

GUILDS AND SOCIETIES.—Two correspondents send us—separately, but at the same time—the constitutions, respectively, of the “St. Andrew’s Guild,” and of the “Christian Endeavour Society.” We have already pointed out in an editorial that the latter society is *precisely the opposite* of what its name imports. Instead of “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (the Church’s concordat),” as the Bible exhorts, they expressly open the doors to “all who believe themselves (?) to be Christians.” It is simply a modern *substitution* for the Church and her sacraments. The St. Andrew’s Guild, on the other hand, is distinctly a society of Church people, and members are at least *baptized*. It has “no uncertain sound,” it draws people to the Church. If we must have such organizations, surely they should be “on Church lines.” The “Endeavourers” are notoriously wild after fads.

“WHAT CONCORD HATH CHRIST WITH BELIAL?”—The Chicago “Parliament of Religions” was a deliberate attempt to set this Biblical challenge at defiance! So, the Mohammedan kept his polygamy in the background, the Parsee hid his dualism, the Hindoo was silent on female degradation, etc. By this means an apparent “concordat” was produced, and people have been since talking about “the remarkable spirit of unity which characterized the religious parliament.” The “Brotherhood of Christian Unity”—including even Unitarianism—has been founded on this rotten basis. Yet, some have been deluded by it.

LESS THAN HALF THE PEOPLE OF WALES prefer to belong to Nonconformist sects, notwithstanding all the agitation about disestablishment. The active and discontented few make more noise and public impression than the quiet and rather apathetic majority, who are really Churchmen. The “cat has got out of the bag” through the “report of adherents” published annually by Welsh dissenters. The Bishop of St. Asaph is on the alert and ready to prove the cry of disestablishment a “hollow” one.

PEOPLE DON’T READ TRACTS, BUT NEWSPAPERS.—The amount of money which continues to be expended on useless tracts and pamphlets—which nobody reads—is amazing. The “days of usefulness” for tracts is past—the thing has been *overdone*, and the public turns from them nauseated. Nine-tenths of them are rubbish, and people have found it out. It is waste of time—so people argue—to wade through a heap of rubbish on the chance of finding an occasional jewel. But they cannot do without the newspapers—they must have news: and useful information is a condiment they relish.

#### ADVENT.

The Church once more approaches the beginning of another year, fitly precluded by the special thoughts grouped together before the Great Festival of our Lord’s nativity—thoughts about the *second coming* of the Lord. According to the practice of the Church, each great Festival is preceded and followed by a course of days set apart with reference to it—by way of preparation and reflection, in order to greater “improvement,” to use a modern phrase, of the occasion. Thus, Easter is preceded by Lent, and succeeded by Eastertide. So Christmas is preceded by Advent and followed by Epiphany. Traces of this economy of observation are to be noticed in the first centuries of the Christian era.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SEASON has always varied somewhat. Although often

likened to Lent, it is really of a more elastic nature. It is true that in monastic houses where the strictest asceticism was affected, the tendency was to make Advent a kind of minor Lent, and the Eastern Church generally shows the same tendency. In the Eastern Church, however, the season has not got that definite reference to the Second Coming which gives emphasis to our use of the title “Advent” in the Western part of Christendom. We find, however, in the West a certain correspondence in the character of the observance, though not so well defined as the Oriental Christmas Fast of forty days. Certain bishops of Italy and France have left unmistakable indications of their wish to make Advent observance correspond very closely with Lent in character—a period of special humiliation and fasting, when every day of the period was characterized by solemnity.

#### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND VARIES

very decidedly from this inclination to Lenten observance of Advent; just as clearly as she has chosen to emphasize the Doctrine of Trinity by special attention. There is a *conspicuous absence* of any hint about greater austerity. The special solemnities of Monday, Wednesday and Friday are deliberately excluded from our routine. Then, again, the perfect silence of our Table of Vigils, Fasts and Days of Abstinence is very significant. There is no reference or hint of any discipline or austerity, any self-denial or solemnity especially proper to the Advent Season. Since the Reformation, this “new departure,” if it be so considered, is clear and emphatic. The Church of England, for some reason, has chosen to exercise in this particular her undoubted national right of “ordering observances” within certain lines.

#### THE REASON OF THIS VARIATION

must be sought in a study of the essential nature of Advent thoughts. The whole idea of Advent is pervaded for the Church—by a feeling of *anticipated relief*, of chastened exultation at the approaching termination of our long period of probation. The aspiration which inspires such a question “How long, O Lord, how long?” has its echo from “under the Altar” to the plane of earthly life. Not in Paradise only do saints yearn for the opening of the new era which is to follow the Judgment Day. Such a feeling of joyous relief added to the *strong forecast* of Christmas itself, natural to the season, is too much for the Anglo-British mind, which does not dwell gratuitously on the darker sides of things, has no morbid craving for the melancholy views and phases of life. The world, it is true, so far as it is *unfaithful* to the Lord, has and will have abundant cause for humiliation, self-discipline: but the Church’s prevailing thought is

#### CHRISTMAS IS COMING!—CHRIST IS COMING!!

The thought of His great love, Divine love for humanity, which culminated in the Incarnation of Jesus, cannot but make the pulse-beat of Christendom faster and warmer—ready to believe all joyous possibilities of what His Second Coming may bring. The brighter thoughts of reliance and confidence come uppermost—as cream in the milk of Christian thought—and give a definite character of cheeriness to the Advent season, only second or inferior to that which follows on Christmas Day itself. If “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that we might have life through Him,” what depths of joy may not that Son’s *coming to reign* mean for us? So the whole cast of thought is one of satisfaction.

#### ADVENT SUBJECTS,

however, as arranged for us by the Church, include, in particular, sober thoughts on the “Armour of Light, the Bible, the Ministry, the Race of Life”—four themes well calculated to make us *pause and reflect*, taking stock as to our own “standing” in regard to these very important matters. Do there cling to us still any remnants of the “works of darkness,” or are we well rid of them all? Do we really “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest” the sacred pages that tell us of God’s will and ways? Are we submitting ourselves obediently to that “preparation” which the Church ministry is established to carry out in us, even to our *complete conversion* to the wisdom of the just? Are we, in fact, engaged consciously and earnestly in “running the race that is set before us,” or are we shirking that exercise of Christian energy, skulking by the wayside? These are momentous questions, well adapted to chasten too great exuberance of joy. They mean, in short, have we a *right* to indulge exclusively or very largely in the bright side of Advent sentiments? Everything, practically, depends on that!

#### HOLY COMMUNION.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE REAL PRESENCE?

BY THE RIGHT REV. G. F. WILKINSON, BISHOP OF ST. ANDREW’S.

Do you believe in the real presence? If asked this question, ask first what your questioner means. So, also, if asked if you believe in “Baptismal Regeneration,” ask what is meant. If you mean that all that is necessary to salvation is done when a person is baptized—that if only he goes to church afterwards, and goes to Holy Communion occasionally, all is right—it is not true. But the Prayer Book says clearly that you have been “regenerated” in baptism (look at the office for Holy Baptism, and the collect for Christmas Day). If you understand by this that you are sure to be saved, because you are baptized, it is untrue. But if you understand by it that you have been taken into God’s family—have been made children of God—it is true. You cannot deny it, if you believe the teaching of the Church of England. Even a child, reading the baptismal service, must see this is the honest meaning of the words.

If asked, therefore, whether you believe in the “real presence,” ask “what do you mean?” If you mean that the bread is no longer bread—that its substance is changed—you are contradicted by the Word of God. The bread remains bread as much as before. But every Churchman who has really studied the subject believes in the *real, true presence* of Our Lord in Holy Communion.

I am not speaking controversially: I am not speaking in a way that cannot be argued against. I am only giving you the intelligent meaning of the words. Our Lord is always present, in a sense. He is with you even if you are sweeping a room, or cleaning your house, or making up your accounts. He is near us wherever we are. But there are some ways in which He is pleased *especially* to reveal Himself.

He has said that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is, in the midst of them: and we all believe that in a special way He is near at such times, because He has promised it. So, in the same way, we believe that in the solemn service wherein He gives Himself to us, He is near. We need not argue *how* or *when* He becomes near: except we are obliged to do it for the glory of God and for the good of