

## MISCELLANEA

### NOTES AND COMMENTS

WE regret that in a review in our last number (p. 157) the Bishop of London's Criminal Law Amendment Bill was inadvertently spoken of as having "become law." At that time the Bill was on the eve of introduction into the House of Lords, and we earnestly hope that our reviewer's words may very shortly prove prophetic of the fact.

The Rev. J. T. Darragh writes from Durban, South Africa, to point out that, strictly speaking, the South African Liturgy, to which allusion has been made in our pages more than once, does not exist. There is a draft before the Province, which is not likely, he says, in its present form, to meet with the final approval of the authorities. In response to a widely signed petition the Bishops have appointed a Committee of six of their own number to review the draft in question before it is placed on the agenda of the next Provincial Synod. Mr. Darragh's letter was written before our March number appeared; and his point tallies entirely with what Mr. Bazeley writes in the Lambeth Conference Review there published.

**Oremus.**

#### An Invocation.

"O God the Holy Ghost, come to us and among us. Come as the wind, and cleanse. Come as the fire, and burn. Come as the dew, and refresh. Convict, convert, and consecrate many hearts and lives—to our great good, and Thy greater glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen."

### BACK TO THE RUBRIC

BY TWO PARISH PRIESTS

#### IV.—THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS (B)

NEXT after the consideration of the discipline of Holy Baptism should come that of the Holy Communion, for as the former comprises the rule of admission to the visible Church, so the latter gives us our central rule of life. The strength of the primitive Church lay in her unity, and her unity depended chiefly on two things—first her rule of admission, and secondly the central rule of life of the members of the Church, described in the Acts of the Apostles as "the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers"; for this is all included in the discipline of the Eucharist. The reality of this initial unity lay in the fact that, according to this rule, all the members of the Church in those early days met together weekly for the Sacrament of the Altar. Thus all the early Christians knew each other well: they could not but be familiar with the faces they saw week after week as they met together, even if there were no other causes to promote this familiarity. The Apostles, on the other hand, knew their congregations, as did the Bishops who succeeded them, could recognize a stranger at once, did any such attempt to join in their worship, and with the certainty of meeting all the faithful every week were able to notice at once the absence of a defaulter, and deal personally with equal promptness with any who failed to keep the Apostles' doctrine. Defaulters and heretics, being then known at once, were dealt with at once, and either

restored to full fellowship by admonition, or expelled from the congregation. The congregation was therefore a simple unity, of which the component individuals knew and trusted each other, and held a common belief and standard in respect of the essentials of Christianity.

This unity of the people of God, so essential if the fighting efficiency of the Church is to be maintained, we have utterly lost. In the numbers of the Church to-day are many confirmed Christians who have become so irregular in their attendance at the Blessed Sacrament that they can hardly be called "Communicants" at all, many unconfirmed who have no intention of seeking confirmation, many, even, who have never been baptized.

The parish priest of to-day, then, is not backed and supported in his work as he should be by a loyal congregation. His congregation do not really know each other, and cannot trust each other, because they are a mixture of different sets of people, holding widely different standards as their ideals of Churchmanship.

This has three direct results. First, there is no unity in the congregation, implying the possibility, and even probability, of internal dissensions, no unity of witness to the world, and no unity of purpose with regard to the duties of Christianity towards the world. Secondly, the admonitions of the priest, ordered in the Ordination Service, cannot be very effective while he has no common rule or standard, accepted, at any rate in theory, by all his people, on which he can base his appeal or admonition. Thirdly, this lack of a commonly accepted standard gravely affects his personal and individual dealings with his flock. If a once regular communicant becomes irregular, there is no universal standard to which he can appeal, for many others of his congregation are irregular, and defend their irregularity in a variety of ways. If one of his flock falls sick, he has very likely to begin at the very beginning of Christianity, and, at a time when he should be able either to administer the Sacrament, or bring the sufferer to a state of repentance, he has to teach the elements of a faith that the sick person does not realize he has not followed faithfully. To receive elaborate instruction in sickness is impossible, but the priest's alternative is perhaps to leave a soul in grave danger. Does one of his recent confirmation candidates become careless of his duties, he has again no commonly accepted standard on which to base his ideal. The witness of the congregation of the Faithful, to both unbelievers and the careless, is all but non-existent.

When one remembers, too, that besides the inadequacy of admonitions on the part of a priest that are not based, cannot be based, on a universally accepted standard or rule, much of the training of the individual conscience is brought about by the direct action of God Himself, through His Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar, on the individual soul, one sees at once why it is that the neglect of this Sacrament has such a terrible effect on the Church as a whole, in that this neglect is the cause of the widely varying standards of morality and honesty upheld by those who call themselves Churchmen.

We need, then, more than anything else in the Church to-day, a fundamental unity underlying all the different opinions and practices that are permissible in our Church, a unity too, which is recognized as more important than the differences in lesser things. This unity can only be created by a definite minimum rule, by means of which a sharp and obvious distinction can be drawn between the obedient and the disobedient, between, that is, the faithful and the unfaithful, between the congregation and those that for want of a better name we may term "hearers."

The definition or terminology, being the same that we use throughout these papers, needs a word of explanation. The congregation proper, consisting of regular communicants who have performed their duty of com-

municating three times in the year, we call Church members, as being entered on the Roll of Church Members about to be described. All other attendants at church we call "hearers," as taking the position in some respects in the Church of to-day that the "hearers" of the Primitive Church took in their own time.

The definite minimum rule the Prayer Book gives us: "And note, that every parishioner shall communicate at least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one."

This rubric we must make the line of demarcation between Church members and the rest. That is, we must see, we maintain, that only those who are obedient to this central rule be considered members of the Church. This seems, in fact, to be the only way in which the direction of the twenty-second canon can be obeyed as things stand at present. That this division of our congregations into "Church members" and "hearers" is practicable, and can prove advantageous to the unity and forward progress of the Church, is proved by the success that attends a similar practice as it is carried out by many of the Nonconformist bodies. If we can enforce this rubric, and thus make definite and clear the line of demarcation, we shall have our congregations divided into those who are faithful, whom alone we shall call members of the Church, and a great body outside. This great body, the "hearers," may decrease by the falling away of some, or perhaps many, as the line of demarcation becomes more public and obvious. We maintain that those who will fall away are those whom we find most difficult to draw on further at present, those, that is, who are most dangerous to the unity and well-being of the Church to-day. Those who do not fall away we can admonish or appeal to on the grounds of the new-old standard which is commonly accepted, and the very fact of their remaining as "hearers" only will prove that there is that in them which is worth and deserves cultivation to the end that they too may become faithful members. Moreover, the very fact of this distinction will incline others to respect the Church, for a Church that does not respect her own rules will never win respect from those outside. It will show to the world that we have something in our religion that we value sufficiently to guard adequately, and the world will begin to respect a Church that respects herself, and this respect will help us as nothing else can in our task of the conversion of the world. Those who do not respect will probably oppose, and this will help us nearly as much as respect. No one will trouble much either to oppose or respect a religion that is too easy. Once we establish a common standard that implies any kind of difficulty however small, once we attach conditions however little hard that must be fulfilled by those desiring to be members, we shall win both respect and opposition.

Before we develop a scheme by which obedience to the rubric may become the condition of Church membership, let us bridge the gap between Holy Baptism and full membership.

Our children, then, will have three guarantors pledged to use every effort to compel their adequate religious education and so to bring them to confirmation. Few will be lost to our Sunday-schools if the guarantors do their work. We must then obey the Prayer Book again, and prepare and present for confirmation our Sunday scholars as soon as they can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and are further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose, as our properly instructed guarantors, the Godparents, will rightly insist. This implies, beyond all possibility of doubt, that our Sunday scholars will be brought to confirmation before they leave Sunday-school, at about the age of twelve. The practice of delaying confirmation until the age of fourteen or fifteen is in direct opposition to the Prayer Book direction, and is generally attacked now on psychological grounds into which we need not enter here.

But "everyone shall have a Godfather or Godmother as witness of their Confirmation"—witness, that is, of their promise made in the Confirmation Service. If this rubric is made the position is immediately changed. Every candidate is to have a guarantor, whose business is, obviously, to justify his witnessing of the confirmation of the child by continuing to watch over him during his youthful years. Should he become careless, this guarantor would appeal to him, and as he would probably be chosen, or at least assented to, by the child himself, he would have as the lever of his appeal the child's own action in choosing or approving him. There can be no doubt that such guarantors, who would, of course, be members of the Church as the twenty-ninth Canon directs, would have immense influence, and would save many newly confirmed from neglecting their duties and finally falling away altogether, especially in those cases where the priest who had prepared the candidate for confirmation, and so had influence over him, had left the parish.

Every possible step would have been taken, in short, to see that every baptized child had been properly instructed, confirmed, and kept true to his full membership of the Church and its obligations until he had passed from a well-spent youth to an age when he must choose for himself. He would then become, technically, a Church member while still under the influence of his guarantor at confirmation, and would have passed the dangerous years without being neglected, and his manhood would begin with a memory of past faithfulness behind it that would tend to strengthen and increase his faith every year.

We shall have done everything, then, to ensure our supply of members. The next consideration is the enforcement of our minimum rule of three communions a year.

Obviously, if this rule is to be enforced, a Communicants' Roll must be kept in every parish, and from this, once a year, a roll of Church members would be made, consisting of the names of those who had made their three communions in the preceding year. This Communicants' Roll can be made by one of the methods now used in our larger parishes. Perhaps the rubric to the effect that all wishing to communicate should give notice beforehand, or some modification of it, might be found useful in this respect. For example, it is usual in some churches for each communicant on the great festivals, or when a large number of communions is expected, to insert his or her name inscribed on a card in boxes provided for the purpose.

The Roll of members would be made as public as possible. One copy should be in the hands of the priest in charge of the parish, and one should be placed in the church where it could be seen by all.

Those on the Roll who failed to keep their three communions in any year would have their names removed from the list until they had performed their duties correctly in a subsequent year. Those whose names did not appear on the Roll would, of course, not be excommunicated; but it might be considered whether in their case the rule of informing the priest beforehand of their intention to partake at a celebration of the Blessed Sacrament should not be enforced. Only those whose names were on the Roll of members would be eligible for any Church office.

Before leaving the subject of the Discipline of the Sacraments, it might perhaps be suggested that the present scandal of the administration of the sacrament of marriage to many infidel and evil-living could fitly be ended by confining the administration of this sacrament to Church members, in the spirit of the rubric which refers to the communions of the bride and bridegroom.

J. F. FULLER.  
M. G. TRUMAN.