

The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: —

L. H. DAVIDSON, D.C.L., MONTREAL.

— ASSOCIATE EDITORS: —

REV. H. W. NYE, M.A., Rector and Rura Dean, Bedford, R.Q.; REV. EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Address Correspondence and Communications to the Editor, P.O. Box 504. Exchanges to P.O. Box 1068. For Business announcements See page 14.

Special Notice.

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

- FEB. 2nd—Purification of V.M.
 " 6th—Septuagesima.
 " 13th—Sexagesima.
 " 20th—Quinquagesima. — (*Notice of Ash Wednesday and of St. Matthias.*)
 " 23rd—ASH WEDNESDAY. (P. Pss. M., 6, 32, 38; E. 102, 130, 143.—Commination Service.
 " 24th—ST. MATTHEW, A. & M., Athanasian Creed.
 27th—1st Sunday in Lent.— (*Notice of Ember Days.*)

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER-BOOK INSTRUCTION IN SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

A Paper read at the Sunday-School Conference, Diocese of Huron, Oct. 1886, by William Craig, B.D., Rector of St. Paul's Church, Clinton—(Continued).

While on this point, let me speak of another thing somewhat missed, but which instruction in the Prayer Book reveals—What it teaches in its offices; in the prayers about the Christian life. It teaches us that it has its *beginning*. We pray that the person baptised may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning. The beginning is that God is his Father, Jesus Christ his Redeemer, the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier. If faithful he stands upon these facts and has them and so grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Saviour, increases in faith, adds grace upon grace, and by the Spirit's power and indwelling brings forth much fruit. Now supposing all this to be real in any one's life, there is something else along with this taught in the Prayer Book, which it is well should be carefully brought before the minds of children and others, viz., that for every one there is to be not only a *deepening* of the religious life, but a *conscious coming to God through Christ*. A lawful study of the Prayer Book will show you that the same people who pray on Christmas Day, "Grant that we, being regenerated and made Thy Children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit," also pray all through Lent that God would "create and make in them clean and contrite hearts" that they, lamenting and confessing their sins, may obtain perfect remission and forgiveness; and on Easter Day, that God who put into their minds good desires would by His continued help enable them to bring them to good effect. This simply means, I think, that no matter about the exact way or how it is felt, for every one there is looked for

a personal conscious coming to God the Father through Jesus Christ. It is important to notice this in connection with the winning back of the careless, the indifferent, the sinful who have wandered away from God. Collects and articles teach that man cannot of himself turn to God; he needs the Spirit of God to turn and stay turned. But whom does he turn to? Not to an angry God, but to a Father, and a Father—unlike some earthly fathers—who is on the sinner's side, who is waiting to see the first homeward turning to receive him with gladness and rejoicing. He is coming not to a strange, new place, he is coming *home*; and having faith he comes by prayer; and he comes by Sacraments taking his old stand on his reception into God's family, and draws near to God, pleading Christ's death for the remission of sin in prayer, and as Christ has appointed in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And so God receives him as he believes in His Son and gives him the pledge of his forgiveness.

2. *The Sacraments*—I think I need not much under this head. The frequency of the administration, the teaching of the catechism ought to make the Sacraments familiar to our thoughts.

I would merely remark [1] that it would be well if greater attention were paid to the *place* and importance of Sacraments in the Christian system, so explaining the large place given them in the Prayer Book. Let me mention this: There is a prevalent belittling of the Sacraments, especially of Baptism, as if they had been instituted by *man*. It might be well to remember that they were commanded by *Christ Himself*. Then remembering that Christianity is a system of spiritualities, it enhances the importance of the Sacraments that they have to do with the *body*, that they are in one aspect material, and so just in the degree that we exalt the spirituality of the Christian system, so must we assign to and this is just what the Prayer Book does—a higher place to the Sacraments.

[2] Next the Sacraments teach us that *symbolism* has its place in Christian teaching, that the inner man is reached by what affects the outward man; that the soul is reached through the body. A little thought and study will show, I think, that this is an explanation of that which is somewhat confusing to some people. The variety of position spoken of in the Prayer Book, the insisting upon certain posture, and the frequent breaks or changes in the services. But again, there being but two Sacraments teaches what we also find in the Prayer Book in its calm, sober reserve, *that symbolism has its limits*.

3. *The Ministry*—This is so large a subject that one hardly knows how to begin, so as to speak briefly. First I think the Prayer Book is opposed to that often expressed notion—which no one believes—that *Church government is a non-essential*. Why have Christian men for centuries divided the Body of Christ for a non-essential, for a mere notion of no consequence?

The Prayer Book is honest and brings you up with a round turn, by saying in the preface to her Ordinal that Church Government is an *important essential*. Secondly, I have long been of the opinion that the one thing which appeared to press hardly on other Christians, viz., that this Church holds that to minister in her a man must have Episcopal ordination was in one sense the Church's *protest* against that which thousands of Christians are coming to see is wrong—*Dissension, schism in the Body of Christ*. Surely, this Church, standing on the Scriptures of Truth, could do nothing else if she was to be loyal to the Word of God and loyal to her Risen and Ascended Head, than declare that divisions in the Body of Christ was not merely wrong but sinful. I think, again, it is important that our children should be taught that setting aside the question of the being of a Church turning on the ministry alone, this Church not only confesses with the Church of all

ages the Historic Faith, but holds with the Church the Historic Ministry of Apostles, Elders and Deacons, or as we have come to call them Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and that when we do hold this we need not be afraid that any opening can be found in our armour either of Scripture or Church History.

4. I come now to speak of my last point—the importance of studying the history of the Prayer Book.

[1] I think it is impossible for one to enter into the full meaning of the *worship* of the Church if he has not some knowledge first of the antiquity of Precomposed Prayers. Second, of the antiquity of fully seven-eighths of the prayers in the Prayer Book. Thirdly, that the responsive use of Psalms, and the reading of lessons dates from the first and second Temple times. It seems to me that if our people understood these things better we should have heartier services than we have; and can we do better than begin in the Sunday-school to teach these things.

[2] I feel quite sure that the history of all the Church's offices, Morning and Evening Prayers, the Sacramental Offices, the Visitation and Burial Offices, the Office of Matrimony—a most solemn one, and utterly opposed to the frippery and frivolity of the usual wedding, and intended to give holier and higher ideas of the marriage state. I say I am sure that the history of these would increase the love, the devotion of our people to the Church. If I may not stir up any controversial fire, I would like to mention one or two points as illustrations when history will save so much confusion and trouble. Would there be so much objection to the Prayer Book if it were known, *e. g.*, that the Baptismal Service is an entirely new service, only one prayer being taken from the old service books, and that one object of the service is to assert the rightful place of Baptism along with the other Sacrament, which the Romanist party in Reformation times exalted out of all proportion with Baptism.

Would not a slight study of its history and construction have revealed that the whole blessing of Baptism comes from God the Holy Ghost, that even its *little words*, a remarkable thing in the Prayer Book, are *important*—the blessing is always "in," never "by" Baptism; that, after all, great as the privilege, great as the blessing, it is only the "beginning." We are to "daily proceed in all virtue and godliness of living."

And now I must apologise for keeping you so long. I have only been able to touch on many points, but looking at the Faith, the Sacraments, the Ministry, the History, I think you will agree with me that the study of the Prayer Book is important for these things which a Christian man ought to know and believe for his soul's health; that it will be interesting, and that it must make many a man now somewhat careless and indifferent about himself and about the Church, to become alive and over her "to fling his arm against the world."

To many minds these days are days of doubt and darkness; to them the world seems cold because they are not sure whether there is a God or, if there is a God, whether He cares. How shall we meet those men? Shall we invite them to a gloomy house with narrow doors and low windows? Or shall we welcome them to our home with wide-open doors, with windows open to the glorious light of Heaven and the wood piled high on the generous hearth, where they may be warmed and cheered. In one word, what is our religion to be like, broad, generous, warmed with the fire of Heaven, fanned into brighter flame by the devotion of martyrs! If so, on our side, I do not forget the need of the grace of God. I know that the study of the Prayer Book will do much to make us better, warmer Christians, and so commend our religion to wandering and weary men.