

The Church Guardian

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Special Notice.

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CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER.

- OCT. 2nd—17th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 9th—18th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 16th—19th Sunday after Trinity. [*Notice of St. Luke*].
 " 17th—INTERSESSION for Sunday-schools.
 " 18th—ST. LUKE—*Evangelist*.
 " 23rd—20th Sunday after Trinity. [*Notice of St. Simon and St. Jude, A. & M. Athanasian Creed*].
 " 30th—21st Sunday after Trinity. [*Notice of All Saints*].

LIFE IN CHURCH SERVICES.

BY THE REV. CANON E. HOARE, M. A.

I firmly believe that we Churchmen have the *best Liturgy in Christendom*; a liturgy with less to be regretted, and more valued, with less of human invention, and more of *Scripture*, than any other Prayer Book in the world. But the worship cannot be made by a book, and, however excellent the book, the fact remains that the service of the Church of England may be cold, lifeless, deadening, and dead. But we are not content with deadness. In this laity and clergy are all agreed, for all alike unite in the wish that the hours of worship should be the most holy, the most happy, and the most refreshing hours of the week.

Now, in order to the attainment of this delightful worship there are four things which may be almost said to be essential.

1. There must be *spirit*, or our service must be what is called '*spirited*'; and few things in this world are more enjoyable. Now, the spirit of a service will depend very much on the person conducting it. A dull man in a dull mind dragging himself to church—the conditions of his living require it—will throw a dulness over everything; whereas the man with a light, happy, thankful spirit, going to church as to the great pleasure of his life, will throw a brightness over the whole service, and over all those that help in it. There is an insensible influence over everything which is felt all around him, and which affects, as it were, the very atmosphere. It is most interesting to observe how mind affects mind even when there is no direct outward communication. But when he begins the service you soon see the effect. The reading is all alive, and you see that his whole heart is in his work and that he realises the interest and solemnity of his sacred office. Then there will be *spirit* in the music. In well-adapted music there is a *marvellous power*. Who has not felt the power of a fine hymn well sung to a good tune? But it must be *well-adapted*. Some people seem to think that the spirit of a

service depends on the *quantity* of music. But I venture to believe that it is not the quantity on which to depend, but *quality*. If we want spiritual worship we must have good hymns and spirited tunes. But while we aim at spirited music may God preserve us from ever making a show of it! It is a dark day for a parish when the church is turned into a *concert-hall*. Advertise a musical performance, and you may attract a crowd, but you may wither all life from your worship. But if the service is to be spirited we must not depend on the *clergyman alone*; for the *whole congregation* must contribute. This is the enormous advantage which we have in the Church of England. A large proportion of our service is conducted by the *people*, and in arranging a shortened form for a mission I would keep almost exclusively to such parts as are responsive. It is important that the laity should remember this. If the service is dull it is not always the fault of the clergyman; but the fault of those ladies and gentlemen who either will not take the trouble, or who think *them-selves too refined to make their voice heard in the congregation*. How often have I sat in the midst of intelligent worshippers and not heard a sound or seen a movement of a lip amongst those by whom I have been surrounded. In such cases it is a lazy laity with whom rests the blame of a lifeless service. Thus far I have spoken only of a spirited service. But that is not all, for there is a great difference between liveliness and life; and it is life that we all desire. This brings me to the second point.

2. *Emotion is the very essence of worship*. All true worship is the expression of our emotions before God. Sorrow for sin, desire for reconciliation, thanksgiving, and adoration are all emotions; and worship is the expression of such emotions in reverent utterance before the living God. When David said 'I will love Thee, O Jehovah, my strength,' he did but utter the emotion of that true, deep, and experimental love with which his heart was full. And when we unite in the triumphant hymn, 'Therefore with angels,' &c., we unite with the unseen multitude of the heavenly host in most reverently pouring out the deep emotion stirred within the soul by that which we can only see by faith, the ineffable glory of the holiness of God. Now, my point is that, as these emotions are expressed in the language of our liturgy, so when there is real life they will be felt in the heart. I do not believe in those emotions which are quite undiscoverable even to the worshipper. I know perfectly well that I am treading on delicate ground. I am fully aware of the danger of a religion of *feeling* as contrasted with a religion of *principle*: but I believe there is quite as great a danger in a religion of principle without feeling; of a *cold, dry, heartless system*, that kindles no feeling and stirs no emotion in the soul. I do not forget Butler's great argument, that passive impressions are weakened by repetition, while active powers acquire strength in action; and I can see clearly that we must not always expect the same vividness of impression which we, in early days, so greatly enjoyed. But I am, at the same time, profoundly convinced that there ought to be, and that there may be, a vast deal more holy, fervent and deep feeling in our worship than many of us are even aiming at. Our Liturgy is the expression of such feeling; and surely if the feeling is not there we have but the dead shell, for the life is gone.

3. If *feeling* is to be sound and trustworthy, it must be the result of *intelligent conviction*. As the love of Christ constrained St. Paul, his judgment convinced him of the Atonement, so the highest, most peaceful, and most soul moving emotion is that which arises from a well-instructed judgement in the truth. Thus, if we desire life we must see that all the worshippers thoroughly *understand* the worship in which they are engaging. It is the principle of the Church of England that both 'public prayer and Sacraments should be in tongue understood by the people.' Carrying out that principle

we want the power of real intelligence to give as it were a backbone to the emotions of our worship. How to promote that intelligence is too wide a subject for me now. My present business is with the worship itself, and how to promote within the Church that intelligence in worship which is essential to the highest order of Christian emotion. One thing is perfectly plain—that to which I have already alluded. There must be *good reading*—good, clear, vigorous, intelligible reading—and that not of the Lessons only, but the prayers. I sometimes hear reading that is enough to deaden anything, and, more than that, I have heard bad actually justified. I have heard people actually cautioned against what was called 'preaching the prayers,' by which, I believe, was meant giving to each clause its right expression, and using the voice for the utterance of the emotions of the heart. Such people seem to prefer the dead level of a meaningless monotone. But whatever is meant by preaching the prayers, of one thing I am perfectly sure—viz., that it is essential to life that we should *pray* them, and if we pray them it is a law of human nature that the modulation of the voice should vary with the varying emotions of the soul.

Then, again, I am persuaded there should be *great care with reference to the use of music*. I have already spoken of its power; but it must never be forgotten that the same power misused can stifle intelligence. This is the only objection that some feel too frequent chanting of the Psalms. We believe that a great many persons cannot follow them, and so lose the intelligence of that delightful part of our worship. A clergyman standing with his choir in the chancel is surrounded by a volume of sound, and thinks it most satisfactory; but let him some day go and worship at the far end of the church amongst the people, and he will in some cases find himself sometimes surrounded by a stillness that may almost be heard. So with the Belief. I know few things more heart-stirring than a large congregation standing up to declare before God and man that they believe in one God the Father Almighty. But what can be more destructive of all intelligent worship than that, instead of doing so, they should be required to stand by and listen while some men and boys sing a long, *elaborate* piece of *difficult music* in which they are not intended to take a part, and which not one out of fifty can follow? I can scarcely imagine an arrangement more destructive of all life in worship. I say, then, *use music as a power*. But let it be a power not to deaden, but to quicken, not to obscure, but to help the soul in rising intelligently to God.

4. Last, and above all, true life must be the result of the *life-giving power of the Holy Spirit*. While it was the duty of the Lord Jesus Christ by His propitiation to open the new and living way, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to lead us in by the way which Christ has opened. When, therefore, we speak of life in our services we mean the living worship of living souls before the Throne of the Living God; and such life can only be given by Him Who is 'the Lord and Giver of life.' I know very well that it is impossible to explain His action, but though it cannot be explained, thank God! it may be experienced, and when experienced it is something infinitely beyond all human instrumentality. Good reading may satisfy the understanding, and good music may charm the ear, but the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit breaks the heart, sways the will, and moves the minds of men as corn is bent before the wind. It produces the same sort of effect as was produced when the old Henry Venn was vicar of Huddersfield, and a deputation was sent from an infidel club at Leeds to hear him. These men fulfilled their errand, and on their return reported to their infidel friends, 'Truly God is in that place, though we know Him not.' There was life in that service at Huddersfield, and that is the life in which we must all most earnestly