

The Church and To-Day.

THE National Mission has been with us for some months past, and we have learnt many lessons, and most of us are desirous that the lessons so learnt, painful and humiliating as they have been, may, through the help of the Holy Spirit; lead on to better things.

I am not in the very least attempting to excuse ourselves in the following paper, but I cannot but feel that now is the time for an improvement to begin. One of the greatest lessons taught by the war is the absolute necessity of up-to-date equipment. We had the men, none finer, but defence was rendered difficult, and advance was impossible, owing to the lack of proper weapons and munitions.

So it is in our warfare; we have the men, devoted, energetic, spiritually-minded, and yet we can hardly hold our own, let alone advance. And some of us ordinary parochial clergymen are becoming convinced that without a better equipment advance is out of the question. Our ideal is, a nation won for Christ, anything short of this will not satisfy us; and yet what are the actual facts? Take my own parish, nominally 6,000 people: of these a large number are Roman Catholics and Non-Conformists, but deducting all these, the Churchpeople number some 3,500 at the lowest estimate. The parish has had a long list of truly converted evangelical Vicars; I am newly come, so may be left out of account. Last Easter Sunday, at four separate times in the day, the total number of communicants was 299! Not 1 in 10! I am not a sacerdotalist by any means, but I cannot believe such a proportion is right or was ever intended by the Great Head of the Church.

Many causes contribute, no doubt, but I must say that lack of proper equipment is a very real cause. I love our Prayer Book, I know how wonderful it is, truly a book filled with the letter and spirit of the Bible. I yield to no one in my reverence for it, and yet it is nowadays largely losing its force and influence among the unlearned classes. Its language is beautiful, rhythmic and poetical, but it is not the language of the people of to-day, while its arrangement is puzzling to them. From all sides, from chaplains at the front, from soldiers themselves, from people at home, is heard a question, repeated more and more and with growing intensity: Is there to be a revision, reform or alteration in our conduct of Public

Worship? Experience of a varied life, in other lands as well as England, makes me certain that some such change is becoming an absolute necessity, and that a book compiled in the sixteenth century, wonderful as it is, should be untouchable, unimprovable and unchangeable savours of absurdity.

There are two classes who will oppose: the people at home who have no idea of the history of the Prayer Book and whom use has so accustomed to the recital of the well-known formulæ that much of what they say and hear has lost its energy and force; many such people will oppose any change tooth and nail, chiefly on account of the trouble involved in using their brains in order to understand any change. These people fail to realize the position, that unless we make our methods up-to-date, we shall lose the people at large still more. Another class is the very large one who stand outside altogether, and, like the children in the market place, will neither dance nor lament, no matter what is done, and who are suspicious of anything and everything, largely because they fear that any participation in such changes will necessitate a change in their moral and spiritual outlook.

Besides these two classes there is a considerable body who would seize an opportunity afforded by any attempted changes to bring back mediæval, if not actual Papal, practices.

Yet, in spite of these opponents, something must be done and done soon, or our position will speedily become unbearable; and one arrives at a question: Cannot such modifications of our present offices be made that will satisfy the demand for modern needs and at the same time preserve that which has proved to be so good in the past?

I do not sympathize with the attempt to substitute the Holy Eucharist in place of Morning Prayer. There are grave dangers in such a substitution. I would, however, like to have certain alterations allowed and permitted, at the discretion of the minister, in the Holy Communion Office. Such as the alternative and permissive use of the "Beatitudes"—the "two Great Commandments" in place of the "Decalogue," so that we may be enriched and widened in our appeal. The Collect for the King might be allowed omission when the "Church Militant Prayer" is used—an "Invocation of the Holy Spirit" might be inserted before the Consecration Prayer, and more elasticity allowed for the use of the Words of

Administration on the occasion of large numbers of Communicants. But after all such changes and modifications are of little urgency; those who attend this service do not as a rule object to its length. Our more immediate necessity is with the offices for Mattins and Evensong; and here I would venture to suggest, with all due respect to those in authority and to the liturgical experts, that the ordinary parish clergyman, who is faced daily with these difficulties, ought to be considered, as well as those among whom he ministers. It is, with all due respect to those who differ, a matter of equipment. May I rapidly indicate some permissive changes or modifications and additions which I think would make our Services more useful. These suggestions may be applied to both Mattins and Evensong.

1. The Sentences. Here I plead for additions—certain sentences for use on Church Festivals, to strike the note at the very beginning of our worship; and a larger number to select from on ordinary days.

2. The Exhortation—to be left as it is with permission to abbreviate if thought well.

3. The Confession, Absolution, Lord's Prayer and Lesser Litany—to be left as they are.

4. In Mattins. Venite to be omitted.

5. Psalms. Either rearranged so as to be recited through in three months, or present arrangement to stand with permission to select one or more. Glorias to be sung or said at the end of the last Psalm used.

6. Lessons. Old Testament proper Lessons to be revised and shortened; proper New Testament Lessons to be selected, so that there may be real continuity and harmony between Old and New.

7. The Canticles to be as usual, with additional ones appointed to be used at discretion.

8. The Creed to stand.

9. After "Let us pray," go on straight to the Versicles and Collects.

After the Third Collect add a series of short prayers in modern English for modern needs, e.g. for King, etc., for Government, for Church, for Bishops, Priests and Deacons, for Churchpeople, Church officers and workers, Sunday School teachers and scholars, for Communicants, for Foreign Mission work, for Navy and Army, for sailors, and for many other things and people, not for regular

daily use, but for use as required, on the lines of the War Prayers now in use—only these prayers must be short and plainly expressed. Then to end with All Sorts and Conditions, Thanksgiving, Chrysostom and Grace. I would suggest that where a Celebration follows Mattins that the Canticle after the Second Lesson be used as an Introit and the Holy Communion Office begin immediately. We must aim at plain direct speech, brevity and avoidance of repetition. The need is urgent; and the sense of it is growing upon the parochial clergy, and many of us are feeling that if no help is forthcoming we must begin to do these things ourselves and thus do violence to our sense of order.

These suggestions are very crude, but they do indicate something of the line on which rearrangement can be done, bringing our methods of public worship into touch with the methods of modern thoughts and needs and also preserving touch with the past.

Again, what about our present method of administering Holy Baptism? It is appointed to be done in the presence of the congregation; in the vast majority of cases it is simply done at some time when no one is present save the clergyman and the actual friends of the baby. Public Baptism has become Private Baptism, and so our people have forgotten that it is one of the two Sacraments of the Gospel. Cannot the Office be so shortened that it could be used at ordinary Morning or Evening Prayer without unduly lengthening the Service; or, if that cannot be done, though the early Church apparently had short forms, may we substitute the present Service for Evensong, say once a month, with hymns and a sermon added. And here again we must have the great truths taught in that Service expressed in words understood by the people.

Another thing: does any one really think a child understands the Church Catechism! I do not, and I have proved it. Take for instance¹ the words of the answer to the question—"What is a Sacrament?" "An outward visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof." Absolutely clear in thought and language for me and for you, my clerical brother, but as far away from the comprehension of an average child of the unlearned class as if it were written in Latin. Cannot we occasion-

¹ Since writing the above I have read a similar plea and quotation in *Have You Understood Christianity?* by the Rev. W. J. Carey.

ally learn from those whom we differ from—e.g. the Roman Church, and issue by authority a plain simple book of instruction for our children, for after all they are the hope for the future. There must be teaching, there must be a touch of authority, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, Prayer, The Bible, the Baptismal Vow and Covenant, and so forth : surely, some of our great masters in spiritual things could compile and issue such a booklet, price one penny only. Then for our older children, approaching Confirmation—cannot such a booklet, rather fuller, leading on through the above subjects to worship, Confirmation, Holy Communion *and* Holy Matrimony, again price one penny only, be issued? Booklets that we can hand to each child in our Sunday School, and tell them to learn it; booklets that our young Sunday School teachers, a splendid army, can teach *memoriter* with a few words perhaps of instruction. Booklets we can hand to our elder lads and girls coming for Confirmation; and tell them they must learn this before they can be accepted as a member of a candidates' class. More is wanted—a booklet with the leading events of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be also learnt by heart. We have been so intent on trying to touch the child's or older lads' hearts that we have neglected their heads. Give us parochial clergy something we can work on, issued by authority. Let there be no excuse. "These Booklets, 1, 2 and 3, are issued by the Archbishops and Bishops, and are to be taught to every child in your Sunday Schools and Bible Classes," and we shall see the next generation, please God, less ignorant of the very A B C of divine things.

Impossible! If so do away with the farce of a so-called National Church, let it be the Church of the educated and privileged, and then may be God will raise up another Church, based on the example and plain simple teaching of the Carpenter's Son, and then perhaps the sons of toil will realize their priesthood too, and thus religion become a real thing in our land.

For the sake of our children, of our lads and lasses, of our working men and women, give, Oh give us equipment suited for their needs and the times.

C. GRANT.

