

LECTURES,
EXPOSITORY AND PRACTICAL,
ON THE
LITURGY OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND.

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TO THE
HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF TORONTO,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME,
IN HUMBLE TESTIMONY OF HIS FATHERLY COUNSELS
AND UNVARYING FRIENDSHIP,
DURING NEARLY HALF A CENTURY,
IS, WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION,
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHOR.

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LECTURE I.

EXPEDIENCY AND BENEFIT OF FORMS OF PRAYER.

Acts ii., 42.—“ And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in PRAYERS.”

IN all the appointments of Almighty God in reference to His visible Church, we find the greatest caution exercised against a common and dangerous infirmity of human nature,—I mean the passion for excitement and novelty, and the changes and confusions which that temper, if unrestrained, must necessarily lead to.

We readily perceive that the Hebrew ritual was framed and directed by some such precaution as this. God’s ancient people were surrounded with idolaters,—with nations who manifested, in their religious belief and worship, the grossest error and impurity ; and to protect them against the danger of such pollutions, it was necessary to fence his Church, if we may say so, with the strictest and most inviolable safeguards. Their priesthood, therefore, was established and regulated by Divine

authority; and their ritual and worship was framed by the same infallible direction. Every thing that pertained to their manner of worshipping God, was taken out of their hands and maintained in His own. He devised and laid before them, in reference to this sacred matter, what he knew what would best promote His own glory, and their highest welfare. He did not leave the manner of conducting the awful mysteries of religion, to their own inclinations and caprices. They could not remove their Priests and Levites from the sacred position in which God had placed them, and elect others, at their will, in their room; nor could they alter one tittle of the holy worship He had appointed, without incurring His severest displeasure.

We can hardly fail, my brethren, to admit that there has been a sympathetic tie between the members of the Church of God in every age; that we can trace up our connexion, link by link, not with Apostles and Prophets only, but with Moses, with the Patriarchs, with the first father of mankind. In spiritual, as well as in natural things, our connexion is intimate and direct even with the first representative head of our species. If "in Adam all die," we may trace up to Adam the first indication of the promise that "in Christ should all be made alive."

With this connexion between the members of the

Church of God in every age recognized and avowed, it would be strange to think that the first principles by which that connexion is to be maintained, should not be perpetually in force. It would be strange to think that, if the Church of God is, to the end of time, to be a regular and orderly fabric,—certainly not worse under the Christian than under the previous dispensations,—every cohesive influence, every thing that could maintain it in this order and strength, was to be destroyed and perish.

THE PRAYERS mentioned in the text,—for it is remarkable that in the original Greek they are so designated, “*the prayers*,”—refer evidently to something regulated and established; to something apparently as closely connected with the framework and order of the Church, as then constituted by the Apostles, as was their doctrine, their fellowship and communion. And it was natural it should be so. If no safeguard was meant to be established against the effects of the natural passion for novelty and excitement in public worship, the destruction of the unity, and not less of the purity of the Church would be inevitable.

In PRAYERS, then, as well as in doctrine and fellowship, we may feel assured that something was established and acted upon in the Church of God from the beginning; and was meant to continue from the beginning to the world’s end. We are,

by no means, to imagine that a form of public prayer has been maintained in the Church merely as a matter of taste, or of expediency. We are to consider that there is a higher sanction for its use; that it was employed in the Jewish Church, and that, in the Christian Church, it can be traced up to the Apostles' times.

Inquiry, then, into the value and importance of Forms of Prayer generally, and the excellency of our own Liturgy in particular, will prove, I trust, both profitable and interesting. Many admire, and statedly employ, that ritual by which our public devotions are directed, without being fully acquainted with the grounds of their admiration and preference: of such the reverence and attachment can only be heightened by examination. Others, perhaps, with some vague feeling of respect for it, shew by their practical inattention to its spirit and directions, that they are not duly alive to its value and importance. These, by tracing up its origin, and ascertaining its scriptural character, and the sanction afforded to its use by the practice of the earliest and most devout Christians, will feel themselves under a weightier obligation to yield to it a heartfelt reverence, and employ it with a faithful and pious spirit. While the result of such an examination will be to thank God the more heartily for our Liturgy, it may be hoped that it will also incite

us the more, in our addresses to the throne of grace, to “pray with the spirit, and to pray with the understanding also.”

It has been well said, that “if there is to be any such thing as united worship, a congregation must consent to pray in the words adopted by the minister. Each man cannot be at liberty to use his own language: else, instead of union, there would be only confusion. Then the question is, which words are best and most appropriate,—those which, carefully composed of old by many holy men, have descended to us consecrated, as it were, by the affectionate reverence of successive generations; or those which, on the spur of the moment, are conceived and uttered by the single individual who officiates? In the presence of those of our fellow mortals whom the claims of duty and custom require us to reverence,—before our sovereign and our rulers,—we should not thus be careless of our deportment or our language. In seeking their favour or their aid, we should express ourselves with humility, and frame with caution the words in which our entreaties are clothed. In what manner, then, should we enter into the presence of the King of kings? In His awful presence, should we venture to be heedless of our conduct, or careless of our words? Should we breathe before His throne, the unchastened promptings of the mind, or the uncorrected

effusions of the heart? When the cherubim and seraphim in heaven veil their faces before the Lord of glory, "how should we, who are but dust and ashes, take upon us to speak unto the Lord?"

Even in the pure days of primitive Christianity, St. Paul censures the Corinthians for an improper exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in the offices of prayer. And if *inspired* men sometimes perverted the gift of utterance, so as to mar the decency and destroy the efficacy of public worship, how much more likely are *uninspired* men, in the delivery of unpremeditated prayers, to fall under this condemnation of the Apostle?

If it be asserted that the utterance of the first awakened feelings of the heart, without the formality of preparation, is likely to be accompanied with a warmer zeal in the speaker, and to beget a more lively interest in the hearer, than where the subject of their prayers is known beforehand; we have to allege, in reply, the danger that the zeal of the speaker may rise into an unbecoming and unedifying vehemence, and the interest of the hearer degenerate into an unfruitful curiosity. Success, too, in this manner of praying, must depend much upon a variety of contingencies which cannot always be brought into favourable operation. "One man," it has been well remarked, "may have a lively imagination, a chastised judgment, a

retentive memory, a readiness of language ; and others may be able with sufficient propriety, to express the wants of a congregation. Another may be destitute of these advantages, and, though with a heart as feelingly alive to the sense of his necessities, be little competent to give them utterance." Nor will the same man find in himself the same capabilities at all times. His mind will sometimes be confused ; his memory will occasionally fail him. And what is a more serious objection, the petitioner, in adopting this manner of praying, will be apt to consider himself rather than the people. There is a risk that his own feelings, opinions, and circumstances will influence his prayers, and give them a tincture and expression perhaps little in harmony with the sentiments, the wants, and desires of those on whose behalf he is addressing God. The littleness of his own concerns may thus be prominently set forth, while the necessities and supplications of hundreds are not expressed. This will lead to needless prolixity on some topics, and corresponding neglect of others ; to a sameness and mannerism, very different from the rich, and copious, and comprehensive uniformity of our Liturgy.

An objection often alleged against forms of prayer is, that weariness is apt to be begotten by the frequent repetition of the same supplications,

which produces inattention, and is consequently an impediment to devotion. In this case, however, the fault must be not in the *form*, but in the *heart*: it is chargeable only upon the individual himself, who permits such languor or listlessness of feeling to check the proper influence of sound words and sound doctrine. But we deny that such is a general or legitimate effect of the habitual and familiar use of what is confessedly appropriate and good. It is a striking fact that, in the Bible itself, the essential truths are few and simple. These we are never tired of referring to, never weary of repeating; and so far from seeking new things in the compass of the sacred volume, Christians in general rather delight to repeat and apply those few passages, which are in the memories and the mouths of all, and which embrace the most obvious sources of consolation and the plainest exhortations to duty.

We may add that, for the animating of devotion, novelty, if it be not an incompetent, is certainly an improper instrument. We are often warned in Scripture against the love of some "new thing," and the indulgence of "itching ears;" and nothing, surely, can be more contradictory to the meaning of these cautions than to seek for the entertainment of the mind, or the gratification of the curiosity, in the solemn business of devotion. This passion it is, which has been the main source

of all the wild speculations in religion, and the distracting novelties which have rent the Christian world so much asunder, and have given so much occasion to the adversaries of Christianity to rejoice.

In the performance of these sacred duties, our own necessities as weak and sinful creatures, and the majesty and loving kindness of that God to whom our petitions are directed, should be the first and engrossing feeling of our minds and hearts. A sense of our depravity, the recollection of our sins, and a becoming recognition of the glory and goodness of our God and Saviour, will be incitements to fervency in devotion which no novelty could aid, and which no frequency of repetition should impair.

In allowing to extemporaneous prayer all the advantages to which it can lay claim, it is not to be forgotten that every prayer thus uttered is nothing more than a *form* to those who hear it; a form, too, attended with the peculiar disadvantage of being previously unknown to the audience. "In this case," says Archdeacon Paley, "the listeners are confounded betwixt the attention to the minister and their own devotion. The devotion of the hearer is necessarily suspended until a petition be concluded; and before he can assent to it or properly adopt it,—that is, before he can adopt

the same request to God for himself and from himself,—is called off to keep pace with what succeeds. Add to this, that the mind of the hearer is held in continual expectation, and detained from its proper business by the very novelty with which it is gratified.”—May we not say, indeed, with another writer, that “the absence of a Liturgy goes far to destroy the union of the whole assembly in prayer. The worship, then, resembles rather the service of the Jewish temple, where the priests alone entered into the sacred place, while the people were restrained without, than the liberty of the Christian Church, where the veil being removed by the death of Jesus, we may *all* approach, with holy boldness, the presence of the Lord, and find grace to help in every time of need. How can a congregation enter with full feeling into supplications, the precise nature of which they cannot anticipate the moment before they are uttered? There is thus rebuilt betwixt them and the open face of God, that partition-wall, which it was the business of the Redeemer to destroy.”

What I shall add upon the value and importance of a Liturgy, will be condensed from that great and excellent divine, Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

1. It is a great bond of union; for since God hath made faith, hope, and charity, the ligaments of the communion of saints, so common prayer is

a great testimony of the same faith, and common hope, and mutual charity ; because they confess the same God whom they worship, and the same articles which they recite, and labour towards the same hope, praying for each other in the same sense and to the same purpose. And thus St. Ignatius says, "All meet together and join at the same time in prayer. Let there be one mind and one prayer." Anciently, indeed, the same forms of prayer were so much the instrument of union, that it was the only bond of the society of Christians ; for their creeds may be reckoned a part of their Liturgy. That a public Liturgy was the great instrument of communion in the primitive Church, appears from this, that excommunication was termed an exclusion from a "participation in the public meeting and prayers;" and therefore, the more united the prayer is, it is the greater instrument of union.

2. Without prescribed forms, prayers may be contradictory in doctrine, and therefore in opposition to the Spirit. And how can we say *Amen* to the prayers of those who preach contradictory doctrine ? For in introducing our opinions into our devotions, and making every school-boy point become our religion, and God himself, as far as we can, a party to our wranglings ; instead of attending to our addresses to Him, we are led to consider

whether such and such a point is true or not ; and by the time that we have tacitly discussed one point, we are driven upon another perhaps as questionable as the first,—to the great discomposing of the spirit of devotion. These are inconveniences avoided in set forms of prayer ; for we know beforehand the conditions of our communion, and to what we are to say *Amen*.

3. In extempore prayer, the people must either have implicit faith in the minister, and then may most easily be abused ; or if they have not, they cannot join in the prayers, nor can it become to them an instrument of communion, but by chance and irregularly, and that after the prayer is over. For till then they cannot judge ; and before they do so they cannot say amen ; and till amen be said, there is no benefit of the prayer, nor any union of hearts and desires, and therefore, as yet, no communion. Without public forms of prayer there cannot be any security given that our prayers shall not be turned into sin. If these be not prescribed and pre-considered, the people will go to church without confidence that they shall return with a blessing. For they know not whether God shall have a present made of a holy oblation ; or, whether the minister will stand in the gap, or make the gap wider.

4. Public forms of prayer are a great security

and basis to the religion and piety of the people. All that the great mass of believers know of their religion is gathered perhaps from the offices of their habitual devotion, and they cannot know it better than by those forms of prayer which publish their faith and their devotion to God. Thus St. Paul, when he gave an account of his religion, did it not by a mere recitation of its articles, but by giving an account of his manner of worship,—his liturgy, as it might be termed : “after the manner which they call heresy, so *worship* I the God of my fathers.”

5. Add to this, that there is no promise in Scripture that he who prays extempore shall be heard the better, or that he shall be assisted at all to such purposes ; and therefore to innovate in so high a matter, without a warrant to command us, or a promise to warrant us, is no better than vanity in the thing, and presumption in the person. He, therefore, that considers that this way of prayer is without all manner of precedent in the primitive Church, against the example of all famous churches in all Christendom, in the whole descent of fifteen ages, without all command or warrant of Scripture ; that it is unreasonable in the nature of the thing, against prudence, and the best wisdom of humanity, because it is without deliberation ; that it is an innovation in a high degree, without

that authority which is truly, and by inherent and ancient right, to command and prescribe to us in external forms of worship; that it is much to the disgrace of the first reformers of our religion; that it gives encouragement to the Church of Rome to quarrel, with some reason and more pretence, against our Reformation; that all heresies may be brought into our prayers, and offered to God in behalf of the people, with the same authority that any truth may,—all the particular matters of our prayers being left to the choice of all men of all persuasions; where actually there are, in many places, heresy and blasphemy, impertinency and illiterate rudenesses put into the devotion of the most solemn days and the most public meetings; when we consider these things, we shall find that particular men are not fit to be entrusted to offer in public, with their private spirit, to God for the people, in such solemnities, in matters of so great a concernment, where the honour of God, the benefit of the people, the interest of kingdoms, the being of a church, the unity of minds, the uniformity of practice, the truth of persuasion, and the salvation of souls, are so much concerned as they are in the public prayers of a whole national church. An unlearned man is not to be trusted, and a wise man dare not trust himself: he that is ignorant, cannot; he that is knowing will not.

LECTURE II.

SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY FOR FORMS OF PRAYER.

2 TIMOTHY i., 13.—“Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me.”

Forms of prayer, as we have seen, are not only useful, but necessary. They are a great bond of union,—the great cement of the communion of saints. Without them we should have confusion in our devotions, and perhaps false doctrine mingled with our addresses to heaven. And we have shewn that no argument can be advanced against the propriety and benefit of such forms, which will not apply, with equal force, to prayers that are delivered without premeditation.

But the Church, although her rules and appointments are shown to be so wise and useful, has followed a better guide than expediency. This would be a capricious and uncertain direction; and one generation, even one individual, differing from another, would have power to subvert all that had been previously settled and adopted. The Church acts upon a sounder principle in her forms of

worship as well as in her system of government ; she takes the Word of God, and not the counsel of man, as her guide. And so we are able to shew that, in the Holy Scriptures themselves, a sanction is given to the use of Forms of Prayer, and that they furnish numerous examples of the adoption of such forms.

1. The Song of Moses and of the children of Israel, on the shores of the Red Sea, after they had been miraculously delivered from the pursuing armies of Pharaoh, is to be regarded as a Liturgical form. For it is not to be supposed that when their deliverance became the subject of their united praises, the thousands of Israel in promiscuous assemblage raised their spontaneous and unpremeditated acclamations of gratitude along those desolate shores ; that the shout of glory to the Lord rang with unchastened fervour ; that each poured forth his own sentiments of thankfulness according to the promptings of his own grateful heart. Moses, we must believe by Divine direction, *prepared* the words of praise in which his delivered countrymen were to express the sensations of their overflowing hearts, so that no confused or inappropriate strains should mar the harmony of the universal song. For, unless thus prepared, we cannot conceive how Miriam and the women who accompanied her with timbrels and dances, should have joined simultaneously in these acknowledg-

ments of praise. Not only, indeed, does this circumstance prove it to have been a *form*, but Miriam's share in the exercises of that joyous day affords a precedent, as venerable from its antiquity as from its sanction from above, to the responsive portions of our public prayers and praises. "If prayers," says Hooker, "were no otherwise accepted of God than being conceived always new, according to the exigence of present occasions,—surely we cannot excuse Moses, who gave such occasion of scandal to the world, by not being contented to praise the name of Almighty God, according to the usual naked simplicity of God's Spirit, for that admirable victory given them against Pharaoh; for that very hymn of Moses grew afterwards to be part of the ordinary Jewish Liturgy."

2. In the twenty-first chapter of Deuteronomy, we find a deprecatory form of prayer, appointed to be used by the elders and judges of Israel, in whose neighbourhood a secret murder might be committed: "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it; be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people whom thou hast redeemed; and lay not innocent blood to thy people of Israel's charge."—These specific words of deprecation would surely not have been furnished, if they were not considered to be expedient, and preferable to any unpremeditated manner of expressing the same thing.

3. In the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, a form is furnished to those who came forward with the offering of their tithes and first-fruits: "And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord my God, that I am come into the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers to give us.....And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, a Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation great, mighty, and populous.....Then shalt thou say before thy Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and have also given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me."—Here, we observe, are three different forms to be used on this particular occasion; and we are not allowed to doubt that the reasons were wise and strong why these words should be *prepared* for the people, rather than that they should express themselves at the moment as feeling might prompt.

4. In the twenty-seventh chapter of the same Book of Deuteronomy, where are recorded the curses of God against certain crimes, the Levites were commanded to declare, in a specified form of words, those awful denunciations; and,—rendering

it thus a responsive service,—the people, at the close of each denunciation, were required to answer AMEN.

5. In the tenth chapter of the Book of Numbers, a prepared form of words is given, in which the priests of Israel were required to bless the congregation : “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee ; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee ; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

6. On the occasion also of a public fast, the priests under the Law were commanded to use this form of supplication,—“Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach that the heathen should rule over them.”

7. In the Psalms of David we have a whole Book of Forms of devotion, suited to every occasion either of lively praise, or of humble supplication ; and it is easy to perceive that most of these beautiful pieces of devotion were composed expressly for the service of the temple.

8. In the twenty-ninth chapter of the second book of Chronicles, we have a direct testimony to the use of Forms, when we are told that “Hezekiah the king, and the princes, commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord *with the words of David and of Asaph the seer.*”

9. In the twenty-third chapter of the first Book

of Chronicles, it is mentioned, as forming a part of the stated duty of the Levites, to "stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even;" and in reference to this appointment, we are informed in the Book of Nehemiah that it was the office of the Levites to "praise, and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David, the man of God, ward over against ward." A testimony, moreover, is contained in the same chapter to the ancient usage: "For in the days of David, and Asaph of old, there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God."

10. In the third chapter of the Book of Ezra, it is expressly stated, that "when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests *to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David, king of Israel; and they sang together by course* in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord." Here we have proof, from the formality and regularity of the whole proceeding, that a *form* of thanksgiving was used.

11. In the 14th chapter of the prophet Hosea, the people of Israel are exhorted, in returning as penitents to God, to "*take with them words*, and turn unto the Lord, and say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."

12. To these sanctions for a Form of Prayer, contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we may annex the fact that the Jews regularly made use of a Liturgy in their synagogue worship, of which many portions are at this day extant. It is certain that these Forms of Prayer were very ancient, and it is probable that they originally received the sanction of some Divine authority : at least, the circumstance of our Saviour's joining regularly in the worship of the synagogue, where such forms were used, would imply His approbation of that manner of praying to and praising God. " Their books of Common Prayer," says Hooker, " contained partly hymns taken out of the Holy Scriptures, partly benedictions, thanksgivings, supplications, penned by such as have been from time to time the governors of that synagogue. These they sorted into their several times and places, some to begin the service of God with, and some to end ; some to go before, and some to follow ; and some to be interlaced between the divine readings of the Law and Prophets. Unto their custom of furnishing the Passover with certain Psalms, there is not any thing more probable than that the holy Evangelist doth evidently allude, saying, That after the cup delivered by our Saviour unto his Apostles, they sang and went forth to the mount of Olives."

13. But the precedent for the use of Forms of Prayer did not cease with the Jewish dispensation. Our Lord, in answer to the request of His disciples that He would teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples,—that is, that He would give them a *form of prayer*, which should be a sign that they were his disciples, and in communion one with another,—instructed them to use that form which we usually designate as the Lord's Prayer. And of this prayer we are to remark, that it does not consist of sentiments or expressions at that time first formed by our Saviour: but, excepting the clause, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," every part is taken from the Jewish formularies; so that, in the main, the prayer was framed from expressions previously in use, and then only combined and adapted for a Christian service.

14. Thrice did our blessed Lord,—and who shall presume to call this a "vain repetition,"—exclaim, in his agony in the garden, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me;" and thrice he pronounced these words of resignation, "Not my will, but thine, O God, be done." In his anguish on the cross, he cried out in the prepared words of the Psalmist, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" and in this form of words, he yielded up his last breath, "Father, into thy

hands I commend my spirit." After his resurrection Jesus appointed this form of words for the performance of Christian baptism, "Go ye and teach all nations, and baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" a form which is still preserved and used in all churches which observe this rite of initiation into the Christian covenant.

15. The Apostle St. Paul concludes several of his Epistles with the same words of benediction; and the Scriptures generally present us with sentences of prayer and praise, suited for our adoption and use. Whenever the Apostles are said to have prayed or sung *with one accord*, their prayers and divine songs must have been previously composed; and as has been well observed, "this necessary consequence of the historical assertion proves every thing that we want respecting the evangelical authority of stated forms." Paul and Silas in prison are represented as having prayed and sung praises to God; but we cannot understand how they could do so, so as to be heard by the other prisoners, unless they joined in the *same* prayers and the *same* songs; for otherwise, instead of really praising God, they would have confused and disturbed each other. The very words of one of the early pre-composed forms are inserted in the Acts (iv. 24-30.) As it is there plainly expressed that the voices of

the assembly were lifted up in conjunction, such conjunction could not have occurred in an extemporary prayer.

16. St. Paul prays that his converts at Rome might “with *one mind* and *one mouth* glorify God;” which, as a learned writer remarks, certainly “refers to the doxologies and litanies accustomed to be publicly used in the Church, but can have no definite meaning, if the interpretation by which dissenters have perverted it, be received.”—The practice of each having a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, as mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of first Corinthians, affords, by St. Paul’s condemnation of it, a strong evidence in support of our position. It furnishes, in short, a direct parallel to the question, upon this point, between the Church and those who separate from her communion.—Such passages also as this in Colossians, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;” and this in Ephesians, “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” must, on this unavoidable principle, have related to fixed forms. “Hymns and psalms,” says Hooker, “are such kinds of prayer as are not wont to be conceived upon a sudden; but are framed by meditation beforehand, or else by prophetic illumination are inspired, as at that time it appeareth they were, when God by

extraordinary gifts of the Spirit enabled men to all parts of service necessary for the edifying of his Church."

17. If from earthly assemblages we direct our contemplations to the worship of the first-born, and of just spirits made perfect in heaven, we have even there, in the adorations also of the Cherubim and Seraphim as revealed to us, strong testimony in favour of a *form*. Of these glorious and glorified spirits, this is represented to be the continual song, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The four and twenty elders respond the chaunt of praise in this unvarying form, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and and were created." And the multitude which no man can number, who surround the throne of the Eternal, are never weary of repeating this same form of praise, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

If, then, the holy men of the old time before us prayed to and praised God in a set form of words; if both Jews and Christians thus "lift up their voices with one accord to the God and Father of all;" if the Son of God himself used forms of prayer during His sojourn upon earth, and breathed

away his life upon the cross in the precomposed words of the Psalmist; if the worshippers in heaven acknowledge the glory of the Eternal in a form of words; it were strange if Christians, at this day, should reject this manner of prayer and praise, so long established and in so solemn a manner sanctioned.

We have, further, a testimony in favour of forms of prayer from those who, in practice, have departed from the ancient custom of worshipping God.

CALVIN, an innovator in some important particulars upon the primitive usages of the Church, wrote thus,—“I strongly recommend that there should be a fixed form of prayer and ecclesiastical rites, from which it should not be lawful for the pastors in their office to depart. There ought to be an established Catechism, an established mode of administering the Sacraments, and also a public form of prayer.”

BAXTER, a non-conformist, uses the following language,—“The constant disuse of forms is apt to breed giddiness in religion, and it may make men hypocrites, who shall delude themselves with conceits that they delight in God, when it is but in those novelties and variations of expression that they are delighted.”

MATTHEW HENRY and DR. WATTS, who were

dissenters from our communion, have furnished several forms of prayer, which they recommend as useful helps at the throne of grace. And Christians of every persuasion and denomination, constantly *sing* by prepared forms. What, therefore, is lawful and expedient in praise, cannot be less so in prayer.

But while such, my brethren, is the acknowledged value and benefit of a "form of sound words" in prayer, we must remember that no words, however appropriate or excellent, will be heard in heaven, unless they proceed from the heart as well as from the lips of the worshipper; and that we must, therefore, not only trust in God to hear and answer our prayers, but look to Him also for the spirit to pray aright. Endued with this heavenly grace, we may enter into the courts of the Lord's house, doubting not that, although the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him,—much less these houses of mortal fabric and contrivance,—yet will He "have respect unto the prayer of His servants, and to their supplication, and will hearken unto the cry and the prayer which His servants pray before Him."*

* 1 Kings, viii. 28.

LECTURE III.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE PRIMITIVE LITURGIES, AND OF THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

ACTS iv., 24.—“They lifted up their voice to God with one accord.”

From the sanction afforded to Forms of Prayer in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and from the practice which is known to have prevailed in the religious services of the Jewish Church, we can readily understand that the introduction of Liturgical compositions into the Christian Church would have been very ancient and very general. The words of our text would indicate the Apostolic practice in this respect; and what *they* commenced, the church would certainly continue. If the first followers of the Lord Jesus “lifted up their voices to God with one accord” in prayer, it is not likely that those that came after them would deviate from the practice. We have, indeed, the most abundant testimony that this was actually the case; we have in existence Liturgies, under various names, that had been used in the Christian Church from a very early date.

A careful examination of these ancient Liturgies would lead us to the conclusion that they may all be reduced to *four* primitive or original ones,—constituting the basis of all the rest that came into use. These four, it can be proved, were used in different churches from a period of the most remote antiquity. The first may be called the GREAT ORIENTAL LITURGY,—as having prevailed in all the Christian Churches from the Euphrates to the Hellespont, and from the Hellespont to the southern extremity of Greece. The second was the ALEXANDRIAN, which, from time immemorial, has been the Liturgy of Egypt, Abyssinia, and the country extending along the Mediterranean sea towards the west. The third was the ROMAN, which prevailed through the whole of Italy, Sicily, and the civil diocese of Africa. The fourth was the GAL-LICAN, which was used throughout Gaul and Spain, and also in ancient Britain and Ireland.*

These four great Liturgies were evidently the parents of all the forms now extant,—of all which can, in any quarter, be discovered; and their antiquity is so very remote, and their use was so extensive in those ages in which bishops were most independent, that it seems difficult to place their origin at a lower period than the Apostolic age. The substantial uniformity observable in them

* Palmer's Origines Liturgicæ.

throughout vast districts of the primitive church, and at a time when the liberty was possessed, and undoubtedly exercised by individual Churches, of improving their formularies of worship, is a satisfactory proof of their Apostolic origin; for with the possession of such a liberty, nothing could have prevented an infinite variety of such formularies, unless there had been a universal deference to the Apostolic source from which their great models were drawn.

It is probable that the Christian Liturgies were not at first committed to writing, but preserved by memory and practice. This, however, did not prevent a substantial uniformity from being maintained; and that this was the case is evident from abundant testimonies of the Fathers,—all of which go to shew that the baptized Christians were familiar with every part of the service. The order of the parts was always preserved,—the same rites and ceremonies continually repeated,—the same ideas and language, without material alteration, handed down from generation to generation. The people always knew the precise points at which they were to repeat their responses, chaunt their sacred hymn, or join in the well-known prayer. The preservation, therefore, of uniformity by this means in different Churches, would cause to be exhibited, even after the lapse of several centuries, a substantial uniformity in them all.

We have allusions in many Christian writers in different ages to these several forms of devotion. By many, quotations are given from them ; and a comparison of these allusions and quotations shews, that the Liturgy which was used, for instance, in the sixth century was identical in substance with that which is found to have been in use in the second century.

We may take, for example, the Liturgy of St. James, as it was called,—one of the branches of the great Oriental Liturgy. In the year 691, two hundred and twenty-seven bishops, in a Council at Constantinople, in a question which was discussed about the wine in the Eucharist, appealed to the written Liturgy of St. James as a standing and recognised authority. In the year 451, more than two hundred years earlier, the heretical sect of the Monophysites formally separated from the Church Catholic; but they, as well as their orthodox brethren, retained the Liturgy of St. James. This shews that both parties must have viewed it as an ancient composition, dating before any distinctions in doctrine arose. St. Jerome, about A. D. 392, quotes expressions out of the same Liturgy of St. James, as part of their daily service. Chrysostom, still earlier, furnishes the same sort of testimony to its use in his time; and Cyril of Jerusalem, about half a century before him, attests its established use in his time.

We have another branch of the great Oriental Liturgy, called the Liturgy of St. Clement; which, in order, substance, and many of its expressions, shews itself to be identical with that of St. James, and making it manifest that they had the same origin. This Liturgy is repeatedly quoted by writers in the fourth century; but we have direct testimony to its greater antiquity. Justin Martyr, in the second century, describes the order of the Christian Liturgy in his days; and as far as his description goes, it agrees exactly with the Liturgy of St. James. So that, although the latter is not known *by this name* earlier than the commencement of the fifth century, its use, in substance, can be traced back to within one hundred years of the Apostles' times. And if it were then in use, the inference is most natural that its *origin* was much earlier: in fact the conclusion would be most reasonable that, as it was not then new or strange, it existed, in its principal features, from the time of the Apostles.

In regard to the Liturgy used in the *Church of England*, there were, in the early times, different forms in different parts of the kingdom; but the variations were trifling, and they manifestly owned a common origin. They bore a marked resemblance to the ancient Liturgies; though by degrees many superstitious ceremonies were introduced,

and prayers and invocations not authorised by the rituals of the primitive times. It was amongst the first cares and earliest labours of our Reformers to remove these corruptions, and supply all deficiencies. With this view, they carefully examined the Oriental Liturgies, and drew from them their materials for correction and improvement, as also from the ancient Gallican, Spanish, and Alexandrian Liturgies. The result, however, was the retention of the greater portion of the prayers which had been used in the Church of England itself for more than twelve hundred years.

All this was with them a work of deliberation, of labour, and of time. The rashness and presumption of other Reformers, both at home and abroad, in resolving at once to raze to the ground the venerable fabric of their forefathers, and to build with the materials a new edifice of human invention, proved a warning by which they were careful to profit. Their design was not to construct any thing new or unauthorised, but rather to prune away and remove innovations. It was their desire, according to their commission, to retain whatever was sanctioned by Scripture and primitive usage, and to reject nothing but what savoured of superstition, or tended to encourage erroneous views of doctrine or of religious worship. Nothing was farther from their thoughts than the presumptuous

notion of composing an entirely new form for public devotion ; but their purpose and their endeavour was, to correct and amend the old,—rendering it more agreeable to the Scriptures, and more correspondent to the practice of the Church in the best and purest ages of Christianity. Whatever, therefore, was sound and valuable they retained ; and this they enriched with the best materials they could collect from the ancient models. In selecting from various ancient Liturgies, chiefly those of the East, our Reformers omitted none of the offices in which the primitive churches were agreed ; and where these differed from the Roman, they followed not the Roman but the others. It has been computed, indeed, that not more than one fourteenth of our prayers are to be found in any Romish office ; and even these were in more ancient offices before the Romish corruptions were introduced.

The original compilers of our Liturgy availed themselves, therefore, of a wide and rich field, in constructing a ritual agreeing as nearly as possible with the rule and usage of the primitive and purest times ; and it has been well remarked that, “in the whole compass of English literature,—many as are the excellent versions of ancient writings which it can boast,—it would be in vain to look for any specimens of translation so vigorous, so simple, so

close, and yet so free from all constraint, as are afforded by the offices of our Church."

I have said that this work of our Reformers was gradually and cautiously pursued; and we shall be best persuaded of their discreet and patient labour, from a short sketch of the progress of our Book of Common Prayer until it finally reached completion.—The first effort to adapt the Service of the Church to the Reformation that had been commenced, was made in the year 1537, during the reign of Henry the Eighth. A Book was composed by a Committee of Convocation, entitled "The godly and pious Institution of a Christian Man." As this Book retained some of the errors of Popery,—for it was difficult to eradicate them all at once,—a further revision was made soon after; and in 1543, it was again published with corrections and alterations, under the title of "A necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian man." And although even this Book was not altogether free from Romish perversions, the publication of it in the English tongue,—and not, like the Roman offices, in Latin,—was a great step gained. A still further improvement was made in 1545, when another Book was published styled "The King's Primer." This contained the whole Morning and Evening Prayer, in English, much as we have it now; for the previous works were a selection and abridgment, rather than the full Service.

In 1547, the first year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth, a most important declaration was put forth by the Convocation, namely, that the Lord's Supper should be administered in both kinds to the Laity. A Committee of Bishops and other divines, including those honoured martyrs Cranmer and Ridley, were appointed to proceed with the work of revision and compilation; and in 1548, they agreed upon the Book entitled, "The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the rites and Sacraments of the Church, after the use of the Church of England;" and it was set forth by the common agreement and full assent of the Parliament and Convocation,—thus manifesting the concurrence both of the Laity and the Clergy.

Although this Liturgy was prepared with the same sound judgment and wise discretion which characterised all those measures in which Cranmer took the lead, an impression got abroad,—fostered by some of the Continental Reformers who had taken refuge in England,—that it had not yet receded far enough from Popish error. Some slight corrections were made in consequence, and several important additions introduced,—amongst others, the forms of consecrating Archbishops and Bishops, and of ordering Priests and Deacons. This revised Liturgy was confirmed by Parliament in the year 1551.

The Reformed Church of England was prostrated, as we know, in the reign of Queen Mary; but on the accession of Queen Elizabeth,—that “bright occidental star,” as she has been happily termed,—the statutes passed in the previous reign against the Reformed Church were repealed, and the Liturgy was restored. But to render this as correct and complete as possible, another Committee was appointed of Bishops and learned divines to revise the whole; and the result was the Book of Common Prayer, in nearly every particular, such as we now have it.

At the celebrated Hampton Court Conference in the reign of King James the First, a long and able discussion upon the Book of Common Prayer was held between certain Bishops and other ministers of the Church on the one side, and several eminent Puritan divines on the other. The result was, a few additions to the forms of Thanksgiving; the completion of the Catechism as it now stands; and the insertion of a rubric at the beginning of the office for Private Baptism.

A further conference between similar parties was held in the reign of King Charles the Second; which resulted in the introduction of a few more excellent Prayers, and some alterations in the selection of the Lessons. The office of Baptism for those of Riper years was also added.

Such then, my brethren, was the care with which our Liturgy was framed; such the critical ordeal through which it had to pass. It was compiled in the first instance by some of the ablest and best of our Reformers and Martyrs; and after more than a century of trial and experience,—after having been brought five times, at different intervals, under the revision of Bishops and other divines, whose piety and theological attainments have not been surpassed in any age of the Christian Church,—it received the final sanction of the Clergy in Convocation, and of the Laity in Parliament, on the twentieth of December, 1661. After all this time, all this searching investigation, all these improvements so gradually introduced, and with this authority and formal sanction of the Church and of the State, the Book of Common Prayer comes before us with claims unrivalled in the history, and with excellencies not to be found in the composition, of any manual of devotion in the world.

In the completeness, the “perfection of beauty,” which it thus received, it has continued ever since to be the instructor, the guide, and the consolation of all true and faithful children of the Church of England; so that the most unlearned man, who pays due attention to the Prayer Book, will find in it, drawn from the great fountain of truth,—God’s holy word,—all that is essentially necessary

to salvation ; “all that a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health.” If, after humble invocation of the Spirit of grace and supplication, he joins in the prayers of the Church with seriousness and devotion, with the spirit and with the understanding, he will learn to love, and delight in, “the pleasures of the temple, the order of her services, the beauty of her buildings, the sweetness of her songs, the decency of her ministrations.” He will from his heart adopt what has been so eloquently said by one of the best writers upon it,—“It is so judiciously contrived, that the wisest may exercise at once their knowledge and devotion ; and yet so plain, that the most ignorant may pray with the understanding ; so full that nothing is omitted which is fit to be asked in public ; and so particular, that it compriseth most things which we would ask in private ; and yet so short, as not to tire any that hath true devotion. Its doctrine is pure and primitive ; its ceremonies so few and innocent, that most of the Christian world agree in them.”

Happy, then, are we, my brethren, in the possession of our invaluable Liturgy ; more happy, if we use it aright. Well then does it become us, when we approach the Lord with these petitions and praises, to “clear the court” of the heart of every idle intruder,—to shut its door against all

worldly temptations and distractions. Then, when these profane things are removed and excluded, the King of glory himself will come in; and vouchsafe His presence, and bring His blessing, to those that are gathered together in His name.

LECTURE IV.

THE INTRODUCTORY SENTENCES AND EXHORTATION.

ECCLESIASTES v., 1.—“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.”

In examining the ordinary Morning and Evening Service of the Church, our attention is first drawn to the INTRODUCTORY SENTENCES; being short verses of Scripture, of which one or more is to be used by the Minister at his discretion.

“Before thou prayest, prepare thyself,”* is an admonition of the wise man of old, by which our Church requires that all her members should be guided. Moses, at the burning bush, was not permitted to address himself to God, until he had put his shoes from off his feet, because the place on which he stood was holy ground. Surely, then, Christians must not be neglectful of a due preparation of the heart, when they come into God’s more immediate presence in the sanctuary of prayer. Not only, therefore, in reverential awe of God’s supreme majesty, do they uncover their heads when they cross the threshold of His holy house;

* Eccles. xviii., 23.

but before they unite in His public worship, they are required to supplicate, by private prayer, His blessing upon the work of devotion in which they are about to engage. Before they enter upon these solemn duties, it is right that a few words of private prayer should be addressed to the throne of grace, that "the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts may be acceptable in the sight of their Lord and Redeemer." This has become an established custom of the Church, and it is one which should never be omitted.

In order more fully to awaken the impressions which befit the suppliant at the throne of grace, our attention is first directed to some of the most important truths in God's holy Word. And here it has been well said, "the venerable compilers of our Liturgy have walked, like skilful physicians, in the garden of God; and finding it plentifully stored with medicines for the cure of spiritual diseases, they have collected a few of the most potent and useful."*

The Introductory Sentences are evidently selected with a view to the different classes of those who may be supposed to appear in the house of God, and are designed to excite in them emotions suitable to the exalted nature of His worship. In this body, verifying our Saviour's similitude of the

* Shephard on Common Prayer.

net cast into the sea, and bringing up fishes good and bad, there is necessarily a "mixed multitude,"—manifesting a great and marked variety in religious knowledge and devotional feeling.

Amongst professing Christians, there will always be some who are prone to lean upon external privileges, and rest their dependence upon a name, in the spirit of the Jews whom our Lord rebuked, "We have Abraham to our father." These are practical enemies to the law of God; and, in their lives it may be, strangers to the holiness which that law enjoins. To them the first of the Introductory Sentences addresses a becoming warning; and they are taught that, although they come to the house of God with the promise of pardon through Christ, a condition of this pardon is a renewed heart and holy life. In the word of God they are reminded that "the wicked man must turn away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, if he would save his soul alive." And lest any should be slumberers in Christian duty, and careless of reformation, they have this declaration sounded in their ears, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Again, there will be those who are self-esteeming, partial judges of themselves; who, in the pride of a carnal heart, are wont to lay stress upon their

own deserts and merits. To them these words of Scripture are addressed, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." They are directed to examples of old,—of men after God's own heart,—in whom there was no self-glorying; but rather, their humble confession, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.—Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." And to bring down to the dust every high imagination, and drive to the cross of Christ as the only refuge, we are reminded of these confessions of holy men of old, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.—Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

But in Christian assemblies, there may be a worse description of offenders than self-deceivers: there may be those who, with Pharisaic duplicity, assume the "form of godliness," while their hearts are strangers to its "power." At the very threshold of the sanctuary, these,—if such there be,—are called upon, in solemn tones, to cast away their sinful disguise, and are told, from God's own word, that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," and that it is the "broken and contrite heart that He will not despise." Their piety must be

vital, not superficial; their repentance in the heart, and not upon the lips alone; the manifestations of godly sorrow must come from the very "issues of life." The mere ostentatious show of religion the Church, at the very commencement of her public services, thus condemns from the word of God, "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God."

Again, in the body of Christian worshippers, there will sometimes be those who are oppressed with fears, and harassed with doubts; in whom a sense of unworthiness and feeling of distrust awakens this language of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." While others trifle, they are serious; while others enter the house of God with levity and indifference, they "tremble at His word and presence." Unworthy to enter into the house of God, they nevertheless dare not absent themselves, because God is only to be found in the instituted means of grace. To sorrow-stricken worshippers, and mourning penitents like these, the Scriptures are full of declarations of encouragement, and the Church is not backward to respond the voice of comfort. She reminds her penitent children, that "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses though we have rebelled against him,"—if they will but return with full purpose of heart to their forsaken alle-

giance. The instance of the prodigal is also adduced, and the affectionate welcome he received from the father he had offended, but to whom, when wretched and in want, he ventured to return. And in the concluding Sentence, while we are warned of the "deceitfulness of sin," and the danger of denying or doubting its existence in ourselves, we are informed that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

From this short review of the Introductory Sentences, we can understand with how much appropriateness they have been selected. They may be considered, indeed, as a series of texts confirming, on the authority of God's word, and commending to our hearts in impressive language, the several propositions of the Exhortation that follows.—We may remark, that the word "judgment," introduced into these Sentences, is used in an extensive signification. "Correct me, but with judgment," means, correct me favourably, moderately; while, in the verse, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant," it signifies the severity of judgment,—a strict judicial process against the guilty, and,—the consequence of such a trial before an infallible judge,—the certain condemnation and execution of the criminal.

It will be observed, that it is required by the

Rubric that both Morning and Evening Prayer should be commenced with the reading by the Minister of one or more of those Sentences of Scripture which we have been considering. This it is desirable to notice, because in some cases, the custom has been adopted of commencing the Service with a psalm or hymn. Such a practice is manifestly irregular, and is at variance with the meaning and spirit of the Service itself; because, according to this, we are not considered fit for the work of praise until we have made confession of our sins. This is, undoubtedly, the first duty of Christians in coming into the presence of God; and this duty it is to which the words of the EXHORTATION that follows, more particularly direct the attention of the hearers.

Our Church in this has adopted, in a more complete and expanded form, what had been usual in ancient times. The primitive Liturgies of Gaul and Spain always prescribed an address to the people, after the Catechumens had been dismissed, and before the more important parts of the Communion Service; and our Church has placed this address in the same relative position in her offices, namely, before the Psalmody and the reading of Scripture. The first part of the Exhortation bears a considerable resemblance to a passage in a Sermon of Avitus, a distinguished bishop of Vienne in Gaul, as long ago as the fifth century.

The Scriptural character, as well as strict adaptation of the Exhortation to the objects intended, will be best seen from a brief examination of it.

Here the minister of God is instructed by the Church to address his hearers as his "dearly beloved brethren;" using towards them all, the comprehensive language of Christian love, though he may to many of them be individually a stranger. "My dearly beloved and longed for," is the language of St. Paul when he urges his Corinthian converts to "stand fast in the Lord." "Dearly beloved," says St. Peter to the universal Church, when he beseeches them to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

In calling to repentance their fellow-worshippers, addressed in these terms of affection, the Ministers of God are only reiterating what, "in sundry places" of Scripture, is earnestly pressed upon all men. When men are prone to deny their guilt, or despise the Exhortation, the ambassador of Christ comes armed with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" and appealing to his credentials, he can say, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent."

As it would be vain to dissemble our sinfulness in the sight of an all-seeing God, and vain to come into His presence without the acknowledgment

of our transgressions, the people are called upon, in this Exhortation, to "acknowledge their manifold sins and wickedness." This we are especially bound to do, "before the face of Almighty God,"—almighty to punish those who despise his mercy and reject his counsel, and almighty to "save to the uttermost all those that come unto him" by faith in Christ Jesus. And when we are told, as a check to presumption, that he is the "Almighty God," we are reminded at the same time, for our encouragement and hope, that he is "our heavenly Father,"—pitying those that fear him, and, like a tender parent, ready to pardon and accept the penitent.

Nor, with this all-seeing and heart-searching God, must there be any reserve,—no "little sin" kept back, or attempted to be hidden. And so we are warned expressly "not to dissemble nor cloak our sins" in the presence of the Most High. "It is the language of Satan's school," says a venerable commentator upon the Liturgy,* "that we may cover one sin by committing another;" but neither will excuse palliate, as in the case of Saul and Ananias, nor denial avail as in the case of Gehazi. Despite of every attempt at extenuation, this truth is fixed, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

* Dean Comber.

Confession, therefore, must be made; but no feeling of pride is to be allowed to linger in the soul,—no unmortified affection to have place in the heart, while the lips proclaim the acknowledgment of sin: it must be done with “an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.” No abasement can be too deep for the Christian, who is conscious of his sins and of the sacrifice which they cost; but he will never be satisfied with this mere prostration of the soul. The humble and mortified heart must be an *obedient* one; shewing the evidence of true repentance by a willingness to ask, and act,—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

The object of this humble confession, it is stated, is to “obtain forgiveness” of the sins of which we make acknowledgment. And here the Church does not fail to remind us, that the source of pardon is “God’s infinite goodness and mercy:” elsewhere it would be sought in vain.

Nor are we allowed to suppose that this is the duty of some particular season only, which may afterwards be safely laid aside: “we ought, *at all times*, humbly to acknowledge our sins before God.” Our confession should be that of David, “My sin is ever before me;” like him, it should be our habitual and continual act, to “acknowledge our transgressions.”

But this duty, we are told, is more particularly

appropriate, "when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits which we have received at His hands," and to "set forth His most worthy praise." The voice of melody would indeed be faint and dull, unless excited by a conviction of sin, and a persuasion of the infinite goodness and mercy of God in pardoning it. The nightingale, it is said, sings most sweetly with its breast upon a thorn: so, the sinner who feels most deeply the effects of the fall, will celebrate most joyfully the riches of redemption.* And this praise to God we are instructed to offer, before we utter a petition for our own wants,—the wants of the body as well as of the soul.

The Minister calls upon "as many as are present" to unite in this confession; and here we discern the great and peculiar privilege of the Christian. Under the Law, the priest *alone* entered into the temple to burn incense, while the people remained without;† and unto the mercy-seat, and into the most holy place none might enter but the High-priest, and he only once a year. But of Christians it may be said, "Ye are no more strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God:" every man is, in this respect, a priest to offer up his own prayers and praises, and that not without. He is

* Rev. T. T. Biddulph.

† Luke i., 9, 10.

led in by the hand to the very throne of grace by one who is the representative of Christ; he has liberty to speak freely for himself before the King of heaven. He is no longer required to send in his petition by the hand of a servant; but the messenger of God earnestly invites him to "accompany him to the throne of the heavenly grace,"—to accompany him who has the same errand for himself, and who is therefore likely to be the more concerned and importunate.

But both he and they must be cautious in their approaches to the footstool of their God. They must proclaim their acknowledgment of sin with a "pure heart;" because the dissembler cannot hope to be heard,—the unfelt petition can never reach the mercy-seat. They must also express their contrition "with an humble voice;" because this were an evidence of inward compunction,—an indication of the secret sorrow of their souls.

"In other prayers," says the commentator already quoted, "it will be sufficient to seal them with an *Amen*, and set our name at the bottom; but this must be all in our own words, to justify God, to take shame to ourselves, and to encourage our brethren."—"Saying after me," is what the minister of God is required to exact of his brethren in the office of Confession, and not a mere declaration of assent at the conclusion. As a fellow-sinner,

he takes the lead in fulfilling the pious duty ; word by word they follow him in the humble acknowledgment of their short-comings and misdoings,— of all in which by thought, word, and deed they have provoked his just wrath and indignation.

LECTURE V.

THE GENERAL CONFESSION.

PSALMN xxxii., 5.—“I will acknowledge my sin unto thee; and mine unrighteousness have I not hid.”

In examining the devotional offices of the early Christian Church, we discover an almost universal sanction of what our own judgment so readily approves,—that a confession of sin should form the very commencement of the work of devotion. As early as the middle of the fourth century, we have the testimony of St. Basil, that it was the custom in the Eastern Church for the people to confess their sins with great contrition, at the beginning of the Service and before the Psalmody and Lessons commenced. “All came,” he says, “early in the morning to the house of prayer, and with sorrow and with affliction and with profusion of tears, made confession of their sins to God; each man expressing his own repentance with his own mouth.”* So, too, with pious men under the old Dispensation: “they prayed unto the Lord, and

* Epist. lxiii.

made their confession ;” they were “ashamed and blushed to lift up their face unto God ;” * all shewing how proper it is to approach that infinitely holy Being with a confession of our sinfulness and unworthiness, before we venture upon the work of praise, or make supplication for our various necessities.

And here, in our invaluable Liturgy, how appropriate is the manner in which we are taught to address the Divine majesty ! In confessing our sins, we are not allowed to be forgetful of His glory and power, and therefore we are instructed to address Him as “Almighty.” We are bound, at such a time, to look upon Him with reverential awe and holy fear,—as able to inflict upon us the punishment which our sins deserve. But while, in this character, we regard Him with fear and trembling, we are taught also to look up to Him with hope ; for if He is Almighty to *punish*, He is also omnipotent to *save*. And so, we are instructed to invoke Him as “most merciful,”—willing and ready to forgive us, if, by hearty repentance and true faith, we become fit objects of His mercy. The more to encourage us to lay open unreservedly before Him our hopes and fears, and wants and wishes, we are privileged to address Him as our “Father ;” thus regarding Him as the author and preserver of our

* Daniel ix , 4 : Ezra ix., 6.

being, and above all as our Father by redemption, —having “begotten us again unto a lively hope in Christ Jesus.”

After this appropriate invocation of the Divine majesty, we make acknowledgment of our many wanderings from His laws and will. We first express our feebleness and helplessness in the pathetic confession, “We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep;” just as the Psalmist said, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep;” and as Isaiah exclaimed, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” And what can be conceived more helpless than the poor lost lamb which has left his shepherd’s side, and whose bleatings in the wilderness there is no friend’s voice to recognise! Ignorant of his way, not knowing whither to turn, his recovery is hopeless and his destruction certain, unless the kindness of the shepherd incites him to search for the wanderer.

The succeeding words of the Confession trace up this frail propensity to its proper source,—the corruption of human nature; “we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,”—hearts whose imaginations, in the words of Scripture, are “only evil continually,” and which are in themselves “desperately wicked.” The contrast is striking and instructive between these

first portions of our Confession. We acknowledge that we have erred and strayed from *God's* ways, that lead to life eternal; and that we have followed *our own* ways which bring us to destruction. We confess that we have left the good Shepherd, the only true guide; and have followed those false guides, Satan and our corrupt hearts. We have forsaken "the wisdom that decendeth from above;" and have pursued that which is "earthly, sensual, devilish."

This surrender of ourselves to the wicked propensities of the heart, to the wishes and temptations of our corrupt nature, leads to that which makes us confess, "We have offended against Thy holy laws." Here lies the essence and malignity of sin; not in opposing the moral fitness of things, in disregarding the native beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, in neglecting the obscure but intelligible notices of religion,—but in offending against the plain, positive, revealed will of God.* It is this that renders sin so "exceeding sinful." As has been mercifully stated, "Where no law is, there is no transgression;" but where the law is clear, where the revelation is explicit, men are "without excuse" for their sins. None of us can plead ignorance of our duty, though we may plead our inability to perform it.

* Waldo on the Liturgy.

After having confessed our sinfulness in general, we proceed to express our sorrow for it under the two distinct heads of sins of omission and of commission,—of duties neglected, and offences committed against the Divine majesty. “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.”—“In many things,” undeniably, “we offend all;” and what particular offences every man has been guilty of, his own conscience will best inform him. Presumptuous and deliberate sins are certainly the worst, and should be lamented with the deepest contrition; but the frequent repetition of *any* sin is a great aggravation of it, and should lead us to the closest watchfulness as well as the sincerest repentance. And most seriously should we keep in mind those sins of omission to which so many are prone,—neglect of prayer and public worship, and neglect especially of the holy sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. But it would be a grievous mockery of God to be content with the mere confession of such neglect; to affect to be sorry for it, at the same time that we are obstinately determined to omit important and essential duties expressly enjoined upon us by our blessed Redeemer.

From actual transgression, we look now to the source from which all sin and wickedness proceeds,

—the inherent corruption, the hereditary depravity of human nature. We, therefore, make the humble acknowledgment that “there is no health in us:” we confess, with the Psalmist, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” The proud unbeliever may boast of the dignity of his nature, the sufficiency of his reason, and the correctness of his morality; but the humble Christian is not ashamed to contradict such high imaginations, and to own the truth. He is not backward to confess his misery and guilt,—that his understanding is darkened, his will perverse, his whole nature corrupt. He is not ashamed to say what he feels, that “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,”—that in our moral and spiritual condition there is, naturally, no health or soundness.

But with acknowledgment of the disease, we appeal to the physician for succour; we ask at His hand the grace that can help and relieve us. Bowed down by our grievous affliction and insupportable burden, we cry, “But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders.” In this petition, we pray for the Divine mercy in general; but in those that follow, we are instructed to be more particular. And first we cry, “Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults;” we sue for pardon in consequence of our hearty confession

and sincere humiliation. We do not presume to have any claim or title to his forgiveness from any thing we ourselves can do, much less from a bare confession of our sins, be this ever so sincere: we only mention it as the first step towards that thorough repentance, which is the condition absolutely required of us if we would obtain mercy.

After praying to be delivered from the punishment of sin, we proceed to entreat that we may be rescued from the power and dominion of it. And so we pray, "Restore thou them that are penitent,"—as much as to say, Restore us, gracious Lord, to the light that sin has deprived us of, and to Thy favour which by our offences we have so justly forfeited. Restore the faculties of our minds, our reason, our understandings, our wills, from their present degraded state, to some degree of that perfection for which they were originally designed. Restore both our souls and bodies, from being instruments of sin, to be instruments of holiness: so change and renovate our nature, so purify and sanctify it, that we may be "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."*

But the petition for mercy, the supplication to be spared, the prayer for restoration to God's reconciled countenance, can never receive its answer on the ground of the mere contrition of him

* Waldo on the Liturgy.

who makes it. Our great reliance is upon the truth which is thus expressed, "According to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord." Through Him alone we can have access unto the Father; all our petitions must be offered up in His name, if we would expect to be heard.

Yet, in our approaches to the throne of grace, while we disclaim the spirit of the Pelagian who denies the original corruption of our nature, we must equally repudiate the temper of the Antinomian who pleads for the efficacy of faith only, without corresponding works. Our confessions would be worthless, our supplications a mere mockery of God, unless accompanied with an anxious desire for Divine grace, in order that our future lives may shew a closer conformity to the Divine law. We pray, then, that "for Christ's sake,"—for the sake of His merits, and through His mediation,—“we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life;” that we may be enabled, through His grace and strength, to live henceforward “as becometh the Gospel of Christ, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

To “live soberly, righteously, and godly” is, it will be remembered, a Scripture expression;* and it is intended, no doubt, to point out the general division of our duty into three branches,—as it

* Titus ii., 12.

respects God, our neighbour, and ourselves. Unless we perform our duty to the utmost of our ability, in all these particulars,—that is, unless our obedience to all the precepts of the Gospel be unreserved and without exception, our confessions and prayers will signify nothing; they will tend rather to aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation.

Having now finished our supplications for pardon and grace, we conclude with expressing the great motive and end of offering them up, namely, “the glory of God’s holy name.”—Strictly speaking, the glory of God is in itself perfect and complete, and absolutely independent of all created beings. Not all the adoration and obedience of the highest angels,—much less the imperfect services or praises of sinful men,—can make any addition to the glory of the great Creator; nor, on the other hand, can their worst disobedience diminish or detract from it. Still it must be confessed that the *manifestation* of God’s glory does, in some sense, depend on the willing obedience of His rational creatures,—on the right use of the faculties He endues them with,—and on the grateful return they make for His undeserved bounty and goodness. For God himself is pleased to say, “Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me;” but to offer this aright and acceptably, it must be “not with our lips only, but in our lives.”

Yet, while the glory of God should be the end of all our actions, we are not restrained, as a motive for prayer and praise, from looking to our own happiness. For of Moses it is recorded, with seeming approbation, that "he had respect unto the *recompense of the reward*;" and even of our blessed Lord himself, that "for *the joy set before Him*, He endured the cross, despising the shame." The truth is, that our own happiness, and the glory of God, should be considered by us, in one point of view, as inseparably connected; since our promoting the last will infallibly secure the first. For, if we make the advancement of His glory the constant and leading object of all our actions *here*, we shall not fail to receive from Him "a crown of glory" *hereafter*, — that unfading, imperishable crown, which "the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

That our only Saviour and prevailing intercessor may never be overlooked in our prayers, we make all these requests "through Jesus Christ our Lord." For His sake alone can we expect a favourable answer to our petitions: His death is the only ground of hope to guilty sinners; only for His sake will an offended God shew mercy.

Such, my brethren, is the tone of self-abasement, such the language of contrition, breathed throughout this beautiful prayer. And we are taught, in

using it, to be as humble in our *manner* as in our words: we are directed meekly to kneel upon our knees, in making these supplications to the Most High. And in this respect we are imitators of devout men in the old time before us. Thus Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, "kneeled upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel." "Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." Our blessed Saviour, in his agony in the garden, "kneeled down and prayed" to his heavenly Father. St. Paul, after bidding the elders of Miletus farewell, "kneeled down and prayed with them all;" and the same Apostle, in these words, expresses prayer itself by the attitude in which it should be used, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

After such examples and such exhortations, we cannot but be struck with the utter impropriety of any other posture in this act of confession. *Standing* is a posture which, at such a time, could only be justified by some infirmity which prevents the humbler and more appropriate attitude; but nothing but the extremest necessity can be thought to excuse the indolent and irreverent habit of *sitting*, during the solemn confession of our sins to God, and the prayer for their pardon.

In conclusion, let me urge an effort on the part

of all, to take their share in this portion of the Service of the Church. When it is considered that every Christian is nearly and indispensably concerned in the duty of confession, the obligation upon all worshippers to be present in God's house at such a time, must be apparent. Many, unhappily, are often too late for this duty of confession: but if they reflected how much they lost in being absent,—how important a portion of the work of the sanctuary is left unperformed,—how essential a preparation for the succeeding duties of prayer and praise is omitted,—they would endeavour surely so to order their engagements, so to arrange their worldly matters, that they might be in time at least for the General Confession. They owe this punctuality to themselves, as needing to confess their sins; and they owe it to others around them, that they may not, by a late attendance, disturb their devotions.

To make no earnest, hearty effort to be in the Lord's house before the Service commences, is as much as to say that the confession of sin is unnecessary, and that we may go, in a self-righteous spirit, into the presence of God. We have but to think upon the effect of such a disposition,—upon the loss and condemnation to ourselves which it must provoke,—to make an earnest and conscientious exertion to correct it. I shall only add,

let every word of this admirable confession be audibly and heartily pronounced by the conscious sinner : let him feel and be persuaded in his heart, of what he utters with his lips ; and then he may look to God, with hope and confidence, for pardon.

LECTURE VI.

THE ABSOLUTION.

ST. JOHN xx., 23.—“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

It has been well observed that to those who feel the sting, and have an overpowering sense of the wages of sin, vague and indeterminate ideas of the mercy of God will not be satisfactory, without some accompanying clearness of persuasion upon the Scripture doctrine of ABSOLUTION.—Sin is compared to a bond, because it binds down the soul by its guilt and power, and not only hinders it from free converse with God, but makes it liable to eternal condemnation. “Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,” says St. Peter to Simon the magician; and the author of the Book of Proverbs thus expresses the same truth, “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.”*

Our blessed Lord came into the world to unloose

* Acts viii., 23; Proverbs v., 22.

these bonds, and he actually did so to many while He was upon earth. "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," were words he often used,—indicating a release better and more important than any He affords to the afflicted body. That our Lord did not mean that the comfort contained in such a declaration should stop with Him, is evident from the words of the text. Though pardon of sin, such as he pronounced, can never be *directly* conveyed by human lips, still He has left it with His Church, to declare to the penitent and believer all the comfort and encouragement of the same remission. He has conveyed to His Church not a ministry only of fear, and shame, and sorrow; not only are they to proclaim the terrors of the Lord, but to dispense His promises and blessings also.

When the minister of Christ has led his fellow worshippers, in humility and penitence, to the throne of grace; when, along with him, they have there confessed their sinfulness and helplessness, and dependence only on the mercy of God through Christ,—he rightly proceeds to the office of consolation. He takes the sinner, as it were, by the hand, raises him from the dust, and comforts him with God's promises of pardon,—not vaguely or indefinitely expressed, but authoritatively spoken on the strength of the commission with which he

has been invested. By our sins we are delivered up, bound as it were with a chain and ready for punishment; but by God's mercy through Christ, vouchsafed to us on our hearty repentance, we are delivered. Upon these terms, His ministers are commissioned to pronounce our discharge.

Nor is the Church of England singular, amongst Protestant communions, in this construction of the wants and desires of her penitent people. The celebrated Calvin says, "We are every one of us ready to admit that, after a General Confession, to subjoin some signal promise which may excite hope of pardon and reconciliation, is a very useful and beneficial practice. And from the very beginning I was desirous of adopting this method, but I yielded too easily to the apprehensions of others."

Whether this absolution be only a *declaration* of the conditions, or terms, upon which God is willing to pardon sinners; or whether it be an *actual conveyance* of pardon, at the very moment of pronouncing it, *to such as come within the terms proposed*, is a question that has been much disputed.—To limit it, however, to the former sense,—to a mere declaration of the conditions of pardon,—would seem to be inconsistent with the rubric that precedes it, and with the tenor of its own expressions. A mere declaration like this would not need to be directly or authoritatively pronounced;

and with the adoption of that view, we could see little force in the expression that "God hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins."

A valuable writer on the Book of Common Prayer, says, "not that I ascribe any *judicial* power or authority to the priest to determine the case of a *private* man, so as to apply God's pardon or forgiveness directly to the conscience of any *particular* or *definite* sinner; nor do I suppose that the priest, when he pronounces this form, can apply the benefit of it to whom he pleases; or that he so much as knows upon whom, or upon how many, it shall take effect: but all I contend for is only this, namely, that since the priest has 'the ministry of reconciliation' committed to him by God, and hath 'power and commandment,' as it is expressed in this form, 'to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins'; therefore, when he does, by virtue of this power and commandment, declare and pronounce such absolution and remission regularly in the congregation; those in the congregation who 'truly and unfeignedly believe God's holy Gospel,'—though the priest does not know who, or how many, they are that do so,—have yet their pardon conveyed and sealed to them, at that very

instant, through his ministrations; it being the ordinary method of God with his Church, to communicate His blessings through the ministry of the priest.”*

Another writer of great authority upon our Book of Common Prayer, says, “It is a solemn promulgation of pardon by a commissioned person, repeated when the whole congregation confess their sins, wherein they are assured of forgiveness if they repent and believe; and this is fitted for a mixed company of good and bad men, where many hypocrites feign repentance: but this absolution gives no encouragement to such; only it assures all that there is a pardon, and shows on what terms it may be had,—so that to those only who truly do repent, it is present remission; to those that do not, it is a monitor that they may repent: it comforts the godly, and allows not the wicked to presume, nor yet to despair: and this being pronounced to all the people, every one is to take his portion.” †

This conditional absolution was spoken by St. Peter to the Jews, when he said, “Repent and be baptised every one of you, for the remission of sins: the fulfilment of the required repentance and faith, authorised in the Apostle the declaration of

* Wheatley on Common Prayer.

† Dean Comber, Companion to the Temple.

the remission of their sins. St. Paul also admits the possession of such powers in the duly accredited minister of the Lord, when he pardons the submissive Corinthians, "in the person of Christ;" and he distinctly recognises these powers when he says, "there has been given unto us the ministry of reconciliation." In illustration of this point, Dean Comber happily remarks, "A temporal prince can choose which of his subjects he pleaseth to act in his name, and by his authority. Much more may the God of heaven do so.—A condemned man may be told of a pardon intended to him, but he will then believe and rejoice in it, when the Prince's herald approacheth with it in his hand."

Our form of Absolution has by some been styled *Popish*; but it is worthy of being remarked that neither this, nor the Confession which precedes it, is taken out of any Popish Service: on the contrary, both of them appeared for the first time in the second edition of King Edward's Common Prayer, which was made with the advice of Presbyterian Protestants. You have already heard the opinion of Calvin; and the fact may not be generally known, that this very form of Absolution came from Pollanus, Calvin's successor at Strasbourg, and was directly levelled against Popery; for the Popish absolutions were given in private,—separately to each particular person,—positively, and without reversion, in the name of the priest.

Ours, on the other hand, is given in public,—to all persons at once,—conditionally,—and in the name of God.

Having considered the reasons for an office of Absolution, we shall be profitably employed in briefly examining the form adopted by our Church.

The sinner, trembling in the sight of a pure and holy God, has comfort conveyed to him in the very first words of the Absolution. If he should be startled at the majesty of the Name with which it is introduced, the “Almighty God,” hope is restored to him when he hears Him represented as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” By the introduction of this Name, we are reminded that He desireth not the death of a sinner,—the best assurance of which is conveyed in the fact that Jesus Christ died for our redemption. We are not left, however, to glean our comforts from these mere epithets of condescension and kindness; our heavenly Father is expressly mentioned as one “that willeth not the death of a sinner.” And to assure the penitent offender to the uttermost, He is described as desiring “rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.”

Yet, if general declarations of this readiness to receive the penitent should not suffice, we are told that God “hath given power and commandment to His ministers” to make known this boon of His

grace. But that none may presume upon this promise of pardon thus authoritatively pronounced, further than their own repentance and faith will justify its application, all are reminded that this absolution and remission of sins is only "declared and pronounced to His people, being penitent."

And let it be understood that the minister of Christ pronounces not this absolution *in his own name*: he only promulgates the terms of pardon, as granted by its heavenly author. Lest there should be any misconception upon the subject, the words of the Church are,—HE, that is, Almighty God, "pardoneth and absolveth;" and in proof that no human or fallible being can possibly confer it, we have its limitation to those "that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." None but God can possibly know how far these conditions are fulfilled; and although his ambassadors on earth may declare the terms of pardon, yet, from ignorance of the secrets of the heart, they cannot confer absolutely the pardon itself.

But we may well ask, who is sufficient for these things? Who, from natural impulse, would repent? Who, from other teaching than the Spirit of God, would really believe? How eagerly, then, should we resort to the throne of grace; how gladly obey the appeal of the Church,—“Let us beseech HIM to grant us true repentance, and His holy Spirit?”

To please God should be the heart's desire and prayer of all His children : earnestly, therefore, should they pray for the divinely bestowed gifts of repentance and faith, that, in the words of the absolution, "those things may please Him which we do at this present,"—even our penitential acts, our offerings of prayer, our assembling together in his holy courts. Nor is the real Christian content with this as the mere fruits of the passing hour : his prayer is not merely that his present acts may be pleasing to God, but that "the rest of his life hereafter may be pure and holy."

Peace on earth, quietness and assurance during our probationary conflicts, will be the sanctifying effect of a genuine faith ; yet there is a state before us in which the tears of repentance will be wiped away, the sighs of sorrow hushed, and the trials of earth succeeded by everlasting happiness. We, therefore, so pray for true repentance and God's holy Spirit, "that at the last we may come to His eternal joy." Of this it is sufficient to say that it is a "joy unspeakable and full of glory,"—one, nevertheless, which no merit of ours has been instrumental in acquiring ; but which is bestowed only "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

These words, so replete with comfort and drawn from the Book of God itself, are, as we have said, more than a simple declaration of God's good-will towards

the penitent. A further proof of their being spoken with authority, by one commissioned to declare the counsel of God, is, that while the congregation, during its utterance, are required to maintain their kneeling posture, the priest is desired to *rise* when he makes this proclamation of his divine Master's pardon. He is desired to *stand*, because he then speaks with the tone of authority: he addresses the people as the Lord's ambassador: he communicates to them, as it were in Christ's stead, the terms of the pardon and forgiveness of their sins.

This impression must be rendered stronger by the terms of the Rubric preceding the Absolution; namely, that it is to be pronounced by *the priest alone*. From this we are to understand, not merely that the people are not to unite in its words, as in the previous confession of sin; but that the individual who is lawfully commissioned to pronounce this declaration of pardon, must have attained to the rank of *priest* in the Christian ministry. The inferior order of Deacons are evidently not empowered to use it; because that special authority is not communicated to them at their ordination, whereas to those admitted to the priesthood it is expressly imparted. It is to be observed, that the word *minister* is put, both in the foregoing Rubric before the Confession and in the

succeeding one before the Lord's Prayer; yet in this before the Absolution, though coming just between them, the word *priest* is inserted. This was done at the last review of the Liturgy, in the year 1661; no doubt for the very purpose of distinguishing and limiting the power to the priest's office.

While the people hear this declaration of God's gracious purposes in silence, their hearts are to accompany its utterance; and, at the conclusion, they respond to the comforting truths that have been proclaimed by a hearty *amen*. In this short but expressive word, they declare their assent to the truths that have been uttered; and they pray also that God would be pleased to confirm and verify to them all the benefits that have been promised.

The congregation of the ancient Israel were required to say *amen*, upon the proclamation of the curse of God against notorious offenders. In the hundred and sixth Psalm, after the conclusion of the prayers and praises of which it consists, the injunction follows, "Let all the people say *amen*, praise ye the Lord;" and accordingly, we find in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Chronicles, "all the people said *amen*, and praised the Lord." After the Babylonish captivity, when Ezra opened the book of the Law and blessed the

Lord, all the people answered *amen*, *amen*, and worshipped. St. Paul alludes to the same custom when he says, "How shall the unlearned say *amen* at thy giving of thanks?" And as an incitement to present worshippers to be earnest in the expression of this word of assent to the several petitions in which they join, we may adduce the example of believers of a later age, who, as St. Jerome informs us, answered *amen* with a voice so fervent that it resembled a peal of thunder.

"Still," as has been well observed, "it is not merely putting *amen* to the Confession and Absolution, that can prove us either true penitents or truly pardoned. Our hearts and lives must be in a growing state of conformity to the will of God, before we can draw any just or favourable conclusion respecting our own safety. For the Lord hath clearly revealed it, and our Church invariably speaks the same language, that none will be admitted at the last to His eternal joy, but such as have confessed and forsaken their sins, and fled for refuge and pardon to the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And the more lively sense we have of the riches of His grace, the more holy shall we be in all manner of conversation."

The word *amen* in our Liturgy, as also in Scripture, bears different significations according to the different forms to which it is annexed. At the end

of the prayers and collects, it is addressed to God, and is expressive of desire ; signifying *verily, so be it, as in our prayers we have expressed*. At the end of exhortations, absolutions, creeds, and such like, it is addressed by the people to the priest, and in some sense to one another ; being affirmative and expressive of assent,—as if saying, “this is true, this is our sense and meaning.”

Having made our confession, and heard God’s declarations of pardon to the truly penitent, authoritatively pronounced by His commissioned minister and ambassador, we are in a condition to open our lips in special prayers and praises. We are loosed now from the chain with which we were tied and bound, and may give free utterance to all the longings of the soul. “Our mouth is open, our heart is enlarged,” to lay all our joys and sorrows before the throne of grace.

LECTURE VII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

ST. MATTHEW, vi., 9.—“After this manner therefore pray ye.”

In the Exhortation at the commencement of the service, immediately after being called upon to make confession of our sins, we are exhorted to prayer and praise. This confession, accordingly, having been completed, and proclamation made of the pardon which God vouchsafes to the true penitent and real believer, *prayer*, properly so called, becomes now the duty of the worshipper. This includes a petition for the supply of the necessities of the soul, as well as of the wants of the body.

But “does the penitent and humbled sinner need encouragement to begin his task of prayer? Does he feel that, from his unworthiness he dare not, and from his blindness he cannot ask? The Church has not been wanting in care to provide us with a beginning that shall animate our courage and hope, and, as it were, break the ice of our devotions. She begins with that model, that best herald of all prayers, the prayer which Jesus gave

to His disciples, when they in their need exclaimed, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' Teach us to pray, is always the cry of the penitent; and the Church, as a tender mother, encouraging the faltering steps of her children, makes the first movement in prayer to be that which Divine wisdom and goodness taught us."*

"The Father," says St. Chrysostom, "well knows the words and meaning of His Son;" and St. Cyprian says, "Let the Father recognise in your prayers the words of his Son. Since we have an advocate with the Father for our sins, we should, whenever we pray for pardon, allege unto God the very words which our Advocate hath taught us. We have His promise, that whatever we shall ask in His name, we shall receive; and must we not more readily obtain our desires, when we not only use His *name*, but in His *very words* present our requests unto God? Our Advocate in heaven has taught us to say this prayer upon earth, that between His intercession and our supplications, the most perfect harmony may subsist." And here we may add the testimony of our learned and judicious Hooker,—“Should men speak with the tongues of angels, yet words so pleasing to the ears of God as those which the Son of God himself has composed, it were not possible for man to

* Penny Sunday Reader.

frame. He therefore which made us to live, hath also taught us to pray, to the end that speaking unto the Father in his Son's own prescript form, without scholy or gloss of ours, we may be sure that we utter nothing which God will either disallow or deny."

Beautiful and comprehensive, rich even in doctrine and practical instruction, is that form of prayer which our blessed Lord hath taught us. Very justly did some of the ancient Fathers style it an "epitome of the Gospel, as affording a complete rule of duty as well as a perfect model of devotion. To this prayer, indeed, the Christian world at large pays homage. It furnishes the first form of pious words which the infant tongue is taught to utter; and by every nation and community which holds the faith of Jesus, this simple and comprehensive prayer seems to be embodied both in their public and private devotions. Not only does it teach us how to pray, but it also instructs us how to live; and a brief examination of its various excellencies would enable us to apply to the prayer of our Lord, what has been said of His preaching, "Never man spake like this man."

Here, first, we invoke the Sovereign of the universe as "our Father." The great God condescends to assume towards us this endearing relation, for our encouragement and hope; command-

ing not the homage of trembling subjects, but inviting the confidence and affection of children; bidding us, in the full trust of filial love, to unveil before Him the secrets of our hearts,—our hopes and fears, our desires and wants.

But we are not permitted to be selfish or contracted in the application of this endearing Name: it is as "*our* Father" that we are taught to address Him,—the father of all petitioners, the parent of the whole human family. Here then, when we refer to our common origin, we make recognition of our common brotherhood; we embrace the whole of mankind in the petitions we offer up. We thus put in practice the unselfish spirit of the Gospel, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

And while we are encouraged to come with boldness to the throne of grace, as to a tender and compassionate Father, we are reminded at the same time of the infinite distance between us and Him. In the midst of our assurance and hope, we are cautioned to be reverent and humble in our advances, in being instructed to address Him as our Father *in heaven*. "Be not rash with thy mouth," says Solomon, "and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth."

In the first petitions of the Lord's Prayer, what

a check do we observe to the characteristic selfishness of mankind ! We are not allowed to approach God with our own hopes and fears, our own wants and wishes in the foreground : these are not to be the primary and principal objects of supplication ; before we are allowed to think of, or pray for, our own necessities, we are directed to what concerns God and His glory. First, we are taught to say, "Hallowed be Thy name,"—to pray that this may be sanctified and honoured, throughout the whole world, by the reverence, worship, and adoration of all His creatures. We pray that the belief of the true God may prevail universally,—that every believer may "give unto the Lord the honour due unto His name, and worship Him with holy worship,"—that "the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" through our disobedience.

Next, we pray, "Thy kingdom come." We implore our heavenly Father to speed the arrival of that blessed time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" when the kingdoms of this world shall become "the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ;" when the true religion, the pure and holy Gospel of Christ, shall be embraced "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same;" when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all Israel shall be saved."

But it is not he, we are warned, that saith, "Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of our Father which is in heaven." It will be vain simply to pray that God's kingdom may come and be universal: we must pray also, as we intend to act, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Our petition is, that we and all mankind,—as far as our imperfect nature will permit,—may obey His laws, and fulfil His will, as the angels "that do His pleasure" in heaven; that we may imitate them in holiness here, as we hope to be sharers with them in happiness hereafter. We ask, too, for grace to be enabled patiently to submit to all the dispensations of God's providence, be they ever so trying and afflictive; not murmuring against nor repining at His dispensations, but willing always with our blessed Saviour to say, "Not my will, but thine, O God, be done."

Having made our first petitions for the extension of God's kingdom, and a universal obedience to His will, we are now permitted to make supplication for our personal wants,—to declare in the ears of the Most High our private necessities and anxieties. But here how complete a restraint is put upon every superfluous wish, upon every vain and extravagant desire! "Give us this day our daily bread," is the modest petition we are directed to

make. There is no encouragement here to pray for the distinctions and enjoyments of life; our petitions are to be limited to the needful sustenance of the passing day; we are forbidden to indulge in any over-anxious thought for the morrow. The words of the petition, too, imply a constant, never-varying sense of our dependence upon Almighty God, even for our passing food: day by day, as continually needing His bounty, we supplicate our daily bread. For "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons," we look entirely to Him; should He withdraw his hand, the "heavens above us would be brass, and the earth beneath us iron."

But while we petition for the wants of the body, we are to be chiefly solicitous for the necessities of the soul; our great anxiety must be directed to our state with God. In continual remembrance of our many short-comings and misdoings, we pray that He would "forgive us our trespasses." And although we can do nothing of ourselves to *merit* forgiveness, there are conditions required of us without the performance of which we should never obtain it. One of the chief of these is, that we "forgive them that trespass against us."

How should the uncharitable and unforgiving man pause before he pronounces this petition,—how careful should he be lest, while he utters it, he should be pronouncing his own condemnation!

not only, then, when we receive the Holy Communion,—for many are disposed to limit a thorough Christian charity as a qualification for this; but whenever we say the Lord's Prayer, we do in effect call down God's wrath and vengeance upon us,—we pray for our own condemnation,—if we do not heartily and sincerely forgive those who have offended us, and are not in perfect love and charity with all men.

Having now implored God's forgiveness of our past offences, we proceed to pray to Him against the power and dominion of sin in future,—against all its fearful consequences both in this world and the next; we entreat His grace and guidance in all difficulties and dangers with which we are at all times surrounded. Having internal corruptions to subdue,—an enticing world to resist,—and spiritual wickedness in high places to overcome, we may well, in the consciousness of our own insufficiency, pray to God to “lead us not into temptation.”

We mean by this, that He would not “suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear,”—that He would not withhold from us His restraining grace, without which the enticements of the enemy might be too strong for us, and his temptations might surprise us to our ruin. Though God tempteth no man,” yet in His infinite wis-

dom He sees fit to put our faith and obedience to many trials. From these we must not expect to be exempt; but it is our duty to pray that, "with the temptation, He would also make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it." It becomes us, as our Saviour admonished, to "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation;" to be always on our guard,—to avoid every occasion of sin,—and when the trial comes which God has been pleased to send, to implore His assistance that we may be enabled to endure and overcome it.

In the petition, "Deliver us from evil," we pray against evil in general,—whatever may afflict the body or the soul; and against the "Evil One" in particular, who is the author of all that can spiritually hurt us. As sin is the greatest of all evils, and the punishment of it is everlasting, we should have this chiefly in view when we offer up this petition; for the greatest calamities that can befall us here, are as nothing in comparison of the miseries that await the impenitent sinner hereafter. Yet great as the power and malice of the enemy of our souls may be, he has no power to hurt us except through our own fault and negligence. Though "our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," yet if we "resist him, he will flee from us."

The concluding words of this admirable Prayer,

are an acknowledgment of the infinite majesty of God,—a declaration of our confidence that He is able, as well as willing, to grant the petitions which we offer up unto Him; “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.” An acknowledgment this, similar to what the glorified spirits in heaven are represented as offering,—“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive *glory*, and *honour*, and *power*; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

The Lord's Prayer we are very properly directed to repeat in the humblest posture of devotion; and as a becoming mark of respect to its Divine author, the congregation of worshippers here, and where-soever else it occurs in the course of divine service, are required to make an audible rehearsal of its several petitions after the minister. The plural number running throughout the prayer, would denote that it was meant to be used in common.

“The prudence of the Church,” says a living writer, “in introducing this prayer to its different offices, and requiring it to be learned in the Catechism, is obvious, and shews its value both as a prayer, and as a set form of prayer. In every stage, and in all the circumstances of life, it is at hand as a familiar friend and dear counsellor. It blends itself almost mechanically with every devo-

tional movement of the soul: it forms one of the earliest and deepest impressions upon our memory, —one of the chords first and closest interwoven into our affections. While its simplicity adapts it to the comprehension of the young and the unlearned, its power and perfection commend it to the mature and to the learned. Its petitions offer balm, or counsel, or strength, for every case. The orphan in it appeals to his heavenly Father; the widow to her just and merciful King; the poor man to Him who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field; the rich to Him who alone can save him from temptation, and enable him to enter into the kingdom of heaven; the sinner to Him who has the will and the power to forgive; the oppressed and the afflicted, the fainting and the feeble, to Him who alone is able to deliver us from evil. In a word, there is no situation, no period of life, in which, when our heart is moved to prayer, its first utterance will not be, ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’ This address to God, rooted in our first recollections, presents itself amongst our latest associations. It is our first and constant companion through life, and fails us not even at the hour of death.”*

“What clergyman,” continues the same writer, “conversant with parochial ministrations, can have

* Rev. Dr. Molesworth, Penny Sunday Reader.

failed to notice the practical usefulness of this prayer, and the advantages which arise from the people being accustomed to its form, and familiar with its petitions? Like the builders of the Jerusalem-wall under Nehemiah, we are beset with watchful and dangerous foes. Our work is carried on in the midst of conflict and peril; and this prayer is to every one, even the poorest and most afflicted, like the 'sword girded on his side,' ready for instant use. It has many times been our lot, we may say our privilege, to witness this. We have knelt beside the bed of the sick and the sorrowful, the suffering and the dying. We have seen, as we offered up this prayer, how the thin hands have been feebly clasped, the heavy eyes have been raised, and the dry bloodless lips have moved with ours, at each word, even when no sound could be uttered. But the mute expression of these signs, with a power to which speech could not attain, nor description do justice, has revealed to us that the prayer touched a string which vibrated in the heart, and would not cease to respond, to the last moment that life and sense continued. And again, when not only voice, but even sense and memory, and every mental faculty have been failing, and the attention could not follow other forms of prayer, they have rallied at these well-known and long-remembered words.

The light of consciousness, seemingly sunk, has again flickered up ; the last breath has expired in that blessed and precious prayer which Jesus taught his disciples, and in which He still teaches the fainting soul to take its flight to OUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

LECTURE VIII.

RESPONSES AFTER THE LORD'S PRAYER.—GLORIA
PATRI.—HALLELUIAH.

Having made our approaches to the throne of grace under the guidance, and in the very words, of our Lord, we proceed now to express our wants in forms of the Church's own preparation,—forms, it should be added, drawn from the holy Word of inspiration, and modelled after its language.

Having repeated the Lord's Prayer, both minister and people,—still in the posture of suppliants, meekly kneeling upon their knees,—are instructed to begin, with imploring the Divine assistance to render effectual their own imperfect forms of petition and praise. This is done in four short devout Versicles ; which, from their being recited by the Minister and people alternately, are sometimes called RESPONSES.

This manner of the Minister repeating, and the people answering, is an ancient custom, derived from the practice of singers among the Jews. These were arranged on two sides,—one side repeating one portion, and the other another, in

regular turns. Thus in the third chapter of the Book of Ezra, it is said that "they sang together *by course*, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord." It appears, however, from this passage, that the performance of the service was limited to the Priests and Levites; but Christian worshippers enjoy a more extensive privilege. Here the whole congregation are called upon to take a part; and every member of it is so far himself a priest, as to be admitted to join in this spiritual sacrifice. In thus uniting in worship, they fulfil the Apostle's exhortation "with *one mind*, and with *one mouth* to glorify God;" and in correspondence with our Saviour's injunction, we shew that we "*agree together* touching what we shall ask of the Father."

This responsive manner of worship is also sanctioned by the structure and directions of the most ancient Christian Liturgies; and Dean Comber observes that the primitive Christians used it so constantly, that they considered the sect of the Essenes to be Christians because they sung by turns, answering one another. It has, moreover, a strong recommendation in its practical usefulness; in enlivening and invigorating devotion, and in keeping up, by variety, the attention which might otherwise wander and droop. "The time," says St. Jerome, "will appear short when it is occupied with so great a variety of works." If the whole

of the prayers were offered up by the Minister alone, without any break of this kind, it would be difficult to keep the minds of the congregation from becoming listless, and forgetting the business in which they were engaged. But this sort of outward help is well calculated to keep up the attention; especially if they are obedient to the direction of the Church, to join with an *audible voice* in the portions of the service assigned to them.

The RESPONSES and GLORIA PATRI may be regarded as the ancient introduction to the Psalms. The first Versicle and reponse, "O Lord, open thou our lips, And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise," are found in very ancient Liturgies, and have been used from time immemorial in the English Church. The second Versicle and response, "O God, make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to help us," are also to be found in ancient Anglo-Saxon offices. But while we have authority for the use of these Versicles in very ancient Liturgies, our highest and best authority is, that they are contained in the Word of God. The first two occur in the fifty-first Psalm, and the latter in the seventieth Psalm; and we cannot but perceive how appropriately they connect the preceding penitential part of the service, with the eucharistic, or thanksgiving part, which succeeds.

The mouth closed by sin, it has been well said,

can only be opened by pardon ; and in token of this, He who came into the world to confer pardon, caused the dumb to speak and the mute to sing praises. Tied and bound with the chain of our sins, we appeal to our heavenly Father to be loosed and delivered : to Him we cry for the gift of utterance in our prayers and praises, which must otherwise be restrained and checked under the deep and distressing consciousness of sin. "O Lord, open Thou our lips," is the petition of the minister of the congregation, weak himself, and helpless, and needing succour as much as any ; and with one voice the congregation are called upon to declare, in connexion with what he has uttered, "And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

But the sense of our infirmities can be neither light nor transient ; and we are straitened until we obtain the help that we need. We are, therefore, earnest and instant in our petitions ; we are importunate for the succour we so much require. "O God, make speed to save us," is the cry of him who is the organ of the assembled worshippers ; and to this a response, in the same spirit, is offered by the congregation, "O Lord, make haste to help us." An able commentator upon the Liturgy has well paraphrased these petitions,—“We are wearied with the burden of our sins, we have destroyed ourselves ; but in Thee is our help. Make haste,

O Lord, to save us. With speed further us in all things necessary to our salvation. Quicken and animate our devotions, and raise our hearts unto thee, while with joyful lips we speak thy praises, and glorify on earth thy holy name."*

We have seen that these are expressions borrowed from the Book of Psalms; and I cannot better conclude this portion of our subject than with the words of the venerable Dean Comber:—"David, surveying his sins more numerous than his hairs, more weighty than his heart could bear, —terrified with which sad spectacle, he breaks out into this passionate ejaculation, which may well befit our mouths, who so lately have been confessing our offences; for it contains all that any penitent sinner, about to put up his petitions, need to sue for by way of preparation, namely, deliverance and safety from evil, and help in that which is good. We suppose ourselves like a besieged city; our sins behind threaten us, and our corruptions have blocked us up before, and fear is on every side, yet still the way to heaven is open, and we send these prayers upwards, to the place where the King of heaven resides, for a speedy rescue to be granted to his distressed subjects. When we look back, and see our innumerable iniquities, we cry out, 'O God, make speed to save us:' when we look forward to

* Shepherd on Common Prayer.

all those duties which we are to do, and the great opposition we are sure to meet with, we say, 'O Lord, make haste to help us.' Our guilt will 'make speed' to pursue us, Satan to destroy us, and evil thoughts to hinder our devotions. Wherefore we must beg that our gracious God will also 'make haste to save and help us,' just now when we are in danger and need; and it will double the kindness."

Having now confessed our sinfulness, and heard the promise of forgiveness; having prayed for pardon in the Lord's own words, and lifted up our united voices to God for help; having, in short, qualified ourselves to say with David, "My heart is ready, my heart is ready, I will sing and give praises,"—we rise from the humble posture of penitent supplication, and *stand up* rejoicing. Thus we read that, when the priests and Levites praised the Lord, all Israel *stood*.*

But, in commencing this act of praise, it is right that we should declare at the same time our faith in the adorable Trinity,—in the FATHER who created us, in the SON who redeemed us, and in the HOLY GHOST that sanctifieth us. "The Church," says Dean Comber, "hath placed this ancient hymn at the close of the penitential part of daily prayer in imitation of holy David, who commonly, when

* 2 Chron., vii., 6.

he made his confession, declared his distress, and begged pardon and deliverance, turns then his petitions into praises, because of his lively hope of acceptance. So we being full of hopes that our gracious Father will forgive us, for his Son's sake, by the ministry of the Spirit, we, I say, do now give 'glory to the *Father*,' who granteth this absolution; 'to the *Son*,' who purchased it and obtained it; and 'to the *Holy Ghost*,' who sealeth and dispenseth it to us; and we also call to mind those innumerable instances of the like infinite mercies to poor sinners, which have been, and ever shall be, to the world's end. And what heart can conceive, or tongue express, that ecstasy of ravishing pleasures which we shall feel at the last day, when we, and all true penitents, that ever were, or shall be, shall all join in singing songs of praise to our dear Redeemer, whom we shall love much, because much is forgiven us. We can foresee those anthems which shall then be sounded on the battlements of heaven by millions of glorious souls rescued from destruction, and we, by faith, have such a sense hereof, that we begin now that song which we shall sing for evermore."

The Doxology is so called from its *giving of glory*, and is usually termed the GLORIA PATRI, from the words in Latin with which it commences. St. Basil * ascribes its origin to the Apostles; but

* A. D. 370.

whether so derived or not, the doctrine it contains is without doubt apostolical, and the language so simple and comprehensive, that we can readily believe it to have been in the mouths of the earliest Christian worshippers. "As we have believed," says that ancient Father, "so must we be baptised; as we are baptised, so must we believe; and as we have believed, so must we glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."—"It is," says Hooker, "the token, evidence, or demonstration of a true understanding or sound belief for matter of doctrine concerning the Trinity, when, in administering baptism, making confession, and giving glory, there is a conjunction of all three, and no one is severed from the other."

From the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna, relating to the martyrdom of Polycarp, we perceive that a Doxology, very nearly resembling the Gloria Patri, were the last words that he uttered. "For which cause," said the dying martyr, "I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, O God, through the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, to whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and for ever. Amen."—This took place in A. D. 167, and proves the antiquity of at least the form of expression after which our Doxology is modelled; for when we recollect that Polycarp was the disciple of St. John, and speaks of the pleasure he took in relating the sayings and things he

heard from them who had seen the Lord, it is reasonable to infer that he, on this occasion, spoke what he had learned from the first followers of Christ.

In St. Clement of Alexandria, who lived A. D. 190, we have these words contained in the form of praising God then used by Christians,—“To the only Father, and the Son, with the Holy Ghost, one in all respects, be glory now and evermore. Amen.”

Innumerable testimonies from succeeding Fathers could be advanced in proof of its being used in the early Christian Church,—exhibiting occasional variations of expression, but always retaining the substance. “As long at least as the Trinity had due honour,” says our venerated Hooker, “and till Arianism made it a matter of great sharpness and subtilty of wit, to be a sound believing Christian, men were not curious what syllables or particles of speech they used.” We may remark that, in the fourth century, the Arians attempted, but without success, to alter the conjunctions into prepositions, so as to destroy the equal claim to honour of the Three Persons,—in this way, “Glory to the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Holy Ghost.” It was well said by Bishop Bull, “I have dwelt the longer upon this, that all may know how ancient and truly Apostolical a form of Doxology that is, which is now used in our Church, and how

firm and stable a monument it is of the Apostolical tradition of a consubstantial Trinity against all attempts of heretics."

Although no place can be unfitting for so beautiful and time-honoured a form as this, in our offices of devotion, yet there is a peculiar propriety in repeating it after each Psalm. We shew by this that we ascribe the glory there given to God, to the three persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, and thus, as has been justly said, we turn the Jewish psalms into Christian hymns.

The hearts of the worshippers being now full of gratitude for the work of redemption by the Triune Deity, expressed in the words of that ancient and comprehensive hymn in which martyrs were wont to solace their dying hours,—the minister of Christ next exhorts them to join him in further acts of praise. He accordingly invites them to this duty of thankfulness in the words, "Praise ye the Lord;" words which may be, as they often are, expressed in the one word HALLELUIAH. The latter, indeed, in the Hebrew language, signifies, "Praise the Lord;" so that they are one and the same thing.

"The word Halleluiah," says Dean Comber, "is so sacred that St. John retains it;* and St. Augustine says, "The Church of old scrupled to translate it. The use of it is frequent in the

* Rev. xix, 1, 3, 4, 6.

Psalms, being the title to, and the conclusion of, many of them; particularly of six psalms, one of which was the Paschal Hymn, and called the great Halleluiah. And among the Christians, it was so usual to sing Halleluiah, that St. Jerome saith, 'The little children were acquainted with it.' It is, adds the same writer, a triumphant hymn upon the joyful news of our Absolution, and the overthrow of our spiritual enemies; for which saith the priest to the people, "Praise ye the Lord;" and they readily obey him replying, "The Lord's name be praised."

¶ Here then, my brethren, we are joining the choirs of angels in praising our common Lord, and we glorify Him in the language of the Holy Spirit himself. In contemplation of such a privilege, how should our hearts glow within us,—what a holy zeal and fervour should be ours! And what a rebuke should we feel in being cold in our devotion, or inattentive to the solemn work we are engaged in! Let us endeavour to improve the occasion, and appreciate the words; let us then be mindful of the petition we have made, that we may be like the angels of God in doing the will of our Father in heaven. As an approach to this, let us strive to glorify Him, as they do; and in exclaiming *Halleluiah*, let us remember that the choirs of heaven are uttering the same words.

LECTURE IX.

THE VENITE.—THE PSALMS.

PSALM xcvi., 2.—“Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms.”

“Praise ye the Lord, the Lord’s name be praised,”—were the invitation and response last considered; and, in the frame of mind which they bespeak, we commence the work of praise by repeating the Ninety-fifth Psalm,—commonly called the VENITE EXULTEMUS, from the words with which it commences in Latin. It is also called the Invitatory Psalm; because, at its commencement, it invites us “to come and sing unto the Lord;” and, acting upon the spirit it thus expresses, some of the early Christians were in the habit of using it before the congregation came into Church. St. Chrysostom says, that, till the whole congregation was fully assembled, it was usual for those that were present, by way of beguiling the time, to sing psalms, of which Venite Exultemus was the chief. In the ancient offices of the English Church, as we learn from the Uses of Sarum and York, the Invitatory Psalm, as it was in them termed, occupied the position in the Service which

it now holds,—having preceded the regular Psalms appointed for the day. This shews that the compilers of our Liturgy have adhered, both in arrangement and matter, to what had been in use from ancient times.

In the words of this hymn, the Church invites us, as it were, to give the rein to those thankful feelings which the previous portions of the Service were intended to awaken ; because they are words replete with arguments for reverence and praise, for prayer and thankfulness to the great Author of all our mercies.

The invitatory hymn, you are aware, is not used in the Evening Service for the day ; because then we are presumed to have already joined in it, having heard its invitation at the Morning Service. Nor is it possible to conceive any composition better adapted to the object for which the Church has appointed it. In the mouth of David, it would have been a stirring and pious exhortation ; but, in the alternate voices of a Christian congregation, it is the noblest concert of mutual joy and encouragement,—brother joining with brother in the heartfelt and affectionate invitation, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord.” And may not only our songs arise, but our hearts “rejoice in the strength of our salvation !”

Very animating and inspiring is this beautiful

psalm; and would that they who recite its stirring words would catch the glow of its pious spirit, and sing from the heart the due praises of the Lord, and offer to Him the tribute of unfeigned thanksgiving! With delight and exultation, "let us come before His presence, and show ourselves glad in Him with Psalms;" for surely this joyous and grateful strain becomes us in approaching Him who is the great God,—of dominion unlimited, of providence beneficent and unfailing.

But with "no proud looks" should we approach that adorable Benefactor; and the language of David teaches us the humbleness of soul with which our gladness should be told,—“O come, let us fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.” We are by no means to forget, or indolently to disregard, the authority and motives by which we are here invited to kneel before the Lord. Christians, surely, can never despise the summons, nor be insensible to the claims which the Lord their God has to the bended knee. At the same time, we must not forget the caution which it sets before us,—that if we “harden our hearts,” as the Jews did in the wilderness, the fate of this perverse people will prove but an emblem of our own. We should ourselves, during this brief life, be wanderers in the wilderness of the world, and finally be excluded from God’s rest in the heavenly Canaan. To us

will be applied, and upon us executed, the awful punishment due to them of whom it was said, "It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known my ways."

"To err in their hearts," does not here imply a slight involuntary error,—a mere mistake in judgment, as in ordinary discourse it might be thought to mean,—but a wilful depravity, a corrupt malevolent turn of mind, such as the psalmist elsewhere describes when he says, that they "set not their *heart* aright;" and that "their *heart* was not whole with Him." In like manner, the word "error" is used by St. Paul to denote the vilest impurity; and by St. James to point out a systematic course of sin, and a total departure from the truth.* The words of the latter Apostle are, "He which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death."

Again, the expression "they have not known my ways," does not signify an unavoidable ignorance, but a wilful blindness,—such as St. Peter speaks of when he says, "For this they *willingly* are ignorant of;" and St. Paul, "They did *not like* to retain God in their knowledge." Our blessed Saviour uses the same sort of expression, when He upbraids the perverse Jews in His days for "not having known God,"†—not speaking of

* Romans i., 27; James v., 20.

† John viii., 55.

their ignorance as invincible, or inexcusable, but taxing them with it as in the highest degree wilful and criminal.

From the Invitatory hymn we proceed to the PSALMS ; which are appointed to be read by the minister and people in alternate verses,—thus shewing that, when he calls upon them to “praise the Lord,” they are not backward in responding to the appeal, “The Lord’s name be praised.”

These, and indeed all acts of praise, should be repeated *standing*. Kneeling, it may be observed, is not the fitting posture for such parts of divine worship as are not addressed immediately to God ; and sitting would be decidedly an irreverent attitude for such parts as are directed to Him. Now, as some portion of most of the Psalms is directed to God, and others partake of a narrative or historical character, standing may be considered to suit both parts with more propriety than any other posture. Since both these parts,—namely, those which are, and those which are not, directed to God,—are so often, and so suddenly, altered, mingled, and interwoven, the one with the other, that the most suitable posture for each of them cannot always be used ; certainly that one posture which best suits both of them together, should be preferred.

The Church directs that the Psalms shall be

either “said,” as in the ordinary parochial service; or “sung,” as in the choir service; and there are examples in scripture of both these ways of praising God. His praises were celebrated in the Jewish Church by singing; and afterwards in the Christian Church, as appears from expressions of St. Paul.* Not to insist on those places which seem to require us to “say” psalms, we find in scripture several sacred hymns,—particularly of Hannah, the blessed Virgin, Zacharias, Simeon, and even the saints in heaven, which are related to have been said by them respectively; and the circumstances in the story do not make it probable that they were *sung*.

It is proper to explain that the Latin sentences prefixed to each psalm or hymn, are the first words of the several psalms in that language; and were retained as names or titles, when the service was changed into the vernacular tongue which the people could understand. There are also dots, resembling a colon, which usually occur about the middle of each verse of a psalm. These denote merely a rest in the music, when the service is chaunted; and are not to be regarded in the reading.

“The Book of Psalms,” says Dean Comber, “is a collection of prayers and praises indited by the

* Ephes. v., 19; Coloss. iii., 16.

Spirit, composed by holy men on various occasions, and so suited to public worship, that they are used and commended by the Jews and Mahometans, as well as Christians ; and though the several parties of Christians differ in most other things, in this they all agree ; so that Cassander designed to compose a Liturgy out of the Psalms, in which all Christians might join. They contain a variety of devotions, agreeable to all degrees and conditions of men ; so that, without much difficulty, every man may apply them to his own case, either directly or by way of accommodation ; for which cause the Church uses these oftener than any other part of scripture. It is certain the Temple service consisted chiefly of forms taken out of the Book of Psalms ; and the prayers of the modern Jews are mostly gathered thence. The Christians undoubtedly used them in their public services in the Apostles' times, and in the following ages it is very plain that they sung psalms in the Church by turns, each side of the choir answering to the other ; yea, it appears the Psalms were placed about the beginning of prayers, soon after the Confession ; and that they were so often repeated at the Church, that the poorest Christians could say them by heart, and used to sing them at their labours, in their houses, and in the fields."

Bishop Horne, who wrote a special commentary

upon the Psalms, has the following eloquent introductory remarks :—"The Psalms are an epitome of the Bible, adapted to the purposes of devotion. They treat occasionally of the creation and formation of the world, the dispensations of Providence, and the economy of grace ; the transactions of the patriarchs, the exodus of the children of Israel ; their journey through the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan ; their law, priesthood, and ritual ; the exploits of their great men, wrought through faith ; their sins and captivities, their repentances and restorations ; the suffering and victories of David ; the peaceful and happy reign of Solomon ; the advent of the Messiah, with its effects and consequences ; His incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom, and priesthood ; the effusion of the Spirit, the conversion of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews : the establishment, increase, and perpetuity of the Christian Church ; the end of the world, the general judgment, the condemnation of the wicked, and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King. These are the subjects presented to our imaginations. We are instructed to conceive of them aright, and to express the different affections which, when so conceived of, they must excite in our minds. They are, for this purpose, adorned with the figures, and set off with all the graces of poetry."

“This little volume,” continues the same writer, “like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, every thing that groweth elsewhere, every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food ; and, above all, that which was there lost, and, and is here restored, ‘the tree of life in the midst of the garden.’ That which we read as a matter of speculation in the other Scriptures, is reduced to practice when we recite it in the Psalms. In those, faith and repentance are described ; in these they are acted. By a perusal of the former we learn how others served God ; but by using the latter, we serve God ourselves.”

Upon the same subject, our great Hooker thus expresses himself,—“What is there necessary for men to know which the Psalms are not able to teach ? They are to beginners a familiar introduction,—a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before,—a strong confirmation to the most perfect. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come,—all good necessarily to be either known, done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease inci-

dent to the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times to be found. This is the very cause why we iterate the Psalms oftener than any other part of Scripture besides ; the cause wherefore we inure the people together with their minister, and not the minister alone, to read them as other parts of scripture he doth."

I cannot better justify the large and constant use of the Psalms by the Church, than by further quoting the eloquent words of Bishop Horne. None can be more appropriate or better expressed ; and many readers of this little work may have had no opportunity of perusing them elsewhere. "In the language of this divine Book," says this learned and pious writer, "the prayers of the Church have been offered up to the throne of grace from age to age. And it appears to have been the manual of the Son of God in the days of his flesh ; who, at the conclusion of his supper, is generally supposed, and that upon good grounds, to have sung a hymn taken from it ; who pronounced upon the cross the beginning of the twenty-second psalm, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and expired with a part of the thirty-first in his mouth, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."—Thus He, who spake as never man spake, chose to conclude his

life, to solace himself in his greatest agony, and at last to breathe out his soul in the words of the Psalmist rather than his own. No tongue of man or angel, as Dr. Hammond justly observes, can convey a higher idea of any book, and of their felicity who use it aright.

“Let us stop for a minute to contemplate the true character of these sacred hymns. Greatness confers no exemption from the pains and sorrows of life. This the Israelitish monarch experienced. He sought in piety that peace which he could not find in empire, and alleviated the disquietudes of state with the exercises of devotion.—His invaluable psalms convey those comforts to others, which they afforded to himself. Composed upon particular occasions, yet designed for general use; delivered out as services for Israelites under the Law, yet no less adapted to the circumstances of Christians under the Gospel, they present religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal. Calculated alike to profit and to please, they inform the understanding, elevate the affections, and entertain the imagination. Indited under the influence of Him to whom all hearts are open, and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations, grateful as the manna which descended from above, and conformed itself to every palate. The fairest pro-

ductions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands and lose their fragrantcy ; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful ; their bloom appears to be daily heightened, fresh odours are emitted, and new sweets are extracted from them. He who hath once tasted their excellencies, will desire to taste them again, and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best."

These, my brethren, are high authorities in commendation of the Book of Psalms. They shew the estimation in which we ought to hold them at all times ; and prove the wisdom of the Church in making them occupy so large and conspicuous a portion of our public service. These evidences of their value must heighten our satisfaction as we use them ; and the more we esteem and use them, the more shall we identify ourselves with their spirit. The more deeply, too, we imbibe that spirit the nearer shall we be in mind and devotion to holy men of old,—the nearer in piety and godly living to our blessed Redeemer himself, who spoke and prayed so often in the language of the psalms. Devoutly using these sacred compositions, we shall be preparing ourselves, with the most becoming feeling and in the most appropriate language, for the song which is to be raised eternally in heaven to the praise of God and the Lamb.

LECTURE X.

THE LESSONS.

ST. JAMES i., 21.—“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Amongst the many excellencies of our highly prized Liturgy, there is none worthy of higher commendation than the provision which is made in it for the public reading of “God’s most holy word.” The Book of Common Prayer, in its whole construction and in all the doctrines it embodies is indeed eminently scriptural: its whole frame-work is from the Bible; and through the large portion of God’s word which it expressly introduces, it makes, as it were, a constant appeal to the sacredness of the foundation upon which it is built. It steadily reiterates those holy and precious truths by which its devotions, its prayers and praises have been constructed.

In the dark days of the Church, when an overshadowing cloud hid, in a great degree, the fair face of truth from the world, and a corrupt priesthood sought by every means to rivet the bonds by

which the minds of men were enthralled,—the sacred Word of God, which “giveth understanding unto the simple,” was studiously concealed from the people. They were not permitted to peruse for themselves its comforting and awakening lessons: they had no opportunity, like the Bereans of old, of comparing the instructions they received with the fountain of truth from which they were professedly drawn. But when a brighter day dawned upon God’s overclouded Church, and when, by the Reformation, the chains of superstition were snapped asunder, one of the first-fruits of the happy change was the restoration to the people of that precious charter of our salvation, from the very sight of which they had been so long debarred.

This to Christians is an inestimable privilege; for if they “cannot hear without a preacher,” so they cannot confide in the counsels which the preacher offers, unless the means be afforded of comparing the instructions which he delivers with that holy Book from which all Christian exhortation should be drawn.

“Search the Scriptures,” is a command of our blessed Saviour, which his Apostles reiterated,—an injunction which, no doubt, was meant to apply primarily, to the duty of perusing them in retirement, and rendering them the subject of habitual study and meditation. But what is a necessary

adjunct of a Christian's obligation in private, it would be manifestly inconsistent to separate from his duty in public. When, in secret, he prays and offers up his praises to God, and searches, as for a "hid treasure," the Holy Scriptures; so when, openly in the congregation, he expresses his thankfulness and presents his petitions to the throne of grace, it is but right and dutiful that he should then make his appeal also to the Book of Books—the BIBLE.

In this public reading of the Holy Scriptures, there are obvious practical advantages. There are, in almost every community, some persons who cannot of themselves read the Word of God; and therefore it is a high privilege to such to receive the knowledge of its truths, and experience the comfort of its promises, by this their public proclamation. And while some are so circumstanced as to be *unable* to read the Scriptures for themselves, there are more probably who are *unwilling* to do so. The Bible is perhaps in their possession, and they are without excuse for neglecting the study of it; yet often it is laid by, unopened and unregarded. Such persons, however, are constrained to hear, in the house of God, what at home, perhaps, they neglect to look into. Moreover, through the "hearing of the ear" impressions are often communicated, which a private perusal of

the Scriptures might not have an equal effect in producing ; and sometimes warnings and counsels from the Book of God, pronounced in that public and solemn manner, have an influence which, under ordinary circumstances, might not be awakened.

The Exhortation at the commencement of the Service, in enumerating the ends of public worship, states one to be,—the “hearing of God’s most holy word ;” and therefore, upon concluding the Psalms, —themselves, strictly speaking, a portion of that Word,—we proceed with a marked propriety to the reading of other portions of the Scriptures. By the devout exercise of reading the Psalms, the mind is elevated, and the heart warmed, to heavenly themes ; and this would seem to be just the moment in which the record of God’s dealings in Providence and grace, as furnished in the Scriptures, is likely to be received with the greatest reverence and improvement. The same sort of preparation, indeed, is afforded by the whole course of devotions which precede the reading of God’s word ; and the admirable remark of Hooker is thus to the letter realised,—“he which prayeth in due sort, is made more ready to hear ; and he which heareth, the most earnest to pray.”

The custom of reading the Holy Scriptures in public, which our Church has retained, derives incontestable authority from the example of the

Jews as well as of the early Christians. Ezra, who himself collated most of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament into one volume, we are told, "brought the law *before the congregation*, and he read therein from morning until mid-day, before the men and women, and those that could understand." And "he stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose and he opened the Book in the sight of all the people and the Levites caused the people to understand the Law and they read in the Book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."* In our Saviour's time, we find that the Scriptures were read in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day: "as his custom was," says St. Luke, "he went into the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read."† In the Apostles' times, the Law and the prophets were read on the same occasions; as in the Acts, it is said of Paul and his company, that they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and sat down; and *after the reading of the Law and the prophets*, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them saying, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."‡ Again, it is stated, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being

* Nehemiah viii., 1-8.

† Luke iv., 16.

‡ Acts xiii., 15.

read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day."* And further on in the history of the Church,—from St. Paul's injunction to the Colossians to have his epistle read among them, and also in the Church of the Laodiceans,—we should judge that the public reading of the Scriptures was customary in the assemblies of the Christians.

This, too, was no doubt the practice of the Church immediately succeeding the Apostles' times. Justin Martyr, in the second century, speaking of the Lessons, and of the usual manner of explaining and applying them, says, "On the day called Sunday, there is held a meeting in one place of all the people, whether they dwell in towns or in the country; and the writings of the Apostles and prophets are read, as far as time and opportunity permit."—Tertullian, who lived half a century later, describing the public worship of the early Christians, says, "We meet together to hear the Holy Scriptures rehearsed for by them we support our faith, exalt our hope, and establish our" confidence. We further enforce obedience to the Divine commands by repeated instructions, by exhortations, and by rebukes."

The ancient offices of our English Church prescribed the same position for the first Lesson as we do, namely, after the Psalms and before the

* xv., 21

Te Deum ; and the custom of selecting the second Lesson from the New Testament is according to the ancient rule of the Egyptian Church in the fifth century.

The Scriptures are divided into the Old Testament and the New ; and therefore it is provided that both should be read in the course of the public service. "The Old and New Testaments," says St. Chrysostom, "are two handmaids and sisters attendant on our Lord."—"The Law," says Justin Martyr, "is the prediction of the Gospel, and the Gospel is the Law fulfilled."—"That," says Bishop Sparrow, "which lies in the Old Testament as under a shadow, is in the New brought out into the open sun ; things there prefigured, are here performed. Thus, as the two Seraphims cry one to another, 'Holy, holy, holy,' so the two Testaments, Old and New, faithfully agreeing, convince the sacred truth of God."—"This method of their reading," says Hooker, "either purposely did tend, or at the leastwise doth fitly serve, that from smaller things the minds of the hearers may go forward to the knowledge of greater ; and by degrees climb up from the lowest to the highest things."

With these sentiments our Church, in her Seventh Article, fully agrees,—"The Old Testament is not contrary to the New ; for both in the Old

and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ." And we may add that, as "the Law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," it is fitting that the Lessons from the Old Testament should be read first. Provision is made that the whole Bible, or at least the greater part of it, should be read over once every year; while the Lessons from the New Testament are so appointed as to be read over thrice in each year, besides the Epistles and Gospels in the Ante-communion service. The Book of Revelation is, however, excepted; for out of this there are only certain proper Lessons appointed for special festivals.

Before concluding our remarks upon this portion of the Service, I may take occasion to offer a few observations upon a part of the Scriptures, not reckoned as inspired or as belonging strictly to the sacred Canon, but nevertheless appointed at certain times to be read,—I mean the APOCRYPHA.

The meaning of this word is, *secret* or *hidden away*; that which is kept out of sight or concealed. Perhaps the most ancient idea of an apocryphal or secret book, is that it was *concealed from the people*. According to this, books were apocryphal when they were thought such as ought not to be read; which agrees with the ancient division of Books into *canonical*, and such as were to be read; and those

that were *apocryphal*. In this sense, foolish and hurtful writings would be amongst the apocryphal; and it has also been thought that some books were kept secret from the *people*, though received by the Church. Thus the Song of Solomon, and the Book of Revelation, though undoubtedly parts of the inspired and canonical Scriptures, are very little read to the people.

Again, a Book may be hidden or secret, in respect to the name of its author; so that secret or *apocryphal*, in this way, will be all but equivalent to *spurious*. And lastly, a Book may be hidden or secret in respect of the authority to which it pretends; as of a Book whose origin was unknown, which wanted testimony, or whose character was suspected.* This last sense is nearest to that in which we view the books usually styled apocryphal.

The apocryphal books, bound up with the Bible, the Romanists receive as genuine Scripture; ascribing to them the same authority as to the undoubted Word of God. On the other hand, those who are extreme in their hostility to Romanists, are desirous of expunging these Books altogether,—of rejecting them entirely, and abandoning the use of them without exception. Here our Church, with characteristic wisdom, adopts a middle course: in the words of her Sixth Article, she “doth read

* Hey's Lectures on Divinity.

them for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet *doth not apply them to establish any doctrine.*" In support of this view, it might be enough to adduce the fact, that the Jews themselves never received the Apocryphal books as Canonical. Moreover they are never directly quoted in the New Testament; and the early Christian writers who succeeded the Apostles, though they occasionally introduce passages from them inculcating some moral sentiment, never profess to prove any *doctrine* from them. This course, we find, was taken by St. Paul himself in quoting from the heathen poets.

The opinion seems to be well founded, that the Apocryphal books were all the works of Jews; and that they were either imitations of some part of the genuine Scripture, or something in the way of supplement or sequel. The third and fourth books of *Esdras* profess to be such, and were probably written from a natural desire, in persons attached to their country, of enlarging upon an interesting portion of its history. The book of *Tobit* seems to be an imitation of *Ruth*; and that of *Judith* appears to have in view Deborah, David, and Goliath, as also the distresses of Hezekiah from the Assyrian armies. The books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus* are evidently imitations of the works of Solomon; and the books of *Maccabees* have the appearance of an

original narrative, composed on the principal of relating attractively an interesting piece of national history.

It is stated in the Sixth Article, that the Church reads the Apocryphal Books for "example of life and instruction of manners." The early Christian writers seem to have taken the same view of the subject. Clement of Rome quotes the Book of Wisdom for its sound moral precepts; and Polycarp, in exhorting the Philipians, describes the heroism of Judith. Athanasius says, that these books "were appointed by the fathers to be read by those who first come to be instructed in the way of *piety*." And St. Jerome seems to agree exactly with the view expressed by our Church, when he says, "As therefore the Church indeed reads the books of Judith and Tobit, and the Maccabees, but receives them not amongst the Canonical Scriptures, so also it may read these two books [Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus] for the edification of the people, not for confirming the authority of ecclesiastical doctrines."

It is to be remarked that the Apocrypha is not, on any occasion, to be read at a Sunday service, nor upon any of the great Fasts or Festivals which do not occur on a Sunday. They are appointed to be read for a few weeks only, in regular course, where there is a regular daily Service; and upon

Saints' Days, the first lessons are occasionally selected from them. It is not often, therefore, that the Apocryphal books are read in our churches; and when they are read, the selection from them is judicious and full of instruction. It would be a cause for regret if they were removed from their place in the Sacred Volume, from the comfort and edification they afford in our private reading; and they are valuable also, from the collateral and incidental evidence they furnish to the authority and truth of the canonical Scriptures themselves.

Of the blessing of having these genuine Scriptures publicly read, we cannot be insensible; for besides the benefit to individuals, they may be held as a safeguard of the purity of the Church. It has been well said, that "the Bible and a Scriptural Liturgy will save a Church in the worst of times." Our Liturgy is framed upon the Bible; and in the appointed public reading of so large a portion of the Bible, we may say that this holy book is continually appealed to in attestation of the fact, that our Prayer Book is but the handmaid and expounder of the Bible.

LECTURE XI.

THE TE DEUM.—OTHER HYMNS AFTER THE LESSONS AT MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM cxxxv. 1.—“Praise the Lord, laud ye the name of the Lord; praise it, O ye servants of the Lord.”

The office of praise is to the Christian at all times a bounden duty as well as a most pleasing occupation. He cannot look round upon the works of God, without feeling prompted to its exercise; far less can he hear the record of His wonderful dealings in the old time before us, both in providence and grace, without a strong impulse to tell out his gratitude in a strain of praise.

When we peruse the Book of God in our closets, and lay down the precious and comforting volume, what is more natural than a warm expression of thankfulness for the joyous truths which that blessed volume reveals? And if so, what can be more natural than to give vent to the same grateful emotions in the house of God, when we hear there the public proclamation of those glad tidings? “For if God had not written His word for us,” says one of our old divines, “we should not have seen either our sin or our danger, our duty or our

assistance, our Deliverer or our reward, and shall we not praise Him for the shining light! And what chapter is there, but it contains a peculiar reason of our thankfulness? Whether it instruct or reprove us, invite us to duty, or affright us from sin; whether it consist of promises or threatenings, precepts or examples, it ought to be concluded with, 'We praise thee, O God,'—for illuminating our minds, quickening our affections, renewing our memory, reviving our hopes, awakening our sloth, or confirming our resolutions."*

We have but to refer to St. Paul's epistles to be assured that such was the sentiment, and the practice of Christians in the days of the Apostles. And in subsequent times, a learned heathen, Pliny, gives testimony that, in the assemblies which, from fear of their enemies, the Christians were accustomed to hold before day-light, a hymn was sung, in honour of Christ as God. As described by this pagan enemy of the truth, the similarity is most striking between the strain of praise which he refers to, and that hymn of thanksgiving which, in our Church service, succeeds the first Morning lesson. In Pliny's time they sang that hymn of praise *in turn*, and they addressed Christ as God.

This would appear to be no mean testimony, of an incidental character, in favour of the antiquity

* Dean Comber.

of the TE DEUM,—one, indeed which is strengthened by the nature of its own construction; for if the composition be human, the materials are certainly divine. In it, it has been well said, we recognise the sublimest passages of Isaiah, the grandest truths of the Gospel history, and the most pathetic supplications of the Book of Psalms. It is, indeed, a noble hymn to the Trinity, worthy of the spouse of Christ, rational and majestic; and among the compositions of uninspired man, this may justly claim the foremost place.*

It is difficult to discover the author of the Te Deum. It has been ascribed to various eminent Christians in the fourth century; but, without being able to fix upon any particular individual as its author, the credit of its composition appears to be due to the Gallican Church, because the most ancient allusions to its existence are found in the rituals of that Church. It was certain that it was in use in the fifth century; and the probability is that it was composed much earlier.

In regard to its position in the Service, it appears always to have occupied the same place which it at present holds,—namely, after the reading of Scripture. As used in this connexion, it may be regarded as a responsory Psalm, since it follows a Lesson; and here the practice of the Church of

* Tyrrell on the Ritual.

England resembles that directed by the Council of Laodicea, held A.D., 367, which provided that a psalm or hymn should be sung after the reading of a portion of the Old and New Testament. In addition to the reasons for its introduction in this place already given, we may observe with an excellent writer upon the Liturgy, that "by this grateful variety, the mind of the devout worshipper is secured against distraction, relieved from langour, and enabled to proceed with attention and fervour."*

The *Te Deum* is so called from its opening words in Latin, in which it was originally composed. Rendered literally, they would appear thus in English, "Thee God we praise;" but they are much better as we have them in our Liturgy, "We praise thee, O God."

"Of the various excellencies of the *Te Deum*," observes the late Mr. Shepherd, "its methodical composition is not the least considerable. It is divided into three parts; each, in its original form, composed of ten versicles. In its present state, it is observable that there is an odd versicle, and that the first part consists only of nine; for the versicles which were formerly the first and second have since been united into one."

Of the three parts above mentioned, the first is

* Shepherd on Common Prayer.

an act of praise, or an amplified Doxology; the second, a confession of the leading articles of the Christian faith; the third contains intercessions for the whole Church, and supplications for ourselves.

In the first, or eucharistical part, we begin with expressing our thankfulness to God, and acknowledging His unbounded sovereignty in earth and heaven. Not only is every created thing on earth invoked to declare their thankfulness; but our minds are borne upwards to the glorious heaven, there to witness the glad and everlasting homage of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim. To these are joined the grateful praises of the just made perfect,—of “the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs.” Having praised God in their lives and honoured him in their deaths, they strike to him their golden harps in heaven, and chaunt everlastingly their songs of bliss and triumph.

But let us particularly observe to whom the ministering servants of the Lord in heaven address their never-ending praises.—“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of *Sabaoth*,” or Lord God of *hosts*, is their continual cry. This thrice repeated “holy” is significant; as expressing their adoration and their songs of joy to the Eternal Three in One,—to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The second part, which embraces a confession of our faith, calls upon the Church universal throughout the world, to acknowledge and adore the same Triune Deity. The *Father*, of an infinite majesty; His true and only *Son*; and the *Holy Ghost* the Comforter,—these the Church confesses and invokes; and then repetition is made of the various acts of condescension on our behalf, which God's eternal Son accomplished. His humiliation, in being made man for our sakes, is contrasted with the glory which He had resumed at the right hand of the Father; and our lost condition before He came into the world to save sinners, is brought into comparison with the bright prospects of heavenly blessedness, which He hath "opened to all believers."

We rejoice in the contemplation of these wonders, but we "rejoice with trembling;" for He, that man of sorrows, the despised and rejected of men, shall "come to be our Judge." With the consciousness of our offences and deficiencies, this would be an appalling contemplation; yet there is unspeakable comfort in knowing that "all judgment hath been committed" unto one, who "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust." If we lean on His merits only, and are penitent and obedient disciples, He will

prove our Advocate and Friend on that great and terrible day.

The third part of this hymn, which contains a prayer for the whole Church, and supplications for ourselves, commences with a petition for the Lord's gracious help to those whom He has "redeemed with His most precious blood,"—that, being washed and justified and sanctified, they may be numbered with His saints in the glory and blessedness of the eternal world. We are prone to err and go astray, we are surrounded with temptations, we are liable to stumble and fall; and therefore we implore the succour, we invoke the guidance and support of our all-sufficient Defender. While we pray for the forgiveness of our past sins, we implore His grace to preserve us from their dominion in future; we pray that the Lord would look upon our frailty, and strengthen us,—that He would look upon our guilt, and pardon us.

In our humility and weakness, we plead not our merits, but our distresses: we renounce all dependence upon earthly aid; our confidence and trust is in Him alone. Our supplications are concluded in the spirit of the faith and reliance of the Psalmist,—“Our fathers trusted in thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.”*

* Psalm xxii, 4, 5.

By St. Ambrose it was remarked, that, after the angel of the Lord had first published the glad-tidings of salvation to the shepherds of Judea, immediately the heavenly host commenced a hymn of praise to the Deity. So we also, after the recital of the joyful truths contained in God's word, are directed by the Church to rise up, and unite our voices in solemn praise to Him who has graciously "caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, our patience, comfort, and hope."

This we effectually do in the Te Deum; but besides this noble hymn, there is another that may be substituted for it at the discretion of the officiating Minister. Although a very animated and pious composition, it does not by any means possess the various excellencies of the Te Deum, and is therefore but seldom used. It is called the BENEDICITE, from its commencing word in Latin; and it seems to have been extracted from the "Song of the Three Holy Children," in the apocryphal appendix to the Book of Daniel. The use of this hymn was also very ancient; and the old Liturgies of the Gallican and Spanish Churches prescribed the "Song of the Three Children" to be sung between the Lessons, according to the arrangement now adopted in our Service.

This hymn bears a close resemblance to the one-

hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, in its sublime appeal to all created things, animate and inanimate, visible and invisible; and calls upon them all to acknowledge and adore the majesty of the Eternal God. Although not often used,—the Te Deum being so incomparably superior,—there would be a propriety in introducing it on those occasions in which the first Lesson treats particularly of the creation of the world, and the power and providence of God. On Trinity Sunday, for instance, when the account of the Creation in the first chapter of Genesis is read, it would be appropriately introduced; and it would seem also to have a special adaptation to the occasion in which is related the account of the martyrdom of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,—that is, on the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. To these illustrious confessors the composition of the hymn itself was primarily ascribed; and their Hebrew names, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, are introduced at the conclusion.

To the Second Lesson, which is uniformly selected from the New Testament, appropriate hymns are also appointed to succeed, on the same ground as they are introduced after the first Lesson,—namely, that a song of praise should then be particularly addressed to Him who “brought life and immortality to light *through the Gospel.*”

Two hymns are appointed for the fulfilment of this reasonable service,—namely, the SONG OF ZACHARIAS, extracted from the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke ; and the HUNDREDTH PSALM.

When the minister of Christ has recited a portion of the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, no words of thankfulness could be more appropriately employed, than those which broke from the lips of the father of the Baptist, when his tongue was loosed,—“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed his people.” “The whole of the hymn, however,” says Shepherd, “having been uttered upon a particular occasion, and under extraordinary circumstances; and the latter part being addressed to the infant Baptist in particular, and referring solely to his immediate office; it may fairly be considered as less adapted to general use than some others, and on this account, probably, it is seldom read after the second Lesson.” In its place, therefore, we generally and with great propriety, use the Hundredth Psalm,—here called, from its first words in Latin, *Jubilate Deo*. Of this psalm the Hebrew title is, a “Song of Praise;” and it is said to have been composed by David upon occasion of a public thanksgiving, and was sung by the Jewish Church at the oblation of the peace-offering, as the priest was entering into the temple. How appro-

priate is it in Christians, to use the same strain of praise in acknowledgment of Him who "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances," and who "came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to them that were nigh!"

As far as we have proceeded with our consideration of the Liturgy, there is no difference between the Morning and Evening Service, except in the Hymns to be said after the Lessons.—After the first Lesson at Evening Prayer, the hymn called **MAGNIFICAT** is appointed to be read,—being the song of thankfulness spoken by the Virgin Mary, on her being saluted by Elizabeth as the mother of our Lord. "Between this hymn, and the Song of Hannah," Shepherd well observes, "there exists a great conformity of expression and sentiment, not less remarkable than the similarity of circumstances under which they were uttered. In the person of Christ, the types and predictions of the Law and prophets were finally accomplished. The recitation therefore of this hymn very properly succeeds the first Lesson, which is taken out of the Books of the Old Testament, and generally contains some circumstance of history or prophecy, that has a direct relation to the events of the Gospel."—It is worthy of remark that this hymn is still retained in the Evening Offices of the Reformed Churches upon the Continent, as well as in our own.

THE CANTATE DOMINO, or Ninety-eighth Psalm, is also appointed to be used after the first Lesson at Evening Service. In this there is a prophetic allusion to the salvation wrought out through Christ for His Church, and therefore a peculiar appropriateness to the place in which it is appointed to be read.

After the second Lesson at Evening Service, we are directed by the Church to express our thankfulness for the boon of salvation, in the language of the devout Simeon. This venerable Israelite, having seen and taken in his arms the infant Saviour, broke out into this language of transport, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." These words, we are informed, animated the private devotions of Christians in early ages, and were triumphantly repeated by martyrs amidst their last sufferings.

Not less appropriate to the glad-tidings of salvation promulgated in the New Testament, is the other Hymn which the Church appoints to be read at this place. The DEUS MISEREATUR, or Sixty-seventh Psalm, is evidently prophetic of the Gospel dispensation; and prays for the "saving health" of Christ's religion to all nations. And until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and the gathering together of the Jews be accomplished,

—until, in short, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,” the Christian Church may with propriety employ this hymn. It will always be appropriately repeated, after the “word of reconciliation,” in the Lesson immediately going before, has been declared both to Jews and Gentiles.

LECTURE XII.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

2 TIMOTHY, i., 13.—“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me.”

The reading of the Holy Scriptures in the public service of the Church is followed, as we have seen, by hymns and psalms of thanksgiving,—expressing our devout gratitude to God for the precious treasure of His holy Word. When the sacred Volume has been closed, and our thankful acknowledgments ended, an appeal like this would seem to be made to us.—“Believest thou the Scriptures?” and from Christians this will be the ready and unhesitating response, “Lord, I believe.”

But it is not enough that this should be the conviction of our minds,—that an inward persuasion of the truth of God’s word should be felt: we must bear open testimony of our belief in its precious truths; we must make a public acknowledgment of our unfeigned assent to all that it contains. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the *Word of God* ;” but the faith which is felt, must be declared: we are to “confess with our mouth” the doctrines which we “believe in our heart.”

In the Apostles' Creed, we are furnished with a comprehensive form in which to make this profession of our faith. The proper position of the Creed in our public service is evidently, then, where our Church has placed it; and the propriety of the arrangement is strengthened from its being immediately followed by the prayers and intercessions, which we are called upon by a sense of our necessities to offer. As we "cannot call on him in whom we have not believed," the profession of our faith as Christians should undoubtedly precede the offering up of our prayers; and since we hope to be heard by God the Father only through the merits of His blessed Son Jesus Christ, and the sanctifying co-operation of the Holy Spirit, it is right that we should preface, as it were, our petitions to the throne of grace by a declaration of our faith in the Triune Godhead, and in those other leading points of Christian doctrine upon which our petitions may be said to be grounded. Its position in the service was nearly the same in the ancient Churches of the West.

Although we have no positive evidence that this Creed was the actual composition of the Apostles, there is not a little testimony existing that, in their time, some rule of faith was adopted; and the statements of several ancient Christian writers support the opinion that this formulary, almost as

it now stands, may have been used. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, speaks of a "form of doctrine" which was held by that Church, and for the zealous maintenance of which he commends them.* To the Galatians he speaks of a "rule," or canon of faith, upon their adherence to which many blessings would follow.† To Timothy he speaks of a "deposit," committed to his faithful keeping;‡ and he subsequently urges upon him a firm adherence to the "form of sound words" in which he had been instructed.§ From these expressions we are justified in inferring that the great truths of the Gospel were compressed into some formulary which was to serve as the rule and directory of Christians.

If we proceed to the age immediately succeeding the Apostles, we find it said by Clement of Rome, that "the Apostles, having received the gift of tongues, while they were yet together, by joint consent composed that Creed which the Church of the faithful now holds." Irenæus declares, that "the Church received from the Apostles and their disciples, this faith in one God the Father Almighty,"—going on with the words of the Creed nearly as we have it. Tertullian, speaking of this "rule of faith," affirms that it "descended to us from the beginning of the Gospel before any

*Rom. vi., 17.

†1 Tim. vi., 20.

‡Gal. vi., 15, 16.

§2 Tim. i., 13.

heretic had risen up." St. Ambrose positively asserts that it was "composed by the twelve Apostles." St. Augustine observes, "That which the Church holds, and was not instituted by Councils but always retained, that is justly believed to have been delivered from Apostolical authority." Ruffinus, who lived towards the end of the fourth century, states of the Creed, that it was then generally spoken of as having been framed by the Apostles. From all these testimonies, therefore, we reasonably conclude that this Creed was composed, or brought at least into its proper shape, in the times of the Apostles.

The Church, however, does not view this as a settled point, but exercises her usual caution in not pronouncing authoritatively upon the question; terming it, in the Eighth Article, the Creed "commonly called the Apostles' Creed." Yet that it is no less entitled to our reverence and regard on this account, is implied in the same Article, when it is declared that all the doctrines it contains "may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." To this test it has been repeatedly brought, and almost every word of it confirmed by an express text of Holy Writ.—The celebrated Calvin himself declared, that it was a confession of faith suited to the times, and consonant to the preaching of the Apostles. Nor does he hesitate

to affirm, that to his mind it contained nothing but what might be proved by the most solid tests of Scripture.

We have already alluded to the propriety of such a public profession of our faith as is contained in this scriptural Creed. Here, as feeble and dependent creatures, we make acknowledgment of God the FATHER, who made and who preserves us: as guilty creatures, we profess our faith in God the SON, for "beside Him there is no Saviour;" and as corrupt and polluted creatures, we declare our belief in the sanctifying influence of God the HOLY GHOST.

This acknowledgment of the Triune Godhead is not without a practical advantage to ourselves. The formal recital of these fundamental truths of our holy religion, cannot fail to awaken in the real believer many salutary feelings. He cannot, for instance, make profession of the might and majesty of God, without a corresponding self-abasement; nor can he pause from this circumstantial recital of the Saviour's sufferings, without a renewal of his contrite sorrow. "A captive," it has been well said, "who has been delivered from cruel bondage, may, in the midst of the bustle of active life, find the emotions of gratitude that is due to his deliverer in a measure suppressed; but when called upon to recite, in the circle of his friends, the various

incidents of the interesting tale, surely his tears will begin to flow afresh. So it is difficult to conceive it possible, that the wonders of redeeming love can pass over the lips without melting the heart.”*

With this formal avowal of his belief fresh upon his lips, the Christian, when tempted to sin, will be induced to exclaim, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”—“Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God,”—ill then would it become his avowed servants to surrender themselves to any dominion which is opposed to Him.

This public confession, too, joined in by all around them in the worshipping assembly, affords to Christians a mutual encouragement. The wavering or languishing faith will be confirmed and animated by this its general and public profession. In private, without counsel and alone, we might feel our vigour of confidence to decay; but “as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance of a friend.” When with a devout and audible voice we join together in the profession of our faith, we encourage one another: the sluggish will be animated, and the indifferent shamed into a livelier warmth of affection and a better vigour of action.

It constitutes, too, a bond of union; for the

* Rev. T. T. Biddulph.

public profession of the same sentiments cannot but forward a unity of sentiment and action amongst believers. The voices of the faithful uniting in the same declarations, will drown the clamour of irreligious debate, and suppress the unhappy spirit of division which has made such inroads upon the oneness of the Christian household. Here, in the Creed, we avow the same mind and speak the same words; and if, as has been well said, we believe, and make public profession of our belief, in the "communion of saints," we shall become better disposed to live as those who love one another.

This public declaration of our faith in the house of God, may also have its salutary influence upon the unbeliever and the mere formal professor. These may be startled by the solemn repetition of the great truths of the Gospel, and impelled to the enquiry whether *they* believe them, or not; whether they rest indeed upon the Providence of God as their only dependence,—upon the Son of God as their only refuge from the condemnation of sin,—upon the Holy Ghost as their only safeguard from its dominion. "The forgiveness of sins," thus publicly pronounced as the faith of Christians, may cause them, too, to seek the mercy-seat for pardon: "the life everlasting," may warn them to be reconciled to Him who alone can confer it.

The Creed is required to be pronounced "by the

Minister and the people ;" because both are alike interested in the confessions which it embraces. It is a summary of that faith which *all* Christians are required to hold, and which all alike are bound openly to profess. While, therefore, the Minister of the Lord pronounces it, it would ill become the assembled people to be silent,—to manifest, by any carelessness of demeanour, least of all by withholding the expression of their assent, that the truths which are proclaimed have no interest for them. And here it is to be remarked, in favour of our Church of England, that she, in this public and united confession of faith, adopts a practice which the Romish Church appears to shrink from. This latter Church, observes one of our writers upon the Liturgy, "appoints the Creed, as well as the Lord's Prayer, to be said secretly; that is, rather mentally, with the heart, not with the mouth, which is no confession at all; or silently, by every one to himself, not audibly in the hearing of the congregation; which defeats the intended acts of confession, namely, the satisfying of the congregation that we hold the same faith, and the confirming and encouraging of them in the same."*

The posture which, in the repetition of the Creed, we are required to use, is *standing*. Kneeling is the appropriate one for prayer; and sitting, in

* Dr. Bisse.

decorous silence, for hearing the word. But if acts of praise are most becomingly performed in the attitude of *standing*, this, too, would seem the one best adapted to the confession of our faith. This it is which most appropriately signifies our readiness earnestly to contend for the faith, at the same time that that it best expresses our steadfastness in it,—“by this posture declaring our resolution to stand by, or defend, that faith which we have professed: so that, at all these times, we resemble not so much an assembly as an army. As then in every well-marshalled army, all look and move in one way, so should we always do in a regular assembly; but especially at the confessions of faith, all Christ's faithful soldiers should shew, by this uniformity of gesture, that they hold the unity of faith.”* In Poland, we are informed, it was anciently the custom for the nobles to draw their swords at the repetition of the Creed, in token that, if need were, they would defend and seal it with their blood.

“Turning at the same time towards the East,” as is remarked by Archbishop Secker, “is an ancient custom; as indeed, in most religions, men have directed their worship one particular way. And this practice, being intended only to honour Christ, the ‘Sun of Righteousness,’ who hath risen

* Dr. Bisse.

upon us, to enlighten us with that doctrine of salvation to which we then declare our adherence, it ought not to be condemned as superstition : and yet, being neither obligatory in itself nor commanded by authority, the omission of it ought not to be censured as irreverence or disobedience."

In justification of this practice, another writer observes,—“The Jews, in their dispersion throughout the world, when they prayed, turned their faces towards the mercy-seat and cherubim, where the ark stood. Daniel was found praying towards Jerusalem, because of the situation of the temple. And this has always been esteemed a very becoming way of expressing our belief in God, namely, by turning to the East, where he is supposed to have His peculiar residence of glory.*

While, on the one hand, the absence of positive authority fully justifies those who deem it expedient to omit this custom, yet, for the reasons given, those who think proper to retain it, ought not to be censured. It is true that God is everywhere, and that man would vainly attempt to define His locality ; but there can be no more impropriety in turning to the East when we recite our belief, than in raising our eyes to heaven when we pray. To condemn this custom because we cannot define God's dwelling-place, would afford room for

* Collis, quoted in Mant.

a denial of His special presence in the house of prayer,—of the Lord's spiritual presence in the elements of the eucharist,—or that of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of true believers.

At the recital of this article of our faith, "I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord," it is usual for our congregations to *bow the head*. This custom is founded upon these words of St. Paul to the Philippians, "God hath given him a name which is above every name, that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;" and is confirmed by the eighteenth canon of the Church, which provides that "when in time of Divine service, the Lord Jesus shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present, as it hath been accustomed; testifying by these outward ceremonies and gestures, their inward humility, Christian resolution, and due acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus Christ, the true eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour of the world, in whom alone all the mercies, graces, and promises of God to mankind, for this life and the life to come, are fully and wholly comprised."

To be affected by the latitudinarian views of modern times, in condemning this custom as superstitious, is at least to be wiser than our fathers;

and it would be charging *them* with the innovations which a later age has so recklessly introduced. There never was a divine of the Church of England more free from either superstition or enthusiasm than Hooker. His plain sense and moderation, united to his acute discernment and immense learning, have acquired for him the epithet of "judicious;" and this will probably be attached to his name as long as the spirit of our true Reformers is revered and cherished. On the custom we have been discussing, Hooker uses this language,—“Because the Gospels, which are weekly read, do all historically declare something which our Lord Jesus Christ himself either spake, did, or suffered in his own person, it hath been the custom of Christian men then especially, in token of the greater reverence, to stand, to utter certain words of acclamation, and at the name of Jesus to bow. Which harmless ceremonies, as there is no man constrained to use, so we know no reason wherefore any man should yet imagine it an insufferable evil. It sheweth a reverent regard to the Son of God above other messengers, although speaking as from God also. And against Infidels, Jews, Arians, who derogate from the honour of Jesus Christ, such ceremonies are thus profitable. As for any erroneous estimation, advancing the Son above the Father and the Holy Ghost, seeing

that the truth of His equality with them is a mystery so far for the wits of mortal men to rise unto, of all heresies that which may give him superiority above them is least to be feared."

In the room of the Apostles' Creed, it is directed by the rubric that, on certain days, the Creed, called the Creed of St. Athanasius, shall be read. This is a confession of faith confined more particularly to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; upon which it is so explicit and decided, that, in the words of Dean Comber, "it is no wonder that it hath been so much opposed and maligned by all those heretics which agree not with the Church in the doctrine of the Trinity, and of our Saviour's Incarnation; because these two fundamental articles are so fully asserted here, that the false teachers have no room left for cavils or evasion,—it being, as Photius saith of his other works, 'a trophy of victory over every heresy, especially the Arian.'"

—But the consideration of this important Creed will employ another Lecture.

LECTURE XIII.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

TITUS ii. 1.—“Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.”

The words thus addressed to an individual, contain a charge that is binding upon the whole Church. What Titus, in the early days of Christianity, was instructed to declare, it is incumbent upon every minister of the Lord Jesus faithfully and fearlessly to proclaim now.

It is out of respect to the principle which this charge inculcates, that the Church retains the Creed of St. Athanasius; and she is careful that the great truths it embodies should from time to time be proclaimed to her children, on the very ground that those truths are so often assailed. It was declared by St. Paul, that “the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine:” this fact makes it all the more necessary that the words of “sound doctrine” should be kept continually before them,—it is the best security against the teachings of error.

The three Creeds, we may observe, were written

at different periods and on account of the peculiar circumstances of the Church. And here, it has been well stated, the Church acted like a tender mother very anxious for her children from the very first; but growing still more and more anxious as they grow older, were more exposed to dangers, and became less and less willing to yield themselves to her control. Thus it may seem that, in the most ancient, the APOSTLES' CREED, a plain simple rule of faith is given. In the next, the NICENE CREED, the same rule is laid down, but more at length, and in a tone of anxiety and caution, as if the enemy were at hand. In the last, the ATHANASIAN CREED, where still the very same rule of faith is laid down, the alarm is loudly sounded. There is throughout an expression of urgent warning, as needful for persons in the very midst of foes,—some open, and more secret foes; who would rob God of his honour, and man of the everlasting inheritance purchased for him by his Saviour's blood.

The Creed under our present consideration is mentioned as that of Athanasius, because it usually bore his name, and contained the doctrines of which, against the opposing heresies, he was so undaunted a champion; not because he was actually its author as it now stands. As to the fact of his having composed some formulary of faith, which would justify the ascribing to him of the Creed

which usually bears his name, there is a good deal of ancient testimony. Amongst others, Gregory Nazianzen speaks of a "royal gift which Athanasius presented to the emperors, *a confession of his faith*, received with great veneration both in the West and East."

Yet as there is some uncertainty, the Church does not assume the actual authorship of this Creed as a point established: accordingly, in the rubric which precedes it in the Prayer Book, it is styled "the Creed, *commonly called* the Creed of St. Athanasius."—"Whether it was composed by him, or not," says an able divine, "the Church of England undertakes not to decide; nor is it very material for our purpose that it should be decided. The Church does not build her faith upon St. Athanasius, but on the Holy Scriptures. Her exposition of the faith is Athanasian certainly, in contradiction to the Arian opinions, because she thinks that Athanasius took the right side of that question, and that his opinions were indisputably more conformable to Scripture, and more in agreement with the testimony of the Ante-Nicene fathers, than those of Arius and his followers: she had a right to make this choice, and she has made it."*

The following remarks of a distinguished living divine of our Church, are well worthy of repetition:

* Nares on the Three Creeds.

—“This Creed,” he says, “was not of a certainty composed by St. Athanasius; nor can it be attributed with certainty to any author. It were perhaps better that his name had not been attached to it. That father was a great and good man, persecuted by the Arians for his faith in the Trinity, and worthy to be had in everlasting honour, among the noble army of martyrs, in the Church triumphant as well as militant. But the Catholic Church refuses to call any man master, or to receive any man’s name. The Church, says one of its ancient fathers, was never called so much as by the name of any Apostle: we never heard of Petrians, or Paulians, or Bartholomæans, or Thaddæans, but only Christians from Christ. I honour Peter, says another father, but I am not called a Petrian: I honour Paul, but I am not called a Paulian; I cannot bear to be named from any man, who am the creature of God. And so the Church in this country has never suffered herself to be called from Cranmer, or Luther, or Calvin, or any other person to whom some societies of Christians look up as their founders; nor is it the name of Athanasius that recommends this formulary to her adoption. She has retained it, because it embodies the tradition of the Universal Church as to the fundamental verities of Christianity.”*

* Rev. Dr. Hook.

I may remark that this Creed was in use in the Church of England before the year 799, as we then find it quoted by an English bishop; and this was nearly a century and a half before it was received in the Church of Rome. This shews how groundless is the opinion of those, who would represent the retention of this Creed as a remnant of Popery.

We may now proceed to a few remarks upon the probable reasons of the introduction of the several clauses of this Creed.—It is directed, in the first place, against those false teachers who *confounded the persons* of the Holy Trinity, as was done by the Sabellians; as also against the Arians and Eunomians, who *divided the substance*. Here we are taught not only that “the Father is God,” but, in opposition to the Arians, that “the Son is God;” and, in opposition to the heresy of Macedonius, that “the Holy Ghost is God.”

The term “uncreate,” which occurs in the eighth clause, would appear to relate to the Arians, who thought the Son a creature, and the Holy Ghost a creature of a creature. The word “incomprehensible” in the ninth clause, does not mean that which cannot be *understood*, but that which cannot be *measured*,—what cannot be comprehended in any space. The expressions “three eternal,” and “one eternal,” in the eleventh clause, mean to shew that each divine attribute is

common to the three Persons, though each has personal relative qualities peculiar to himself. Not only is the union of the three Divine persons asserted, but the distinction between them is also positively affirmed. Those who neglected the distinction of Persons, might substitute one for another at will ; which would make it indifferent to them whether they spoke of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or of three Fathers, three Sons, and three Holy Ghosts. This is distinctly condemned in the Creed.

As the former part of the Creed rejects and excludes all prevailing errors with regard to the Trinity, so does the latter part with regard to the Incarnation of Christ. While many heretics, in ancient times, denied the *divinity* of our Lord, there were probably as many who denied his *humanity*. The Arians, for example, called Christ a God, but denied that he was " God of the substance of the Father ;" while the Eutychians, who held our Lord's divinity, denied that Christ was " man of the substance of his mother." The former conceived the Word to be made flesh in such a sense, that he was, even in his divine nature, susceptible of suffering ; while the latter taught that the Word was so united to the flesh, that the humanity was lost, absorbed, or annihilated. The former amounted to a "conversion of the Godhead

into flesh;" and the latter is very properly condemned in this Creed, inasmuch as the body of flesh evidently remained in our Lord.

By "taking of the manhood into God," is meant no more than Christ's taking man's nature upon him, a being of divine nature and perfection. If a junction is to be expressed, it could not be expressed more appropriately than by saying that the *finite* was assumed by the *infinite*, or *taken into* the infinite. Every notion is meant to be rejected, which is inconsistent with a *union* of the two natures, divine and human, or with their continuing distinct, though united.

It is very true, my brethren, that many of the heresies against which the Creed of Athanasius was particularly framed, have ceased to exist; but there are still those who, under the garb of Christianity, impugn the doctrines which the Athanasian Creed is intended to defend. While, therefore, there remains the Socinian, the Unitarian, and others who deny the Godhead of our blessed Saviour, and thus unsettle the fundamental tenets of Christianity, the Creed of Athanasius is very properly retained in the Church, and appointed, on certain occasions, to be publicly read.

This Creed, as to its doctrines, has been styled by the great Martin Luther a "bulwark;" and in being retained, we may correctly say it is retained

in that sense,—as a *fortification*. In times of peace, the expense and inconvenience of keeping up fortifications, occasions their being sometimes neglected ; but when war breaks out afresh, every one is clamorous against the imprudence and danger of such neglect. If we are at peace now with the powers which would attack us where this creed would be our defence, we are always liable to be at war with them again. In case of renewed attacks, our present Creed would be a much better defence than any new one that could be made at the time it was wanted.

In this confession of our faith, however,—sound and scriptural as it is,—there are passages which have been objected to for their alleged *uncharitableness*. It is asserted, indeed, that, by the use of this formulary, we doom to eternal perdition all who do not believe exactly as we do, or who do not make profession of their faith after our forms.

In reply to this, it may be remarked that where the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are at stake, there can be no terms too strong in which to express our own adherence to them, or our condemnation of those who would subvert them. This Creed, therefore, may be regarded in the light of a fence or bulwark against all innovations and encroachments upon vital points of truth ; to prevent the vineyard, in what may be considered

the parts most liable to be assailed, from being trodden down by its enemies. It may well be asked, is a mother to be blamed, who, seeing her child in imminent danger, warns him of it in language the most powerful the tongue can give utterance to? If the Gospel of Christ be indeed our only hope, is not the Church a true friend to us in telling us so; in making us confess it, as we may say, whether we choose or not? It is plain from the Scriptures that God the Father Almighty should be the object of all our love and adoration. From the same Scriptures it also appears that the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and hope, is entitled to equal honour and affection. And again, from the same word of truth the Holy Spirit of God, the only Sanctifier, Guide, and Guardian of his Church, is made to claim the same full amount of love and reverence. Now if these are tenets wont to be assailed,—as we know them to be,—surely the Church, as a good parent, should warn her children against their rejection in the strongest terms.

We find, indeed, that the Scripture itself sanctions this rule; for there, as has been judiciously remarked, “there is no mention but of two ways, one leading to destruction, the other bringing unto life; of two sorts of men, whereof some believe and they are saved; some believe not and they

are damned ; and of two states, one blessed, where Lazarus is ; the other cursed, where Dives abides. A third way, sort, or state, cannot be found in the word of God.”*

The dissatisfaction with this Creed is founded upon the following clauses :—

“Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith.”

“Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.”

“He, therefore, that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.”

“Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he also rightly believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“This is the Catholic faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.”

Now it should be borne in mind that, in using these expressions, we are not addressing ourselves to the unbeliever or to the heretic ; but we are professing our own faith, the foundation of our own hopes, the principles of our own communion. We declare our own belief that such is the scriptural view of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of Christ’s incarnation ; so the penalties of apostacy, as expressed in this Creed, will fall upon ourselves.

* Nares on the Three Creeds.

These are doctrines set forth in the Bible : we believe them to be contained there : we make profession of our faith in them ; and if we keep them not whole and undefiled, we are but pronouncing sentence of condemnation upon ourselves.

In doing this, we are certainly not departing from the rule of scripture itself. Our Saviour said to his Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but that he that believeth not, shall be *damned*."

There is nothing in the condemnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, more positive than this language of our Lord; and the subject to which they are applied is, in substance, the same as that which gave rise to our Saviour's expressions. To *believe*, as our Lord in this passage expresses it; and to *hold the Catholic*, or *Christian faith*, as asserted in the Creed, is substantially the same thing: it is, therefore, no worse to say that they who "hold not this faith shall perish everlastingly," than to declare that they who "believe not shall be damned."

Although there may be qualifications of the rule laid down, such qualifications are not added by our Saviour, and therefore not by the Church. Any such qualifications or limitations of the principles of Holy Scripture, it would be unbecoming in us to

express. The rule of salvation must be taken, just as it is set down in God's word; we have nothing to do with the possible exceptions, or limitations, of which it may be susceptible. The duty of the Church is to teach her children to believe, and to seek salvation, in the appointed way,—in the plain and direct one which the Lord himself has pointed out: she has nothing to do with schemes and exceptions of man's own devising. Her Divine Master's words are her guidance, when to the vain and needless question, "Are there few that be saved?" he replied, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

When uncharitableness is imputed to the Church for stating this great truth of the Gospel, and the penalty of rejecting it, she may well ask with the Apostle, "Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth?" For if that be true which the Creed contains, the want of charity would be, not in the declaration of it, but in the refusing to declare it. If the Church tells a man that he is in a perilous state, unless he worships one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, it does not follow that it is the Church which places him in that perilous state. If his state be really one of peril, he should thank that careful, anxious mother for warning him of it, and for her real charity in trying to rouse him from his security in unbelief.

But I have said enough upon this point; enough to shew that, if the doctrine of the Trinity be one necessary to salvation, the Church is right in affirming it in the plainest terms, and in expressing, with equal plainness, the consequences of rejecting it. She is right, in short, in maintaining a Creed amongst her formularies, which distinctly avows the truth, and honestly declares the condemnation that will follow from denying it.

And this brings our series of Lectures to a close for the present, - with the hope and intention of by and by resuming them. What has been said will, I trust, deepen the veneration for our invaluable Liturgy, and cause it to be used with more thankfulness and devotion. It is an acknowledged duty to worship the Lord; and it may safely be said, that in faithfully using the ritual of our Church, we are "worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

