

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

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ON almost any morning just before the nine o'clock hour for university lectures in the University of Göttingen, about the year 1880, there might have been seen making his way along the wall, from the Albani Gate to the Auditorium, a striking personality. Rather short and stout, he moved with a brisk, active step, alert to every impression from without. His face revealed a character in which strength predominated. Good-natured and frank in expression, bluff and hearty in address, he was imperious in his manner, and his full lips and mobile mouth suggested the capacity of sudden anger and blunt utterance, of which further acquaintance would have undoubtedly soon afforded illustrations. If the observer had followed him to the lecture-room, he would have found him earnest, rapid in his delivery, polemic in his tone, now illuminating the theme with a touch of humor, often expressing scorn of something low or contemptible, not always immediately intelligible, but upon the whole possessing an eminent power of instructive discourse, and animated by the highest intellectual and ethical ideals. In his study at home, whither an inquiring student might follow him, the reception would depend something upon the humor of the moment, but more upon the idea of the purpose of the visitor which would formulate itself, generally with too much rapidity, in his mind. If he thought him candid, docile and accessible to the new ideas which the teacher had to give, he would be suggestive, kind and helpful; but one must be

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III.

THE LITURGICAL POSITION OF THE PRESBY- TERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

IN these days there are many voices raised to advocate improvement in the public worship of the Presbyterian Church. Among so many we may detect, no doubt, a variance in the definition of the precise measure of improvement desired; but there seems also to be a common consent as to the main ends which are sought. Among these are, in the words of a recent writer,* “to relieve our acts of worship of the evils of individualism,” and to give to our worship “the historic quality,” the realization of our oneness with the Christian Church of all the centuries, which is best attained “by the expression of our own religious life in great forms which belong to all the branches of the Church, and all, or nearly all, its periods.” Among them also are “such a modification of the Presbyterian cultus as shall give the people” a larger “share in the devotional services of the sanctuary,”† and the introduction of “some judicious and satisfactory liturgical forms,” ‡ and, also, “the revival of the old Church year.”§

It is not the writer's present purpose to add his voice to those others which are advocating the improvement of our worship. His purpose is rather to make some historical inquiries that bear upon the legitimacy of the movement. Just because there is plainly perceptible an increase in the volume of the advocacy and a deepening in the note of its insistence, it becomes the more important to inquire what is, historically and constitutionally, the liturgical ¶ position of the Church; and whether or not this litur-

* Prof. John DeWitt, D.D., in *The Evangelist*, for August 20, 1896.

† Prof. Samuel M. Hopkins, D.D., in *The Presbyterian Review*, January, 1882, p. 40.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

§ The Rev. Roswell D. Hitehoeck, D.D., LL.D., in *The Proceedings of the Second General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance* (Philadelphia: N. D., 8vo), p. 75.

¶ The word is used in its largest sense, as pertaining to the conduct of public worship. Where it is used in a narrower sense (hereafter explained), the word has been enclosed in quotation marks to avoid confusion.

gical movement is in any way inconsistent with entire loyalty to that position; and whether the fulfillment of the ends aimed at would be subversive in any degree either of the Church's Constitution or of its liturgical position.

It may be frankly admitted that all proposals for the improvement of our worship must submit themselves to such a test. On the other hand, it is admissible to enter a quiet protest against the assumption that these particular proposals do not stand the test. There is, perhaps, a disposition here and there to treat this whole matter of the improvement of our worship as though it were quite a novel, not to say revolutionary, proposal, something alien, apart from the trend of our Church's history, and foreign also to her spirit. Such an attitude appears to find its support in a theory of the liturgical history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, which, were it to be written down, would be something like this: "The American Church inherited from the Westminster Assembly a Directory for Worship, at once so simple, so Scriptural, so authoritative, that it has stood through two centuries as the satisfying expression of her ideals of worship, and her unflinching guide in its conduct. Only now, at so late a day, has arisen a disposition to question these ideals and to introduce the spirit of change into her practice." And it would follow therefrom that the liturgical position of our Church is to be ascertained by an examination of the Westminster Directory. This theory of her liturgical history finds its strength in the fact that it is *not* written down, but exists rather with the vague outlines of a something taken for granted and generally understood among us. It has the force of tradition; it has also the charm of simplicity. But if once it were written down, it would become apparent that it has the added charm which the late Mr. Freeman used to attribute to the historical writings of Mr. Froude, in that it puts clearly before us one way in which we are quite assured things did not happen. If we are to get at the real liturgical position of the Church we must do so by leaving theories aside, by coming to the study of the way in which things did happen. The matters with which we have to deal are the actual relations in which the Church stood to the Westminster Directory, the manner and spirit of her dealings with that document, and with the whole matter of worship, down to the time of establishing her own liturgical Constitution, and especially with that Constitution itself as it stands in the American Directory for Worship. In a constitutional Church, its liturgical position is that of its Constitution. And back of the Constitution stands the liturgical history which led up to its adoption: and in the Constitution stands revealed the spirit of the

men who made it. To trace this history, to enter into this spirit, to study this Constitution, is the purpose of this article.

Colonial Presbyterianism apparently began its career as a Church without a written creed or a written constitution.* And there were those within her ranks who considered that condition of things to be both apostolic in principle and prudent in practice, and who greatly desired that it might continue.† But that was not to be; and in 1729 the Synod passed the Adopting Act, in which the Westminster Confession and Catechisms were formally adopted as the Confession of the Church's faith. It is to be noted that the Adopting Act did not cover the Directory for Worship, Discipline and Government. This appears from the language of the Act itself. It appears also from the fact that within a few days of the event, a motion became necessary to discover "the Synod's judgment about the Directory." Thereupon Synod "gave their sense of that matter in the following words,‡ viz.:

"The Synod do unanimously acknowledge and declare, that they judge the directory for worship, discipline, and government of the church commonly annexed to the Westminster Confession, to be agreeable in substance to the word of God, and founded thereupon, and therefore do earnestly recommend the same to all their members, to be by them observed as near as circumstances will allow, and Christian prudenee direct."

This deliverance bears on its face the evidences of careful study and of cautious expression. It breathes at once the spirit of approval of the principles of the Westminster Directory, and the spirit of independence also in matters of worship and government, in view of the peculiar circumstances of the Colonial Church; and it maintains the two in an even balance with calm decision. There are, no doubt, more places than one in the minutes of Synod where reference is made to this deliverance as though Synod had adopted the Directory as part of the Constitution. And from "The Form of Installation" used by the Rev. Samuel Davies in the year 1752, it would appear that, in his judgment, at least, the

* For the evidence, see *A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church, from its Origin in America to the Present Time, with Notes and Documents*, by the Rev. Samuel J. Baird (Philadelphia, 1856, 8vo), p. 1.

† See *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* by Charles Hodge, D.D. (Philadelphia, N. D., 8vo), Part i, pp. 141-145, where is quoted a letter from Mr. Andrews: "I think all the Scotch are on one side, and all the English and Welsh on the other, to a man," and also the objections of President Dickinson to the adoption of the Westminster Standards. See also *Historical Discourses, Relating to the First Presbyterian Church in Newark*, by Jonathan F. Stearns, D.D. (Newark, 1853, 8vo), pp. 133-138.

‡ *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1841, 8vo), p. 93.

Directory was also "adopted" by candidates at their ordination to the ministry. His language is as follows :*

"Do you solemnly promise . . . that you will . . . make the SACRED SCRIPTURES your only *infallible* and *supreme* Rule, as they are substantially explained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Sum of saving Knowledge, and Directory*, which you adopted at your Ordination; and in the *Articles of the Church of England*, which you have subscribed; excepting those excepted in the *Act of Toleration*?"

But this reference to the "adoption" of the Directory in Mr. Davies's ample catalogue, as well as the references to its Synodical adoption in the later minutes of that body, must obviously be interpreted by the deliverance itself, upon which they are based and which they could not amend. If indeed that deliverance was an adoption by the Synod of the Directory as a part of the Constitution of the Church, then the manner and form of such adoption were probably unique in the annals of Constitution making. Even with the most liberal allowances of informality to ecclesiastical proceedings, how can the judgment that a certain document is "agreeable in substance to the word of God," and a recommendation of the same to all members, to be by them observed "as near as circumstances will allow, and Christian prudence direct"—how can such action be construed as the adoption of that document as part of the Constitution of the Church? What was the "substance" of the Directory, and how much or how little of it became of the Constitution? Probably Dr. Charles Hodge's language is even too guarded :†

"The 'substance' of the Directory is of course its Presbyterianism. What is not substantial about it, is its numerous directions, having reference in many cases either to unimportant, or to local and temporary circumstances. A stricter adoption of the Westminster Directory in this country was impossible."

It seems plain that the Directory for Worship was not made a part of the written Constitution of the Church. It stood before the churches simply as approved for substance, and recommended to be applied in so far as it might prove to be expedient and convenient; and of that pastors and churches were to be the judge.

Such, then, was the liturgical position of the Church under the Adopting Act, a position whose strength or whose weakness, as that may be, must be measured by its room for freedom, its lack of restraint, rather than by its provision for uniformity or orderli-

* *A Sermon, Preached at the Installation of the Revd. Mr. John Todd, A.B. into the Pastoral Charge of the Presbyterian Congregation, in and about the upper Part of Hanover County, in Virginia, Nov. 12, 1752 With an Appendix, Containing the Form of Installation, &c.* Published at the Desire of the Hearers, by S. Davies, V.D.M. (Glasgow, 1754, 18mo), p. 94.

† *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church*, etc., Part i, p. 147.

ness. It would be difficult, certainly, within the bounds of anything which might properly be called Presbyterianism, to deal with the subject of liturgies in a spirit more free and unconstrained. The way was obviously open for a large degree of individualism in the conduct of public worship, and for such changes or developments therein as might recommend themselves to the churches or to any individual church.

How open was the way, and how ready the churches were to take it, was indeed amply demonstrated in the history of the succeeding years, in which, after a sharp contest, the Church separated itself from the Calvinistic position and the Presbyterian practice in the great matter of public praise.

The people's share in the Church's praise had been won for them at the Reformation; but here, as at so many points, the Lutheran and Calvinistic Reformers had parted company. The Lutheran encouraged the use of hymns in the nature of folk-songs, and adopted also versions of the ancient Latin hymns; the Calvinistic turned to the inspired songs of the Holy Scriptures as the only proper subject-matter of praise. All the Calvinistic churches were Psalm singers, and the immigrants from various lands who made up Colonial Presbyterianism brought with them the Psalm-books they had used at home, and here also continued their use. The Westminster Assembly had given its attention to the subject of Psalmody, made provision in the Directory for the singing of Psalms by the people, adopted the version of Francis Rous, and authorized its use. After four years, in which that version had been elaborately revised, it was adopted in its new form by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and published in 1650 as the only authorized Psalmody of that Church. Owing to Scotch-Irish influences, this Scottish version, no doubt, was that most familiar to Colonial Presbyterians, and, by force of habit and association, had even gained for itself a position of authority which it did not hold by any formal prescription. Meantime, however, the popular taste and feeling, stimulated by the influences of the Great Awakening,* was outgrowing the restrictions of the proper subject-matter of praise; and a strong disposition began to manifest itself in the churches to worship God in the warmer and more evangelical strains which the great Dr. Watts had placed at the service of the Independents. His "The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian State and Worship," was published in London in 1719.

* See MS. Journal quoted in *American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History*, by Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D. (New York, 1885, 8vo), p. 281.

By 1729 it had reached the seventh edition, and in that year was reprinted (again in 1740 and 1741) by Benjamin Franklin at Philadelphia. It is not fair to say that the Imitations earned a welcome in the Colonial churches also, because eighteenth-century taste preferred their smoother measures to the rugged strength of the Scottish Psalter. We may be touched rather even now to think what these Imitations must have been to men and women prohibited all their lives from speaking the name of Christ in praise.

It is difficult to say when and where the new measures were first introduced into Church worship among us; the impulse very likely came with those moving westward from the Congregational churches of New England, or perhaps from the example of Baptist churches here and there. But in 1752, for the first time, we are made to realize how serious the innovation was, and the intense opposition it excited. The church in New York was the scene of the struggle; and there Providence had ventured to ally a band of Scotch-Irish with a band of New England Puritans in church fellowship; and Christian grace was applying itself to its opportunity with only a moderate zeal. The Session introduced Watts's Imitations into its services. The Scotch element resisted; the Puritan persisted; and upon complaint the matter came before the Synod of New York in 1752. It was referred to a committee, with power "to recommend Dr. Watts's version, if upon observation of circumstances they think it proper."* The committee reported in the following year that they had authorized the continuance of the use of Dr. Watts's version, in which they were sustained by Synod.† The Scotch element withdrew from the New York congregation, and formed the "Scotch Church," wherein the strains of Watts might offend neither their ears nor their consciences.

So began the great contest in regard to the proper subject-matter of praise. The principle involved was indeed settled at this first encounter. For both sides of the controversy must have seen plainly that Dr. Watts's Imitations could not in any proper sense be called a version of the Psalter. Indeed their author had shown that with needless emphasis in the Preface to his book. They professed only to be imitations of the Psalms, expressed in *New Testament* language, and if once they were admitted to church use, then the days, not only of the authorized version, but of prescribed Psalm singing itself, were over. This first decision really settled the matter, and in view of the liturgical position of the Church, it is difficult to see how the decision could have been

* *Records*, etc., p. 249.

† *Records*, etc., p. 259.

other than it was. If Watts's Imitations were *not* a version of the Psalter, all Presbyterian and Calvinistic precedents were on the side of the conservatives, as has been shown. In that case the question to be decided was whether the singing of none other than the songs of Scripture was of the essence of Presbyterianism; but that question the Colonial Church had already decided to its own satisfaction by the adoption of a Constitution in which prescribed Psalm singing had no part. It would have required not a deliverance, but a constitutional amendment, to have fulfilled the wishes of the Psalm singers. Or if Watts's Imitations *were* but a new version of the Psalms, then the only authority the conservatives could rely on must have been the fact of the sole authorization of the Scottish Psalter by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Their position would be that the Colonial Church, as a branch of the Scotch, was still bound by that action of the mother Church. Undoubtedly there had been some such relation to the Church of Scotland at first,* and in some quarters there was not lacking a disposition to maintain it. But that such was no longer the Church's attitude in matters of government and worship was just what had been decided at the time of the Adopting Act of 1729. How completely independent the Church felt, not only of Scotland, but of Westminster itself, in matters liturgical, was indeed evidenced by this same Synod which authorized the use of Watts's Imitations. The Westminster Directory is explicit that prayer at the burial of the dead must be given over as superstitious. But now, in 1754, the Synod of New York approve a report as follows: †

“As to praying at the burial of the dead . . . the committee think it no just matter of offence, especially as it is frequently practiced by the Presbyterian ministers in this country, and the reasons for which the General Assembly (in the early times of reformation from popery) prohibited it, are now evidently ceased.”

Apart from Synod's quiet assurance in setting aside a prohibition no doubt thought of great importance by the Westminster Assembly, one is struck by the fact that many of the clergy had already set it aside in their own practice and of their own motions, and by the yet more suggestive fact that their practice is referred to as evidence of sufficient weight to offset the original Westminster prohibition. Before such a Synod, certainly, we should not expect a Scotch precedent as to a particular version of the Psalter to be decisive. So that, whichever view be taken of the character

* See *The Influence of the Scottish Church in Christendom, being the Baird Lecture for 1895*, by Henry Cowan, D.D. (London, 1896, 12mo), pp. 145-147, and the authorities there cited.

† *Records, etc.*, p. 259.

of Watts's Imitations, the decision of the Synod is a natural expression of the Church's position. The decision, however, was not accepted as final by those to whom it was unwelcome. Resistance was made at many points to the introduction of Watts into the churches, and a determined and prolonged controversy ensued, neither side of which was lacking in zeal. The earnestness of the debate, unhappily excited into bitterness, seems still to palpitate in the dry records, and in the now scarce pamphlets which were weapons in the fray, still more in misunderstandings and separations and schisms yet unhealed, which are the living witness of that controversy. The Church, however, never retraced its steps, and repeated appeals to Synod were all in vain. The united Synod of New York and Philadelphia again and again confirmed the position of that of New York,* and left nothing for the conservatives but the right of secession and the consolation of more "pamphlets." How soon the introduction into the churches of hymns, as distinguished from versions and imitations of Psalms, followed, can hardly be determined. Watts's hymns, no doubt, did not wait very long to share the welcome of his Imitations which prepared the way for them, but the formal authorization of hymns was not until 1788, when the right to sing hymns was recognized in the new Constitution of the Church. And so was made formally complete the victory substantially gained in 1753.

Enjoying as we do the inestimable treasure of our Christian hymnody, we readily forget that the right to sing hymns was not something which our fathers inherited from the old country, but a liberty which they won for us on American soil. They won it in the face of all the traditions of Calvinism and the deliverances of the Assemblies of Westminster and of Scotland, in spite of most earnest and excited opposition of many within their ranks who erected the exclusive use of inspired songs in praise as an essential Church principle resting upon the very *ipse dixit* of God, at the cost of defections that took clergy and laity out of their fold, disrupted congregations, and even divided the House of God itself. Their victory marks an epoch in the history of Presbyterian worship. And it would seem as if the theory which treats the matter of the improvement of our Church's worship as something essentially novel, and even alien to her history, hardly constitutes an adequate celebration of their victory.

We have seen, then, the relation in which the Colonial Church stood to the Westminster Directory; how that she never adopted it as a part of her written Constitution, and only in a very qualified sense can be said to have adopted it at all, and how that

* *Records*, etc., pp. 331, 345, 448

the churches had successfully maintained before her highest tribunals their right to depart from that Directory in what seemed to many then, and seems to many now, the most important and distinctively Presbyterian feature of it, the confinement to the Psalms as the proper subject-matter of praise. Our next step is to trace that same free liturgical spirit manifested in the establishment of a Directory for Worship of her own.

In 1786 the Synod found itself confronted with the problem of reorganizing the Church upon a national basis, and of establishing its Constitution. To understand the spirit in which those engaged in that great undertaking prosecuted their work, it is necessary to remind ourselves of their situation. For years a very widespread dissatisfaction had been manifest with the government and methods of discipline in the Church. Since the close of the Revolutionary War, the Church had grown greatly in numbers and in the extent of territory in which the members resided. It became more and more difficult to accomplish a proper representation of so large an area in that body; and it was felt by some that too great power inhered in the centre, that Synod was disposed to exercise too great authority in matters of government, too great strictness in matters of discipline. Moreover, after a long struggle, the Colonies had freed themselves from the British yoke, and it was unseemly that the Church should continue its allegiance to the unchanged Westminster Standards, which on their very face were no longer adapted to the situation. The American feeling was in the air, and especially in the hearts of American Presbyterians, who had done so much to bring about the freedom of their country. Such feeling was only aggravated by the disposition still manifested in influential quarters to mould the American Church in Scotch forms, and to abide behind the authority of Scotch precedents. Constitution-making too was uppermost in the minds of all citizens. The time had come to make a nation: and the time had come to make a national Church. And the feeling which men brought to these enterprises, whether in Church or State, was what they expressed by "Liberty." It expressed a great deal: among other things, their purpose to try old precedents by new circumstances, to seek the things which were wise and prudent, rather than the things which were venerable for their own sakes. Our American fathers did not feel that they had inherited the British Constitution, nor did the fathers of American Presbyterianism feel bound and tied by all that was said at Westminster and done in the Church of Scotland. The Confession of Westminster had, after much opposition indeed, been already adopted by Synod, and now needed no revision, except as

touching civil things ; but upon the details of Church government, and upon the conduct of public worship, they held their own opinions. And now they were about to give effect to those opinions in the Constitution of the American Church.

The beginnings were made in 1786, when the Synod referred the Book of Discipline and Government to a committee, "to digest such a system as they shall think to be accommodated to the state of the Presbyterian Church in America," and to distribute a draught of their plan to the several Presbyteries for consideration and report.* In 1787 this draught was considered and amended, and Synod appointed Dr. Rodgers, Dr. McWhorter, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Wilson, Jr., "a committee to have a thousand copies thereof printed as now amended, and to distribute them among the Presbyteries."† The Synod also appointed the same committee "to revise the Westminster Directory for public worship, and to have it, when thus revised, printed, together with the draught, for consideration."‡ The committee was prompt in going to press ; the revised draught, together with their proposed Directory for Worship, appearing that same year in a 12mo pamphlet of 143 pages, of which a few copies still survive.§ The Directory begins at p. 49 of the pamphlet, and ends with p. 143, and has a sub-title-page of its own, as follows : "The Directory, for the Public Worship of God, of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America ; As revised by the Committee of Synod appointed for that Purpose. *Let all things be done decently and in order.* 1 Cor. xiv. 40."

Although destined to undergo much revision at the hands of Synod, this proposed Directory yet remains a document by no means without interest and value: this partly for its own sake, partly also as an indication of what was in the minds of some of the best men of the Church regarding its worship, and most of all for its marked influence in moulding the final form of the American Directory. The earlier pages are occupied by a Preface, and as one reads it, he becomes aware that he has before him a very earnest practical attempt to remedy what is disclosed as a serious condition of things in the public worship of the Church.

"This Church firmly believes," so it affirms, "that her doctrines, and modes of worship, are most agreeable to the Word of God ; to the Practice of the Primitive Church in the three first centuries ; and to the best reformed Churches. . . . yet these are far from being perfect. This imperfection,

* *Records*, p. 525.

† *Records*, p. 539.

‡ *Records*, p. 539.

§ *A Draught of the Form of the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Proposed, by the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, for the consideration of the Presbyteries and Churches under their care. New York: Printed by S. and J. Loudon, No. 5, Water Street. MDCCLXXXVII. 12mo, pp. 143.

however, is not so much in her constitution, as in carrying her government, and modes of worship into effect. . . . One great and apparent imperfection, attending the public worship of this Church . . . (for which we have great reason to be deeply humbled before God) is the manifest deficiency of solemn gravity, holy reverence, and a devotional spirit, in the time of performing divine service. It is absolutely necessary that something be done to revive the spirit and appearance of devotion. Where there is real devotion, there the appearance of it will be. This, we doubt not, is the case with a number, through divine grace, in all our Congregations. It is readily granted, that there may be the appearance, without the spirit of devotion; but there cannot be the spirit, without the appearance: and did we attend more to the appearance, it might have a happy tendency to awaken and revive a devotional spirit."

Many causes are cited which "seem to contribute to banish the appearance of devotion from our worshipping Assemblies:

"I. Persons going out and in, during the progress of worship. . . .

"II. That many do not join in singing the praises of God. . . .

"III. There is a want of devotion, awfully apparent in our Congregations, during the time of public prayer. Some are gazing about, some turning their back to the Minister, and others putting themselves into different attitudes of ease; and but few, either are in the posture, or have the appearance of devotion. . . .

"IV. As the reading of the holy Scriptures is a very important part of divine worship, it is much to be lamented, that this should be neglected in any of our Congregations. Where it has not been used, it should be introduced. . . . In order to give solemnity to this part of our worship . . . it would be decent and not improper for the whole Congregation to stand up during the reading of the Scriptures; as was the usage under the Old Testament dispensation, and among the primitive Christians."

V. Some things are referred to as amiss during the preaching of the sermon.

The Preface concludes with a prayer which is the best exponent of the spirit in which the committee had done its work, and of the end aimed at in their Directory: "Now may God, of his infinite mercy, grant, that solemn reverence, and a devotional spirit, may be revived and flourish, in all our Churches, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

The whole tone of this Preface suggests that it was not intended to expose the failings of the Church so much as to prepare the minds of the clergy, and especially of the members of Synod, for the changes put forth in the Directory itself in the hope of correcting those failings. The most striking of these changes no doubt is the somewhat elaborate provision of liturgical forms of prayer replacing the directions for the conduct of prayer contained in the Westminster Directory. To quote the summary of Dr. Samuel J. Baird:*

"It is very full in liturgical forms and directions. In addition to the substance of what is retained in the Directory for Worship at present in use, it contained Forms of Prayer for the Invocation, before Sermon, before and after

* *A Collection of the Acts, etc.*, p. 9.

Baptism, at the Lord's Table, upon exercising Discipline, at the Solemnization of Marriage, in the Sick-room, at Ordinations, and nine prayers for the family."

But what proved in the event to be more important than these liturgical forms, because more influential, was the new emphasis which throughout this proposed Directory was put upon the service as distinguished from the sermon. This appears throughout the document, but sounds in unmistakable terms in its article "Of the Preaching of the Word."

"As one primary design, of the public ordinances of the Sabbath, is, to pay acts of social homage to the most high God, the Minister is to be careful not to make his sermons too long, so as to interfere therewith:" and again, the minister "is particularly to guard against shortening the *devotional and more important parts of the service*, to make way for long discourses."

This proposed Directory came before the Synod of 1788, where its consideration seems to have occupied the greater part of two days. So far as the forms of prayer contained in it are concerned, it may be said at once that they were not adopted by Synod. In the language of the minutes,* "that part of the draught which respects public prayer, and prayers to be used on other occasions," was referred to a committee to revise "and to prepare it for printing with the Constitution." This language seems to mean that Synod expressed a preference for the plan of a more general outline of the several prayers rather than the printing of full forms, and that they entrusted the committee with the actual embodiment of their views in the proper sections of the Directory. Dr. Ashbel Green gives the following account of the matter:†

"The draught of 1787, which formed the basis of discussion that issued in adopting the Constitution, contained, in the Directory for the worship of God, a number of forms of prayer. A question was raised, whether those forms should stand as they appeared in the draught, or whether the several parts and subjects of prayer should be stated *in thesi*, or in a doctrinal form. The latter method was carried by a majority; but I voted for the retention of the forms, assigning for reason, that an exemplification of any matter of instruction, I considered as the best method of making it intelligible and plain. The idea of a confinement to forms of any description was entertained by no one."

It need not, perhaps, be a source of regret to any, of whatever views in regard to liturgical forms, that these particular ones were not incorporated in the Constitution of the Church. Although excellent in spirit, and an advance, no doubt, beyond the average of pulpit prayers, then or now, they yet lack that perfection of structure and expression which alone could render them satisfying either as models of public prayer, or as component parts of a lit-

* *Records*, etc., p. 547.

† *The Life of Ashbel Green*, V. D. M., written by himself, etc. Prepared for the press by Joseph H. Jones (New York, 1849, 8vo), p. 184

urgy. The real work which the committee did was not in their proposal of these liturgical forms, but rather in the higher conception of worship embodied in their draught, and which remained in it as finally revised and adopted by Synod. The record of this adoption is as follows :*

“The Synod, having now revised and corrected the draught of a directory for worship, did approve and ratify the same, and do hereby appoint the said directory, as now amended, to be the directory for the worship of God in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.”

While the appointment of the committee had been to the end of revising the Westminster Directory, it will be noticed that in the language of the act of adoption there is apparently an abandonment of such intention. The document discussed and acted upon is referred to simply as “the draught of a directory for worship,” and not as the Westminster Directory as revised, nor even is it said (as quoted by Dr. Charles Hodge, p. 414) that Synod “revised and corrected *the* Directory for Worship.” The Synod was doubtless well aware that the document they adopted was not the Westminster Directory, and could hardly properly be called a revision of it. It was rather what they called it, *a* Directory for the American Church, laid out upon the general lines of the old Directory, and using its materials frankly, and yet at the same time dealing with the whole subject and with its details in a quite free way : a very different document from the old Directory, and that difference not merely a difference to be observed in its letter and arrangement, but deeper, to be traced in a very marked change in the spirit pervading both its conception and execution.

The very marked distinction between this American Directory and that of Westminster seems even yet hardly to have been brought out. Certainly it is not generally understood, and not uncommonly references are made to the Westminster Directory under the assumption that it is part of the Constitution of the American Church. There can be no question at all of the altered aspect of the American document. But while the fact and the extent of the changes are obvious enough, there does not seem to be any single phrase which will give a name to the spirit in which those changes were made by the Synod, nor any one point of view from which the changes themselves can be understood. If we say that the changes show a disposition to open the way for a return to the liturgical usages of the historic Church, we are met by other changes which show rather a disposition to let each individual take whatever direction he may choose ; and if we say that the changes show merely a desire for a larger individual liberty,

* *Records, etc.*, p. 547.

we are met not only by these new relations to historic usages, but also by a clear purpose to exalt the liturgical parts of the service as against the homiletical, and to clothe them with becoming propriety, order and reverence; to protest even against such a use of personal freedom as should interfere with such purpose.

The fact seems to be that in the making of the new Directory, two spirits, generally accounted antagonistic, were jointly and even harmoniously at work. The spirit which exalts liturgics and is best described as "liturgical," and (perhaps in the very same minds) the spirit of "liberty," the American unwillingness to be made subject to the restraint of regulations. And the joint product of these two spirits can probably best be understood when studied not so much as the witness of either spirit as it is somewhat in the nature of a compromise between the workings of both. If the facts set forth in the Preface to the draught of the proposed Directory were true, as doubtless they were, it was impossible that the study of them should not make a deep impression upon a body of serious-minded clergy. Things were radically wrong in the conduct of their congregations at public worship, and back of their conduct, in the thoughts and feelings with which they regarded its meaning, its responsibilities and privileges. It was impossible that the clergy had no share in abuses so lamentable and widespread as that Preface disclosed, and the new Directory remains as the evidence of their recognition of a new and loftier conception of what public worship is and what it demands, and of their own allegiance to that higher ideal. But at the same time the Directory also discloses the marks of that impatience of restraint, that unwillingness either to bind or to be bound by rules and rubrics, which was no doubt especially characteristic of their time and surroundings, but which still to a great degree characterizes the spirit of American Presbyterianism. The two resulting classes of changes in the Directory it will be most convenient to set down side by side, rather than to undertake the office of reconciliation between them.

I. THE CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION OF A RETURN TO THE LITURGICAL IDEALS AND USAGES OF THE HISTORIC CHURCH.

1. *The refusal by the American Synod to take up the Westminster attitude of opposition to the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England.* This was accomplished by the omission from the American Directory of the Preface to that of Westminster.

The Preface to the Westminster Directory is one of its most striking features; and indeed, out of the thirty-five pages of the original (in the reprint of B. Franklin, Philadelphia, 1745), consid-

crably over three pages (nearly one-tenth of the whole) are occupied by the Preface. This Preface reads at first sight as though it were intended to vindicate the publication of a Directory by casting contempt upon the use of all liturgical forms; but the attack was in reality confined to the Book of Common Prayer and Ceremonies of the Church of England. The Scotch divines, at whose insistence the Preface was made part of the Directory, did not intend to reflect upon their own Book of Common Order, when insisting upon their neighbors' giving up their Book of Common Prayer. Their grievance was not that Reformed England worshiped God with a liturgy so much as that England's archbishop had attempted to force that liturgy upon Scotland. When some of the English divines objected to the stern condemnation of the Prayer Book in the Preface, Gillespie told them that the honor of his country would not be satisfied with less, and that its ceremonies were not, like those of the law, to be buried with honor, "but with the burial of the uncircumcised."* Certainly harsher words were never spoken at a funeral, before or since.

'Long and sad experience had proved the Prayer Book an offense: its many unprofitable and burdensome Ceremonies had occasioned much Mischief: the use of it had proved to the great hindrance of the Preaching of the Word: the Reading of Common Prayer had been made no better than an Idol by many ignorant and superstitious people. It had come to pass that the Liturgy had been a great means to make and increase an idle and unedifying Ministry; and for reasons such as these must in the needed process of further Reformation be wholly laid aside.'

It is very suggestive of the changed atmosphere of the American Church that all this Preface, with its charges, its statements and its implications, should be completely dropped from all consideration in the framing of a Directory by the Synod. There is no Preface to the American Directory. But in the Preface to the committee's proposed Directory, kindly allusions had been made to cordial relations with the Protestant Episcopal Church, and Presbyterians were counseled to worship with that Church (among others) in places where their own Church had established no services. The committee's Preface apparently was intended only for temporary use, but even so it sets up a contrast with the Preface of the Westminster Directory as complete as could well be, short of a formal approval of the Book of Common Prayer. What the committee's Preface really expressed was a kindly feeling of fellowship between struggling churches in a new land; and what the omission by Synod of the Westminster Preface from the American Directory expressed was a refusal of old issues which in the heart of them were rather political than liturgical.

* *The Westminster Assembly; Its History and Standards*, by Alexander F. Mitchell, D.D. (London, 1883, 12mo), p. 227.

2. *The opening of the way for the observance of the festival days of the Christian year.*

As connected in the minds of the Westminster divines with the rites and ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer, and sharing a common condemnation with it, was the Christian year.

The Westminster Directory had "An Appendix" as well as a Preface: "An Appendix Touching Days and Places for Publick Worship." It began with a declaration, repeated in the American Directory, that no day is commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the Gospel, but the Lord's Day. And then immediately followed this trenchant deliverance: "Festival days, vulgarly called Holy days, having no Warrant in the Word of God, are not to be continued." This the American Synod completely ignored, and in doing so they left the observance of the Christian year among those things which are to be determined by circumstances and prudence. They did nothing to establish the Christian year in the American Church, but obviously they left the way open for its observance either by common consent or by the preference of individual churches. This fact is frankly recognized by a writer* who has more recently exhibited a strong personal anti-"liturgical" bias, as follows:

"The Westminster ostracism of festival days other than the Sabbath having been expunged from our Directory, it may be claimed with some force that the recognition of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, is not under ban, especially as the Calvinistic churches of Europe observe them. Certainly the minister who, on the Sabbath which custom has associated with the great facts of the Gospel history, specially adapts his services to them, will not be interfered with."

Less than this could hardly be said by way of a fair construction of the act of Synod in reversing the Westminster prohibition of the observance of festival days. And yet one is sometimes disposed to wonder if this position of the American Church in relation to the Christian year is generally clearly understood, or, if understood, whether it be included among the things that are to be remembered among us. For certainly things are said in current debate which seem hardly consistent with the fact that the rights of the churches in this matter were left to them under the Constitution.

3. *The removal of the Westminster prohibition of prayer at the burial of the dead.*

This significant change in the American Directory may also be put here in connection with the Prayer Book ceremonies just referred to. It has already appeared that the Westminster Direc-

* Dr. R. M. Patterson, in *The Presbyterian Review*, October, 1883, p. 756.

tory contained a positive prohibition of praying by the corpse before burial and at the grave. It was in the following language :

“ And because the Customs of Kneeling down, and Praying by, or towards the dead Corpse, and other such Usages, in the Place where it lies, before it be carried to Burial, are superstitious ; and for that, Praying, Reading and Singing, both in going to, and at the Grave, have been grossly abused, are no way beneficial to the Dead, and have proved many ways hurtful to the Living, therefore let all such Things be laid aside.”

We have already seen that the American clergy had ignored this prohibition in practice, and that Synod had referred to it as merely a relic of an earlier time. And now this changed view was recognized in the Constitution by dropping out all reference to the matter. The American usage of prayer and praise at the funeral and beside the grave has been established for so long that it may be doubted whether very many members of our own Church are aware that the prohibition of such things was ever a part of the Presbyterian Directory for Worship.

4. *The substitution of the “liturgical” conception of worship for the homiletical conception of it contained in the Westminster Directory.*

In reading the Westminster Directory, one gets the impression that public worship is to consist of preaching, with appendages. Everything is dominated by the sermon, and the whole document has a distinctly homiletical air. The directions for prayer are very full and elaborate, but even the prayer is somehow made to seem a prelude to the sermon. “ The minister *who is to preach*, is to endeavor to get his own *and his hearers’* hearts to be rightly affected with their sins,” etc. The two sections on prayer are severally entitled “ Of Public Prayer before the Sermon,” and “ Of Prayer after Sermon.” Between the two lies the section “ Of the Preaching of the Word,” which is a little treatise on homiletics, descending to the most minute particulars of sermon-making, and covering more than four pages, nearly one-eighth of the whole Directory. The spirit which would insert a code of directions for *making* sermons into a Directory for Public Worship, and give up so much space to it, is no doubt the homiletical spirit, even to an extreme development ; the worship is of that type which gives the most marked preponderance to the sermon, and subjects all beside to its domination.

In studying the draught of the proposed American Directory we have already seen how differently that document estimated the importance of the service as distinguished from the sermon. And the Directory itself maintains the higher view of the draught, and, if possible, adds to its emphasis. In the section “ Of Public Prayer,” the prayers are still distinguished as “ before and after

sermon," and yet the atmosphere is different. The treatise on homiletics has disappeared; the subject of preaching occupies much less space, both actually and relatively. And even now one is almost startled to find that this paragraph, mostly taken from the earlier draught, is a part of the Constitution of his Church :*

"As one primary design of public ordinances is to pay social acts of homage to the *most high God*, ministers ought to be careful, not to make their sermons so long as to interfere with, or exclude the more important duties of prayer and praise, but preserve a just proportion between the several parts of public Worship."

It is often said that the Reformed, or perhaps rather the Calvinistic, view of worship, is distinguished by the fact that it lays stress upon the sermon as the central and most important feature of worship, and makes all else subsidiary to it. The remark is one that invites examination, but if it be true as it stands, then candor seems to compel the admission that the framers of the American Directory have deliberately separated this Church from that Calvinistic position. And that they did it deliberately and not from impulse or inadvertence, appears from the fact that they had had a view of the relative importance of the various parts of worship, precisely similar to the one they adopted, laid before them for deliberate consideration in the committee's draught of the Directory. And certainly it is a notable deliverance, occupying ground far higher from a liturgical point of view than the Westminster position. No more compact summary of what may be called the "liturgical" view of worship as against the homiletical need be sought for. And the force and value of it lie in the fact that it is a part of the fundamental law of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. There are, beyond a doubt, those among us who sincerely prefer the homiletical attitude of the Westminster divines, but it must be plainly said that it is not they who seem most in accord with the Constitution of their Church in this matter. And if there be also among us others who maintain the "liturgical" view of worship, it must in fairness be said that such a "liturgical" school of thought finds its ample warrant in the Church's Constitution. In a Directory for Public Worship, surely the view taken of public worship is the thing that is fun-

* *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* containing the *Confession of Faith*, the *Catechisms*, the *Government and Discipline* and the *Directory for the Worship of God*, Ratified and adopted by the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, held at Philadelphia, May the 16th 1788, and continued by adjournments until the 28th of the same month. (*Philadelphia*: Printed by Thomas Bradford, In *Front-Street*, fourth Door below *Market-Street*, MDCCCLXXXIX, 16mo), p. 192. *Directory of Worship*, chap. vi, sec. iv.

damental, and those who look at worship from that same point of view have of all men the best right to claim that they occupy ground of vantage for maintaining loyalty to the Directory both in the spirit and in the letter.

II. THE CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION OF GREATER INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IN WORSHIP.

Coming, with so "liturgical" a conception of worship, to consider the parts of worship and the details of its conduct, we should naturally expect to find in the American Directory an increase in both the number and strictness of the rubrics, and a more decided "liturgical" cast in the order and arrangement of the parts. We do indeed find great freedom in recasting the Westminster materials, and changes at every point in ample abundance. But only occasionally, as in the introduction of the collection of offerings into the service as an act of worship, can we be said to find anything that could be called an advance in a "liturgical" direction. It must indeed be remembered that the other parts of the Sunday service are substantially the same in all Reformed Churches: prayer, praise, the reading of Scripture, the sermon, the benediction, the administration of the Sacraments. These were the parts of the Westminster service, and remained the parts of the American service. It must also be remembered that the Westminster service had an orderly progress, and a careful, detailed, and in some respects "liturgical," treatment of its own. It was indeed just in these respects that it suffered most change at American hands. For just here came in the American craving for "liberty," for freedom from the necessity of conformity to rubrics, to set rules, and a definitely prescribed procedure. The "liturgical" spirit of the Synod seems to have satisfied itself in the high ideal of worship it had set up, and with the uplift thereby given to the parts of service too little esteemed, too much neglected. But when it came to a question as to how this ideal was to be actually realized in an improved conduct of worship, then the spirit of liberty asserted itself in the minds of the clergy, and each one wished to have leave given to decide these questions of detail for himself, in view of his own tastes and equipment and surroundings. No action indeed was taken upon the question of the use of forms of prayer, beyond expressing a refusal to *confine* ministers to them (which seems to assume as beyond question their *right* to employ them), and the decision of the majority not to insert in the Directory the particular forms presented by the draught, or any others. Most earnest action was, however, taken against the offering of prayer that was extemporaneous in the sense of not being carefully

prepared beforehand, that the service of prayer "may be performed with dignity and propriety, as well as to the profit of those who join in it; and that [the minister] may not disgrace that important service by mean, irregular, or extravagant effusions."* But, on the whole, the changes made by Synod in the details of the conduct of worship were rather in the direction of individual freedom than in that of uniformity and order. And whether that direction be described as anti-"liturgical" or whether (more properly, apparently) it be described as toward liturgical liberty, the results remain what they are; and they stand in the Directory over against its "liturgical" conception of worship, the two not opposing one another, but abiding in the peace of compromise.

It may truly be said, and is rightly of course insisted upon, that the character of changes introduced into the conduct of worship, just because they were in the direction of individual freedom, did actually increase at every point the opportunity for liturgical enrichment and development of the service on the part of any inclined that way, just as it left equal opportunity for those of a contrary bias. But what seems to have been most in the minds of our fathers, and to have pleased them best, is not so much that the new Directory left an open way either in one direction or in the other specifically, as that it left to every man his personal liberty to choose which one of the two ways he should take.

Some of these changes of detail in the direction of freedom may properly be noted:

1. *A relaxation of the rubrical directions.*

In the ordinary Sunday service the Westminster Directory had provided that "the minister, after solemn Calling on [the Congregation] to the Worshipping of the Great Name of God, is to begin with Prayer." In the place of this, the American Directory suggests simply that "It seems very proper to begin the public worship of the Sanctuary by a short prayer."† The same relaxation of rubrical strictness appears a little further on in the service, in the directions for the fuller prayer. In the old Directory, the prayer is assigned to "the minister who is to preach," (he "is to endeavor to get his own and his Hearers Hearts to be rightly affected with their sins"); and the rubric is mandatory. For this the American Directory substitutes: "It is proper that before sermon there should be a full and comprehensive prayer."‡ The explanation of such changes would seem to lie in the fact that they were made necessary by the larger change now to be noticed.

* *Directory for Worship*, chap. v, sec. iv.

† Chap. v, sec. i.

‡ Chap. v, sec. ii.

2. *The giving over of a definite order of service, as provided for in the Westminster Directory.*

There is of course no doubt that the Westminster divines laid down a definite order for the several parts of worship in the Sunday service, and that they expected that order to be maintained. That order was as follows: 1. The solemn calling on the Congregation to the Worshipping of the Great Name of God. 2. The prayer of access. 3. The reading of Scripture. 4. The singing of the Psalm. 5. The comprehensive prayer. 6. The sermon. 7. The prayer after sermon. 8. The singing of a Psalm. 9. The solemn Blessing. Such then is the familiar order of service in the Westminster Directory. It is customary to speak of our Directory also as setting forth a like definite order of the acts of worship, and to lament current departures from it as unlawful. Dr. Briggs has drawn out the order of service in full;* Dr. Patterson has also done the same thing with less elaboration,† and the striking feature of a comparison of the two is that they do not agree. According to Dr. Briggs, the American order is as follows: 1. Prayer. 2. Reading of Scriptures. 3. Psalm or hymn. 4. Prayer. 5. Sermon. 6. Prayer. 7. Psalm. 8. Collection. 9. Benediction. According to Dr. Patterson the order of service is: 1. Prayer. 2. Psalm or hymn. 3. Prayer. 4. Hymn. 5. Sermon. 6. Prayer. 7. Psalm. 8. Collection. 9. Benediction. Dr. Briggs, that is to say, finds that in the American order, the reading of Scripture comes second, and Dr. Patterson finds that it is entirely omitted. Dr. Patterson finds provision for a hymn before sermon, and Dr. Briggs finds no such provision. What then are we to think of the perspicuity of this setting forth of an order of worship, when even students of the document cannot agree as to what the order is? It would seem that such an order, if intended, would be noted with precision, but in this case the lack of precision is especially marked. The facts seem to be these: The Directory sets forth (1) The propriety of beginning with prayer: and after (2) singing a Psalm or hymn, the propriety of (3) a comprehensive prayer. After (4) the sermon, (5) a prayer, and then (6) the singing of a psalm, (7) the collection, and (8) the benediction, seem to be enjoined rather than recommended. Now in all this there is no provision for the reading of the Scriptures. And yet it was the lamentable failure in certain quarters to read the Scriptures in the exercises of worship, to which the special attention of Synod had been called in the draught, and Chapter iii of the

* *Whither? A Theological Question for the Times*, by Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D. (New York, 1889, 8vo), p. 50.

† *The Presbyterian Review*, October, 1883, p. 754.

Directory itself had set down the reading of Scriptures as to occur "in each service." At what point in the service this was to be done cannot be gathered from the document; it was apparently left to the convenience of the officiating clergyman. Even the place of the section on the reading of the Scriptures has been changed, so as to remove it from the position it had held in the Westminster Directory immediately after the section on the opening prayer. In the American, the provisions for ordering the service are contained altogether in chaps. v and vi, while the chapter on the public reading of Scripture is set apart as chap. iii. We are compelled then to one of two conclusions: either the American Directory sets forth an order of service which makes no provision for publicly reading the Scriptures, or else it does not intend to set forth a definite order of service. That the latter is the true conclusion seems to be beyond all reasonable doubt; and that it should be so reveals the workings of that same conflict of ideas which has already been referred to as coloring the whole document. Just as Synod had exalted the "liturgical" ideal of worship and had then proceeded to weaken rather than to strengthen the actual liturgical provisions for worship; so here, they emphasized the public reading of Scripture by putting to the forefront of their Directory the section referring to it, and which called for such reading "in each service," and then proceeded to discuss the beginning and progress of the service without even suggesting a place in which such reading might fitly come; and yet more, as we shall see, they lessened the Westminster requirements as to the extent and continuity of the very reading which they had exalted.

3. *The allowance of a freer method in reading the Scriptures.*

The Westminster Directory dealt with the "public Reading of the Holy Scriptures" with considerable liturgical propriety. It recommended a lesson from each Testament, ordinarily to cover a chapter, and laid it down as "requisite that all the Canonical Books be read over in Order," and that "ordinarily where the Reading in either Testament ends on one Lord's Day, it is to begin the next." Not to discuss its further provisions, so much at least is in the direct line of liturgical propriety needing only a lectionary to give these provisions that air of staidness without which they were likely to fail. But the American Directory modifies them in the interests of personal freedom. Instead of a lesson from each Testament at every service, "one chapter" is the suggested minimum, nor is any reference whatever made to the orderly reading of all the Scriptures in rotation. It hardly admits of doubt that our fathers had no objection to lessons from each Testament

or to a reading that brought all parts of the Bible in turn before their people. They did, however, object to being told that even so much would be expected of them in the line of ordinary procedure. Perhaps the fact that the Westminster Directory seemed to go so far as to refuse to make any distinction between the parts of Scripture more or less suitable to public reading, encouraged Synod toward an opposite extreme.

4. *The cutting down of the materials for the prayers.*

It would seem from the minutes that the portion of the American Directory covering public prayer was the work, not of Synod, but of a committee of three appointed to revise so much of it, "and to prepare it for printing with the Constitution,"* Synod approving and ratifying their work before it had been begun. The committee may be presumed to have known what was in the minds of a majority of the members of Synod, and probably to have received their instructions. Be that as it may, the spirit of change, in its most sweeping form, dealt with the Westminster directions for prayer. The full and often excellent materials for prayer were put aside, and a mere framework set up in their stead; none the less orderly indeed, the parts of prayer even more precisely articulated, but no new materials taking the place of those offered either in the old Directory or in the draught of the new. As this part of the Directory is merely committee work, it is less significant than other parts; something akin to impatience indeed being the thing most obviously signified, an impatience possibly of the great lengths to which the prayers both of the old Directory and the proposed draught extended. The draught had, truly enough, contained an injunction to ministers to "be careful not to be tedious in this part of the service," but then that injunction occurred at the close of a prayer covering over twelve printed pages. Between prayers so exhaustive and the shocking irreverence of the congregations in prayer-time complained of in the Preface to the draught, there may have been some connection in the minds of this committee. Whatever their motive, they substituted an outline of the parts of prayer for the ample materials furnished by the old Directory. And whether of their own motion, or by instructions from Synod which are not of record, they omitted altogether the recommendation of the Westminster Directory that the Lord's Prayer should be used in the prayers of the Church. One would gladly believe that this omission was a mark of a committee's haste to get the document ready for the press; but more probably the matter was intentionally left among the things to be decided at "the discretion of the minister," without so much as a recommendation to mar his freedom.

* *Records*, p. 547.

The actual effect of the changes in the parts of the American Directory covering public prayer would seem to be no more than this, that they furnish ample justification to one who may choose, for whatever reason, to forego the public use of the Lord's Prayer; that they diminish the amount of materials offered to one in preparing for public prayer; and that they provide a clear order of topics of prayer for the guidance of the minister in framing, and the congregation in following, his prayers. But the one thing not done in the Directory is the lending of any countenance to prayers that are not duly prepared before being offered, and which depend upon the spontaneous impulse of the moment of delivery. Free prayer may be said to be encouraged within the limits of propriety in expression and orderliness in arrangement; written or printed forms of prayer are equally permissible within the same limits; prayers that are merely extemporaneous are guarded against in language as emphatic as could well be.*

5. *The provision for the singing of hymns.*

This change, momentous as it was, has been dwelt upon already at sufficient length, and needs only to be set down here, as the last, if not the least, among the greater changes effected in the American Directory. Its provision for the singing of hymns, it may be remarked, must be limited, if the theory be adopted that it contains a definite order of service, to the act of praise immediately following the opening prayer; for that following the last prayer, it provides a Psalm alone. This arrangement no doubt was also in the spirit of compromise which would furnish at one point a desired opportunity to the hymn singer, and yet reserve at another the more restricted occasion by way of compensation to the Psalm singer.

This last item brings to an end our review of the principal changes in the American Directory. It brings to an end also the historical inquiry upon which we started. For by the adoption of this Directory the liturgical position of the Church became established where it still remains. The only change since effected has been the recent insertion in the Directory of a chapter "On the worship of God by offerings," which is unquestionably in the line of liturgical development, though so moulded as not to interfere with individual freedom. It would be of interest to follow through the latter years the history of worship in our Church, and especially the line of deliverances by the General Assembly that relate to the subject. But these were not included in the scope of an article already too long. Nor have they any forceful bearing upon a liturgical position, which, being constitutionally established,

* Chap. v, sec. iv.

cannot be affected by mere enactment or by practices or opinions. And to follow out the lines of deliverances or of practice would no doubt be simply to find still at work the twofold spirit which worked in the making of the Constitution, the "liturgical" spirit and the spirit of freedom. History repeats itself, has repeated itself indeed so lately as at the General Assembly of 1896, when a resolution was introduced to inquire into the various forms of public worship in use within the Church and to report on the various plans to produce uniformity in worship;* on which resolution the Assembly declined to take action, "inasmuch as it judges that the present freedom under the limits of our Directory for Worship is more reliable and edifying." †

And now, if, in the light of our historical review, we consider the question in general of the legitimacy of an effort to improve our public worship, it seems hardly possible to raise a doubt or even a question. The one who would give fixity to the forms or lack of forms he assumes to be traditional is the one most out of accord with the spirit of the fathers of his Church, and with the provisions of its Constitution. It is rather the one who seeks progress and improvement in public worship who shares in the spirit of those fathers, and who finds the way open before him for his efforts, simply because of their resolute determination that it should be left open for the coming of such as he.

And if we turn to those specific proposals for the improvement of our worship with whose recital this article opened, it is plainly seen that they are all in the line of the development of that "liturgical" conception of worship which is the peculiar feature of the American Directory, and that no one of them contravenes either the spirit or the letter of the Constitution. Is the proposal to express our worship in the great historical forms of the Church? Our Constitution blotted out the Westminster opposition to the Reformed Book of Common Prayer, and secured "the liberty which belongs to each minister to avail himself of the Calvinistic or other ancient devotional forms of the Reformed Churches as far as may seem to him for edification." ‡ Is the proposal to give the people a larger share in the services? This reaches a right behind even the Constitution itself, a right which is of Reformation principle, and directly involved in the denial of sacerdotal functions to the clergy. Is the proposal to revive the Christian year? Our fathers left the way open to that very end, as we have seen. To only one of the particular proposals cited does the Constitution raise any obstacle, and that is the proposal to check the evils of

* *Minutes of the General Assembly, 1896, p. 37.*

† *Minutes, p. 39.*

‡ *Minutes of the General Assembly, 1882, p. 95.*

individualism in our worship. It may well be that our fathers did not foresee the full extent to which individualism would grow, but it cannot be denied that they practiced it themselves, and that they carefully left the way open for a similar practice on the part of those who should come after them. And the Constitution they made does impose a check upon the correction of even the evils of individualism, to the extent that no mere legislation can impair that almost unrestricted liturgical liberty which is the constitutional right of the American clergy. Under the Constitution no effort to enforce liturgical uniformity at the expense of individual freedom can be successful. But there remains open a better way to correct any evils of individualism. Let the clergy become convinced that the growth of individualism has become an evil to the extent even of threatening the best interests of worship and of Church growth, and that conviction will itself find the way to correct the evil, not by legislation, but by common agreement. The clergy of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are by inheritance lovers of individual freedom, but they are lovers of Presbyterianism also as over against Congregationalism. They believe in the Church before they learn to love the parish. Let them be convinced as to just how much of parish individuality needs to be foregone in order to secure the best results for the common worship of the Church, and no one who knows them widely can entertain serious doubts that they stand as a body ready to contribute their share to the common weal, even to the point of sacrifice of individual preferences.

PHILADELPHIA.

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