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Prayer-Book Revision in Canada.

THE problem of Prayer-Book Revision is apparently acute just now in England, and perhaps a few suggestions from Canada may be of service towards the solution. The Canadian Church has already taken action, and, but for the war preventing the meeting of the General Synod last September, the movement would pretty certainly have gone further. For several years a Committee appointed by the General Synod has been at work, and after a number of meetings a draft Prayer-Book has been prepared embodying the suggestions. Some months ago the Bishop of Kingston, Ontario (Dr. Bidwell), prepared for general circulation in the Church press a statement of the proposals and proceedings of the Committee.

First of all, it will be well to observe that the Committee were instructed to prepare a Revision which should not in any way involve questions of doctrine. This requirement has been of great help, for it has given confidence to men of different views who for various reasons did not wish any fundamental doctrinal changes. The Committee was divided into three sub-committees, and it was decided that no change in the Prayer-Book should be made or new matter introduced unless carried by two-thirds majority of those present. It is only possible to give a very general account of what has been done, based on the statement issued by the Bishop of Kingston.

1. A shortened form of Morning and Evening Prayer is proposed, permission being granted to use it on Sundays and Holy Days when special circumstances indicate the necessity. Such liberty, however, is only possible with the written approval of the Bishop. Certain combinations of services are also permitted, including Litany at Evening Prayer and Litany and Holy Communion.

2. A number of new Opening Sentences have been added, suitable to various seasons, and Special Anthems on the analogy of the Easter Anthem are suggested for Christmas Day, Good Friday, Ascension Day, Whit-Sunday.

3. A rubric is inserted after the Apostles' Creed, following the example of the American Prayer-Book, stating that the words "He descended into hell" are considered to mean, "He went into the place of departed spirits."

4. A prayer including the King, Queen, Royal Family, Governor-General, and Legislators, may be substituted for the State Prayers.

5. A new rubric is placed over General Thanksgiving to the effect that it can be said by the minister alone or by the minister and people together.

6. The problem of the Athanasian Creed has not been solved, but the suggestion of an alternative form was made. The proposal was carried at one meeting, but not confirmed at a subsequent one. It remains to be seen whether the General Synod would allow the use of the new version instead of the Creed as it now stands. One or the other must be used on all the appointed days. But it is more than likely that the present plan adopted in many churches will be continued. According to Canadian usage, permitted by the General Synod, the Morning Prayer can be shortened by proceeding to the ante-Communion Service directly after the Benedictus, thereby obviating the necessity of using the Athanasian Creed. It is an open secret that many clergy welcome this freedom.

7. The Litany has two or three new petitions, all of which seem to be most appropriate and helpful.

8. New prayers have been added for use on special occasions, including the New Year, for Missions, for Synods, Rogation Days, Hospitals, etc.

9. The Transfiguration has been added to the Red Letter Festivals, with Collect, Epistle, and Gospel. This follows American usage.

10. The alterations in the Holy Communion Office are naturally slight, and are concerned mainly with modifications of language. The Office as a whole has been wisely left alone, though permission is given to say both of the post-Communion prayers. No doubt some Canadian Churchmen would have

liked a closer approximation to the Scottish and American usage, but this would have involved such structural changes as would have implied definite change of doctrine. Anything of the latter kind would have led at once to serious trouble.

11. The Baptismal Services have new rubrics, but here, again, there does not seem to be anything involving doctrine.

12. In the Order of Confirmation certain additions are proposed, commencing with the presentation of the candidates, similar to the presentation at Ordination. There is also an addition to the opening address; and use is made of Acts viii. and Acts xviii. 14-17, Acts xix. 1-7, and Heb. vi. 1-3, in such a way as to imply that our present Confirmation is identical with the laying-on-of-hands in the Acts. This is virtually a doctrinal change of serious import, because it tends to make our Bishops one with the Apostles in spiritual power. It is one thing to support our English rite by the examples furnished in Acts, but it is quite another to show that our Confirmation is identical with that of Apostolic usage. This is a point to which Evangelical Churchmen in Canada may be trusted to give special attention. We do not want either in Canada or in England to transform our Confirmation Office into anything like a sacrament, or revert to "a corrupt following of the Apostles."

13. The Order for the Visitation of the Sick has a very appropriate addition in the form of a prayer for a sick child. Other suitable prayers are also added, together with selected passages of Holy Scripture.

14. In the Order for the Burial of the Dead a new and important rubric is inserted, directing the clergyman what to do when this Office is not to be used. Then, after Psalm xc., a rubric appears permitting the use of Psalm xxiii. at the burial of children. There is also a similarly appropriate change of lesson and forms of prayers.

15. The Psalter is also noteworthy by reason of the changes made. Additions to the Proper Psalms for certain days are suggested, and a list of Psalms that may be used in Holy Week is given. Then, following the American plan, a number of

selections of Psalms is provided for use either on the thirty-first day of the month or on other days for sufficient cause.

16. New forms are included for Institution and Induction, Harvest Thanksgiving, Consecration of Church, Churchyard, and other services. These are all new, but "have been framed on the best models procurable."

17. The new Lectionary is decidedly important. Its main feature is the provision of Second Lessons for Sundays on a definite plan. The Morning Lessons from Advent to Trinity tell the story of our Lord's life from the Gospels, with some variations for special seasons. The Morning Lessons from Trinity to Advent are chosen from passages in the Epistles and the Apocalypse, which treat of the teachings of the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the day. The Evening Lessons from Advent to Trinity are similarly chosen from the Epistles and the Apocalypse, and treat of the teachings for the day. The Evening Lessons from Trinity to Advent are chosen from the Gospels, containing in the main our Lord's teaching. The Daily Lessons have not been touched, but special Lessons for Lent are suggested. In the selection of First Lessons for Sunday there has been revision by shortening or transposing and also enrichment by selection of chapters that are now seldom heard. A larger use is made of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets.

18. A few changes of importance have been effected in the Calendar. Some unknown Black Letter names are omitted, and the Table of the Vigils, Fasts, and Days of Abstinence, is much shorter than at present.

19. A Preface has been drawn up pointing out that, while the Prayer-Book has endeared itself to generations of Christians, yet changes during 300 years have necessitated more adequate expression than is possible at present. The result has been adaptation and enrichment, without involving or implying any change of doctrine or principle. The chief results of the present Revision are shown by adaptation of rubrics to present customs, provision of directions for the combined use of different services,

adaptation and enrichment of the occasional Offices, the provision of forms for additional services, the addition of new prayers for special occasions, and the revision of the Calendar, Lectionary, and Psalter.

It is now announced that the General Synod, which should have met in Vancouver last September, will meet in Toronto in September next, where presumably the draft Prayer-Book will be presented. Even if the Revision as a whole is accepted, the new book will not become law until after another meeting of the General Synod three years hence. During this time there will be ample opportunity for thorough consideration and full discussions.

The Bishop of Kingston, in closing his statement, sums up the work in these words: "Of revision there is little; of adaptation a fair amount; of enrichment a great deal." In conclusion, it may not be unnecessary or lacking in respect if it be added with special application to Revision in England: "Go and do likewise."

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