

Richard Nelson Iv. Length of the Public Service

by J.H. Newman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of church attendance, the influence of parental behavior on children, and the need to uphold traditional practices in worship despite societal pressures.

Scripture: Psalm 84:5, Isaiah 29:13, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:23, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Traditional Worship", "Sacred Practices"

Description

J.H. Newman preaches about the importance of upholding the traditional Church Service and Prayer Book, despite pressures to shorten it to cater to popular opinion. He emphasizes the need to follow the examples of devout figures like David, Daniel, St. Paul, and St. John, who never grew weary of worship and prayer. The sermon highlights the danger of compromising on sacred practices to accommodate modern preferences, urging parishioners to defend the integrity of the Church's worship.

Transcript

"O, they be blessed that may dwell

Within Thy house always:

For they all times Thy facts do tell,

And ever give Thee praise.

"Yea, happy sure likewise are they

Whose stay and strength Thou art,

Who to Thy house do mind the way,

And seek it in their heart."

PSALM lxxxiv. 5, 6.

AMONG all the boys of our Sunday-school, none have given me so much trouble as Absalom Plush, and two of farmer Yawn's sons. They are almost always behind their time; at school they are very inattentive, and at Church their conduct has been repeatedly so disgraceful, that it even attracted the attention of one of the Churchwardens, who gave them a severe reprimand, and threatened to send for a constable; since

which they have conducted themselves rather more decently. Perhaps my readers may be inclined to ask why I suffer them to remain in the school, their behaviour having been so bad. My answer must be, that as they are but little boys, (for Absalom is the eldest, and he is not more than eleven, if so much,) I still hope they may improve; and if I were to put them out of the school, I fear I should lose all chance of gaining any influence over them. However I have made up my mind that if they behave in this sort of way again, they shall go.

There is, too, another consideration which has rather disposed me to be sorry for these boys in the midst of my displeasure, namely, that if they had been well instructed, and a good example had been set them at home, they would, perhaps, have behaved differently at school and in Church. For young Plush does not want for sense, though he is so unruly; and as to the little Yawns, they are not naturally of bad dispositions, but so determinedly indolent and unwilling to make any exertion for their own improvement, that it is a great trial of one's patience to endeavour to teach them. I am, however, sorry to say, the examples they have before them at home are not such as to encourage them to turn to good account the instruction they may receive at Church or at the school. This I was fully aware of from the first, and, accordingly, as it is my usual custom when the children behave ill at school to take the first opportunity of mentioning it to their parents and friends, with the hope of throwing in a word which may be for their good too, I determined that I would do so in these instances.

An occasion soon offered itself of speaking to farmer Yawn, whose house is very near to mine. But before I state what passed between us, I should say that I had, that same morning, talked the matter over with my friend Richard Nelson, in whose class Absalom was, as well as the elder of the two Yawns.

"Sir," replied Richard, in answer to my question respecting the conduct of these boys, "as to Lawrence Yawn, I cannot say that he applies much to his book, or, as I think, ever means to do so. Indeed, I have heard that he should say he likes to be at the bottom of the class, because then he has a chance of leaning against the wall, or of resting on the corner of my chair. But Absalom Plush is much more untractable, and inclined to be impudent too. To give you an instance, Sir, what happened only last Sunday. He came in very late, as he frequently does, and when I spoke to him about it he only laughed, and said he could not come sooner, and under breath, as I thought, he should not, and he seemed to me occasionally to be humming to himself some kind of song."

"A song!" said I, "what in the school? that is something new indeed."

"However," proceeded Nelson, "according to your advice to us in such cases, I took no notice at the time: but in the evening, as he happened to come along the path by our garden, I said to him, 'Absalom, I do wish you would pay a little more attention at school, I really fancied to-day you were singing something of a song.' 'Well,' said he, 'suppose I was--what then?' 'twas only a bit of a tune that a man was singing in at father's, one night last week; and father said, that altering the words a little, it would just suit us boys of the Sunday-school. There is no harm (he continued) in the words, I will tell you what they were.' But they seemed to me, Sir, to be part of a very mischievous ballad, signifying that instead of Churches and Prayer Books, people had better sit in public houses and study newspapers; that Church-going is time-wasting, and so forth. So it is plain that the boy is encouraged at home in his bad ways; and, as you ask me the question, Sir, I fear it is not much better with the two Yawns; for I dare say you must have observed that there are six or seven people, who always come late into Church, rain or shine, morning or evening, and amongst them Master Yawn comes in as regularly as possible just about the end of the first Lesson."

"Yes," I said, "I have observed it, and have long wished for an opportunity of inquiring into the cause of such a practice."

After some other observations we parted, and it happened, as I before observed, that on the same day my neighbour Yawn came to our house to borrow a milking bucket, which I very readily lent him, though not with my servant's good will, as such articles seldom returned from the farmer's in exactly as good a condition as they went.

Seeing him, then, go out of the yard with the bucket in his hand, I met him at the garden gate, and said to him at once, "I do wish, Mr. Yawn, you would speak to Lawrence and the little boy, for by their irregularity and extreme idleness, they vex me very much, and do harm to the other boys in the school."

"Sir," he replied, making a low bow, "I am very sorry indeed to come troubling again so soon for a bucket, but our people are so careless--" "O never mind about the bucket," I said, "only please let it be thoroughly cleaned--but I want you to tell me what will be the best way of treating that idle fellow, Lawrence, and his little brother."

"Sir," he answered, "I am very sorry indeed they should have done any thing to offend you, but you may depend on it they shall always for the future come to school in good time, and mind what is said to them; otherwise, their mother or I will give them the stick as sure as every Sunday morning comes round."

"Mr. Yawn," I replied, "I should be very sorry to have Sunday made the day for such unpleasing performances in your house or in any other. I do not at all wish any boys to come to the school against their will, especially if their friends only send them to please me."

"O Sir," he said, "I am sure it is not at all against our will--though, certainly, 'tis a longish while for the children to stay, from nine to half past twelve, or more; and I don't altogether wonder that the boys are tired. But they shall come for the future, and stay too, tired or not tired, for I should be very sorry we should do any thing to offend you, Sir."

"You have told me so now three times, Mr. Yawn," I answered, "so of course I ought to believe it. But at all events, I hope I shall not offend you if I take this opportunity to ask you, why you and Edward Gape, and two or three others, make a rule of treating our Church Service in such a careless, and I must say scornful way."

"Me treat the Church with scorn! " he replied, "why, Sir, what can you be thinking of? Why I scarcely ever miss a Sunday. 'Twould be a good thing for you clergymen if every body else was as regular."

"As to that," I replied, "it makes no sort of difference to us whether people come or stay away, except so far as that we ought to be thankful when they do right, and grieved when they neglect their duty. In this respect, Mr. Yawn, we are the really 'independent' ministers. But what I allude to is, your strange unaccountable custom of coming into Church so late. I have been here now nearly six years, and in all that time, though by your own account you have come to Church regularly once every Sunday, yet I doubt if ever you have been within the walls till after I had begun reading the Lessons."

"Yes, Sir, I have," he said, "you are mistaken there."

"Come now," I said, "if I have been here five years and a half, I have been here 286 Sundays, and I think I may venture to say, that during all that time you have not been in Church time enough to hear all the first

Lesson more than twenty times."

"Perhaps not," he said, "twenty is a good many."

"Well," I replied, "I will venture to say not more than ten times."

"I am not sure of that," he answered.

"But I am sure of it," I said, "sure that you have not been in by the time that I mention, even five Sundays."

"I can remember at least three times," he answered, "once when I mistook the clock, and once when old Thomas Pout brought his new bassoon, and on the Fast-day I was in at the Psalms, I am confident. But I don't wish to make an argument about the matter; I will tell you, Sir, plainly, that I have a great deal to do on a Sunday morning, more than you think of, and that instead of finding fault with me for being so late, you should thank me for coming at all. Think, Sir, how many don't come at all, and there am I in the pew as regular, pretty near, as old Job the clerk, only half an hour later."

"Yes," I said, "you are very regular in your irregularity. But, Mr. Yawn, let me ask you this one question,--do you come to Church to do any good to ALMIGHTY GOD, or to me, or to yourself? Is it any profit to the ALMIGHTY that you serve Him, if such an imperfect attendance as yours can be called service; or to me is it any profit or advantage in the way of worldly interest? You know full well, my friend, that yours is the danger, yours will be the loss, if you persist in thus dishonouring the holy, jealous GOD."

To this his only reply was, that he had been used to do it for a good way in forty years, and it was not to be expected he should alter now; and with this observation he walked slowly away with the bucket over his arm. But thinking, I suppose, that he had not been quite civil to me, he turned round with the intention, as I hoped, of making some sort of promise of amendment; but my hope was groundless, for he came back and said in rather a low voice, "I hope, Sir, nothing I have said will prevent you taking your butter of us as usual; and as to the boys, I promise you they shall be well punished every Sunday morning, and then, Sir, if they do behave ill, you know it will not be my fault, or my wife's."

I made no answer, but as I walked back to the house, I was led sadly to reflect on the tendency of a worldly and selfish spirit to deaden not merely all serious sense of Religion, but even the natural affection of a parent for his children.

Some few evenings afterwards, as I was returning homewards from a distant part of the parish, Nelson overtook me, when I told him of the conversation I had with my neighbour Yawn, adding that I had little hope his boys would ever come to any good, especially as their father seemed determined to keep to his bad habit merely because it was his habit, without giving any sort of reason or excuse for it.

"O Sir," replied Nelson, "he fancies he has a very fair reason, only he did not like to mention it to you. He thinks, or at least pretends to think, (for I do not imagine he puts his mind much to any thing,) that the Church Service altogether is too long and tedious. And he and some others have of late been much encouraged in this their notion by a travelling man, (whether he comes from Hull or Preston I am not sure,) who quarters at Plush's occasionally, sometimes for a fortnight at a time, and is so kind as to offer to enlighten us in this dark corner of the world."

"I have heard of him," I said; "it seems then he dabbles in religion as well as in politics."

"Yes, Sir," replied Richard, "that he certainly does, for I had the whole account of him from a man who was working with me the week before last; you know him, Sir, I dare say, William Burnet."

"O yes, I know him," I said, "very well; any thing like the prospect of a change in religion or politics William dearly loves, without troubling himself much to enquire whether or not it is likely to be a change for the better in either case. But what did the wise man from Hull say about the Church Service?"

"Why," answered Nelson, "as I never was in company with the man myself, perhaps it will be the best way for me to tell you, Sir, if you like to hear it, what passed between Burnet and me on the subject. And indeed it is not Burnet only, but a good many others are of the same way of thinking, more than used to be formerly."

"Yes," said I, "their number increases, I fear, very rapidly, and if so, all who love Truth and the Prayer-book, ought to be on their guard. But now will you please to tell me how you answered Burnet's arguments?"

"Sir," he replied, "I will tell you as near as I can remember, what passed between us on this subject, though I do not promise to be able to repeat his exact words; and certainly nothing I said is worthy to be called an answer to arguments."

"Make no apologies," I said, "but proceed."

Well then, Sir, said Nelson, thus it was,--Burnet was constantly commending this friend of his, who was then lodging at Plush's, and wishing me to come along if it were but one evening, that I might judge for myself how beautiful he could talk and expound on any subject a person might choose to mention, politics, trade, agriculture, learning, religion, and what not.

But I said to him, "No, Will, I have something else to do of an evening than to sit in a beer-shop listening to your friend Tiptop (for that is the man's name). But I dare say you can give me some account of his wise sayings; what was he upon last night?"

"Last night, (said Will, after some little consideration,) last night he was lecturing about the Church Prayer-book, a subject that he has often spoken very well upon in my hearing, but never better than he did yesterday evening."

"What was his argument?" I asked.

"Judge by this," said Will, taking a printed paper out of his pocket, "it is one of Mr. Tiptop's perspectives, as he calls them." (I have this paper with me, said Nelson to me, and with your leave, Sir, I will read some of the heads.) "The Church Service lengthy, tedious, and prolix--in this respect lamentably prejudicial to the spread of vital religion--vast numbers of highly-talented individuals unable to devote their time and attention to these procrastinated forms--consequently compelled to neglect religion altogether--surprising effects, if the Service was abbreviated at least one-half--the churches immediately sure to be filled with crowds of devout worshippers--this with facility accomplished by merely shortening the lessons three-fifths, omitting all superstitious forms, such as the absolution, creeds, &c.--the Lord's Prayer repeated usque ad nauseam." (At this expression, Will said all the company expressed their approbation very vehemently, some even clapping their hands; but he did not like to ask what it meant, for fear of appearing ignorant): and so Mr. Tiptop finished with saying, that in his opinion, about a couple of pleasing hymns, a dozen verses out of the Testament, three or four prayers, and a sermon in quantity and

quality according to the taste of the audience; this would be enough for him in all conscience, and he supposed for others too, and need not altogether take up more than thirty-five or forty minutes at the outside, allowing fifteen or twenty for the sermon.

"But, Will," said I, "do you really and seriously imagine it would be well if such alterations as these were made in the Church Service?"

"To be sure I do," he answered, "and so do many other people, who understand these things better than I or you do. Indeed Mr. Tiptop told us that some gentlemen had actually taken the matter up, and that it would be brought before the parliament very speedily, and such alterations would be made as should suit the spirit of the age; above all, that the Service must be shortened, otherwise the Church would be entirely deserted, and the Establishment upset."

"GOD forbid," I said, "that the Church should be governed by the spirit of the times. I trust she is governed by a very different SPIRIT. I trust she may be willing to be (as you threaten) utterly deserted, rather than herself desert the station allotted to her by the Chief Shepherd. And as to the Establishment being in danger, it may be perhaps true, yet I am sure nothing more dangerous can befall it, than for our governors to hearken to the counsels of such orators as Tiptop, though encouraged by all the Plushes in England, each with a company of puffers and smokers about him."

"But Dick," said he to me, "what is the use of a Church, my friend, if people are tired of it, and won't go to it."

To this I answered, "You might as well ask, what is the use of our SAVIOUR'S precepts, if people are tired of them and won't obey them? You will not, I suppose, say, that the holy rules of the Gospel ought to be publicly set aside, merely because they are generally neglected."

"No," he replied, "of course I do not mean that."

"Well then," said I, "neither should you affirm that it is the duty of the Church to withdraw or alter her rules, merely because people are weary of complying with them."

"That may be true," he answered, "but you must remember that the Church herself did not mean that the Service should be so long. What we have all at once, was formerly divided into two or three parts, as I have understood. Why should it not be again?"

"What you say is, I believe, no more than the truth," I replied; "I have been lately reading a little book upon the subject, and from that I understood that there were first the early morning prayers--then, perhaps, after two or three hours, the Litany--and then again, after a short interval, the Communion Service, including a sermon of considerable length, (an hour possibly) and afterwards the administration of the Sacrament. But this last service alone would be much beyond Mr. Tiptop's limit of forty minutes; and in this way, 'the spirit of the age' would be more opposed even than it is now."

"O," he said, "I never thought of having the Sacrament administered every Sunday."

"Then," replied I, "you forgot one of the principal intentions of the Church in having the Services so divided. If the Bishops and clergy thought well, I do not deny that it would in many aspects be edifying, if this ancient custom in all its parts could be revived; but yet I will tell you plainly, that I do not think it would have the effect you seem to imagine, of bringing people to Church, for, to my knowledge, it was tried by a

clergyman in a parish near Sheffield, and to his great surprise, many of his parishioners stayed in consequence quite away from the Church. Some said, they should not think of going so near half a service; others, who had a mile or two to come to Church, said they were scarcely allowed to rest themselves, but that as soon as they got in it was time to go back. So the clergyman thought it best to return to the old, or, rather I should say, the modern custom again, of uniting the services."

"And yet," said Burnet, "the American Church has shortened the Lessons very much, Mr. Tiptop told us."

"It may be so," I answered, "but it does not follow that it is a wise measure nevertheless, though far it be from me to say that it is otherwise. Still, of the two, the daughter should take pattern from the mother, rather than the mother from the daughter. And for myself I must say, that I have often been glad that the Lessons are of considerable length, for two reasons especially.

"What are they?" he asked.

"The one is," I replied, "that in very short readings it is not so easy to discover the general meaning and argument; and the other, that if I have from any cause been inattentive in one part, I have not been so throughout. So also with respect to the Lord's Prayer, I have often and often been glad to have had a second and a third opportunity of joining in it with increased attention. Therefore, Will, I for one shall never give my vote to have the Services shortened in either of these ways; and as to Mr. Tiptop's fine prospectus, or what he calls it, I don't think it worth a rush."

To this Burnet answered, "that it was plainly of no use to reason with me, as he saw I was determined to keep to the old ways."

"That I am," said I, "and think I have pretty good authority for it, authority somewhat more to be depended on than Mr. Tiptop's opinion."

"But," continued Will, "I do still persist in affirming that great numbers of people are weary of the length of the Service, and that it would be but common kindness to see what can be done to relieve their grievance. And since nothing can be more easy than just to omit a few prayers and other old-fashioned forms, and shorten the Lessons, it would be a shame not to try it, and when it is done, every body will be pleased, and the Church establishment will be greatly strengthened."

"Well," said I, "whatever effect such a measure might have on the Establishment, I am confident it would deeply injure the Church. And as to what you say about relieving a grievance, I wish you to consider this argument which I met with in a book of Sermons that was lent to me a few weeks ago. 'If people were weary merely of the length of the Service, they would be at least attentive at the beginning, and their weariness would come on by degrees; but we know it is not so. Of the two, they are often more tired in the early part of the Service than in the later.' I do not remember the exact words, but such is the meaning."

"Yes," he said, "that is because they care more about the sermon than they do about the Prayers and Lessons."

"Very well," I replied, "you have supplied me with a strong argument against your own views. For by whose opinion do you think the Church ought to be chiefly guided, that of the few (if they be few) who delight in the Prayers and Lessons, or that of the many (if they be many) who are weary of them even from the beginning?"

"Why," he replied, "I thought it was now almost universally agreed, that What most people think, is True--What most people determine, is Just--What most people like, is Good. Mr. Tiptop called these 'Three Grand Parliamentary Principles,' and we all admired them."

"But, Will," I said, "suppose it should happen that, 'What most people like' might be to get rid of the restraints of Religion altogether, I reckon you would not consider this a safe and good principle to be guided by; and yet you may be sure that this, and nothing less than this, lies at the root of all these pretended Church Reforms. And as to the principal contriver of these deceits, the Great Reformer himself, I do not choose to mention his name to you, but I think you will find him spoken of, and hid character awfully set forth, in the eighth chapter of St. John, and if I recollect right, the 44th verse.

"But really now, Will," I continued, "will you be kind enough to tell me, what are people hindered from by the length of the Service? how comes it men's time is so much more precious now than it was formerly? and if the Service were made shorter how would they be better employed than in hearing GOD'S holy word, and praying for His blessing on themselves and their friends?"

"I say, Will, what do Farmer Yawn, and Ned Gape, and the rest of you do, who walk always so late into Church; are you spending your time any better than if you came into GOD'S house before the bell ceases?"

"As to that," said he, laughing, "we generally sit on the wall, at least when the weather is dry, and look at Ned's pigs, or talk over the news, or anything, just to pass the time. But the farmer's rule is, to begin shaving just as the bells chime, and then he comes in at the first Lesson as exact as clock-work, and we after him."

"Then," said I, "why should you and he trouble about having the Service shortened, for I suppose, whatever were its length or shortness, you would always come in twenty minutes after it had begun."

"That would be as we should please," he said. "However, I see plainly I shall never be able to reason you out of your bigoted old-fashioned notions. I only wish I could bring you and Mr. Tiptop together. I think he would soon settle you and your arguments too; he would quickly turn the laugh against you, I can assure you, Master Nelson."

To this I answered, "that I had no reason to be afraid of Tiptop, his arguments, or his jests, but that I never would willingly go or stay in the company of persons who could make light of serious matters; and I told Burnet, that I was sure sooner or later, he would allow that I was right in this resolution."

"This, Sir, was the substance of my conversation with Will; and if you should be disengaged next Sunday evening and disposed to see me, I should be glad to have a few more words with you on the same subject."

To this I readily agreed, so we parted at his garden-gate; and as I heard his door shut, I could not but say to myself, if happiness is to be found on earth it is in that cottage, and what is the precious secret whereby it has been attained? No secret at all, (I answered myself) but simply the practice of "pure and undefiled religion," "patient continuance in well doing," with "glory, honour, and immortality" in view.

When he came to me in my study on the Sunday evening, according to appointment, he said that he really was anxious to know whether there was any truth in the report which Tiptop and others had so confidently spread about, that some alteration of the Prayer-book was intended, especially (as they said) for the

purpose of making the Service more 'short and compact, and suitable to the taste of the times.'

I answered, "that of course it was out of my power to say what our governors in Church or State might wish, but that I feared that in Religion, as in other matters, there was some reason to apprehend too great regard might be paid to popular fancies, even by those who are as far as possible from approving of them."

"Sir," he replied very earnestly, "I hope and trust the Church Services will never be shortened one sentence, line, or word. Grown people, Sir, are but children in Religion. If once you begin to yield to their indolence and dislike of trouble, you sanction the bad feeling, and it will go on increasing till it has eaten out the very heart of piety."

"Yes," I replied, "I fully agree with you. And to say the truth, it is my firm opinion that if any alteration is necessary, it is the other way, that the Service should be longer instead of shorter. I mean, for instance, that the "Prayer for Christ's Church Militant" should be regularly used as appointed, after the morning sermon when there is no Communion; at least where it can be done without any great inconvenience, which possibly in some churches may not be the case. It is to my mind one of the most perfect of uninspired compositions, and it is greatly to be wished that it might be made familiar to every ear and every heart."

"Sir," said he, "I have often thought so. Still at the best our weakness is great: 'the corruptible body,' as the wise man says, 'presses down the soul;' and I suppose it is the case with all of us occasionally, and even when we would most earnestly deplore and strive against it, that our thoughts are apt to wander and our devotions to be cold. Whenever, therefore, I have found myself disposed to be weary of GOD'S house and service, or have beard others complaining of the tediousness of the Prayers and Lessons, I have said to myself,--if David, the Prince of Penitents, were here now, would he speak or think thus, he who desired to abide in GOD'S tabernacle for ever--who envied (as it were) the sparrows and the swallows their continual abode under the sacred roof--who, when shut out, or far away longed, yea, even fainted for the courts of the LORD, as a hart thirsting for the water brooks! If holy Daniel, that greatest of statesmen, that real "man of business;" if he were among us now--he, who in a far distant land, and prime minister to the greatest of earthly kings, would yet let no day pass in which he would not thrice find or make leisure to offer solemn prayers to the GOD of his fathers, his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, where lay the temple of his GOD in ruins; that as he could not be there in person, he would be so in heart and mind, would he say that our Church Service is too long? If St. Paul, that most heroic, and (if there were such a word,) that most unselfish of men,--if he were now among us, would he be weary of our Lessons, Prayers, and Creeds,--he whose conversation and home was in heaven--who desired to depart and to be with CHRIST, and who calls on all true Christians to "hold fast the form of sound words," in Christian faith and love! Or the beloved John, the last and greatest of prophets,--weary, not of his LORD'S service, but of being kept so long from his presence would he, and all the other holy men of every age, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and saints, whether of the Patriarchal, Jewish, or Christian Churches, would they complain of our Services being TOO LONG?

"O no, Sir, that is not to be imagined. So neither ought we to complain, heirs with them of the same promises, and looking to meet them hereafter in our one great eternal Home."

"Richard," I replied, "you say true. As it is dangerous for an individual to take for his guidance any but a perfect pattern of Christian conduct, so is it dangerous for the Church to follow any but a perfect model of

Christian worship, so far as perfection can be obtained. Her rules should be framed not according to what people are, but what they ought to be: otherwise you must plainly see that a door will be at once opened for numberless errors as well in doctrine as in practice."

"Yes, Sir, I see it," he replied. "And, therefore, it seems to me, that when on such subjects popular opinion runs vehemently in a wrong direction, (or if not wrong, at least questionable,) that then it is not the best time, but the very worst possible, for yielding to its fancies. So that even if it should be at any time, necessary or expedient (which I cannot think it ever will be) to shorten the Church Services, yet then is the very worst of all times to set about it, when there is the greatest demand for it."

"You are quite right," I said, "beyond all doubt. But I think it would be a great support to the good cause, that is, to the cause of GOD, and truth, the Church, and the Prayer Book; and also a great encouragement to such among us of the clergy as desire to stand in the old paths; if in every parish a few serious thinking persons would consider of drawing up and signing a solemn address to their respective Bishops, plainly saying that they utterly disapprove of all plans whatever for shortening the Church Service, unless some urgent cause should arise, stronger than they have ever yet heard; and that as churchmen they never can or will consent to any such plans of miscalled Church reform. For you know, Richard, laymen are quite as much part of THE CHURCH as the clergy; and it is your right and duty to stand up in its defence, as much as it is ours."

"Sir," he replied, "you may be sure I would gladly sign such a declaration as this you propose, and I think I know four or five more who would sign it also with all their hearts."

"That will be sufficient," I said, "for our parish, for no doubt the Bishops will estimate the value of such addresses, not by the quantity, but by the quality of those who sign them--not by the number of names, but by the worth of those who bear them, their honesty, piety, and truth."

So we agreed that an address of this kind should be prepared, and kept ready to be presented to the Bishop whenever circumstances should seem to require.

Not of course that we were so vain as to expect that our exertions could be of much avail; but still, as Richard said, "We cannot stand by and see the noble old Prayer Book pulled to pieces, just to humour a mob of Tiptops, Gapes, and Yawns."

OXFORD,

The Feast of St. Matthew, 1834.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jh-newman/richard-nelson-iv-length-of-the-public-service/>

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