

**REVISION OF THE LITURGY: FIVE
DISCOURSES. I. ABSOLUTION. II.
REGENERATION. III.
ATHANASIAN CREED. IV. BURIAL
SERVICE. V. HOLY ORDERS**

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CHARLES JOHN VAUGHAN

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FIVE DISCOURSES.

I. ABSOLUTION. II. REGENERATION.
III. ATHANASIAN CREED. IV. BURIAL SERVICE.
V. HOLY ORDERS.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION.

BY

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TO MY ABSENT FRIEND,
GEORGE EDWARD,
BISHOP OF CALCUTTA.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT has been the apparent result of all recent efforts in Parliament for the revision of our Liturgy, to postpone rather than to advance the object which they have had in view. It was so in 1840: it has been so again in 1860. The difficulties of revision are made more apparent, and its advantages more problematical, by every such discussion.

The Church of England has practically lost its machinery for self-modification. To deal conclusively with questions of doctrine or even of ritual, Convocation has no power, and Parliament little fitness. The one represents but a part of the Church—but a part even of the Clergy—even of the Clergy of one Province; the other includes many who are not of the Church at all. If the demand for change could be made as precise as it is now vague, and as harmonious as it is now dis-

cordant, there would still remain the questions, to whom is it to be addressed, and where resides, if not the power, yet the right, to grant it or to refuse?

Nor is it only that the question is beset with practical difficulties. The difficulties of the process are great: but the dangers of the result, whatever it be, would be far greater.

A revision once effected must give a ten-fold stringency to subscription. It could no longer be pleaded then, as it may justly be pleaded now, that ancient forms of worship, and ancient statements of doctrine, must necessarily contain expressions not wholly suitable to modern feeling, and that the difficulty of alteration may reasonably excuse some latitude of individual interpretation. Whatever remains after revision must be taken as it stands, and interpreted, at least for a generation or two, according to its grammatical sense. If this be so, where, after a revision made under present circumstances, would be our national Church?

It is no small blessing, in the eyes of all

but party theologians, that there should be room within the pale of a common worship for men of various opinions. It may even be regarded as one instance of God's Providence over our Church of England as at present constituted, that we have Articles and Formularies drawn from very various sources, and incapable perhaps in some points of a perfectly logical coherence. It is thus that excellent men, of conflicting doctrinal notions on many topics of secondary and on some of primary importance, have been enabled to worship together, and even to minister together, in a common Church and at a common altar. It is thus too that reasonable men have been practically warned against intolerance towards each other, because each felt that, if he had something with him, he had also something against him; if the Articles spoke his language, the Liturgy here and there might seem to speak the language of his opponent; and he who would claim indulgence in reference to the one, must give that indulgence in reference to the other.