

thoughts with directness and freedom on the moral and social questions of the day. If the clergy are to lead their people, this leadership must discuss the matters which bright people in the congregation are thinking about. The pulpit is not always the best place for this, though it is the place if no more convenient opportunity can be had. It is a difficulty very seriously felt, and felt more and more as time goes on, that no special provision is made among us for the higher education of our lay people in a great many matters about which they ought to feel better informed. Perhaps our laity are better educated in many religious matters than the people of other religious bodies; but too little attention has been given in the parish to the instruction of people in *Church matters* who, if they understood better the spirit and movement of *The Church* and the work that we have to do in this country, would be far more efficient in their co-operation than they are to-day. We have had so much to do in all our parishes, and the duties of life crowd so much upon capable people, that it is not easy to find thoroughly trained Churchmen even in leading parishes. It was said of the late John Caswell, who was for many years one of the vestrymen of Trinity Church, New York, that when he was confirmed he made a thorough study of the history and principles of the Church, and prepared himself for all the duties which a Christian layman might be called upon to discharge. It was characteristic of the laity of Connecticut two and three generations ago, in the sharp disputes between Congregationalists and Churchmen in those days, that they were the best educated laity in our communion in this country. You could not corner one of these Connecticut farmers on any point that was within his reach; and the vitality and strength of conviction which these men had is felt far and wide in the Churchmanship of the west as well as in steady old Connecticut.

These instances are sufficient to show that where the laity are properly trained in *Church* teaching and in the related topics which connect the Church with Society, they exert an influence in the parish and in the community which is of the first importance. The question is how this special training may be undertaken and carried on. The rector is already overworked in the larger parishes; but it is believed that the instruction of bright and influential persons in the things that an influential Christian layman ought to know and believe, would be time well spent even by the busiest clergyman, if he has due regard to the work which the Church has to do in the care of souls and in giving direction to public institutions and social life. There seems to be no way for giving this training except through the individual clergyman who is persuaded that it is one of the most effectual means of using the strength of individuals for securing large results. It was said of one of the most successful rectors in Massachusetts that he educated his laity and then found out what each man and woman could do best. In this way he increased his own strength many fold, and he left a parish which had in it the permanent principles of growth. He counted no effort too great if he could only bring men and women to see what they could do for Christ and His Church, and to open their minds and hearts to all that the Church had to say to them. Some of the best work in our parishes to-day is done in the rural districts, where the clergy faithfully and thoroughly instruct the young men and women in the spirit and method of the Church; and prepare them so that when they go into larger fields they are able to use their gifts in a large way to promote Christian ends. A good *CHURCH* newspaper, where the rector is beyond reach, is the best companion which a Churchman can have after his Bible and Prayer Book.

In the larger parishes something is necessary

also to save our educated men from the deadening effect of agnosticism. The new criticism of the Bible has in many cases blunted the edge of their religious life; they know just enough about it to create uncertainty, and this doubt will not be removed until they know more.

This matter is of interest also from another point of view. The Church specially needs those educated laymen in order to multiply the agencies for the thorough instruction of the young; and the laity who are carefully taught by the rector or others in classes or as individuals are almost sure to be his influential assistants in teaching and in the development of the parish life. We have not begun to cultivate the field which is here opened; we have hardly touched its borders, but it is believed that here is one of the agencies for Church work and growth which will be more fruitful in results than any one can estimate when it is properly developed.—*The Churchman, N. Y.*

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING TO A TRUE CHURCH.

I have sometimes heard it said that 'it matters little to what body of Christians we attach ourselves,' that 'it does not signify to what earthly Church we belong, so that we get to heaven at last.' But it does matter a great deal. It is true that when a building is erected the scaffolding is no longer needed. When a grain of wheat is ready for the garner the husk may be thrown away; or when a nut is fully ripe its shell is of no further use. But would it not be unwise to undo the scaffold poles whilst the house is being built, or to cast away the husk before the harvest time, or to strip off the shell before the kernel within is fully ripe? Even so it is with regard to the outward Church. As the scaffolding is important while the stones and the timber are being put into their places, and the husk and the shell are not only valuable, but even necessary, in the formation of the grain and of the kernel which they contain; so we should value the outward Church during the time when our souls are being built up and formed for eternity—as long as the repenting process for heaven is going on. It has a very important purpose to serve. And then, when the present state of things comes to an end, the outward help and the outward covering, as it were, will be laid aside, and the life within will alone remain. It must therefore be of the greatest importance where we cast in our lot, whether in a sound or an unsound Church. Suppose we were called upon to make a perilous descent down one of the cliffs of Dover, and our chance of safety consisted in attaching a rope to some post at the top, would it not be of immense importance to select a strong rope and a sound post? No effort of our own would make us secure if the support on which we depended proved worthless. Or, to take another case; suppose we wished to make a long voyage, and we were to go to one of our seaports in order to secure our passage in a trustworthy ship. We might see, perhaps, in the harbor three or four all bound for the same port. But if one was pointed out to us that had already made the voyage, and had conveyed in safety thousands of passengers—one that had weathered many a storm, and had shown itself thoroughly seaworthy—should we not at once say, 'This is the ship for me?' It is true there may be others of a newer and more attractive appearance; but to this vessel I will trust myself with the fullest confidence. And so we may trust with confidence to *The Church*. Of course she cannot save us; Christ alone can do that. But she is a sound rope by which we may hold on to Him amidst the perils of the world. She is a vessel of safety, in which we may embark with perfect confidence on the voyage of life. She has borne out others safely

to 'the haven where they would be,' and safely too will she bear us, if we are faithful to her, and trust to her guidance. . . . It is not merely the *clergy* who should be earnest in the Church's cause; the *people* should be earnest too, even the very humblest of them. Our constant enquiry should be, is there any way in which we can serve her? Can we do anything to promote her interests? Then let us do it with all our hearts. Let us be more faithful to our Church. Let us not be ashamed to stand up for her when spoken against. Let us speak of her as those who feel cordily thankful that they belong to such a fold. Other Christians are not ashamed of their creeds, why should we be less zealous than they? We do not claim perfection for our Church. She may have many faults, and so has everything in which man is concerned. But has she not been, and is she not still, a vast blessing to the world, and especially to this country? She has given us a well translated Bible and a Scriptural Liturgy. She has been honored by a noble army of martyrs, and a glorious company of devoted servants of Christ. May her boundaries be enlarged, and her usefulness extended, and may thousands have reason to call her walls salvation and her gates praise! Look upon your Church then as a nursery for heaven. Be not only anxious to see many flocking into it, but be still more anxious that those that are already in it should be men and women whose hearts are given to God, and whose treasure and home are above. What we want is that our members should be faithful and true of heart; men and women who are walking with God here, and are growing meet for His presence hereafter; who love the Church in which they have found peace and rest; the home in which they are tarrying for a while; the ship, as it were, which is bearing them on their way, but whose eyes are steadily fixed on that land to which every wave is bringing them nearer.—*Extract from Our Church and her Services.*

#### OUR PRAYER BOOK.

It is well for us all to read our Bibles much more than we do. We cannot afford to be ignorant of them. Half the empty nonsense so often heard on religion would be replaced by common sense if we read the Holy Book more devotionally and carefully; or in fact if it were daily read at all.

But this is true also of the Prayer Book. One of the crying needs of the hour is fuller acquaintance with the grandest of devotional works. Like the Bible, from which three parts are taken, it must be read and pondered well. In it, from office to office, the scheme of salvation gradually unfolds itself. The principles of the faith are practically applied. The very soul of worship assumes its living form, and the child of God walks o'er the sacred path long trodden by ransomed millions. Oh! what associations cluster around this grand Old Prayer Book as it leads the saint along from hill and vale, from every scene and town, until it carries him to the great temple of Jerusalem, its glory and its God. For in its antitype to all prophecy and shadows, it reveals the great reality in its Eucharistic worship to which all paths lead, and from which all blessings flow. Amid the good things coming by and by, I certainly would number, of earnest, devout, and daily Prayer-book readers a great and noble army.—*West Indian Guardian.*

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