









# A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE

## THE GENERAL CONVENTION

OF THE

## PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES,

IN

*ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,*

On the 21st of May, 1814.

BY THE RIGHT REV.

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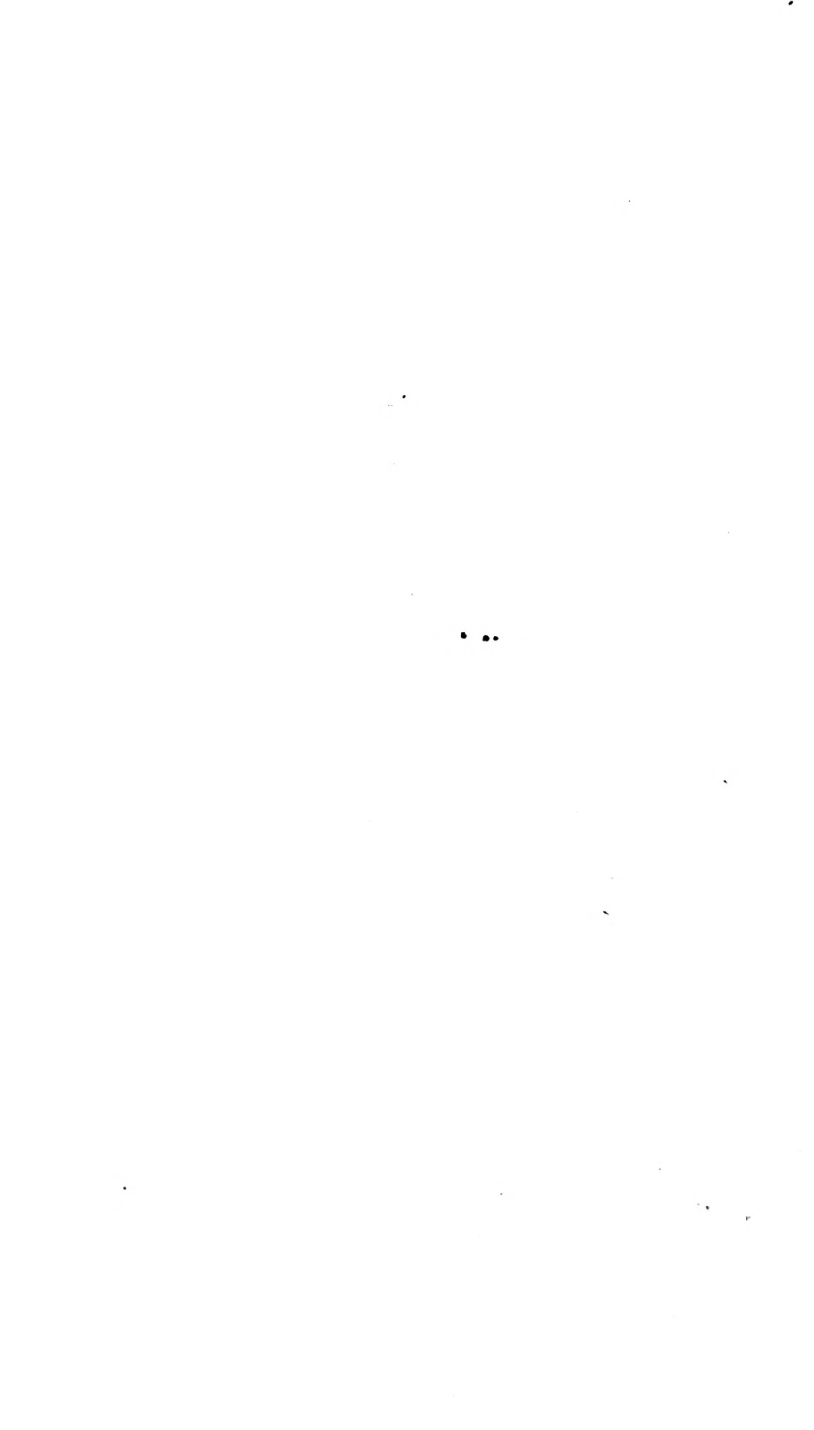
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

*WHEN* the following discourse was preached, the time of the convention was deemed, by the writer, too precious to admit of the delivery of the whole of it. The parts which were then omitted, are given in the publication, in the humble hope, that they will be acceptable to his brethren; and render the discourse more practically useful to those who shall read it.





## A DISCOURSE, &c.

PSALM xl̄v. 13.

*Her clothing is of wrought gold.*

**O**F whom speaketh the psalmist this? Of the church; whom David, with the eye of prophecy, saw, in all that glorious beauty, in which, in the age of her maturity, she should be “brought unto the king,” and enjoy the choicest demonstrations of his affection and favour. What was meant by her clothing in the psalmist’s mind, we may not be able indisputably to ascertain; but we shall not materially err, if we consider it as signifying those offices of devotion, in which she is seen by mankind sublimely attired; and on the days, on which he vouchsafes to give her a special audience, presents herself before the Lord her God. In this view of their import, the words of the text have been taken to introduce a discourse upon that excellent liturgy, the public service of our common prayer, in which the church is as truly seen by us as she was by the psalmist, in a clothing of wrought gold.

Should I attempt, in a single discourse, to treat fully of the liturgy of the church, I should wrong the subject, and fill your minds and my own with dissatisfaction. It is work for a volume. And the many excellent volumes in which its character is analyzed, and its perfection developed, render unnecessary any efforts of mine to add to

its celebrity or illustrate its praise. All, therefore, that I shall aim to do, will be, to point out to you some of its most distinguished properties—properties, an acquaintance with which is indispensably necessary, to enable us to know its excellence, and to use it in such a manner as will render it that pure and holy, that becoming and acceptable sacrifice, which it was intended we should offer in it to God and the Redeemer.

That you may the more fully see the importance of the subject, allow me, before I proceed to the discussion of it, to recall to your minds the important truth, that the great, the chief object of our assembling together in the sanctuary, is to worship God. Sermons have, in modern times, more admirers than prayers ~~have~~. But whoever considers the authority by which public worship is instituted, the reasons on which it is grounded, and the purposes for which it is designed, will perceive, that the first business for which we come together into the temple is to acknowledge the Most High God our redeemer—to recognize our relations to him, and pay him the homage—to seek of him the mercies and blessings which we need—and in acts of adoration and praise to celebrate his glorious name. Preaching is undoubtedly an ordinance of the Almighty; and so long as “faith shall come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” must be an ordinance of very great moment to the salvation of men. But it is nevertheless secondary in nature and importance to that great, that leading, that most interesting duty, of worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness. This is the highest act in which our nature can be engaged. And the people who are furnished with the means of performing it most perfectly are brought nearest to the angels in their privileges, and will, if they

use them faithfully, be beheld in their public assemblies with most complacency by the Almighty. How important then the enquiry concerning the properties of that service, which the church has provided for us to perform, when we are gathered together in the courts of our Maker! What are these properties? I would call your attention to those which follow—that our liturgy is social—that it is sensible—that it is spiritual—that it is complete—that it is well arranged—and that it is holy. Under these heads, may be brought to view enough of its character, to confirm our attachment to it: we may find under each of them instruction concerning its excellency, and direction concerning its use.

Men are social beings; and when they are assembled in the temples of the Almighty, their *natures* and the *community* of their blessings and wants, require, that they should offer a common worship. In order to this, a form of prayer and praise is necessary. Without it, they cannot *associate* in the performance of the service. And he, who is most averse to this idea, will, upon reflection, perceive, that even extemporary prayers are forms to all who hear them; from which they cannot wander without relinquishing their part in the common business of the congregation. As a form is in the nature of the thing necessary, so *established* forms have in all ages of the church been esteemed most conducive to the purposes of social worship. They were used by God's chosen people in the service of the tabernacle and the temple— they have the sanction of our blessed Lord—they were adopted by the apostles and primitive christians—and are found in the church in every age, from their time to the present day. By such *stated* services, the people know beforehand the sacrifice which is to be offered—they have

it as it were in their hands—they *unitedly* bring it to the altar and lay it thereon; it is *their* offering, as well as the priest's. Here, then, may be observed the happy adaptation of our liturgy to the social character, which should appertain to the worship of the christian temple. Whereas, it is not easy for us to conceive, how, having no such established service, we could assent to that, which we had never contemplated; or offer that, which we never possessed.

But, further, that the service of the sanctuary may be, as it should be, perfectly social, the people should have in it an active part. In the prayers, as well as the praises, with their bodies, as well as with their spirits, they should all, after an orderly manner, be engaged, that the service may be most truly the service of all.

Conformably with this principle was our liturgy constructed. The people have in it an active service, as well as the priest; sometimes, as in the collects and the prayers, or adorations which have been offered, expressing their assent by an audible and devout amen; sometimes, as in the versicles, echoing the petition which the priest has made, or enforcing it with new considerations; sometimes, as in the litany, when the minister has offered the suffrage, taking as it were with holy ardour the words out of his mouth, and uttering the deprecation, or the entreaty; and sometimes, as in the holy hymns, the psalms, and the doxologies, responding in alternate verse the praises of God, the desires of men, the holiness and homage, the faith, and hopes, and charity of religion—thus exhibiting an humble imitation of the worship of heaven; in which we are told the celestial beings *cry one to another*. How admirably is this arrangement adapted to exhibit the perfection of the beauty of social

worship! Allow me then to notice the importance, that, in order to the production of its due effect, the people should refrain, on the one hand, from repeating the parts, which belong exclusively to the minister, as the exhortations, the absolution, the commandments, the benediction, and those prayers which are to be said by him alone, and, on the other hand, that with pure hearts, and humble, yet audible voices, they should perform the parts, which belong exclusively to *them*. The responses are a beautiful, very ancient, peculiar, and most useful part of the liturgy of our church. By the solemn performance of them the people may keep their own attention engaged, may animate him who is ministering among them, and may kindle devotion one in another. Yea, if the little children were taught to pronounce with attention and proper solemnity these parts of divine service, it would add to the beauty and utility of public worship; and in our assemblies would be exhibited the verity of the inspired declaration, *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.*

To excite you to join diligently and with reverence in the service of common prayer, I need only guide your attention to the sublime extent of the application of its social character. It is not only in this house, in which you assemble, that in all its parts it is sociably performed. The same prayers and praises, in the same words, are offered, perhaps at the same hour, with the same faith, by ten thousand tongues, to the same God and father of all. From all christian parts of the globe the amen resounds, which you here utter; and the doxology is raised, in which you are here called upon to bear a part. It is not in this age only, in which you live, that this service conveys the devotions of christians to heaven.

In some of the ejaculations it contains, the first disciples breathed their praises and their wishes to the Most High. Its collects have, many of them, for many hundreds of years been the vehicles of the public devotions of the church. And upon some of its apostrophes has the last breath of distinguished martyrs trembled, whose piety, during their lives, was refreshed with its hymns, and its psalms. It is not under the gospel dispensation alone, that some parts of this service have been used to express the common devotions of the faithful. There are hymns in it which were sung by saints under the mosaic dispensation; and in the use of the psalms particularly, the church of the New Testament is found in society with the church of the Old; for in these sacred compositions, not the emotions of David's heart only were vented, but much of the worship of God's ancient people did consist. It is not only in the church militant upon earth, that this service, in some of its parts, is used. We have borrowed from the church triumphant in heaven their gratulatory anthem, and their perpetual hymn, and have reason to believe that their voices are in concert with ours when they sing the song of the redeemed. How sublime is this view of the communion and fellowship of the church, under the mosaic and christian dispensations, in different ages, and in distant nations, on earth and in heaven, in the use of some part or other of that holy liturgy, which it is our distinguishing felicity to have received from our fathers! Who would not wish, in the temple, to bear upon his lips those psalms and prayers, in which the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs, have uttered their devotions to God! How dead must he be to the finest associations, which can affect the mind, who

is not animated to a devout and fervent performance of his part of the service of the sanctuary, by the consideration, that, upon this same censer, which the church holds out to him, incense hath been put by those hands, which are now extended before the throne of the Almighty; and that as its smoke ascended, those eyes were lifted up to heaven, which are now fixed upon the visible glory of God and the Lamb.

This social property of our liturgy forms its most prominent feature; and endears it to us, as suitable to our nature, and friendly to the best feelings of the heart. Would to God its beauty were noticed by every member of our congregations, and commended by his practice to others! Pleasant and elevating is the scene, which the christian temple exhibits, when the priest and the people are as one, to make one offering unto the Lord; and from every mouth, from the infant of days and from the old man who hath not filled his days, there arises the alternate adoration or the assenting amen.

But this leads me to the second property of our liturgy to be noticed, viz. that it is sensible. By this I mean that it has a body, as well as spirit; that it is adapted to the nature of beings who have senses, as well as souls. All worship, to be becoming, must be suitable to the nature of those who offer it, as well as to his nature to whom it is offered. A worship, wholly spiritual, would not be proper for man in his present state. It would be the act of but half of his nature. To be complete, all his faculties must be employed in it. With his body, as well as his spirit, he must worship—for each is a part of himself, each is the offspring of divine power, each is a partaker of the divine blessings, each is redeemed by the divine mercy, each needs the divine protection, and

both are God's. Indeed it is difficult to conceive, how, without corporeal acts, the important quality of sociality in worship, upon which we have already dilated, could be maintained. If the service be not sensible, the signs must be wanting, by which alone men can manifest their association in a common work, to the world and to each other. Shall I be told, that the spirit may be engaged when the body is still? It may. But the spirits of men cannot, in this present state, evidence to men, what are their engagements, but by signs and deeds. If there be in the assemblies of the saints no sound of words, and no consentaneous posture of bodies, there may be sincerity in the individual; there may be an insulated altar in every bosom; but the visible chain is wanting, which should connect all together; and conduct the spirit, by which one is animated, through the whole. On these accounts, mankind have been impelled, by the dictates of reason, in every country, to invest their public worship with rites and ceremonies; and with an eye to these principles, the wise compilers of our liturgy have rendered it a sensible service. They have adapted it to our state of being upon "this visible diurnal sphere," guarding with equal caution against the impalpable reveries of the mystic, and the tedious mummeries of the formalist; on the one hand avoiding to incumber the service of the sanctuary with such a mass of ceremonies, as would obscure, and overwhelm its spirit, and restraining themselves, on the other hand, from affecting a worship so abstract and imperceptible, as would not become man on the earth; and indeed we know not whether any such is offered in heaven. It is here then you will be struck with the importance of the audible voice, with which the congregation, as well as the priest, are to celebrate



divine service, that they may honour God with the best member which they have. Here you will perceive the propriety of using, to enliven and beautify the worship of the sanctuary, that faculty, which is given to men, of clothing their thoughts and their feelings, their faith, their hopes, and their love in the ravishing charms of melodious sounds. Here you will discern the fitness of that decent attire, which the church has prescribed for her priests; of that adoration, which she expresses by the consecration to the honour of the Almighty, of temples meet for his service; and of those “outward visible signs of inward and spiritual grace,” which she has received in the sacraments from her Lord, and transmits as hallowed to posterity. Here you will see the reasons of those holy instructions, which teach us to fall low on our knees, when we confess our sins to Almighty God, or supplicate his mercies; and to stand upon our feet, when we declare the articles of faith, which we are resolved to maintain, or with elevated emotions proclaim the greatness and the goodness, whereby the Most High hath made us glad. These sensible acts, this employment of the faculties and posture of our bodies, the worshipping our Creator, how natural are they, how expressive, how becoming our condition in this state of being! To shew you in what value they were held by those who were best able to estimate them, need I turn your attention to Solomon, kneeling upon his knees, when he offers his prayer to God; and rising upon his feet, and stretching forth his hands, when in the name of the Almighty he blesses the people? Need I bring to your view the congregation of Israel, the chosen and divinely instructed people, bowing their heads, when they received the benediction of the Most High; and raising their bodies and

their voices, when they magnify his name? Need I call to your recollection, the striking picture which the spirit of revelation hath given us, of the inhabitants of heaven, veiling their faces, and casting down their crowns, when they worship him who sitteth upon the throne? Need I take you to Gethsemane, and shew you Jesus, the pattern of all that is perfect, thrice kneeling down before his Father, while he thrice utters the same earnest supplication? No; I need not. These, and other examples, are familiar to your minds. And whenever you have pondered seriously the import of prayer and praise, conscience has testified to you the wisdom of the rubrics which teach us to do likewise. They are but repetitions of rubrics of nature. Is other evidence of their fitness needed, than that which is furnished by reason? You hear it in the voice of the Almighty himself, calling upon you in his holy word, *to glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are his.*

This leads me to a third property of our liturgy, worthy of observation, viz. that it is spiritual. Important as it is, that our religious services should have a sensible form, this form would be of no worth, if it were destitute of life. The audible voice is of no value, but as it expresses the thoughts of the heart. The bended knee is of no significance, but as it represents the humbled soul. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And as a spirit he is truly worshipped in the service of our church. No image of the Godhead is contemplated by our minds. By no attempt to represent the Almighty to our senses, is the divine nature dishonoured, and our own weakness betrayed. As the Great Spirit, who pervadeth all space, and inhabiteth eternity, we address him—whom, not

having seen, we love ; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The worship which is rendered to him is, too, in a high degree spiritual. In every part of it there is life. Within the beautiful and holy form there is a *soul*, fraught with the treasures of divine truth, and pure as has been found on earth, since the transgression of man. Is it said that it is cold ? Where is manifested more fervent affection, than in its addresses, or more intense devotion, than in its litany and hymns ? Is it said to confide too much in its exterior ? The faith, which it implies, is seated in the spirit ; the blessings, which it most celebrates and deserves, are spiritual ; and it is skilfully contrived to engage *our souls* in the acts of it, and to carry them, on a stream of sacred emotions, perpetually flowing, to the foot of the mount of God. Is it said, that it affords not scope for the feelings, which are sometimes kindled in the heart, when it approaches its Maker ; nor freedom to the action of the soul, when the spirit of devotion comes upon it ? Which of the affections, or dispositions of man, that is proper to be engaged in the worship of his Maker, may not find employment and vent for itself in the psalms and in some or other of the collects ? and in what production of the most rapturous being, has piety taken a loftier flight, than in her favourite *Te Deum*, the hymn so eminently spiritual, so wonderfully sublime, that one can scarce forbear to believe, that the lips which first uttered it, were touched with a coal from the altar of heaven ? Is it said that it is formal ? What faculty of our nature, meet for the work, is not brought into action in the due performance of the common prayer ? Our souls and all that is within us, our understanding, our will, and our affections, all in this

service have their part and occupation; and he, who engages in it as he ought, cannot fail to enjoy a very near communion with his God. In short, humility, and faith, and love, and gratitude, and sincerity, have all here a place, that they may come and adorn the worship of the sanctuary; and the propensity of our minds to wander, even when our tongues are engaged, is checked with the happiest skill, by those variations and acclamations, which now relieve, and now quicken attention; and by those sudden breaks, and frequent apostrophes, which remind us of the nature of our work, and of the presence of the Almighty. It is true, all this may be overlooked, or disregarded. In our temples, with all the spirituality of our service, there may pass from our lips an empty sound—our hands may offer an unhallowed oblation. But who, that would worship the Lord his God as he ought, will not be careful to engage the powers of his mind, and affections of his heart, in this his highest duty? To what purpose shall we, as taught by the Redeemer, address the Deity as our parent, if we have none of the feelings, which the idea of a father, of a father in heaven, of a father who is God, ought to excite? With what benefit are we so often reminded, in the beginning and end of our prayers, of the attributes of God, and mediation of Christ, if we do not exert that reverence and fear, that faith and hope, that affection and confidence, which the very frequent recurrence of these great ideas, was designed to inspire? Where is the propriety, when *we* have said, (we trust with simplicity and sincerity), “the Lord be with you,” in replying, “and with thy spirit,” if the heart do not wish what the lips express? What honour can result to the Almighty, or what advantage to ourselves, from pronouncing the customary amen, if we

thereby assent to that, to which we have not listened ; or ratify that, about which we are indifferent. Can we expect that the doxology of the tongue will be reported by the spirits, that minister about the throne, if it be unaccompanied by the alleluia of the soul? O, let us not separate the life from the form—the soul from the body of our excellent liturgy ! With its *sensible* let us combine its *spiritual* property ; that thus we may offer to God a reasonable service. With us, who in this respect are so signally blessed, what apology can be found, if the Almighty shall have occasion to say of us, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me !

But it is time for me to pass to another distinguishing property of our liturgy, its comprehensiveness, or fullness. Here was the labour, this was the difficulty, in compiling a book of common prayer, to provide for the claims and expectations of God, and for the conditions, and wants, and wishes, and duties of all estates of men ; so that of such honour, as we unworthy creatures can render unto our heavenly Father, there should be no deficiency ; and none of his worshippers be left without such instructions, as they would need to receive, such oblations, as it would become them to offer, and such supplications, as they might wish to make. And when we consider, how successfully the framers of our liturgy have accomplished this, we must look upon it as among the most wonderful achievements of wisdom and piety, which the world has known. They have recurred to the oracles of truth, and have brought the Old and the New Testament, to stand daily and always as parts of the liturgy ; that thus it might be enriched with perennial sources of wisdom, and instruction, and peace. They

have gone to the Jewish church; and have brought thence the wonderful psalms, and many hymns, which the spirit of God seems to have inspired his servants to indite for the use of his people. They have had recourse to the first christians, and the first churches; to the fathers, and to their immediate descendants; and from their precious stores have obtained parts of the primitive liturgies, venerable for their antiquity and holy simplicity. They have looked among the christians of the eastern and of the western empire; into the Greek church and into the church of Rome; and from them have taken many most excellent prayers, versicles, and litany-suffrages, which they have rendered of great value and utility in the accomplishment of their work. To these rich materials, they have added many productions of their own pious and enlarged minds; productions, which, in purity of language, sanctity of sentiment, and true character of devotion, are not inferior to the generality of those, with which they are combined. From this mass of materials, they separated whatever was gross, discordant, or unnecessary; and with the rest composed the service, which enriches and adorns our church. Thus you perceive, that from the richest mines, there has from time to time been collected in large abundance, for the perfecting of the work, the choicest gold; and under the following head, which will treat of the arrangement of the service, will see, that the gold has been wrought into this clothing of the church, with exquisite skill and finished effect. At present our concern is only with the fulness of the liturgy.

Let us consider it with respect to the Being to whom its adorations are addressed. He is recognized and worshipped in his great characters of our Creator, Redeemer,

and Sanctifier. His glorious attributes, as far as they are known to us, are all of them celebrated. That confession of sins, acknowledgment of dependence, thanksgiving for blessings, adoration of his greatness, supplication for his favour, and avowal of allegiance to him, and all those dispositions and affections towards the Deity, which man should possess and manifest, are provided for in this liturgy; and, conformably with the divine canon, God in all its parts is glorified, through Christ Jesus.

Consider it with respect to the beings, by whom it is to be used. How admirably adapted to instruct the ignorant, and remind the well informed, in what they are to believe and do, is the *reading of the holy scriptures* in order throughout the year; the rehearsal *in the creed*, whenever they assemble and meet together, of a summary of the truths, which God has revealed to be embraced and cherished by them; and the declaration *in the decalogue*, of his will and pleasure concerning their conduct! Who that attends stately upon this service can long be ignorant, what is good, and what the Lord his God doth require of him! So full is it with respect to the truths of christianity, that it has been well observed, a complete body of divinity might be easily framed out of the words it contains. With what felicity, also, are its prayers and praises so framed, as to embrace, almost without an exception, the wants and the blessings of every human being! Is there a lust or passion, a vice or misery, an evil or danger, common to mankind, which is not in it deprecated and deplored? Is there a grace of christianity, a virtue, which can adorn and bless the human character, a thing essential to life or godliness, which is not celebrated in it, and devoutly sought? Is there a condition of prosperity or adversity, of joy or

sorrow, to which man can be brought, in which he may not find vent for his wishes in that eminently complete production, *the litany*; and for his praises, in the thanksgiving, and the psalms? As was the case with the food, furnished for the Israelites in the wilderness, there is in this service provision made for every man, according to his necessities, and the necessities of his household.

But that which renders this property of our liturgy very admirable, is the skill with which it is so framed, as to be adapted to the use of all classes and orders of men. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the ruler and the subject, the master and the slave, the saint and the sinner, may each find in it an oblation, meet for him to offer, and a blessing worthy to be thankfully received. It may be used without perplexity by the mean and the ignorant, and by the wise and the mighty without disgust. The plainest may understand it; and it may entertain all the faculties of the most refined. With a felicity, rarely to be found in any human production, its fulness is such, and so continued, that the prince and the beggar may use it together, and both find in it, becoming devotion, instruction, and delight. It has been objected to it, that it is too long. But when with serious deliberation we have considered the matter, we shall discover unexpected difficulty in selecting the parts with which we would most willingly dispense; and shall perceive that no part can be removed from it, without impairing its strength, disturbing its proportions, and diminishing its fulness.

From the fulness of the liturgy, we pass to the arrangement of its parts. A mass of materials, however great and valuable, can excite but little admiration, and be of but little utility, till it is reduced to some form and order.



It has been said that order is heaven's first law. All the works of God, from the disposition of the parts, which form the humblest flower of the field, to the disposition of the planets and stars, which form the magnificence of unbounded space, are doubtless conformed to the principles, and exhibit, to the eye which can ken the whole, the beauty of order. And man, who was made originally in the image of God, and is taught in the gospel to aspire after a recovery of that image, should in all his concerns, but especially in the worship which he renders to the Being, who is the author of beauty and lover of harmony, observe and cherish order. Without this, the service he renders must produce a jargon with the very nature of the Being, to whom it is addressed. In the prophetic vision, which the psalmist had of the church, when in the age of her maturity she should be espoused to her Lord, he remarks, that "she should be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework," intimating not only, that her attire should not be plain, coarse, or common, but that it should be costly, and adorned by the skilful, according to the unchangeable principles of art and excellency. We have mentioned as a fifth property of our liturgy, worthy to be noticed, that it is well arranged; and if we advert to it, we shall find, that the golden materials of which it is composed, are not thrown together in splendid confusion, but disposed systematically, and in such a way, as to produce the great ends of arrangement, convenience, pleasure, and the best accomplishment of the effect proposed.

The parts of our service are so disposed as to produce a variety, which is at once convenient and delightful to the worshipper. The corruptible body too much presses down the mind; and the mind itself, in the present state,

is too weak to be long continued upon the same stretch with much satisfaction. On this account, with wise adaptation to the infirmities as well as powers of our nature, and in humble imitation of the œconomy of the Great Creator, in the production of his works, our liturgy is rendered “*various*;

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that the mind  
Of desultory man, studious of change,  
————— may be indulged.”

This variety is, in a happy manner, produced by the division of the service into many short prayers; whereby the thoughts and affections are concentered a little while upon one subject, and then relieved by transition to another; excited afresh in each by the new address with which it begins, and resting a moment upon the amen at the end. These frequent addresses direct our attention, each one of them, to a distinct attribute of God; and thus, in the course of the service, all the parts of the glory of his character with which we are acquainted, in grateful succession pass before us. Nor is it with an idle volatility, that this transition from one attribute of the Deity to another is so frequently made; but every address is with great felicity adapted to the subject of the prayer, which begins with it—a thing worthy to be observed, that when in the use of these various collects, we pray with the spirit, we may pray with the understanding also. Thus, when we are about to confess our sins and implore the forgiveness of them, that we may be filled with that union of fear and hope, which becomes sincere penitents before the throne of the heavenly grace, we are directed to contemplate and address him before whom we bow, as an “*Almighty and most merciful Father.*” Thus, when

about to beseech him at his holy table, to prepare us, by cleansing the thoughts of our hearts, perfectly to love him, and worthily to magnify his holy name, we look up to him as the being, “unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.” Thus, when, in obedience to the instructions of the gospel, we are about to offer supplications for the rulers of the land, we address him, as “the high and mighty ruler of the universe, who doth from his throne behold all the dwellers upon earth.” And in like manner, when, with the comprehensive benevolence of our holy religion, we are about to pray for all sorts and conditions of men, or to offer thanks for all the blessings enjoyed by us, and by all men, we, in the former case, approach him as “the Creator and preserver of all mankind,” and, in the latter, as “the Father of all mercies.” And all this in conformity with the example of our blessed Lord, who, in the inimitable prayer he hath given us, that we may be filled with the filial reverence and affection which we ought to feel when approaching God, hath taught us in the beginning of it, to call upon him, as “our Father;” and that we may have confidence in his power to do what we ask, hath reminded us, that he is “in heaven.”

The variety, however, which so much enlivens and beautifies our service, does not consist wholly, nor chiefly, in the division of it into many prayers. However numerous the parts of worship may be, if they be all of the same kind, without change or variation of their nature, the mind would become satiated with the sameness, and wearied with the repetition. The humblest penitent might be oppressed by prolonged confession, if no recollection of the promise of absolution gleamed upon his heart. The most devout suppliant would have

his fervour abated, if no recollection of past mercies animated his hopes, and no acts of praise enlivened his spirit. On this account it is, that there are introduced into our liturgy, those changes of occupation, of subject, and of posture, which, by diversifying our business, render it more interesting. Indeed, variety in our acts of worship is not less answerable to the claims of the Almighty, than to the necessities of man. "The church, therefore, diversifies and variegates her service with friendly exhortations, humbling confessions, comforting absolutions, fervent prayers, hymns and psalms of cheerful praise, and with the writings of the prophets and apostles; to a participation of the benefits of all which, her children are admitted by the initiatory sacrament of baptism; as afterwards they are promoted to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, by the repeated communications of his Holy Spirit in the blessed eucharist." In this view of it, our liturgy is as a well furnished garden; in which are shades of the deepest verdure, and flowers of the liveliest hue, waters flowing from perennial fountains to fertilize and delight, and seats, at which, at proper intervals, we may rest and be refreshed.

But I hasten to observe, that amidst all this variety, there is a perfect order. The different materials are not thrown together without design. Every part is placed according to principles of fitness. Each has a relation to and dependance upon others. And the pleasing effect of the whole, is the result of that happy union of order with variety, which is the source of the beautiful, in all the works of nature and of art. It would be instructive and pleasant, to contemplate the beauty of the arrangement in every part of the common prayer, and administration of the holy sacraments. But to do it completely in a dis-

course is impossible. I must content myself with pointing out to you some of the most prominent features of the felicity of this arrangement, in the services, which we most frequently use. Attentive observation in your retired hours, will discover equal beauty and utility in the disposition of the parts of all the several offices; and many excellencies in the order of the *daily* service, which the lapse of time will compel me to leave unnoticed.

Interesting is the scene, when a congregation are assembled, as a people whom the Most High hath redeemed, to worship him in his holy temple. How solemn the moment, when they are about to present themselves before the Almighty! To collect their thoughts and excite in them a due solemnity, the service opens with some passages of scripture peculiarly impressive. To these follows an address, in which the minister, while he sets before them the great purposes of their assembling together, aims chiefly to excite in them humility, and confidence in "Almighty God, their heavenly Father," and invites them to accompany him with their hearts and voices to "the throne of the heavenly grace." After this decent preparation, they are ready to bow before his footstool. With what shall they begin? Angels, ye, first and last, utter only adorations. Spirits of the just made perfect, ye break forth, at every approach to your Creator, in acts of praise. But sinful men, should they not first propitiate their Maker, before they offer him any oblation? Accordingly the first act of our devotion is the confession of our sins; a confession, so comprehensive, that under some one or other of its general clauses every fault, with which a man can charge himself, may be included; and so very affecting, that his heart must be dead to all religious emotions, who is not humbled by it before his

God. To the pious penitent, who has made this confession, how joyous would it be, could he hear immediately from the throne of the Almighty, "thy sins be forgiven thee!" This he cannot hear, till Jesus shall personally present him to the Father. But, behold, for their comfort and encouragement, while they continue in the flesh, 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." This declaration, therefore, the priest, rising from before the throne, makes to the people, directly after their confession. And of the comfort of it, every christian who is conscious that he "truly repents, and unfeignedly believes the gospel," should with faith avail himself, to the quieting of his conscience, and perfecting of his gratitude and joy. Being now reconciled to God, according to the promises declared to our race in Christ Jesus, we, as children adopted anew into his family, extend our affections, and lift our grateful eyes to him as "our Father;" and address to him that summary of our homage and desires, in which he, who purchased our forgiveness, hath taught us to pray. Our spirits being relieved from the burthen of their fears, and revived by the tenor of this prayer which his Son hath authorised to address to our Maker, we rise upon our feet, and with hearts glowing with devotion, in a most ancient doxology, an animated hymn, and a portion of the sacred psalms, ascribe everlasting glory to him, in language of inspiration celebrating his praise. This first part of the service how beautiful it is! How proper the order—how natural and significant the transitions—how happy our minds, when we sit down—how well prepared to listen to the instructions of God's holy word! A lesson is read from the Old Testa-

ment. At the close of it, we rise, and cherish the flame of our devotion by celebrating, in suitable hymns, his character and works and grace. There is then read a lesson from the New Testament, and by this arrangement the law and the gospel, the prophets and the apostles, are brought, at a suitable time, to adorn and bless our service; and the important truth is inculcated, that throughout the Bible there is but one scheme carried on, issuing in the redemption of the world through Jesus, the son of God. To the lesson from the New Testament, there follow appropriate hymns, in which we express our adorations and joy. And then having heard the scriptures, we, in the presence of each other, of the world, and of God, with great propriety rehearse a summary of the truths, which have been received from revelation; by our amen declaring our assent to them, and our resolution to maintain them. Knowing in whom we may believe, and what are our interests, and for how great mercies we are indebted to the Most High, we, after a reciprocation of holy wishes between the priest and people, (venerable for the antiquity of its use, and for its christian courteousness), prostrate ourselves again before the Almighty, and in a series of prayers, engage in acts of supplication; in which spiritual blessings are magnified above temporal ones; the church is regarded more than the world; the less is sought after the greater; and sometimes, as in the litany, which was originally a separate service, but now is incorporated into the morning prayer, there is a regular transition from invocation of mercy to deprecation of evil, and from deprecation of evil to supplication of favours; in all which the concerns of the soul are remembered before those of the body—the concerns of the church before those of the world—the concerns of the world, and

the powers whom God hath ordained to rule it, before those of individuals; and yet there is not a thing, needful for the body, which is forgotten, nor an individual, who may not find a petition adapted to his own case. As we draw towards the close of this service, we are called upon to exalt our gratitude to the highest point of fervour; and to expand our charity to the utmost extent. In a prayer for all sorts and conditions of men, we, as we would ask an alms for the dumb beggar, supplicate appropriate mercies *for all our race*. And in a general thanksgiving, which burns with the holiest and most ardent spirit of praise, we honour God for all his mercies to us, and to all men. An excellent summary, from the pen of the pious Chrysostom, of all for which the christian can be solicitous, follows: and the benedictory prayer, which the spirit of inspiration hath hallowed, closes the daily service.

I must forbear to enter at present upon the office of the communion. This is perhaps the most finished piece of devotion, which exists in the world. In a hasty manner to speak of its excellence would not satisfy my admiration of it. Happily its beauties are so striking, and impressive, that they who use it, need not to have them described. No good christian can join in the celebration of this office, without discovering in it as high perfection of the beauty of holiness, as he can expect to behold upon earth.

It is objected to the arrangement of our liturgy, that the many variations, and frequent risings and sittings, diminish its solemnity. But to those who have studied the principles by which it is framed, these changes have a lively significance; and while they are calculated to keep attention awake, give to the service a becoming character of activity.



It has also been objected, that the apostrophes and short ejaculations, which abound in our liturgy, produce confusion, and are useless. But, they are of precious value, as relics of primitive devotion; are many of them important, as connecting ligaments in the system, or powerful expressions in themselves of true piety. “In these connexions,” says an admirer of the liturgy, “the wisdom of the church hath imitated the skill of nature. For as in framing the body of man, nature has not only formed the limbs in proportion, and placed them in order, but has also fastened them with joints, which seem made no less for beauty than necessity; so in composing the body of our common prayer, the church hath not only framed the several offices of a due length, and ranged them in a just method, but has likewise united them with versicles, as it were with joints; which, though less regarded, are yet the no less beautiful than necessary parts of our liturgy; so that we shall find as great comeliness and art in these connexions, as there are in the compositions themselves.”

After this manner are wisdom and propriety displayed throughout the service, in the arrangement of its parts. The choice gold, which with so much care was collected for the foundation of it, is not thrown together in a promiscuous heap. It is “*wrought*”—and wrought with such skill, as to produce in the system all the charms and advantages, which are found in what is significant, orderly, and beautiful. And the effect proposed in instituting the service, is by the arrangement most surely accomplished. The church is enabled to present herself before her Lord, in a clothing suitable to her character and condition; and her Lord, when he beholds her in

this good and glorious attire, "hath pleasure in her beauty."

The last property of our liturgy, which we shall consider, is that it is holy. Without this quality no offering can be acceptable unto God. Into his ancient tabernacle and temple, nothing, that had the least impurity, was allowed to enter. To his altar no sacrifice, that had any blemish, was permitted to be brought. Upon the forehead of the priests, and upon the holy vestments, and upon all the utensils of the sacred place, was inscribed holiness unto the Lord. And, it is its most important commendation, that the service provided for us to offer in his sanctuary, is pre-eminently holy.

Shall I speak to you of its language? Much of it is the language of inspiration. All of it is grand and reverent. So pure and chaste is it, so free from imbecility and corruption, that perhaps there is no better standard of the excellencies of our tongue. If there be here and there an ancient phrase, or expression, this does not diminish, but rather adds to its solemnity. Who would exchange any part of the rich, majestic, and durable clothing of wrought gold, for the fripperies of modern decoration; the tinsel and gaudy affectations with which some would refine it?

Shall I speak to you of its doctrines and sentiments? They are purely scriptural. The pattern of them was brought by Jesus from heaven. Nothing is there among them, which has not affinity with the sacred truths, which God hath taught us to revere. They are holy, as the gold of the censers, upon which the ministering spirits in heaven offer the prayers of the saints.

Shall I speak to you of its forms and ceremonies? There is nothing in them to debase the worshipper or

offend his God. No tarnish of pious fraud rests upon them. No stain of human vanity defiles them. They are simple, pure, significant; wholly calculated to give an expression of sanctity to the *manner*, that it may correspond with the *spirit* of the holy service.

Shall I speak to you of the object to whom it is addressed? He is the one only living and true God, in the Trinity of persons, as he has graciously revealed himself to mankind in the oracles of truth; the Being, before whom the company of heaven rest not day nor night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

Shall I speak to you of its tendency? It is to inspire us with an abhorrence of impurity—to sanctify our thoughts, and elevate our affections—to beget in us holiness of heart and life. He, who duly uses it, will be made more pious and virtuous by it. As Moses, by long contemplation of the divine nature in the mount, caught a gleam of its lustre, with which his countenance beamed, so he, who shall long and constantly use this service, may at length, in the temper of his soul, and conduct of his life, be changed into its glory.

In short, when I speak of the holiness of our service, shall I err, if I say, that no sacrifice, more perfect in this respect, hath been prepared to be offered to God, in this world, since the fall of man, except the sacrifice of his adorable Son? Let us bring to the use of it, dispositions and affections, correspondent to its character; and we shall not fail to “worship the Lord with an holy worship.”

I have now finished what I proposed to do, in treating upon the liturgy of our church. In reviewing what has been said, you cannot, my brethren, but perceive, that we ought to consider ourselves, as highly distinguished by





