

INTRODUCTION,

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EVERY year's experience convinces us of the importance of a Book of Common Prayer for public worship. We can hardly enter a congregation where the people worship by proxy, or through the extemporaneous prayers of the minister or some other unauthorized person, that our devotions and religious meditations are not disturbed by the unscriptural, improper, and sometimes ungrammatical expressions offered up in prayer to Almighty God; and this alone convinces us there is something intrinsically wrong in such services. Indeed it is very difficult for a devout mind to join in them at all; for when the prayer commences he does not know what petitions are going to be offered, and instead of uniting heartily in them he has to stop, examine the petitions, and meditate on their meaning, or else he must be "*rash*" and "*hasty*" in his worship, without having the words ordered according to the divine commandment. Eccl. v. 2.

For hundreds of years after Christ there was not a single example of extemporaneous prayers in the Church; which indeed is a presumptive proof that the book of prayer is of God's own appointment. Every one at all acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures or the Old Testament Church knows very well that the worship which God required was always by a liturgy: and this was the case in the purest and best days of that Church. The book of Psalms was part of the Jewish sanctuary service, and many of them were prepared for special occasions of worship. Solomon's beautiful prayer at the dedication of the Temple was pre-written, and so also was the song of Moses, which he and the children of Israel sang responsively. And God himself spake unto Moses, saying, "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, the Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace."—Num. vi. 22–27. From this we know that it was not left with Aaron and his sons, although they were priests, what words they should use in the sanctuary in blessing the people: but God commanded them to use the words which had been expressly prepared for the occasion.

Nor was the order of divine service changed in the Christian dispensation: for when the disciples of Jesus applied to him for information upon this subject, and said "Lord teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples," Jesus said unto them, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven."—Luke xi. 1, 2. And thus taught them a collect which every scholar knows well he found in the Jewish prayer book.—*Horn's Intro. to Scripture*, v. iii, 296. To understand this correctly it is necessary to know that the disciples had reference to the well known custom of the day of religious teachers giving their disciples a set form of words to be offered up in petition to the Almighty; therefore they say, "teach us to pray