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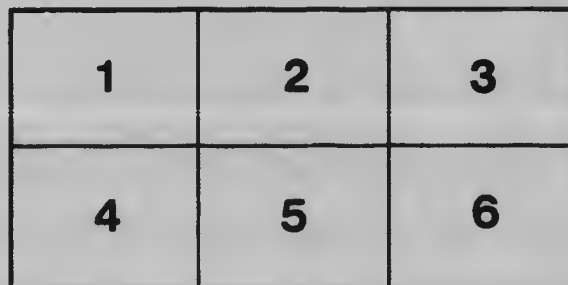
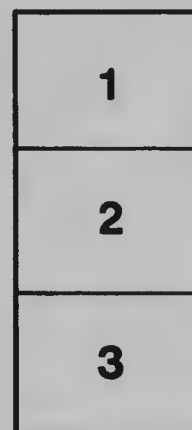
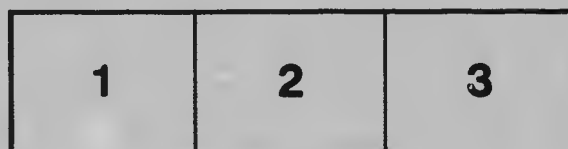
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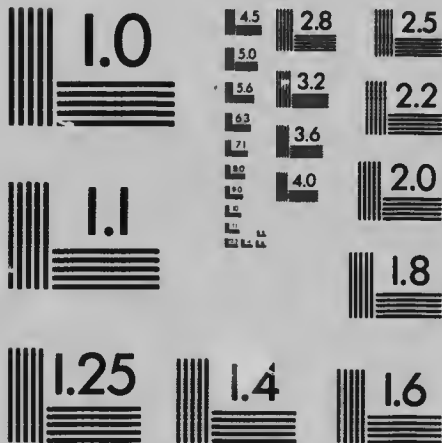
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**The Value
of
The Prayer Book**

**By Canon Dyson Hague, M. A.
London, Ontario, Canada.**

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
GENERAL SYNOD, ARCHIVES**

ANGLICAN CHURCH
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Church House

Toronto

This was originally prepared as a paper for the Conference of the Deanery of East Middlesex, held in St. John's Church, London, January 31st, 1911, and kindly read in my absence by the Dean of Huron. It is printed with a few additional notes, in the hope that it will help the clergy and divinity students, and Sunday School teachers to realize the value of our Book of Common Prayer in our present-day Church life.



The Value of the Prayer Book.

ONE of the first things that we ought to realize as Church people is that the value of the Prayer Book does not consist merely in its traditional importance. It is to be feared that many people look upon the Prayer Book as a very respectable volume, possessed of a certain amount of dignity and gravity, but a thing, after all, that has had its day, and that the few only realize its essential value and the greatness of its importance as a present-day asset of a living Church! That great Churchman, Anselm, made a fine remark in his *Cur Deus Home*: "It seems to me," he said, "to be negligence, if after we have been confirmed in the faith, we do not study to understand what we believe." Anselm was right. We ought to study in order that we may understand, and if we lay our minds to this matter we shall undoubtedly come to see the wonderful value of our Prayer Book.

1. In the first place think for a moment of its historical value. Think of the place it has held in English life. Think of the place it now holds in the life of the Empire. Think of its power as a moulding factor in the family, the Church and the nation. Think of the moral and spiritual impulses it has sent into a myriad of lives, through these modern centuries. It can unquestionably be asserted that nowhere else is the greatest guarantee of our Church's spiritual life. It has become a national institution. In its consecration and initiation it represents that emergence of the spirit of British nationalism which culminated in the overthrow of the long-claimed supremacy of an alien potentate of Rome, and the magnificent assertion of the right of a national Church to formulate its own doctrines and to construct its own style of worship. It was the climax, the culmination, of centuries of aspirations and spiritual upheaval, and in its

ITS

HISTORICAL

VALUE :

contents it not only represents the leading of the Holy Spirit, and a fulness of Scripture, but the adaptation through the teaching of the Spirit of a spiritual, scriptural, and simple worship to the wants of the people and land. It was the resultant of a thousand years of English Church history. It was the climax of the dreams and desires and determinations of those Spirit-illumined, Spirit-led men who were gradually led by the Holy Spirit of God to discern the weakness and the vanity and the superstition of the Romish worship, and to determine, not as revolutionists but as reformers, to compile a people's Prayer Book, on Scriptural lines, in the people's language, for the people's profit, and the glory of God. It is the monument therefore of the evangelical originality of these great Bishops who dared, in the face of a thousand years of tradition, to purify what was superstitious, to simplify what was incomprehensible, and to edify God's people by substituting truth for superstition and real prayer for darkened ceremonies.*

It is, indeed, a grand thing for us and for our children to possess a book that represents the climacteric of the long-prepared, God-planned emancipation of the Church of England from the Roman Communion and Roman corruption through the work and witness of the Bishop reformers.

2. The Prayer Book not only represents a great national epoch of permanent influence upon the life of the British people, but it is possessed of an additional value to this somewhat conceited and superficial, in that it represents in its material the product of many writers and of many ages, and brings within the reach of the humblest child of the Church

ITS

DIVERSITY

OF CONTENTS :

represents in its material the product of many writers and of many ages, and brings within the reach of the humblest child of the Church

*The reader will remember that before the Reformation, in the modern Church sense of the word there were no hymns, no lessons, no Prayer Book. Everything was in Latin; the Hour Services were largely for ecclesiastics and monks, and the main service Church people attended was the Mass. England's Church arose at the Reformation from the deadly sleep of medievalism with two books—the Bible and the Prayer Book; a Bible in every Church, and a Prayer Book in every hand. It was the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes. See Art. 22, 24, 23, 30, 31.

the magnificent productions of the greatest minds the world has known. It represents a more diverse historical reach than even the Bible itself, for it contains within its covers the writings, not only of the great inspired writers of the ancient Hebrew world, such as Moses and David, and of the Apostolic age, such as Peter and John and Paul, but of authors of the Ante-Nicene and the Post-Nicene era, and also of the age of the Reformation, of Elizabeth and the Stuarts. It represents thus the literary riches of all the ages. It contains the finest of the ancient and modern Liturgical material of all the Churches, and in its pages :

Lutheran prayer and Roman chant
 In one devotion blend,
 To speak the soul's eternal want
 To Him the eternal Friend.*

As the form, therefore, in which the worship of millions has been conducted for centuries, and is now being conducted every week in every part of the world, and as a handbook of devotion which has the large circulation of any book in the world outside of the Bible, the Prayer Book not only was, but is, a great spiritual institution, and men are finding that no other book outside the Bible is so suited to the need of all peoples in every land, and that as a missionary organ it is adapted to Christians of every realm, of every race, and of every color; white, black, red, yellow; in east, west, north and south.

3. Another great element of value in the Prayer Book is its democratic and its Catholic spirit. It is so Catholic

*For instance, we have in the Prefaces not only the work of Cranmer and Sanderson, the Englishmen, but of the Spaniard, Cardinal Quignoni. In the Morning and Evening Prayer, we have in addition to the inspired writings of David and Luke, the work of the Englishman Cranmer, the Polander Alaseo (the Gallican Ambrose, the African Augustine, traditionally), the Roman Gregory, the Italian Gelasius, the Anglican Reynolds, the Constantinopolitan Chrysostom. In the Communion and Baptismal services, we have the inspired words of Moses and the Apostles close to those of the Cyprian Epiphanius, and the work of Cranmer and Ridley, and (possibly) Cyril of Jerusalem, side by side with that of Luther and Bucer, of Osiander and Melancthon.

in its supply for all sorts of needs and all sorts of people in every age, in every country, and in every condition of

ITS

**DEMOCRATIC
AND CATHOLIC
FEATURES :**

life. Its services are for all men, without distinction of race or class. There is no partiality or favoritism in the Prayer Book. The prince and the pauper are baptized, and confirmed, and married, and buried alike by the same beautiful services. One of its chief charms is that it does not take us as rich people, or learned people, or poor people, or ignorant people, but it just takes each and all as poor, sinning, Saviour-needing souls, whatever we are, or wherever we may be. It includes in its broad reach every possible kind of life, and with its broad sweep touches life at every stage. In the baptismal service it begins with the little babe in the cradle. It takes up the boy and girl in confirmation, has precious words for the newly married, carries them all through the vicissitudes of child-birth and sickness, and when life's brief day is passed, pronounces its grand words of hope above the grave. And so it has been built into the very life of the people for ages. Notice, too, how the Catholic spirit of the Prayer Book is manifested in the way in which it emphasizes those great foundation truths which circle around and center in the Person and work of our Divine Redeemer, and how all the seasons from the beginning to the end of each year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, only serve in turn to bring the Incarnation, and Crucifixion, and Resurrection, and Ascension, and the second Advent before all Churchmen's eyes. No great doctrine is omitted. Every week and every month brings with it some fresh revelation, some fresh aspect, of the riches of God's glory and God's grace. It always has something for everybody, some great and helpful truth. Its

spirit is the spirit of the Litany. It includes everything for all, and always has something for each.*

4. In the next place think of the value of the Prayer Book as an ideal inspirer of the spirit of tenderness and sympathy, and of the spirit of unselfishness and love. Think how full the Prayer

ITS Book is of the spirit of the love of Christ.
MISSIONARY
VALUE : How full it is of the spirit of compassion.

There breathes throughout all its pages a spirit of tenderness for the fallen, and of sympathy for the unfortunate. There is in it a philanthropic anxiety for the needy that is pre-eminently the spirit of Christ. It has not only words of compassion for the sinner, but words of hope for the wanderer, and loving welcomes for those who have strayed far away. In wonderful contrast to Rome's haughty plea, "That thou vouchsafe to humble the enemies of the Holy Church," it teaches us to pray for our enemies, for our slanderers, and for those who persecute us. Its tone of sympathy for the sad, the sorrowing, the bereaved is remarkable. Every day we are to pray for all those who are in anyway afflicted in mind, body, or estate. It has pity for those in prison, and compassion for the orphan. In this respect verily the Prayer Book has the Spirit of Christ.

There is nothing selfish in the tone of the Prayer Book. There is nothing insular in the character of its Christianity. It is grandly cosmopolitan in its longings. It is intensely evangelistic in its spiritual zeal. Its daily prayer

*The range of intercession in the Litany, for instance, is worthy of every Churchman's study. There are 103 petitions, fifty-two of them to be said by the priesthood of the ministry and fifty-one by the priesthood of the laity. The use of the word *all* indicates a circle of petition peculiarly vast and comprehensive. We pray to be delivered from thirty-four temporal and spiritual evils. We urge our requests by fifteen phases of our Lord's Divine fulness. We ask for blessing upon more than thirty classes of our fellow beings, in more than twenty different phases of necessity, from every mother and child in the world to the monarch on the throne, the Church Universal, and all nations and men upon the face of the earth.

is that God's ways may be known unto all sorts and conditions of men, and God's saving health unto all nations. It beseeches the good Lord to have mercy on all men. It declares that the supreme object of the ministry is the enlargement of God's blessed Kingdom.* The evangelistic note is remarkable. The opening sentences are the Gospel initiated. They sound like a call of hope and mercy from the God of all grace and love, to the returning sinner. They summarize in eleven sentences the gravity of guilt and the grace of God. The message of the Absolution is the Gospel epitomized. And in the services for the visitation of the sick, and in the Communion service, there is the most marvellous, the most pathetic evangelistic appeal. These services breathe the very spirit of the yearning Christ, and are interpenetrated with a spirit of intense evangelistic fervor.

5. Think of the value of the book doctrinally. What a splendid thing it is for us to have a form of devotion so

ITS

VALUE

DOCTRINALLY :

sound, so dependable. From the beginning to the end there is not a note of heresy. The truth as it is in Jesus

is uniformly set forth in the Prayer Book. The standard of the Prayer

Book throughout is the Word of God, and that alone, and all Churchmen may plant themselves with a feeling of perfect satisfaction upon the teaching of the sixth Article, that in the Church of England only that is found which is in accordance with Holy Scripture.† Churchmen should

*A Methodist minister said not long ago, that there is only one prayer for missions in the Church of England Prayer Book, and that is only used once a year, on Good Friday. But is his ignorance any greater than that of a multitude of our Church people ?

† This is marvellous, when we consider what the Anglican Church was before the Reformation. In those days there was no doctrine of the Church of England as distinct from the Church of Rome. The reformation of the Church of England was effected through the Word of God, illuminating by the Holy Spirit the minds and hearts of influential leaders, whose words and works became the formulated teaching and worship of the reformed national Church. Read that extraordinary work by Dom. Gasquet, Edward VI., and the Book of Common Prayer.

read and young Churchmen should learn off by heart the sixth, eighth, and twenty-second Articles. Even the Creeds, which are the Creeds of the Undivided Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, are subordinated to the authority of the Holy Scriptures. And though the services of the Prayer Book are saturated with Scripture, though the bulk of the prayers and hymns of the Prayer Book are the very words of God, yet above all the Church of England rears as the final standard in splendid and final supremacy, the inspired Word of the living God.

6. Think, too, of the value of the Prayer Book from a homiletic standpoint. We may say a word here especially to the Clergy. What a helpful thing

ITS

HOMILETIC

VALUE :

it is to have as a source and suggestion of regular and uniform pulpit teaching the order and suggestion of the ecclesiastical year, and of the various services as set forth in our Liturgy. Many years ago a most distinguished Presbyterian came to our Church seeking Episcopal ordination, and when asked what it was that especially attracted him to the Church of England he replied :

(1) The wonderful power of edification and comfort that is to be found in the Church of England worship.

(2) The practical effect of our religious system in emphasizing continually the foundation facts of the Christian system, those columnar verities of Christianity; the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the expected personal appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We think that the Clergy sometimes fail to avail themselves of the manifold opportunities of the Prayer Book, and it would, perhaps, be a good thing if they preached more courses of sermons upon the Creeds, the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Canticles, the Services, the Articles, and in general upon the great teaching of the

Church's year. We have sometimes thought that it would be a magnificent thing also if some central authority, such as Canterbury, for instance, could send out for one year a homiletic series to regulate and enforce the preaching power of the pulpit throughout the Anglican world. It is only a dream, of course, but think what a magnificent impression it would make upon the world if one solid, continuous hammer-stroke upon hammer-stroke of sublime doctrine could be given week in and week out upon the same great themes by ten thousand voices speaking in the name of the Lord most high.

But Sunday School teachers and parents should also prove the value of its systematic teaching of simple truth to the young, and the more they enter into the spirit of the Prayer Book the more they will experience its power to steady, to uplift, to elevate, to evoke heavenly aspirations and desires. We repeat, one of its greatest elements of value in the Prayer Book consists, not merely in its system, but in its unity and in what it offers, not in any handbook of suggestion, but in itself, in its systematized provision for the teaching of all the cardinal doctrines of the Christian Faith.

But perhaps the chief value of the Prayer Book to us should be that it is an instrument of common prayer, an organ of deeply spiritual worship. The pre-
ITS eminent idea of the Prayer Book is that for
POPULAR every single soul that participates in the wor-
VALUE : ship of the Church of England is to have a
 part in the service, and that the prayers of
 our Church are to be for the benefit of all. They are
 Common Prayer ; that is, they are not the right and priv-
 ilege of any one class. They are for everybody. It is
 everybody's Prayer Book. As, therefore, the Church of Eng-
 land emphasizes the personality and individuality of all our
 worship, it should be the endeavor of each Churchman to
 make the worship, the worship of all and by all in each

part, and to prevent its becoming a mere priestly performance—a spectacular performance away off in the choir.* The very intention of the Book of Common Prayer is that the Church of England service is a worship common to all, where young and old, people and minister, join heartily and joyously together in the prayer and praise to God.

9. Finally, the highest value of the Prayer Book to us, after all, is that it ever inculcates the spirit of adoration, of reverence, and religious awe. Its

ITS REVERENTIAL TONE :

tone from the beginning to end is that of reverential adoration. The Name of God is very highly exalted in the Church of England service. Wherever it is mentioned, it is mentioned with solemnity and carefulness of truth. The Ever Blessed and Most Holy Trinity is very frequently and highly exalted throughout our Prayer Book. The Name and Person of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour, are likewise exalted very highly. The God of Jesus is brought out in the Prayer Book with glorious fulness. Our Saviour is worshipped in psalm, in canticle, in Te Deum and Magnificat, in creed and collect. He is adored as the sinner's friend, the Son of the Father, the King of Glory, and the Lamb of God. The Holy Ghost is exalted very high in the Church of England. Not only is He worshipped in every repetition of the Gloria, but in the Te Deum, the Litany, the Creeds; He is honored with the honor that is given to the Father and the Son. No one can dishonor God, the Holy Ghost, or degrade Him into a mere influence or effluence, who employs the worship of the Church of England in spirit and in truth; for in

*The clergyman and the choir-master are the two great controllers of the service in our Church. As a rule they are to blame whenever the service is taken away from the people by impossible musical services, and canticles, and responses in which none but the choir can join. The clergyman after all, as everybody's friend, ought to be the true representative of the people, and in the long run he is the only one who can safeguard the people's rights.

every service of the Church, the Holy Ghost is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son.*

In fact, from the beginning to the end of the Prayer Book, it will be seen that the Greatness, and the Glory, and the Holiness, and the Nearness, and the Power, and the Grace, and the Love of God are manifested in every service, and collect, and canticle, and psalm and creed. Its end and aim is to humble man and exalt God. To one who studies the Prayer Book devoutly this aspect is overwhelming. It seems to say to the worshipper: The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him! For the aim and the spirit of the Prayer Book are summarized in these marvellous words: Therefore, with angels and archangels, and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name evermore, praising Thee and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory, Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost are most high in the glory of the Father.

*This is a point that might be enlarged upon with singular emphasis in this present age. The widespreading leaven of the New Theology and the revamped Arianism and Pelagianism of Christian Science, Spiritualism and Unitarianism, with their displacement of the Deity of Jesus and the Personality of the Holy Spirit, only reveals the need of some such strong counteractive as that supplied by the words and spirit of the services of the Church of England.

The reader who desires to read still further along these lines is recommended to secure the recently published works of Dimock (Longmans), especially his *Doctrine of the Sacraments*, the *Sacerdotium*, and the *History of the Book of Common Prayer*; those of Dr. Griffith Thomas, on the *Catholic Faith and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; *English Church Teaching* (Chas. Murray); and Bishop Moule's valuable little work, *Our Prayer Book*. Any local bookseller will order them.

POSTSCRIPT BY A CRITICAL FRIEND.

*"I have read with great interest your paper on the
" Value of the Prayer Book. Your arguments are
" worthy of a careful study, and your tone of high
" appreciation, and strong eulogy fit in with my senti-
" ments. At the same time, I can't help feeling this :
" That while your words are true, and the Prayer Book
" is all that you say it is, very few people in our Church
" really think so, and the great majority of people
" outside our church think the very opposite. To them
" the Prayer Book is possessed of very little, if of any
" value, and the reason perhaps is, that so few of our
" people, and also so few even of our clergy really live
" up to it. Even in the Sunday services, how carelessly
" and irreverently its words are uttered, and how seldom
" the grandeur and sublimity of its teaching is impres-
" sively expressed in tones of earnestness and force."*

