

The Church Guardian.

Upholds the Doctrines and Rubrics of the Prayer Book.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi. 24.
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude: 3.

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HALIFAX.

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THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE CHURCH.

In whatever particular faith of the Denominations any Christian may have been brought up the Church has a Home for them all, and a true doctrine—they themselves being judges:—

Are they "Christians?" So are we, in faith and practice; and the Cross is our glory.

Are they United Brethren? So are we—"the Communion of Saints," in one Creed, and one Church never divided.

Are they Presbyterians? So are we, having a Presbytery, and the laying on of hands being required in every ordination.

Are they Congregationalists? So are we, giving the largest liberty, under law, and having many a prayer for the "Congregation," and giving to each congregation the management of its local affairs.

Are they Unitarians? So are we in believing in but one God. The Nicene Creed begins with this statement.

Are they Baptists? We more, insisting on the baptism of Adults, not only, but of Infants, as well, and performing it by Immersion, if it is so desired.

Are they Methodists? So are we—having given the Wesleys (John and Charles) Coke and Asbury (and Whitfield withal) to the Church, and having had a *Method* in our ways and service, so strict, that many have not been able to bear them. From us, the Methodists derived their doctrine and Liturgy, but not their Orders.

Are they Universalists? We, too, say that Christ died for all, and that He made "a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

Are they Spiritualists? So are we—believing in the existence of the soul after death, and that every one should be as spiritually minded as possible. We also think the dead are somewhere this side of heaven or hell in the Intermediate State.

Are they Quakers? We too believe in a religion of silent prayer, in a meek and quiet spirit, the Spirit of God moving us, in works of mercy and charity, we favor plain dress, and plain speech in the place of worship. With the Quakers too, we have no "Sabbath" superstition, but call it "the Lord's Day."

Do they believe in Conversion? So do we, and we keep Whitsun-day in honor of the day when 3,000 were converted; and our Prayer Book has the collect, "Create and make in us, new and contrite hearts."

Have they Bishops and a Liturgy? So have we—an unbroken line from the Apostles, which has never been overtopped by a Pope, nor travestied into mere Superintendents. As for our Liturgy, all the denominations are copying it—one of them proposing to take nearly our whole Liturgy.

Have they much to say of the Bible? We read it ten times in our two Sunday Services, we translated it, and have furnished almost every martyr who has witnessed to its truth in English speech. The man who said, "The Bible and the Bible alone, the Religion of Protestants," was a Churchman.

Have they now, Gothic Churches? We had them in abbeys, minsters, chapels, and cathedrals, crowned with the cross, from the days when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary; and their ruins, sleeping in glory, have drawn thousands to study them in wonder, and to say "there must have been giants in those days."

Have they organs? We have had them back to the days when "Merrie England" caught the strains that echoed from the organs of David. In this country we fought the battle for them against the holy nasal twang, and the puritanical pitch-pipe.

Have they Sunday schools? So have we—one of our clergy, Thomas Stock, originating them in 1780, and calling in Robert Raikes, a Churchman, as his assistant.

In a word, the Anglican Church, like the Common Law, the basis of all good statutes, has all and every greatly good thing of Christendom. From her has sprung all there is of valued and enduring among all the denominations of Christians.

The difference is, we hold them by a prescriptive right, without taxing others a "Royalty." We hold them in their integrity and entirety, with each point in its true place, as each and every point of the compass, guiding the ship into the haven where it would be.

No one religious Body has, like ours, had the full circle of Christian doctrines, to fill and round, to incite and lift up the hearts and minds of their members, and to hold them to the faith and practice. Our "Old Ship Zion" sails around the world, with a chart made by the Apostles. Every traveller records it gratefully, that whether in Europe Asia, Africa, or the Isles of the Sea, if he finds one of our Churches he finds there "the faith once delivered to the saints." This faith we hold in its true place and importance, without letting any one doctrine crowd out some relative one of equal significance. We hold every great truth in its healthful roundness, not pressing it to swell out into a tumor that needs the theological knife, nor is there one truth left to shrivel up, and die out of our creed and practice.

This proves it to be the Church Universal, "the whole body fitly joined together." Into this "Holy Catholic Church" every one should come.—*Rev. J. W. Ray.*

FRANCE.

DECLINE OF ROMANISM.

ABBE BOUGAUD, Vicar-General of Orleans, France, has put forth an appeal to his Church, in which he attributes its decline to the increasing scarcity of priests and the diminution of students for the Ministry. From the reports of the Bishops of France he draws an alarming description of the terrible dearth of pastors. Seminaries and Schools of Philosophy, which a few years ago were filled and supported, have now so few students that, together with the thinning out of the ranks of the Clergy by disease and death, the condition is such as to awaken not only present anxiety, but "great fears for the future." He has upon his table more than thirty pastoral letters recently published, and "they are only a wail." Many of them are cries of distress at the many vacant Parishes, the many Churches and Chapels without Incumbents; in the rural districts populations of from one to two thousand souls without a Priest to minister to them and no means of obtaining one.

The Archbishop of Sens writes that the number of students in the Superior Seminary is reduced from 130 to 15. The Archbishop of Rheims wrote that since the war of 1870 the number of students in the Superior Seminary is reduced from 100 to 55, and in the small Seminary from 230 to 150.

The Bishop of Verdun writes that the decrease of students there is from 150 to 30. One Bishop, speaking of the increasing number of Parishes without Priests, says:—"The future alarms us. We do not see how it will be possible to fill the vacancies."

The Abbe asserts that: "There are three thousand communes at this moment in France that have neither Church nor Chapel nor any regular worship, and which cannot have any." He states, from official reports, that in 1877 there were 2,568 Parishes without priests—that is, 1,500,000 Christians needing a pastor and not able to obtain one.

Moreover, he describes the state of the existing clergy as "strange and sad." They live in poverty and neglect. According to the Abbe's statistics, the average income of the Priests is only about 900 francs (less than \$200), and they live in a state of poverty bordering upon misery. A few Priests in the larger Parishes do sometimes receive 1,200 francs (\$240), but even this is only a pittance.

He writes, too, with grief and anxiety, of the growing neglect of public worship and of attendance upon Mass. In many Parishes, he tells us, the men never go to Church and but few women. One Bishop, on arriving at his Diocese, ascertained that only 37,000 of the 400,000 in his charge had made their Easter Communion. A city Curate, whose Parish numbered 17,000, reported that only 3,000 made their Easter Communion.

These are remarkable confessions, and prove the failure of Romanism in France.

POSITION AND WORK OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH.

The position of the laity may be said to be one of essential importance in the Church. It was with the laity that the Church began. They, as consisting of the body of the faithful, make up the Church. The institution of a clergy and its continuance is for the better ordering and more efficient working of that body of laity, not at all for the subordination or obscuring of the essential position of the laity. The work of the laity, as naturally following from such a position, must include the highest and loftiest features which belong to the work of the Church in the world. Those features always relate to the spiritual work of influencing men's souls by teaching and developing the power of the truth by spiritual thought and action. It cannot be right, therefore, to give those things to the clergy and to commit to the laity only the care of material interests. The Church's mode of worship and form of constitution give the laity a very high place of influence in its public affairs. And any limitation of their practical work is against her spirit and tendency, as embodied in the history of her foundation in this country. It was meant to be and ought to be a layman's Church, and not a clergyman's Church, and the true phrase should be, "let the clergy hold up the hands of the laity." The more the laity are cultivated to partake in the highest work of the Church, the better will it be for the clergy's position and work. They will have the stimulus of contact with men who are able to judge of all that is put before them. They will still have the advantage of special training, and will use it as experts and not as exclusive monopolists. The Church's order will protect the interests of the clergy, but their work will be helped by new agencies, which must spring from the thought and activity of the laity.