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## “ A SAFE, SANE AND CONSERVATIVE REVISION.”

BY THE REV. C. SYDNEY CARTER, M.A., Litt.D.

THE present century is witnessing an era of liturgical activity in the Anglican Communion. During recent years the Scotch, the Irish, the American and Canadian Churches have been engaged on a revision and enrichment of the Prayer Book in order that it may be more suitable to meet changing modern needs and conditions. Some of these efforts are not yet concluded, but for the last two years the daughter Church in the Dominion of Canada has been enjoying a fully completed and authorized Revision of the Book of Common Prayer, and the Archdeacon of Halifax, Nova Scotia, has written a most interesting “ Story ” <sup>1</sup> of the inception and progress of this epoch making undertaking which is likely to form an exhaustive and standard work on the subject for all time. Certainly no better qualified person could have been found to undertake the task than Dr. Armitage. Besides being the custodian of the new Prayer Book, and the secretary of the Revision Committee, he is a staunch and enthusiastic churchman, who for over a quarter of a century has been rector of St. Paul’s, Halifax, N.S., the oldest and most historic church in the Dominion of Canada.

Before describing the Revision in detail Dr. Armitage devotes thirteen most interesting chapters to the history of the movement in which he faithfully and succinctly chronicles the struggles and set-backs during its early stages as well as the patience and persistence of its advocates before their efforts were finally crowned with success. Several of the most enthusiastic pioneers of the movement did not live to see its fruition, since the first proposal for revision was made in 1896, only three years after the General Synod of the whole Canadian Church had been formed. It was decided at that time to provide for the necessary alterations and additions by means of an “ Appendix ” to the existing Book which would contain the required supplementary services. The Appendix however, although containing much fresh valuable matter, met with little general

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of the Canadian Revision of the Prayer Book.* By W. J. Armitage, D.D., Ph.D. With a Foreword by the Most Rev. S. P. Matheson, D.D., Primate of all Canada. Cambridge University Press. 9s. net.

favour and only had a tentative and chequered existence for three years (1902-5). It never obtained permanent sanction, and was soon entirely forgotten, while owing to a division of opinion between the Upper and Lower Houses of the General Synod the question of Revision was not again seriously undertaken till 1911, when the Synod appointed a committee to deal with the subject composed of all the bishops, thirty-one clergy and eighteen laymen. Archdeacon Armitage emphasizes the prominent part taken by the laity in the Revision movement. An influential layman was the prime mover of the question, and the laity were from the first given a recognized position together with the clergy as joint revisers. He rightly claims that this decision affords the most practical acceptance by the General Synod of the priesthood of the laity and of the fact that the *jus liturgicum* resides in the whole Church. He contrasts with this action the attitude of the Mother Church in which the Revision proposals were entrusted to the Convocations and the concurrence of the laity merely invited at the end. The full share which the laity are now accorded in the Revision discussions in the Church Assembly has not altogether destroyed the force of this criticism, since the final form which our Revision will take is still left to the sole decision of the House of Bishops. Dr. Armitage reminds us that both in the Irish and the American Churches the laity were given equal rights with the clergy in the revision of the Prayer Book. It is more than probable that the full acceptance of the rights of the laity was one of the main factors which in the end achieved a complete unanimity in the results of the Committee's labours. It is significant that it was a layman who proposed the resolution concerning the guiding principle to be followed in the work of revision, which was ultimately accepted, and which at once smoothed the way for a harmonious consideration of the whole question. There is little doubt that we in the Home Church could now have been enjoying a really helpful and valuable revision of the Prayer Book if our revisers had from the start followed the Canadian method and declared that " no change either in text or rubric shall be introduced which will involve or imply a change of doctrine or of principles, it being always understood that the Ornaments Rubric be left untouched." It may be urged that such a course lacks courage to deal with existing conditions and opinions ; but our own painful experience is surely sufficient evidence of the hopelessness and the

dangers of all attempts to placate the aims and desires of extremists by introducing serious doctrinal questions and proposals which merely widen and embitter existing differences without gaining the obedience or allegiance of those who openly profess an ultimate loyalty *only* to the superior authority of an indefinite " Catholic Church ! "

A further wise rule was adopted by the Canadian revisers that a two-thirds majority must be obtained before making any change in the Prayer Book. The discussions throughout were, the Archdeacon informs us, marked by a conspicuous absence of the party spirit and by 1915 a Draft Revised Prayer Book was approved by the General Synod, and this came into a trial use by Christmas. The Canon adopting its use required, however, confirmation at the next Synod, while the new Book needed the approval of the Provincial Synods before it could be finally authorized. A further " Three Years' Study " was therefore given to the question during which several amendments and enrichments were added, and in 1918 the final Revision was approved by the General Synod and permission was given for its provisional use. During the next three years it received the concurrence of the different Provincial Synods, and in October 1921 the final confirmation of the Canon (XII) authorizing it was obtained from the General Synod. The new Book was then officially " proclaimed " by the Primate to come into force from Easter Day, 1922.

Turning to the actual changes and additions effected by the Revision we are struck by the great care which the Revisers displayed that every possible source for improvement and enrichment should be explored and laid under contribution. Thus the new prayers and services are drawn not only from the proposals of our own Convocation revision and from the Scotch, Irish and American Prayer Books, but from the ancient Eastern liturgies, and they also include some beautiful modern compositions by prominent Canadian Churchmen. Viewing the result as a whole it would not be a serious exaggeration to adapt the eulogium which Professor Pollard bestows on Cranmer's work in compiling our historic English Liturgy and declare that the Canadian revisers have " borrowed, and learnt and adapted " " from various sources and whatever they have touched they have adorned," so that our time-honoured and greatly revered Book of Common Prayer, now revised and enriched by numer-

ous seasonable and valuable additions, is likely to secure an increasing hold on the esteem and affections of Canadian churchpeople.

Limits of space forbid any very detailed exposition of the principal changes in the various services or their comparison with our own present proposals. Following the American example a new Red Letter Saints Day is added to celebrate the Transfiguration, while numerous Black Letter Days are added commemorating many notable churchmen included by our own Revisers. Scholars, martyrs, preachers and great saints are represented, so that Athanasius, Justin, Polycarp and Ignatius find a place as well as Thomas à Becket. A significant omission is that of Thomas of Aquinum.

In Morning and Evening Prayer the shortened form may "in special circumstances" be used on Sundays and Holy Days with episcopal sanction, but the General Confession and Absolution are not to be omitted. A new rubric however permits a considerable variation in the different combinations of services which can be used. Thus Morning Prayer can be replaced by a Shortened Form of Litany and Holy Communion, while Evening Prayer may also include the Litany. If the Litany is included with Morning Prayer and Holy Communion it can be commenced immediately after the Te Deum. There are several new Opening Sentences added which are most appropriately arranged for the special seasons of the Christian Year, while "Proper Anthems" are appointed instead of the Venite for Christmas, Good Friday, Ascension Day and Whit-Sunday as well as Easter. A useful "Note" is added to the Apostles' Creed explaining that "He descended into Hell" signifies "into the place of departed spirits." A single comprehensive prayer for the Sovereign and the Empire is inserted as an alternative to the present State prayers. In the prayer for "the Clergy and People" the rather curious statement "Who alone workest great marvels" is changed, as in the proposed revision of 1689, into "The giver of all spiritual gifts"—certainly a far happier expression! The example of the American Church is followed in incorporating the Prayers for "All Sorts and Conditions" and the "General Thanksgiving" in the service for Morning Prayer, while a special rubric regularizes the present universal custom of adding a sermon at the conclusion of the service.

Archdeacon Armitage tells us that there were long and heated discussions concerning the retention and use of the Athanasian

Creed. Eight optional courses of treatment were suggested for dealing with this highly contentious question. Finally, in the end the " Lambeth translation " of the Creed was adopted, while the " Declaration " agreed to in the Canterbury Convocation in 1879 concerning the meaning of the statements in the Creed was added at the end. The rubric was however altered, making its recitation merely an *optional* alternative to the Apostles' Creed. A new rubric allows the use of the Shortened form of the Litany enriched by additional suffrages for modern needs, similar to that proposed in C.A. 84.

In the Occasional Prayers there are numerous welcome additions. A most suitable Prayer for the New Year is taken from the Scotch Book, while two new and beautifully expressed prayers for Missions are added from the Irish and American Books. Valuable prayers are included for Confirmation candidates, the Parish, the Sunday School, Church Synods, times of Election, and for Employers and Workmen. A single yet wonderfully comprehensive intercessory prayer is added, drawn from the Liturgy of the Eastern Church, which will probably soon earn a well merited popularity equal to that now enjoyed by our General Thanksgiving, especially for use at the Evening service. Two very expressive and comforting prayers are added in the Burial Service. There is also a new and beautifully comprehensive Bidding Prayer, especially applicable to Canadian conditions. In the Holy Communion service Our Lord's summary of the Law is allowed to take the place of the Decalogue provided that the Commandments are read once each Sunday—the permissive arrangement allowed in the American Book. Definite efforts were made to alter the Prayer of Consecration in a similar way to that now proposed by the " Green Book " Canon, but they were ruled out of order by the Primate as contravening the guiding principle to preserve the existing doctrinal standard, a further attempt to obtain the permissive use of the Scotch Communion office, including the epiclesis, also failed.

The Confirmation Service is greatly enriched by a fuller explanation of its meaning and by additional questions addressed to the candidates. In the Marriage Service a new rubric strictly forbids any clergyman to re-marry a divorced person whether the innocent or the guilty party. The reasons for the institution of matrimony are concisely and clearly set forth in a single sentence, which is a

great improvement on our present rather coarse and indelicate explanations. Very many distinct improvements are made in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick, but certainly the most practical is the provision which allows the form to be altogether dispensed with "if necessity so require," since it is doubtful if many clergy to-day ever find the existing service suitable in its entirety for visiting the sick. A very useful selection of suitable passages from Holy Scripture is added at the end of this service. In the Communion of the Sick the Irish Prayer Book is followed in the permission to shorten the service in case of necessity, to the Confession, Absolution, Prayer of Consecration, Lord's Prayer and the Blessing, which will render still more unnecessary any provision for reservation.

The new revised Lectionary is adopted with the exception of the Apocryphal lessons, and sixteen selections of psalms receive a permissive optional use on certain occasions in place of the Psalms for the day, except when there are Proper Psalms appointed. The Canadian Revisers have certainly adopted a very reverent and conservative attitude in their treatment of the Psalter.

In the Ordinal we cannot but think that the simple and direct question addressed to the deacon concerning Holy Scripture is a marked improvement both on our present rather ambiguous form or on the wordy alternative proposed in C.A. 84. "Do you believe the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and to contain all things necessary to salvation?"

Archdeacon Armitage devotes nine concluding chapters to a description of the "Special Services," which form a very valuable addition to the New Prayer Book. Each service is helpfully introduced by explanatory and historical notes. A most appropriate form is compiled for "Dominion Day" and "Occasions of National Thanksgiving," which includes several new and very beautiful prayers written by Canadian churchmen. A special Order of Service for Children, with an appended list of suggested psalms and lessons is a most welcome addition. Another specially useful and valuable new feature is the special Service for Missions which has been most helpfully compiled and arranged to be used as an alternative to the regular service for the day. In this way "Missionary Sunday" will stand out conspicuously and arrest the attention and interest of the congregation, not merely by the special preacher but in the special lessons, psalms and canticles which are all in harmony

with the effort. A similar much needed addition is included in a special form for " Harvest Thanksgivings."

Forms of service for laying Foundation Stones and consecrating Churches and churchyards are also included, as well as special services for Institution and Induction to a benefice which differ in some details from those in general use in our Home Church. For instance, a most useful and significant addition is the Admonition to the people concerning their duty to support the Incumbent with their substance so that freed " from worldly necessities he may devote himself wholly to the preaching of God's word." An innovation which should prove especially valuable is the inclusion within the covers of the prayer book of a very helpful selection of prayers for use in Family Worship. It should do something to revive a supremely valuable practice which, owing to the rush and hurry of modern life, is being increasingly neglected. Undoubtedly the Canadian Church possesses in its new Prayer Book a rich storehouse of most valuable liturgical devotion which should prove an added help and blessing to it in developing its life and work and in carrying on its sacred mission in the great Dominion. Moreover Archdeacon Armitage has rendered a distinct service to his fellow Anglican churchmen in introducing in such a clear, concise and attractive form the salient features of what the Canadian Primate rightly describes as a " safe, sane and conservative revision." Archbishop Matheson at the same time justifies the independent action of the daughter Church in Canada in seeking this practically uncontroversial solution of the Revision problem, by declaring that this method alone enabled it to avoid the very real twin dangers of a probable deadlock on the one hand or of a serious disruption on the other. It would be well if our own Revisers would seriously weigh the Archbishop's warning in this respect, since it seems increasingly doubtful if in the present course of our revision proposals we shall ultimately escape this very Scylla or Charybdis. A thoughtful perusal of Dr. Armitage's interesting and instructive " Story " would probably convince most of our Church leaders that the Canadian example is not only the safest and more expeditious, but also the " more excellent " way of Revision.

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