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ART. I.—THE SUNDAY SERVICE—A “CHURCH
REFORM” PAPER.

THAT lengthened prayer is not essential to the attainment of an object we learn on no less an authority than that of our Divine Teacher. More, the converse, if not actually commanded, may be reasonably inferred from the words of the Saviour. By the wisest of monarchs we know that brevity in supplication to the Most High was enjoined. Whether the Church of England, through her appointed rulers, is judicious in sanctioning the lengthened services which obtain so generally—how far the warranty of Scripture is accorded for so doing—are thoughts which obtrude themselves on the minds of such lay members of the Establishment as have at heart a fuller development of her capacity for good.

It may be that the laical voice, less weighted by rigid conventionality and usage of centuries, is better fitted to raise a question in which their spiritual well-being is the admitted object concerned. Left undisturbed, unmooted, now, a day, possibly not distant, may arrive, when the National Church must stand on her own strength, disestablished and disendowed; when, so to speak, the clergy will have to take spiritual stock of the requirements of their congregations; and when the unwisdom of a course of procedure deterrent of the very object which it was their avowed aim to accomplish would be patent to the world.

Her chief pastors might *then* consider how far the words of the Jewish king, and of One who was greater than Solomon, were a guide to the higher life in prayer and praise; whether, too, on grounds of human expediency, apart from higher motives, procedure, which has no weightier recommendation than “custom,” must give way to a general demand for vitality in the Worship of the Sanctuary.

Objections by laymen to length in the ordinary morning services of the Church on Sundays are met by the ready answer that separate services are therein joined together. Also, that of late years authority by Act of Parliament has been given for modification, as far as relates to the use or omission of the Litany. Is this latter procedure generally followed? Rather is it not in the main a dead letter, and does not old usage obtain very generally in the Evangelical and, to a considerable extent, in the High sections of the Church? True, Ritualists, less it may be in deference to episcopal precept than to Roman Catholic practice, have abbreviated—divided—such services. Be the motive what it may, let credit be given for the step which, in principle, must commend itself to thoughtful men.

We venture to submit that—(1) Prolixity; (2) Repetition in prayer, tend to sap its very foundation and object; and (3) To introduce the element of self-worthiness in a worshipper.

The pages of Scripture afford testimony negative, as well as positive, on these points.

Alike in Old and New Testament, if we except, as we may legitimately do, the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple—prayer which embraced the spiritual wants of a nation—it would seem that in proportion to the very brevity of supplication was the blessing vouchsafed in answer. In our direst necessities, perils, and dangers, we instinctively follow the example—often the very words—of the Publican. During the progress of grave, it may be of painful, disease, we know that prayer is intuitively, and necessarily, limited, to short, fervent utterances. And, when the hour of dissolution comes, the Christian narrows still further down his supplications to *a name* which is his creed, his gospel of salvation, his “All in all.”

At other periods, indeed, it is not so. In health, with the special temptations which it brings; in the far more general state of bodily derangement and the temptations which *it* also brings, who cannot recognize conditions that call for such closet prayer as may not be limited to time nor words?

But any lengthened public worship is to be viewed in a different light. We take it to evidence, when analyzed in the light of Divine truth, an antagonism through which man's fallen nature asserts its empire over the heart, and introduces an element of self—a rag of creature righteousness—against the striving of the Holy Spirit. Faith is lacking, and compensation for deficient measure virtually claimed in the scrupulous or superstitious utterance of “many words.” Is it not in some such aspect we may regard—regretfully, not uncharitably—the opposition of certain members of a congregation to shorter service? They claim an old-established right to the whole

ritual in which they have been brought up, and—to use a commercial figure—on full receipt go away self-satisfied.

We learn from our Lord's scathing denunciation of Pharisees, that long prayer *may* be a cloak to great sin: "vain repetition" and "much speaking," we also find condemned by the Saviour. Vain repetition—much speaking! Can anything bearing this semblance be found within the pale of the Church of England?

In an extreme section of our Church frequent service, frequent reiteration, obtains. When so hurried over that the value of time appears to be the first consideration; when, as a necessary consequence, a hasty mechanical assent is all that the mind can render; and when duty rather than privilege stamps the whole procedure, how far does it stand the test of examination in the light of Divine Wisdom? of Him who "knew what was in man?"

And, from a different standpoint, much the same results practically ensue from public worship as carried out by the other sections of our National Church—the main body of clergy.

It is not the object of the writer to consider in lengthened detail the Liturgy of the Church of England, beautiful and comprehensive as it is, taken as a whole, with reference to adaptability to the wants of a congregation in the days we live in. A volume of wisdom and truth speaks to us in the very figures which span three centuries. Omitting no iota of doctrine, holding firmly to the principles of the Reformation, acknowledging fully the sound scriptural truth of the Articles on which the Prayer-book rests, the question, withal, is one that forces itself more and more on the attention of earnest men, alike clergy and laity, of the present day. Do we not hear of frequent Congresses which, if "much speaking" availed, should yield fruits? As yet we see blossom—which drops off again and again—not leaving even an immature "fig." Elasticity, to use a familiar term in party warfare, is indeed advocated from widely divergent bases and in very opposite directions. The professed objects, however, are the same—to bring men to Church—to save souls. Are these ends gained by existing means; *can* they be gained by them?

Thus far these remarks have applied rather to the highly educated members of "congregation." But what of the working classes? The percentage of church-goers among them in London,¹ has been recently brought prominently before the public. The statistics are appalling enough to paralyze the mind and efforts of the Bishop, and to justify the grave mis-

¹ Reference is only made to London. In a letter the writer has just received, he is informed that in a large manufacturing town in the North the percentage of those who attend any place of worship on Sundays is 9!

givings of the veteran philanthropist, Lord Shaftesbury, as to the future of the metropolis.

In duly weighing the great desideratum, spiritual edification of the masses with relation to the National Church, there are elements heretofore little recognized, almost ignored. These are the state of education, social status, and (*pari passu*) requirements of the nation at the Reformation period, contrasted with those of the 19th century. Who would venture to affirm that there is any parallelism? That any system of public worship albeit wisely and well adapted to meet the wants (as a whole) of an ignorant and superstitious people, living in disturbed times, and in an exceptional period of the Church's history, would be suitable for the present day? Yet, virtually, we act as though such were the case. To a future generation it may well appear surprising that recognition of a fact so patent and—more—action based on such recognition, were so long deferred. To touch but upon one bearing of the matter. There is an agency powerfully operative at the present day, wholly wanting then. This agency has assumed a predominant position at Church of England services in congregations widely opposed in tenets and character. It is the Hymn-book. To the higher classes associated with music it appeals strongly to the religious as well as to the æsthetic principles within. In them it cannot be easily determined how far “singing with the spirit and understanding,” how far extraneous influences through the senses are concerned,—which predominate. Too close an introspection might evoke a greater, a more subtle, antagonism to Heavenly communion, only to be combatted by looking in child-like faith from self to a Saviour. That this latter element mingles a good deal with the devotional, especially among the young, as regards chants, anthems, oratorios—all that constitute “ornate worship,” may reasonably be conceded. The fact remains that singing in its varied forms at public worship has established a great, an increasing hold, on congregations. This much admitted, it follows that any pre-existent need, assuming that there might have been such, for a lengthened liturgy, no longer obtains.

But what of Hymnology in relation to the lower orders—to the outside waifs and strays, ignorant and debased, who know not the Gospel, who come not to hear it, and to whom its messengers must go out among the lowest byways and hedges? Nothing less than an all-potent instrument and channel of Divine grace which first awakens, then feeds, spiritual life. Without the spell of Sacred music, again and again a chord is touched by the hand of a Divine Master, breathed upon by the Holy Spirit, and that melody of the heart which we know heralds a still higher harmony above, speaks of the return home to the Father of the “one sinner that repenteth.” Well does

an old Divine, whose ministry was a great power generations ago, say, "The loveliest emblem of Heaven that I know upon earth is, when the people of God, in the deep sense of His excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together, both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of His praises."

It might not be wholly unprofitable for the Episcopal bench in the exercise of functions, grave indeed, both as Bishops and Legislators, to weigh outside utterances—the words especially of ministers of other Protestant denominations whose position frees them from the colour of party, and whose warm commendation of the Liturgy of the Church of England renders an opinion the more worthy of consideration. Dr. Norman M'Leod and Dr. Guthrie arrived at a like conclusion as to the material of effective public service, that it should include both prescribed and extempore prayer. To this view, in degree qualified as regards proportion of each, we fully concur. We would add a proviso that due consideration be given—1st, to avoidance of repetition, 2nd, to duration of service.

And surely this plan meets all the wants, fulfils all the essentials, of true worship. The congregation can join fervently in familiar words which they feel to clothe their Heavenward thoughts and aspirations, while opportunity is afforded the clergyman to include in subsequent short petitions such matters as either the particular subject of his discourse, particular "wants" in the well-being of his people, or, it may be, passing providential occurrence, render him desirous of pressing home. More, might not such procedure tend to bring into the fold of the National Church outsiders of the Nonconformist communities? who object to the hard and fast lines of a prayer-book, but yet, not unfrequently, so highly appreciate its beauties, as at the hand of their ministers to include portions of it in public devotions.

That the need of *some* departure from the "deadening" precedent of centuries exists, we have only to look around us. Why else the mission services, now so frequent and general, and which at the hands of one section of the Church seek to draw into the gospel-net not only lifeless members of the Establishment and "Heathen," but, perchance, stray fishes from other waters? Why else Missioners and Missions by clergy holding widely opposed doctrines but imbued with the same Christian spirit?

As exercising no light bearing on the subject which heads this paper, we would ask the question, "Does not the Church in her public offices overlook, ignore, the bodily condition of the individual worshipper, as regards receptivity for Divine truth, as well as for that office which George Herbert so beautifully renders, as,

“God’s breath in man returning to his birth.”

Much as the Liturgy in the mouth of a congregation assumes—alas! with what measure of sterling fact?—that all who utter the words are Christians like those of old in Antioch, so she acts virtually on the principle that members of a congregation are blessed in the fullest degree with a “*Mens sana in corpore sano*,” that all present are perfectly sound—well—all absent very much the reverse. Hence the capacity of mind for assimilation—the amount of spiritual food salutary for a congregation viewed in its entirety, so to speak, is not duly considered and weighed out. That very large class of individuals, particularly women—to say nothing of children—who are neither in robust health nor in definable sickness, is not allowed for. Strain such physique, either by spiritual or bodily over-effort, and the outcome is morbid—disease—mental or physical. The history of revivals illustrates this, as well as records of asylums. We by no means assert that such consequences are to be especially laid at the door of the Church of England. Indeed, within her portals, there is ordinarily a sufficient safeguard against over-excitement of the brain. It is one that runs on a line not to be desired either by clergymen or laymen. For, if there be not during the long service, a recoil by the mind to mundane thought, a sense of weariness creeps in. The faculties which at the commencement can grasp freshly and fully the words of prayer, by reiteration, render a mechanical assent. Is it not so? and at the close of each Sunday, when we take a retrospect of the past hours, do we not with pain often confess as much?

Apart from more abstract general considerations, the season of the year, extremes of heat and cold—particularly the former—are no insignificant factors in the matter, and merit attention.

It may be urged that any fault lies, not with the Church—her services—but with the individual. Be it even so. Is it not true wisdom when things not essential are involved to allow for human weakness—to act in some measure on the lines of that great teacher and expert, St. Paul? Both letters and life show that *he* did not ignore the body in its just relation and subordination to the great object of his mission,—how he carried out the instructions of his Divine Master, and was “Wise as the serpent”—“Crafty to win souls.” As a physician administers nutriment in quality and quantity suitable for diverse conditions of the digestion—an illustration aptly used by the Apostle¹—viewing mal-administration the thing to be avoided, so did St. Paul, in public ministry and Epistles to the Churches, practise and enjoy. In one instance indeed we have a departure,

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 2.

or what appears to be such, from this principle. We read it in the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and 9th verse. "And as Paul discoursed yet longer,¹ being borne down by his sleep, he (Eutychus) fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead." We can well understand how the apostle, on this exceptional occasion carried away alike by love to Christ and that tender human love—reflex of his Lord's—which so often finds expression,² lost sight of his own infirmities in the flesh as well as of those whom he addressed. Probably this lesson was not lost on him afterwards.

We take avoidance of repetition to be a principle essential to the objects of public worship—striking to its very foundation. Likewise, that such principle is based on the Bible, on human reason, and on human experience.

Let any one in his closet go reverentially and thoughtfully through the ordinary public services of the Prayer-book. Let him note, (1) Those petitions which in verbal entirety are repeated, (2) Those in which slight variation of word, none in purport, are employed.

As regards the latter, any hard and fast line would doubtless be a mistake. Some repetition there must be unless prayer, liturgical and extempore, be reduced to a dead level—automatic and dangerous in tendency—as in certain alien churches. Some synonymous word, some cardinal thought, will assert its mastery over the heart, will leaven the mind, will force expression, in true prayer. But withal, is there not both room and grounds for omission while leaving intact every truth and doctrine, every supplication and thanksgiving, evolved at the Reformation?

There are those indeed who would virtually place the Prayer-book on the same pedestal as the Bible, who would view with fear and aversion the transposition of a comma. They ignore the facts that it was the work of men, who, possessed of undeniable piety and Biblical light for the age in which they lived, were yet uninspired; that it may not be wholly free from a spirit of compromise on various points since clearly defined; and that three centuries of progress in knowledge, Divine and human, have set their mark on language and expression in prayer. It is surely somewhat puerile with reference to certain portions of that book, to assert, as some practically do when they explain them away, that words in the liturgies have one signification, and in lexicons and in the usages of society, another! Unwittingly it may be, do not such persons trench too near on Jesuitism?

If there be any one class of the community, high in position, and entitled to the deepest respect, among whom the axiom,

¹ New Version.

² Philip. ii. 27.

“*Quieta non movere*,” obtains, surely it is the bishops of our Church. Powerless, unhappily, to enforce law and discipline among the clergy, the words of the wise king¹ appear to be their refuge, and so with the ægis of the Latin saw, alike, points of doctrine scarcely dubious, and cummin and aniseed of tradition, are covered.

In the army we know that an officer and gentleman considers himself bound to obey those in command. Insubordination is unknown. The general is to him a judge whose word is law. It is otherwise with certain officers in the Church Militant. To laymen there is a fine irony when words of St. Paul and St. Peter on obedience to lawful authority fall from the lips of teachers and exemplars. But there is a yet graver aspect. We read in Macaulay’s history that statesmen received King William’s pay and served King James. And we know how posterity judges of *their* character.

To return to the former class of petition—viz., where in the entirety it is repeated over again during the same service. Is such procedure commendable, and, if so, on what grounds?

It will have occurred to all who have followed these remarks that there is one prayer in our Church service which stands pre-eminent—sublime in simplicity and power of diction, comprehensive in scope, adapted to the wants of mankind in every age. It is the prayer of prayers—“The Lord’s Prayer.” And surely every sentence, every word in it, apart from the great truths and lessons inculcated, is an argument in favour of the principle we would advocate—a standing protest against existing usage in the National Church. “After this manner” we are taught to pray. Practically, how widely we depart from it! Clergymen not infrequently deplore spiritual insensibility in the mass of their congregation, the absence of fruit from their ministry. In no carping spirit would we ask their consideration, among other possible hindrances, of those which proceed from within, and in which the pastor, rather than flock, are concerned.

In the foregoing pages it has been maintained that, on different grounds, reiteration in prayer is antagonistic to earnest public worship. If this inference be fairly deducible from—among such grounds—the pages of the Bible, in what light can we regard the frequent employment of the Lord’s Prayer in each Sunday Service of our Church? It is repeated ordinarily four times, and, if we add the office of Holy Communion, five times, during Morning Service. Some of us too may recall days in our boyhood when, for a sixth time, the words were uttered before the sermon. Occasionally, even now, a clergyman of the

¹ Proverbs xxiv. 21.

old school who does so may be met with.¹ How many can say, after due introspection, that, *each* time, his heart rises to a full apprehension of, and response to, the petition? More, may not the officiating clergyman, as well as devout laymen—for of such latter we now speak—put the question to himself? For, whether it be from length of service in prayer, or—alas! that such conclusion should be sometimes *forced* on a congregation—motive less excusable than human infirmity—the words Divine are hurried over in a way that necessarily precludes anything save mere mechanical response.²

It is humiliating, yet not the less true, that Nonconformist ministers place the mirror before our clergy, and in more than one aspect. Enter a chapel, and you may hear the Lord's Prayer offered up *once*, devoutly, reverently, befittingly. The careless even may catch somewhat of the Spirit of Him who gave it, for the moment, and find his heart drawn upwards to the Father of all Mercies—the God of all Comfort. And contrast, as a rule, the elocution of men some of whom have struggled manfully through all the difficulties incident to insignificant social position and imperfect education, with that of clergymen trained at Universities. At the humblest Dissenting place of worship a stranger may feel assured that he will hear the Bible read feelingly, and prayer offered up in a reverential spirit. Can as much be said for *all* Church services? Monotone, sing-song, rapid utterance, is defended on the plea of relief to the voice—lessening of physical effort. Were prayer abbreviated and, so to speak, quality, not quantity, the consideration, such undesirable need would not exist. But why should not practical instruction in elocution, tested at the time of ordination, form part of the curriculum of a candidate for Holy Orders? In the other two liberal professions, progress—*utility*—have made their mark of late years in preparatory studies. Is the ministerial office alone so perfect as to admit of no improvement among its neophytes? As matters stand, defective delivery is so common as to be a matter of frequent comment by flippant Churchmen and inimical Dissenters. Reading is often stilted, the pitch of voice high, unnatural, and unmodified by the varied subject matter. One is reminded too often of some technical legal document, when necessarily gone through as a prelude to real business. Surely these things ought not to be.

Reverting to the Lord's Prayer, the question may perhaps, not

¹ "Baptism" and "churching" during Sunday services of course further lengthen the latter. Again, there is reiteration of the Lord's Prayer.

² A little girl, at L—d, after hearing the prayers thus rapidly gone through, said to her father, "If Jesus Christ had been here, He would have taken a scourge of small cords and driven that man out of the Temple."

unprofitably, be rendered thus: "How can I, under existing usage at public worship, realize the petition, enter into its spirit, strive against antagonisms?" It is one of those matters for the attempted solution of which each must look to his own heart. The writer tries to meet it, *not* unpreparedly, by apprehending, as far as may be, the prayer in its integrity when first offered, and, on subsequent repetitions, by dwelling mentally on one or other of the several sentences which shape the grand harmonious whole. Can we too profoundly and reverently search the depths of Divine Words, the first learned by infancy, the last uttered (often) by old age,—Words on which volumes have been founded?¹

But is there no remedy for *misuse*—surely the phrase is not too strong—of this soul-stirring petition? We believe that a solution, very simple, is to be found—one of a nature to meet with general approval. Let those with whom authority legitimately rests be empowered to issue a mandate prohibiting usage of the Lord's Prayer oftener than once in each service of the Church, excepting on the occasion—now so frequent—when the celebration of the Holy Communion takes place.

Reference has been made to this Prayer as an illustration—meet indeed to take precedence—of the position into which custom has led us at the present day. If the foregoing principle be conceded, further argument is scarcely required to point its application to the component parts of Church service generally.

A step universally approved was taken some five years ago, when Parliamentary sanction was obtained for a modified use of the Litany—its optional exclusion on Sunday mornings. Add to this formula the General Thanksgiving, together with hymns and sermon, and a terse, admirable service for either afternoon or evening is afforded. Preferably the latter, inasmuch as a larger congregation attends, and from physical causes, sufficiently obvious, a condition of greater receptivity may be expected. Surely further concession, to meet exigencies increasingly recognized, might be sought for through the same channel.² The Liturgy of our Church has been well

¹ Some two years ago, a young nobleman lay on his deathbed, the sole occupant of a tent pitched in an African desert. He had been overtaken by fatal illness while hunting there with some brother officers, and, with no dear one to close his eyes, no ministry of religion, the hour of departure was come. Prolonged insensibility was broken, the voice was heard from without clearly and slowly repeating the words of Jesus, and then the spirit took its flight. A vision of infant years at a mother's knee it may have been to the dying man.

² The most profitable week-day service we can recall was that carried out in the Church of St. Mathias at Dublin, where the much lamented Dean Daunt was Incumbent. It consisted of the Litany, chapter from the New Testament, one or more hymns, and a short, earnest sermon.

designated "matchless." With an ascription of praise to the Triune God, such as the *Te Deum*; an embodiment of human wants and supplications, such as the Litany; and of gratitude to the Most High, such as the General Thanksgiving, what other uninspired system of worship can vie? It remains only to utilize such material—to readjust and abbreviate services to meet the altered circumstances of the present age.

The initiatory of the procedure might emanate from Convocation—in committee. The basis of such rearrangement is sufficiently patent, its object sufficiently manifest—edification.

A layman may well feel somewhat diffident in approaching details on this subject. We would submit, in such spirit, the following as among changes meet to be entertained:—

1. One of the Creeds to be used, at the option of the officiating minister (as in the American Episcopal Church).
2. One Collect for the Queen.
3. One reading of the Collect for the day.
4. That the response to the Ten Commandments be limited, as in the Communion Service, to the word "Amen," with the exception of the last inclusive one. Surely, a hearty, brief assent is preferable to the long-drawn sentence sung after *each* command, both as regards the worshipper and the time utilized.

The bishops of our Church have spoken of late on the high importance of an order of laymen—sub-deacon or evangelist—set apart to supplement ministerial work. Such persons are commissioned to hold short services, including prayers, hymns, and brief expositions of Scripture. A wise and timely measure, it may be admitted. The mass of the people do not come to church; the Church, in a generic sense, goes forth to them. Perhaps some little weakness in the ecclesiastical system might be inferred from this. But do their lordships consider the possibility that the lower orders, whether they be found in the alleys and dens or in the mechanic's room, for whom such necessarily brief—let us hope, earnest and hearty—services are designed, may little appreciate the lengthy Ordinances of the Sanctuary, to which the former is a stepping-stone?

We have already pleaded for relaxation in the direction of extempore prayer—literally "ex-tempore." The practice obtains, whether legal or otherwise, among some clergy of the Evangelical school, so far as the introduction of a few words in addition to—more occasionally substitution for—the usual collect before the sermon. And sometimes also such are heard after delivery, at a time when the preacher's heart is stirred, his sense of the value of immortal souls, as well as of his own responsibility as "a steward," quickened. Has any hearer ever wished such

words unsaid? Surely elasticity may be permissible at such times, and freshness of utterance, *with its acknowledged power to arrest attention*, be the gain.

And this leads us to the subject of duration of public service—what time it should cover. Clergymen are differently circumstanced in town and in country, and, if we set aside the calibre of the preacher, the position in life and surroundings of the congregation must needs affect the length of a sermon. What greater contrast can there be than, let us say, between the peasant or small farmer, who comes from a distance to church, and wistfully looks forward to his Sunday dinner, and the Templar, who, freed from such considerations, would gladly listen for an indefinite period to acute, logical reasoning, enforced by fluent speech. These are extremes. If we place the average entire service at from one hour and a quarter to an hour and a half we might consider two-thirds of such period applicable for prayer and praise, a third to the sermon.

One great principle alone should underlie all efforts to further an object of such solemn import as public worship. It is met with in St. John's Gospel, iv. 24.

Not without prayerful consideration, the outcome of many years, has the writer approached his subject in the light of these words.

There are, indeed, profound difficulties to the untrammelled minds of Christian laymen when they seek to harmonize the Church based on the Apostolic mould with a Church in the age in which we live. Not with the scepticism of a heathen governor or philosopher, but rather with the mind of that Apostle who spoke of an undivided Christ, must he, too, supplicate the Spirit of Truth to guide him into all truth. For he knows that the day will come when the fiat everlasting will depend upon such apprehension in relation, directly and individually, to the Judge Himself. While here below, he will—wisely, for the avoidance of an otherwise inevitable chaos—be identified with a recognized scriptural pastorate and church government. Yet, rising above sectarianism to some conception, however dim, of the Church of Divine Writ—the Church Catholic—he sees in all its branches below, the word "imperfection" indelibly stamped. May he not withal in humble faith recognize, albeit dimly, the purpose of the All-Wise, All-Good, thus drawing us from the finite to the Infinite, from the Church on earth to the Church triumphant? "the multitude which no man may number."

At the present age we find man, on the one hand, demanding such demonstration—analysis—of Scripture as would virtually supersede all faith, and on the other resting on a superstition which would ignore the faculties with which God has gifted him, and, with such gift, the responsibilities thereby created. Thus

alike, in the so-called empire of reason, or in that other sovereignty which arrogates to itself attributes of the Most High, truly we behold impious man "as God, sitting in the Temple of God, declaring himself to be God."

At least, so far as the ascription of praise and prayer in the Sanctuary reaches, and, with it, the highest aim, the worthiest means, by which worship in spirit and truth may be affected, the path is open. Here, surely, difficulties are not insuperable. The idols of tradition and conventionality have to be encountered and overthrown. Should that disestablishment, which some bishops already speak of as a question of brief years, arrive, the sifting of wheat from the chaff in public worship must needs begin, and the great question from without, as well as from within, her pale be, not only "What the Church says," but, also, "What can the Church do?"

Is it not preferable to be timely wise?

FREDERICK ROBINSON.

ART. II.—"ALMS AND OBLATIONS."

IN offering to the readers of THE CHURCHMAN at the beginning of its new year (and I hope the new year will be for it one of continued prosperity and increasing usefulness) an argument on what I believe to be the true meaning of the phrase "*Alms and Oblations*", in our Book of Common Prayer, I write in the first person, partly because the subject has come before my notice in a somewhat personal manner; and partly because, taking a keen interest in liturgical studies, and yet wishing to avoid all approach to a show of learning, I find it more natural and easy to write in this way than in any other.

It happened to me, a few years ago, in the course of preaching certain sermons, which the Restoration of Chester Cathedral rendered desirable, and for which the great kindness of Clergymen in the Diocese gave frequent opportunities, to encounter two contrasted experiences, which I remember very well. In each case it occurred that the offertory for the Cathedral Restoration was taken on a Sunday morning, when there was no administration of the Holy Communion. At one end of the Diocese the Parish Priest (a moderate Low Churchman, if I may use a detestable cant phrase), on presenting upon the Lord's Table the offerings of the people, prayed that our "oblations" might be accepted, the word "alms" being omitted from the formula which is prescribed. I saw at once the thought that was in his mind. He knew that the collection was not for the