carried out would split the Church in two." I also agree with the Bishop and Mr. Gore in their advice—"Let them not be in too great a hurry. Let them be patient and prayerful, and trust in God, and the work"—*i.e.*, of union—"would be done."

Let our Church *recognise* the Church of Scotland, etc., as visible Churches. Let us candidly acknowledge the validity of their sacraments. Let us cherish *intercommunion*, as far as is possible, between Churches which are not actually in union; and then, resting in quietness and confidence, we may dare to hope that, in the providence of God, in His own good time, *this* celestial vision shall be a real and glorious birth.

THE RIGHT HON. ROBERT R. WARREN.



ART. V.—THE BENEFITS OF THE REFORMATION.

HIS Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury has lately, on two prominent occasions, called attention to the habit of treating the Reformation with disparaging remarks. He has himself reminded us that the Reformation was the greatest event in the history of Christendom since the days of the Apostles. And he has borne emphatic testimony to the fact that the Reformers must always rank amongst the most learned and greatest theologians of any age. I do not think that at the present day the enormous and incalculable benefits of the Reformation are sufficiently studied and understood. It is a hurrying age, and innumerable ideas confront our minds; and it is not everybody who has time to think and inquire. It is a time when there is a tendency to consider one set of principles as good as another. The instinct of fair play is a grand characteristic of Englishmen; but it is a travesty of that instinct when it leads you to neglect your own principles in favour of those of other bodies antagonistic to your own. It is an abuse of that liberal habit of mind when it makes you disparage facts and influences which have been a power for good in the history of your country which is beyond all estimation.

It is not my habit to reflect on anybody, whether in the Church of Rome or outside of it. Everybody has the right to believe as he pleases, and to express his belief. But sometimes the recognition of that liberty of conscience and of prophesying is taken to imply that everybody has the right

except ourselves. The phrase "I have as much right to my opinions as you," is sometimes used as if it meant "I may say what I think, but if you do the same I shall consider it an attack on myself." Now, I think the time has come when through the length and breadth of the country—north, south, east, and west—all to whom the Reformation is a priceless boon should speak out with perfect calmness and moderation and give the reasons for that ineradicable opinion, for which they have the highest authority, and from which they will never part.

The effect of the Reformation in England was not merely the repudiation of the authority of the Western Patriarch; it was a breaking away from the superannuated and darkened system of the visible Catholic Church as it was then understood. The development of the Catholic hierarchy had been perfectly regular and by orderly stages. The bishoprics had gradually been united under metropolitans, and the metropolitans under patriarchs. There were the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople. The Eastern Churches had gradually broken off from the Western, and at last, when they were unable to accept the article of the Nicene Creed which speaks of the Spirit as proceeding from the Son, an article sanctioned by the Western Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 809, and condemned by the Eastern Council of Constantinople, the eighth at that city, in 869, then the split on this and on other grounds became definite. Amongst the other grounds for the great disruption were the increasing encroachments of the Western Patriarch on the liberties of other Churches, and his claims for a universal supremacy, first as Bishop of the ancient capital of the Roman Empire, and afterwards as the supposed successor of St. Peter. Some of the Western Churches remonstrated at different times against these encroachments, in particular the Churches of Spain, France, and England. But in the end they submitted. At the time of the Reformation there was nothing different in relationship to Rome between the Church of England and the other national Churches outside Italy which had succumbed to the exaggerated and overgrown jurisdiction of the Western Patriarch. At the Reformation the English nation decided that in the arrangements of patriarchates there was nothing essential to the constitution of Christendom. And as the Western Patriarchate had become exceedingly corrupt in doctrine, and refused to recognise the return to primitive principles promoted by the Reformation, it was necessary to fall back on the principle of National Churches and to break entirely with Rome.

But, besides this act of independence, the Reformation gave

us a true instead of a false conception of the Church. Contrary to the language of the New Testament, where a Church always includes the unofficial members as well as their ministers, in the mediæval ages the Church had come to mean a hierarchy with a commission handed down from generation to generation, in communion with one visible centre and authority, having branches in different countries, and with power to alter doctrines and practices in accordance with a belief that it was directly inspired so to act. For this wholly unscriptural ideal the Reformation gave us the true and majestic conception that "the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to God's ordinances in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." And in the Fifty-fifth Canon we get this definition of Christ's Holy Catholic Church: "That is, the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world." And in the Prayer-Book: "We pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church . . . that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

Thirdly, the Reformation restored the supremacy of Holy Scripture as the rule of faith. It is the fashion to say that the Church presents the doctrine, and that the Bible is used to prove it. That is not the doctrine either of Scripture, or of the Apostles, or of the Fathers, or of the Reformation. Scripture is supreme because it contains the words of Christ Himself, and the words of inspired men. The Fathers after the time of the Apostles drew the sharpest possible distinction between their own words and those of the inspired writers. And when it began to be the custom to draw up formularies at Councils, the Council did not prepare a doctrine and then bring Scripture to prove it, but it deduced the doctrine from the very Scripture itself. In the Book of Homilies it is said: "Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, deceived by men's imaginations, for our justification and salvation. For in Holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hands at length. . . . If it shall require to teach any truth, or reprove false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, to comfort or to exhort, or to do any other thing requisite for our salvation, all those things, saith St. Chrysostom, we may learn plentifully from the Scripture. There is, saith Fulgentius, abundantly enough

both for men to eat and for children to suck. There is whatsoever is meet for all ages, and for all degrees and sorts of men. . . . Whosoever giveth his mind to Holy Scripture, with diligent study and burning desire, it cannot be, saith St. John Chrysostom, that he should be left without help. For either God Almighty will send him some godly doctor to teach him—as he did to instruct the eunuch . . . or else, if we lack a learned man to instruct and teach us, yet God Himself from above will give light unto our minds, and teach us those things which be necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant. And in another place St. Chrysostom saith that man's human or worldly wisdom and science is not needful to the understanding of Scripture; but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefor." And in confirmation of this great primary view we may remember that the vast majority of Christians agree in plain, simple, fundamental truths: the Fatherhood of God, the Divinity of our Lord, the work of the Holy Spirit, the redemption of the world, the initial rite of baptism, the spiritual festival of the Lord's Supper, the immortality of the soul, the power of prayer, the future reward and punishment, and the like. It is the exception when, in consequence of some strong individual leadership in a different direction, they take a line contrary to any of these primary verities. And so we hold fast as the very palladium of our spiritual liberties the Sixth Article: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein nor can be proved thereby is not to be required of any man that it should be received as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Before the Reformation the old mediæval Catholic Church was a Church without a Bible; the majority even of the priests could not read it; to the people it was a sealed book. The Reformation put the Bible into the hands of the people, drew certain simple summaries of its teaching, and left it to the consciences of the people to apply them to their souls. They did not at once see the full results of the principle of the liberty of conscience; these would only be arrived at gradually in the emancipation of Nonconformists, the emancipation of Roman Catholics, the removal of disabilities from the Jews; but they were inherent in the principle, and their full declaration was only a question of time.

A fourth great gift of the Reformation was the repudiation of the principle of the infallibility of the Church. Hitherto, whatever the Bishops declared to be true must be accepted without question. The English Church at the Reformation took the more modest view of the Apostles themselves. "As

the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith." No ecclesiastical authority could be greater than that of General Councils, which were as far as possible supposed to be representative of the whole Episcopate. Yet about their authority our Church is no less definite in its limitation. "General Councils . . . when they be gathered together (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God), they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore, things ordained of them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture."

A fruitful source of error in the mediæval Catholic Church was the importance ascribed to Tradition. Nobody might be able to tell how a tradition had originated. But if it was there, it was to be accepted without question. It is easy to see how dangerous an element this must be where the supreme authority of Holy Scripture was not maintained, and how antagonistic that principle must be to Tradition where it was once declared. The unreformed Catholic Church of the West subsequently enshrined the equal authority of tradition with that of Holy Scripture in the decrees of the Council of Trent. Borrowing from that unreformed opinion, members of our Church sometimes in the present day say, "The Church possesses the authentic Catholic tradition, and by this interprets Scripture. A part of this tradition is the authenticity of Holy Scripture, which is therefore received at the hands of the Church, and because we believe the Church. Further, private persons may not search Scripture independently of external help." The Article on the Supremacy of Holy Scripture will not allow this view, which is an exaggeration of the truth. In the mind of the Reformation the Church is "Testis et Conservatrix" of Holy Scripture. She is not the judge, far less the giver, of Scripture. From age to age she has witnessed to each successive generation, "These are the books which I have received, and these I have sedulously preserved." To this I would add the words of Hooker: "The schools of Rome teach Scripture to be insufficient, as if, except traditions were added, it did not contain all revealed and supernatural truth, which absolutely is necessary for the children of men in this life to know that they may in the next be saved." The Thirty-fourth Article sets traditions aside—"It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike, for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the

diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word."

A sixth blessing of the Reformation was the restoration of the Scriptural model of the Christian ministry. Before the unsealing of the Word of God, all men held that the officers of the Church were a sacerdotal caste, like that of the Jews, and that every presbyter was a sacrificing priest. The clergy literally held in their hands the keys of the kingdom of heaven. They were mediators between God and man. Every time they said Mass they repeated the miracle of the Incarnation; and the more often Christ was embodied on the altars, so much the better for the benefit of all present. The priest could cause the shortening of the time of a soul in purgatory by repeating masses on its behalf. All this was not only contrary to the language of Scripture, but it had the worst effect upon the men themselves. They became tyrants, they interfered in everything, they often lost humility, self-control, honesty, and morality. The Reformation stripped the ministry of its sacerdotal character. The Reformers cast out the words "sacrifice" and "altar" in reference to the Lord's Supper and the Holy Table. They retained the word "priest" when it was necessary to distinguish him from the deacon, but in the original and Scriptural sense of presbyter or elder, not of sacrificer. "They taught the people everywhere that the clergy were not the lords of God's heritage, but, like St. Paul and St. Timothy, its servants, ambassadors, messengers, witnesses, evangelists, teachers, and ministers of the Word and Sacraments." They showed in the Ordination Services that the business of the Presbyterate was not to offer up Christ, but to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.

A seventh gift of the Reformation was the return to the Scriptural view of the Lord's Supper. The teaching of the mediæval Catholic Church was thus subsequently set forth by the Council of Trent: "Since the same Christ, Who once offered Himself by His blood on the Cross, is contained in this Divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass and offered without blood, the Holy Scripture teaches us that this sacrifice is really propitiatory, and made by Christ. . . . For assuredly God is appeased by this oblation . . . for the sacrifice which is now offered by the ministry of the priests is one and the same as that which Christ there offered on the Cross, only the mode of offering it is different." The doctrine of the Church of England is very simple and direct: "The offering of Christ

once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." And in the Communion Office we speak of Christ, "Who by His one oblation of Himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in His Holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death until His coming again." And in the Catechism: "Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained? For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." The special presence of our Lord, which we all desire and to which we all cling, is in the Lord's Supper itself, not locally in the bread and wine. As our great divine Hooker has said, "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not to be sought in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament. . . . I see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ, when and where the bread is His body and the cup His blood; but only in the very heart and soul of him who receiveth them. As for the Sacraments, they really exhibit, but, for aught we can gather out of that which is written of them, they are not really, nor do really contain in themselves, that grace which, with them or by them, it pleaseth God to bestow." That is the meaning of another sentence in the Article: "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is eaten and received in the Supper is faith." That is the meaning also of the answer in the Catechism, "The body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. The means of receiving is faith; those who receive them are those who have faith. Those who be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing."

Again, in pre-Reformation days the Sacrament was superstitiously hedged round by all kinds of restrictions—obligatory, fasting, penance, confession and absolution, and the like. These restrictions also, as far as they were considered necessities, the Reformation swept aside. What is required of

them who come to the Lord's Supper? says the Catechisin. "To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and to be in charity with all men." Fasting before Communion may be good for some; but, as the Bishops of our Province only this year declared, it is a matter of Christian liberty. If any cannot by self-examination quiet his own conscience, but further requireth comfort or counsel, he is at full liberty to come to his parish clergyman, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness. Our Church prefers self-examination; but in cases where peace cannot be obtained, resort may be had to advice and the authoritative declaration of God's forgiveness to all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel. The old system of obligatory auricular confession was entirely set aside. No institution of the unreformed Catholic Church had a more corrupting or degrading influence. By it the priests interfered "between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between masters and servants, between landlords and tenants, between subjects and sovereigns, between souls and God," in every conceivable relation of life. When carried to its full extent it ended in the poisonous and immoral system of indulgences. It was used for two great objects: enriching the Church and promoting the sacerdotal power. The rescue of souls from purgatory, the enriching of the shrines of favourite saints, the endowment by the dying of abbeys, monasteries, and chapters with vast tracts of land to atone for evil life, led to such a state of things that in fact, says Burnet, if some laws had not restrained them the greater part of all the estates in England had been given to religious houses. The increase of power came by the same means. Absolution was necessary to Communion, Extreme Unction to salvation. To please the priests was the first of duties; they were sacred persons, and for a long time had laws of their own. Fuller, the historian, tells us that in 1489 a certain Italian priest got an immense sum of money in England by obtaining power from the Pope to absolve people from usury, theft, manslaughter, fornication, and all crime whatsoever, except smiting the clergy and conspiring against the Pope (Fuller, "Church History," i. 532).

Amongst innumerable other advantages which we owe to the Reformation we must place in the next place the freedom from imposture. Before that era of light the worship of relics

and images was universal. You may read about them in Strype, Fuller, and Burnet. At Reading they had an angel with one wing, the spear-head which pierced our Saviour's side, two pieces of the holy cross, St. James's hand, St. Philip's stole; a bone of Mary Magdalene, a bone of Salome. At Bury St. Edmunds were exhibited the coals that roasted St. Lawrence, the parings of St. Edmund's toenails, Thomas à Becket's penknife and boots, and as many pieces of our Saviour's cross as would have made when put together one large whole cross. At Maiden Bradley the objects of reverence were the Virgin Mary's smock, a piece of the stone on which our Lord was born at Bethlehem, and a part of the bread used by Christ and the Apostles at the Last Supper. At Bruton, in Somerset, was a girdle of the Virgin in red silk, used in child-births. At Farley Abbey, in Wiltshire, they used a white girdle of St. Mary Magdalene. At St. Mary's Nunnery, in Derby, the nuns had a piece of St. Thomas's shirt, worshipped by women expecting confinement. At Dale Abbey, near Derby, they worshipped part of another girdle of the Virgin Mary, and some of her milk. At Repton the bell of St. Guthlac was in great honour, and those with headache used to put their heads under it. At Grace Dieu, in Leicestershire, they worshipped the girdle and part of the coat of St. Francis. At Hales, in Gloucestershire, a vial was shown on great occasions which was said to contain the blood of Christ. On examination by the Royal Commissioners of Henry VIII., it was found to contain the blood of a duck, renewed every week. At Worcester, in one of the churches, was a huge image of the Virgin, covered with a veil, which on inquiry was found to be the statue of an old Bishop. At Bexley a crucifix was shown which, when copper was offered to it, looked grave; when silver, it relaxed its severity; when gold, it smiled. On examination it was found to be worked by wires. To such a low ebb had religion sunk when the Bible was kept from the people. The boast of the unreformed Western Church is that it is always the same; and these absurdities may be matched on the Continent to this day.

Yet another boon was of immense importance. It was the shattering of the superstition of calling on saints for their prayers. Of course a moment's reasoning reflection will show that the saints, however blessed, are not omnipresent; and, without some such Divine attribute, they could not possibly hear the prayers of their numerous votaries all over the world. But even if they could, the practice would be superstitious. The love of our Lord is perfect, complete, and absolute, and any intercession of His mercy, after all the assurances that He has given us, would be an impiety and an impertinence—"Lo,

I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"; "Him that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out."

The Reformation purified the lives of the clergy, and restored the universal obligation of the strictest Christian morality. The lives of the clergy and the monks were the scandal of Christendom. Here and there faithful religious houses might be found, and pious clergy; but the open immorality of the lives of most was the subject of common satire. The Western Churches had themselves aimed at reform, but to be reformed the clergy refused. The terrible system of casuistry, or providing rules for cases of conscience, had provided excuses for the breach of every commandment, and the practical divorce between faith and morality was complete. That faith without morality is dead is a revived doctrine of the New Testament which is not the least of the gifts we owe to the Reformation. To the influence and example of the Reformation, even the unreformed Western Catholic Church is itself indebted; there have been fewer Popes of notorious and scandalous wickedness, and the Romish priesthood has been far more consistent and careful than before. In England they conform as much as possible to the lives and manners of the best of the reformed clergy.

The Reformation gave us a reasonable and intelligible system of public worship. When Romanism was prevalent and undisturbed, all services must have been mysterious performances undertaken by the priest on behalf of the people in a foreign tongue and in unintelligible tones. The Reformers not only gave us the English Bible and the English Prayer-Book, but they placed the service of edification, described by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians, side by side with the service of the Lord's Supper, and they raised the office of instruction and preaching to the dignity with which it had been endowed by St. Paul. They restored the liberty of national Churches to settle their own ceremonies, and made the services as simple as they could possibly be. "Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying. None were to bring back ceremonies not authorized by the provisions of the National Church; the sole book of ordinances was the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies according to the use of the Church of England. "The particular forms of Divine worship and the rites and ceremonies to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the exigency of times and occasions,

such changes and alterations should be made therein as to those that are in place of authority, should from time to time seem necessary or expedient." "The godly and decent order of the ancient Fathers had been altered, broken, or neglected . . . with multitude of responds, verses, vain repetitions, commemorations, and synodals." All henceforth was to be simple and easily understood by the people. The Romish mitre was discarded. The Romish vestments were dropped. The plain white surplice, a quiet and primitive costume, became the dress for all the ministrations of the Church. Public worship became an exercise for the mind and reason as well as for the heart.

I might mention many other particular privileges which we owe to the Reformation. It kept for us the old primitive order of Church government, for which we cannot be too thankful as a starting-point for the future reform and reunion of the Christian Churches. But it ranges together side by side in defence of light and liberty, all Christian Churches and bodies who hold the primitive faith of the Gospels. Some may be more perfect in organization; some may be, through the necessary misfortunes of history, defective; but all alike we are excommunicated by the unreformed Churches of the Western Patriarchate, and all alike we have the perpetual duty to protest against that excommunication, and the errors, superstitions, and unscriptural developments to which it is due.

Such was the Reformation. It found darkness, corruption, and tyranny; it gave us light, morality, and liberty. It restored the Bible to its position as the rule of faith. It recovered for the laity the place which they had lost. It revived learning throughout Europe. It appealed to Scriptures and to the witness of the Primitive Church. It reunited faith and holiness. It opened once more the freedom of access of the soul to Christ for pardon and peace. No human movement is perfect; no human composition is free from error; but the teaching of the Church of England in Articles and Prayer-Book in its simple, plain historical sense, is to our minds as near the mind of the Apostles as human documents can be made. The liberty and purity of the English Church have made England great; and, please God, we will support that liberty and purity with all our hearts and minds and souls as the secret of the happiness and prosperity of our people.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

