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- ART. I.—1. *The Directory for the Worship of God in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as amended and ratified by the General Assembly in May, 1821.*
2. *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.*

IF any feel amazement at the variety of forms in which the religious sentiment of Christians seeks expression in mental and bodily exercises, while, in all the cases, the God who is worshipped, the end of the worship, and the spirit which guides the worshipper are the same, they have but to consider this obvious and significant fact: That the spirit of God in the mind of man expresses itself in the various languages, and the various forms of thought and of actions familiar to the persons who are the subjects of his operation. The different forms of Christian worship are different languages employed to express one and the same sentiment of religion.

The people of different nations, under their various forms of social organization, differing from each other in their climates, their education, and their occupations, and having little assimilating intercourse with one another, have their various forms of expressing respect and disrespect, love and hatred; while the

feelings themselves, as mere mental states, are of the same nature in all. Now if the diversities of religious forms among Christians coincide with the diversities of other social customs among the same people, they may imply no fault in the worshippers. If the Asiatic worship by prostration, the European by kneeling, the American by standing, the mutual non-conformity may betray neither darkness in the understanding nor perverseness in the heart. But when people of the same nation and of the same social usages, dissent from one another in their forms of religious devotion, and make their respective peculiarities matters of grave and conscientious scruple, their dissent "cometh of evil."

The infirmity of human nature which reveals itself in such dissensions became prominent in the earliest period of the Christian church. The Corinthian Christians, long before they appear to have thought of dividing their religious assemblies on points of form, indicated diverse preferences as to the manner in which their public exercises should be conducted; and the reproof of St. Paul was evidently directed against the germ of that contention for forms of speech and forms of worship which has at length rent the church with divisions, obliterated the natural and appropriate signs of her unity, and become the ecclesiastical scandal of Christendom.

That the spirit of true Christianity in the follower of Jesus and of the apostle Paul, should feel its unity violated, by these divisions is to be expected, as matter of course by all who consider what true Christianity is. It will also be expected that the "*vis medicatrix*," of the system will show itself in recuperative efforts wherever it can, without directly encountering the deep-seated ecclesiastical disorder. A frequent and rather amusing exhibition of this operation we have in the pulpit and platform eulogies of Christian union with which the public ear has grown familiar, by men who are not among the least distinguished for exclusiveness, and whose occasional ardour for union seems very like the fitful reaction of their Christian sentiment against the violence of their own habitual sectarianism. We have a more rational and amiable instance in the significant applause bestowed on Bible, Tract, or Sunday School Societies, which join many sects together on the field of their Christian philanthropy. We have another, almost worthy to be called stupendous, in which

the representatives of the various Christian sects of the world are invited to assemble for deliberation on some plan or basis of union. Now in all this we have the spectacle of a multitude of religious communions, each formed apart by its vicious law of intrinsic repulsion, yet all recoiling from their state of mutual diversity and antagonism, and breathing a common desire for some true index of that church unity of which every man has a conception in his mind, who has the love of Christ in his heart. The dislocated members of the body of Christ cannot rest as they are. The spirit of Christ in his people strives to express in some proper way the unity which it feels. But do Christians indeed dream of constituting an outward unity of the church by a confederation of sects?

The forms of worship in the various branches of the church, have arisen out of the reason and the pious emotions of Christians under a general influence of the holy scriptures. They take their character from the desire of the pious to select the most edifying and acceptable manner of expressing the united thoughts and feelings of many minds as an offering of worship to God. The natural history of forms of worship in the Christian church, written in the proper language and spirit of a Christian philosophy, would be, at any time, but especially in the present state of the protestant mind, a valuable addition to our religious literature. It would open, before many thinking people, a path of clear thought, on the internal and the external of religion, and the relation of the one to the other. We feel quite sure that very few if any of the religious topics which could engage the learned and active mind of our generation, would lead a writer and his readers through a more inviting and fruitful field of inquiry than this. To trace clearly those properties of our constitution which lie at the foundation of an outward form of devotion, and those inward laws by which that form is determined, and then to estimate the reflex influence of the form itself on the experience and character of the mind which has produced it;—to ascertain the general law by which the leaves of the spiritual tree are opened and shaped, and how they then become the inhaling and exhaling organs of the system, would lead our thoughts in the direction of sound wisdom, and of a rational and consistent charity.

Our present design does not lead us to attempt such a history.

It does not even require of us a chronological account of the various rites and ceremonies of the church. We see the protestant portion of the body of Christ divided scarcely less on forms of worship, than on articles of faith; and we desire that the few remarks of this essay may assist the candid and truth-seeking reader to discern the general standard by which our various forms of public religious exercise may be judged, and to which they ought to conform.

Of those who feel any interest in this subject, there are probably very few who would not gladly receive more accurate and extensive information than we now have concerning the exercises of the Christian assemblies in the days of the apostles.—The only general characteristic of those exercises, which we certainly know, is their extreme simplicity. The entire silence of the canonical epistles as to particular forms of public worship is remarkable. It seems hard to account for this important fact, on any other supposition, than that the apostles were content to commit the public devotions of Christians, as well as the private, to the direction of their own sense of propriety and their conscientious regard for mutual edification; that the apostles considered these guides safe for sincere Christians, while for those who lacked sincerity, prescriptions would be useless. The Holy Spirit seems, in this, to have honoured that law of human nature which renders the communion between the inner and the outer man most harmonious and effective when the latter is most strictly the offspring of the former.

The Christian assemblies of the apostolic age multiplied faster than the persons qualified to lead their public exercises. Those who would, in the proper sense be called public teachers, were, amongst the earlier Christian converts, very few. The seven deacons, elected and ordained at Jerusalem, were chosen from express regard to their piety and discretion. They were selected as men “of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, who might be set over this business” of distributing the charity funds of the church. Two of these deacons, Stephen and Philip, are represented as qualified, and on certain occasions, employed to give religious instruction. Among the men of approved faith, discretion and purity of morals, who were appointed under the general denomination of elders, while all appear to have had equal authority, to regulate the public exercises of worship, to

administer discipline, to superintend the ecclesiastical proceedings of their respective congregations, and unitedly to counsel and govern the church at large, there were some who were distinguished as "labouring in word and doctrine." But in the Christian meetings of those days, all persons who had peculiar spiritual gifts, or who deemed themselves qualified to speak to the edification of the assembly or who had a psalm, a doctrine, an exhortation or an interpretation, had liberty to speak in order. We hear of no elaborate discourses by persons officially responsible for such an exercise; no forms of prayer, approved and authorized to be used in all the churches; no compilation or version of psalmody, not even "David's Psalms," appointed by authority to be sung in public worship; but every one might offer his exhortation, his psalm or his interpretation, it being only required that "all things be done decently and in order."

No modern sect of Christians, so far as we know, insists that, as to the order and form of religious exercises, the church of Christ is to be confined to that primitive developement of her divine institutions. We certainly have no apostolic precept on this point; and as for the example, even if we had an explicit and an authentic record of it, we doubt whether many would feel themselves bound by it. The sense of the mass of intelligent Christians on this subject is doubtless expressed by the church of England, in the preface of her "Book of Common Prayer." "The particular forms of divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable, that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigencies of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those who are in places of authority, should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient." There is, therefore little to incite a strenuous adherence to any particular model as apostolical; and hence, so far as we have no authentic and definite information to the contrary, we are at liberty to assign the origin of our various forms of worship, as we do the origin of the various languages of mankind, to the properties and circumstances of human nature which guide men in such matters.

It is evident from the phraseology which has ever been employed to designate the leading purpose of the religious assembly

under the gospel, that this purpose has been conceived to be mainly that of worshipping God. We hence speak of the members of such an assembly as worshippers; and whatever else they are, in their various capacities as speakers, singers or hearers, they become such in order to what is deemed the worship of God. This seems farther evident also from the impression which we think to be universal among true Christians, that the more directly and intensely the mind of the assembly is exercised in proper acts towards God, the better does the character of the proceeding agree with its design.

As to the kind of exercises which may be chosen to serve this end: It seems easier to give satisfactory reasons why they should be prayer, singing and didactic and hortatory discourse, than why they should consist only of one or two of them, or why the number of the exercises should be greater. Both singing and prayer are convenient, as an expression of the devout sentiments common to the many minds of the Christian assembly; and both, being addressed to God, or capable of being so, are the most natural, simple and edifying expressions of religious faith. They are, of all conceivable exercises, the best adapted, when properly used, to awaken a sense of the presence and power of God in the mind of the worshipper. It is when speaking to God that we most clearly recognise his presence. While the act of addressing him is the natural utterance of our recognition of his presence, it enlivens the recognition it expresses. So long as those exercises of worship which proceed in the manner of direct address to God are the most engaging to minds of true and lively devotion, the disposition of our devout assemblies will continue favourable to singing and prayer as a prominent part of public worship.

These were an important part of the religious worship of the primitive churches. Both these exercises were performed in the manner of direct address to God through Jesus Christ, or to Jesus Christ himself. The report of Pliny to Trajan, that the Christians sang hymns to Jesus as to a God, favours the impression that the prevailing character of those Christian hymns was that of direct worship; that they were prepared with more reference to expressing the sentiments of the Christian heart in acts of united worship, than to their being used by one part of the congregation for effect upon another. Besides singing and

prayer, the only performances in many public meetings of the early Christians, were those of persons endowed with some peculiar and perhaps temporary gift of knowledge or of speech, or of both, by which the unbelieving hearers, or the non-gifted and silent Christians, might receive a useful impression.

There are three ideas which are susceptible of combination in our views of the design of the Christian assembly: First, That of rendering the united homage of the people to God; Second, That of instruction and the excitement of devout emotion by discourse; Third, That of a public celebration in honour of God, to commend religion to the world. The more reflecting and spiritual minds of the Christian church have manifestly always regarded the first of those as the fundamental idea of a public religious exercise. They conceive themselves as coming together, that, by the mutual assistance of many individuals, each may the better do what he feels to be his duty towards God. The development of this fundamental idea of a religious meeting will seem to be influenced by the second and third above mentioned, in a degree accordant with the character of the persons composing the assembly. And it is interesting to trace the operations of the Christian principle, as it manifests itself through the modifications which the character of religious assemblies has undergone; and particularly to observe its tenacity for the form of direct worship addressed to God in the public exercises.

The first worshipping assemblies under the new dispensation were composed almost exclusively of Christian communicants; believers in Jesus Christ, as distinguished from Jews and Pagans. In those days there was no such thing as a man of no religious profession. People did not habitually attend the Christian meetings until they were prepared to forsake their old religion, and become disciples of Christ. The professed unbelievers in the religious assemblies of those days were, therefore, very few; and the only modifications of the exercise with reference to such persons, were the miraculous use of various languages, and a preference for the vernacular on common occasions, to enable spectators to understand what was done. 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24. In the miraculous use of tongues it was rather the manner of the performance than the matter of it, which was intended for the unbeliever. The impression was expected from the phenomenon, as a miracle and not from argument and exhortation thus

addressed to reason and conscience. The leading exercises of the assembly, being for the most part, unconstrained by the presence of a multitude of unbelievers, might confine themselves to the edification of the Christians.

But the usages of our evangelized communities have given the chief assemblies of most denominations a character altogether promiscuous. Our meetings for public worship, embrace believers and unbelievers with equal freedom. They unite both classes, indiscriminately in supporting the ministry, the conveniences of the assembly, and even the operations of evangelical benevolence. It is the remarkable truth, that in many of our congregations, unconverted persons compose the majority; and we have grown familiar with the spectacle of a multitude of persons not professing to be Christians, attending habitually upon the Christian institutions. Our exercises naturally assume a corresponding character. And to such an extreme of conformity have we gone in this way, that our sermons to the impenitent may almost be considered the general rule, and those to Christians the exceptions; our prayers, though, in form, directed to God, are often to a great extent conceived and uttered, in substance, as appeals to the impenitent; our hymns are composed with reference to the unconverted, and not unfrequently addressed to them in person; and even when the argument of the occasion is directed to Christians, the cases are very common in which the matter of the appeal is supplied by the condition and prospects of the unbelievers. These are a prominent part of the facts in relation to the exercises of our assemblies on the Lord's day, our chief day of stated convocation.

Out of this practice of treating our more public congregations with so prevalent a reference to the unbelievers, has arisen, among the most lively members of the church, the demand for the lecture or prayer meeting; a less formal and less promiscuous assemblage, once or twice in a week for exercises more strictly appropriate to Christians. The very general existence of these meetings among the more devout members of the church is a fruit of that inward impulse which gave the first Christian assemblies their devotional character. They arise from no specific precept of Christ or the apostles. They have their origin in the hearts of the disciples of Jesus; and they come to supply the want arising from the partial diversion of the Sabbath

exercises in the promiscuous congregation from the peculiar use and benefit of Christians. They are felt as such a compensation by those who enjoy them. They meet one of those wholesome desires in the Christian mind, which are the manifestation of true spiritual life and health. They come, not from ecclesiastical policy, but from the emergency of Christian experience. And their great help to those devout affections out of which they arise, has never been overrated; and we have deeply to regret that the proportion of the members of the church who attend them is so small; and that all do not find in them the pleasure and advantage which is so uniformly enjoyed by a few.

We must presume that the habitual attendants on these meetings will chiefly be members of the church and those who most nearly accord with them in their motives for being present. To have it otherwise would reduce the character of these exercises, to that of the exercises of the larger congregation, and thus defeat their object. The character of the assembly, then, renders it peculiarly proper that the prayers should be the expression of the Christian's intimate communion with God; that the sacred songs should be the harmonious utterance of the gratitude, confession, desire, and adoration, proper to believers in Jesus; that the lecture, if there be one, should awaken devout meditations in the assembly, and guide them in the way of truth and peace. To increase the entertainment and profit of the occasion, let all who officiate form just views of the object of the meeting as distinct from that of the more public congregation and conform first in their own feelings, and then, by consequence, in their expressions, to the character of the assembly. The purposes of these devotional occasions are more nearly comprehended in the edifying expression of Christian thoughts and feelings respecting God than is generally supposed. By such exercises Christians "prevail with God." With their spiritual principles thus warmed into life, and their souls endowed with a divine unction; with an enlivened view of the love of Christ for sinners, an invigorated faith, a vivid consciousness of their union with Christ and of their fellowship with the Holy Ghost, they are prepared to pray for every thing pertaining to the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ, and the welfare of men. This state of mind is itself a fervent effectual prayer that availeth much. While their desires reach after the impenitent, it is not by an unchastened

movement of natural pity for the misery of the unbeliever, or of natural horror at the prospect of his ruin, but by a calm, and consistent impulse of the Spirit of God towards the accomplishment of the divine will in the salvation of sinners. Let the professors of religion in our churches, who neglect the weekly lecture and the prayer meeting, and content themselves with the benefits of the more public and promiscuous assembly, consider both what they lack and what they lose. They lack the disposition out of which the primary forms of Christian worship arise; and, with their present spirit, they would, if placed in the circumstances of the early Christians, maintain no religious exercises at all. They lose the refreshment of direct personal communion with God, under the agreeable and effectual excitement of the social assembly; and they lose what is far more than the mere social excitement, the special and invaluable office of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of even two or three who unite to pray in the name of Jesus.

It is highly instructive to observe, how extensively this sort of exercise is felt by our more devout church members, as the most natural and faithful expression of the Christian sentiment, the most invigorating discipline of the Christian affections, and, therefore, the most proper culture for the true evangelical spirit in the hearts of believers. It is also the most effectual commendation of the gospel to the acceptance of all men. The ground of the great utility of the prayer meeting lies deep in the constitution of the people of God, and in the nature of true religion. The lively motions of religious feeling always bring the people together for prayer, and for mutual communion; not from any calculations of utility to either themselves or others, but by the social impulse of the Christian instinct; while the perception of utility comes, as in other operations of nature, after the act. Such is the tendency of true religion in man; and when the genuine tendencies of true religion are most freely indulged, the promotion of true religion is most sure. From the prayer meetings of Christians, therefore, we may most safely pronounce both upon the force of the true evangelical principle in the members of the church, and upon the rate of its propagation; while in these less formal and more simple and natural exercises of social devotion the minister of the gospel may find a very just crite-

tion of his own agreement with the genius and tendency of true Christianity.

From these examples of the natural operation of the religious principle in assemblies of Christians, we derive valuable hints concerning the proper conduct of our religious convocations on the Sabbath.

Our public assemblages on the Lord's day, nominally for the worship of God, but really to hear preaching, constitute our great occasions for the communication of the gospel with the popular mind. Such they have always been amongst people not "wholly given to idolatry." The sermon has come to be in the estimation of the body of the people, the chief end of the meeting; the scripture reading, the music, and the prayers are its accompaniments. Whether it ought to be so, we here neither affirm nor deny. We are chiefly concerned to observe that it is so; that as such it obviously is neither dissallowed by the most intelligent and lively piety of the protestant portion of the church, nor disrespected by our most rational schemes for the promotion of Christianity. It is not likely soon to be deposed from its pre-eminence. Its present position in our religious exercises is generally understood as a legitimate acquiescence in the apostolic commendation of "preaching to save them that believe." The popular intelligence of Christendom has for centuries demanded the sermon, and will still more demand it, as a support and guide to the intellectual exercises on the engaging and profound topics of religious truth. The great problem is, to determine the theme and style of preaching and the forms and manner of devotional exercise for its complement, which will constitute a homogeneous offering, conformed most strictly to the rational and scriptural idea of worshipping God.

We speak first of the preaching. The foundation of every sermon strictly evangelical, must of course be Jesus Christ; his works, his character, his authority; but above all, his death as a sacrifice for sin. No subject not directly chosen as a medium for setting forth the Saviour and directing upon him the attention and the reverence of the hearers, can have lawful admittance into a Christian pulpit. This remark will bear the widest and most rigid application. It would doubtless astonish many a preacher in its course of pulpit expurgation. Many a popular harangue on the economical and political utility of Christianity

would lose its place. Lectures on morals would be disallowed, except when they preach morality as a fruit of faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life, and as the ornament and honour of the Christian character and profession. • The preaching which is surest of immediate and manifest fruit, in true conversion and edification, is that which coincides most nearly with the tendencies of devout minds and consequently, with the work of the Spirit on the heart.

Such preaching will not be a mere auxiliary to spiritual worship, by giving the hearers a preparatory impulse. It will partake itself of the nature of worship. With this view the preacher does not quite comprehend all the conditions of a gospel sermon, when he fills it with instruction, and illumines it with exposition, cultivates a sense of the responsibility under which he is to speak and prays for the blessing of God to accompany his word. The worshipping posture of the mind in the preparation of a sermon, and especially in the delivery of it, will work an important modification in the order of the thoughts, and even in the thoughts themselves. Our idea on this point is not all included in the consciousness of speaking, in the name and by the authority of the Lord, and under a sense of his presence. There is a consciousness in the worshipper that the thing he does, he does unto the Lord; that he is rendering homage to the Saviour. This is what we now conceive as one of the conditions of proper preaching. Standing, as the preacher does, between the living and the dead, he may expect to be the better conductor of life, the more he himself has of conscious communication with the fountain of life.

In the selection of topics for pulpit discourses, we are sure the preacher would never be led amiss by a strict regard to the nature of the sermon as an exercise of divine worship. The attributes of the divine Saviour, as revealed in the scriptures and illustrated in the created universe, and in the work of redemption, never fail, when presented by a preacher of good sense and piety, and of the requisite knowledge and discipline, to engage the devout feelings of true believers and to gain the serious attention of unbelievers. The attributes of God are too little preached in our pulpits. They are, indeed, difficult themes. But their very difficulty is what all need to feel. It is the very incomprehensibleness of God which awakens in

the believer the profound reverence and humility properly belonging to true religion. It requires, indeed, great wisdom to treat so mysterious a subject in a profitable manner; to turn its mysteriousness to good account; to illustrate the contrast between God and man, and make the hearers see how far and in what respects God is not altogether such an one as themselves. But though the work be difficult it is no small part of the work of preaching the gospel. To preach Jesus Christ and him crucified in all the extent to which that wonderful theme is fitted both to humble and to exalt the mind of man, we must preach him as God; and keep inseparably joined together in the minds of our hearers, his divine glory and his humiliation and death for sinners. To do this effectually, we must acquire distinct conceptions of the true characteristics of God, and guide the thoughts of the people in their endeavours to know him and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

It is no small part of the work of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of the understanding upon the majesty and glory of Jehovah; and to cause the sinner to see that glory embodied in Jesus Christ, who died for us. That mental state in which clear views of God in Christ predominate, is the only consistent and rational state, of a religious human mind. This is an indispensable condition of permanence in our religious emotions, of genuine and joyful tranquillity, of healthy and symmetrical growth in spiritual knowledge and comfort, and of conscious conformity to the character and will of God. While the comforter is taking of Christ and showing it to his people, the preaching of the divine glory of Christ, the contemplation of the infinite and unsearchable perfection of Jehovah asset forth by the words and the works of Jesus, accompanies the heavenly operation in delightful and fruitful coincidence.

We just now alluded to the extreme difficulty of so treating this awful subject as to promote the legitimate work of the character of God upon the minds of the hearers. Crude, loose and confused declamation would do more harm than good. Dull common place, suggesting to the hearers nothing more than daily occurs to their own thoughts, would be useless. A formal argument in the way of proving particular points relating to the divine character, or the justness of his claims to the love and worship of his creatures, would not favour that posture of con-

templative devotion, which a judicious train of meditation is adapted to produce, and quite as effectually without the conclusion of a formal argument as with it. On the part of the hearers, the lack of general intelligence and of mental discipline deprives multitudes of the benefit of scientific illustrations of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. It is hard indeed for a preacher to maintain a permanent interest in the character and works of God, in minds who seem capable of comprehending no goodness, but that which sheds its blessings directly upon them; no power, but that which is exerted for or against them; no justice but that which addresses them with threatenings and promises. Our pulpits are heavily oppressed with this difficulty, and almost universally, but it belongs to them, by the proper exercise of their functions, and by the blessings of God, to relieve themselves. The evil has its source in a very imperfect intellectual and spiritual culture. The pulpit is the only instrument adapted to remove it; and that the pulpit ought steadily to aim at its removal, we conclude from the habitual exercises of all intelligent and heavenly minded Christians, and from the obvious ways of God in the discipline of his people. Although the believer never forgets what God has been, is, and will forever be to himself, he nevertheless learns to contemplate God in other relations. He learns to adore power exerted for other purposes besides his own well being; wisdom, manifested in adapting things to other purposes besides his own use; goodness, which blesses others besides himself. This is religion of the higher sort. The Christian's own relations to God, engage his first attentions, but not his last. With his own feet upon the Rock of Ages, he enlarges the joys of his security by observing the solid extension of that Rock beneath the millions of other feet which rest with equal security upon it; until the distinct contemplation of his own safety is merged in the amazement of his soul at the eternal stability and grandeur of the rock itself. The enlightened and sincere believer, having found in Jesus the repose of his soul, goes joyfully forth into every accessible scene of divine manifestation, not with a self seeking zeal for personal advantage, but by a lively and healthful appetite for new views of his adorable Saviour. To such exercises the pulpit must bring its powerful help. This is its higher office. In this capacity it preaches Jesus Christ as he is, and as the mind of man is fitted to behold

and enjoy him. It is while the believer is led through these sublime fields, that his soul rises above earthly influence and affection, and is trained by the established and unobstructed laws of the divine operation, to the purity and joy of the spiritual life.

From our conception of the sermon in its proper connexion with the worship of God, we have a suggestion to which we venture to invite the attention of our brethren, in the form of an inquiry, whether the somewhat prevalent manner of addressing unconverted persons be the best adapted to accomplish the end in view. Our own impression is, and it becomes deeper by longer observation, that those discourses which produce the most desirable state of mind in the unconverted, are such as proceed with clear and forcible exhibitions of Christian truth, though no specific call be made on the attention of "impenitent hearers," and no professed and formal "application to the conscience" be attempted. The right sort of sermon is application throughout. Its statements of doctrine engage the hearer's interest and draw him by a secret but powerful persuasion. The recent history of great numbers of Christian churches abundantly illustrates the undesirable tendency on preacher and hearer, of an habitual specific expostulation with every class, in a formal and protracted strain, until the "appeal to the conscience" is regarded by some as the passing wind, and by others with secret but strong distaste. It is not uncommon to witness an open and lively attention to a discourse by persons whose countenances fall and whose feelings recoil when the preacher opens his battery of "application" upon the impenitent. And to explain such facts by referring to the natural aversion of the human mind for the truth, is unsatisfactory. The frequent examples of what is commonly called "gospel hardening" consist largely of persons who receive with manifest indifference or displeasure, these repulsive appeals.—There is no general law of persuasion which recommends them. Even in those cases in which they take apparent effect, it remains questionable whether their habitual use has resulted in advantage. Reflecting hearers find, in such form of address, little tendency towards the end in view, while they often discern much in the effects, on both speaker and hearer, which it would be desirable to avoid.

Considering preaching as one of the exercises of Christian worship, we judge that no form of the sermon conduces more to

the important object proposed, than that of exposition and meditation. There is an obvious affinity between the intellectual exercise of apprehending truth as stated in the holy scriptures, and the reverential address of our thoughts and feelings to God. Is there not a pleasing analogy between the submission of the mind to the word of God, and the offering of homage in prayer and praise? Every Christian sentiment recommends that preaching in which this mental posture is apparent. If we may refer, for an example, to the commentaries and sermons of Archbishop Leighton, as presenting some prominent qualities of an excellent model, we must not be understood as recommending such a literary dress for our times, nor such a selection and order of thought, for the common purpose of spiritual culture, but as commending an admirable example of a preacher who diffuses through his sermon the savour of his text; who does not so often resolve his chosen portion of scripture into a formal proposition of systematic theology, and treat that proposition first with statement and explanation, second, with proof, third with practical application, as diffuse the heavenly flavour of the divine words through his own mind, and then draw out from his fulness, whatever his text, his heart, and the occasion jointly suggest. The evident increase of this sort of preaching among the more disciplined, spiritual and rich furnished minds of our pulpit is attended with an equally evident increase of edification to Christians; and is more uniformly effectual than any other preaching, in the conversion of men.

There are serious reasons for regret when the pulpit is given to disputation on occasions of public worship. As there is no theological truth which does not stand opposed to some error existing or believed to exist in the community, there is no subject which does not permit the preacher to assume the controversial air; and in the majority of cases the temptation to the polemic attitude is strong. It coincides with the propensity to sarcasm, caricature, and denunciation; it favours the inclination to perpetual antagonism and where there is a lack of true spiritual sensibility, it furnishes almost the only incitement of fervour. Besides these facilities for controversy, there is an exaggerated estimation of its utility in settling important views of religious truth, and maintaining a pure faith in the church; and with all these causes combined, the polemical turn of the protestant pul-

pit in many quarters may be said to have become a habit, more prevalent than, without consideration, most of our brethren would be prepared to believe. It is worthy of serious inquiry indeed how far the errors, which require refutation in the preaching of the gospel, have been generated by the disputation which they seem to provoke. But so far as the pulpit is involved in this matter, it labours at a disadvantage. We are sure that for a worshipping assembly the polemical aspect is the least profitable of all the aspects under which the doctrines of the gospel can be presented. The intellectual state produced in a congregation by the controversial presentation of religious instruction is unfavorable to devotion, and incongenial to the spiritual mind. The history of pulpit controversy furnishes instructive illustration of the fact that so far as preaching has for its object to sustain the mind of the hearer in the posture of devout worship, it defeats its end when it involves the hearer in theological warfare. If it be the office of the sermon to help the public devotion of the assembly, and if it be so regarded by enlightened and devout people, the good sense and piety of our ministry will cause a continual approximation towards the devotional standard, and the pulpit of our country will gradually direct more of its luminous and powerful issues into the channel of scripture exposition and devout meditation.

Another form of expressing the united worship of our religious assembly is that of sacred song.

The two principles in which the use of song in public worship originates are these: The instinctive impulse in the members of an assembly of men to unite in some vocal expression of their common sentiments; second, the natural relish for music, which determines them to give their united voices the order of musical harmony.

The natural office of psalmody in the congregation would therefore be that of giving an orderly and convenient utterance to religious devotion. So far as it fulfils this office, it has a peculiar power to enliven and strengthen devotional feeling in the worshippers, and impart it to others. By means of this power it often comes to be esteemed and used chiefly for the sake of its secondary and incidental office; its primary office is disregarded, and an important portion of its benefits as an exercise of worship thereby prevented.

The idea of giving devout sentiments a musical expression appears to have been co-eval with that of expressing religious sentiments in any form by the union of many voices. The art of music was one of the earliest arts of mankind. From the fact that the first instance of devotion to the culture of music appeared in one of the descendants of Cain, we may infer that if the false religion of that race of men assumed any public form, it may have presented the first examples of the public use of music. But the first instance now certainly known was one in which music was used in a public procession in honour of the true God. *Ex. xv.*

The earliest use of vocal music in the worship of God, was attended with the sounds of such instruments as were supplied by the arts of the time and were agreeable to the taste of the people; together with those bodily movements which were regarded as emphatical indications of the lively emotions of the soul. All these practices were, of course, susceptible of change with the varying taste of the people; and when the same ceremonies became common to the worshippers of the true God and idolaters, and by being associated with idolatry became snares to the people of God; they were in some cases abandoned by common consent, or expressly forbidden. In such cases, the religious caution of the people or the authority of God, for special and peculiar reasons, regulated an exercise which would otherwise have been left to the public taste. The use of music in connexion with the alluring and profane practices of irreligion, and the intimate associations they formed between it and impure and degrading sentiments and feelings, have always caused more or less embarrassment in the use of it among Christians. Especially has instrumental music lost, with many devout people, all its devotional utility on account of its mirthful and profane associations. Even those instruments which have been confined chiefly to sacred uses, have lost their sacred character by association with a corrupt religion or with an obnoxious administration of spiritual affairs. To redeem these powerful agents from their present disrepute, and render them acceptable and efficient aids to public devotion, will require a great advance in that mental culture in which a taste for music shall have prominent place. Indeed, against a highly cultivated style of poetry and music in general for the purposes of public worship, the force of preju-

dice has in many circumstances, been peculiarly strong. If schisms prevail among the worshippers of God, and one party regard another with jealousy and aversion, the parties associate the offensive peculiarities of their respective opponents with their most prominent public ceremonies; and as sacred music is one of the most prominent and captivating parts of public worship, the times of ecclesiastical discord and division have generally been times of great fluctuation in the music of the Christian assembly. In those communities in which the taste for music was least cultivated, the use of music, as such, was at times almost abandoned; and the worship rendered by the united voices of the people, have but a very remote relation to true musical expression.

The psalmody of the Christian assembly has generally partaken largely of those characteristics of thought and expression which arise from the circumstances of the people. In a divided state of the church, when the different denominations are zealous for their respective forms of doctrine and worship, the lyric poetry becomes strongly argumentative, and polemical; addresses men rather than God; and is employed to defend and inculcate theology, and to confirm the attachment of the people to their peculiar articles of faith. Hence each sect has its psalmody. Both policy and conscience are deemed to require the hymns to coincide in sentiment throughout with the creed of the sect. And the doctrines are not only stated in poetical language, or language professedly poetical, and dwelt upon in a strain of devout meditation, but are frequently inculcated in a sort of metrical argument and appeal, to persons not supposed to believe them. Some religious assemblies are so trained, by the peculiar administration of the word and ordinances of the gospel among them, as almost to abandon the idea of worshipping God in the public meeting, and to consider it the leading object of the meeting to impress the irreligious. To this view of public religious exercises among Christians many compilations of psalmody are accommodated. The hymns either express or address every state of mind which is conceived to exist in any individual of the assembly. In those churches in which the "Psalms of David" are scrupulously retained, in a literary dress which for every other purpose is obsolete, we have an example of the stronger prevalence of the notion of worship, as the end of public

psalmody, in distinction from the notion of utility in inculcating doctrine and correcting states of mind amongst the hearers; while in this case we have also an example of the force of circumstances in interrupting the natural connexion between the habitual use of a public form of social exercise, and the influence of taste in the particular arts employed.

That the fundamental idea of Christian psalmody is that of a poetical and musical expression of devout sentiment in the manner of worship, we infer from the superior satisfaction which all true Christians feel in the exercise, when the poetry and the music help the elevation of their thoughts directly to God; when the words of the song and the strains of the harmony are sensible signs of that reverence, and of faith and hope and love which rise towards God as incense from the altar of the heart. It is only by the stress of circumstances that the pious heart consents to the diversion from God to embrace the intermediate ends of our earthly state. Mature and elevated piety is by nature contemplative; and those outward exercises, whether public or private, which present God in Jesus Christ most directly to the view, are most congenial to its tendencies. And if it should, upon enlightened observation, be found that in the evangelized parts of the world, the simple, fervent, spiritual worship of Christians by scriptural meditation, prayer and sacred song, constitutes, under God, the great power of the public assembly for the conversion and edification of the heirs of heaven, it will be what the instruction of Christ and his apostles teach us to expect.

The matter of our sacred songs then, will be the more appropriate, the more it consists of those sentiments only which are common to all the sincere worshippers of God who take part in the exercise. These sentiments will be for the most part, of a general character. The special and peculiar views and feelings of individuals cannot ordinarily be sufficiently known and appreciated by the congregation to be interesting matter for united expression in an act of worship; and for the whole assembly to engage in singing the language of those thoughts or emotions which are entertained by only one or two members seems incompatible with any proper idea of the nature of united worship. We do not consider the use of such special matter entirely unprofitable to any of the religious purposes which may be an-

swered by such public exercises; nor would we discourage the introduction of any evangelical subject in which the cordial interest of the Christian worshippers can be engaged. But the highest edification of the assembly requires that our sacred poetry should express the sentiment of those who use it; that it should be strictly devotional, and treat of those subjects in which the worshippers must be presumed to feel a common interest.

In determining the proper manner of performing this part of our worship we are encompassed with difficulty. The difficulty, however, does not lie so much in forming a clear and satisfactory conception of the proper style of church psalmody, as in realizing that conception in the execution.

There are very strong considerations which recommend that the address should be to God, the object of the worship, other things being equal, the song is most inspiring when it addresses God in the second person, or uses the third in a way which implies the second, as in the twenty-third psalm. The thanksgiving, the petition, the confession, the adoration and praise, being all intended for God, accord best with the tendencies of the truly devout mind when addressed directly to him. The interhortatory form of praise, by which the performers incite one another to the animated expression of their faith and joy in God, may be conceived as a figurative style of addressing God himself. It presumes a cordial unanimity of devotion by which the worshippers exclaim with united voices, "O, come let us sing unto the Lord." The original effect of this style is however partly lost with the choral responses which formed a prominent part of the ancient celebrations, but which are chiefly dismissed by modern taste, from public ceremonies strictly religious. Other classes of hortatory hymns, together with didactic and polemic pieces, interspersed in many compilations, have been suggested by the local and varying relations of men to one another, and are generally found to require peculiar circumstances to reconcile them with the common sentiments and feelings which are felt by all Christians to be essential in the nature of public worship. Many of these hymns have found their way into the congregations, through confusion of what is proper to the exercises of the public assembly, with what is proper to the private exercises of individual Christians. Although a formal expurgation of our lyric poetry, according to these principles, is

to be neither expected nor desired, yet occasional suggestions of some of the principles involved in the preparation and use of psalmody for public worship may be useful guides to our thoughts on this interesting subject, and may contribute to an edifying uniformity of practice among the people of God.

The conception of psalmody above stated, as a part of public worship, obviously requires that the exercises should be sustained as far as practicable, by the voices of all the worshippers. The great practical difficulty of this part of our religious ceremonies has always been found here. The natural laws which act their part in the regulation of this matter are these: 1. The spontaneous impulse to vocal exertion by all in the assembly whose thoughts and emotions are expressed in the performance; and 2. The necessity that the voices submit to the laws of harmony. These principles have revealed their agency in all the phenomena of sacred song from the earliest period of its use, and will be found in combination with each other, and with the circumstances of the times, to account for the interesting series of facts which constitute the history of church music.

At the grand celebration of deliverance on the shore of the Red Sea, the triumphal procession was conducted with all the public demonstrations of joy which the people then knew how to use. A prominent part of the ceremony was music, instrumental and vocal, joined with the utterance of joyful and devout sentiment. The very brief description given us of the scene, leaves the impression on the reader, that in some form and to some extent, the voices of all the people were engaged in the ceremony. The people were rude, and the instruments of music and the art of execution as rude as the people; and we have here the only conditions of the general participation of a multitude in a musical performance; namely, that of the composition of the music and the style of performance required, correspond with the taste and capacity of the most uncultivated portion of the people.

The days of Solomon were distinguished by many signs of social culture; but the mass of the people had been hitherto occupied in war. The kind and degree of civilization requisite to sustain a taste and capacity for a cultivated style of music, the body of the people had not attained. Many of them, at their time of life, could never attain it. The alternative presented

to Solomon was, either to submit to the use of rude music, in the temple service, or appoint select performers. His choice of the latter is commended by the laws of social improvement, and by the most intelligent regard for the elevating and devotional effect of public worship. Here occurs the conflict between the two laws of nature mentioned above; the disposition of all to join their voices in the expression of thoughts and feelings which are common to all; and the necessity that the united voices consult the taste for harmony.

In the early Christian assemblies, as we judge from the general simplicity of their exercises, in the absence of direct testimony their singing was performed by the whole assembly. And this would naturally continue to be the practice while the regulation of the public exercises was with the people, or with persons whose taste agreed with the popular standard. But when the whole control of the assembly was assured by a few cultivated and powerful persons in the respective churches, and at length by a hierarchy, there was introduced a standard of musical performance which was above the people; proficients only were selected and assigned to the service, the idea of divine worship was dissociated from the exercise in the minds of the performers; and in process of time, the music of the church, became little else than a professional display. During the middle ages, the external unity of the church, and the entire withdrawal of the regulation of its affairs from the people to the hierarchy, produced as strict a uniformity in the exercises of public worship, as the difference of language and of social manners and customs would permit. Through all that period, the music of the religious assembly was performed by agents employed by the hierarchy, as a part of the system of worship by priestly meditation between the people and God. The music itself was of a higher order. It was one of the arts of which the church became a constant and munificent patron. But instead of being properly responsive to any devout sentiment of the people, it was a mere instrument of agreeable excitement.

From the reformation downwards, church music, in the different branches of the protestant church, has existed in perpetual fluctuation, and in all conceivable diversity of spirit and style. No one settled and uniform conception of the nature and design of the exercise prevailed among the different churches. Yet in

all the diversity we see these two requisitions combining their influence in various proportions: first, that the people sing; second, that the singing be in true harmony. Amidst all the diversity of views, we do not detect any which requires the assignment of the music to select performers, except by a choice of evils; it being the only condition of obtaining the harmony demanded by the common sense of the worshippers. Nor do we, on the other hand detect any view which requires or allows discordant and unskillful performance, except by a choice of evils; it being the only condition on which the congregation can sing with the union demanded by the common sense of the worshippers.

The style of the poetry has had its influence on the manner of performing the music. The early versions of the Psalms of David, had in their poetical texture, but a feeble affinity for cultivated music, if indeed they would at all consent to union with it. But among the people who have used, and still use the literal versions, there has prevailed a strong and uniform preference for singing by the whole congregation, even at the sacrifice of refinement in the music. The peculiar style of devotional poetry to which they become attached, together with their lively interest in the united song of the assembly, produces contentment with such a style of singing as the congregation can perform; while, in the more refined communities, the desire for improvement in the music shows itself in the precentors, whose taste is generally in advance of the people, and who consult it not unfrequently by propounding pieces in the public worship which they are permitted to sing chiefly by themselves.

The ascendancy of the desire for improved harmony over the desire for the union of all voices, has appeared in the organization of the choir, consisting of persons who have some special training in the art of music, and who take the charge of this part of the public service, with the aid of such instruments as their skill, and the taste and means of the congregation may supply. This arrangement provides more nearly for realizing the legitimate results of the two laws concerned in this part of public worship, than any other which has been devised. It is in most cases a voluntary service on the part of the members of the choir; is undertaken with the countenance and frequently with

the patronage of the congregation ; and becomes, by that means, a virtual index of the conception of musical propriety in the congregation, and instrumental of general improvement.

The execution of this plan encounters these two difficulties ; that of having performers in the choir who are not supposed to be sincere worshippers of God, and that of having selections of music ill-suited to the taste of the congregation, and the purposes of devotion. The first of these difficulties is to be diminished by maintaining in the congregation and particularly in the persons immediately concerned the proper views of the design of the exercise, and the qualifications for performing it ; the other must be removed through the discretion of the leader. When these inconveniencies have been diminished as far as possible by these means, what remains of them may be alleviated by the consideration that the singing of persons who are not sincere worshippers is incidental to that exercise in any form ; and that music becomes appropriate by use.

These inconveniences, however, are slightly felt against the advantages of a judiciously conducted choir. We speak with some assurance on this subject from the evident tendency of the churches towards the general adoption of the choir ; and from the reluctance with which the choir is relinquished where its proper benefits have once been felt. To ascertain its legitimate office and judge of its utility, when properly used, we must keep in view the two properties of church music which all seek to realize : the general union of voices, and true harmony. We are then prepared to designate for the conduct and office of the choir, some such rules as the following :

Its performances should be pervaded by the spirit of true and sincere worship in the hearts of the members. Though not indispensable to the usefulness of the service to others, the sincere mind is strictly indispensable to propriety and rectitude on the part of the performers. They must be governed in this respect by those rules which are applied to ministers of the gospel, and all who have leading parts in spiritual services. They are a portion of the congregation who profess to worship God, and are rendered conspicuous in this profession by the prominence they voluntarily assume. Though the sentiment of the congregation may be indulgent towards them in this respect, and may not exact sincere Christian devotion as the condition of their service,

it does not relieve them of responsibility to God for this duty. The congregation may err in their judgment of propriety in this matter. Many unquestionably do. A very low sense of the solemnity of this part of divine service prevails in many quarters, yet many sensible and pious people are grieved with this laxity who do not express their feelings; and who endeavour to overcome all disturbance of their minds from such sources, and to use the musical aid afforded them to express and elevate their own devotion. The duty we now urge is the same which is to be urged on every person who sings in the congregation, whether he be a member of a choir, or not. It is the duty of worshipping God in spirit, while making the signs of worship with the voice. The singing of the congregation is not less solemn and significant than the prayers. And for an undevout person to take the language of prayer upon his lips, because it might be the custom of the assembly to pronounce the prayers, would be felt by every serious mind as an extreme impropriety. We do not say that such persons ought to keep silence, and not to join in the sacred song, but we do say that they ought not to sing insincerely and undevoutly. By so doing, they sin; they violate the sense of righteousness in all pious minds, and even in their own. Having said these things, we add, that those persons in our respective congregations whose natural gifts, and whose taste and opportunities for improvement, facilitate their performance of this pleasing exercise, and enable them to hold a prominent place among the worshippers of Christ, have great occasion of thankfulness for a valuable endowment. It adds vastly to the delight with which they can praise God; and they wrong themselves, and lose the precious fruit of a heavenly gift, if they do not make their talent the brilliant censer in which they offer to God the incense of the pure and joyful heart.

The true theory of church music forbids, that either the choir or the congregation should consider the select company of singers as official performers of the music for the congregation. The spirit of the movement by which the singing sometimes falls into the hands of a few persons of superior musical gifts, doubtless claims for the choir the sole office. This spirit is too often entertained by both parties. The choir assume the office, and the congregation leave it to them. But this way of conducting church music satisfies no one who considers the singing an aid to

devotion. The duties of the members of a choir, as they arise out of the views we have taken, are these; to consider themselves still as so many members of the congregation assembled for the worship of God; to take their most convenient position in the assembly from which their voices can exert the greatest power on the whole, to consider themselves as the leaders of the congregation in raising the song of praise to Jehovah, and exert all their power to engage the hearts of the assembly in symphony with theirs. For this purpose they must cultivate their talent for singing by the rules of a judicious discipline. They must have their hearts in tune for the praise of God. They must subject their taste to a sound discretion in judging of the strains of harmony best adapted to the purposes of the congregation; and in all suitable ways encourage the assembly to unite in singing under their direction.

The influence of a well conducted choir, in this matter is very desirable and very great. We are confident that for training a whole congregation to unite their voices in worshipping God in the strains of a sacred and delightful harmony, no other means can be so effectual as this. To assemble a whole congregation or any considerable portion of one, for drilling in sacred music under a professional teacher, is out of the question. To introduce music with which the assembly is not familiar, and so impress it on them by the voice of a single leader that they will acquire the use of it with tolerable facility and despatch, is, in common cases, impracticable. But with a choir properly instructed and employed, the most appropriate music can be introduced, with such distribution of parts, and such power and correctness of harmony, as will carry the congregation along with it, impress it speedily on the minds of the people and provoke all to join in the song who can sing with any propriety. Then, with such a generation, as we trust is not very remote in the future—a generation trained in the principles of music as a part of their common education; made familiar with sacred music in the Sunday school, and prepared for true spiritual worship by the grace of God, the sacred song adopted by the laws of nature as one of the forms of our divine worship, will reach the standard which nature and grace unitedly instruct us to attain.

Many an attentive Christian observer has witnessed the musical developments of our generation in some important quarters

of the church in this country with devout gratitude and hope. The names of Thomas Hastings and Lowell Mason, will be held in long remembrance, from their association, not perhaps with the original and fruitful genius like those which produced "The Messiah," or "The Creation," but with such a combination of musical genius and skill, with sound practical views of the high office of music in Christian worship, as has given the church a powerful impulse in the way she should go. The general style of church music to which they have given their valuable sanction, has already diffused a charm through the stated worship of many thousand congregations, and is destined to attend the progress of the Christian assembly towards the attainment of what all devout minds, by nature, conceive as the perfection of the sacred song;—the union of all voices in a perfect harmony.

ART. II.—*Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung*. Herausgegeben von C. W. Hengstenberg. Dr. der Phil. u. d. Theol. der letzteren ord. Professor an der Universität zu Berlin. Jahrgang 1845.

GERMANY, more perhaps than any part of the world, has of late years been the seat of religious agitations. The leading parties, or the principal elements in the struggling mass, are the German Catholics, the Rationalists, and the advocates of the standards of the church. The subdivisions under these heads are almost endless. The fermentation is the product of so many conflicting principles that it is no easy thing to form any intelligent conception of the religious state of that interesting country. We propose from the sources within our reach, to give some account of the more important movements which have marked its history during the past year.

Our readers are all aware of the hopes almost universally excited by the first appearance of Ronge. The absence of any decisive evidence that the Spirit of God was the source of his convictions and declarations, and the want of any clear indication of either a knowledge or zeal for evangelical truth, gave rise from the beginning to many misgivings. But as the movement in the first instance was in the right direction, as Ronge's protest

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ART. I.—*Discourses and Reviews upon Questions in Controversial Theology and Practical Religion.* By Orville Dewey, D.D., Pastor of the Church of the Messiah in New York. New York: C. S. Francis & Co. 1846. pp. 388. 12mo.

THE author of these discourses stands in the very first rank of Unitarian literature. As a pulpit orator, his reputation is distinguished, and the post which he occupies in our greatest city adds importance to whatever he may choose to utter. For these reasons, and because it is some time since a polemic volume has been produced, on the side of Anti-trinitarianism, we are disposed to subject it to a serious examination.

With a few exceptions, which shall be noted in their proper place, these essays are not chargeable with the usual offensiveness of controversial writing. Dr. Dewey possesses all the qualifications which are needed to give seemliness and polish to the form of his opinions. He shines more to our apprehension, in the gentle glow of sentiment, than in the conflict of reasoning. Nothing is more characteristic of the whole work, than a disposition to avoid bold statement of positions, sharp cutting of defin-

accomplished of bringing the church under the same influence that rules the families of which it is composed. Whether all the heads of families were clothed with this authority, or only some selected for the purpose, is a question of detail, not at all affecting principle, and one which might perhaps admit of a solution varying with local and other unessential circumstances. One thing, however, appears certain, as an inference from all the facts which we have been considering, viz. that while some features of the Jewish polity were laid aside as temporary, the government by elders was retained as a permanent principle of organization in the Christian Church. And here we meet with the only explanation of the fact already mentioned, that the creation of the office of Elder is nowhere recorded in the New Testament, as in the case of Deacons and Apostles, because the latter were created to meet new and special exigencies, while the former was transmitted from the earliest times. In other words, THE OFFICE OF ELDER WAS THE ONLY PERMANENT ESSENTIAL OFFICE OF THE CHURCH UNDER EITHER DISPENSATION.

- ART. IV—1. *The Directory for the worship of God in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as amended and ratified by the General Assembly, in May, 1841.*
2. *The Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.*

WE resume, from our last number, the consideration of Forms of Worship, for the purpose of adding a few thoughts on Public Prayer.

Of the exercises of the Christian Assembly, the one most nearly conformed to the natural and true idea of worshipping God, is prayer. It is taken for granted in the New Testament, that if Christians unite in the worship of God at all, they will unite in prayer.

United prayer is an unfailing condition of divine favour. The agreement of even but two or three in a common petition en-

sure a favourable answer. The revelation of this truth in the form of a promise, is most seasonable and welcome to Christians; seasonable as instruction, and welcome as an encouragement to hope. The promissory revelation is confined to union in prayer. The union of two or three in preaching the Gospel, or in applying the natural agency of man in any form of well-doing to man, has no revealed assurance of enlarged success. The union of natural agencies gives a natural assurance of the result; and that suffices. Revelation and promise here would be superfluous. Men learn, from the least experience, that two natural agents are better than one; that, as in physical forces, so in the action of human minds, other things being equal, the power is as the number. Such is the law of providence; and men readily learn it, and have sufficient confidence in its truth and efficacy. Jesus reveals the prevalence of the same law in the kingdom of grace. This must be taught by revelation if men need to know it: for experience is too slow and stammering a teacher of spiritual laws for such pupils as men, and therefore the Saviour states, once for all, and with perfect fulness and precision, the law of united prayer.

This law of union in prayer illustrates a part of the work of God in the hearts of his people. What the Saviour thus makes a condition of favour to his disciples, the Holy Spirit moves them to do. Their joining together in prayer is a fruit of his own work in them. He regards it with peculiar approbation. It is an outward and visible sign of his own preparation to bless them, an expression of concurrent thought and feeling in several minds, which thus put forth the organs of their common appetite to receive the heavenly gift with congenial assent and correspondence. So the good soil has its ingredients of fertility stirred to mutual interfusion and combination by tillage; and is prepared to unite its own congenial activity with the germinating activity of the good seed. So the stamina stand up together from the base of the flower, at equal elevation, and in simultaneous maturity, to catch the precious dust which their united virtue will help to transform into delicious and nourishing fruit. The union of the pious in prayer comes by a law of the Spirit's own operation. It is one spirit which unites them, and which blesses their union. Christians, the most eminent for intelligence and piety in every age of the new dispensation, have con-

sidered prayer the central exercise of public worship, the parent and preserver of all the rest.

The preaching of the Word, which is the chief of the appointed means of spreading the Gospel, has always attained its end, when it has been the instrument of moving men to prayer, and of guiding them in it; for, by the nature of true devotion, as uttered in proper prayer, the completeness of religion in the heart and the life is made sure; while any results of preaching, which do not proceed by prayer, are faulty. Without insisting on prayer as the only form of true spiritual worship, which all other forms must exclusively subserve, we all agree in holding it as the most expressive and direct of our forms of worship; in esteeming the others the better as they partake the more of the nature of this, and in expecting them to acquire this property the more, as the worshippers approach the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

Our remarks on this subject will assume a broad definition of prayer. We mean by the term all forms of thought and speech employed in direct address to God. This is the usual conception of prayer in the minds of intelligent Christians. Thus Clement of Alexandria calls it "a homily to God." "*Ὁμιλία πρὸς τὸν θεόν.*" Thus Witsius: "the address of a rational being to God." Accordingly, the expression of the thoughts and feelings of an assembly directly to God is public prayer; the union of many, in expressing, by the same outward signs, the same sentiments of pious devotion. The conscious recognition of the Mediator gives the exercise the specific property of Christian prayer.

We note the obvious distinction between private prayer and public. The individual may confine his expression to thoughts and feelings peculiar to himself. Or he may dismiss altogether the audible form, and lift up his soul to God in silent communion. Or if he use an audible expression, he may surrender its style and order to the dictates of his own mental state; and since he makes his signs of devotion to none but himself, he needs give no attention to the body which he puts upon the spirit of his prayer.

In public devotion the assembly prays, and not the minister alone. The prayer is the prayer of the congregation. This we take to be the conception of public prayer with all protestant Christians. We think it is not conceived that the prayer of the

pulpit, is a mere expression of the sentiments of the speaker, in the name and behalf of the congregation; but that the prayer is the language of the assembly, expressing what the members are supposed themselves to understand and feel. The exercise seems strictly to be regarded as the act of both the assembly and the minister as one body; not as done by the one for the other. It is only as such that it can come under the description and claim the virtue of united prayer.

We cannot but admire the relation which thus becomes discernible between the public worship of a truly religious assembly, and that union of Christians in prayer which received so emphatical encouragement from the Saviour. They are indeed identical. Prayer thus offered is the address of an assembly of rational beings to God; and this constitutes the essence of true and spiritual public worship. God, therefore, has peculiar pleasure in a worshipping assembly. His eye of tender love is upon them. His gracious presence is among them. The desires, the sentiments of adoration, of thankfulness, of penitence in which they agree, he has wrought in them by his grace; he has given to those graces the most precious of his promises, that his people may know how to value them; and now he makes them his occasions of showing further favour. He giveth grace for grace.

In this view of public prayer, there are many considerations which will make this part of ministerial duty appear to a conscientious minister extremely delicate and difficult. It does not surprise us to hear, as we not unfrequently do, from ministers of great excellence of mind and heart, complaints of peculiar dissatisfaction with their usual performance of this duty, and of incompetency to answer their own sense of propriety in the service. The grounds of these complaints are obvious; and that the sense of this imperfection is not more prevalent, is doubtless owing to the little and superficial attention given by our brethren to the nature and office of the exercise. From all we know of the experience of our most intelligent and pious ministers, we are led to consider it as the prevailing feeling that, compared with the standard universally received among Christians for public prayer, this part of our worship is more defective than any other. At least, we venture to invite the attention of our readers to the inquiry whether, upon close and serious reflection, this feeling will not become far more prevalent than it is.

Especially is the deficiency perceptible and often very painful, to the more discerning in the congregations. We do not say this in disparagement of our practice compared with the usages of other branches of the church; but in the way of "provoking one another" to improvement in one of the most sacred and useful ordinances of our religion.

The fundamental idea of prayer, as an exercise of the public assembly, is doubtless that of worship. A devout address to God, not characterized by any special desire, but intended as a general act of religious veneration, was called by the first Christians "giving thanks;" as when Jesus is said to have "given thanks" before breaking bread, and when Paul exhorts the Thessalonians: "In everything give thanks." This language was brought forward from the devotional ceremonies of the Jews, whose forms of public prayer were strongly eucharistic. God is revealed in the scriptures, primarily, as the object of worship; and since all circumstances in which men ever worship God are proofs of divine favour already bestowed on the worshippers, their acts of adoration naturally become acts of thanksgiving. In worshipping and glorifying God as God, they are thankful. In this general character, prayer is adopted into the stated exercises of divine worship by all religious people.

But as men fall into exigency, and as the Holy Spirit awakens in them desires after special divine favour, their worship assumes the form of supplication. It is, however, strictly worship still; and by means of the form of supplication, the true spiritual worshipper utters his blended feelings of humility, reverence, gratitude, and praise. In all our forms of address to God, we assume, by faith, that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and this faith being in exercise, the natural and availing virtue of our worship is reverence. The ancient conception of piety was expressed by "the fear of the Lord." Profound awe is a necessary condition of a creature's approach to the Infinite Majesty; especially, of the approach of a sinner; and hence, the language and the gestures of prayer, under all its forms of supplication, confession, thanksgiving, and praise, are properly chosen with more regard to their fitness as expressions of reverence, than to any other quality. The character of God never exerts a more transforming power on the heart of man than when viewed under its awful aspects; and man never gains more

largely the benefit of communion with God, than when addressing him in the terms and with the sentiments of profoundest reverence. No man with proper views of Jehovah can approach him with a freedom incompatible with awe. No man possessing the sentiments which pervade the devotional parts of Holy Scripture, can familiarise himself with God. The very boldness of the saint in coming to the throne of grace, is a venturing near into the infinite presence, to utter there the all-absorbing reverence of the heart of pure devotion.

The united prayer of a congregation of Christians comes thus before us under the primary notion of reverential worship. The people, as a body, are regarded as performing a joint act of homage to God. And although prayer be viewed as asking favour, or as a condition of obtaining favour, yet it is delightful to consider how completely the exercise under the simple notion of worship agrees with all the purposes for which prayer is enjoined, and with all the ends which devout people may hope to gain by it. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. As to the particular things we want, our heavenly Father knoweth that we need them. It is the luxury of pious submission and faith, to have the distinct consciousness of want so swallowed up in the contemplation of the divine glory, that we may command all our thoughts into the posture of adoration. Our thoughts in prayer are modified by the changes of our temporal condition in proportion as we are worldly minded. It is under the influence of the world that our spiritual vicissitudes occur. And the stress of our occasions destroys the tranquil equilibrium of pure devotion, produces an agitating inequality amongst the pious affections, and thus makes our prayers appear like something different from proper worship. Now the Christian's communion with God becomes an act of contrition under remorse for some newly detected sin; now it becomes the out-breathing of some strenuous desire; now, the offering of new-born thanks, in each case, some cord of religious affection is strained into unnatural tension by the force of circumstances.

But these circumstances occasion only certain accidents of prayer. They did not give birth to prayer itself. Nor are they, in any proper sense, the ground of its continuance. They are always present with us, but their power over our forms of communion with God is inversely as our spirituality. The pro-

gressive state of Christianity in the world, and of piety in the hearts of men, keeps up a constant appetite in true Christians, and gives their prayers the form of petition. We count not ourselves to have apprehended, but we look forward to things which are before. To this progressive state, the Lord's prayer is adapted. All this is the proper expression of lively aspiration after higher knowledge, and purer comfort; and the greater prevalence of religion among men. And we may also add, all this has its full expression in those acts of worship which are less specific in their nature, and to which Christians address themselves with an earnest devotion. While then the countless and varied interests of individuals cannot become matters of unanimous concern to a congregation, and while occasions of absorbing interest to a community are comparatively rare, there is matter for public devotion which may have the united regards of all the members of a Christian assembly. And this is the proper matter for public prayer. On this the thoughts of the assembly are supposed to be dwelling in unison and their feelings are supposed to be jointly engaged with it; and the minister is properly said to express the prayer of the people. Accordingly he uses the first person and the plural number. All present are thus represented as agreed in the worship. All are supposed to have part in the prayer, not as prayed for, but as praying. *We pray.* And when the minister specifies individuals or classes of the congregation as subjects of prayer, and speaks of them in the third person as if he considered them out of the house, it is an implied relinquishment of the union of the whole assembly, and is so far a violence to the consistency of the exercise.

In the Book of Common Prayer the offices presume the concurrence of all present. And if any present fall under the descriptions of persons prayed for, they are neither mentioned nor regarded as part of the assembly. This is strong testimony in favour of our assertion just made, that public prayer is, in theory, the prayer of the congregation.

In the worship of Roman Catholic assemblies, this idea of union, is in a measure precluded by the notion of a sacerdotal mediation between the people and God by the officiating minister. Hence the liturgy does not fail of its office, though pronounced inaudibly and in an unknown tongue. The prayers

are offered for the people, not by them. The people are even expected to be conducting their own devotions, each for himself. Thus books are not uniform, their crossings and genuflections are not simultaneous and no worshipper appears to have any concern with his fellow worshippers, or with the offices of the priest, except at one or two points in the progress of the service. This practice conforms to the idea of separation between people and priest and also to the idea of diversity in the thoughts and feelings of the people. The aids to devotion thus obtained in the house of public worship are only the presence of numbers devoutly employed, and the sight of the priest and his attendants, of the altar, the images, and the other sacred, suggestive and imposing objects of sense. There is no mutual communion by means of speech, except when united attention is demanded for the discourse.

The alternative is, either private devotion in the public assembly, each worshipper conducting his own, or some commanding and intelligible form of prayer which while it presumes unanimity in the assembly, shall also assist it, and be a suitable utterance of the mind of the congregation. The last is the protestant part of this alternative. It is the only part compatible with true gospel worship. United devotion is given in the New Testament as the leading feature of Christian worship, it is commended with great stress as having peculiar virtue; its practical benefits are obvious to the common sense of all Christian people; and the very instincts of piety lead to it.

This union contemplates two ends: 1. Doing a service considered as due and acceptable to God; 2. The cultivation and gratification of pious dispositions by the aid of sensible signs and acts of devotion; both which ends are accompanied by divine favours bestowed in fulfilment of promise, and in answer to prayer. The two ends are inseparable in their attainment. One is always accomplished in the same measure as the other. No service is pleasing to God but that which expresses sincere devotion, and such service always strengthens the devotion it expresses; while both as service to God, and an expression of the pious affections of the mind, the exercise brings the worshippers within the range of the most gracious and faithful promise of God to answer the united prayers of his people. It is a copious and unfailing conductor of heavenly favour to the souls of the pious.

Of the matter of public prayer, we remark, first, that it should proceed directly from the suggestions of a submissive and reverential temper. We have already mentioned the place of reverence in the office of prayer. It is the radical virtue of divine worship; faith being regarded as the soil in which this root of true devotion is planted. Gratitude, penitence, love, desire, hope, joy, must all be reverential. Indeed we know not but some comprehensive sense of reverence might make it almost a general name for them all. Whatever we say to God as we ought we speak with reverential awe, which will impart its own character to all our particular emotions.

This reverential posture of the mind, being supposed common to both the speaker and the assembly, a broad foundation is laid for union of thought and feelings in the progress of the exercise. The unanimity of reverence predisposes all to unanimity of thought. When a people have come together with thoughts raised to God, and with hearts impressed by his majesty, while each member of the congregation recognises the presence and the solemnity of the rest, they have undergone a valuable preparation for the united exercise of the understanding and the heart in acts of devotion. What would be suggested by the devout heart of a speaker in leading the exercises, would fall in with the feelings of all the rest; and hence the ready acquiescence of many in the expressed sentiments of one may be properly looked for, if the sentiments themselves come as we have supposed. All eccentricity, strangeness, and novelty of thought should be discarded from public prayer as doing violence to the union; and no peculiarities of the mental habits of a speaker should be obtruded on the attention of the assembly, except as the peculiarity consist of an uncommon spirit of true devotion, or an uncommon felicity in clear spiritual ideas.

There are strong inducements to infuse didactic, hortatory, and even controversial discussions into public prayer; and it is not surprising that with many ministers, this becomes habitual. Several natural and valuable tendencies in an earnest and zealous minister incline him, when not on his guard, or not prevented by an opposite habit, to frame his prayers with reference to instruction and persuasion. The grave and impressive announcement of a doctrine in the form of a devout acknowledgment to God, carries with it a sort of sacramental attestation of solemn conviction in the speaker, and is in some respects adapted to

produce a corresponding conviction in the hearer. Hence we observe in some ministers a proneness to assert views of doctrine, and also of practice, which they suppose to be questioned, or rejected, perhaps even by some of the hearers; and to do this for the advantage of the peculiar sacredness of an address to God in challenging acceptance for a controverted tenet, or awakening abhorrence for an obnoxious dogma. Thus the prayers of the assembly are sadly warped into the strain of the teacher, and even of the disputant. Since the incidental bearings of the exercise are so favourable to the purposes of instruction and persuasion, they create a demand for caution and discretion in ministers, to preserve its devotional character inviolate.

The worship of an assembly of penitent sinners will partake of confession of sin. Confession is made a part of prayer by express law. It is appropriate. No part of public or private devotion can be more so. It suits the character of the worshippers. It suits all the purposes for which prayer is offered by men. Indeed, prayer by a sinner without confession of sin, in substance at least, if not in form, would be an offence to God. The hearts of an assembly, at all moved by the Holy Spirit, and penetrated by a sense of sin, concur promptly with those free and spontaneous confessions which rise from the spirit of reverential contrition. They will follow the scripture language of true penitence, for they know its voice. They will follow the simple language of the broken spirit. But they know not the voice of scholastic propositions asserting theories of sin. Theological confessions, statements taught in the schools of science respecting the nature of sin, its origin, and its extent, though in their philosophy undeniable, are not the natural language of a guilt stricken heart; and the penitent emotions of a worshipping assembly fall away from them, as steel from the magnet when the attraction is suspended. It is water to the flame of devotion to be led through a series of scientific technicalities relating to depravity, which were bred in the intellect alone, and have little fitness to express the deep and subduing convictions of a broken heart.

The prayers of sincere worshippers consist largely of thanksgiving. Habitual thanksgiving is enjoined by Christian precept. It is illustrated by the forms of piety in all ages. Whenever unconstrained by local or temporary impulse, the heart of pure

and lively devotion, rises to God on the wings of an ever living, and an ever vigorous thankfulness. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord. I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth." "Giving thanks always, for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; established in the faith and abounding therein with thanksgiving; continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

There are common and almost perpetual favours which address the pious with outward incitements of gratitude. The blessings of health, plenty and peace, are so seldom blotted from our list of mercies, that forms of thanksgiving which include them, may be almost unchangeable. Especially may we always be thankful for the light of the gospel and the hope of glory. We cannot over estimate the fitness of thanksgiving as one of the forms of exercising true piety, nor can we use it in excess. But reason and experience can give us valuable hints concerning its most just and useful expressions.

Let the matter of thanksgiving be intelligible to the people; free from fanciful, ingenious or highly wrought conceptions; such as most naturally falls within the reverential and grateful contemplation of the people in common. In recounting particulars, let them be the prominent sources of lively and general gratification; benefits direct, and in reality; not by elaborate construction. It does not suit the simple offering of pious gratitude to load our thoughts with propositions of systematic theology, although beginning with the eucharistic formula. We are never able to preserve the mental posture of thankfulness while the minister gives thanks to God, not for the revelation of the things of God, but for the fact that every thing revealed is as he himself conceives it; that the truth relating to human freedom and ability is so and so; that eternal decrees stand so and so related to free agency in man; that such and such is the way in which atonement separates pardon, and imputed righteousness, justification, and the Holy Spirit, the new heart. Such turning up the subsoil of divine beneficence may, with a blessing, bring remote returns of thankfulness; but meanwhile the labourer starves. If the people are thankful at all in connexion with such offices, it is when they are done. Thankfulness like peni-

tence, congeals in the intellectual zone, where the heavenly rays fall obliquely, and are scattered by endless refractions; but under the excitement of a vertical radiance, direct, as it were, upon the heart, the grateful emotions have their natural force.

We have suggested the impropriety of drawing theological discussions into public prayer at all; most of all do we recoil from interweaving them with our forms of thanksgiving. It is all the better for the devotions of the congregation when the matter of thanksgiving is that which is most familiar to all the people. That special and striking benefits to individuals should be specified for united thanksgiving by the assembly, to a reasonable extent, can never be amiss in a body thus composed of sympathizing members. The promptings of such sympathy ought not to be suppressed. But the best general incitements to gratitude are those which are most common. Their influence is the most comprehensive and abiding. Nothing can more engage the thankful devotion of the assembly than the ease and freedom of the minister in recounting with an ardent gratitude the most common and familiar gifts of heavenly beneficence. We know not that our remarks on this subject can be appreciated by any who have not sometimes felt their grateful emotions resisted by the unfruitful performance of the pulpit, and been prompted to forsake the guidance of the minister, and select expressions of thankfulness for themselves.

The chief part of prayer, in the common estimation, is supplication. It is in supplication that Christians consider themselves most sure of the immediate benefits of union.

We must here recall attention to the distinction between private and public prayer. The Christian in his private supplication, presents whatever petitions may be suggested by the state of his own mind, and his prayers may be the index of his own inward frame alone. Though not confined to his own concerns, they still relate only to matters interesting to himself. To embrace other matters were inappropriate and unnatural. And in the family, the head of the household prays with and for his household as his own; and the validity of the prayer as a family exercise, depends on his own faith, and not on the union of all the members in the spirit and the act of prayer. His supplications, therefore, in the family, may follow his private feelings; provided they relate suitably to the interests of the

family and of himself as its head. But public supplication, not being the prayer of the minister alone can hardly be submitted to the direction of his private feelings; and here occurs, what we shall soon remark upon more at large; the greatest of our practical disadvantages with extemporary prayer in public. It is the difficulty of putting off the character of the individual suppliant, and putting on the character of an organ for expressing the devotions of the assembly. To do this effectually, requires a ready and entire submission of the mind to just views of the nature of the exercise. A minister may have a lively state of the devout affections, and strong impulses to pray for particular benefits, and a strong desire for the spiritual improvement of his congregation; he may carry all his fervour into his pulpit services, and yet fail of that most important quality of public prayer which makes it properly the prayer of the congregation.

We remark then, first, of the matter of public supplication, what has been remarked of that of thanksgiving, and hardly needs to be repeated, that it should be matter in which the worshippers so far as they are sincerely devout, must be presumed to feel a common interest. It does violence to the nature of united supplication to introduce matter respecting which the assembly are either ignorant or unconcerned. There is no union in prayer where there is no agreement, no identity of thought; and no corresponding agreement of feeling.

Next, the matter of supplication must be such as may occupy the attention of the people to the greatest benefit of their religious feelings. Supplication for temporal benefits in the spirit of dependence, nourishes the sense of dependence in the worshippers and a pious hope for the continued bounties of Providence. Supplication for the forgiveness of sin is the grand pervading petition in all prayer by sinners; since the reception of any favour from God implies a kind forbearance towards our sins, and is a sign of that forbearance. Prayer for any good is virtually a request that God may put away our sins from before him. This is uniformly regarded by the Christian as the only condition of blessing from God; and all proper matter of supplication will be freely interspersed with such ideas. The congregation must be supposed prepared to offer united and earnest supplication for peace with God, through Jesus Christ, and for all the blessedness which flows from it; for the increase of the spirit of devotion

in them, and divine aid in all their duties; for support under trial, and all grace necessary for every time of need; remembering that these blessings flow from the forgiving mercy of God through Jesus Christ; by whose blood we have remission of sins. This is the most natural and suitable train of thought for public supplication. All devout people so readily unite upon it; it rises so promptly from the heart of true piety; it gives so free and genial exercise to all the feelings which are properly Christian, and pours its refreshing waters so readily and copiously through all the channels of faith, humility, gratitude, love, and hope, that minister and people may look for a blessing on the prayer into which it largely enters.

That part of public supplication which consists of intercession for others, furnishes occasion for the exercise of sound discretion. First of all supplication should be made for all men; that the blessings of health, of plenty, and of social order and happiness may abound every where; and that all men may have the true knowledge of Christ, and the hope of salvation. In particular, the prayers of the congregation should be offered for persons in civil authority, that they may be preserved and guided by the goodness and wisdom of God, and be instrumental of securing the rights of all the people; that they may render due respect to the kingdom of Christ, and promote by their example and by the conduct of their administration, a general respect for religion in the community. For the afflicted, besides supplication for members of the particular community by special request, we properly pray for all the sorrowful and oppressed of mankind, as persons whose sufferings, by the blessing of God, may be sources of benefit to themselves and others. Beyond this the minute classification of men as subjects of public prayer, can seldom be indulged without risk of omitting indispensable matters, or of being tedious.

We are seldom assisted in our public devotions by prolix and minute descriptions of persons often prayed for by the minister, and classified according to some peculiarity of religious experience. Especially are we unedified, when those cases are displayed successively with precise distinctions in respect of fear, anxiety, conviction, doubt, dejection, darkness, and the like, in the terms of an experimental nomenclature, to which few conceptions of the people correspond, and which are least of all

likely to be appropriated by any hearer. The prayers offered in public by one minister for another who is present, contribute seldom to edification. Their strong tendency to suggest to the hearer, not unfrequently the idea of a fraternal compliment, and commonly a class of thoughts not readily assimilated to the spiritual frame of a devout worshipper, renders them a very delicate part of the matter of supplication. It would, we are sure, accord with the sense of propriety in most of the people, that this part of our public prayers, if considered worthy of being retained, should be conceived with wise reference to the devotional use and benefit of the assembly; should contemplate the minister in his public and ministerial relations only; and should be short.

We only add, respecting the matter of supplication, that the things specified in our requests should be definite objects of conscious and direct desire; readily and clearly apprehended as such by the congregation. Preaching in prayer is abundantly and very justly disallowed; not least, as we sometimes think, by ministers more given to it themselves than they are aware. This sort of impropriety creeps into the petitions presented for the conversion of impenitent persons; when the minister prays that they may be taught a great variety of particulars, composing in his view, the system of saving knowledge and faith; that they may be led through a course of experience which he delineates in systematic detail; and that they may thus escape from misery and be reformed from sin, which he proceeds to paint, at full length, in the theological costume; departing throughout from the proper sphere of public supplication, except as he introduces each series with the suppliant prefix, "we pray."

Nothing but a defective apprehension of the nature of public prayer can reconcile a truly devout congregation to these didactic supplications. While in form addressing God, they, in fact, address the people. The people feel the prayer, not as the expression of their own devotion to God, but as a means of persuasion to themselves. One part of the evil thus incurred is the check thrown upon the fervour of devotion in the pious mind; and another is the injury suffered by all who have become so familiar with the impropriety as not to notice it.

We have dwelt on this subject at some length. The appa-

rent want of union in public prayer is, in our view, an afflicting sign of imperfection in the spiritual worship of our congregations. With all charity, we cannot help suspecting that real union in the prayers of our religious assemblies is confined to very few persons; that many Christians, even of the more lively and conscientious sort, only hear the prayers, and that multitudes do not so much as that. If such suspicions are groundless, we are sorry to harbour them, and glad that truth does not warrant them. We put it to the consciences of those concerned. If the fact warrant our suspicions, it is a fault and a scandal. We are grievously false to our own theory of worship. We draw nigh to God with the lips while the heart is far from him. And our simulation is the more inexcusable and provoking, for our greater zeal and jealousy in contending for usages which multiply its facilities, and presuppose religious feelings which they do not outwardly support.

It will be readily perceived that the defects we have referred to, are the natural offspring of the human mind indulged in the common liberty of extemporary prayer. Our prayers are formed by the principles of association which prevail in the mind of the speaker at the time. The speaker's habits of association are wanting in special adaptation to public prayer. His education and studies tend to make them so. And these intellectual habits cannot be properly conformed to the laws of pulpit devotion, by means of his private exercises, because of the great difference between private and public prayer. His mental habits are more those of a religious instructor, and of a private supplicant, than of a representative and guide of the devotions of an assembly. The education necessary for the successful use of extemporary prayer must be that which will secure the most suitable thoughts and expressions by the principles of association. It must be the formation of an intellectual habit under the influence of proper views of the nature and design of public prayer; that so the trains of thought may be less exclusively controlled by the common studies of the minister, and more modified by views connected with the devotions of the assembly. From the lack of this appropriate discipline it is, that we sometimes hear philosophical prayers, sometimes poetical; the intellectual characteristics of the speaker, being conspicuous at every step. A distinguished minister in a time of great commercial distress is said to have introduced his theory of the public adver-

sity into his pulpit prayers after this sort. "Our people have transgressed the laws of commercial prosperity, by taking the shadow of wealth for the substance, and they have heaped up riches which had only a fictitious value and which made its owners ashamed. And now that the burdened and overlain world is rolling back upon her people the fruits of their frantic speculation, may God avert," &c. The doctrine, in such cases, may be true, and the expression eloquent, the whole may be instructive and impressive, but is it devotional? Is the mind, engaged with such conceptions, properly in the posture of prayer. Does the Christian perform such mental exercises as acts of devotion in private. And even if he did, they seem far from expressing the united views which are likely to exist in the devout minds of an assembly, on which an assembly can receive from the speaker without a kind of intellectual employment hardly compatible, in the majority of minds, with direct spiritual worship.

The prayers of the pulpit cannot well be the fruit of genius. Invention, in its proper acceptation, must here hold an inferior place. An original prayer in public worship is an inappropriate prayer. Though thought must be active as a part of true spiritual devotion, it leaves the province of public prayer when it goes in search of new and original ideas. Especially are the least signs of concern for rhetorical ornament in prayer, repulsive to the pious mind. Whatever in the thought would beguile reverence, or seem not to be suggested by it; whatever would draw attention to the intellectual labour of the speaker, or betray regard for language or attitude, is a fault. It awakens suspicion that the speaker is not duly impressed with a sense of his official duty, and of the character and presence of the being he addresses.

From ministers of fervid temperament, lively invention, and literary refinement, whose genius and ardour are unchastened by strict views of the nature of public devotion, we often have prayers of most engaging fluency and eloquence; the effects of which are often striking, though, by no means such as the speakers themselves would desire. We have heard of a minister who was applauded by the audience at the close of a prayer on a literary occasion. We remember to have seen, in a secular paper, several years ago, in a report of proceedings of a public meeting, the remark that the "reverend gentleman opened the

meeting with one of the most eloquent prayers ever addressed to a Boston audience."

The trials of a conscientious and sensitive minister in adapting extemporary prayer to the circumstances in which he is called to perform it, have a deep source in the mind of Christian piety. That he should speak under a constant and vivid impression from the presence of his congregation is unavoidable. It is indispensable. Were it possible to be otherwise, it would not be right. One of a praying multitude as he is, the leading one, the organ of speech for the body, the outlet and conductor of the devout worship of the people, through a sensible medium, to God, the representative, as well in heart as in speech, of the blended piety of the assembly, he must not abstract himself into the conscious separation of a solitary worshipper, but must carry his congregation with himself in the intimate texture of all his thought and feeling. The analysis of his experience in this office is difficult, but not less profitable than difficult. The conscious necessity of joining a sense of the presence of the congregation with the sense of the presence of God; the endeavour to unite principles which, like oil and water, mix reluctantly: the desire to give the sense of the divine presence due ascendancy above that of the human; at the same, the labour of the mind for thought and language appropriate to the posture of true spiritual worship; all these, in simultaneous pressure on a mind conscious of infirmity, can be comfortably sustained in the pulpit only by the minister of high attainments in intellectual and spiritual discipline. Yet with all these difficulties in view, we nevertheless insist that the prevailing imperfection of our pulpit prayers is unnecessary. The talent for this service is susceptible of specific culture. It merits that culture. We can learn to pray better. In no part of the service of the sanctuary is improvement more desirable, in none would it be more discernible, in none would it give greater satisfaction and richer profit. The people would feel its benefits, though all may not now feel the want of them. Those who have no devout feelings to season the exercise of public worship, and who attend on preaching chiefly for intellectual entertainment, would certainly feel a part of the irksomeness of our religious ceremonies removed; a part which, as it arises from what we consider a fault, we may well desire the more for their sakes, to remove.

The cultivation of this talent will promote the edification of the minister himself. The elevation and enlargement of the heart under the power of true and proper public prayer may be invaluable to him. His services may bring greater profit to himself than to any of his people. From the engagement of his thoughts, and the warmth of his heart, assisted even by his physical exercise, he may have larger and clearer views of divine things than his hearers, and drink more copious refreshment from the fountain of life. Though it were all the same to his people, it is a blessing to himself to pray in the pulpit aright. To be free from mental darkness and indolence in which the life of pulpit devotion is too often swallowed up; to be free from all confusion and absence of thought, which puts the mind in an agony of endeavour after things to say and ways of saying them; to be delivered from the fear of an assembly, regarded as standing around like a cloud of witnesses, rather as critics of the prayer than as partners in it; and to feel the sympathetic support of those whose humble and grateful emotions he utters while expressing his own; if a minister's spirit of self-improvement can be awakened and sustained by any views of present advantage to himself, it must be by such considerations as these.

But a motive not less powerful is the edification of the people. The value of all the divine ordinances to the people of God depends largely on the tempering of their minds by public prayer. The amount of religious knowledge which can be held in solution by the Christian mind varies with the devotional temperature. All the comforts of Christians may receive a sweet savour from the prayers of the house of worship. By these the people are assisted in drawing nigh to God. By these they learn to pray. The minister diffuses the intellectual and spiritual virtue of his prayers as well through the private as the public devotions of his Christian people. And as to those who are not Christians, we do not, indeed, allow that prayers in public ought to be framed for their entertainment; but since the very performances which best answer and satisfy Christian feeling are commonly best for all serious hearers, the gratification of such persons is a legitimate addition to the motives for improvement in public prayer. So far as we can judge of the fitness and tendency of second causes, in a matter which the Lord keeps so much in his own power, we conclude that the prayer which

best suits the purposes of Christian devotion, is one of the most effective instruments of the Lord in the conversion of men.

With such motives for striving to elevate the standard of public prayer, we are interested in ascertaining the most suitable means.

In all we have to say on this point, we assume the existence of a truly Christian spirit. The ground-work of the spirit of prayer is faith, a spiritual and devout frame of the soul; a heart right with God, and an understanding exercised upon the truth as it is in Jesus.

Then, *first*, the subject of public prayer must be treated more in the way of instruction and study. The study would be difficult, and still more difficult it might be to give instruction in the details of the exercise. There is no part of ministerial service to which so much culture may be applied, while yet so little appearance of art in the performance can be endured. Preparation for public prayer is doubtless to be sought, in part, by the systematic study of Christian doctrine; yet how few of the immediate results of this preparation can be suffered to make their appearance in the devotions of the Christian assembly. The requisite discipline cannot, to any great extent, be gained by candidates in their preparatory course. It should be made a subject of reflection and study in connexion with the practical duties of the ministry. It requires experience in the pulpit, familiarity with the presence of the congregation, knowledge of the common motions of devout minds in the public assembly, and a practical conformity of the mental habits in prayer to the laws of edification by united worship.

Valuable help in this preparation may be gained by acquaintance with good models. While it is true that no one model would equally satisfy different ministers, it is also true that the performances of all would be the better for the greater familiarity with approved examples. Of these, except the examples of living ministers, we have none. The Book of Common Prayer, though highly satisfactory to most worshippers familiar with it, and though possessing several qualities of unrivalled excellence, fails, in the extent and variety of its matter, in some of its implied doctrines, and in its arrangement, to answer the views and feelings of modern congregations, whose devout habits have not been conformed to it by use. The prayers of Taylor, and many

others who might be mentioned, are private exercises. Our acquaintance with this particular species of literature is not extensive; but those examples which come the nearest to our standard of taste in this matter, are a few interspersed through some portions of the works of Archbishop Leighton. There are forms of devotion which seem to have intrinsic fitness; which answer agreeably the states of all devout minds; which require no long familiarity to reconcile them to existing tastes, and no practice to adapt the motions of the pious mind to the character and order of the thoughts.

As to stated and authorized forms of prayer, it is obvious that their value must vary with circumstances. With the proper conditions of a suitable performance, we do not hesitate to challenge for the ministry of the gospel, the liberty, the responsibility and if properly used, the great advantage of extemporaneous prayer. With correct and established views of propriety in the service, and a right judgment of its value to the people of God, a well trained and devout ministry will serve the house of God the better for the greater freedom. In no case ought the liberty of extemporaneous prayer to be taken from the minister in the pulpit. As well might preaching be confined by authority to prescribed forms of words. The discretion of the ministry may be trusted as freely in the one as the other. But if, in the solemn office of leading the united devotions of the assembly, the ministry might exercise a judgment better informed by approved examples set forth for that end, and if it might even have an election between extemporaneous prayer and a form appointed to be used at option, the standard of extemporary prayer itself would rise, and the edification of our people in public worship would be enlarged. We must not make our liberty a cloak of licentiousness. There are few of our most able and eminent ministers who come as near the true standard of pulpit prayer as they do that of the sermon. When we hear it said of such a man as Robert Hall that his prayers were felt by his hearers to be strikingly unequal to his sermons, we seem to discern in a mind keenly sensitive to the proprieties of pulpit prayer, an aversion to making prayer the work of genius, and at the same time, some lack of zeal in cultivating the peculiar talent for its just and most useful performance. But among our brethren of the lower grades of ability and industry, we not unfrequently

observe habits in this service from which many of our sensible and pious people would gladly take refuge in a book of prayers. When we sometimes hear the intimation that the Book of Common Prayer, could it be quietly introduced, would be an improvement upon the present forms of devotion in many of our pulpits, we know this preference not to be for written prayers, in general, but as an alternative and a way of escape from peculiar and unnecessary faults in prayers with which the observers are often afflicted. We cannot assent to such a remark, but we have a deep impression of the needless imperfection of our present standard, and desire to speak that impression with emphasis. We are confident that our standard may be so raised that all would feel the transition from extemporaneous to written prayers as a descent and a defection. When we observe the special satisfaction of thousands of devout worshippers with what appear to us the indefinite and comparatively barren forms of the English Liturgy, we see the great power of a few striking points of propriety in public prayer to engage the heart of true devotion. But the prayers of our own pulpits may yield a special satisfaction far superior to this. The capabilities of extemporary prayer, on the lips of a truly pious and rightly cultivated ministry are comparatively unlimited. By fixing deeply and cherishing sacredly an aversion to the didactic and the hortatory in public prayer, by forming a correct taste in ministers and people,—a taste which rational piety will render uniform in proportion to the serious and intelligent consideration bestowed upon the subject, by the influence of good models, prepared and sanctioned by persons of high esteem and station in the churches, we may produce a degree of improvement which shall gratify all our devout people, and forward all the ends for which public prayer is maintained.

This is not a conventional question. 'The suitable, the agreeable, the useful, seems to us to have the same sort of absolute existence in this department of the kingdom of God, as the beautiful has in the world of sensible things. One way of praying in public is not exactly as good as another, though the people may be pleased with it as well. Though generally most pleased with forms with which we are most familiar, we are not of necessity most edified by them. We should learn to discern and approve the things which are excellent. We must not take for

granted that the things which most please us are, in themselves, best. There may be other things which, if we learn to approve and enjoy them, would be better for us. There are, indeed, some valuable principles of human nature which resist change, and require conformity to the present standard. But there are other principles more estimable among men, which tend to progress. These ought to rule. Under their sway taste advances with intelligence. And true advancement tends to uniformity. So long as musical culture leads none to prefer the screech of the owl to the warbling of the nightingale; so long as the study of architecture leads none to choose an Egyptian pile for an airy summer retreat and a Corinthian delicacy for a prison, so long as social culture never tends to make the dress and manners of the peasant the fashion of the court, so long may we expect the true culture of intelligent and rational piety to lead towards uniformity in what we may call the style of our public devotion.

Our object in this discussion thus becomes apparent. We do not disparage any forms of worship in the view of those who use them to edification. When Christians, in the free exercise of their best judgment, are content with their usages, we would not disturb their satisfaction. But we would bring their best judgment into exercise. We would tempt review, and re-judgment, as it is well, at times, to do with every thing which tends to the fixedness of habit. Stir thought again, and observe where it settles. Not projecting revolutions, total and sudden, in anything except the vices of the heart; not proposing substitutes for existing usages, to be at once adopted by formal act; but keeping the eye of right reason in search of whatsoever things are true, lovely and of good report, and forbidding irrational practices to take deep root, we are free to advance in the way we should go. If on each revision, we reach the same conclusion, it is with increased confidence that we are right. If our conclusions vary, still give them due weight in practice. Should occasional violence be suffered to a prejudice it will not be the worse. Prejudice is not piety. It does not ordinarily favour pure religion. However it interweave itself with the instincts of a pious mind, it is still only evil; and when it has gained such ascendancy as to make prudent men afraid to disturb it, it is high time it were disturbed.

It will not be thought amiss that brethren be invited to speak

together on the subject of improvement in pulpit prayer. We hold the influence of fraternal suggestions in such a matter in high esteem. It would be one of the most useful subjects for presbyterial deliberation. An occasional report of a committee, presenting, not resolutions for laws, but suggestions for thought, would not be ineffectual, and would promote one of the important ends contemplated by an apostolic Presbytery.

We look for improvement in the devotional forms of the Christian assembly in the direction of the primitive simplicity. We do not mean by simplicity, the absence of any legitimate signs of true culture. We mean a simplicity which is the fruit of the highest culture ; which rejects superfluity, yields the outward exercises to the refined and regulated impulse of the inward, and follows the Spirit of the Lord as it moves in well trained and furnished understandings and pure hearts. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. As the prophet approaches the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, and learns the reciprocal subjection of the divine to the human, and of the human to the divine, we shall witness most of the genuine beauty of holiness in the most extemporaneous outgoings of the pious heart.

Such simplicity is a noble part of the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. The church will learn to stand fast in it. She cannot, in a pure state, be subject to ordinances. Her nature requires that ordinances be subject to her. Whatever is lovely in her ordinances must be the immediate outshining of her inward virtue. The rigid and cumbrous incrustation of forms which grew out upon her in the middle ages, from the impurity of her blood, will disappear, and disclose her natural complexion fair as the sun. With the present imperfection of Christians, while they fit so ill together, carry so little of beauty and grace in their spontaneous movements, they must constrain mutual intercourse with rules imposed on the affections by reason ; they must study attitudes, and submit to laws of mutual accommodation enforced by external authority ; that so the strong help the infirmities of the weak, that no weak conscience suffer from the liberty of the stronger, and that no weak brother perish for whom Christ died. But does not true progress look towards freedom, the freedom of simplicity, the freedom of inward rectitude and vigour ; when the pure and rational piety of the church

shall be a law unto itself: when the outward forms of godliness will not be required as supports of the inward virtue; when the body of Christ shall feel the energy of its proper life, and enter into the joy of an inward, unincumbered, unrestrained activity, walking and leaping and praising God.

ART. V.—*Lettres de M. Botta, sur ses découvertes a Khorsabad, près de Ninive, publiées par M. J. Mohl, Membre de l' Institut.* Paris. Imprimerie Royale. 1845.

It would not be difficult to make a long and interesting article on the subject suggested by this work, if we were able to reproduce its extraordinary illustrations, of which the letter-press is merely descriptive. Of these plates there are no less than fifty-five, in the highest style of lithographic exactness, some of them unfolding to large dimensions. Our remarks, however, must labour under the disadvantage of having no such visible and striking aids. Yet the subject is one of commanding interest, and opens a field of investigation, which promises the richest results for ethnography and apologetical theology. In what follows, we shall employ the language of the author, wherever it is most convenient, but shall generally make some abridgement.

M. Botta went to Mosul in 1843, with the purpose of employing such leisure as might be allowed amidst his duties as Consul, in making excavations at Nineveh, from the supposed ruins of which Mosul is divided only by the Tigris. He caused works to be undertaken, for some time, at that spot on the river, which has long passed for the rampart of the city of Nineveh, but which is now supposed to have contained only the palace of the Assyrian kings. It is so near Mosul, that it has long since become as common as a highway; and the labours of M. Botta resulted in nothing further than a few inscriptions on brick and stone. During this time, the inhabitants of the environs, seeing the Consul of France busied thus, brought him from different directions, bricks with inscriptions, and other remains of antiquity, and M. Botta, hopeless of any great results here, transferred his