

and church regulations and ritual which the Apostles used had been recorded, these would have been thought to have as much authority as any other part of Scripture; and even if the Apostles had distinctly and repeatedly declared that it would be lawful to alter them as circumstances might require, men would have most scrupulously insisted, notwithstanding, on adhering to them with superstitious reverence, even where difference of country and times and manners made them no longer the most suitable,

The ritual of the Jews was intended, as you know, for one nation and one country, and it was meant only to be temporary: therefore it was absolutely fixed and accurately described in all its parts. But the Christian religion was for all times, all nations, and all kinds of persons, and therefore Christians were left free in respect of those points where differences would not only be desirable, but even in some instances unavoidable. Take, for example, the single case of Catechisms. Although the Christian religion is itself always one and the same, it is impossible that any one mode of introducing its truths should be the best adapted for children and adults, for the civilized and the barbarian, and for all other varieties of time, country, intellectual culture, and natural capacity. So in respect of church formularies generally. It shows the superhuman wisdom by which the sacred writers were directed, that they confined themselves to laying broad foundations of doctrine and principle upon which the subsequent ages could erect superstructures, differing somewhat in outward aspect, but harmonious still, and resting upon Christ himself, the great corner stone. The apostle gives us but one rubric for the conduct of Divine worship, but it is a pregnant one and the source of all others. He says: "Let all things be done decently and in order." From this starting point, the Church of Christ has evolved a book of Common Prayer, only next to the Bible in its beauty and value. It is the duty of all members of our Church to know and study this form of sound words,—so scriptural, so evangelical, so free from all error, breathing as it does, the devout aspirations of generations of the most exalted saints of God, and consecrated by the lives of virgins, martyrs, and confessors. It is here, indeed, that we see, in its perfection, the blessed communion of saints. What can be more beautiful and inspiring than to hear even little children taking part in the services of the Church along with their fathers and mothers. Surely their sweet, fresh voices must be pleasant music in the ears of God as he bends down to catch the accents of his worshipping people.

I am satisfied that as we become better acquainted with the services of our Church, we shall enter into them with more enjoyment, and their performance will be greatly improved. They who love the Prayer Book most, are they who know it best; and on the other hand, those who object to it most loudly, are the same also who really know it least. And let us remember that a really good and valuable thing cannot be known in a moment. Earnest study and prolonged thought and consideration are needed to fathom the merits of the great things of this world. This applies to books, and architecture, and painting, and music alike. What is shallow is easily discerned by anyone, but what is really grand in conception, and

wise and prudent and skilful in execution, can only be appreciated by those who are willing to bring their most thoughtful and patient efforts to the investigation of what is under scrutiny. This may be said eminently of our own Prayer Book. In subsequent evening sermons I shall endeavor to help you in this respect.

But now, in closing, let me say that no book of devotion, however perfect, can be of any value without the Spirit of devotion, any more than the most perfect piece of machinery can do its work without some motive power. And the vital question for us is, whether we use rightly the heritage which has come down to us by God's grace. My brethren, it is written, that "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required." Certain it is that we of the Church of England are greatly privileged; let us then be diligent in the use of our talents, that our profiting may appear and that the fruit which we bear, may abound unto God's glory. Let us throw our whole soul into the grand, familiar words which we knew so well, and thus our prayer book will shine with new beauty and grace, just as is the case, when God's word is read with deep thought and study. Let us see what we can get out of it for our spiritual enjoyment and sustenance, and suddenly things that we never noticed before will spring to our enchanted vision and we shall prize as we have never yet done this precious form of sound words.

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