

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

WHY ARE YOU A PRESBYTERIAN?—VII.

BY REV. JOHN LAING, M.A., DUNDAS.

If it is a difficult matter to fix the attention of men generally on questions of church government on account of their comparative unimportance practically, it is quite the other way in matters of worship. Here every little matter is practical, seen and appreciated by everyone who attends church, and there is danger of small things being unduly magnified as if they were matters of principle, while the real principles laid down in Scripture are overlooked. It is easy to see the difference between the gorgeous ritual of an Anglican, semi-papish Church and the bald simplicity of a Puritan meeting house; but it is not so easy to point out exactly what things in the former ought to be removed as opposed to New Testament worship, or the proper ground of opposition to them, and what additions and improvements in the latter may be made in perfect accordance with the principles of New Testament worship. It is regarding such questions of form, many of them of a secondary nature, that our Presbyterian Church is often agitated, while the more important principles which have regulated the worship of the reformed Churches is entirely ignored. A right understanding of the principles would lead to greater forbearance and charity in matters of form and practices in worship. The two grand fundamental principles which guided the Reformed Churches in their worship are

I. *God is to be worshipped only in the way which He has appointed in His Word.* This excludes all "will-worship," that is, institutions or ordinances of worship for which we have not Scriptural warrant, but which have been devised and decreed by human or mere church authority.

II. *God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.* This excludes all symbolism in worship, or the expression of spiritual realities and doctrines under outward forms. The only symbolic rites of the New Testament are the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.

Having these principles in view, we may next inquire what are the ordinances of worship which God has appointed for the Church under the New Testament dispensation.

Preaching of the Gospel, followed by baptism of such as profess to be disciples is the first step to be taken in forming a Church of Christ. When these professed disciples are gathered together and form a Church, in the language of Holy Scripture they are "to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts ii. 42, xx. 7; Heb. x. 25; 1 Cor. xi. 20, and xiv.). "The words sacraments, and prayer," are the ordinary outward means of grace; and associated with them is contributive for religious purposes from the material substance of professing Christians (1 Cor. xvi. 1; Heb. xiii. 16; Gal. vi. 6).

The Presbyterian Church has always laid much stress on private individual worship. Secret prayer and reading of the Word, as well as worship in public, is appointed by God. Family worship also has the sanction of God's Word (Acts xvi. 34; Romans xvi. 5), as it is the natural expression of devout feeling in the most intimate relations of life. Not only as individuals, but as families, God should be worshipped. Then on the first day of the week, and on other days specially appointed, families and individuals should meet together as a community, unitedly and publicly, to worship. Besides these occasions, Scripture also teaches that God is to be worshipped in proper times and circumstances by religious oaths, vows, and fastings. Far more may feel inclined to dissent from these plain statements, but it is noteworthy that ritualistic theories and practices are practically inimical to select and family devotion, and that an unscriptural individualism tends to prevent public worship of communities as such, and substitutes for it meetings of sectarian societies under rules formed by themselves.

But places for public worship are needed. In the New Testament we have no mention of places erected for the purpose of worship. The first disciples for a time met in the temple (Acts ii. 46), as well as in private houses. The apostles preached in synagogues when they were to be found, and when denied that privilege, sought other commodious places, such as the school of Tyrannus, or upper rooms (Acts xix. 9;

xx. 8). But we have no Scripture warrant for attributing to these places any relative holiness, or for dedicating them as if worship performed in them were more acceptable than if rendered in any other place. Far less is there any scriptural authority for insisting on any one form or position for a church building as more proper than another, or the necessity of a form of consecration to constitute any building holy to the Lord in the sense in which the Jewish temple was a holy place. To quote the language of the Westminster Directory, "no place is capable of any holiness under pretence of whatsoever dedication or consecration."

Suitable places for worship are a necessity, and the Reformers in many instances made use of the ecclesiastical edifices then existing, after making them suitable for reformed worship, and since that time buildings commonly known as churches, sometimes as chapels and meeting-houses, have been erected for this purpose. Such buildings should have the accommodation required for edifying worship, and should be in accordance with the circumstances and conditions of the worshippers. Very properly men who dwell in "ceiled houses," and are accustomed to dwellings provided with luxuries and tastefully adorned, desire that their place of worship should be correspondingly elegant and commodious. But it is a serious mistake to suppose that the magnificent, costly, and beautiful cathedral is, in the sight of God, more acceptable than the humble frame building which new and poor settlers have painfully erected. Too often the satisfaction experienced by many in fine churches, and the lavish expenditure of money in their erection and furnishing are accompanied by a mistaken notion that in some way or other God is honoured by the external grandeur of the edifice apart from the spiritual devotion of the worshipper.

A distinctive feature of mediæval or popish worship was the association of art with worship—stately cathedrals, gorgeous vestments, imposing ceremonies, suggestive pictures and images, enchanting altar-pieces, the finest music, and such like things, were made use of to impress the sense of the worshipper with a view to producing devotion. The Reformers regarded these things, not as aids, but rather as hindrances, and abolishing them all, determined to follow the simplicity of New Testament worship. Regarding the attempt to "render sensuous the spiritual" as vain, and believing that the attempt to make worship artistic ends in making religion sensuous, and thus obscuring spiritual realities, they divorced worship and fine art, and established a form of worship unartistic and simple, but spiritual. Another claim for imposing ceremonies is now being boldly put forth by Ritualists, viz.: "Ritual is the logical sequence of doctrine, Catholic ritual of Catholic doctrine, . . . given the duties of priests to teach the distinctive Catholic doctrines of the real presence, the eucharistic sacrifice, and priestly absolution, the most direct logic must lead those priests to adopt lights, vestments, incense, wafer-bread, the mixed chalice, the eastward position, the saving veil, and the confessional box." Now, according to the reformed faith and practice, the church is not a temple in the Jewish sense, the priest is not a minister, the bread is not transubstantiated into the body and blood of the Lord, the eucharist is not a sacrifice, the consecrated wine is not turned into the blood Christ mixed with water, no man can forgive sin, and confession to man is an absurdity. Hence the whole system of Ritualism is ruled out as both unscriptural and unspiritual. Every rite and ceremony thus devised by man to express such doctrines, and to symbolize them to the senses is dishonouring to Christ and offensive to God, hence they are to be totally abolished, and any attempt to devise such ceremonies or to practise them cannot be tolerated in a Reformed Church.

HOME LIFE IN INDIA.—X.

BY H. FAIRWEATHER.

A little before ten o'clock the women begin to gather in groups about the door-ways, and when all are ready they set off in companies to bathe in the nearest tank or river; those who may not leave home make use of the house-well. They usually sing in concert as they go, one taking the lead, if the majority are not more than a word or two behind they are doing *fairly*. Yet they are good timers, ringing their anklets together as they go, with a sharp beat like the striking of cymbals. Should a man chance to pass along they coquetishly throw the

corner of the veil over the face, but otherwise take little notice of any, except those of their own party. Arrived at the water they were in and wash, after which they anoint their bodies with oil, exchange wet garments for dry ones—a single robe composes the attire. Next they unbind their long luxuriant hair to dry it in the sun. This is the time *par excellence* for sociality. The news of the village or neighbourhood, the doings of the English, etc., are discussed, but above all other themes in interest are the legends of the chivalrous days of old, the loves of heroes and heroines, the doings of goblins and witches, of ghosts and devils, or the magic power of the evil eye; these fill up the time in a manner truly edifying. There is one peculiarity of Hindoo gossip, which is, perhaps, unprecedented elsewhere; it is that each may discuss the affairs of all others, but *never her own*, on pain of having her nose rubbed upon hard clay by her husband, until she learns a life lesson in caution. Forever after she will stifle any yearnings she might have for public sympathy in the details of private home experiences. While we smile at the quaintness of the mode, we cannot help admiring the practical wisdom underlying such usage. How perfect it would be did it include the male gossip as well, and extend to the white as well as the black races. As it stands, however, it is one-sided. Together they again return home in time to prepare the noon-tide meal.

The babies of the house are as much an institution in India as anywhere else. They are decorated and ornamented with infinite care; they are lulled to sleep in tiny hammocks made of canvas, and swung from the verandah roof by hempen cords, another cord is fastened to its mother's great toe, who, working and rocking, sings quaint lullabys in a low, chanting fashion. One which is quite popular with the common people of the north-west rhymes as follows:

"To sleep, to sleep, why does he not go?
Slumber with wakefulness mingles so;
Sleep cries coming, lady I'm coming,
But to two or three more babies just now I'm humming."

Another also common among the north-west peasant people is worth transcribing:

"My baby's little cradle
By silken cords I'll swing,
From Kabul the Maghanti comes,
So lie still while I sing,
Your father loves your mother,
May our darling boy live long,
Now close your sleepy eyes, my child,
While I'm singing you this song,
While I am grinding people's grain
Your father's threshing, dear;
So go to sleep my pretty pet,
Lest a dog bite off your ear."

I copy the following from the "Indian Evangelical Review;" it is given as a popular lullaby in the Canara districts of South India. It is the song of a Sudra mother:

CANARA CRADLE SONG.

"Hush, hush, my child I go fast to sleep,
The bogie's in the tree I
He's killed a hundred little boys,
And wants to come for thee.
Jo, jo, my babe, jo, jo,
Jo, jo, jo, jo.

Hush, hush, my child, the bogie's jumped
On yonder banyan tree,
He's killed a hundred little boys,
And now he comes for thee.
Jo, jo, etc.

Bad people passing by do wish
On thee their eyes to set,
But mother's tied a talisman,
So sleep my darling pet.
Jo, jo, etc.

Hush, hush, my child, lie down and sleep,
Thy bed is nicely made;
I've wrapt thee in a pretty cloth,
So sleep, be not afraid."
Jo, jo, etc.

The native Christians have their cradle song also, following the custom of the others:

"Jesus slept in a baby's cradle,
Joseph rocked Him, Mariam rocked Him,
Jesus slept in a baby's cradle,
Hung by silken cords."

Swinging is a very popular amusement, as is kite flying and bird fighting during certain seasons of the year; both young and old partake in them. It is said that if indulged in at any other than the prescribed period, accidents entailing serious loss are sure to follow.