

Perhaps no devotional manual has so successfully avoided the effusion of mere religious sentiment, and at the same time embodied the manly tendencies of the deeply religious heart. Unlike the Breviaries, Litanies, and Manuals of France, Italy, and Spain, as well as of the English Roman Catholicism, which address themselves chiefly to the emotions, and often minister to that which is morbid in feeling and repulsive in taste, on the ground that they are designed for the ignorant masses of the people, the book of common prayer is as noble in thought as it is stimulating in feeling. It satisfies the taste of the most cultured, while it is perfectly simple to the most ignorant. Like the old Latin hymns, it is majestic and undemonstrative, and works its spell upon the worshippers by the simple force of its statements, and the calm intensity of its earnestness. It has none of the sensuousness and sentimentality that characterize many prayers and hymns, and yet it is instinct with devotional feeling. It ministers to robustness as well as tenderness of religious life, and is a wonderful expression of the religious characteristics of the English nation; although to more sensuous nations, like the French and Spanish, it would seem cold, and distant, and rigid. Very precious are many of its prayers; and could the dubious sacerdotalism and the ecclesiastical polemics with which they have really nothing to do, be discharged from them, their severe simplicity, their spiritual wisdom, their compressed meanings, their chastened reverence, and their deep and solemn pathos, would commend them to all religious hearts. We can scarcely wonder, therefore, that the Book of Common Prayer should be so far removed from the conditions under which ordinary books live, and from the feelings with which they are regarded. It is an ark of God, which has contained many precious things, and around which great memories gather."

The writer proceeds to consider the various opinions of "High and Low Church" writers as to the character and claims of the "Priest" of the Prayer Book, summing up as follows:—

"We do not think, therefore, that the Ordination Service justifies the Ritualist in saying, as Mr. Bennett says, that he is ordained a *sacerdos*; but, whatever the intentions of its framers, as it stands, it does justify him in saying that he is ordained a Priest, to mediate between God and human souls, and having official powers far transcending those of a mere prophet or teacher. It seems evident that the framers of the ordinal conceived of the office of the Priest as one of far greater official authority and power than the Evangelicals would represent it."

And again:—

"On the whole, there appears to us some room to doubt what were the exact conceptions and intentions of the compilers of the Prayer Book concerning priestly authority and absolution. That they did intend to invest the priest with an authority above that of a mere minister or teacher of the Gospel, and above that of a mere pastor, it is impossible to doubt. But whether they intended the absolution to be declaratory, precatory, potential, or simply ecclesiastical may still admit of controversy; there is perhaps as much to be said on one side as on the other. On the one hand, it is hardly likely that Protestant Reformers would intend a theory of absolution, unknown for twelve centuries; but then on the other, it is notorious that they retained the then modern indicative form of absolution; and it is notorious that in the final revision of the Prayer Book in 1662, sacerdotal influences were in the ascendant."

After reciting a series of "opinions" for and against the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession, the writer considers the teaching of the Prayer Book on