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ON

Private Devotion

IN

CHURCHES.



The Place where Prayer was wont to be made.

THE

RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE SYSTEM

OF

Private Devotion in Churches

CONSIDERED IN

A LETTER

TO THE VENERABLE

The President

OF THE

CAMBRIDGE CAMDEN SOCIETY.

Kugeley :

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MDCCCXLIV.

On Private Devotion in Churches.

A LETTER.

REVEREND SIR,

It is allowed on all hands, that one of the principal benefits likely to accrue to the Church from the formation of those Architectural Societies, of the largest and most influential of which you are President, is the inculcation of a due spirit of Reverence towards the Houses of GOD. They are not only instituted in order that future temples may be, in some sort, worthy of His Divine Majesty, but that those which we already possess may be regarded as verily and indeed the habitations of Him, Whom the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain. They would teach, if it may be so, the Architect how to frame his conceptions, to arrange his details, to mature his plan: but they would also teach the humble worshipper, by symbols and types which he can understand, the Majesty of that GOD Who draws nigh to the sons of men in His own Holy Temples. That the exertions of the Cambridge Camden Society have been useful in promoting the latter end, you have frequently stated in your anniversary addresses; that it is an end dear to all the

members of our Society, but more especially so to yourself, none who are at all conversant with the subject will deny. It is therefore with the more confidence that the following pages are addressed to you: because I am sure that any attempt, however feeble in itself, to revive a devotional and ancient practice, will, if honestly made, be favourably received by you; and that you will, to use an architectural metaphor, excuse the details for the sake of the idea.

No English Catholick can, I think, have visited in foreign lands the churches of another Communion, without being struck by some painful differences between them and our own. The doors are there open from day-break till the afternoon; in the morning hours, the number of worshippers employed in private devotion is often large; and even later in the day, when two or three aged men, or poor widows, are all who are to be found there, the character and the holiness of the House of Prayer are still maintained. Our traveller cannot but contrast these things with the difficulty of access, on the week-day, to one of our own parish churches; with our fastened wickets, and locked doors, and bolted gates; with the deserted appearance, desolate sensations and damp atmosphere which mark one of God's Temples amongst ourselves. Doubtless the first impression, whatever might be the result of a further comparison, is in favour of the Foreign System, and against our own.

The enquiry, therefore, naturally suggests itself,—What are the advantages of that system? To what objections does it lie open? Should the former be found to preponderate over the latter, what are the difficulties which would attend its introduction, (or rather, as I shall presently endeavour to shew, *re-introduction*) amongst our-

selves? Are they of such a nature as to be invincible? If not, how may we best hope to overcome them?

It is to these enquiries that, with your permission, I now propose to attempt an answer. I know well that a prejudice, rather the misfortune than the fault of the present age, is strongly opposed to the plan I am about to recommend. But I am also sure, that it needs only fairly and perseveringly to be met, in order finally to be dispelled. ¹“As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore.” And when I remember the prejudices that have been and are being surmounted by the force of Truth, I am not apprehensive but that this also will share their fate.

Let us take the highest possible ground at the out-set. I will begin by asking one simple question. Have we, or have we not, reason to believe that a difference of locality can make any difference in the acceptance with which the same prayer, offered by the same persons, is received by Him Who is everywhere present! Have we, in short, any reasons for believing in the *inherent sanctity of particular spots*? I am willing to join issue on the narrowest possible ground, and dropping for the present all reference to Catholick practice, which none will deny to be in my favour, and confining myself to the Scriptural argument alone, I answer, Undoubtedly we have reason for this belief.

We shall find, that in each of the three Dispensations, Prayer, offered either in the House of God, or in the place which He more immediately honoured with His presence, had a virtue and an efficacy which it had not elsewhere. To speak first of the Patriarchal Age. It is the opinion of the Jewish Rabbis, and this, as you are aware, has received the sanction of the learned Bishop Patrick, that from the very first the Schechinah, a Divine

¹ Esdras iv. 38.

Glory, appeared to the Patriarchs in some settled locality, where in danger or necessity they could always resort to it. Thus the going up to this locality became a religious action, and was called appearing before the LORD, or drawing nigh unto the LORD. A reference to the texts¹ which I have placed below, with the notes of the above named commentator, will tend to make this view more than probable. Furthermore, the Altar which Abram built, in the place where this Schechinah had appeared, at the beginning of his sojourn in the land of Canaan, seems to have been ever after regarded by him as more especially holy. Three years later, we find him returning for the purpose of sacrifice, ²“unto the place of the Altar which he had made there at the first.” A second Altar, erected in the plain of Mamre, was resorted to, not only by Abraham himself, but also by Isaac and Jacob. Mount Moriah, first, as it were, hallowed by the oblation of Isaac, was afterwards appointed to be the scene of the Great Sacrifice which that represented. The grove, planted by Abraham at Beer-sheba³ for the purposes of devotion, seems afterwards to have been frequented by his son Isaac. An instance more remarkably to our purpose, is that of the stone, which Jacob,⁴ when flying from his father's house, had consecrated in Bethel, as a memorial of the vision which he had seen, and of the vow which he had made, in that city. To this Altar, on his return to the land of Canaan, he was expressly commanded by GOD⁵ to go up, and there to offer sacrifice; a clear intimation that worship paid in that particular spot would be more acceptable to the Maker of all things, than that offered in any other. Nay, more;

¹ Genesis iv. 16, xviii. 23; Exodus viii. 12, 30, ix. 29, 33; Genesis xii. 7.

² Genesis xii. 4. ³ Genesis xxi. 33, and compare Genesis xxvi. 23, 33.

⁴ Gen. xxviii. 18, 20. ⁵ Gen. xxxv. 1; see also Gen. xxxi. 13.

God condescended to receive a title from the place which he had thus sanctified: and thus it is that we read of El-Bethel.¹ Now I will venture to say, that had a fact like this come down to us, attested by Ecclesiastical only, instead of Scriptural authority, it would have exposed the relaters to the charge of gross superstition, and a low view of the Attributes of the Divine Being. Again, the mountain in which Moses fed his father-in-law's sheep, and which was consecrated by the appearance of the unconsumed bush, was that mountain to which the Israelites were afterwards expressly led, for the purpose of worshipping God there. These instances may suffice to prove that in the Patriarchal dispensation, the sanctity attaching itself to locality was an acknowledged principle; and if this be allowed us, our argument is at once very strong. For those ordinances and those doctrines which, like the Sabbath, had been instituted and inculcated before the Law, were, as S. Paul² teaches with respect to another subject, intended to continue after the Law.

Under the Jewish dispensation, none will deny that Prayer, offered in the Tabernacle or Temple, had greater power than when offered elsewhere. I may refer more particularly to Hannah's³ supplication for Samuel; to Solomon's inaugural speech at the dedication of the Temple; to Asaph's⁴ going up to God's House, when perplexed by the consideration of the worldly prosperity of the wicked; to his declaration that the way of God is in the Sanctuary; to David's earnest desire to see God's Power and Glory, so as he had⁵ seen Him in the Sanctuary; to his going into the Tabernacle to return thanks⁶ for the

¹ Genesis xxxv. 7. ² Galatians iii. 17. ³ 1 Samuel i. 10.

⁴ Psalm lxxiii. 17; and Psalm lxxvii. 13. ⁵ Psalm lxiii. 2.

⁶ 2 Chron. xvii. 16.

gracious promise vouchsafed to him with respect to his successors; to his¹ doing the same thing when bowing to God's will, after the death of his son; to Hezekiah's² spreading Rabshakeh's letters before the LORD, in the temple; to the carrying forth of the Ark in cases of difficulty and danger, as in the battle³ of Aphek, and the flight of David⁴ from Jerusalem; to Naaman's⁵ requesting two mules' burden of Israelitish earth, for the purpose of building an Altar,—a request unreprieved by Elisha; and finally, to the custom which prevailed amongst the devout Jews, as we may see in the instance of Daniel,⁶ of praying with open windows toward the distant Temple. And so indeed David exclaims,⁷ “in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy Holy Temple;” and even Jonah, in the whale's belly, could say,⁸ “I will look again toward Thy Holy Temple.” It would appear, from a comparison of certain passages in the Prophecy of Ezekiel,⁹ that the prophetic spirit descended on him in one particular locality, to which place the elders of Israel were accordingly wont to assemble when any enquiry was to be made. After the return from captivity we find¹⁰ Sherezer and Regem-melech deputed, on an occasion of particular importance, to pray in the House of the LORD, and that, it may be well to observe, three¹¹ years before the building was finished. So great was the sanctity then attached to locality alone! And you will remember, that, in the cases I have mentioned, the acceptableness of the prayer arose from the simple circumstance of the place where it was offered, not from the united fervour of the petitions of a congregation. A

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 20.

² 2 Kings xix. 14

³ 1 Sam. 4, 5.

⁴ 2 Sam. 15—24.

⁵ 2 Kings v. 17.

⁶ Dan. vi. 10.

⁷ Psalm v. 7; cxxxviii. 2.

⁸ Jonah ii. 4.

⁹ Ezekiel viii. 1; xiv. 1; xx. 1; xxxiii. 31.

¹⁰ Zech. vii. 2.

¹¹ Compare with the above Ezra vi. 15.

reference to the Book of Psalms shows how often GOD has condescended to receive a title from the places which He has honoured, from time to time, with His especial Presence.

Nay,—which will be, perhaps, more pertinent still to our argument,—the case was the same under the Christian Dispensation. Anna¹ departed *not from the Temple*. Our blessed SAVIOUR chose the Temple as the scene of His discourses, and of what the Fathers are wont to call His Greatest Miracle; a miracle wrought for the express purpose of asserting the sanctity, and punishing the profanation, of that House of Prayer. And afterwards, although the Jewish polity was now at an end, it was *in the Temple* that the Apostles were continually² praising and blessing GOD: and again we are told, that they continued daily with one accord *in the Temple*; and yet again, that daily *in the Temple*³ they ceased not to teach. It was to the Temple⁴ that S. S. Peter and John went up at the hour of prayer; it was in the Temple⁵ that the Holy Apostles were commanded by the Angel to stand and speak to the people all the words of this life; it was *in the Temple*⁶ that S. Paul received his mission to the Gentiles. Nay, and long afterwards, witness was borne to the sanctity which yet lingered around the building by those fearful words, which were heard, during the Siege, to proceed from the Holy of Holies, LET US DEPART HENCE! And the case was the same with the Proseuchæ or Oratories. The SAVIOUR Himself frequented the Jewish synagogues: and His example was followed by His Apostles. At Philippi, on the Sabbath, S. Paul and his companions⁸ “went out

¹ S. Luke ii. 37.

² S. Luke xxiv. 53.

³ Acts ii. 46.

⁴ Acts v. 42

⁵ Acts iii. 1.

⁶ Ibid v. 20.

⁷ Ibid xxii. 17—21.

⁸ Ibid xvi. 13.

of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made:" and it was as they went to the¹ Proseucha, apparently day after day, that the Pythoness bore witness to their mission. And finally, I would observe, that one of the strongest testimonies to the sanctity of locality is given by S. Matthew, where, after recording that deed, the like of which, for horror, was never perpetrated, he calls Jerusalem, the scene of the action, "the Holy City."²

I conclude, then, that if a building, like the Temple, which never had possessed more than a shadow of good things to come, and was in process of time, deprived even of that; a building, originally founded by a wicked oppressor, deprived of its proper orders of ministers, profaned by the Gentiles, defiled by merchandize, the scene of rapine and violence, were, nevertheless, a place where the faithful were wont to supplicate God's blessing, with the certainty of becoming, therefore, the more acceptable to Him; have we not an *a fortiori* argument for the belief that Christian churches, dedicated by fasting and prayer, hallowed by so many commemorative sacrifices at the Altar, and so many illuminations at the Font, are more especially suited to be the resort of Christians for Private Prayer. "The LORD loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

Let us now consider the analogy of holy *Times*, still confining ourselves to Holy Scripture. It is assumed, all through the formularies of our Church, which therein according to her wont, only echoes the consentient voice of the Church Catholick, that "although we ought at all times

¹ Acts xvi. 16. εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν: where our translation, "went to prayer," is evidently wrong

² S. Matth. xxvii. 53.

humbly to acknowledge our sins before GOD, yet ought we most chiefly so to do " at particular and appointed seasons. Bishop Cosin has some excellent remarks on the analogy we are noting. The duties, he says,¹ of observing holy times, and reverencing holy places are " both of one nature, and therefore hath GOD also joined (them) together: ye shall reverence My Sanctuary, and observe My Sabbaths."

It was the practice of GOD's people from the earliest times to observe, not only certain days, but also certain parts of the day. The Sabbaths, the New Moons, the Feasts, whether instituted of GOD, as those of the Pass-over, Tabernacles, and Weeks, or of man, as those of Lots and of the Dedication, are instances of the former. Nor do we lack examples of the latter. Elijah, when about to request a signal manifestation of GOD's power, waited for the season of the Evening² Sacrifice, though that Sacrifice was offered in a far distant city. When Elisha had prophesied deliverance to the three kings in the desert, it was³ " in the morning when the meat offering was offered" that the miraculous supply of water was granted: Judith, when about to implore GOD's blessing on her enterprise, waited till " about the time that the incense of that evening was offered in Jerusalem in the House of the LORD". Daniel had been praying the whole day for his people; but the Angel Gabriel did not touch him till ⁴*about the time of* the evening oblation; and this, be it remembered, when no evening oblation could have been really offered. Again, in the New Testament: " S. S. Peter and John went up to the Temple at the Hour of Prayer,

¹ Bp. COSIN'S Works. Anglo Catholic Lib. i. 160, 161.

² 1 Kings xviii. 36.

³ 2 Kings iii. 20.

⁴ Judith ix. 1.

⁵ Daniel ix. 21.

⁶ Acts iii. 1.

being the ninth hour. It was at the time of the sacrifice, and in the Temple,¹ that the Angel appeared to Zacharias. It was at midnight,² one of the Canonical Hours, that S. Paul, and S. Silas, being in prison, “prayed and sang praises unto GOD.” It was at the sixth hour,³ another Canonical season, that S. Peter went up upon the house top to pray. It was at the ninth hour that the Angel appeared to Cornelius.⁴

If, therefore, one time of prayer be more acceptable to GOD than another, why not one place also? When it is objected against us, that we are commanded to pray⁵ every where, that the chamber,⁶ the house top,⁷ the sea-shore,⁸ the garden,⁹ the bed,¹⁰ the desert,¹¹ the mountain,¹² are all named as places of prayer; we answer, that although we are commanded to pray without ceasing, and although there is no hour which could not furnish an example of some favourably answered petition, yet none denies that there are days, and, we may add, hours, in which prayer is heard more favourably than at others.

This may be called the Scriptural argument in our favour: very briefly, indeed, but not unfairly stated. Now let us see what the Scriptural objections are. They lie in two texts, both of which, undoubtedly bear a *prima facie* opposition to our system. But, it must be remembered, *firstly*, that however little any explanation to be given of them may be thought satisfactory, they cannot invalidate the argument which we have just drawn from the whole scope of Bible History; and, *secondly*, that where two principles, the one deduced from a few scattered texts,

¹ S. Luke i. 10

² Acts xvi. 25.

³ Ibid x. 9.

⁴ Ibid x. 3.

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 8

⁶ S. Matthew vi. 6.

⁷ Acts x. 9.

⁸ Ibid xxi. 5.

⁹ John xviii. 1.

¹⁰ Psalm cxlix. 5.

¹¹ S. Mark i. 35.

¹² S. Mark iv. 46.

the other, from the whole tenour of Scripture, appear to clash, the probability is greater that the former, than that the latter, should be misunderstood.

One of the passages which our opponents bring forward against us, is, Sir, as you are well aware, the declaration of S. Stephen,¹ “Howbeit, the MOST HIGH dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands.” Whatever force these isolated words may have, will quite vanish, if we consider them in the context. “Howbeit, the MOST HIGH dwelleth not in Temples made with hands, *as saith the Prophet.*” This declaration, then, was as applicable to Jewish, as to our own times; and, therefore, if proving anything with respect to our present subject, would prove too much; inasmuch as we have just seen that prayer, under the Mosaick Covenant, even if unaccompanied by Sacrifices, was peculiarly acceptable to GOD, when offered in the Temple.

The other passage is the command of our Saviour,² “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy FATHER Which is in secret.” I answer, *firstly*, if we are to take these words literally, without reference to the context, they would forbid Publick Prayer altogether. *Secondly*, the similar command of not letting our left hand know what our right hand doeth, has not been thought to preclude all lists of Societies and commemorations of charitable donations. *Thirdly*, that the Apostles, as we have seen, regarded this commandment, as the Church has ever done, in a more general light, as directed against love of ostentation, particularly against that of the Pharisees, who loved to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets,

¹ Acts vii. 48.

² S. Matthew vi. 6

to be seen of men. It will be remembered that the Publican, the true penitent, who would not so much as lift up his eyes unto Heaven, and who went down to his house justified rather than the other, had, nevertheless, gone up to the Temple¹ to pray. Indeed, this seems to have been our SAVIOUR'S method of teaching, to state a fact strongly, that the impression might be strong; and thus it is that we are commanded to hate our father and mother, to turn the left cheek to him that smites us on the right, to allow him that has taken our coat to have our cloak also.

We may conclude this branch of our subject by a quotation from Hooker,² who, if he does not here take quite so high ground as Andrewes or Montague would have done, must be remembered to be arguing against a Puritan, and to be, therefore, unwilling to say more, or to speak more strongly, than was absolutely necessary for the purpose of his argument;—

“Again, albeit the true worship of GOD be to GOD in itself acceptable, Who respecteth not so much in what place, as with what affection He is served; and, therefore, Moses in the midst of the sea, Job in the dunghill, Ezechias in bed, Jeremy in the mire, Jonah in the whale, Daniel in the den, the children in the furnace, the thief on the cross, Peter and Paul in prison, calling unto God were heard, as S. Basil [Pseudo Chrysostom] noteth; manifest, notwithstanding, it is, that the very majesty and holiness of the place, where GOD is worshipped, hath in regard of us great virtue, force, and efficacy, for that it serveth as a sensible help to stir up devotion, and, in that respect, no doubt bettereth even our holiest and best actions in this kind.”

I do not propose to dwell long on the argument to be

¹ Luke xviii. 10.

² *Eccles Pol*, KEELE'S Ed. ii., 57, 58.

drawn in our favour from Catholick consent. It is so obvious that from the earliest times, Private Devotion has been, when circumstances allowed, offered in churches or oratories, and that in occasions of great need it has been thought necessary to offer them there, that it were mere waste of your time to furnish you with examples of an undoubted fact. Need I remind you of the extreme sanctity attached, in the earliest ages, to the *Martyria*? Need I remind you, how, when heresy was all but triumphant, and Arius about to be thrust into the Church, the Archbishop of Constantinople, repairing to his own church, and prostrating himself before the Altar, was instant in prayer a whole day, that GOD would remove either himself or the arch-heretick out of the world, and how Catholick prayers prevailed to the destruction of the blasphemer?—But if this be so, that till the Reformation the system I am recommending prevailed, and does prevail now in almost every branch of the Church, except our own; then, unless it can be shewn from any recognised document, that the Anglican Church is opposed to the practice, it ought to be restored amongst ourselves. But it cannot even be made to appear probable that the Anglican Church does object to it. Neither Prayer-book, Homilies, nor Canons contain a hint against it. I am not aware that among the numerous accusations which the writings of the Reformers bring forward against the Romish Church, this was ever one. On the contrary, we know as a fact, that the system survived the Reformation, and, probably, did not perish till the Great Rebellion. We know that Hooker and Herbert spent many hours in private prayer in their churches. And the heavenly minded Andrewes did the same thing, as his¹ *Private Devotions* imply. So that, while nothing in

¹ For example, p. 6. *Ald. Ed.* “Aures Tue intentæ sint ad

the formularies of our Church can be construed as disapproving of the practice, those formularies, if interpreted by the custom of the wisest and holiest of her sons, are actually in favour of it.

Let us now examine if the proposed system would have any beneficial effect on our own minds. And, in the first place, we may observe, that in no other place are we so likely to be lifted above the ordinary thoughts and cares of this life, as in a church. We all know that Books of Devotion are written in a style very different from that of ordinary intercourse. We should be shocked, if we were to find colloquial grammar introduced, and familiar phrases adopted, in them. A man kneels down to prayer in the same room in which all the business of the day has been transacted, and all its amusements have been enjoyed;—how is it possible that his mind should be entirely free from frivolous thoughts? The pleasures, and vexations, and anecdotes, and visits, and news, and merriment, and letters, and employments, and domestick occurrences, with which the very walls, and windows, and door, and furniture are associated, will they not almost inevitably rush into his thoughts and distract his devotions? Is there not a class of furniture, pictures, for example, and busts, more especially those of a free character, in the presence of which fervent prayer seems almost irreverent? It is not, be it remembered, with prayer as with other engagements; prayer is not,—at least, with the vast majority of Christians,—a natural and an easy thing; a duty which, once commenced, swallows up every other thought, and puts, as it ought, an end to every other sensation except that of being alone in the presence of the Almighty. We are, also, to bear in mind

orationem quam servus Tuus facit in hoc loco, in quo invocatum est Nomen Tuum." Again, p. 117, "*Memento, Domine, fratrum nos cir-*

that the great enemy is only too glad to be able, by outward objects, to suggest wandering thoughts, and to awaken frivolous ideas. A glance at one of the secular objects about us may open the way to a quarter of an hour's idle imaginations, the more, therefore, that we surround ourselves with such things, the more do we facilitate the attacks of the Devil. We put ourselves in the position of a besieged city, which should have without its walls thickets to conceal the enemy, and trees to shelter him, and tenements to house him, and provisions to supply him, and ammunition to arm him. We are, in fact, storing up around us the implements of our own destruction; we are leading ourselves into that temptation into which we beseech GOD not to lead us. And are we so confident in our own strength, that, like skilful players, we are willing to give our adversary an advantage? Are his temptations so few and so feeble, that we can afford to tempt him?

Nay, I am confident to appeal to the practice of many around us. Many devout persons, it is well known, retire into their own chambers for the purpose of private prayer; because in them they are less likely to be distracted by familiar objects, and every day associations. Some, again, go further even than this: and set apart a particular spot in their chamber for this purpose, and for this alone; a practice, indeed, long ago recommended by Law. Again, at the hour of family prayer, many persons, from a similar cause, are careful to remove from the table, books, and drawings, and work-boxes, and every thing else which refer to worldly employment, or can *remind* one of it. And it is well and wisely done. Only, since such persons acknowledge, perhaps unconsciously, the principle for

cumstantium et comprecantium nobiscum in ista hora sancta." Again, p. 133, "*Pro domo hae sancta, et eam cum fide et reverentia ingredientibus.*"

which I am contending; why do they not carry it out to its greatest and most profitable extent? Nature itself almost seems to speak on my side; we are almost taught by her to close the eyes in fervent prayer. Why is this, but to secure that disturbing ideas may be—

“—— at one entrance quite shut out?”

We despair, it seems, of rendering our eyes assistants to devotion; and we think ourselves well off if we can prevent their being drawbacks to it. How different from this is the Church system! that system so marvellously adapted, and adapting itself, to human nature! Just as the Church, not content with trusting profane sounds, makes the Ear, by her heavenly musick, an inlet to devotion; so, not deeming it enough to banish worldly spectacles, she had, and might have now, the beauty of holiness to render the Eye a help, instead of hindrance, in acts of Prayer.

Once more; we may look at this subject in a point of view exactly opposite. The spots which have been hallowed by Private Devotion, by closer Communion with GOD, by deeper self-abasement, by more earnest Faith than it has been our ordinary privilege to attain; how can we bear to desecrate them afterwards by frivolous conversation and worldly amusement. There is, thus, a sort of confounding together of holy and unholy, of profane and un-profane, which must,—however little we may wish it,—have a bad effect on our moral sense. It will not throw a religious feeling around our secular employments, but will introduce their worldliness into our most sacred seasons. Just as in the Jewish Law, an indifferent thing, touched by a holy object, did not become holy; but, touched by an unclean did become unclean; persons, in short, might be polluted, could not be sanctified, by contact.

Furthermore, are not our ears, as well as our eyes, most important inlets to wandering thoughts? From the various sounds of daily occupation and family employment, who, in a private house, can pretend to be secure? Let me take an extreme instance. I will appeal to your own experience, whether private prayer is not, on board a crowded vessel, the most difficult of all difficult things? What this is, *more* than any other situation, that every private house, especially every small house, is, in a less degree.

Now a church has not only the negative excellence of freeing us from each and all of these distractions. It is rich in associations the best qualified to raise and purify our thoughts, and to give life and energy to our prayers. The remembrance of those who have gone before us, and are sleeping around us—the assistances and deliverances which our prayers, and theirs, have heretofore, within the same holy walls, obtained—the thoughts of the vow we have ourselves made, and the grace we have received at the Font—of the strength to fulfil that vow, and to make that grace fruitful, which has been given to us at the Altar—are not these things effectual helps to prayer? Looking forward to the supplications, which will, to the end of time, be sent up, from the same temple; to the unborn infants who will there be regenerated; the future generations of the faithful that will there receive consolation; knowing that the prayers of many fellow-worshippers are accompanying our own petitions to the mercy seat, and thus knit into communion with the past, and present, and future generations of the One Holy Church,—how shall we not feel an influence to which we are, and must be, strangers elsewhere? Instead of mementos of worldly vanity, and allurements to worldly thoughts, we have the monuments of the dead to remind us that the fashion of this world

passeth away ; instead of implements and contrivances appropriated to human use, and ministering to human luxury, materials which pander to pomp or effeminacy, and things which are of the earth, earthy, we behold nothing that does not, in an especial manner, serve to promote the Glory of God ; we see Art the handmaid of Religion, and Beauty rendered subservient to Truth ; instead of viewing around us a habitation, in which we may expect, many years, to enjoy the brightness of worldly prosperity, and the endearments of domestic love, we see that home, near which we hope, after a few years, to rest ; from which, after a few more, we shall arise. Many have felt their devotion increased by the contemplation of their own coffins ; much more will it be quickened here. If the Romans could not venture to bring to trial a popular favourite within sight of the Capitol, thereby, rough and iron-hearted as they were, acknowledging the magic, and bowing to the mightiness, of association, shall we, cast in the softer mould of Christianity, attempt to deny, or profess to scorn it.

My assertion then is, that when we pray with fervour at home, we do it in spite of this mighty power ; when we pray in church, we enlist it on the side of devotion. But will you deem another argument, which, I confess, has much influence with me, too subtle and metaphysical ? We know that Catholick ethics gave rise to Catholick architecture ; may we not hope that, by a kind of reversed process, association with Catholick architecture will give rise to Catholick ethics ? On this subject I cannot do more than touch ; its full discussion would require a volume.

“ Thus was Beauty sent from Heaven,
The lovely ministress of Truth and Good,
In this dark world ; for Truth and Good are one ;
And Beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation. Wherefore, then,
O sons of earth, would ye dissolve the tie ? ”

Many who, perhaps, may own some force in the above arguments, will possibly think that prayer, offered up in the sight of men, would soon become a very different thing—prayer offered up to be seen of men. What then, if I should assert, paradox as it may seem, that, if we take a general view of the case, prayer would be more private in church than it would be anywhere else? And yet this is undoubtedly the case.

To the poor the Gospel is preached. They have the first claim on the care and motherly love of the Church. Now, let us ask what opportunities—I had almost said, what possibilities—have they for private devotion? We, able to retire where and when we will—we, with our separate chambers, when we would be alone—we, with our leisure, which may thus be sanctified—find it easy enough to talk to them on the necessity of praying always; but, truly, it is something like saying, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled,” notwithstanding that we give them not the things necessary for the body. We do not consider the crowded state of their cottages, the smallness of their rooms, the interruptions of their time, the claims of their children, the urgency of their employers, the assistance required by, and given to, their neighbours; the impossibility that an occupation can be carried on by one member of the family, without being shared by, or at least disturbing all; the necessity that, if daily bread is to be earned, it must be carried on at any rate. The cottager’s wife, with her large family, her two rooms, her continual interruptions, now scarcely able, morning and evening, to devote her little ones to GOD; would she not hail, as an inestimable privilege, the open church? The mechanick, pent up all day in the stifling manufactory, returning to an equally stifling apartment, crowded—witness the Sanatory Report of the Poor Law Commissioners—with ten, twelve, fifteen

inmates; are his prayers private? The labourer returning from toil in the sweat of his brow, if to an affectionate, yet to a noisy, family, would not he rejoice to go in, for a few brief minutes, to the open House of GOD, and there to recommend himself, and his, to his Heavenly FATHER? Can these, and such as these, enter into their closets, and pray to their FATHER, which seeth in secret? Take (if ye do in any case, reason is, in this also), the strict sense of our Blessed LORD's words, and the poor can never pray, save in the congregation. And yet we tell him, and we tell him rightly, he must. Where, when, and how, except it be in the open church?

Again, it is not a common fault, in this age, that it does not get the worth of its money. But, for all that, it is the case with respect to our present subject. We spend large (would they were larger!) sums of money on our churches; we, perhaps, supply them with free seats, and we throw them open four or six hours in the week. So far, so good; but, for the same money, the poor man might have had the privilege of praying in church from twelve to fourteen times daily. When this is done, we may, indeed, call ourselves members of the poor man's Church. Here, for a few minutes, let the poor be certain of the uninterrupted thoughts, and the gracious assistances, which they cannot elsewhere obtain; those poor, who have less power of abstraction, and are more sensible to external impressions, than ourselves; those poor, who have stronger temptations to believe themselves forgotten of GOD than we have. They who love the poor will be for open churches.

Once more; the very habit of going up to the church, will tend to induce a stricter attendance on Divine Service. The actual trouble of going up, keeps many, especially on the week day, from church. This would cease to be felt

as a trouble, when practised every day. Daily Prayer could not but introduce Daily Service. Some of the worshippers would engage in private devotion before, some after, public worship. They who love the Daily Service will be for open churches.

Further, strangers and travellers would feel the benefit of the system. Where can the man, who is passing a few hours at an inn, retire for prayer? Whereas, were churches open, wherever wayfarers might journey, they would still have the opportunity, in a consecrated place, of joining in communion with the Faithful assembled therein. Yes, of *joining* with them; for what hinders but that the promise to the two or three may be applicable also to this case? The details of their petitions may be different; the sum, Grace and Deliverance, must of necessity be the same. Here then is another argument for us; for none can deny that our dear LORD has promised to be present to the petitions of two or three, as He has not promised to be present to the petitions of one. They who care for the stranger will be for open churches.

Again; what incalculable influence would the proposed system put into the hands of the Church! To Her would the thoughts of the poor, in the hour of their private devotions, be turned; She would feed them as hirelings cannot feed them; She would have treasures for them that aliens possess not; She would have tenderness for them that is not in the heart of a stranger. Then we should see the difference between Her, and those that are not of Her; then would every candid mind exclaim, "Give *Her* the child; She is the Mother thereof!" For allowing that Conventicles would, in imitation, be thrown open—though this I do not think likely—none are more sensible than the poor to the difference between the "Old" Church of Eng-

land, and the new-fangled ways which schism has introduced. This, and this alone, keeps many within the fold; and GOD be thanked that this is a feeling which cannot be argued down. The contrast would be the more sensible, when, as in Private Prayer, there was no enthusiastic declamation, no extemporaneous prayer, no false excitement, to bewilder and to mislead.

Lastly; the sympathy excited for, when we kneel by, others, would have the most profitable effects on ourselves. When we shut ourselves up alone, we are too apt to forget the duty of intercession; we selfishly confine ourselves to our own wants, or to those of our own immediate circle, forgetting the necessities and claims of the various members of the Holy Church throughout all the world. We need to be called on in the words of a true son of our American sister:—

“ Pray for the victims all
Of heresy and sect;
And lift thy heart, like Paul,
For all the LORD’S Elect!

Pray for the Church—I mean,
For Schem and Japhet pray;
For Churches long unseen;
For isles, and far away!

Our fellowship is One;
One LORD, One Faith, One Birth;
O pray to GOD the SON,
For all His Church on earth!”

And shall we not be quickened in this duty, when we may possibly see some of the very objects, for which we ought to pray, around us? Shall we not intercede for the widow and the orphan, when the widow and the orphan are before us?—for the distressed, when the mourner kneels by us? for the needy, when the poor man is at our side? The rich and the poor never meet together, without deriving mutual

benefit; let it be so in the present instance. By finding others engaged, at the same time, in the same service as ourselves, we shall be preserved from two evils, one of which might otherwise befall us; from despondency, if we imagine that we are alone in drawing nigh to GOD; from presumption, if we fancy ourselves, therefore, better than the rest of our fellow-creatures.

If then these advantages are thus to be attained—and I believe, Sir, that you will agree with me in saying that they are advantages, and that they are thus to be attained—what, in the name of common sense, is to hinder the re-introduction of the proposed system? “Oh,” says one, “the damp and unhealthy state of our churches makes it undesirable.” Indeed! And who is it that defends one wrong by another? This “is an easy thing for a man to say; but such excuses are not so easily accepted before GOD.”

“But,” argues another, “our churches could not be safely left open to all comers; harm would ensue, and irreverence be the consequence.” And are our churches then so costly furnished, and so gorgeously arrayed, that it has come to this? Is our exposed Altar plate so valuable? are our vestments so rich, our candlesticks so tempting, our alms-boxes so well filled, that the poor would be led to commit sacrilege? Time has, indeed, been, that these things were so; time, by GOD’S Grace, will come, when they shall again be so; when they were, then the doors were fearlessly left open, and the poor man freely entered. Do any ill consequences arise from the adoption of this system, at the present day, in foreign lands? I trow not. I have seen, Sir, much of the poor, and more of churches; and I am persuaded, that as the consequence of Daily Service is not a looking on the Prayers as a common thing,

but a deeper appreciation of them ; so the effect of constant attendance in the church, would not be the regarding it as a common place, but rather the feeling it to be, as it indeed is, the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven.

But it is, perhaps, our own conveniences and comforts for which we are concerned. Our richly-cushioned pews, our linings and hassocks, our curtains and stuffings, will they not suffer? And is it not enough that the Pew system should have driven many from the Fold—should have deprived many, who remain in it, of much of its profit—should have been the mother of irreverence, frivolity, and profaneness, but when anything fresh is proposed for the welfare of the poor, it should still interfere with, and oppose it? Its death-warrant has long been signed; how long will execution be reprieved?

I am aware that there are many who will look on the proposal which these pages have brought forward with considerable aversion, and who will consider what has been advanced, as to the inherent holiness of certain localities, as an approximation to Romanism. Yet such, Sir, might do well to consider the other arguments which have been adduced; if a course is manifestly right, the views of its recommenders can matter but little. And I would remind such of the example set them by one, whom, however erroneous I may consider some of his views, I cannot but honour for his warm-heartedness in a cold, and his single-mindedness in an Erastian generation; I allude to HENRY VENN. He allowed, by his practice, the desirableness of the system; it being his habit thus to spend half-an-hour daily in his church.

It must ever be remembered that the plan recommended is one which it is perfectly in the power of every Parish Priest to carry into execution. Let him only give notice

of his design; let him only set forth its advantages; let him throw open his church, if it be at first but for an hour a day; let him, above all, himself set the example of worshipping there; let him patiently, at first, bear with the hindrances which novelty, and English reserve, and false shame, will throw in his way; and who can calculate the advantages which may, by these means, accrue to his parish? And herein, Sir, I am but repeating what the Cambridge Camden Society has, in its *Few Words to Churchwardens*, already implied.

It is, then, because the practice of Private Devotion in churches comes recommended by Scripture, by Catholick consent, by the practice of the wisest members of our own communion; because the effect on our own minds is hallowing and reverential, while the contrary system opens a wide door to frivolity and distraction; because the analogy derivable from Holy Times pleads strongly in its favour; because GOD'S Blessing seems more especially promised and granted to prayer made in His House; because our sympathies for our fellow-creatures are more strongly excited, and our better feelings called into play; because the poor can scarcely pray elsewhere, so as to be free from interruptions, while yet, from their want of the power of abstraction, quiet is essential to them, above all others; because those who profess themselves opposed to the system, do in effect, though in an imperfect and so far unprofitable manner, adopt it; because it would tend to introduce more generally the Daily Service; because it would provide for the spiritual need of the stranger and the traveller; because it would throw greater power into the hands of the Church, and diffuse a wider sense of Her motherliness; because the very contact with Catholick buildings is elevating, and wholesome to the mind; because

these advantages are counterbalanced by no corresponding evil, and might be acquired with perfect ease ; it is for these, and for similar reasons, that I would earnestly plead for open churches.

With these remarks, I beg leave to conclude this already, perhaps, too protracted letter, and to subscribe myself,

Reverend and Dear Sir,

With the greatest respect and gratitude,

Your sincerely attached friend, and sometime pupil,

JOHN MASON NEALE.









