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A
LETTER
TO THE PARISHIONERS
OF
ST. LUKE'S CHURCH
ROCHESTER;
ON THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER
OF
THE LITURGY
OF
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

BY THE REV. F. H. CUMING,

ROCHESTER.
PRINTED BY EDWIN SCRANTON.

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LETTER & C.

NO particular directory for conducting the public worship of God, in Christian assemblies, being contained in the Bible, different churches, have taken it upon themselves to give from time to time, such regulations for this purpose as they deemed most consistent with the general precepts of the apostle, "Let all things be done to edifying,—let all things be done decently and in order."—(*Corinthians*, xiv. 26, 40.) Hence we hear of no religious society maintaining that for all its customs, rites and practices, there is an express and a positive command contained in scripture.—These are appointed and changed by the proper authorities, as circumstances and occasions may require.—This you may see most plainly set forth in the Augsburg Confession, the Assembly's Directory, the works of Calvin, by the author of the Platform of the Kirk of Scotland, and indeed in the formularies of all the Reformed Churches.

It is my design my Brethren, in this letter to point out to you, some of the excellencies which distinguish that form of worship, which has been established by the authorities of our church. It is indeed to be feared that many who use our Liturgy, do not properly consider its spiritual import, and that the preference they express for it, arises, rather from its composition, than its evangelical character.—It were worse than useless for us to have, as a guide to our devotions in the temple of the Most High, a book which had nothing else to recommend it, save a happy selection of words and an ingenious and admirably contrived arrangement of its different

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INTRODUCTION

parts. In humble dependence upon God's Holy spirit for assistance, I shall endeavor to show you, that our book of Common Prayer has more worthy claims to your attachment; that it speaks a language, which, the truly awakened soul does not only understand, but in which she can express, far better than in any words of her own, her feelings, her wants, her sorrows and her joys.—My object is to show, that our services do not only approve themselves to the *judgment* of all unprejudiced persons, but that they are also adapted to the *feelings* of the truly pious.

No person will pretend that it is not a very decent and proper act, when we first enter the house of God, to offer to him a secret petition, that our prayers and praises may ascend to him as the acceptable incense, and the word which is now to be read or preached to us, be blessed to the good of ourselves and to others. He who thinks of God, with the reverence with which he ought, who has that regard for him, which springs from true religion, it might be supposed would make it his very first act when he finds himself in the sanctuary, humbly to fall upon his knees and address himself to his Maker, in some such words as the following:

LORD, I am now in thy house; assist I pray thee, and accept of my services; enable me, and all who shall this day meet in thy name, to worship thee in spirit and in truth. Let thy Holy spirit help our infirmities, and dispose our hearts to seriousness, attention, and devotion; and grant that we may improve this opportunity to the honor of thy holy name, and the benefit of our souls, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.—

Amen.

THIS is a practice with the members of our church my Brethren; whether it be not one which godliness approves of, and which the place and occasion of our meeting together, seem absolutely to require, I leave with confidence, for those who love God to decide.

LET us now consider the manner in which the service is introduced. If there be any thing calculated to prevent levity, or to impress the mind with seriousness and devotion, it will be found in those *sentences*, with the reading of some of which, the minister commences our religious exercises.—How must

the thoughtless be awed, when they hear those solemn words, "The *Lord* is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him. Enter not into judgment with thy servant O Lord for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." How will the timid Christian be encouraged to present himself before God in the exercises of prayer and praise, when the words of the returning prodigal are sounded in his ears, "I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son!"

THE christian who is anxious to worship God in sincerity and truth, cannot but be disposed to say with the minister, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer." He does indeed know his situation in the sight of God, to be that of a condemned sinner. He is persuaded that if God should deal with him as he deserves, he could expect nothing but tribulation and anguish. How grateful to his feelings then to hear such gracious words as these, "When the wicked man, turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenessess though we have rebelled against him." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "Rend your heart and not your garments and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

THOSE who are conscious of the depravity of their nature, will be sensible of their unworthiness to appear in the presence of him "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and may therefore be expected to listen with no ordinary degree of interest to the "Exhortation" which follows the reading of the sentences of scripture, and instructs us how we should come before the Lord. Nor will persons of this description fail to see that it is right and proper we should be told, not to "dissemble or cloak" our manifold sins and wickedness, but "confess them with an humble, lowly and obedient heart."—The form of the Confession which the church has prepared for

us, requires now to be considered. It is "a general confession," that is, such an one as a public congregation generally can unite in using, and which all are expected to adopt, and to make individually applicable, by recalling to their minds the particular sins which they may have committed. With respect to the language of this "Confession," may we not confidently assert that it is impossible for us to find, any where else, words which can so well express the penitential emotions of the humble, contrite, and broken-hearted sinner!

How does he here approach, the dread Being whom he is conscious she has "offended?" It is as his "Almighty and most merciful Father." O, he is aware of his ruined state before him. But he is "ALMIGHTY," and *can* assist him, he is "*most merciful*," and therefore he is encouraged to hope for deliverance; he is a "Father," and has he not said, "yea like as a father pitieth his own children, so will the Lord be merciful to them that fear him." We have left our Father's house, we have forsaken the pastures of life, and our cry is, "Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep." But he who is truly convinced of the sinfulness of his nature, will not only realize his wretched condition as the rebellious child of a most merciful Father, but will also perceive and bewail the *cause* of his alienation. An evil, a depraved heart has turned him aside; and he surely *must* feel that the following words are particularly adapted to his situation, "we have followed too much the *devices* and *desires* of our own hearts." It is this evil heart, which has disposed us to leave "undone those things which we ought to have done, and to do those things which we ought not to have done." Sensible of this natural indisposition to obey the laws of God, of our feebleness and weakness independent of divine aid, of the earthly character of our affections, and of our diseased condition by reason of sin, who cannot be satisfied, what child of God will not see, and confess, "There is no health in us."

AFTER we have taken this humbling view of ourselves, and seen our danger as transgressors, and *felt* that we deserved condemnation, and had actually incurred God's wrath, what will be our first act? Doubtless it will be to ask for mercy. As it is God alone who has power to forgive sins,

to him alone do we lift up our voice. And what is the language which we now use? What supplications can be invented which will so well express the sincere breathings, the ardent longings of the contrite, as those which we are now taught to use. "But *thou*, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. *Spare* thou, those who are penitent." (spare them from that punishment which they have merited.) "*Restore* thou," (restore to thy favour) "those who are penitent." But what plea do we put in that we should be heard, or have this precious boon of pardon conveyed to us? O certainly not for any thing *in us*, which can entitle us to it—It is because God for Christ's sake has said, (i. John, 1. 9.) "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Our prayer is, "spare thou, those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent. *According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

"THESE words express the apprehension and desires of a sinner fully convinced of his demerits; and the supplication is warranted by the sure guarantee of the divine Covenant; "He that confesseth & forsaketh his sins shall find mercy." (*Prov. xxviii 13.*) There is, however, an important difference between the mere confession of the lip, and the real humility of the heart.—The reiterated confession is but a solemn mockery in the mouths of those who use it without thought, or as a mere matter of form. It is the language of a heart deeply sensible of the enormity of sin, fully aware of its awful consequences, and earnestly desirous of being delivered from its dominion and its punishment. Such a heart will earnestly seek to be recovered from its errors, and its wanderings, and to be reinstated in the divine favor; and with renewed ardor, will appropriate the additional supplication, "Restore thou those who are penitent."

IN the former petition, we prayed to be delivered from the punishment of sin: In this we pray to be restored from its pollutions. It is as though we should say, "Restore us gracious Lord, to the light that sin has deprived us of, and to thy favor which we have justly forfeited by our numberless transgressions; restore the faculties of our minds, our reason, our understanding, and our wills—from their present depraved

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, and means of promoting thy glory." We are not indeed to expect an entire renovation of our nature to its primitive purity while in this life ; but we may expect, and humbly pray for such a renovation as may "make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." In the former petition, we sought deliverance from the punishment of sin, on account of our sincere confession. In this we ask to be freed from its pollutions, on the ground of our penitence. But we are not to imagine that our confessions or our penitence give us any meritorious claim to forgiveness and restoration to the favor of God. These are necessary conditions, on the faithful performance of which, God vouchsafes to extend his mercy to us, through the merits of his Son. It is through him alone that we have access to the Father, and all our petitions must be offered in his name. Accordingly, the Church directs us to the promises of God, in Christ, as the foundation of all our hopes and expectations of mercy, and directs us to ask for pardon and renovation, as well as for every other blessing, solely on these grounds : "According to thy promises declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In this way and according to these promises, the humblest penitent, in his daily supplications at the throne of grace, is taught to seek forgiveness of his sins, and the renovation of his nature ; that being redeemed from all iniquity, he may be brought into the liberty of the children of God. In making these reiterated petitions for pardoning grace, the essential requisites on our part, are contrition and sincerity. It is to be feared that there are many who wish to be delivered from the dreadful consequences of sin in the world to come, who yet feel little real sorrow for it, and seldom manifest a sincere desire of being delivered from the guilt and power of it here. But it is necessary that we should feel sin to be a burthen ;—and be fully persuaded that the guilt of it unless pardoned here will be ruinous to us hereafter. It is necessary that we should apply to the merits of Christ for pardon, and wait by faith for the blessings of his redemption. And though the

best righteousness we can render may be compared to filthy rags, yet we should be as anxious to maintain a life and conversation worthy of our high calling, as if our everlasting welfare depended solely upon our own merits. Hence it is, in addition to our supplications for pardon, and a spiritual restoration to the divine favor through the Redeemer, we are taught to continue our petitions, in the following words :—
“And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life; to the glory of thy holy name. *Amen.*”

THE desire of reformation, and amendment of life, is the great criterion of a sincere confession, and an evangelical repentance. A loud and ostentatious profession of religion or an attachment to the most orthodox creeds, will avail us nothing, without a holy and consistent conduct. St. Paul has summed up all practical Christianity, in teaching us to live “a godly, righteous, and sober life”; *Godly*, exercising all piety and devotion in our services towards God! *righteously*, in all honesty, fidelity and charity, with our neighbour: *soberly*, governing ourselves, with all temperance, modesty and humility. It is with great propriety that the Church has introduced this form of speech into her Liturgy, at the conclusion of the general Confession. It is impossible that the sum of our duties could be expressed in fewer, better, or plainer words. And it is a main end of all our confessions, and supplications at the divine footstool, that we may be enabled to perform these duties with new and increased fidelity.

WE have thus taken a minute view of this general Confession which the piety of the Church has provided for us. We cannot help admiring its propriety and excellency; its exact conformity to the language and spirit of the Scriptures, and its suitableness to our condition as sinners, and supplicants at the throne of grace. May the examination which we have given it, lead us all to a fuller view of the import of the confessions and supplications which it contains, and dispose us to use it with an “humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of our sins, through the infinite mercy and goodness of God.”*

* See Bishop Brownell's Family Prayer Book, a work which every Episcopalian should possess.

"THIS provision of the Church is made with good reason. For could there be any thing devised better, than that we *all*, at our first access unto God by prayer should acknowledge, meekly our sins, and that not only in heart, but with the tongue; all that are present being made earnest witnesses, even of every man's distinct and deliberate assent to each particular branch of a common indictment drawn against ourselves? How were it possible that the Church should any way else, with such ease and certainty, provided, that none of her children may dissemble that wretchedness, the penitent confession whereof is so necessary a preamble especially to common prayer?"*

WHAT is that which so much endears the *Bible* to a sinner? It is the promise which is found in it, of forgiveness of sins, and final acceptance, addressed to the penitent and faithful. With what emotions does he, who is weary and heavy laden with the burthen of his guilt, hear that with God "is mercy and plenteous redemption," and that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." This sensibility, the *Church* seeks, both to excite and encourage.—Hence, directly after we have made our confession, and acknowledged that we were miserable sinners, what do we hear? The minister rises, (the people being still kneeling before God,) and declares to us, that unworthy, lost and ruined as we are, we may yet have hope; we must not sink into despair, for God "pardoneth and absolveth all who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." Encouraged by this assurance, in what language should we now call upon God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is through Jesus as "a new and living way" that we have access to him; surely then, no words can be more suitable than those taught us by our blessed master:—And when the minister begins himself, to offer up that inimitable prayer, known by the name of the Lord's Prayer, every one who feels that the precious privilege is his, of calling God his Father, and especially, if he indulges the hope that He is his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, will with difficulty be re-

*Bishop Sparrow.

strained from uniting with the minister and the rest of his fellow Christians, in the distinct and audible utterance of the same words. His feelings will make him give to the very first words of this prayer, an emphasis which none but God's adopted children can attach to them. Having confessed and deplored his wretchedness as a sinner ; having heard that God pardons and absolves all "who truly repent and unfeignedly believe," with what filial confidence does he approach the mercy-seat ! But there is humility in his confidence, and instead of using any words of his own, he prefers those which he has learned from him, for whose sake alone, he expects to be heard—His language is, "OUR FATHER who art in Heaven," &c. Surely Christians, those who do indeed love their Saviour, will delight to see this form of sound words, thus honored by being at *all times* used in our offices of devotion. Surely, it must be gratifying, in no inconsiderable degree, to every pious mind, to hear the whole congregation of worshippers presenting their petitions not only in the name, but in the very words of him, through whom alone they expect to be saved.—"Lord teach us to pray." Teach us, O, thou divine Instructor, better to understand, and more fully to enter into the spirit of those sacred words which thou hast commanded us to use.

BUT we can no more acceptably praise, than we can pray without divine assistance. Our thanksgivings unless excited by God's holy spirit will be heartless, cold, formal offerings. Need any one then be informed why before we enter upon these enlivening exercises we pray, "O Lord open *thou* our lips ?" In the response or answer which is returned by the people to this petition of the minister, the reason is given. It is, "*that* our mouth may show forth thy praise." Let the devout soul listen to the words with which we commence the animating duty of praise and say whether they are not such as she delights to use.—Let her consider what manifold reasons there are why, to God who created, to Jesus who redeemed and to the blessed spirit who sanctifies us, praise should be rendered, and then inquire what is more proper, than that she should lift up her voice, and ascribe "Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." He who knows that

God has from eternity, ever been glorified, and will be glorified through eternity, and who is willing to do all in his power to promote his glory, will not hesitate to respond to this strain, and complete the doxology by saying, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

As we cannot weary the Almighty with our praises, and as it is important often to be reminded of the nature of the duties which we are required to perform, the minister calls upon us for the purpose of keeping our attention confined to the exercise in which we are engaged, as well as to excite within us increased liveliness of feeling, and says "Praise ye the Lord." The people, as if impatient to prolong the enlivening employment, reply, "the Lord's name be praised," while both minister and people, as if with *one heart, and one voice*, proceed to magnify the Lord our God, by alternately reciting, or "singing to *one another*," according to apostolic direction,* the 95, Psalm, and the particular psalms appointed for the day of the month.

HE who loves a *social* worship cannot but perceive how well calculated the service of the church is, to promote this object. By the admirable order which is here established, not only the minister, but the people also are heard both praying to and praising God.—Our Liturgy gives the congregation an opportunity of *uniting* in the different religious exercises. We can here show that we do indeed take some interest in the public worship of Almighty God. Of a very strange character must be his religious feelings, who is not pleased, delighted, and animated to fervency in his own devotions when he *hears* the voices of all those around him, lifted up in the strains of holy prayer and thanksgiving. I know there is objection made to this practice, of the people responding. But the objection comes only from those who attend church but seldom, and who when they are there, instead of rising when the congregation rise, and kneeling when it is proper to kneel, are too apt to *sit* as mere spectators, and as if they were calculating rather to be amused with the mode of worship, or to see something with which to *find fault*, than to be instructed and edified. If they would take the Prayer

*Collossians iii. 16.

Book and observe and *audibly* repeat *their* part of the service, instead of thinking it a "*strange*" worship, they would find it rational, consistent and animating. The beauty of holiness is far more conspicuous, when instead of *one* man's having the whole service to perform, hundreds of voices are at the same time and with *one accord*, uttering the melting *confession* of penitents, and calling upon "our Father who art in heaven;" at another time sending forth their hearty *Amen* to the prayers, and then with their souls and all that is within them, uniting in the sublime and enrapturing strains of "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." Such was the custom in primitive times as we learn from St. Basil who says, "the people rising before it is light, go to the house of prayer, and there in great agony of soul and incessant showers of tears, make confession of their sins to God; and then rising from their prayers, proceed to singing of Psalms, dividing themselves into two parts and singing by turns."

WHEN the pious soul is in her most joyous mood does she not select one of the Psalms of David, in which to express her feelings? When "cast down and disquieted" does she not make the complaints of the royal penitent her own. When she reflects upon the greatness and goodness of God, whom does she hear with a more ardent and elevated mind, extolling him? The *pious soul* then need not be informed why the compositions of Israel's sweet singer occupy so much space in our daily service. In them she finds something applicable to every situation in which we can be placed,—and she is therefore ever willing to hear them read, and we should hope always ready to unite with the assembled congregation in reading them herself, alternately with the minister.—That they composed a great part of the religious exercises of the early Christians, is perfectly evident. There is something truly delightful to the servant of God, in the fact, that at this distant day he can worship God in the very way, the very form and words as did the church in the time of her greatest purity. Let us rejoice then Brethren that *our* church retains this primitive form of worship.

THE food by which the soul is nourished is God's holy word. She is ever longing for that bread which came down

from Heaven.—The Church acting as the steward of our Lord, is unwilling that she should “go empty away,” and now, as some relaxation to the mind, which hitherto has been employed in adoration, thanksgiving and praise, as well as to supply her with the spiritual manna which she craves, reverently opens the blessed volume, and reads for our edification a portion of scripture from the Old Testament. Little does he deserve to be dignified with the name of servant of God, who is not disposed to express his gratitude to our Heavenly Father for the precious revelation of the divine will which we enjoy. For the common blessings of his bounty and grace we should be thankful. But for the richer provision which he has made for our souls, contained in his sacred word, for having sent the sun of Righteousness to dispel the cloud of gloom, of doubt and of ignorance by which our horizon was blackened, for having enlightend our minds with divine truth, and established our hopes upon a basis which nothing but our own wilfulness can destroy,—he who is sensible of these benefits will ask for a hymn of praise, which he may use, the most animating and expressive, of any that can be composed. Does he not find this in the one which our Church is now heard offering, to the thrice Holy Lord God of Sabaoth? And when the minister begins it, saying “We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord,” is he not impatient to reply, “all the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting.” Say Christians of every denomination, did you ever peruse composition of uninspired man, which was so sublime, so heavenly as is this wonderful hymn, this celebrated “Te Deum,” which the church hath taught us to use! O if you have indeed a devotional spirit within you, you *must feel* that new wings are given to it, when you are listening to, and uniting in the repetition of this holy anthem.

THIS hymn finished, again the blessed volume is opened, and we have read to us a portion of the New Testament.—The child of God loves to witness the fulfilment of the law, in the Gospel; it delights him to behold the wonderful scheme of mercy unfolding itself through the types and figures of former dispensations, till it appears intelligible, luminous and clear in the incarnation, sufferings, death, resurrection

and ascension of the Lord and giver of life.—And on account of the manifestation which he here witnesses, of God's great love, in giving "his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life," to what act is it reasonable to suppose he would be prompted, but that of praise? He considers the miserable thralldom from which the world has been delivered, and he cannot be content that his *minister's* voice *alone*, should be heard acknowledging the benefit. He himself rises to add his ascriptions, and calls upon "all lands to be sure that the Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture."—Thus he proceeds repeating verse by verse with his minister, that noble Psalm, the one hundredth, or that beautiful song of Zacharias as recorded by St. Luke, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people," &c.

THE Christian is not ashamed to make a profession of his faith. Knowing in whom he believes, and properly valuing the interesting doctrines of the Gospel, and sensible of the influence which his example may have upon others, it may reasonably be expected of *him*, that he, not only will unite himself to the Redeemer, by a devout reception of the ordinances of religion; but that he will, whenever he comes into the house of God for publick worship, publicly, *audibly* rehearse the general articles of his belief. He believes in God, as his Creator, in Jesus Christ as his Redeemer, in the Holy Spirit, as the sanctifier of his miserably depraved nature. How then can any person of this description object to hearing the people now lifting up their voices and repeating with their minister, that excellent, comprehensive summary of Christian doctrine, known by the name of the Apostle's Creed? Should it be noticed, that while we are uttering the articles in the creed, "and in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord," we reverently incline our heads, O surely, he who is willing and anxious to have it known, he regards his Saviour, as "very God of very God," will not be dissatisfied at this outward expression of our conviction of his absolute, perfect Divinity.—He will think that by this act, the words of holy writ, which declare, "at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow," are to a certain extent fulfilled, and will not refuse himself to ob-

serve the ancient, the highly significant and appropriate custom.

LET us suppose a truly Godly person to have proceeded thus far in the performance of the service of the Church ; to have silently invoked God's blessing, when he first entered the sanctuary, and then with the congregation to have humbly confessed the sinfulness of his nature, and also : the particular sins of which his conscience might accuse him ; to have "set forth God's most worthy praise," by repeating the Psalms ; to have heard "his most holy word," as it has been read in the first and second lessons ; and to have made a declaration of his faith, as it is set forth in the Apostle's Creed. Would he not think that now was the proper time to make his general supplications to God ! When "our consciences are absolved from sin, our affections, warmed by our praises and thanksgivings, our understandings enlightened by the word of truth, and our faith strengthened by the publick professions of it ; the Church deems us fitted to enter upon this solemn duty," and now leads us to God's throne, that we may "ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul."

BUT the pious soul knows full well, that if there be any time, when he most requires the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit, it is when he is about to present himself before God, in the exercise of holy prayer. Tell me not then, that *such a person*, can see no beauty, no propriety in the wish now expressed by the minister as he says to the people, "The Lord be with you." But the minister requires assistance from above, as much as do the people ; and hearing them return his salutation, in the words, "and with thy spirit," (may the Lord also assist *you* in your exercises,) he feels encouraged to proceed in the duty before him. Does it not look as if there was real affection, and a good understanding as well as an earnest desire for each other's edification, when both minister and people are heard thus blessing and wishing well to each other ?

LET the candid determine whether such a spectacle, is not far more interesting, exhibiting more of a *social* worship, than where no such interchange of good wishes is witnessed ; and

where throughout the whole exercise of prayer, supplication and thanksgiving, no voice is heard, but that of the minister.

THE petition of the publican when he went up to the temple to pray was "God be *merciful* to me a sinner." Those who have the same feelings which this conscience-stung offender possessed, and who like him, feel that they deserve only wrath and punishment from God, will not require to be told, that the short prayer which the minister now offers up, is one which should ever be in the mouth of those who realize their exceeding sinfulness. "It is, O Lord, show thy mercy upon us." And he shows himself too much insensible to the gift of eternal life, of which, through God's mercy we have the promise, who in spirit at least, will not reply in the words which are now used by the people, "And grant us thy salvation."—The truly awakened soul perceives the unholy dispositions by which our nature is influenced. She knows how deep and general is our depravity, and that the very offerings of such persons as we are, must be more or less polluted, and among her first supplications, will be one for inward purity.—How strongly then must all those who are sensible of their need of the sanctifying grace of God to render their services acceptable, approve of the petition which they now hear. It is, "O God, make clean our hearts within us." And how ready should they be to unite in uttering the response, "And take not thy Holy Spirit from us." Strange indeed it must be, to hear any persons who believe in the necessity of our hearts being cleansed and renewed by the Divine Spirit, finding fault with a manual of devotion in which this great doctrine is so frequently set forth, and in which are so many, and such earnest and affecting Invocations for the presence and influence of that Blessed Agent by whom we are enabled to work out our salvation.

THE prayers which succeed are broken into short collects. This is an arrangement, which those sincerely devoted to their God and Saviour, might be expected, much to admire. For what can be better calculated to excite and keep alive our devotional feelings, and to inspire religious awe and veneration, than the seasonable, frequent, solemn mention of the name and attributes of the great God? With these each prayer or collect begins. What can be more congenial to

the sentiments of him who entertains evangelical views of the Mediation of the blessed Redeemer, than to perceive others pleading to have each one of their petitions accepted and answered, only for his sake, and in virtue of his merits and Intercession? It is thus that all our prayers and collects end.—With respect to the matter or subjects of our different prayers I shall now say nothing more, than that true candour, and unaffected piety must admit they are on this account pre-eminently worthy of all the commendation which their most devoted admirers have passed upon them, and that they ought to receive the loud the hearty AMEN (*so I pray it may be*) of every one who listens to them. The Litany deserves a more particular attention than circumstances will permit me now to give it. As a prayer, when do we hear any one of modern invention to equal it, in point of fulness, simplicity, fervour and sublimity? Of a truly singular cast must be his devotional feelings, whom this inimitable composition cannot interest. How solemn, and how solemnly repeated are its Invocations! Where are the “miserable sinners,” those whom the weight of their corruption and sins does indeed oppress, who do not wish God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, the holy, blessed and glorious Trinity to have mercy upon them? What but apprehensions of danger will the consciousness of our depravity and guilt as “miserable offenders” excite? Who does not know, that for his transgressions he has justly exposed himself to the wrath which is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness? And *who*, convinced that this is his situation, when he hears the minister fervently praying “Remember not Lord our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers, neither take thou vengeance of our sins; spare us good Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us forever”—will not be almost irresistibly prompted to unite with the congregation and say “Spare us good Lord?” I am not disposed to wish that any human tests should be established by which we are to determine whether we be Christians. I should however think myself almost justified in the supposition, that he who could not approve of the various petitions of this solemn Litany or general supplication, must never have examined

or listened to it without prejudice. And let me ask those who have correct ideas of social worship, whether it does not immediately strike them with peculiar force, when the minister is deprecating the "evils which we have most justly deserved," to hear the whole congregation frequently crying out "Good Lord deliver us?" Or how can it but favourably affect us, to witness the interest which the people take in the devotions, and the engagedness which is manifested by them as *their* voices are heard occasionally lifted up in the earnest Supplication, "We beseech thee to hear us good Lord?" Does it not look, I ask again, as if we were sensible of our wants, as if we realized our danger, and were most anxious to have our petitions granted, when as a whole people our voices ascend *together*, "Son of God we beseech thee to hear us; O Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world; have mercy upon us; grant us thy peace?" And what, I confidently enquire, can give a more striking and imposing appearance of an *assembly* of Christian worshippers than a service thus conducted, *jointly*, by the minister and people?—That such was the kind of worship in which our Saviour united while on earth,—that it is the same as was observed by the early Christians, Ecclesiastical history most fully testifies.

It is in order, for me now to ask you, to consider that part of the Communion service which is appointed to be read on all Sundays, and Holy days, and which commences with a prayer that God would "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts within us, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit," It is a prayer to which, we might at once conclude, the religious feelings of all who listen to it, and who do sincerely desire "perfectly to love God and worthily to magnify his holy name," would induce to add their hearty Amen. It is true, the Ten Commandments were addressed directly to the Jews: But he who remembers that they form a general rule of life; that all the precepts, either of the law or the gospel, may be resolved into them; that we are imperatively bound to observe their spirit, that their moral obligation rests with as much binding force upon us, as upon the Israelites, our whole duty to God and our neighbour being summed up in them, will deem it a wise regulation, that they are required to be continually proclaimed in the Christian Church. The people are directed

to kneel while they are listening to the commandments, (a posture which must strongly recommend itself to the pious, as the most proper one when we are receiving any communications from Heaven,) and after every commandment, to implore God's pardoning mercy for past transgressions, and his strengthening grace for the time to come. Their prayer is "Lord, have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law." It is a prayer whose peculiar suitableness to the place where it is introduced, cannot but be at once perfectly evident. It is a prayer which we might think no sinner, sensible of his errors, his natural weakness and his need of divine assistance to enable him to live a godly, righteous, and a sober life, would scruple, hesitate or refuse to adopt. But we hear the declaration of the moral law with trembling, with alarm, for who has not violated it? Who is able to render to it a perfect obedience? Who when judged by this, does not perceive that he has incurred the condemnation implied in the sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" With what delighted sensations then must we hear, as we now do, the precious truths, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved!" This heart-cheering revelation is contained in the Epistle and Gospel, with the reading of which the law is followed. To testify our peculiar reverence for the words of our blessed Lord, we rise when we are greeted with these glad tidings, and the ascription of praise is heard escaping from the congregation, "Glory be to thee O Lord." It is the glorious news that "repentance unto life" is granted us. It is the blessed offer of pardon and immortal glory which we hear. Let Him be especially glorified, through whom the offer is made, and who by his sufferings and death, purchased for us, the inestimable blessing.

I have thus in a very hasty manner, endeavored to show you, my brethren, that our daily service is calculated to interest the *feelings* of the truly pious soul. The experience of many, who have shown among the brightest lights in the Church of the Redeemer, is in perfect conformity with these observations. Some of the prayers and praises which you are here taught to use, were composed by Confessors and

and Martyrs, and were the very ones in the offering of which their spirits left their bodies to unite with "the spirits of just men made perfect" in a better world, in grateful adorations, to "the Father of an infinite majesty, his true and only Son, and also the Holy Ghost the Comforter." Still higher and more sacred authority than this, in reference to the mode of some of the very exercises of your worship, you have the example of the Saviour to recommend and hallow it, and in reference to the prayer which you here are taught most repeatedly to offer up, his authority to command its use.

What is there then in this service, not in accordance with the feelings of the most zealous, active, ardent, devoted Christian belonging to any religious denomination? We do indeed, read larger portions of God's word than are heard in other Protestant societies. To this, none who have received this, as the *engrafted word* which is able to save our souls, ought or can consistently object.—We do indeed, differ from many other denominations in our posture during prayer. It is that of kneeling, not sitting, which by too many is irreverently substituted for kneeling. Kneeling is the posture sanctioned and enjoined by scripture, and therefore ought to be approved and adopted by us. It is the posture which the *sinner* does indeed *feel* best becomes one who is conscious of his unworthiness so much as to lift up his eyes to that place of purity where dwells the High and Holy One.—And if piety delights to see the servants of God thus lowly abasing themselves in prayer, she will assuredly think it right, if agreeably to scripture also" we *stand* up when we praise our Father in Heaven. For what other attitude is so significant of the elevation of soul we should experience in the performance of this animating exercise? I am aware that the remark is made, that ours is a *form* of worship. Hear what the pious John Newton has said upon this subject:—

"I should think an evangelical liturgy a great blessing; as it must secure the people (that is, the bulk of the nation) from being exposed to the same uncertainty and disappointment from the reading-desk, as they are liable to from the pulpit. For they who cannot, or do not, preach the Gospel, are not likely to pray agreeably to the spirit of the Gospel, if that part of the public service was likewise left to their

own management. Or shall we say, it is an advantage to some dissenting congregations, that their ministers not being confined to a form of sound words, there is little more of Christ or of grace to be found in their prayers than in their sermons? Is it not too hastily taken for granted by many, that God cannot be worshipped in spirit and truth by those who use a form of prayer? or that he will not afford them who so approach him any testimony of his acceptance? If the words of a form suit and express the desires and feelings of my mind, the prayer is as much *my own* as if I had conceived it upon the spot. On the other hand, if I have the greatest readiness and fluency in diversifying expressions, so that my prayer should always appear unstudied and new; yet if my spirit, or the spirit of those who join with me, be not engaged in it, though I may admire my own performance, and be applauded by others, it is no better than a mere lifeless form in the sight of Him who searcheth the heart. Not to say, that many who profess to pray extempore, that is, without either a printed or a written form, go so much in a beaten path, that they who hear them frequently can tell, with tolerable certainty, how they will begin, when they are about the middle, and when they are drawing towards the close of their prayer."

My Brethren, merely *hearing* a prayer, deserves no more to be called praying, than hearing a sermon ought to be called preaching. And I submit it to those who have paid any strict, unbiassed, attention to this subject, whether they have not had the spirit of prayer much more effectually checked by the vanity, the ignorance, the embarrassment, or the unbecoming confidence, of many who have attempted to *make* the prayers, *during the time of service*, than it would have been had the same persons used a well arranged, pre-composed form. How *can* the true spirit of prayer have been excited within us, if it is only to be kept alive by *novelty* of expression? Do we require God's will to be revealed to us in continually *changing* words and expressions to make it interesting to us? In prayer we address ourselves not to man, whose "itching ears" can be gratified only with new sounds, and an ever-varying phraseology, but to that Being who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," and who, in

our addresses to him, regards not so much the words we use, as the sincerity, the reverence, the humility, which may mark our conduct.

My Brethren, admiring, or even being affected by the prayers of others, is not praying ourselves any more than admiring, or being affected by, a sermon, is preaching.

We pray ourselves, when the words or thoughts in which the petitions are expressed, are either our own, or adopted as our own. To *adopt* any thing which our understanding does not approve of, is to attach infallibility to him whose sentiments we thus receive. To *approve* of any thing without having duly *considered*, and *reflected* upon it, is to refuse properly to use the faculties which God has given us. Let the dispassionate and candid say whether we must not be better prepared to "*pray with the spirit and the understanding*" when the form of prayer which we are to adopt, be one with which we have for a long time been familiar, and whose scriptural and evangelical character we plainly perceive, than when what is given us, is one framed during the very time when we are called to engage in this duty, and of which we can know nothing, save only as the minister composes it word by word, and concerning the propriety and fitness of whose every petition, our judgment is expected to pass an opinion *after* we have heard them? Understand me not as intimating that we never hear unpremeditated prayers, to which we cannot add our sincere Amen. I am not writing to disparage the modes of worship to which other denominations of Christians give their preference. But as we use a *precomposed* form, instead of one composed during the time when we have met together to perform our solemn worship, I wish you to see, that in the former case, knowing before hand what we are going to say, we all can *indeed*, "*UNITE in prayer.*" Being acquainted with the prayers, we assemble as a congregation of worshippers, not mere hearers of prayer. We can come with hearts prepared to enter upon the duty before us, without any apprehension that our minds will be shocked by any thing of an improper character, which can be included among the petitions, either accidentally or designedly, or through the weakness of him who might prefer giving us a prayer of his own immediate framing. To

object to precomposed forms of devotion, is to reflect upon the wisdom, I say not simply of some of the worthiest, the most Godly men the world ever knew, but of our blessed Lord himself, who not only united in a worship of this kind ; but prepared and commanded his disciples to use a form. It is moreover to reflect upon the wisdom of God himself, who on many occasions, prescribed the very words of the confession and prayer which persons were directed to make before Him.*

It is to reflect upon our own consistency of conduct. For are not our devotions, as it respects the exercise of *Praise*, conducted by a pre-composed form ? Why, then, may not our devotions, as it respects *Prayer*, be conducted in the same manner.† It is to be feared that in the objections which have been made to this mode of worship, there has, not unfrequently, been discovered less of good sense, sound argument, scriptural proof, and christian temper, than ill-will, passion, and prejudice. Let the subject be closely examined in all its bearings, with that candid spirit by which the humble child of God is expected to be governed—let such a one remember the character of many of the addresses, *called* prayer, which he has heard, the intemperate expressions which they have contained, the erroneous opinions which have thus been advanced, the intolerant spirit, the bitter anathemas they have breathed, to say nothing of the rash, unmeaning, repetitions, which have been heard, the confusion and embarrassment of the speaker, which have been discovered, and *can* he refrain from acknowledging that it would be *safer* at least, and that our religious exercises would be less liable to be ridiculed, or to give offence, would be more generally acceptable, imparting more dignity, solemnity, and animation, to our religious exercises, should there be a *form* prepared by the collected wisdom and learning of the Church, “from which it should not be lawful for the pastor in his office to depart.” Such a form Calvin did “most highly approve their should be.” Whether ours, my Brethren, be such a Form, you can somewhat judge from the manner in which Robert Hall, a Baptist clergyman, and author of the

* Deut. 26, 12, 15. See the works of John Newton, vol. 3, p. 407.

† Newton, vol. 3, p. 409.

tract, "Quench not the spirit," has spoken of it. The following is his language: "I believe the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervour of its devotions, the majestic simplicity of its language, have placed the English Liturgy in the very first rank of uninspired compositions." (*Speech before Liecester Bible Society.*)

THAT ours is indeed such a form, the very learned Adam Clarke, a Methodist clergyman and author of the commentary on the Bible, gives his opinion in these very strong terms.

"It is a work almost universally esteemed by the devout and pious of every denomination, and the greatest effort of the reformation, next to the translation of the scriptures into the English language." In addition to this, we find this *form* used in the splendid Methodist Chapel recently erected in Tevoitdale (England,) and this same highly distinguished individual, in his sermon delivered when that church was first opened for divine service, speaking of "*the very great pleasure which it afforded him to witness the introduction of the liturgy in that place*, and expressing his ardent desire that he might live to see it adopted in every place where the Methodists have a morning service."

To produce the opinions of many others, eminent for their learning and piety, belonging to different Christian denominations, would be very easy.—But it is time this letter was concluded. The subject is left with the utmost confidence to be determined by all who will allow themselves to be influenced by an unprejudiced judgment, whether our Liturgy be not "scriptural, evangelical and experimental;"* and whether it be not calculated to promote, cherish and increase a rational piety, and all those devotional feelings, which warm the heart subdued by Divine grace?—

It is not my desire my Brethren that you should *worship* the Liturgy. Let the ever blessed Redeemer have your strongest and purest affection, your supreme love. But let not your attachment to "the Church which is his body," be weak, transient or of a *doubtful* character: Nor lightly esteem any Formulary of devotion, in which there is provided for the use of the Church a service embracing all the doctrines of the Gospel; and whose prayers, praises, and thanksgivings are such as reason can sanction, the "spiritually minded," en-

*Newton.

gage in with fervor, the feeblest capacities comprehend, the most refined, and highly cultivated minds admire, and a whole people, "young men and maidens, old men and children" *unite* in performing, in a decent, an orderly an animating, a primitive and scriptural manner. Such is the character of the service of the Protestant Episcopal Church. That such is its character, is acknowledged not only by those who have been brought up, in the bosom of the Church from their infancy. Among her most decided adherents, she numbers many who have attached themselves to her, from the honest convictions of their own minds, after careful examination, of the soundness of her doctrines, the liberality of her views, the undoubted validity of her ministerial authority, the evangelical nature of her Liturgy. Hardly a denomination of Christians can be mentioned, from among whose ministers, there have not been some, who are now zealously, faithfully, and successfully laboring as Episcopal clergymen. They have risen superior to the prejudices of education, to selfish considerations, to family or extraneous influence, and aware of the privations to which they would be called to submit, united themselves to our church, and are known now among her brightest ornaments. Be assured, a boasting spirit does not prompt the mention of this circumstance. It is related to you, only to corroborate the assertion which has been made, as to the fitness and beauty which have been discovered in our service, and the estimation to which candid and pious persons have thought it entitled. The learned Doct. Dwight late President of Yale College, has been heard frequently to say, that were he in England he should attach himself to the Episcopal Church. He, it is to be hoped, has gone to that happy world, where dissensions are unknown. Already, (surely it must be pleasant to us all to think so) carried to Abraham's bosom, his voice we trust will hereafter be heard, in the Church triumphant, *there* lifted up at the same time and in the *same* words, in songs of everlasting praise "to Him who hath loved us and given himself for us, and by his blood made us kings and priests unto God forever."

THE cloud which gathered over him, shrouding from his view, all earthly scenes, must, sooner or later, my Brethren, wrap us all, in its awful shade.—"The night cometh, when

no man can work." Our probationary period draws rapidly to a close. That "glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," is constantly receiving new accessions of "such as shall be saved." The day will ere long be ushered in, when the saints of the Most High, shall be seen ascending to take possession of their heavenly inheritance, and to "be forever with the Lord," and the ungodly be left to reap the bitter "fruit of their own doings." What, in view of the solemn and affecting events which God has irreversibly decreed shall then be witnessed; what, in reference to that unchangeable destiny, that state of "honour, glory, immortality," and that state of "tribulation and anguish;" that "life eternal, and that everlasting punishment," one or the other of which, becomes the ever-during portion of each of us—O what, my Brethren, is our duty? To what, should a regard for our best interest prompt us? To what, does the love of God call us? It is to become such burning and shining lights," in the Church of the Redeemer on earth, "that others seeing our good works, shall be led to glorify our Father in Heaven." It is to have, what our inimitable Liturgy teaches us each Lord's day, to pray we may have, "our hearts set to obey God's commandments." It is to have "new and contrite hearts created within us." It is to unite ourselves to the Lord's family, to become members of "his body which is the church," and to live a godly, righteous and sober life." It is not required of you, to commence a crusade against other religious denominations, and dishonorably endeavour to make proselytes of others to your own opinions. Neither ought you to permit your attachment to the church to be weakened by the exploded notion that her services are not calculated to advance your growth in grace. They are not, it is true, calculated to encourage that presumption, extravagance, fanaticism, which are sometimes discovered in the conduct of those who would wish to be thought, the true friends of the Saviour. But when you will unite in performing the various parts of our service, and will allow your understanding to judge of its merits, and will pray to your heavenly Father to assist you in the devotions which the Church has prepared for you, and can forget that you have an "itching ear," to be gratified, can forget proud, carnal self, and

seek only to be recognized as *humble* worshippers in the temple, yourselves content rather to sit at the feet of the Elders, than anxious to display your own talents and gifts; then you will find our Liturgy, what a noble army of Martyrs have found it, and what the pious Newton describes it, "animating, Evangelical, and Scriptural." "Hold fast" then Brethren, "this form of sound words." Never allow a love of novelty, to influence you in such an important, such a sacred matter, as that of religion. Think not, either the learning or piety, of any persons at the present day, is so superior to what distinguished such men as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Gregory, Basil, Chrysostom, and a host of others now gone to their everlasting rest, that you may expect to have made for you, *during the time* of public worship, prayers more suitable for a public congregation, than those which these venerable men, the most of whom perished at the stake for the cause of Jesus, have prepared for you.—Mistake not animal excitement, for religious sensibility: attribute not to the influence of God's Holy Spirit, what may be traced to the power of sympathy. Think not your becoming followers of either "Paul, Apollos or Cephas" is the same thing as being followers of the Lord Jesus Ghrist. As I would caution you not to think more highly of the Liturgy, than of the Church the body, the family of Christ, to which the promise of pardon is made, and in which we must here be "planted," if we would hereafter "flourish in the courts of our God;" so would I caution you, not to think more highly of the *ministering servants*, than of the Great Head of the Church. Suffer no man to "make merchandise of you."—Be not seduced into the opinion that the estimation in which you may hold men's persons, can be substituted for sincere affection towards the Saviour of your souls. To Him is due the highest, the purest worship, which you can possibly render. Love to his character must induce you to unite yourselves to him, by an unreserved surrender of yourselves to his service, by a fearless, decided dedication of yourselves to him, in the ordinances of his own appointment. His own declaration is, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." It is "the Church for which he gave himself." It is the Church for which he addressed himself to Heaven, when he said, "Father I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou

hast given me. Neither pray I for them alone, but for them also, who shall *believe* on me through their word." Of those who *do* believe in this Divine being as their only Saviour, no inconsiderable portion, compose the Protestant Episcopal Church. This Church claims prophets and apostles as the foundation on which she is built, Jesus Christ as the corner stone, on which she rests, and which binds her together in one holy compact body. In her ministry, her doctrines and her mode of worship we read of her, in the volume of our faith, when "they that gladly received the word were *baptized*, and continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread*, and prayers." (Acts 2, 41, 42.) *Anterior* to this, the Commission was given, in virtue of which, the Apostles went forth to proclaim the message of their master, sending others even as they had been sent by Christ himself, and transmitting to others the same commission, which they had received, until it has come down by unbroken succession, to our own days; thus making *valid* the ministrations of the clergy of your church.

SHOULD any attempts be made to ridicule or deny the institutions of this church, let those who make them remember her primitive, her apostolic, her divine origin, and not forget that the reflections which they cast upon her, must extend also to those holy, those *inspired* men by whom she was organized, and also to the ADORABLE BEING who is the rock on which she has been built. Should the stale remark be repeated that there was no piety among the members of this church, let those from whom it comes, consider whether they do not expose their weakness, to say nothing of their uncharitableness, in thus speaking of a church, in communion with which have died, a Jewel, a Tillotson, a Horseley, a John Newton, a Thomas Scott, a Henry Martyn.

Should the insinuation be thrown out, that here exists only "a form" of godliness, let those if any there be, who are ungenerous enough to make it, bear in mind they give alarming evidence that they have not yet been so thoroughly transformed by "the power" of godliness, as to "think no evil." Should efforts be made to estrange the affections of any from the church, let those upon whom the influence is excited, endeavor to ascertain whether to this conduct, those who approach you for this purpose are prompted, so much from a-

ny sound objections which can be raised, to the rites, the offices, the *forms*, the Liturgy of the church, as from a desire to advance their own peculiar interests. Finally, my Brethren, let us by our *unostentatious* zeal, our manly consistency, our active piety, by the meekness of our dispositions, the holiness of our life, prove that our service is indeed a spiritual service, and our church the nursery in which, the Holy Spirit is training us up in such a manner, that we may hereafter be welcomed as members of the church of the first born. Thus beloved Brethren, conducting ourselves, the delightful reflection will be ours, that, we are not building ourselves up as a party, but by our example, winning souls to the cause of our Redeemer, recommending the church to which we belong, by an argument which can never be controverted, and causing those who are "of the contrary part to be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us." (Titus, 2, 8.)

It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can be enabled to show ourselves "a pattern" worthy to be imitated by others, and thus adorn, benefit and extend the Church of the Living God. That all who peruse these pages may be successful instruments in advancing this glorious work, and hereafter appear "as living stones, in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," is the fervent prayer, my Brethren, of your friend and pastor,

F. H. CUMING.

P. S.—That many inaccuracies will be discovered in this little pamphlet the author is perfectly aware. But as it was written, during a time, when an unusual share of parochial duty devolved upon him, and when he was exposed to continual interruptions, he hopes those who read it will extend to it their utmost indulgence.

The following are some of the errors which should be noticed, viz.

The word 'she,' used for 'he,' in the 11th line, page 6.

The word 'was,' for 'were,' in the 7th line from the bottom of page 16.

The word 'deny,' for 'decry,' in the 20th line of page 29.

The writer has made a few extracts, without marking them as quotations, from a little work published by him, some years since, entitled, "The Episcopalian Instructed."