

ART. III.—SAYINGS OF JESUS :

"PARTY FEELING."

IN the following lines I desire to say a few words about "parties" and "party feeling" in the Church and in the world, and to see, if it may be, something of what is said concerning them in the Bible, and to ask what light is shed upon them by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

Without even mentioning them by name I do not spend any time in showing that there are "parties" in the Church. They exist, inevitably differ, and often dispute. And we all know that "government by party" is the present fashion in the State. As politicians, most men adopt a distinctive name, range themselves under a special flag, follow a leader. And as professing Christians (though many resent being classed under titles which suggest division), they either claim openly to belong to some sect or are stubbornly reckoned by others as representing this or that party in the Church.

I do not for a moment assume that there is no good reason for these divisions. Many men, many minds. But, at the same time, not a few join, or remain in, them without being able to explain, with individual intelligence, why they do so. The accident of birth, marriage, education, society, circumstance, fixes their profession and place. Or some half-realized motive (perhaps an unworthy one) leads them in the choice of their opinions. And, these once chosen, they generally shut their eyes and stick to them without any further question or inquiry.

If men are asked to co-operate with anyone it is generally enough to be told that he belongs to such or such a party, is known by this or that name. That settles the question. We decline or accept the proposal to associate ourselves with him. That is the usual way in the world and in the Church. And there is much to be said for it. There are distinct principles of authority or rule in both—feudal and popular; priestly and personal. We can generally tell the nature of a man's mind by his surroundings, and, however we may respect him, can hardly help using them to measure the prospect of cordiality between us.

Where there is no common sentiment, common action is difficult, and thus "party feeling" is an accepted guide, and saves us a world of trouble. What are his colours? That is the point.

But convenient as this measure of humanity is, widely as it has been accepted, strongly as it is held and used, nothing is more notable than the light which is shed upon it in the New

Testament. I say New, because the Old is intensely penetrated with party feeling—at least, that chief portion of it which records the history of the Jews. I need bring no proof of this to anyone who reads the Bible with even the least intelligence. Why, the very utterance “Shibboleth,” which is the familiar newspaper, and even almost household, word to indicate a “party test,” has been provided for us in our English Bibles by the Hebrew. The Hebrew has ever been scrupulously exclusive. I will not quote instances in Old Testament history to show this—they abound in the Holy Scriptures. But there is one in the New which illustrates, better than any other, the way in which “party spirit” was regarded by our Lord Jesus Christ, and through which we may see the light shed upon it by Him.

I refer to the bitterness with which the Samaritan was looked upon by every Jew. Some have reckoned this to be impiously intolerant. Nevertheless, there was a special reason for it (2 Kings xvii. 6, etc.). When, in the reign of Hosea, the King of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, he “brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel, and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof.” And so it was (we read) at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they (this mixed imported race) feared not the Lord; therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spake to the King of Assyria, saying, “The nations which thou hast placed in the cities of Samaria know not the manner of, the God of the land: therefore He hath sent lions among them. Then the King of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.” Then comes the original offence which separated the Jews from the Samaritans, and it is thus recorded. “Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places. . . . So they feared the Lord,” *i. e.*, in such a mixed fashion. They observed the Hebrew ordinance and Jewish ritual taught them by one of the banished priests who had been sent back from Babylon to Bethel. And also “served their graven images, both their children and their children’s children . . . unto this day.”

Thus the religion, the ritual and ordinances of the Samaritan were polluted reproductions of the Jewish, and we must not wonder at the hatred with which the Jew abhorred him.

The Passover of the Samaritan was to him a blasphemous fraud, a base coin, an insulting counterfeit of holy worship. If any believer had good reason for showing religious intolerance towards a neighbour, it was the Jew, insulted by an offensive travesty or pollution of what he held most dear.

And yet they were the Samaritans of whom our Lord repeatedly and signally spoke with toleration and tenderness. This is most remarkable. Think of the occasions on which He so carried Himself towards these heretics, or brought in their name to illustrate some doctrine which He taught.

It was not as if they showed a better mind than the Jews, and desired a recognition which was denied to them. On one occasion, when He entered into a certain village of the Samaritans, they would not receive Him because His face was set towards Jerusalem, and thus the angry disciples prayed Him to call down fire upon them, like Elias. They knew not (as yet) what manner of spirit was required in a follower of Jesus, as He told them. They could not understand His toleration of this affront. Take another case. When common misery had driven a Samaritan to consort with some leper Jews, and Jesus had healed them all, He drew marked notice to the gratitude of "this stranger." We may recall other indications of the feeling shown by the Jews to these people. If the Scribes and Pharisees desired to bring the worst charge they could think of against Jesus they had only to remark, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" And yet, when He would illustrate genuine humanity, He draws the picture of a good Samaritan. The accusation of the Scribes which I have quoted would seem to indicate other examples of His tolerance of Samaritans beside those which are recorded. He was known to be their friend, deep as was the wound inflicted on the Jewish faith by their ancestors, and defective, or rather heretical, as was their worship in His (our Lord's) time.

The instances of His tolerance are, probably, not all recorded. Not the least of those we know of is seen in the surprise of the woman of Samaria, who asked, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?" She had not for a moment forgotten the ancient feud between the two nations, which barred the interchange of even the barest courtesies between them. The disciples marvelled that He even talked with her. But, heretic though she was, Jesus admits her fitness to hear some of the most precious among His recorded words. It was not He who first referred to the enmity between the Jew and the Samaritan. He assumes Himself to be the common Saviour of them both. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have

asked of Him, and " (here is one point) " He would have given to thee living water." This is specially notable. The mission of the Christ covered and ignored the dividing feud between these hostile races, though it was so deep and grave, as I have pointed out by reference to its origin.

That, in itself, displays the catholicity of Christian tolerance, and shows how Jesus was willing to treat the representatives of the most divergent religious animosity. Though, as the woman began by saying, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, He (so to speak) waived this aside at once, without then entering upon its merits or nature, and was prepared to offer her blessings of salvation in words which are to this day prized as full of comfort: "He would have given thee living water."

But this is by no means all that we learn about the tolerance of Christ from His conversation with this bigoted woman. She insisted on dragging into it one chief point of dispute between the divided worshippers. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

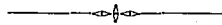
And then it was that Jesus brought forward the profound eternal reason why an end should be put to all the bitterness of religious differences. He lifted the whole question of any such disputes into another level. There was one divine atmosphere which should be breathed by those who should thereafter understand and follow Him. It was not a question of local boundaries or external distinctions, or even deep traditional division. Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." For the present time, He would say, the Samaritan was wrong and the Jew was right (and this adds to the force and value of His forecast); but in the time to come this would be superseded and left behind in the fuller relationship between any true worshippers, at all. "God is a Spirit," He said, "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." This cannot mean (the context forbids it) merely that all worship should be spiritually sincere, whatever its form. That is obvious. It goes (so to speak) without saying. It was no new thing to be affirmed. We do not need revelation to be assured of such a truth. To restrict the teaching of Jesus on this critical, this pointed occasion, to the announcement of so evident a fact is to rob His words of their significance. What, then, can they mean?

They really contain the Divine eternal principle that sincerity and the love of truth must override what we understand by "party feeling" in all our relations with one another.

There must, I need hardly say, be parties. There must be

variety in views. I do not like this word "views," but I am at a loss to find another which expresses what I mean. There must be differences in our aspect of facts. Minds, circumstances, abilities, intelligences, and tastes vary. What is one man's meat is another man's poison. This cannot be helped. There are diversities of operations by the same Spirit of God. But among things needful, that we may be Christians indeed, in whom is no guile, the knowledge and use of this law is not merely desirable, but prominent, essential, inevitable. We must honestly follow after truth ourselves, and be ready to believe that those from whom we differ may be equally sincere. The Father seeketh such in all the relationships of life.

Then divisions, or parties, if we like to term them so, lose their sting, their taint, their bad nature, and yet retain all their force. As each seeks truth rather than victory or sectional triumph, so, and so alone, the cause of righteousness advances in the Church and in the State. We must not be silenced by the reply that this is Utopian. It is simply true. And only as it prevails can there be true national and individual life. This is the salt of the earth which alone saves the people and the man from corruption, disappointment, and shame. The Father seeketh such to worship Him, or to serve Him, in any way. It is this which marks the "Christian" way of life and work, as distinguished from the ancient Jewish or the modern worldly.



ART. IV. — FASTING COMMUNION NEITHER PRIMITIVE, NOR APOSTOLIC, NOR DIVINE.

PART II.

PASSING onwards down the stream of history, we find no support for the practice of fasting before Communion, notwithstanding the efforts made by some to discern such support where none exists, until we come to Tertullian, A.D. 192, who as a Montanist would regard fasting as meritorious. We are not, therefore, surprised at his praise of the woman who received the Communion *secreto* and *ante omnem cibum*. But his evidence as to the practice of the Church goes quite in the opposite direction in another passage as follows: "Eucharistiæ Sacramentum omnibus mandatam a domino tempore victûs ETIAM in antelucanis cœtibus de presidentium manu sumimus" — "The Sacrament which was commanded by the Lord to all at the time of food, we partake of ALSO at our meetings before dawn at the hand of the presiders."

This is clear evidence that what our Lord commanded still