

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

increase the power of Mohammedanism. They suggest "the establishment of an international Catholic association, which would, by means of a general plan having identical bases, administer spiritual bread to the natives of the dark continent." If the representatives of Christian nations could thus agree to work in harmony, they would be able, these Portuguese travellers believe, to frustrate the efforts of the Arabs.

The region mainly explored by these travellers is, in some respects, one of the most interesting in Africa; its hydrographic system, as many readers of Livingstone's journeys will remember, is extremely complicated. Livingstone, in his first journey, wrote of the bewildering nature of the watershed; a very little, sometimes, would turn an affluent of the Congo into a feeder of the Zambesi.

For many years this region has been a favourite field for German explorers. They have been successful; but in communicating the scientific results of their explorations they did not, so far as we know, write lengthy narratives. In March, 1879, it seems (vol. ii. p. 61) Messrs. Ivens and Capello met Dr. Max Buchner. "We were seated at the entrance of our hut, when there suddenly appeared to our astonished eyes an European gentleman, mounted on an ox, and attended by two or three negroes." Dr. Buchner, a German explorer, introduced himself, and was hospitably entertained.



#### ART. V.—LITURGICAL IMPROVEMENTS.

**L**ET the Church be careful, lest, while discussing other things of very considerable importance, she omit the practical question of Liturgical alterations and improvements.

This is a practical question, and ought to be dealt with speedily, so far, at least, as relates to the production of more "Offices." The need for additions is great, indeed. No earnest and observing clergyman, who tries to work his parish thoroughly, can be in doubt about it.

To this hour thousands who attend church know not how to find the needful "places" in the Prayer Book. This could be very easily remedied, although never remedied hitherto. Thousands attend church, but their voices are never raised in one act of worship. They appear as if their share of worship consisted in placing their bodies within the walls of a church, while others said or sung whatever was uttered.

The Prayer Book could easily be much enriched, and, by

simplification, also much improved; and, probably, even these things could be secured to a very considerable extent without legislation.

Certainly, the clergy have wisely ceased to regard the Act of Uniformity as the awful bugbear which it was thought to be some fifty years ago, when the very utterance of the term would hush an aspirant into silence, and continue others in the slumber which they loved. The Act of Uniformity may have been necessary in the times when it was passed, and under the sad conditions which suggested it. It has been improved and modified, as everybody knows. But I believe it was never intended to be what of later years it has been made to be—namely, a direful hindrance to any clergyman who simply, in his earnestness, desired to adapt the actions of the Church to the needs of the period.

The old Evangelical of fifty years ago perceived this, and wisely acted accordingly. He was in due time scorned and ridiculed as a law-breaker; but, after a while, the Ritualist and the earnest "High Church" Missioner both found the needs of the case, and appear by their proceedings to have discovered that the old Evangelicals were not so wrong in their instincts as they had been represented to be. Of late years we find celebrations of Holy Communion in which a large portion of that Office is omitted, without consulting law, bishop, or rubric; but it may be presumed that this has been tacitly allowed by the Bishop's perceiving the necessity of the omission under certain circumstances. Yet, if this is allowed, surely the omission of the long introductory portion of the Baptismal Offices may be omitted with at least equal propriety. If, *e. g.*, the public baptism of infants commenced with the third prayer, and were thus shortened about one-third, it could, perhaps, be introduced at the time appointed, although even then it would be abundantly and needlessly long.

As to the *administration* of Holy Communion, it is of great importance to shorten the lengthy period occupied in this part of the Office. They who desire to render the Holy Communion a mere celebration, at which hundreds may worship, while few partake, may see the policy of retaining matters as they are. But they who adhere to Christ's own injunction—"Take, eat, drink ye all of this," and who regard the act of eating and drinking to be just as essential in this sacrament as the *application* of water is in the other, will recognize, on consideration, the importance of the proposal. The number of communicants must increase rapidly everywhere, and it is of high importance to render the service shorter. This is done now by a bold act of omission. It could be done with far greater propriety by a very small change, which involves no principle or doctrine, but which

would hinder all undue lengthening out of the time occupied in the Communion. It is wearisome to many of the communicants, and wearying to the clergyman or clergymen officiating, to repeat two long sentences at the administration of the bread, and two more long sentences at the administration of the cup. If for these were substituted the very words of Holy Writ—"The Communion of the body of Christ," "The Communion of the blood of Christ," this would both shorten the time of administration very sensibly, and would secure the utterance of very comforting truth to every one communicated.

There is happily a revival of the practice of observing New Year's Day, and the Church feast day and the close of the year, with marked solemnity. It would be manifestly a wise thing to provide a suitable Collect for each one of these occasions.

Then, too, a study of the structure of that prayer of which Jesus said, "After this manner pray ye," will reveal that the mode of structure of our Offices should be characterized by Adoration of God, Submission to His Will, and Desire for the advancement of His Kingdom, before any prayer about ourselves.

This is not quite so fully manifest as it ought to be in some particulars. And it would be an effort in the right direction towards this, if at all the great Church Festivals a proper anthem were substituted for the *Venite*, just as is done now at Easter Day. The late Dean of Westminster (Dr. A. P. Stanley) did this (as the Cathedral Psalter testifies), and he claimed that he and any "Ordinary" could do this lawfully.

There is no doubt that the Act of Uniformity never was, and never was intended to be, half so stringent and severe even before modern alterations of it, as certain stiff Churchmen (interpreting everything on Shylock's principle) persuaded themselves and many others it really was. Such modes of interpretation generally end as Shylock's.

What need can there be for the clergy to apply to their Diocesan for leave to substitute other Lessons in place of the ordinary Lessons, or to select special psalms for special occasions, so long as the remarkable note between the two Books of Homilies is extant, and so long as in the Diocese of Lincoln the whole matter is so beautifully managed without this? The truth is that too many are not loyal to their Bishop in this matter, but alter psalms and lessons *without* informing him, on the allegation, when questioned concerning the proceeding, that it was certain the Bishop would not deny them. But there are greater things than all these possible and desirable.

Let any man who has the opportunity go to Antwerp Cathedral, and observe there on every weekday afternoon, the quiet-assembling of a number of peasantry in an appointed part of the Cathedral, for private prayer probably, in the beginning, but

not for this only. Wait and watch. A layman comes in and reverently conducts a well-known service there in the Flemish tongue, and in which the people therefore can and do heartily join. Well, we need much lay agency, chiefly by unpaid and educated men, for they will do it best, especially anything inside the church. But we also need the labours of lay agents, paid and unpaid, learned and even unlearned, to do mighty and great works for God outside the building.

All these are wanting, and all can readily be obtained. None certainly ought to be employed within consecrated Church buildings except those who are duly licensed (as sub-deacons or teachers) by the Bishop. Much strife is made by many about the non-imposition of hands when so setting apart these men. But hands are laid on children in confirmation, so that there seems needless alarm in this particular.

But if laymen are to be employed in Church work, even outside the Church building, they greatly need a Book of Offices specially prepared for them and for the object in view, so constructed as to allow a place for brief *extempore* prayer when it seems necessary, and so expressed as to lead on to the higher offices of the Church services within the consecrated building, in the sacraments, prayers, and other offices, as being the ultimate aim, on earth, of all this outside lay agency work.

From lack of these things the Church has suffered. Many of her most devoted members have yearned after them. Will the longing never be supplied?

For forty years and upwards there has been a yearning for an occasional extra Sunday Service. It ought to have been given long ago. But now, before the compilers supply it, let them visit Freiburg, in Baden, on one of the occasional days on which a special service is used there. These are the Epiphany, Corpus Christi, Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi, and S. Michael's Day. Let the visitors witness the Service of the Confraternity Sanctissimi Corporis Christi. Let them examine its admirable construction for *united, hearty, public* worship. Let them hear it, and witness the devotion of which it is capable, and with which it is used. Then let them prayerfully set to work and give the Church here at home a service as equally full of beauty, as it may easily be, but free from idolatry and superstition, and they may rest assured that a great privilege and honour has been conferred upon them.

God grant the Anglican Church such a service as this would then be. It would be a blessing to the nation indeed, and a great power to the Church.

But how large is the work still then remaining! Why should our Sunday Schools continue to be the only organized disorganization in the world? Dame schools, village schools, and every kind of

day school have been shaped into form, wherein now all teaching is given by system, and plan, and with punctuality. But practically in Sunday Schools it is not so. The Church of England Sunday School Institute has done much, and probably will do much more; but Sunday Schools need almost a revolution ere they can meet the double revolution in the day schools of (a) omission of distinct and distinctive religious instruction; and (b) the introduction of thorough systematic graduated teaching. If this latter were well introduced and used in all our Sunday Schools, and if the lessons were duly examined, with the teachers, by the clergyman some time before they used them, the Sunday School would then take its proper position in the Church. Four, five, or six sets of graduated lessons are needed for every Sunday School. The highest but one of these ought to have for its object to secure a whole year's training for Confirmation. The highest set should be for the confirmed only, and should give some theology and a little Church religious history.

Then Rogation Days ought to be thoroughly revived.

The need of a very carefully constructed Office, to be used at the institution of every minister, is greatly felt, and ought to be without delay provided. It ought to differ in many particulars from any other Office, and the parishioners, led by a layman, ought to take an active part in the conduct of it. In fact, it should be more of a service conducted by the people for their minister than of a service conducted by the minister for his people. Carefully constructed and heartily carried out, it would be the means of at once introducing priest and people to each other in the best way possible.

Family prayers, too, are much needed, *constructed on responsive principles*. Ember seasons need something more than we now have, especially if one day in each were made a quiet day of devotion for a parish, or a deanery, or once annually also at the cathedral of the diocese.

It would be well if the Church would recollect that nearly every phase of schism originated in the earnest pursuit of some important truth which the Church almost failed to exhibit. The pursuit of that one truth may have carried its followers too far; but the Church ought never to have lost the exhibition of any one truth. Amongst these the solemn, silent hour of meditation has been much forgotten, until the Society of Friends restored it, and it would be wise if the Church appointed certain times for meditation within the sacred edifice, with occasional intervals for short exhortations, and prayers, and hymns.

Happily the need of many additional services has been recognized and declared. The Bishop of Norwich may be regarded as a very high authority on the subject. Known, in whatever parish he ever had charge of as its pastor, as amongst the most

diligent, orderly, and methodical of workers and organizers, as well as for the fidelity of his attention to all sorts and conditions of men, and for the faithfulness of his preaching, his opinion as a parish priest ought to be valuable. And when to this is added the experience of a quarter of a century, as a faithful, wise, and most devoted Bishop, the judgment of such a man is worth all respect and attention. And his Lordship's statement is that "many additional services ought to be introduced." Such evidence is simply conclusive. But, as he adds, "The question is, how to do it?" Now, on consideration, it does appear that very many of the things that are wanting, can be provided by the Bishops and Convocation.

Of course, so long as the Convocations of the two Provinces remain separate in every way as they are at present, they will not have much influence, because they will remain powerless for good. And, indeed, unless they unite (in practice, at least), they will hardly continue to exist much longer, although their ceasing to exist would be a great catastrophe. But even if the Houses of Convocation are bent on suicide, or resolved to die of inanition, the Bishops alone can provide a large proportion of the things that are wanting.

There is scarcely one of the things wanted, except the Additional Service for Sunday, which the Church could not secure and use without any reference to Parliament, or infringement of the Act of Uniformity, interpreted not by the Pharisaical spirit of a Shylock, but by the wise and loving mind of a Portia.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I have said very little about alterations in the Book of Common Prayer, and for reasons which I cannot give better than by quoting a declaration which I made at the Church Congress at Derby. It is as follows:— Many years have passed since I endeavoured, so far as my small influence enabled me, to urge upon the Church the importance of making a few alterations in her Book of Common Prayer. I thought that they would have been grateful to some myriads of her children, acceptable to many conscientious Dissenters, thoroughly in accordance with real catholicity, and quite free from the compromise of any one truth. I have now served three apprenticeships in Church Congress, and during that period I have also had the care of three important parishes. The result of the observation, inquiry, and experience of these twenty-one years is, that my judgment, right or wrong, remains unchanged in regard to this subject. I believe, however, that the Church lost a good opportunity some twenty years ago of making a few alterations, which in the present aspect of the times would be quite impossible now. I deeply deplore this, even as some, perhaps many, with equally good faith rejoice at it. But whether we weep or laugh, it seems to me to be beyond question that no changes can now be attempted in the Book of Common Prayer, except only those which adapt the use of the services to the necessities of the present time.

The wants of the Sunday School could all be provided by the Bishops, or through their consultation, arrangement, and approval, within another year.

The like may be said of many special services. No one can hinder the production of a Book of Offices for laymen to use, *outside* the Church at least, even if not *within* it.

Already ministers are instituted in the Diocese of Lichfield by a special service in church, and there is, it is believed, no legal difficulty whatever to the publication and use of a well drawn up service for the purpose. It is high time that these wants were fully supplied; and I will add, in spite of the unpopularity of the proposal, that a Book of Common Praise (a title which I suggested some twenty years ago) were printed for Church use.

If only the Church recognized her high calling by the assertion of holy deeds, and of provisions for the wants of her children, rather than by too much mere declamation about this, and would *act* because she *feels herself to be* the Church Catholic of this land, and would prove her *status* by her *performances*, the day would not be far off when she would be known by her manifested spirit of prayer and praise exhibited in almost every conceivable method, as well as by the chastened purity of all her doctrines.

Men love the term Catholicity. Are we fond of what it really means?

For Catholicity consists not in a cold and strict uniformity, but rather in orthodox varieties gathered up by true charity and bound together in one bond of loving unity.

If the Church of England be the pure, and scriptural, and one true branch in this country, of God's Universal Church on earth, which I confess to believe her to be, she will be very careful not to give one needless cause for schism or disunion, and she will do anything and everything within her power, not involving any true principle, to provide whatsoever Christians need, or can reasonably desire as a means of worship, or as an act of devotional ritual. The sooner the attention of the Church shall be fixed on these subjects, the better will it be for her, and for the well-being of the people.

GEORGE VENABLES.

Great Yarmouth Vicarage,  
Nov. 4.