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4

A DISCOURSE

M.D. Daniel Prince 1776

CONCERNING THE

Excellency and Usefulness

OF THE

LITURGY OR COMMON-PRAYER.

Extracted from a Sermon of

BISHOP BEVERIDGE,

With additions and alterations,

For the Use of his own Parishioners,

BY A COUNTRY CLERGYMAN.

O X F O R D.

Printed for DANIEL PRINCE, near the *Clarendon*
Printing House; Sold by JOHN RIVINGTON,
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To the READER.

THE multitude of Editions the Sermon has gone through, which is the groundwork of the following Discourse, is a sufficient proof of the opinion entertained of its usefulness. But as it was originally delivered on a particular occasion, there were many things in it proper to that occasion, which it has now been thought more convenient to omit. Other points have been enlarged upon, and alterations made, of general use indeed, but with a special eye to the exigencies of a *Zarish*, abounding with Sectaries and Dissenters from the established Church; some of whom are apt to think slightly of our excellent Liturgy, and indeed of all prescribed Forms of Prayer whatsoever, and to promote in others the like unfavourable opinions and prejudices. It is hoped however, that from a serious and candid perusal of this little Tract these prejudices may be softened and in some measure removed; that the honest and well-meaning Christian, of whatever religious denomination, may be convinced of the reasonableness

sonableness of worshipping God in common by a settled Form, and may be prevailed on to join with us in our public devotions; and that those who are already attached to this mode of worship, whether from education or principle, may henceforth not content themselves with attending the service as a mere matter of form only, but may concur in it with their whole heart and soul and body, according to the directions here laid down for their godly edification. This will effectually answer the end of Him, who most affectionately wishes well to the salvation of all men, and is more especially concerned to pray for and solicit the spiritual welfare of those, for whose service in particular he hath undertaken the revival and republication of this Discourse.

The Excellency and Usefulness of the COMMON PRAYER.

1 Cor. xiv. 26.

LET ALL THINGS BE DONE
TO EDIFYING.

THE Apostle in this chapter having discoursed at large concerning the manner of holding Christian Assemblies for the worship of God, lays it down as a general Rule necessary to be observed in all such religious meetings, that *all things should be there done to the edifying of those* that are present in them. For the better understanding of which Rule it is necessary to consider what is meant by the word *Edifying*. After which we may proceed to examine how far that form of public worship, which is prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, established by the laws of the land, and appointed to be used in our religious assemblies, is justified by its conformity to this Apostolical Rule and Injunction.

To *edify* is a word of the same signification as *to build*; and because the whole body of Christians are often figuratively called *the temple^a, the house^b, the building^c of God*; in allusion to this, by whatsoever Men are in any respect qualified to become a part of this spiritual building or edifice, that is, whatever contributes to make them more

^a 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. ii. 21, 22.

^b 1 Tim. iii. 15. Heb. iii. 6.

^c 1 Cor. iii. 9. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

firm and solid Christians, more holy, perfect, and good than they were before, by that they are said to be *built* or *edified*. And from hence we see that it is a very great mistake for persons to think, as some are apt to do, that they are *edified* by what they hear, merely because they are made to know some little matter of which they were before ignorant, without deriving any farther improvement from it. For Knowledge is then only useful, when it has a proper influence upon our practice; otherwise, as the Apostle saith^a, it only *puffeth up*, or serves to fill the mind with vanity and self-conceit, whilst *Charity* is that which *edifieth*, or is of real service in forming the true Christian. So that whatever degree of knowledge we may attain, we never can be said to be *edified* by it, farther than as it is used as a means of exciting our *Charity* or *Love* towards God and towards each other, and of disposing our hearts to all holiness and righteousness and goodness. And that this is the true notion of *edifying*, is plain from the Apostle's own words, where he saith, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*^b. For from hence it is manifest, that that conversation only is properly said to *edify*, which ministers *Grace*, or helps to make us more pure and holy than we were before. And thus we read of *edifying ourselves in Love*^c; and *building up ourselves in our most holy faith*^d; which phrases imply the improving ourselves in those two Graces, which together make up a real and true Christian. And nothing can be said to *edify*, but what tends to

^a 1 Cor. viii. 1.

^c Eph. iv. 16.

^b Eph. iv. 29.

^d Jude 20.

the exciting and increasing of them, until we come (as the Apostle saith) in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ^a; or, are become as perfect and complete in all the will of God^b, as the religion of our great Master directs and instructs us how to be. Hence therefore, when the Apostle saith, *Let all things be done to edifying*, his meaning in brief is this, That in all our Christian Assemblies, when we meet together to worship and serve God, all things are there to be so done, that we may return home wiser and better than we came thither; with our knowledge of the divine goodness and perfections and of our own duty increased, our desires of pleasing God and enjoying his favour enlarged, our love and gratitude inflamed, our faith strengthened, our hopes confirmed, and every Christian Grace and Virtue so far quickened and cultivated in us, as to make us both in heart and outward deportment more humble, more holy, and more like to God, than ever we were before.

THUS much being premised by way of explaining what is meant by that *Edification* which the Apostle recommends to us; let us now proceed to consider and shew, that the Form of public worship, prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, and directed by the laws of the land to be observed in all Churches and Chapels of this Kingdom in communion with the Church of England, is such as corresponds exactly with the Apostle's Rule, and that *all things* therein contained *are done* indeed *to edifying*.

BUT before we prove that Form in particular, which our Church hath prescribed, to be agreeable

^a Eph. iv. 13.

^b 6 Col. iv. 12.

to this Apostolical Rule, it is necessary to prove first, That the prescribing a Form in general is so. For unless prescribing a Form in general be according to this Rule, no Form in particular that is prescribed can possibly agree with it. Now that this Rule doth not simply admit, but even require the prescribing of some Form, is evident from the Rule itself. For the Apostle herein commands the Church of Corinth, and consequently all Provincial Churches, to take care that in their religious Assemblies *all Things be done to edifying*. But how is it possible for any Provincial Church to see that this be done, except she prescribes some certain Form for the doing of it? If every Minister of a Parish should be left to his own liberty to do what he pleased in his own Congregation, although some perhaps might be so wise and prudent as to observe this Rule as well as they could, yet, considering the corruption of human nature, it is much to be feared that others would not. At least the Church could not be sufficiently secure in a matter of such moment that all would; and therefore must needs be obliged to consider of, and appoint some such Form to be used in all her Congregations, by which she may be fully assured that this Apostolical Rule is every where observed, as it ought to be. And although we should suppose, what never can be expected, that all the Clergy in every Province should be as wise and good as they ought, yet it cannot be supposed that every one of them should understand what is for the Edification of the People, so well as all together. And therefore it must needs be acknowledged, that the surest way to have this Rule observed is, for the Governors of every Church with their Clergy to meet together in a Synod or Convocation, and there, upon mature deliberation,

deliberation, to agree upon such form, which they in their prudence and Consciences judge to be according to this Rule, which the Apostle here lays down before them.

AND besides, that the prescribing a Form in general, is more for our *Edifying*, than to leave every one to do what seems good in his own eyes, we have the concurrent testimony, experience, and practice of the Universal Church. For whatever may have been attempted by a few scattered Enthusiasts, we never have read or heard of any regularly established Church in the world, from the Apostles days to ours, but what took this course. Though all have not used the same, yet no Church but have used some Form or other. And therefore for any man to say, that it is not lawful, or not expedient, or not so edifying, to use a Form of Prayer in the public worship of God, is to set up his private opinion against the general sense of the whole Catholic Church, and to make himself wiser than all Christians that ever were before him. To do which, without very sufficient and clear grounds indeed, were a presumption and folly that deserves the severest condemnation.

BUT it is still something more than all this; for it is not only to make himself wiser than all Christians, but even wiser than Christ himself. For it is impossible to prescribe a Form of Prayer in more plain and express terms than he hath done it, where he saith, *When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, &c. Luke xi. 2.* And surely there is no Christian but will acknowledge that Christ, by whom alone we can be edified, knows better what is, or what is not for our edification, than we or all the men in the world can do. Seeing then he hath not only prescribed a

form of prayer for his disciples to use, but hath expressly commanded them to use it, we, who profess ourselves to be his Disciples, ought to rest fully satisfied in our minds, that the using of a form of prayer is not only lawful, but much more for our edifying, than it is possible for any other way of praying to be. It is said indeed by some, that Praying by a set form damps the Holy Spirit, and precludes those assistances from him, which are promised us in our petitions. But how this can be, doth not sufficiently appear. For without inquiring farther at present into the nature and extent of the aid promised us, let us only consider who gave us the promise. And if it came from Christ himself, it cannot be supposed that he would have dictated the Use of that, which should counteract the beneficial effects of his promise. But if the assistance of the Holy Spirit be not incompatible with the use of the Lord's prayer, why should it be thought any more so with the use of any other settled form, of one especially composed by a select number of the most pious and learned Divines met together in the name and by the authority of the whole Church; who certainly had full as good reason to expect the concurrence of the Holy Spirit in furthering their well-intentioned and well-concerted endeavours, as any individual Christian can have to promise himself the like assistance in framing his own private petitions; or any single minister in ordering, either with or without premeditation, the devotions of his own particular and distinct Congregation?

BUT we have not only the Arguments above alleged to convince us, that the prescription of a form of prayer is the most for our general *Edifying*; but we have moreover other sufficient reasons

reasons collected from the nature of the thing itself, to shew how it comes to be so. For, first, in order to our being edified, so as to be made better and holier, whensoever we meet together upon any religious account, it is necessary that the same good and holy things be always inculcated and pressed upon us after one and the same manner. For we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to fasten any thing that is truly good either upon our own minds or upon the minds of others; and that it is rarely, if ever, effected without frequent repetitions of it. Whatsoever good things we hear only once, or now and then, although upon the hearing of them, they may swim for a while in our heads, yet they seldom sink down into our hearts, so as to move and sway the affections; as it is necessary they should do, in order to our being edified by them. Whereas by a set form of publick Devotions, rightly composed, as we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know or to do, so that is done always by the same words and expressions, which by their constant use will imprint the things themselves so firmly in our minds, that it will be no easy matter to obliterate or efface them; but do what we can, they will still occur upon all occasions, which cannot but be much for our Christian Edification.

MOREOVER, that which conduceth to the quickening of our souls, and to the raising of our Affections in our publick Devotions, must needs be acknowledged to conduce much to our Edification. This advantage indeed is challenged by those who choose to pray without any settled form at all; because the novelty and variety of expression, it is said, helps to fix the mind and rouse the attention; whilst the continual repetition

tion of the same form of words is represented as flat and tiresome and disgustful to the hearers. And true it is, that if amusement were the only end of Prayer, the continual introduction of a new set of words and phrases, with an agreeable variety in the thoughts and turn of address, is well enough calculated to surprize the imagination, to tickle the ear, and work up the mind into sudden and transitory feelings, just as when we hear a new piece of musick performed, or are entertained with the recital of stories full of uncommon incidents and strange adventures. But how widely different is this from that steady composure of thought, that earnest application of the soul, that fixed elevation of the heart to God, which constitutes true and solid and lively Devotion? It is here that the external dress of words is least of all to be regarded, any farther than as it is incumbent on us to take especial care that they are decent and proper, and that neither in the matter nor style of our addresses any thing be admitted unsuitable to the majesty of the divine being, or to the relation which subsists between him and us. But it is very plain, that when I pray after another without knowing beforehand what he will say, in order to pray aright, I must first listen to what he is about to utter, and then consider whether what he says be agreeable to sound doctrine, and such both in matter and form as I ought to consent to and join in; after which, if I find it to be so, I must then join with him in it with my whole soul. But before this can be done to any purpose, he is already advanced to something else, where I have to follow him in the same course; by which means though a spark of proper sentiment may now and then be lighted up for a moment, it cannot possibly have time to burn
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up into a permanent and invigorating flame. But on the other hand, when I am to pray by a form with which I am already familiarly acquainted, and am sure to meet with nothing but what I can heartily approve, freed from the anxiety and trouble of examining as I go along, I have nothing else to do but to compose my mind for what I know will follow in its order; and still as the words are pronounced in my ears, to move my heart and its affections conformably to them; to humble my soul in confessing my unworthiness, to raise my desires of the good things I pray for, to call forth to view the divine excellencies which I adore, and gratefully to recollect the mercies which are the special objects of my acknowledgements. And thus my whole Soul, being uniformly taken up and employed, receives stronger and livelier impressions, and such as are infinitely more likely to abide with it, even after the service is over. But if, notwithstanding all this, we all, nay the very best of us, feel ourselves still subject to frequent wanderings and inattentiveness in our attendance upon publick worship, it is partly our own fault, and partly our infirmity, and in no wise to be ascribed to the use of an established form, since the evil is felt and complained of in a much higher degree by those who are accustomed to an unconfined and extemporary worship^a.

NOR is it of small moment to add warmth and vigour to our prayers, to know that instead of being confined to the petitions of one single Minister, and praying after his peculiar notions and principles, (which whether they are right or

^a See A Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland, p. 62,—65, where Experience is appealed to for the different effects of each mode of Worship.

wrong, the greatest part of the Congregation may want capacity to judge, even if they had leisure for doing it) we join in prayers to which the whole body of the Church have already declared their assent, and which are common to all as well as ourselves; so that we are sure of having all the pious and devout souls which are members of the same Church heartily concurring and joining with us in the same petitions and requests. A Circumstance that cannot but contribute much to our satisfaction and confidence. It is pretended however, that a fixed Form of prayer cannot be altogether so edifying, because there is no expressing in it all that a Congregation may at times have occasion to offer. But this is a mistake. For the circumstances and wants of mankind in general are at all times so nearly the same, as to leave little room to vary in the matter of our common petitions. We all have sins at all times to confess and to implore God's pardon for; we ever want the assistance of his grace and holy spirit to guide and influence our conduct; and have need of his continual protection and good providence for our preservation and support; it is our constant duty to pray for all sorts and conditions of Men according to their general and ordinary distinctions, and thankfully to acknowledge the divine goodness exercised towards all. In cases of extraordinary blessings or calamities of a public nature, it may perhaps be right to take distinct notice of them in our public devotions; but these cases happen but seldom, and when they do, may be provided for by the special interposition of public authority. But on all ordinary occasions, and where private individuals are desirous of a particular recommendation in the prayers of the Church, it is more decent and proper to confine ourselves to the use

of general terms, which may easily be provided so as to suit all possible cases, than to descend too minutely into particulars, as if we thought God could not rightly understand our meaning, if we did not take care to explain it to him very distinctly.

BUT lastly, In order to our being edified by our publick Devotions, as it is necessary that we know beforehand what we are to pray for, so is it necessary that we afterwards know what we have prayed for, when the business of prayer is over. For I suppose it will easily be granted, that all the good and benefit we can receive from our prayers is ultimately to be resolved into God's gracious hearing and answering of our petitions; without which they will come to nothing. But there are two things required of us in order to the obtaining the answer of our prayers. First, That we ask with an earnest and fervent desire; to which, as we have shewn, a set form of prayer conduceth very much. And secondly, That we trust and depend on God for granting the good things we desire of him according to the promises which he hath made unto us in Jesus Christ our Lord. For as trusting in God is one of the most essential acts of Religion we can perform, so is it that which must give life and vigour, virtue and efficacy to our prayers; nor without it have we any just ground to expect that they should be answered. And perhaps one great reason why Men are so often unsuccessful in their prayers is, because, when they have prayed, they think no more of the matter; and of course place not that trust and dependence upon God which they ought. For Trust in God is not a mere transient Act of belief, nor is it a vain and groundless confidence and presumption that God will hear us, whatever we do, or howsoever we behave; but it is a

rooted and steady principle of conduct, urging us to render ourselves fit objects of his attention by becoming good Christians, and exerting our own proper endeavours for the accomplishment of our purposes. For God will not listen to nor regard the supplications of wicked men, nor is he at all concerned to answer the petitions of those, who in the mean time are unmindful to do what they can for themselves. So that on all these accounts it is needful, even after we have prayed, that we should consider and bear in mind the subject matter of our requests, lest haply we fall short of the good things we might have received, either for want of reposing due trust in the divine goodness and truth, or otherwise through our own culpable remissness and negligence.

Now it is obvious, that in this respect likewise a set form of Prayer must be of considerable help and advantage to us. For if we hear another utter an extemporary prayer which he never said, nor we heard, before, nor ever shall do again, it is much if he himself can remember the whole, or even the greatest part of what he uttered. Much less can we do so that heard him. And if we cannot possibly remember what we prayed for, we cannot put forth that degree of reasonable and permanent trust and dependence on God, which is required of us, in respect to the particulars we have asked of him. But if we pray by a set form, we can easily recollect ourselves after we have prayed, and look over again at leisure the several articles of our petitions, either in a book, or in our minds, where long use has imprinted them strongly, and so act our faith and confidence in God, as not only to insure us success in what we have prayed for, but also to the very great furtherance of all those Christian graces and virtues.

virtues, which we know will procure us acceptance in his sight. So that on this account also this method of praying must needs be the most edifying we can possibly use.

THESE things being duly weighed, we may now take for granted, That the using of a Form in general in the publick worship of God is agreeable to the Apostolical Rule, which requireth *all things to be done to edifying*; and may proceed to consider how far that Form in particular, which the Church of England hath appointed to be used, is so too. For which end it will not be necessary to run over each particular word, phrase, or expression in the *Common Prayer*; much less to take notice of and vindicate it from every little cavil and exception, which ignorance or malice may sometimes make against it. For nothing ever yet was, or ever can be said or written, but something or other, right or wrong, may still be urged to its disparagement. But it will be abundantly sufficient to recommend it to our use and esteem, if it shall appear, That the Form of Divine Service contained in the Book of Common Prayer, which is now in use among us, conduceth so much to the edification of those that use it, that it agrees exactly with the Rule which the Apostle prescribes. And this may fairly be demonstrated under the four following heads. 1. From the Language. 2. From the Matter or substance of it. 3. From the Method. And, 4. From the manner of performing it. For if it be edifying in all these respects, it must needs be so on the whole; there being nothing in it but what may be reduced to one of these heads.

AND first, as to the Language in which the whole service is performed, we know that it is *English*, the common and vulgar Language of

the Nation, which every one understands, and so may be edified by it. And this indeed is the Ground and Foundation of all the benefit we can possibly receive from our public prayers. And therefore in the Church of Rome the common people are made incapable of being edified by the prayers of the Church, in that they are all made in Latin, a Language which they do not understand. So that when they meet to worship God, there are seldom any in the Congregation that know what is said there, except the Priest that reads it, and oftentimes not he neither. By which means they have no such thing really amongst them as *Common Prayer*. Neither is it possible for the common people to be ever edified by what is there said or done; except they could once be convinced by it of the horrible abuse which their church puts upon them, in commanding all her publick devotions to be performed in an unknown tongue, directly contrary not only to the rule in the Text, but to the express design of the Chapter out of which it is taken.

BUT, blessed be God for it, it is not so with us; for the whole is written and read in that language which is common to all the Congregations in the kingdom, and to every person in each Congregation. So that all the people of the land, whatsoever rank or condition they are of, may join together in the use of every thing that is in it, and so be jointly edified by it: especially considering, that it is not only in *English*, but in common and plain *English*, such as we use in our common discourse with one another. There are no unusual or obsolete words, no hard or uncouth phrases in it, but every thing is expressed as clearly and plainly as words can do it. So that the meanest person in the Congregation, that understands but
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the Mother-tongue, may reap the same advantage from it as the greatest Scholar.

BUT that which is chiefly to be considered in the Language of the Common Prayer is, that it is not only *common*, but *proper* too; that is, though the words there used are but common words, they are so used, as *properly* to express the things designed by them. This may perhaps at first sight seem to be no great matter, yet it is that without which we might be subverted by that which was intended for our edification. For impropriety of speech in matters of Religion hath given occasion to all, or most of the Schisms, Errors, and Heresies, that have infested this or any other part of the Christian Church, as might easily be demonstrated. Hence the Apostle gave *Timothy a Form of sound words*, and charged him to hold it fast^a: as knowing that except the words, whereby he usually expressed divine truths, were sound and proper, it would be impossible for him to preserve, or to convey to others at least, right notions and opinions of the things themselves. And certainly, if there ever was a *Form of sound words*, composed by men since the Apostles' days, our Common Prayer may justly claim that title; it being all made up of such fit and proper, such sound and wholesome words, that if we but hold fast to them, there is no great fear of our falling into any dangerous heresy or schism. For they, being duly considered, will suggest to our minds right and true apprehensions of all the articles of the Christian Religion, and so not only make us sound, but build us up strong and firm in our most holy faith. So that considering the plainness and perspicuity, the sound-

^a 2 Tim. i. 13.

ness and propriety of speech, the least that can be said of the Common Prayer is, that all things in it are so worded, as is most for the edifying of all those that use it.

2. AND as the words in the Common Prayer are all as edifying as words can be, so, secondly, is the *Matter* expressed by those words. For there is nothing in it but what is proper for our edification; and all things that are, or can be for our edification, are plainly to be found in it. First, I say there is nothing in our Liturgy but what is proper for our Edification. There are no such *Fables* in it, or *endless Genealogies*, which (as the Apostle saith) *minister Questions, rather than godly Edifying*^a. There are none of those vain disputations and impertinent controversies, which have of late been raised in the Church to it's great disturbance, rather than its Edification. There are no new opinions, nor airy speculations in it, which serve only to tickle mens ears, and please their fancies, and so divert their thoughts from what they are about. Look it all over without prejudice or partiality, consider seriously every thing that is in it, and you will find nothing asserted, but what is consonant to God's word; nothing prayed for, but according to his promise; nothing represented as a duty, but what is agreeable to his commands; nothing said or done, but what is grave and sober, solemn and substantial; nothing but what becomes the worship of a great and almighty, a pure and holy God; and therefore nothing but what we may some way or other be edified by.

AND as there is nothing in it but what is edifying, so all things that are, or can be edifying

^a 1 Tim. i. 4.

are found in it. For nothing can be necessary to edify, or make us solid and perfect Christians, but what is necessary either to be *believed*, or *done*, or else *obtained* by us. But there is nothing necessary to be *believed*, which we are not taught; nothing necessary to be *done*, but what we are enjoined; nothing necessary to be *obtained*, but we are made to pray for it in our publick Form of divine Service.

FOR, first, As to those things which are necessary to be *known* or *believed*, it is acknowledged by all Protestants, that they are fully contained in the *holy Scriptures*, which make a great, if not the greatest, part of our divine Service; and are constantly read over, the *Psalms* once every month, the *O'd Testament* once, and the *New Testament* thrice every year. And all the fundamental Articles of our Christian Faith, revealed in the *holy Scriptures*, being briefly summed up in the *Apostles Creed*, that we may be sure to keep them always in our minds, we have that Creed read and repeated always once, and most commonly twice every day in the Year. And seeing the Godhead of our blessed Saviour, the Foundation of our whole Religion, hath been, and is still denied by some; lest we should be led away into so dangerous an error, every Sunday and Holiday the *Nicene Creed* is appointed to be read, wherein the Godhead both of the Son and Holy Ghost is asserted and explained. And whereas some over curious and speculative Men have fallen into erroneous and false notions respecting the doctrine of the most holy Trinity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God; in order to guard against such errors, and to preserve the true Catholic faith whole and undefiled, it hath been judged fit to retain and read upon stated days in the Year

the Creed called the *Athanasian Creed*, wherein the doctrine approved from Scripture by the primitive Church concerning these Mysteries is set forth in as clear and perspicuous terms, as the nature of the things will admit; although still perhaps not very intelligible to such as are unlearned, who are therefore not concerned to distinguish in such very nice and intricate questions.

AND as all things necessary to be believed are summarily contained in the *Three Creeds*, so are they frequently explained in other parts of our Liturgy; in so much that it would be easy to frame a compleat body of Divinity out of the whole together; at least of all such things as any Christian whatsoever is bound to believe or to know, in order to his eternal Salvation.

THE same may be said also of all those things which we ought to *do*. For as it is here particularly prescribed to us what we ought to do in order to serve God acceptably in his house of prayer; so are we likewise taught and admonished what is needful to be learned, in order to our serving him in all other places. So that no Man that frequents our public Congregations, where the Common Prayer is used, can ever plead ignorance of any one duty whatsoever; for, if it be not his own fault, he may there be instructed in every thing which he that made him requires of him. For here, as was before observed, we constantly read the holy Scripture, which (as the Apostle saith) *is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*^a. And seeing it hath pleased the most high God to comprise his whole Will,

^a 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

and consequently our Duty, in the *ten Commandments*, hence we read them constantly every Sunday and Holiday throughout the whole Year : by which means every one, that doth not wilfully shut his eyes, may clearly see, and fully understand, the Sum of his Duty both to God and Man. Especially considering, that in our Prayers themselves also frequent mention is made of all those vices which ought to be avoided, and of all those good works which ought to be performed by us. So that we can never come to Church without being still put in mind both of *what we ought*, and *what we ought not to do*, that we may be saved.

AND further, as there is nothing necessary to be known or done, but we are taught it, so neither is there any thing necessary to be *obtained*, to make us either holy or happy, but we pray for it in the *Common Prayer*. For here have we the *Lord's Prayer*, a prayer composed by wisdom itself; and therefore it must needs be the most perfect and divine prayer that ever was made. Neither do we use it only once, but in every distinct service of the Church, in our prayers before we read the holy scripture, and in our prayers after : towards the end of the Litany, and in the beginning of the Communion Service, and in every Office of our Church besides. And the reason is, because although our Saviour hath not forbidden us to use any other prayer than this, yet he hath expressly commanded us to say this, whensoever we pray^a. And therefore, in obedience to his command, our Church hath wisely ordered, that in every solemn address that we make to the divine Majesty we always say this prayer ; lest otherwise,

^a Luke xi. 2.

by the transgression of his command in omitting this, we make all our other prayers to be ineffectual. And besides, by the use of this amongst our other prayers, we are always sure to use one prayer, both absolutely perfect in itself, and most acceptable to him to whom we pray; it being a prayer of his own dictating. So that we speak unto God in his own words; and may therefore be confident that what we ask of him is exactly according to his own will.

AND though all things necessary for us be virtually contained in the *Lord's Prayer*, yet our Church, in conformity to the practice of the Catholic Church in the purest ages, hath thought good to add some other prayers, in which the same things are more particularly expressed and desired at the hands of our great and most bountiful Benefactor. All which are so contrived, that there is nothing evil or hurtful to us, but we pray against it; nothing good or useful, but we pray for it. There is no vice or lust, but we desire it may be subdued in us; no grace or virtue, but we pray that it may be planted and made to grow in us. Insomuch, that if we do but constantly and sincerely pray over all those prayers, and stedfastly believe and trust in God for his answering of them, and strenuously exert our own endeavours for the same purposes, we cannot but be as real and true Saints, as happy and blessed Christians, as it is possible for us to be in this world. Neither do we here pray for ourselves only, but according to the Apostle's direction, we make *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men*^a; yea, for our very *Enemies*, as our Saviour hath commanded us^b.

^a 1 Tim, ii, 1.

^b Matt, v. 44.

And what more can be desired than all this, to make the matter of our *Common-Prayer* edifying either to ourselves or others? Nothing certainly, but Truth and Sincerity of heart in the using of it.

BEFORE we quit this head, one thing more is to be observed concerning the Prayers in general; which is, That they are not carried on in one continued discourse, but divided into many short prayers, or Collects, such as that is, which our Lord himself composed; and that might be one reason why our Church so ordered it, that so she might follow our Lord's example, who best knew what kind of prayers were fittest for us to use. And indeed we cannot but all find by our own experience, how difficult it is to keep our minds long intent upon any thing, much more upon so great things as the Object and Subject of our prayers; but do what we can, we are still liable to distractions. So that there is a kind of necessity to break off sometimes, to give ourselves a breathing time, that our thoughts being loosened for a while, they may with more ease and less danger of distraction be tied up again, as it is necessary they should be, all the while that we are actually praying to the supreme Being and Lord of the World.

BESIDES which, in order to the performing of our Devotions aright to the most high God, it is necessary that our souls be possessed all along with due apprehensions of his greatness and glory. To which purpose our short prayers contribute very much. For every one of them beginning with some of the properties or perfections of God, and so suggesting to our minds right apprehensions of him at first, it is easy to preserve them in our
minds

minds during a short space of prayer, which in a long one would be apt to scatter and vanish away.

BUT one of the principal reasons, no doubt, why our public Devotions are, and should be divided into short Collects, is this: Our blessed Saviour hath often told us, That whatsoever we ask in his name, we shall receive; and so hath directed us in all our prayers to make use of his name, and to ask nothing but upon the account of his merits and mediation for us; upon which all our hopes and expectations from God do wholly and solely depend. Hence therefore it cannot but be judged necessary, that the name of Christ be frequently inserted in our prayers, that so we may lift up our heart unto him, and act our faith upon him for our obtaining of the good things we pray for. And accordingly we see it is in the *Common Prayer*; for whatsoever we ask of God, we presently add, *Through Jesus Christ our Lord*, or something to that purpose; and so ask nothing but according to our Lord's direction, even in his name. And hence it is that our prayers are all so short; for take away the conclusion of every Collect or Prayer, *In the name of Christ*, and you may join them all together, and make them but as one continued Prayer. But this would be doing our prayers a very essential disservice, in taking away that which gives them their full force and energy, and so making them ineffectual to the purposes for which they are used. For assuredly the asking of all things in the name of Christ, as we do in the *Common Prayer*, is the only sure way to obtain what we desire, and by consequence the most *edifying way* of praying that can be.

3. THE next thing to be considered in the *Common Prayer* is the *Method*, which is admirable, and

and as *edifying*, if possible, as the *Matter* itself. Of which a short sketch may suffice to shew not only the Reasonableness, but the Excellency of it throughout.

LET us then suppose a Congregation of sober and devout Christians (such as we all should be) met together to perform their public Devotions to Almighty God; every one of whom having lift up his heart privately unto him already, imploring his aid and assistance in the performance of so great a work, they are all now ready to enter upon it. The first thing done is, to read some *Sentences* of holy Scripture, that so we may begin our Devotions in God's own words. And these *Sentences* are all such as are intended to put us in mind of our Sins against him, and of his promise to pardon us, if we truly repent of them; that so we may present and carry ourselves before him with that reverence and godly fear, which becometh those who are sensible of their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so great a majesty; and likewise with that faith and humble confidence, which becometh those that believe, that he upon our repentance will forgive us our sins, and accept both our persons and performances according to the promises which he hath made unto us.

Then follows a grave *Exhortation* concerning the end of our present assembling, which is of great use, and ought never to be omitted. For Men are generally too apt to rush into the presence of Almighty God, without duly considering what they go about. Whereas this *Exhortation* (which on the part of the People should be attentively listened to, not repeated) puts us upon considering the greatness of the work we are now engaged
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in, and so upon composing our thoughts, and preparing ourselves for the due performance of it.

Our Minds being thus brought into a right frame and temper for it, we all, both Minister and People, prostrate ourselves in all humility before the most high God, *Confessing* upon our knees the manifold sins and wickedness that we have committed against him. Which *Confession* is so contrived, that all, and every Person in any Congregation whatsoever, may join in it. For it runs in general terms; and yet so too, that every particular person may, and should in his own mind confess and acknowledge his own sins, which he knows himself to be guilty of; as when he repeats the words, *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.* At the saying of this, every one ought to call his own sins to remembrance, what duties he knows himself to have omitted, and what vices he knows himself to have committed, and to confess them accordingly unto God. And having thus confessed our sins to God, we presently implore his mercy in the pardon of them, and his grace, that for the future we may forsake them.

AND whilst we are thus upon our Knees, humbly confessing and bewailing our sins before the Lord our God, the Minister stands up, and, in the name of God, declares and pronounces to all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel, *The Absolution and Remission of all their sins.* This, though spoken also in general terms, and not to be repeated after the Minister, as some ignorantly do, yet every particular person present ought to apply to himself, so as to be fully persuaded in his own mind, that if he doth but sincerely repent, and believe the Gospel, he is perfectly

perfectly *absolved* from all his Sins by God himself, according to the promises which he hath made to Mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord.

AND now looking upon ourselves as *absolved* from our sins, upon our repentance and faith in Christ, and, by consequence, as reconciled to God, we take the boldness to call him Father, humbly addressing ourselves to him in that divine form of prayer which Christ himself hath given us. Which done, we lift up our hearts and voices unto God for his assistance of us in what we do, in the words of David, the Minister crying out, *O Lord open thou our lips,* and the People answering, *And our mouths shall shew forth thy praise.* The Minister again, *O God make speed to save us;* the People, *O Lord, make haste to help us.* And immediately we all lift up our bodies also, and stand upon our feet, putting ourselves thereby into a proper posture for praising and magnifying the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for his infinite mercy and goodness towards us; for which purpose the Minister first saith, or sings, the *Gloria Patri, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;* and the People, to shew their consent, answer, *As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.* But not thinking this to be enough, the Minister again calls upon the People, saying, *Praise ye the Lord;* and the People answer, *The Lord's name be praised;* and then we go on to praise him together, saying, or singing, the ninety fifth Psalm, *O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation, &c.* And from thence we proceed to the Psalms appointed for the day. After every one of which, to testify our belief in the holy Trinity, and our acknowledgement of that infinite Love and

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Goodness which every one of those divine Persons hath manifested to us, we repeat that incomparable hymn, *Glory be to the Father, &c.*

OUR Hearts being thus raised up to God in praise and admiration of him, we are now in a fit temper and disposition to hear his holy word, and therefore have a Chapter read out of the *Old Testament*, in the ordinary course; except upon Sundays and Holidays, when more people attending the publick worship of God, than can conveniently come upon other days, some select portion is read proper for the day, and such as is judged most edifying to all who are present. And having thus heard God speaking to us in his holy word, we presently begin anew to praise him for so unspeakable a mercy, saying, or singing, in the Morning, the *Te Deum*, one of the most heavenly and seraphic hymns that ever was composed by man; or else, the *Song of the three Children*, which is nothing but a paraphrase upon that which David sang so often upon earth, and which the holy angels sing continually in heaven, even *Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord*. Wherein we being all sensible how far short we ourselves come of praising God sufficiently, we call upon all the Creatures of the World to do it, *Bless ye the Lord, praise him, and magnify his name for ever*. In the afternoon, we sing the *Magnificat, or Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, or else the Ninety-eighth Psalm; both which, being taken out of God's own word, cannot but be very pleasing and acceptable unto him.

After this, our Souls being got upon the wing again, and soaring aloft in the contemplation of the divine perfections, we are now rightly qualified to hear and receive the sublime mysteries of the Gospel. We have therefore a Chapter or Portion
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of the *New Testament* read to us. And being then revived as it were with the good tidings of the gospel, and filled with admiration at the infinite goodness of God therein revealed to us, we naturally break forth again into praising and adoring him, in the Song of *Zacharias*, or else in the hundredth *Pfalm*, in the morning; and at evening, in the sixty-seventh *Pfalm*, or else the Song of *Simeon*, still concluding with giving *Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

Having thus heard some part of God's word read to us, and expressed our thankfulness to him for the mercies therein recorded, in order to signify our Assent, not only to what we have heard, but to the whole Scripture, we all with one heart and voice make profession of our Christian faith in the *Apostle's Creed*, thereby acknowledging ourselves to be the Disciples of Christ, and that as we were at first baptized, so we still continue to believe in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one *God* blessed for evermore.

HITHERTO we have been mostly taken up with confessing our sins to God, imploring his mercy in the forgiveness of them, hearing his most holy word, acknowledging his goodness to us, and praising and magnifying his name for it. By which means, except we have been extremely wanting to ourselves, our hearts cannot but be so united and fixed upon God, that we are now rightly disposed to make known our wants, and present our supplications before him. This therefore is the next thing we proceed to. But seeing that neither Minister nor People can possibly do it aright, without the assistance of God himself, therefore each of them first prays for his special presence with the other; the one saying, *The Lord be with you*: the other, *And with thy Spirit*. An

then immediately falling down upon our knees, we adore and supplicate each person of the most blessed Trinity to have mercy upon us ; *Lord, have mercy upon us ; Christ, have mercy upon us ; Lord, have mercy upon us.* After which we address ourselves to God in the words which he himself hath put into our mouths, saying the *Lord's Prayer* ; which ended, the Minister and People by turns lift up their hearts to God in some short and heavenly ejaculations, striving as it were to outvie each other in prevailing with the Almighty to pour down his blessings upon us. And then in a humble and solemn manner we join together in supplicating his divine Majesty for his grace and favour, his defence and protection, his mercy and blessing, for ourselves, for the King, for the Royal family, for the Church, and for all Mankind ; and this we ordinarily do in the Collects appointed for that purpose. But upon *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, (upon which days the Primitive Church used to perform their more than ordinary Devotions) as also upon the *Lords Day*, in the morning, we do it in the *Litany*, and in such a *Litany*, as comprehends all and every thing a Christian can ever need to desire of *Almighty God*, either for himself or others.

UPON Sundays and Holidays we next proceed to the *Communion Service*. But as this was intended for a *distinct* Service, some considerable interval should always be allowed to intervene, which may be employed either in singing Psalms, or in silent meditation and recollection of what we have been about. Approaching then to the Lord's Table, if convenient, we begin with the Lord's own prayer ; and after another short prayer to God to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, the *Ten Com-*
mandments

mandments, which he hath enjoined us to observe, are audibly recited; and after every Commandment we ask of God mercy for our transgression of his law for the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come; saying, *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.* And then after a Prayer for the King, and the Collect for the day, the *Epistle* and *Gospel* are read, that is, a short paragraph taken for the most part out of the Canonical *Epistles*, and another taken always out of one of the holy *Gospels*; which was the antient way of reading the Scripture, before it was divided into Chapters. And this is now done in order to prepare us the better for the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, therein revealed to us. But seeing we neither do, nor can read over the whole Gospel at one time, we repeat the substance of it in the *Nicene Creed*, which it is very necessary we should do at this time, that so we may demonstrate ourselves to be Christians, and on that account capable of receiving the most holy Communion.

HE that all this while hath employed himself as he ought to do in the Service of our Church, cannot but find himself greatly edified by it. Yet however, that nothing may be wanting which may conduce to our Edification, immediately after the *Nicene Creed* our Church hath appointed a *Sermon* to be preached; which, if it contain sound, plain, and practical doctrine, as it ought to do, cannot but be very edifying too.

AND now we may well be supposed to be so far edified, as to be raised up to the highest pitch of Devotion we can arrive at in this world, and so are fit to be admitted to the highest Ordinance of the Church, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And therefore we now betake ourselves to it

But that we may not appear before the Lord empty, we first offer up to him something of what he hath bestowed upon us, to be disposed of to pious and charitable uses; testifying thereby both our acknowledgment of his goodness to us, and that we have nothing but what we receive from him; and also our charity and good will to our poorer brethren. And to excite and encourage our liberality, all the while that we are offering, some select Sentences of Scripture are read, wherein God either commands us to be charitable, or else promises a blessing to those who are so. And then to extend our charity still farther, we pray for *Christ's whole Church militant here in earth*; thus professing ourselves to be real members of it, and desirous to hold communion with it in the partaking of Christ's mystical Body and Blood. And so we proceed to the celebration of that holy Sacrament, in which the *Method* is so clear, so apparently edifying, that nothing more need be said of it.

ONE Remark only seems requisite to be made concerning the holy Communion, which is, that our Church requireth, or at least supposeth it to be administered every Lord's Day, and every Holiday throughout the year, as was practised in the primitive Church. For that is the reason that the *Communion Service* is appointed to be used upon all such days, and to be read at the Communion Table, that so the Minister may be ready there to administer it to all those that desire to partake of it. Which shews the great care that our Church hath of all her members, that they may be edified and confirmed in the faith; to which nothing contributes more than frequent Communion at the Lord's Table. Which if people could once be persuaded to, they would soon find
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greater benefit by it, than can easily be expressed or imagined. But since in the present state of things a sufficient number of Communicants cannot be expected so often, it is hoped however, that whenever the customary times of Celebration now recur, as few will absent themselves as possible, and deny themselves the use of an Ordinance, which is so much for their Souls' health.

FROM this short and cursory review of the excellent *Method* wherein our Divine Service is performed it sufficiently appears, that in this respect likewise it is edifying, very edifying indeed. The last Thing to be considered is the *Manner* of its performance ; by which we mean only the several postures of the Body, as Standing and Kneeling, which are used in it ; for they also are done to edifying.

WHILE we say or sing the *Hymns* or *Psalms* to the praise and glory of God, we are directed to *stand up*, not only to signify, but at the same time also to excite the elevation of our Souls towards the object of our praises. For our Souls and our Bodies are so intimately connected, and have such an influence on each other, that whatever bespeaks any sort of affection in the one, has a natural tendency to inspire and promote a like habit or disposition in the other. Now a sitting or reclining Posture bespeaks weariness and indolence in the Body, and a disposition to rest and self-indulgence ; whereas an erect Position denotes vigor and alacrity, and a readiness to engage in some active employment. Hence we rise and stand up in the presence of great men, our superiors, in token that we have at that time laid aside all regard to our own personal ease and gratification, and are solely intent on knowing their pleasure, and executing their commands. With how
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much greater reason then ought we to shew this mark of our respect, attention, and zeal, when we are actually engaged in the service of the greatest and best Being in the Universe, a service too the most honourable that can be for us here, and beyond which we can hope for no greater reward hereafter? For much the same reason also do we *stand* also in repeating the *Creeds*; for these being Confessions of our faith in God, as such they come under the notion of hymns or songs of praise to him; all our praising of God being in reality nothing else but confessing and acknowledging him to be such as he is, both in himself, and towards us. Besides, by *standing up* at the *Creeds*, or when the holy Gospel is read, we signify our assent to and esteem for the doctrines contained in them, and our resolution to maintain them against all opposition whatsoever.

AND as for the Gospels in particular, they contain some of the principal acts which our Lord did, and the words which he spake while on earth; how then can we, who profess to receive him for our Lord and Master, choose but *stand up* with the greatest reverence, when we hear him speaking, and listen diligently to the gracious words which proceeded out of his divine mouth?

ON the other hand, when we make confession of our sins and unworthiness to God, and supplicate his pardon, and the grant of whatsoever else we stand in need of, we are directed to fall low on our knees before him, expressing thereby our humiliation and lowly dependence. And so proper, so natural is this posture of *kneeling* for offending Creatures and Supplicants, that if all men did but consider what they are about, when they pray to Almighty God, they could not possibly approach the divine presence, to offer up their
 petitions,

petitions, in any other. Our blessed Lord, though so far exalted above us both in nature and dignity, hath yet in this particular, as in all other, set us an example of humility, which it highly becomes us to follow. For we find him *kneeling* on the bare ground, when he prayed to his Father in the garden^a. And so did St. Paul too, that worthy follower of his Master, *kneeling* down to prayer on the sea shore amidst the stones and sand^b. Who then are we, that we should decline paying this homage on our knees, when we address ourselves to the supreme Lord of heaven and earth? Certainly those who are guilty of such a wilful neglect, give but too much cause to suspect they have either very little or no religion at all in their hearts. For if they had, they durst not, methinks, presume to carry themselves no otherwise, when they petition the great Creator and Sovereign of the Universe, than as if they were conversing with one of their Equals among their Fellow-creatures. Such persons, it is to be feared, come not to Church for any purpose of devotion, but merely for fashion sake, or to see and be seen. At least when they are there, they perform no fit act of external worship or adoration to their Maker, nor shew him that respect and reverence with their bodies, which is his due; and so give very great offence to all pious and devout Christians.

WHEREAS if all and every person in the Congregation would always be upon their knees, when they put up their petitions to the most high God, what a mighty advantage would this be, not only to every one in particular, but to the whole Congregation in general? For as every one would by this means keep his heart more stedfast and fixed

^a Luke xxii. 41.

^b Acts xxi. 5.

in the true fear and dread of God, and of course be more sure of obtaining the good things he prayed for; so the whole Congregation would also be very much edified by such an uniform and decent deportment. For by this means we should excite and inflame the devotions of each other, confirm and strengthen one another's faith, and convince both ourselves and all that see us, that Religion is indeed a serious thing, and that we believe it to be so, by our serving God with so much reverence and godly fear, as this humble posture representeth. Let us then be persuaded, every one of us, whensoever we come together to join in publick prayer to God, to do it in that awful, lowly, and solemn manner, which our Church commandeth, and which becometh Creatures speaking to a great and Almighty Creator; that so we may give true worship and honour unto Him, and also receive that benefit and edification unto ourselves, which he hath promised, and we expect from our public prayers; this being certainly the most edifying Posture that we can possibly use upon such Occasions.

AND now from the observations that have been made concerning the Language, the Matter, the Method, and the Manner of performing Divine Service, as contained and prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, we may fairly conclude, that it agrees exactly with the Rule laid down by the Apostle, and that *all things are indeed done in it to edifying*. And though we dare not take upon us to affirm, that it is so absolutely complete and perfect, as not to need, or be capable of any alteration for the better; (for that were presumption to think of any human composition; and moreover might be of bad consequence in prejudicing our minds against any real improvements which
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the wisdom of our Governors may hereafter have to propose;) yet thus much we may assuredly boast concerning it, that search all the Christian World over, you will not any where find a Liturgy to be compared with it in every branch of excellence. Let it then be our care to esteem and value it in proportion to its Worth; let us rejoice in it, and be thankful to God for so inestimable a benefit: and let us not be moved by those vain and frivolous objections, which are now and then raised against some parts of it by persons, who, if they would speak openly, have no greater fault to find with it, than that it falls not in with their weak and groundless prejudices, or perhaps their impious and heretical errors. Let us hold fast this *form of sound words*, which we have been taught, and which has already stood the trial of ages; and let us not be ready to exchange it for any extemporary effusions, no, nor for any premeditated Forms of private invention; which, because they have the grace of novelty to recommend them, or are delivered perhaps with an unusual tone of voice, or with an appearance of more than ordinary warmth and fervor, are apt to make a stronger impression for the first upon persons of weak judgment; but if soberly considered, or put to the proof of long experience, would be found to want much of that edifying grace, which is to be met with in our established Form of Worship. But above all, if we would be convinced by our own experience of its salutary influence and efficacy, let us be careful to use it with that earnestness and attention, which should ever accompany us in religious matters. For the true reason why some are so little improved and affected by it, is because they are negligent in their manner of setting about it. But negligence in a point of so much concern
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to our Salvation is the most inexcusable and fatal misconduct we can be guilty of. To avoid which, and in order that we may reap the full benefit and advantage of our excellent Common Prayer, let the following Rules be strictly and carefully observed by us.

FIRST, Come not to our publick Prayers only out of Custom, or for Fashion sake, as the manner of some is, but out of a sincere obedience to God's commands, and with a sure trust and confidence in his promises for his blessing upon what you do. For which end, it will be very good and adviseable, as you go to Church, seriously to bethink yourselves whither you are going, and what you are to do there; that so, laying aside all other business, you may put yourselves into a right temper for so great a work.

SECONDLY, Frequent the public service as often as you conveniently can. The oftener you attend it, the better you will like it, and the more edified you will find yourselves by it. And therefore do not satisfy yourselves with hearing it once a week only, if you have leisure and opportunity for doing it oftener. But for those whose circumstances or situation will not admit of a more frequent attendance, let them not fail however on any account of coming constantly to Church every Lord's day, on which due care is taken that every one shall have divine service performed within his reach, and each single householder is obliged by the express command of Almighty God to provide both himself and those belonging to him with sufficient leisure for the purpose. For this is one great end of the divine institution of the Sabbath, and the principal of those religious duties, which we are bound to observe on that day of rest and cessation from worldly business. Take care then,
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and beware of frivolous pleas and excuses for the omission of this so necessary duty; such as, that you have not time, or are not sufficiently clad, and the like. For what business can you possibly have, that is half so important to you, as that of preparing for eternity? Or what are all the external ornaments of Dress, compared to a mind richly furnished with the graces and virtues of the Gospel? Better were it by far to come in the meanest rags, than not to come at all; for God, whose judgment is more to be valued than Man's, looketh not at the outward appearance, but accepteth the heart that is devoted to his service, without distinction of poor or rich. Let us then, every one of us, resolve to let slip none of these opportunities and means of Christian Edifying, which are put into our hands, lest haply, if we neglect them now, we may one day or other wish we had done otherwise, when wishing will do us no good.

THIRDLY, If possible, come always at the beginning of divine service; otherwise you will certainly miss of something that would have been edifying to you; and perhaps of that, which at that time might have done you more good than all the rest. Neither will you lose the benefit only of part of it, but in some measure of the whole too; all the parts of it being linked together in so excellent a manner and method, that they influence and assist each other. So that nothing can be omitted either by Minister or People, but the whole will suffer by it, and lose something of that virtue and efficacy, which otherwise would be found in it.

FOURTHLY, All the while you are in God's house, carry yourselves as in his special presence, and suitably to the work you are about; standing

while you praise God, and kneeling when you pray unto him, as our Church hath directed you. For though these things may seem but little in themselves, yet are they of great consequence, both to our worshipping of God aright, and to our being edified by what we do, as has been before shewn.

LASTLY, Take special care all along to keep your minds intent upon the matter in hand; when you confess your sins to God, do it with an hearty and sincere repentance for all the errors of your life past. When the Absolution is pronounced, receive it with a firm and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour. When you repeat or sing the *Hymns* or *Psalms*, raise up your spirits as high as you can to join with those above in praising and magnifying the eternal God. When the word of God is read, hearken diligently unto it, and consider seriously what he that hath made you saith to you, and requires of you; and resolve, by his blessing, to believe and act accordingly. And all the while that you are upon your knees, putting up your petitions to the most high God, let your whole souls be employed in it, earnestly desiring the good things you pray for at his gracious hands, and humbly confiding on his faithful promises for the granting of them. By this means you will perform a reasonable service unto God, and by consequence, that which will be very acceptable unto him, and as profitable and edifying to yourselves. Whereas they that do not observe this rule, cannot properly be said to pray or serve God at all. And therefore it is no wonder that they come to Church, and hear the Common Prayer read, and yet are no way edified by it. Indeed it is impossible they should: forasmuch as all the benefit and edification we can possibly receive from our devotions

depends very much upon the due intention of our minds in the performance of them ; to which, as has been observed, both a Form of Prayer in general, and our Form in particular, is a very great help.

Do but observe these plain and necessary Rules in using the *Common-Prayer*, (without which you cannot truly be said to use, but rather to abuse it) and you will soon find the truth of what has been said concerning it, that *all things are done in it to edifying* ; and that it would prove a most powerful and efficacious means to render us pious and holy, loyal and virtuous, just and charitable, and thereby acceptable unto God ; which indeed is the very end and essence of all true Religion. For by our constant worshipping of Almighty God in so solemn and devout a manner as this, our hearts would be overawed with so great a fear of his divine Majesty, that we should never dare willingly to offend him. Our minds would be filled and impressed with such a sense of his power and sovereignty, that we should honour and reverence it in those whom he hath set over us. Our whole souls would be raised so much above the world and its temptations, that we should not do an ill act for the sake of gaining even the whole of it to ourselves. In short, we should be every day more and more edified in Faith, in Love, in Humility, in Self-denial, in Temperance, in Patience, and in all true grace and virtue ; and we should so proceed from strength to strength, and from one degree of spiritual holiness and excellence unto another, that at length we should arrive at perfection of happiness and glory in the highest heavens, where eternity itself would be employed by us in adoring and praising the most high and blessed Lord God ; as for all other his

mercies vouchsafed unto us, so in a particular manner for his having made us members of such a true and Apostolical Church, wherein *all things are done to edifying.*

WHICH God of his infinite mercy grant that we may all do through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.