

# LIFE AND WORSHIP IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE.

## SIDELIGHTS FROM ADDISON'S "SPECTATOR."

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### II.

FROM a letter published in No. 312 we gather that the use of extempore prayer was not infrequent in the pulpit. "There is another pretty fancy. When a young man has a mind to let us know who gave him his scarf, he speaks a parenthesis to the Almighty: 'Bless, as I am in duty bound to pray, the right honourable, the Countess'; is not that as much as to say, 'Bless her, for Thou knowest I am her chaplain.'"

A letter in No. 455 informs us that the clergy in *Spectator's* day, as in our own, had to remind their congregations that kneeling is the appropriate posture for prayer—also that the reminder may be given in such a way as to bring ridicule upon the preacher: "Mr. Spectator, I desire you would print this in Italic, so that it may be generally taken notice of. It is designed only to admonish all persons who speak either at the bar, pulpit, or any other public assembly whatever, how they discover their ignorance in the use of similies." The writer proceeds to give the following instance: "On Sunday last, one who shall be nameless, reproving several of his congregation for standing at prayers, was pleased to say, 'One would think, like the elephant, you had no knees.' Now I myself saw an elephant, in Bartholomew Fair, kneel down to take on his back the ingenious Mr. William Penkethman."<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that what Cowper calls "the divorce of knees from hassocks" became increasingly general during the eighteenth century. Sir Roger de Coverley's gift of hassocks to encourage the congregation in the practice of kneeling leads us to infer that the posture, in the judgment of Addison, was not an unimportant detail of worship.

On the whole, *Spectator's* opinion of Church music is unfavourable. Addison expresses the wish that there were "the same application and endeavour to cultivate our Church music as we have lately bestowed on that of the stage." The oratorio, which

<sup>1</sup> John Pinkethman, a well-known actor; or, as often spelt, Penkethman.

owed its development, if not its origin, to Handel, was still a thing of the future, whereas the opera in England began its chequered and not very distinguished career in 1673. In a later paper a contributor to the *Spectator* speaks favourably of Church music. This contribution was not from the pen of Addison or Steele, and there is reason to doubt whether either of those two accomplished writers was a competent judge of musical efficiency.

Quiet country parishes, where the highest ambitions were satisfied by the metrical psalter of Tate and Brady, or Sternhold and Hopkins, were in danger of being scandalized by incursions from the realms of fashion. No. 205 contains a letter from a country parson, who confides his difficulty to the *Spectator*, and asks advice. Here is the letter. "Mr. Spectator, I am a country clergyman, and hope you will lend me your assistance in ridiculing some little indecencies, which cannot be so properly exposed from the pulpit. A widow lady, who straggled this summer from London into my parish for the benefit of the air, as she says, appears every Sunday at church with many fashionable extravagances to the great astonishment of my congregation. But what gives us the most offence is her theatrical manner of singing the psalms. She introduces about fifty Italian airs into the hundredth psalm, and whilst we begin 'All people,' in the old solemn tune of our forefathers, she, in a quite different key, runs divisions on the vowels and adorns them with the graces of Nicolini ;<sup>1</sup> and if she meets with eke ' or ' aye,' which are frequent in the metre of Hopkins and Sternhold, we are certain to hear her quavering them half a minute after us to some sprightly air of the opera. I am very far from being an enemy to Church music, but fear this abuse of it may make my parish ridiculous, who already look on singing psalms as an entertainment, and not part of their devotion."

A serious grievance is ventilated in No. 338, and here the stricture is aimed at the organ-loft. The organ had securely established itself before the end of the seventeenth century, and, although the puritanical element in the Church still raised a feeble protest, was now almost universal in the churches of the metropolis. *Spectator* remarks severely upon the usual practice on the stage of appending a comic epilogue to the most solemn of tragedies. He charitably (or shall we say sarcastically?) supposes that this is done with a

<sup>1</sup> A well-known operatic singer of the day.

view to sending the audience away in a cheerful frame of mind, but he highly disapproves of the practice. He continues: "what makes me more desirous to have some reformation of this matter is, because of an evil consequence or two attending it; for a great many of our church musicians being related to the theatre, they have, in imitation of these epilogues, introduced in their farewell voluntaries, a sort of music quite foreign to the design of church services, to the great prejudice of well-disposed people. Those fingering gentlemen should be informed, that they ought to suit their airs to the place and business; and that a musician is obliged to keep to the text as much as the preacher. For want of this I have found by experience a great deal of mischief. For when the preacher has often, with great piety, and art enough, handled his subject, and the judicious clerk has, with the utmost diligence, culled out two staves proper to the discourse, and I have found in myself, and in the rest of the pew, good thoughts and dispositions they have been all in a moment dissipated by a merry jig from the organ-loft." Most of us have known churches where this would be a word in season if pinned in the organ-loft.

Irreverent and careless conduct in church is a subject of frequent and severe comment in the *Spectator*. He takes great exception to the elaborate and frequent salutations given and received in the house of God. The vein in which the rebuke is couched may be exemplified by the following passage: "A dissenter of rank and distinction was lately prevailed upon by a friend of his to come to one of the greatest congregations of the Church of England about town. After the service was over, he declared he was very well pleased with the little ceremony which was used towards Almighty God, but at the same time he feared he should not be able to go through those required towards one another: as to this point he was in a state of despair, and feared he was not well-bred enough to be a convert."

In one of his papers Addison gives an account of the visit of four Indian Kings to the metropolis, and he takes the opportunity of drawing attention to this scandal. The royal sightseers attended a service at St. Paul's Cathedral, and thus describe their experience: "It is probable that when this great work was begun, which must have been many hundred years ago, there was some religion among this people; for they give it the name of a temple, and have a

tradition that it was designed for men to pay their devotion in. And, indeed, there are several reasons which make us think that the natives of this country had formerly among them some form of worship, for they set apart every seventh day as sacred ; but upon my going into one of these holy houses on that day, I could not observe any circumstances of devotion in their behaviour. There rises indeed a man in black, who was mounted above the rest, and seemed to utter something with a great deal of vehemence ; but as for those underneath him, instead of paying their worship to the deity of the place, they were most of them bowing and curtsying to one another, and a considerable number of them fast asleep." The " man in black," it may be observed, is contemporary proof of the use of the black gown in the pulpit.

*Spectator* contrasts the Church of England, in respect of behaviour in the house of God, very unfavourably with that of the Church of Rome. Steele puts his thoughts on this subject into the mouth of an imaginary correspondent. " Mr. Spectator, I write to you to desire, that you would again touch upon a certain enormity, which is chiefly in use among the politer and better-bred part of mankind ; I mean the ceremonies, bows, curtsies, whisperings, smiles, winks, nods, with other familiar arts of salutation, which take up in our churches so much time that might be better employed, and which seem so utterly inconsistent with the duty and true intent of our entering into those religious assemblies. The resemblance which this bears to our, indeed, proper behaviour in theatres may be some instance of its incongruity in the above-mentioned places. In Roman Catholic churches and chapels abroad, I myself have observed, more than once, persons of the first quality, of the nearest relation, and intimate acquaintance, passing by one another, unknowing as it were, and unknown, and with so little notice of each other, that it looked like having their minds more suitably and more solemnly engaged ; at least it was an acknowledgment that they ought to have been so. . . . I cannot help, upon this occasion, remarking on the excellent memories of those devotionists, who upon returning from church, shall give a particular account how two or three hundred people were dressed : a thing by reason of its variety, so difficult to be digested and fixed in the head, that it is a miracle to me how two poor hours of divine service can be time sufficient for so elaborate an undertaking, the duty of the place too

being jointly, and no doubt oft pathetically, performed along with it." The foregoing quotations are mere specimens of constantly recurring animadversions on irreverent behaviour in church.

*Spectator* in No. 236 strongly deprecates the presence of the whispering worshipper, that is, the audible repetition after the ministers of the prayers and other parts of the service. This grievance is expressed, as so frequently, in a letter from an imaginary correspondent, who complains of "the disturbance some people give to others at church by their repetition of the prayers after the minister; and that not only in the prayers, but also in the absolution; and the commandments fare no better." The letter concludes with the remark that "this religious inadvertency is a thing extremely offensive," but with the caution that it should not be severely dealt with, since it is expressive of genuine devotion. This aggravating trick is, perhaps, almost obsolete, but there are few elderly church-goers who cannot remember being irritated by the whispering worshipper.

The parish clerk was already an important functionary and was on his way to reach a still higher degree of eminence. It is the fashion to smile at the parish clerk of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but his associations and traditions are honourable. The parish clerks of London had been incorporated by Henry III as the Brotherhood of St. Nicholas. They had a hall of their own in Bishopsgate Street, with an anniversary, and a special service at St. Alban's Church. They have their place in the *Spectator*. In No. 372 we are introduced to a company assembled in a tavern near the Exchange,—“a precise set of men, with grave countenances, short wigs, black clothes, mourning gloves, and hatbands. We are prepared to hear that they are undertakers; but, upon enquiry, *Spectator* learns that they are “a knot of parish clerks, who have taken a fancy to each other, and perhaps settle the bills of mortality over their half pints.”

In No. 284 we have an entertaining account of the way in which a brazen-faced coquette so misbehaved herself in church, curtsying and making other familiar signs to a young baronet, that the clerk was fairly disconcerted and lost his nerve. “I had one day set the hundredth psalm, and was singing the first line in order to put the congregation into the tune; she was all the while curtsying to Sir Anthony, in so affected and indecent a manner that the indignation

I conceived at it made me forget myself so far, as from the tune of that psalm to wander into the Southwell tune, and from thence into the Windsor tune, still unable to recover myself, until I had, with the utmost confusion, set a new one. . . . When I have spoken the assent to a prayer with a long Amen, uttered with decent gravity, she has been rolling her eyes round about in such a manner, as plainly showed, however she was moved, it was not towards a heavenly object." Here we catch the long, drawn-out, drawling Amen, often with a strong nasal accent, that some of us can remember hearing in country churches in the days of our youth.

We shall bring our subject to a more dignified conclusion by drawing attention to the educational work of the Church. The *Spectator* has more than one reference to the Anniversary Services of Charity schools, which were a marked feature in the ecclesiastical life of the reign of Queen Anne. Addison and Steele, both in the *Spectator* and in other writings, lavish much praise on these schools, a large number of which, in their lifetime, were established in London and elsewhere in connexion with the Church of England. Philip Stubbs, alluded to above, the elocutionist so heartily commended by Steele, established Church schools in no less than three parishes, namely, Woolwich, St. Alphege (London) and Bicester. In the fifteen years ending 1712 as many as one hundred and seventeen schools were set up in London and Westminster, providing education for nearly five thousand children. On February 6, 1712, Steele calls the attention of his readers to the fact there would be a school anniversary service on the following Sunday at St. Bride's Church.

We do not dwell upon the Societies for the Reformation of Manners established at the close of the seventeenth and the opening of the eighteenth century, because the work was not strictly that of the Anglican Church. It was an effort in which religious men of all persuasions united, nor would it be easy to exaggerate the beneficial effect resulting from it. At the same time, while bearing in mind the inter-denominational character of the work, it should not be forgotten that the movement owed its origin, and much of its success, to the influence of distinguished Churchmen, amongst whom may be named William Beveridge, who died Bishop of St. Asaph in 1708, and Dr. Anthony Horneck, preacher at the Savoy, and Prebend of Westminster, the most popular preacher of his day, who died in

1698. Commendatory allusions to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners are to be found both in the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*; by Addison in the former, by Steele in the latter.<sup>1</sup>

In closing these remarks, one is deeply conscious of the little real light that has been thrown upon the subject in hand, namely, the life and worship of the Church of England in the reign of Queen Anne. All that has been brought together from the six hundred and thirty-five essays, which compose the *Spectator*, deals with the external and superficial features of the Church and her mission. Nevertheless, to know what men like Addison and Steele thought of the Church to which they belonged cannot be without interest. Probably the most vivid impression left upon the mind is the failure of the Church to attain to her ideals,—the lamentable shortcomings, both in theory and practice, of the “Church as by law established,”; the formality, the conventionalism, the unreality, the general lack of vitality, that crippled, if it did not paralyse, its influence and action. A worse time was before the Church as the eighteenth century wore on, and nearly a hundred years were to pass before the Church of England, as a whole, reached the nadir of stagnation and inefficiency. There is, indeed, no ground for self-congratulation<sup>a</sup> but it may be truly said that, during the last century, there has been a conspicuous revival of all that constitutes the life of the Church. Much, indeed, is open to criticism, and critics are unsparing, but if zeal toward God and practical interest in all that concerns the true welfare of man are of the essence of the Christian religion, the condition of the Church at the present time bears very favourable comparison with that of two centuries ago.

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<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, No. 8; *Tatler*, No. 3. Steele not only commends the Society but speaks of himself as a member of it.

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#### NEW METHOD IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT.

THE CLASS-ROOM REPUBLIC. By E. A. Craddock, M.A. London: A. & C. Black.

An interesting little book by an experienced teacher, who advocates a “new method” in School management, namely, the substitution of a Republic for the present “monarchical” system. Mr. Craddock tells us that the “conduct” of his experiments during the past two years has made them the happiest and most fruitful of all his teaching experience.