

# Church Observer.

"One Faith,—One Lord,—One Baptism."

MONTEAL, WEDNESDAY, OCT. 5, 1870.

## REVISION OF THE PRAYER BOOK.

The Commission appointed by Her Majesty to consider what changes are desirable in the Book of Common Prayer, have presented their third and final report. We can afford space for only a few remarks on the most important of their recommendations.

Every one must admit the inexpediency of allowing laws to remain nominally in force, whereas, by common consent, they have become a dead letter. Sometimes it is advisable to legislate new life and vigour into them, but in most cases it is found that they have become obsolete, in consequence either of their essential badness, or of radical changes in society, in either of which cases their repeal is wise. The requirements of some of the rubrics are systematically disregarded by the majority of clergymen, and no inconvenience is found to result from the neglect to observe them. They have fallen into disuse, in some cases, because they were never practicable; in others because, though practicable once, they are not so now. There can be no doubt that the repeal of such rubrics is expedient, and even necessary to the validity of those which are still respected. There may be some difference of opinion as to whether they should not have been cancelled instead of modified, and whether the Commissioners have acted judiciously in dealing with this or that particular rubric as obsolete or obsolescent.

In the following cases the Commissioners propose to make optional what is now obligatory. The rubric in the "Collect or Prayer for all sorts and conditions of men" is to read, "This may be said when any desire the prayers of the congregation," instead of "This is to be," &c. A similar change is made in the General Thanksgiving. It is made optional to omit the "Collect for the Queen," in the Communion Service, when the Queen has been prayed for in the preceding service. Our remarks on obsolete statutes, of course, do not apply here. The rubric in the same service, requiring a sermon or homily to be preached after the Creed and before the Sentences, is made optional when "a sermon has been preached at any other part of the morning service." The invariable disregard of the rubric as it stands, and the certainty that very few clergymen will be more disposed in future than they are now to lengthen the Communion Service, by the delivery of a second sermon, might have justified its repeal rather than its modification. The Exhortation beginning "Dearly beloved, on —day," &c., instead of having to be read previously to every administration of the Sacrament, is required to be read only three times in the course of the year. A new rubric will make it allowable, when convenient, for the minister to address the words appointed to be said to each communicant separately to as many communicants "as shall together kneel" to receive the elements. The first of the rubrics following the Catechism is to read, "The curate of every parish may, upon Sundays and holy days, . . . openly instruct and examine so many children of his parish sent unto him as he shall think convenient, in some part of this Catechism." The rubric, as it stands, is obligatory. In cases of necessity it will be lawful for the minister considerably to abridge the service for the Communion of the Sick. The "order for the Visitation of the Sick," to which many Evangelicals

take exception, and which they are sometimes puzzled to reconcile with the thoroughly Protestant spirit of their church, the Commissioners would make optional. The most important modification of the Burial Service rubrics is that permission is given to omit the portions beginning "Forasmuch as," &c., "I heard a voice," &c., "Almighty God, with whom do live," &c., and "O merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom," &c. The following Lessons are proposed as alternative:—St. Mark v. 35-41; Luke vii. 11-16; St. John xi. 39-44; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18; and St. Matt. xxiv. 35-42. We think the Commissioners' recommendations will, in this instance meet the views of everybody, "cutting off occasion from them that seek occasion of cavil or quarrel against" this part of "the Liturgy of the Church." So much as regards the repeal or modification of such directions as are thought to have become obsolete or impracticable. One of the most important of these is the insertion of words in the rubric concerning the Lessons, to the effect that the latter may be read either by the minister or by some fit person appointed by him. This may be construed as a recognition of the lawfulness of laymen reading the Scriptures before the congregation—a question which has been much disputed, and which it is desirable to have settled one way or another without further delay. What are sometimes called "the damatory clauses" in the Athanasian creed, are explained by a new rubric, to the effect that they are only "a solemn warning of the peril of those who willfully reject the Catholic faith." An explanatory note to the rubrics which precede the Communion Service provides that the directions respecting persons disqualified for communion shall not be construed as authorizing the refusal of the elements to those who humbly and earnestly desire to partake. A clause inserted in the rubric preceding the Exhortation in the Communion Service provides that "those who desire" shall then have "opportunity to withdraw." This is a small concession to those who regard the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as a Christian privilege, not as a Mass. In one of the rubrics appended to the same service the use of wafers is positively prohibited. Instead of three sponsors being required, it is proposed that, in certain cases, one shall suffice, and also that parents may be sponsors for their own children. A rubric is inserted in the Marriage Service, to the effect that when more than one couple come to be married, it shall not be necessary to repeat those portions which can be addressed to the persons collectively. The phrase "Ecclesiastical Notices" has been substituted for the objectionable words, "Briefs, Citations and Excommunications," which are used in the rubric following the Creed in the Communion Service. Those who regard daily services as essential, and taunt evangelical clergymen with infraction of duty in not holding them, will have something to say against the following new rubric:—"The directions concerning the daily use of the church services are retained, not as a compulsory rule, but as a witness to the value put by the church on daily prayers and intercessions, and on the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures."

The Commissioners, in that portion of their report which is now before us, propose two omissions, one of which has our hearty approval. We wonder how many people (senior wranglers and mathematical Professors excepted) have a clear understanding of the multitudinous tables for finding Easter Day. It is all very well to be directed to "guide your eye sideways," and you will find something or other in the

first column, but this is only the threshold beyond which very few have courage to go far, much less to the end of the terrible vista of figures and capital letters. Happily for such as have not graduated high in mathematics all this is done away with, and they will be able to find Easter Day without any difficulty, if they are sceptical in regard to non-ecclesiastical almanacs.

We are not so well pleased with the omission of the oath of supremacy. If masses were being sung for the repose of the soul of the last Jesuit we might let this venerable pledge go without much reluctance, but, so long as Loyala has a single votary on this side the grave, we prefer that our Protestant throne shall have every safeguard—whether oaths or bayonets—which can be provided for its defence.

## ANOTHER TWELVE DAYS' MISSION.

We have no desire to join in the "hue and cry" after the English Bishops. Their position at the present time is, on many accounts, one of peculiar difficulty. If they side with either of the great parties which are in battle array in every diocese, the consequences must be most momentous; while, if they do not declare themselves for one or other, they are accused of temporizing, indolence or incapacity. Most men who have any regard for their own ease, if elected just now to an English See, would say, "Nolo episcopari," and mean it. We have no reason to doubt that most of the members of the Episcopate are anxious to do the best they can for the church, but the difficulty is to know what is best. From motives with which we cannot find fault they shrink from the responsibility of causing schism by prompt and decided action, and prefer to wait for some happy concurrence of circumstance which shall present an easy and natural solution of the difficulty. To do nothing is often wise,—if it is only done well; it is sometimes far better than an energetic measure. We have, therefore, abstained from laying the whole blame of the troubles of the church at the door of the Bishops, whose power the experience of the past few years has proved to be out of all proportion to their dignity. They can do very little, and something may be said in favour of their not doing that. Some of their Lordships, however, lately departed from their policy of non-interference to express a qualified approval of the so-called Missions of the Ritualists. The facts are these: An appeal was made to them to sanction the holding of "a Twelve Days' Mission," similar to that which was held in London last year, and an account of which appeared in the OBSERVER. The Bishops being thus appealed to were in a dilemma. If they condemned the services *in toto* as absurd and Popish, the condemnation would have reached far beyond that on which they were asked to express an opinion; if they expressed an unqualified approval, they would give umbrage to every evangelical member of the church. Besides, English Bishops are mostly moderate men, and are disinclined to say "Yes" or "No" without some qualifications. They accordingly replied to the memorialists that the repetition of the "Twelve Days' Mission" might be attended with "beneficial effects" if the following conditions were observed:

1. No religious services shall be used in church other than those which are contained in the prayer-book, or consist of the very words of Scripture.
2. No ritual shall be used in any church in excess of, or in addition to the ordinary ritual of such church; and in particular, no unauthorized form shall be introduced as a renewal of the baptismal vow.
3. Although every facility should be given for personal and private communion with the clergy to those who are troubled in conscience, or who require further comfort, counsel, or

instruction, these services shall not be made the occasion of recommending the practice of habitual confession to the priest as a duty of the Christian life.

This was very guarded, but, as often happens, too guarded to please anybody. The advocates of these services are more insolent than ever in their criticism of the Bishops, who, they contend, should have gone much farther; while their opponents are very uneasy that their Lordships have gone so far.

But did the Bishops expect a different result? Did they suppose that those who made the application were likely to be satisfied with permission to do far less than they presume to do already? Did they for a moment imagine that services denuded of crosses, masses, flaring vestments, candles, a mimic confessional, and wild tirade against Reformed doctrine, were so much to the taste of their memorialists that permission to hold a long series of them would be regarded as a boon? If so, the rabid *Church Times*, or the highly respectable *Guardian*, must seldom or never find its way into the Episcopal palaces of England. For once, at least, those who are anxious to uphold the dignity of the Bishops, and to pay them the respect due to their high and sacred office, must confess that a mistake—and a grave one—has been made.

## "WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT."

In the opinion of some people all creeds are alike false and mischievous, but our contemporary the *Gazette* seems to think all faiths equally good, true, and worthy of its patronage. One day we have an eloquent panegyric on "that grand old man," Pope Pius IX.; in the next issue the adjectives and notes of admiration are transferred to some distinguished Presbyterian; the following day the Wesleyans come in for an equal share of approval from the writer who has charge of this department of the *Gazette*, and who evidently is one whom continuous ecstasy does not exhaust. We have reason to hope that in due time Episcopacy will come under his distinguished notice, and that we of that persuasion may find that, like all the sects already patronized, we are "perfect and entire." Possibly, however, we shall have to wait until that other "grand old man," Brigham Young, has had his laudation, until the Mikado has been received into the *Gazette's* Pantheon, and the Grand Lama of Thibet has been held forth as the embodiment of the cardinal virtues, and the perfection of sacerdotal dignity and wisdom.

In these days of doubt it is truly refreshing to meet with a writer who believes everything to be—not only good, but—better than everything else. We can put up with the paradox for the sake of the charity. Still, we would take the liberty of suggesting to the conductors of the *Gazette* that it would be well to restrain the exuberant benevolence of the writer of the articles referred to, as inconsiderate people may not make allowance for his remarkably benignant temperament, and may think that free-love-ism is as objectionable in journalism as in domestic relations.

## ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH.

We propose to give in our next number a detailed description of the new St. George's Church, with a full report of the opening services which takes place next Sunday. We shall be obliged if our friends in the country will send in their communications as early as possible so that they may not be excluded by press of matter.

EXPLANATION.—At the moment of going to press we receive two letters from esteemed friends at Quebec, calling our at-