

R E M A R K S
MADE
AT A PARISH MEETING
OF
TRINITY CHURCH,
AT
BRIDGEWATER,
ON THE 15TH OF MAY, 1848.

By JOHN EDSON.

BOSTON :
PRESS OF JOSEPH G. TORREY.
1 8 4 8 .

REMARKS.

MR. MODERATOR :—I am now 62 years of age, and I may say that for about 50 years I have been enquiring the way to Zion with my face thitherward. I was bred and lived till I was 23 years old, a Congregationalist. - I have examined the claims, I trust, with candor, of all the prominent denominations of Christians in our country, and for many years I have believed and been fully persuaded that the Episcopal Church is the only one in this country which retains, in its purity and integrity, the faith once delivered to the saints, for which the apostle says, “ we ought earnestly to contend.”

I have been a churchman about 40 years, and during that time have been putting forth efforts to build up and establish a church in this place, to be in conformity with the doctrines and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, and I have expended in that time, and for that purpose, about 4,000 dollars, just about the cost of this present house.

When this church was finished, it was (including the bell) about 1200 dollars in debt. The building committee gave their security for the debt, hoping we should be able to sell the balance of the pews to pay the same; but no opportunity has occurred to sell a single pew. In 1844, the committee were called upon to pay the debt. One of the committee declined paying his proportion, and the whole debt fell on the shoulders of Mr. Increase Robinson and myself, and the remainder of the pews passed into our hands in 1844.

It was not our wish to invest so much property in the church, or to own so many pews; but the debt must have been paid, and all the remuneration we could have was to take the pews, or permit the church to be sold under the auctioneer's hammer;—and now it seems a plan has been set on foot by persons who have done nothing toward the erection of the church to deprive the present owners of the pews the use of their property, by assuming them as common stock, without paying for the pews, or any rent for the use of them.

When this church was erected we were aided by persons in Boston, Taunton and New York. They aided us under the assurance and pledge that it was to be an Episcopal Church; and all persons in this town and vicinity, who aided by taking shares or buying pews, were given to understand that it was to be an Episcopal Church and no other, and when it was completed it was solemnly devoted by us, and consecrated by the Bishop, to the service of Almighty God, according to the doctrines and liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The occasion which has called us together at this time, was a petition from sundry persons requesting an alteration of our by-laws, (which in the opinion of judicious and disinterested men, are very liberal as they now stand) so that persons may become voters in parish affairs by simply paying three dollars for the support of public worship.

I have examined the list of names, on the petition, and I presume to say there is not one of them that will acknowledge himself to be a churchman in the true and proper sense of

the term. The question naturally arises, what can be their object in desiring a change in our by-laws? We can hardly suppose that they wish to promote the real interests of the church, for it is manifest they are unwilling that the present incumbent should preach the doctrines of the church any further than they are held in common with other denominations. All the sects can have their own peculiar doctrines preached in their own meeting houses, and nobody questions their right;—but these petitioners and others of their party will not allow the minister of the church to preach upon or instruct the people in the distinctive principles of the church, although the canon makes it his duty: neither must he teach the catechism as the rubric directs.

We have kept ourselves quiet for the last two years, and permitted the anti-church party the use of the church, hoping that a peaceful and conciliatory course would have been pursued, but we have been disappointed. It is now evident that no compromise can be made with them, without the sacrifice of

principle. The course which a sense of duty requires me now to take, judging from past experience, will no doubt expose me to the maledictions of the party, and peradventure the spoiling of my goods.

I expect that my name will be cast out as evil, my conduct and motives misrepresented, and if I am not hated of all men I shall be by very many in this community ; but I remember that my Lord once said to his disciples, “ Marvel not if the world hate you.” We are taught in scripture that “ he that will do the will of God, must bear the cross, must suffer persecution.”

Mr. Moderator, I declare to you that I am conscientious in this matter. I act from a sense of duty to my God and his church, to my family and the present and rising generation. I cannot, with a good conscience, join myself to any other religious community. The opposers of the church here, say that they can, with a good conscience, worship with and hear the doctrines preached of any or all of the evangelical sects, with perhaps the exception of the church. Now would

it not be more honorable and christian-like if these gentlemen would go where they can be gratified rather than to come here and try to deprive us of the privilege which we value so much of hearing the church. I have no ill-will towards those even who have joined issue against the church. I desire to live peaceably and in good neighborhood with them,—and if we cannot agree in religious matters, let us at least agree not to put a stumbling block in our brother's way, nor try to hinder him from worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience.