

WHAT THE CHURCH SERVICE IS.

The Bishop of Chester has been giving good advice to some violent Anti Ritualists, lately, who are like those naughty people who live in glass houses and *will* throw stones. The celebrated Dr. McNeile—the leader of the extreme Low Church party—was very much displeased with the advice, and he has published a protest against it. The whole matter relates to the performance or non performance of the Church Service, and hereupon the London *Guardian* justly says:—

The Church Service is a public offering to Almighty God of united supplication and praise, made by clergy and people in their character of redeemed and regenerate members of the body of Christ. To “read the service to” an audience, is to treat it as a kind of introduction to the sermon, cast indeed in another and less attractive form, but having no essential difference of character from the more important function which it precedes. Some such idea as this does seem to possess the minds of the representative men in Dr. McNeile’s school. Attend their churches, and you will be led, so far as extends supply any evidences of opinion, to conclude that with them to hear the sermon is the main purpose for which Christians go to church. They take the eighteenth-century version of Divine Service, with the parson and clerk duet, the singing gallery, and the “three decker,” because they really do not think such matters of any importance. Let the pulpit be high enough, and all the rest will take care of itself. As for devotional prayer, it is an excellent thing—at prayer meetings and on other suitable occasions, in the Church Service it is not to be looked for, they read “our excellent *Liturgy*” to the people, and hope that, in some way or other, it may do them good. It may possibly be edifying in itself—at least it may dispose the minds of the listeners to await with keener spiritual appetite the oratorical feast which is to follow its close. On this view there is certainly no reason to take hours for public service—as Dr. McNeile puts it—from study and house-to-house visitations, or to speak more practically, to shorten the morning nap, and interrupt the social dinner-party at night. There is, indeed, a very different view of the gathering together of two or three in Christ’s name and to those who hold it it may well seem that sleep and good society are in comparison of little worth. More than this, it may seem to them that a cold and lifeless performance of Divine Service is a grievous wrong, alike to earnest souls in the congregation and to Him in whose house they are assembled.

RITUALISM.—The Commission upon the Ritual of the Church of England have agreed upon the following report:—

*To the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty.*

Your Majesty having been graciously pleased to issue a commission reciting that “differences of practice have arisen from varying interpretations put upon the rubrics, orders, and directions for regulating the course and conduct of public worship, the administration of the sacraments, and other services contained in the Book of Common Prayer according to the use of the United Church of England and Ireland, and more especially with reference to the ornaments used in the churches and chapels of the said United Church, and the vestments worn by the ministers thereof at the time of their ministration,”—and that “it is expedient that a full and impartial inquiry should be made into the matters aforesaid with the view of explaining or amending the said rubrics, orders, and directions, so as to secure general uniformity of practice in such matters as may be deemed essential,”—and enjoining your Commissioners “to make diligent enquiry into all and every the matters aforesaid, and to report thereupon from time to time as to them, “or any two or more of” them, “may appear to be most expedient, having regard not only to the said rubrics, orders, and directions contained in the said Book of Common Prayer, but also to any other laws or custom relating to the matters aforesaid, with power to suggest any alterations, improvements, or amendments with respect to such matters, or any of them, as” they, “or any ten or more of” them, “may think fit to recommend.” We, your Majesty’s Commissioners, have, in accordance with the terms of your Majesty’s commission, directed our first attention to the question of the vestments worn by the ministers of the said United Church at the time of their ministration, and especially to those the use of which has been lately introduced into certain churches. We find that, while these vestments are regarded by some witnesses as symbolical of doctrine, and by others as a distinctive vesture whereby they desire to do honor to the Holy Communion as the highest act of Christian worship, they are by none regarded as essential, and they give grave offence to many. We are of opinion that it is expedient to restrain in the public service of the United Church of England and Ireland all variations in respect of vesture from that which has long been the established usage of the said United Church, and we think that this may be best secured by providing aggrieved parishioners with an easy and effectual process for complaint and redress. We are not yet prepared to recommend to your Majesty the best mode of giving effect to these conclusions, with a view at once to secure the objects proposed and to promote the peace of the Church, but we have thought it our duty in a matter to which great interest is attached not to delay the com-