

T H E C O L O N I A L C H U R C H M A N .

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE. Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

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ESSAY ON THE LITURGY.

ESSAY II.—Continued.

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Psalm xcvi. 9.

The congregation, then, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and being exhorted to draw near in full assurance of faith, enter upon the work of thanksgiving and supplication, by joining in the Lord's prayer. You know the origin of this prayer, and how it came to be styled 'the Lord's'—how the disciples of our Saviour came to him, and said, 'Lord teach us to pray,' as John taught his disciples;—and how he gave them that form of sound words, which has been carefully inserted in our liturgy. Whatever imperfection may be found in the other parts of the service, there is surely none in this; and it is 'because we know not what to pray for as we ought,' that the Lord's prayer is introduced into every distinct office of our ritual. We can indeed justify our liturgy before men, but we presume not to do it before God, even whose ministering spirits are charged with folly. 'Wherefore, it is not the love of repetition,' as one observes, 'but the fear of imperfection, that hath induced the church to insert the Lord's prayer in all her offices; that by its perfection, she might atone for the infirmities of her own compositions.'

There is a manifest reference in the general exhortation, to the order in which the parts of worship succeed each other; for the object of religious assemblies is declared to be, 'to render thanks to God for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.' Now we 'render thanks for the benefits, and set forth the worthy praises of God,' in the psalms and hymns which precede the lessons; we 'hear his most holy word,' when we listen to the chapters from the old and new testament; and we proceed to 'ask the things necessary for the body and the soul, in the prayers and litanies which follow. The order here observed, is the order of nature and of propriety; for is it not reasonable that we should set forth the perfections of the Deity, before we declare our own wants;—to render thanks for the benefits already received, before we presume to ask for more?

The work of praise is introduced by a verse from the fifty-first psalm, which forms a very proper transition from confession of sins to thanksgiving—"O Lord, open thou our lips; and our mouth shall show forth thy praise."—We then rise from our kneeling posture, and give glory to God in a doxology, which has been used in the church from the earliest ages. Our authority for ascribing glory to each person in the Godhead, is founded on the language of our Saviour's commission to his disciples, to baptize 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' for while the words of that commission stand on record, we are not afraid to consider them as equally the objects of adoration.

'Praise ye the Lord,' is a literal translation of the Hebrew word, Hallelujah;—a word so sacred, that the church in early times scrupled to translate it. It is mixed indeed with loftier hymns, and sung in higher strains than ours; for the exiled apostle heard in one of his visions, 'as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluiah; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' The versicle is re-echoed by the united voice of the congregation, 'the Lord's name be praised;' and in what words shall praise be offered more acceptably, than in those of the sweet psalmist of Israel?

The portion of psalms, or as it is styled in Hebrew, 'the book of praises,' appointed for the day, is introduced by an anthem from the ninety-fifth and ninety-sixth psalms, which was styled in the old liturgies, 'the invitatory psalm, because it contains an invitation to join in the worship of God—'O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.'

If it be asked, why we repeat the doxology at the end of this anthem; we reply, that the doxology is but a paraphrase on the song of the seraphim, 'holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty; which art, and which wast, and which art to come:' and as they above do it continually, it is no harm in us to do it frequently.

Concerning the book of Psalms, I have barely time to observe, that it is, of all parts of the sacred writings, the best calculated for public devotion; that they composed most of the temple service; that they have been used in the christian church from the time of our Saviour; and that every worshipper may find something in them, accommodated to his particular case. To quote the words of an old divine on this subject—'Hath any one received a blessing? In the psalms he hath a thanksgiving. Hath he any to be requested? In the psalms he hath a petition. Hath he any evil to be removed? In the psalms he hath a deprecation. Would he delight his soul in meditations? In the psalms, the scenes of creation and providence are opened in beautiful representations. Would he prostrate his soul in humiliations? In the psalms he finds many that are penitential.'

Having set forth the most worthy praises of God, in the psalms and doxologies, we are invited to listen to his most holy word; and thus, an agreeable relief is given to the mind, by recalling it from a state of action, to one of mere attention. The affections which had been previously engaged, are suffered to rest, while the understanding is called into exercise. The scriptures are introduced into our worship, on the principle, that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' and as 'Moses was read in the synagogue every sabbath day,' so do we esteem it an excellence in our church, that the scriptures are read in the hearing of the people. The chapters are selected alternately from the old and new testament, to show the harmony between the law and the gospel; 'for what is the law but the gospel foreshowed; and what is the gospel but the law fulfilled?' Things prefigured in the one, are accomplished in the other; and for this reason, the first lesson is read from the old testament, and the second from the new. Take for example the lessons for Christmas day; and you will find the first, from the 9th of Isaiah, to contain a prediction of our Saviour's birth; while the second, from the 2d of Luke, gives the fulfilment of the prophecy.

But the chapters are not read in immediate succession. They are separated by a hymn to the trinity, most worthy the spouse of Christ, and fit for the tongue of men and angels. Amongst all devotional compositions which are not the work of immediate inspiration, our *Te Deum* justly stands the highest, for sublimity of thought, and depth of devotion;—for glow of feeling, and majesty of expression. It was composed, as is generally believed, by St. Ambrose, on the occasion of St. Augustin's baptism; and has been used in the church for more than fourteen hundred years. Its name is derived from the two first words of the Latin, in which it was originally composed—*Te Deum laudamus*, 'we praise thee, O God.'

After the second lesson is completed, we are again summoned to the work of praise, by joining in the 100th

psalm, or the hymn of Zacharias on the birth of John the baptist; and then we rehearse the articles of our belief.—The creed is styled the apostles' creed, from an opinion which long prevailed among christians, that it was drawn up by the apostles themselves; and although this opinion can scarcely be maintained, yet we have the best assurance that it was compiled at a very early period, nearly in the form in which it now appears. The position of the creed is immediately after the reading of the scriptures; but as faith cometh by hearing, it is proper that confession of faith should follow as its natural effect; and it stands moreover as a fit introduction to the prayers; 'for how can we call on him, in whom we have not believed?' This confession is to be made by the whole congregation; for it is not sufficient that a christian believe rightly in his heart, unless 'with his mouth he makes confession unto salvation.'

To be continued.

S E L E C T E D .

PARAPHRASE ON ISAIAH, XLI. X.

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Fear not, O weak believer, trust my power,
For I am with thee in the trying hour;
Be not dismay'd, Jehovah is my name,
My truth, my faithfulness, is still the same.
I'll strengthen thee through all the paths below,
In sorrow, sickness, misery, and woe:
Yea, help I'll give, as well as grace, to bear
The ills which, in my love, I bid thee share.
And dost thou now despair to gain the prize?
Thy fears allay, let doubts no longer rise,
For I'll uphold thee with my righteous hand,
Till thou art safe on Canaan's happy land;
When thou shalt dwell, thro' everlasting days,
In bliss supreme, redeeming love to praise.

"THY WILL BE DONE."

How hard to say, 'thy will be done,'
And say it from the heart,
From all our joys, the dearest one,
When God commands to part;
To see our fairest hopes decay
And perish in our sight,
And yet, 'thy will be done,' to say,
And own that will is right.
To give what nature holds most dear—
Our life, up to the Lord;
Nor heave a sigh, nor shed a tear,
Nor speak a murmuring word.
'Thy will be done,' who now can say—
O tell me where is one
Who on his heart his hand can lay,
And cry, 'thy will be done?'

The Church of Christ.—The Church, being a *supernatural* society, says Hooker, doth differ from *natural* societies in this: that the person unto whom we associate ourselves in the one, are *men*, simply considered as men; but they to whom we are joined in the other, are GOD, ANGELS and HOLY MEN.

Believers "know the love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge," as a weary traveller receives refreshment from a spring, and yet cannot fathom the depth of the ocean, from which it proceeds.