

under present conditions. We are at present divided asunder by the need some of us feel to attack the privileges of the Church, by the need others of us feel to defend these privileges at all costs. Were the Church and Nonconformity on an equal footing, there might not be reunion, but it would be easier to understand one another and to arrange for social, and even religious, co-operation.

That Disestablishment will come one of these days many Churchmen consider not only possible, but probable. When it does come there will be many heartburnings, much bitterness, great lamentation.

But after the tumultuous passions aroused by the Disestablishment measure have subsided, the thought of the disadvantages which accompanied Establishment will help many devoted members of the Church to bear with resignation the loss of many things, to rejoice in the newly gained liberty, and to regard the future with courage and hope.



A Layman's View of the Church Services.

By LLEWELLYN PREECE, M.I.C.E., M.I.E.E.

IN some letters written by Dr. James Gairdner to the *Guardian* a few weeks ago, he insisted that the true translation of the word *salvus* is "safe and sound," "in good health," and not simply "safe." If he is right, then the title "Saviour" is synonymous with "Spiritual Health-giver." Could any title be more appropriate to our Lord? Is not this what in every sense of the word the religion founded by Christ offers us? Spiritual health, and the way to attain the same!

But if we accept this definition, we must also, I think, look upon the Church as a spiritual hospital or sanatorium, and her various rites, rules, and liturgies as virtually treatments, nourishments, and exercises, drawn up for the purpose of helping the soul to obtain perfect health—a series of spiritual "exercises"

and spiritual "diets." Now, every medical treatment must be judged by its efficacy. If health does not result, the treatment prescribed must be altered; abuse of the invalid cannot mend matters. If, therefore, it is found that any of the Church services are unsuccessful and unsatisfactory to the congregation, the blame ought, it would appear, to be laid upon the service, and not on the people.

I contend that this is to some extent the case with the present orders of Morning and Evening Prayer. Many acquire but little advantage or strength from these services. Something is wanting with these offices, and the following suggestions are brought forward with a view to indicate where the main defects lie, and how they might be overcome.

Looking first at these services from a general point of view, I suggest that there are four faults which require amendment.

The first has to do with the composition. As has been pointed out on several occasions by various writers, these liturgies were drawn up some three and a half centuries ago, and probably express excellently the thoughts and general mental attitude of the Church at that time. But by enforcing the use of such forms upon living members, the Church is deliberately ignoring the mental attitude of the present age.

The physical, mental, and spiritual natures of man are closely correlated; and, therefore, to strive to stimulate one of these natures, without giving any heed to the possible effect on the others, must often lead to failure. Dr. Sanday drew attention to this in his article in the *Interpreter* on Modernism, where he said:

"If we are ourselves modern men, we must needs look out into the world, as such; in other words, we must carry with us that body of ideas and habits of thought in which we have been born and trained. Our heads are full of notions which have been implanted and developed in us by our education and surroundings. We cannot divest ourselves of these, and we would not, if we could, because to a great extent they are due to enlarged knowledge and experience. No one century of Christian history is exactly like its predecessors; the traditions, handed down from the past, must, in each case, filter through the beds of new ideas, deposited by the present; so that they cannot come out exactly as they went in."

The actual language is to some extent at fault. Like so much that was written in the sixteenth century, the language of the Prayer-Book is beautiful. But it is well known that true beauty, found in the highest artistic creations, is only discernible by those who have true inborn or educated artistic feelings. To an ordinary person such a production often appears vague and uninteresting. What the learned man comprehends and delights in, the unlearned passes over as unintelligible. This applies to the language of the Prayer-Book. It stimulates and satisfies the educated, but it sometimes leaves the uneducated cold and impassive. As the Church's main duty is to attract and assist the uneducated, surely her language should be such as to be easily understood by the same ?

The third fault to which I wish to draw attention is connected with the frequency of these services.

Strictly speaking, the Church in her Prayer-Book calls upon all her members to attend the orders of Morning and Evening Prayer daily throughout the year. But this is quite impracticable ; secular work is the laity's sacred duty. How can they spend over an hour daily in collective worship ?

The Church naturally calls upon the laity to lay aside a certain time daily for personal devotion ; she expects them all to attend service every Sunday, and to celebrate several times in the year. More than this, however, she should not expect. I therefore consider that the Church would be well advised to draw up a special liturgy for Sunday general services only, and not use, as at present, the ordinary daily service, the scheme of which is only truly understandable if the services are attended every day.

The last general fault on which I wish to touch has reference to what may be called the preponderance of the parson. In these services it is the parson who exhorts and absolves, who usually reads the lessons, who reads the prayers and chooses the hymns, and who finally preaches the sermon. The laity might almost be deaf, dumb, blind, and mentally deficient so

far as their duties in Church, or connected with the Church services, are concerned.

This is, of course, largely recognized and regretted by many clergy at the present time, and schemes have been put forward for the amending of this obvious flaw. Steps have been taken so that competent laymen can be called upon as lay-readers to assist the clergy. Church Councils also in a few cases have been given real power. I think, however, much more might be done than has been carried out so far. In every Church there must be among the congregation men who could preach sermons and read prayers quite as beneficially as the parson. The laity are, as has been often pointed out, as really priests, in the true sense of the word, as the clergy. Why should they not take duties as such?

Further, it is a well authenticated historical fact that, in many instances, when the Almighty desired an advance to be made in the spiritual understanding of the true religion, He selected a layman to act as His mouthpiece. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Origen (for a great part of his life), Francis of Assisi, Boehme, George Fox, to mention only a few, were all laymen. For this reason it is at least desirable that the rubrics of our Church should leave some opening so that unordained persons could often have the power to address her congregations from the pulpit.

Another great disadvantage of leaving so much to the parson is that his own personality is, unavoidably, strongly impressed upon the whole service. He becomes the main attraction or deterrent to the congregation. Many do not come to Divine worship so much to obtain spiritual strengthening as for the reason that they like to hear the particular parson; and the majority of those who refuse to come do so because they object to the incumbent. This is obviously and disastrously wrong; but this could be largely overcome if several clergy and laity partook jointly in the one service.

We will now consider certain sections of these orders of prayer. As at present arranged, they include:

1. The Exhortation, Confession, and Absolution.
2. The Psalms.
3. The Lessons.
4. The Creeds.
5. The Prayers.
6. The Hymns.
7. The Sermon.

It would take too long to treat fully all these sections, so I will omit the first, the fourth, and the sixth.

Section 2 comprises the Psalms. Now, there can be no two opinions respecting the devotional value of these psalms. A few, apparently, would be more exact if re-translated, and some would be more suitable with a slight editing; but, on the whole, it is a wonderful collection of real spiritual songs. Nevertheless, I consider the present method of employing the same in these services to be very faulty. In the first place, the Psalter is so arranged that the whole contents should be sung or repeated once a month. The result is, that no one, except the most dutiful clergymen who read the Morning and Evening Service daily, ever goes right through the Psalter at all, unless it be in their private devotions.

In these services the congregations are asked either to read alternate verses, in which case all thought is swamped in the endeavour mechanically to gabble off the words as quickly as those who lead; or else they are asked to sing them, in which case, with many psalms, all their energies are absorbed in striving to fit various lengths of line into the constant bar of music—a singing exercise of sorts, in which all feeling, all thinking, and all devotion, cannot but be absent. In prayers, hymns, and psalms it is not the repetition of the words that is of value, it is the strengthening experience of the emotion which the sense of these words should stimulate. Unless time is allowed for such emotions to arise, the exercise is futile. Therefore, unless a psalm is short and easily comprehended, it is better read in private devotions, when its full spiritual power can be discovered, understood, and felt. I should like to suggest that the shorter and more obviously spiritual psalms be selected

and set to special music, and one or two of these be sung at each service.

It is hardly necessary to deal at length with the Lessons. It is generally recognized that the present selection might be improved, both by a certain amount of shortening, and by bringing the two lessons of any one service into more direct relationship with one another.

One point, however, calls for notice, but as it was touched upon by the Bishop of Wakefield at the last Church Congress, I will quote his remark :

“ How could people be expected to grasp the lessons unless they were really taught, not gabbled or monotoned? In one church the Vicar used to give a short introduction to each lesson, and this was universally welcomed.”

This idea seems to me most excellent. To have either an introduction or an explanation to each lesson would greatly intensify one's interest in what is being read. It would also be most useful in stimulating the average clergyman to study advanced theological and Biblical science.

The fifth section includes the Prayers, and although this is a subject which a layman is bound to feel considerable diffidence in approaching, there are two points to which I feel I must draw attention.

The first relates to the part apportioned to the congregation in connection with these prayers, the arrangement whereby the parson reads the prayers and the congregation chimes in at the end of each with a generally unmeaning and unmeant “ Amen.” No doubt at one time the meaning of this word was known, and the congregation realized that when they said “ Amen,” they meant “ So be it,” or “ So it is.” Now it is often a mechanical grunt, or else looked upon as some mysterious cabalistic expression.

I cannot understand why the congregation should not repeat audibly every prayer. This would be more likely to bring home to each individual in Church the words actually used and the fact that they are addressing their Deity ; it would also teach all

the actual prayers. The present arrangement is, to my mind, absolutely mechanical.

The second point refers to silent prayer. I am strongly of the opinion that this should be an essential part of the general services, not a perfunctory performance on entering or leaving church. Take the Communion Service; who does not look forward to, and thankfully utilize, the several quiet moments therein for silent prayer?

Finally, we have the Sermon. This is, of course, a most difficult subject. A sermon can unquestionably be of immense service in promoting the main object of the Church's existence. An instructive, easily understood, and spiritually strengthening discourse fully conforms to the idea of the Church as a spiritual healing institution.

Dr. Stalker, a short time ago, in an address on Calvin, said, when alluding to the plea that it is better to go to church to pray than to hear sermons :

“ But it is not better, if preaching is what Calvin insisted it must be. In prayer man speaks to God; but in preaching God speaks to man. Where this prophetic strain is present, preaching ought not to yield even to prayer.”

But how very far short of this is the average sermon! It seems to me absolutely ridiculous to call on a man to preach two sermons every Sunday, and to expect him to be able truly to instruct his congregation every time, when his time is, or should be, fully occupied throughout the week in ministerial work. Not even the greatest genius could do this.

To remedy this, the Church should take three steps. She should relieve the clergyman of the absolute necessity of preaching, except at special times; she should institute a special order of preachers, whose time during the week would be given up to study and travelling, and whose duty on Sundays would be to preach in different parts of the country; and she should freely license competent laymen to fill the pulpit, and give her congregations plenty of opportunities to hear lay views on spiritual realities and lay experiences of spiritual truths.

Speaking generally, I believe it is the tendency to monotony of the Morning and Evening Services that is accountable for the dwindling congregations in so many of the English churches. The same arrangements, the same man, and almost the same words, Sunday after Sunday throughout the year, cannot but be found depressing to the average person, unless he or she has the God-given gift of spiritual imagination that makes all things new, a gift which, unfortunately, few English people possess. For this reason more latitude should be given to the Sunday liturgies, more power within certain limits to vary the features of the services. In the hands of Church of England clergy, a certain liberty to diversify the liturgies could not possibly lead to any harm, but might be the means of bringing many wanderers back to the emptying fold.

To conclude I will take a quotation from the Rev. H. N. Bate's book "The Healthful Spirit" :

"The worshipping heart will never be convinced that the mind of the English Church was for ever expressed three and a half centuries ago, nor that what was included or excluded then was for ever barred or admitted. But a Church which really determines to build up the faithful, to be free in the progressive study of the art of worship, to learn from and with its pupils, will have not only the past behind it, but the present with it, and the future before it; and in satisfying with generosity the widely various needs of worshipping humanity will be as strong as it is broad."

In these words is ample justification for all I have now brought forward.



The Reality of the Christ of the New Testament.

BY THE REV. W. ST. CLAIR TISDALL, D.D.

IN our own days the question has often been asked in various forms, What proof have we of the actual existence of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth some one thousand nine hundred years ago? How far is the New Testament account of him historically correct, and how far is it ideal? Quite recently an attempt has been made to distinguish between "Jesus" and "Christ"—that is, to show that the picture of the man Jesus of Nazareth given in the Synoptic Gospels (though even that, these sages of Gotham tell us, is "largely ideal") differs almost *in toto* from the conception of the Divine