

PRÉFACE.

The following Treatise is based upon an impartial examination of the only authority which is universally acknowledged in the English Church and her sisters in ecclesiastical fellowship, the Book of Common Prayer, containing as it does both authoritative standards of doctrine, with forms, rites and ceremonies of universal obligation to all her members.

Many other authorities have been at various times appealed to, both critical, historical, and doctrinal, but any one of these is almost certain to be itself the subject of controversy as to its authenticity, truthfulness, or applicability to the point at issue.

Historical statements, especially with regard to mediæval times, and the acts, sayings and doings, of men in the early period of the Church in the British Islands, are so beset with what is disputable and has been disputed, with contradictory methods of relating the same substantive facts, that it is vain to rest on them for support of any theory of order, doctrine or observance.

The only certain matter about the writings that have come down from this period is, that only a small residuum of absolute veritude can be extracted out of the mazes of statements more or less mythical and contradictory.

This applies, though to a lesser extent, even to the period of the Saxon Dominion and the Norman Kings, almost down to the period of the Reformation.

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