

forms, whilst insisting on the superiority of forms of their own devising, —showing their liberality by giving away what does not belong to them. And false liberality is very popular in our day. Those who, amongst ourselves, are least anxious to preserve and make reverent use of the Holy Communion, are always the most ready to carp at “forms” ordered by Holy Scripture and the rubrics of our Prayer-book.

We are led into this train of thought by a paragraph in one of our Church of England periodicals of a recent date, published in western Canada, on the subject of prayer. In these days, when we find sectarian bodies not kneeling or even standing in public prayer or praise, but sitting —(a position never known either in the ancient Jewish or the primitive Christian Church), our brother, a Churchman, we suppose, thus expresses the feelings of his soul to his brethren :

“The first duty of the worshipper is personal prayer. It is not necessary that he should kneel to pray. Even the bowed head may be a poor substitute for the bowed and waiting heart. All forms fail; nothing but the personal outreaching of the mind and heart after God will meet the deep want.”

This strong assumption that the outward form of devotion and humility is a dangerous thing, and liable to be suspected of not being accompanied by the “personal outreaching of the mind and heart,” is

—to say the least—not unlikely to be accepted as a *solatium* by those whom we too often see lolling or even half lying in their pews, whilst others are humbly kneeling at prayer, or standing whilst the praises of God are sung in His holy temple. Who are the most likely to believe in God’s immediate presence in public worship,—those who “worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker,” or those who sit, or lazily recline, in the Divine Presence, whilst with self-satisfaction they suspect of insincerity and mere formalism their brethren who assume the more reverent attitude?

What would have been thought in aftertimes of the three wise men from the east, if instead of kneeling in the presence of the Holy Child in the stable at Bethlehem, they had seated themselves perhaps on a log at hand?

What would we have thought of their wisdom if instead of kneeling when offering their gifts, they had—like too many in our day—presented them, whilst sitting, by the hands of others?

Whatever men may think, Satan well knows that true religion has its foundation in humility, and God is the author of forms in religion, without which its spirituality may soon evaporate amid the deadly miasma of infidelity.

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Disregard or excuse your small fault, and you commit a great fault.