

## TRIAL SERMONS.

We refer again to a crying abuse of a divine institution existing among us. I allude to the practice of 'trial sermons,' or 'preaching matches,' as they may be called, an ordeal to which candidates for vacant cures are in most cases called to submit themselves in our Church. Such a theory of the work of the preacher is excusable among Presbyterians, according to whose teaching the call of a congregation to a probationer is the necessary prelude to his ordination as a minister. But among Churchmen such a theory is at once an abuse and a degradation of spiritual gifts, for it is utterly alien to the spirit of her teaching on the sacramental gift of orders, as laid down in the services for the ordination of clergy. Preaching is the authoritative instruction in righteousness, in faith and morals, to be delivered in disregard of the personal feelings of both the preacher and the people who hear him. But according to the system of 'preaching matches,' a sermon is no longer a means of instruction, but becomes an oratorical display of the preacher's learning or fluency, delivered with a view to his own temporal benefit, as having a constitutional right to a comfortable house and a share in the equal dividend. Such a low carnal use of a divine institution may fitly be called prostitution, for 'corruptio optimi pessima est.' These 'preaching matches' are also indefensible on other grounds. In the Church system the work of the laity, and therefore of the lay patrons who represent them, in the choice of an applicant is ecclesiastical rather than spiritual. It concerns the financial work of the church and the morals of the candidates who offer themselves, if we may judge from the analogy of the *si quis* which is addressed by the Bishop to the laity at the ordination of the clergy. Certainly it is not of a spiritual kind, for spiritual work belongs to the clergy, and to the clergy alone, and as the laity often remind us when that kind of work is of a laborious kind. Besides, the laity, though they may be able to judge whether a man has a good voice, or even whether he has an effective manner, are, from a defect in their theological learning, unable to judge whether a man rightly and scientifically ministers the preached Word. The same rule applies elsewhere. Any educated person who serves a jury can distinguish between an effective and ineffective speaker at the bar, but for an opinion as to the legal abilities of the two speakers as exemplified in their speeches, resort must be made to 'persons learned in the law.' So, as to preaching, the right judges are not the laity, however learned and experienced they may be in secular knowledge, but spiritual persons such as the Bishop, with spiritual assessors such as the Canons of his Cathedral to assist his judgment. Practically, too, the system of 'preaching matches' is indefensible, for no priest, though of ordinary acquirements, yet with a high sense of his office, and with due self-respect, would submit to such an ordeal, so that in practice the best men fail to be appointed where the best men are urgently wanted. Letting alone, however, these higher considerations, there is the absurdity, of supposing that the best way of judging about the best person is to listen to an isolated sermon or two specially got up for delivery to a people who know nothing of him except as the preacher of a trial sermon. For surely there are other departments of work as important as sermons, such as parochial organization, visitation of the sick, mission work, and instruction of the young. An efficient parish priest who does not shine in the pulpit is better than a mere windbag who spends the time which he ought to give to the parish to the concoction of sonorous phrases and picturesque descriptions which some lay patrons call elo-

quence. But there is a financial objection to the scheme also, which alone should drown the whole system of 'preaching matches.' Out of say, fifty candidates for a vacant cure, forty-nine clergy, most of them of moderate income have to travel many miles at their own expense without any returns, while the richer lay patrons, through a corporation, and therefore doubly qualified to meet expenses, suffer no pecuniary loss at all, but content themselves with handing over to each contestant preacher each Monday morning, his legal fee of £2 2s. and nothing more, which, of course, is taken from the income due to the incumbent, and not from their own pockets as should be the case. In short, this system of 'preaching matches' demands from our spiritual fathers, the Bishops, instant and searching consideration with a view to its speedy abolition, as an abuse which degrades 'the office and work of a priest in the Church of God.'—*Scrutator in John Bull.*

## PRESBYTERIANS ON THE LITURGY.

At a Presbyterian Council at Philadelphia the Rev. Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock, of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, once read a paper on "The Ceremonial, the Moral and the Emotional, in which he speaks as follows:

"If Christianity were a body without a soul, its life would not be worth insuring. But neither is it a soul without a body. The Disciples of our Lord asked Him for a Form of Prayer, and he gave it to them. The Ten Commandments they possessed already. The Apostles' Creed had not long to be waited for. These three as the germ of all the liturgies were oral, flexible and varied. Not till after the Nicene epoch were they reduced to writing. Later still was the Roman usurpation, with intolerance and exclusion of other forms. Now, in all liturgical churches, or nearly all, the liturgy is no longer servant, but master. There is too much of it for constant repetition. Liberty of omitting portions not always apposite is unwisely denied. The absolute exclusion of individual extempore petitions is equally unwise. And the overshadowed, dwarfed discourse would be a great misfortune were good discourse otherwise more likely to be had.

"But these abuses of liturgy are no argument against the use. Our present Presbyterian baldness of public service is hurting us—hurting us in many ways which need not be specified. And the hurt is quite gratuitous, since the cause of it is not one of our old Presbyterian traditions. Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and the early reformers generally were liturgists. Even the Westminster Assembly, which was anti-liturgical, set forth its directory of worship which concedes, of course, the liturgical idea. A liturgy, it has been said, is for children. Very well. What place have we now for children but in the Sunday-school? And by what arts of responsive reading, light secular singing, amusing anecdotes, annual parades and picnics, the institution is kept going you need not be told. This whole Sunday-school interest will have to be taken in hand by and by for review and revision. Children who now go to the Sunday-school, but not to Church, shall be brought also to Church. And one of these days, though not probably till we are all gone, there will be a form of public service which will suit the mature and cultured none the less for suiting also the immature and uncultured. In this matter of public worship we have yet to learn, and we shall learn, that what is really best for anybody is best for everybody. No existing Prayer Book satisfies any good Presbyterian. Still less would any good, wise Presbyterian ask to have a new Prayer Book made up out of materials that are new. The materials mostly are old, some of them very old—such as the '*Gloria in Excelsis*,' the '*Tersanctus*,' and the '*Te Deum*.' The doxology

of Bishop Ken, 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,' is our chief modern contribution to the worship of the ages. Prayer, especially, is a great inspiration and a high art. Somehow the old collects put us all to shame. Christendom to-day could better spare any treatise of Athanasius than the Prayer of Chrysostom. 'Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world of knowledge of Thy truth and in the world to come life everlasting.' The further on we get down the centuries the more precious will be to us the long, unbroken melodies of praise and prayer.

"I anticipate, also, a revival of the old Church year. Clear back, close up to Apostolic times, we find at least Passover, Pentecost and Epiphany. Christmas appears not long after. And then the calendar is crowded rapidly with festivals, which disgusted our Protestant fathers, bringing the whole system into disrepute. As between Puritan and Papist, we side, of course, with the Puritan; but the older way is better than either. Judaism had more than its weekly Sabbath; and Christendom needs more and is steadily taking more. Christmas is leading this new procession. Good Friday, Easter and Whitsuntide are not far behind. These, at least, can do us no harm. They emphasize the three grand facts and features of our religion—Incarnation, Atonement and Regeneration."—*Exchange.*

## REPORT OF THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE.

The Church Times says:—

"The Encyclical Letter of the Bishops, together with their resolutions and the reports of the Committees, are to be issued by the S.P.C.K. in the form of a pamphlet in the course of a day or two. Meanwhile the Bishop of Salisbury has published in his Diocesan Gazette a sort of preliminary sketch of their contents. From his Lordship's statement we learn that with the exception of that on purity the reports were received and not adopted; so that they have no force beyond what they derive from the individual prelates who drafted them. The resolutions, however, stand on a different footing, and Bishop Wordsworth says they are weighty not only 'from the authority that propounds them, but in the definiteness of their conclusions on most important subjects. The Conference is not a Council or a Synod; and therefore its conclusions are not embodied in the form of Canons, much less are they weighed with anathemas; but their moral force cannot but be immense.' We are glad to see that one of the resolutions he mentions entirely discountenances the use of 'the unfermented juice of the grape or any other liquid than true wine, diluted or undiluted,' as the element to be administered in the Eucharistic cup. The resolutions on divorce and polygamy (he says) are most serious and important. Those on divorce were passed unanimously, or without expression of dissent, and will be a great support in the maintenance of the law of the Church, and of the sanctity of marriage for the sake of which that law exists. As to Home Re-union, we are told the Conference 'practically decided to follow the example set by the American General Convention of 1886. It lays down certain bases on which approach may be made—thereby tacitly excluding from its views any bodies who cannot accept such articles—and then invites approaches and conferences on the part of those who may be willing to accept them. Such advances will have to be considered by the constituted authorities of the different branches of our communion.' The Conference gives a distinct recognition to the Old Catholics of Germany and Switzerland, but without establishing any formal alliance with them. Bishop Wordsworth is quite right in predicting that the pamphlet will be read with great interest. Personally he appears to